

June 2019



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024



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Foreword

This strategy clearly sets out our approach to tackling homelessness within the borough and signals our intention to deliver a service which is compassionate, fair and effective at helping residents at the time when they need our help the most.

It reinforces our commitment to support those facing homelessness in the borough and builds on the excellent work carried out by the housing team over the last five years. It recognises that there are few things that contribute more to our residents' wellbeing than having a secure place they can call home.

In line with our Corporate Plan and key objectives, over the next five years, Eastleigh Borough Council will fulfil its statutory duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 by working in partnership with key agencies; adopting a person-centred approach and being proactive in tackling homelessness.

As a Council we will work tirelessly to remove the stigma of homelessness recognising that any one of us could, through bad luck, a relationship breakdown or a downturn in the economy, find ourselves facing homelessness; and should the worst happen, we are committed to being a source of help, guidance and support for residents so that they are able to retain their home or quickly find a new one.

This strategy contributes to our overall vision to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives and works in the borough so that all our residents have an equal opportunity to flourish and live long, happy and healthy lives. It is a core component of our commitment to supporting and creating sustainable communities and we believe the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will help us deliver our vision.

Cllr Tina Campbell
Cabinet Member for Social Policy

Introduction

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) represents one of the most significant changes in homelessness legislation for 20 years. An updated Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy therefore comes at an opportune time as the Council and its statutory and voluntary partners seek to work together to meet the requirements of the new Act and provide better outcomes for customers facing homelessness in the Eastleigh borough.

Homelessness is often associated with poverty and is a social determinant of mental health. Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness contain some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Being homeless can also delay discharge from hospital, lengthen stays and cause repeated admissions. Homelessness is not always visible and includes households who are living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing and those who have no fixed abode, including sofa surfers, rough sleepers, those living in garages, sheds, cars and other moveable structures, and transient households.

There are a number of risk factors associated with the likelihood of someone becoming homeless. The risks range from drug and alcohol issues, bereavement, and experience of the criminal justice system, to the wider determinants of health such as inequality, unemployment, housing supply and affordability.

In 2014, 80% of homeless people in England reported experiencing mental health problems, with 45% having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Studies have also shown the prevalence of mental health conditions amongst the homeless is higher compared to the general population.¹

Eastleigh Borough Council, alongside key partners, has worked hard for the last five years to prevent homelessness year on year and has a strong record of performance compared to its CIPFA nearest statistical neighbours.²

Despite the above successes, the next few years are likely to bring considerable challenges. Homelessness in Hampshire and the UK is steadily rising and the continued roll out of welfare reform measures will inevitably impact on many households who are already seeking housing advice and support from the Council.

¹ Public Health England rationale for Homelessness <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

² The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) model identifies other Local Authorities that have similar characteristics and demographics by using 41 metrics including a wide range of social-economic indicators

Current Position

The HRA came into force on 3rd April 2018 and introduced increased duties on Local Authorities in relation to homelessness. The Act places a greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness at an early stage and partnership working with external agencies.

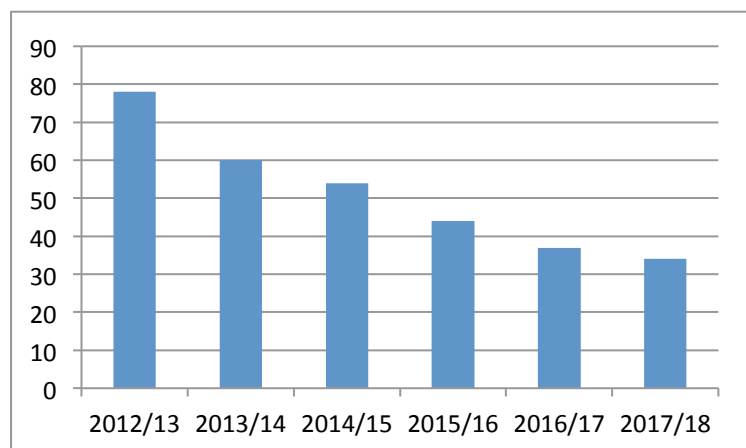
The key changes include:

- An increase in the definition of ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 to 56 days
- The introduction of a 56 day prevention and/or relief duty in relation to all households
- A duty to work with all households to assess needs and create a Personalised Housing Plan with reasonable steps for both the applicant and the Local Authority
- A duty on specified public bodies to refer households to the Local Authority where there is a threat of homelessness

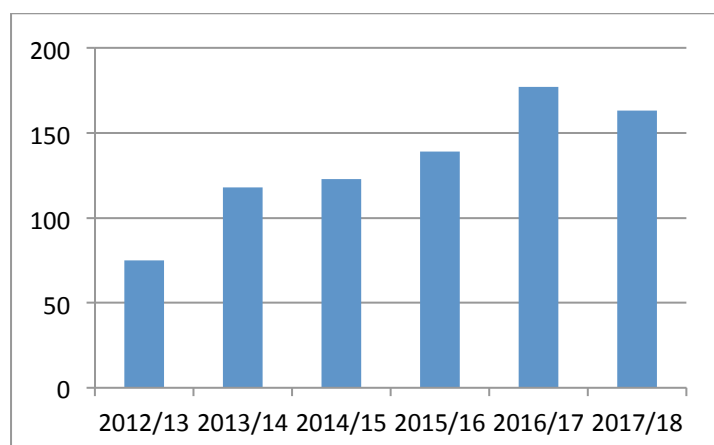
Due to significant changes introduced by the HRA, in particular in relation to the stage at which a formal homeless application is taken, statistical performance since April 2018 is not comparable to that of the preceding years. However, in planning for the future it is still important to review performance of the years prior to the HRA.

Figure 1 demonstrates that during the period 2012/13 to 2017/18 Eastleigh Borough Council saw a reduction in the number of formal homeless applications to the Authority. During the same period Figure 2 shows an increase in the number of cases where a successful homeless prevention was achieved, which directly influenced the downward trend seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
Number of homeless applications received by Eastleigh Borough Council



**Figure 2:
Number of homeless prevention cases dealt with by Eastleigh Borough Council**



This data demonstrates that Eastleigh Borough Council already had a strong focus on the prevention of homelessness prior to the introduction of the HRA, placing the Authority in a strong position to successfully implement the additional duties brought about by the Act. Figure 3 shows the volume of homeless cases dealt with by the Authority during the first full year of the HRA.

**Figure 3:
Number of homeless approaches and outcomes dealt with by Eastleigh Borough Council during the period 03/04/2018 to 31/03/2019**

Early Intervention Advice	173
Homelessness Prevented	120
Homelessness Relieved	54
Currently Under Prevention	28
Currently Under Relief	14
Main Duty Accepted	1
Total	390

Whilst in comparison to Figure 1 there has been a steep increase in the footfall of applicants presenting for homelessness advice and assistance, this is due to the requirements of the HRA and in particular the associated recording requirements.

The data shows that of the 390 approaches, 173 were assisted with advice at an early intervention stage. A further 174 successful outcomes were achieved at the prevention and relief stage with an additional 42 cases ongoing at the time of recording. There was one case where a successful outcome was not achieved at the relief stage, resulting in the Authority accepting the main housing duty.

Figure 4 shows the latest indicators taken from the public health profiles which compare Eastleigh's homelessness performance against its CIPFA nearest statistical neighbours. This outcome data shows that Eastleigh has the joint lowest number of households in temporary accommodation and lowest number of households classified as homeless at a rate of per 1,000 households against our nearest neighbours.

**Figure 4:
Public Health England data³**

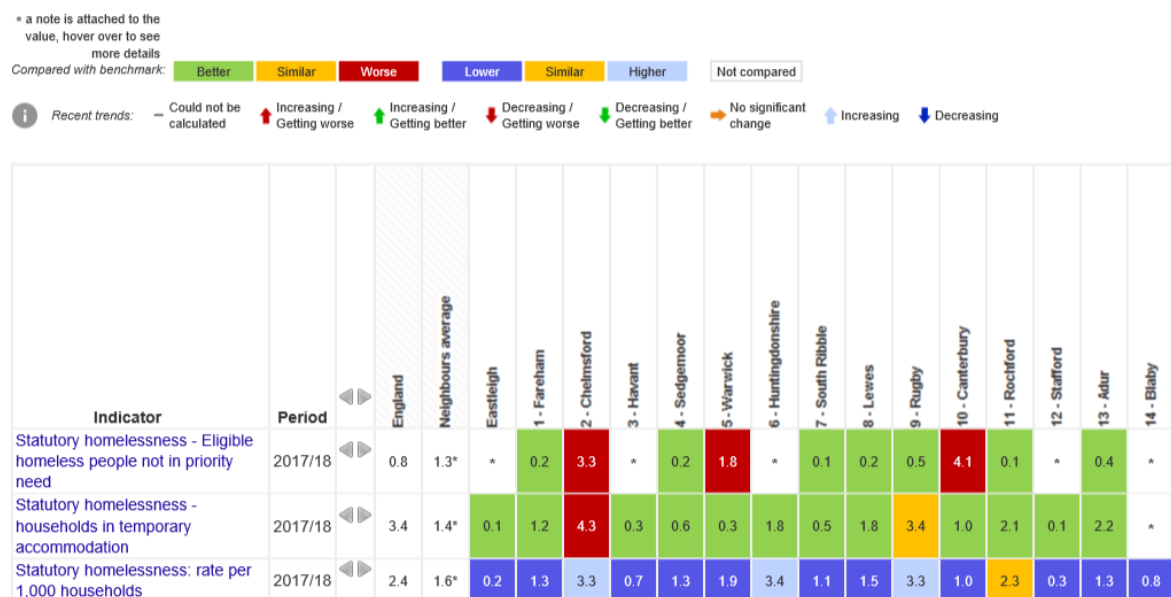


Figure 5 shows the numbers of rough sleepers recorded in the borough during a yearly snapshot estimate on one night during the autumn. Whilst it is only snapshot information, it does reflect Eastleigh’s low numbers of rough sleepers.

**Figure 5:
Rough sleeper estimate**

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number	1	0	0	0	0

Figure 6 shows Eastleigh Borough Council’s spend over the last 5 years in tackling homelessness. Spending on homelessness prevention loans (Tenancy Start Up loans and Rent Top Up loans) has enabled the Authority to achieve the successful homeless outcomes seen in the homelessness prevention statistics in Figure 2.

**Figure 6:
Spending on homelessness**

Activity	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Bed and Breakfast	£165,191	£115,264	£90,478	£65,802	£111,303
Homelessness Prevention Loans	£108,656	£107,326	£123,348	£82,525	£106,153

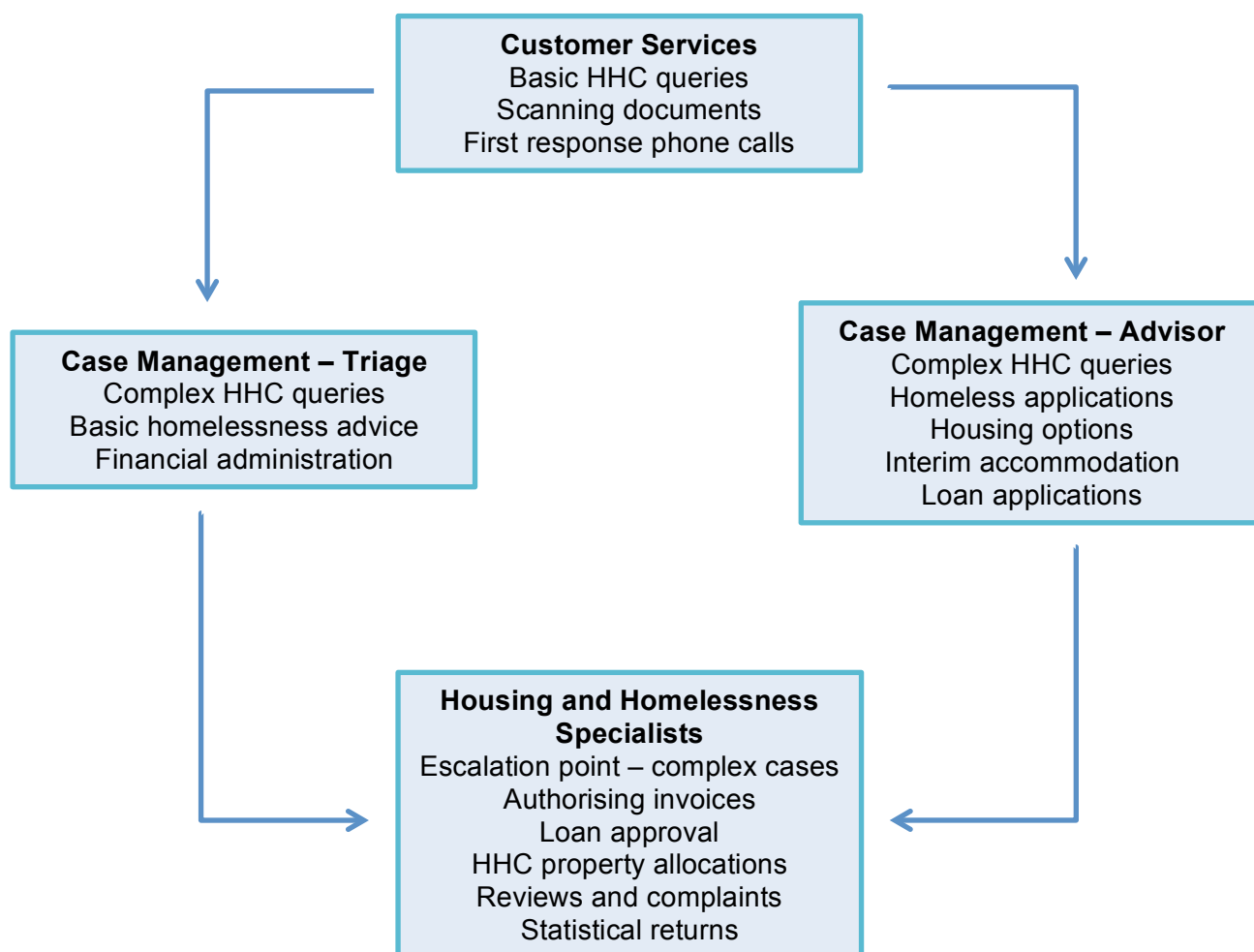
³ Public Health England data as at 06/06/2019
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/homelessness#page/0/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/101/are/E0700086/nn/nn-1-E0700086>

Operating Model and Team Structure

The housing team are responsible for the following processes and activities:

- Assess and verify Hampshire Home Choice (HHC) applications
- Assess, investigate and verify homeless applications
- Provide personalised housing advice and assistance
- Work with customers to seek and secure housing options
- Accommodation and support referrals
- Arrange interim accommodation
- Assess affordability
- Manage loan applications
- Agree repayment plan and administration of invoices and loan payments
- Bed and Breakfast reconciliation
- Allocation of affordable rented housing
- Reviews and complaints
- Produce statistical returns
- Out of hours emergency service

The housing team is spread across the Customer Service, Case Management and Specialist areas and consists of a core team of six FTE Housing Case Management Officers and two Housing and Homelessness Specialists. The Specialist team also hosts a Housing and Community Care Adviser which is a joint funded position with Hampshire County Council. The distribution of activities across the different areas is broadly as follows:



Strategic Objectives

Providing secure and good quality housing is invaluable to maintaining good health, improving quality of life and reducing health inequalities in the borough. Those individuals and communities suffering the worst health outcomes are often those on the lowest incomes and in the poorest standard of housing. “Poorer people are more likely to live in more deprived neighbourhoods. The more deprived the neighbourhood, the more likely it is to have social and environmental characteristics presenting risks to health. These include poor housing, higher rates of crime, poorer air quality, a lack of green spaces and places for children to play and more risks to safety from traffic.”⁴

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will play a significant part in addressing the two strategic priorities of:

- Tackling social deprivation and health inequalities
- Enabling health and wellbeing

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy complements the Council’s overarching Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Housing and Development Strategy.

There are also a number of strategies and policies that are closely related to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. These documents are reviewed and renewed to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant:

- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)
- Empty Properties Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Armed Forces Community Covenant

The following external strategies and agencies also impact on homelessness in Eastleigh and must also be considered:

- Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework
- Accommodation and support providers
- West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group locality plans for Eastleigh and the southern parishes

The Council ensures compliance with homelessness legislation and our direction of travel is working towards 100% successful homelessness resolutions by 2025.

The Council will measure its performance by recording the following outputs using H-CLIC:⁵

- Number of households placed in Bed and Breakfast
- Number of cases under prevention and under relief
- Number of overdue tasks
- Number of cases over 56 days

⁴ Marmot Review, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, page 79

⁵ H-CLIC (Homelessness Case Level Information Collection)

Strategic Approach

The Council's approach will focus on:

- Taking a person-centered approach, ensuring people are well informed about their housing options
- Providing sufficient housing stock to cope with demand
- Taking a preventative approach to tackling homelessness whilst supporting sustainable communities
- Working in partnership with key agencies
- Proactive approach to tackle rough sleeping

Person-centered Approach

- Review recently introduced non-appointment drop-in service designed to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness at the first point of contact, minimise repetitive presentations and ensure an efficient and responsive service
- Continual review of template letters and forms to ensure they are user-friendly and contain relevant information
- Build on the existing web pages to give a greater level of advice online
- Staff training in homelessness and other relevant legislation, softer skills and mental health/support needs (for example managing suicidal conversations and Connect 5 training)⁶
- Continual review of application processing times and quality to ensure a high level of service is provided consistently

Housing Supply

- New build programme
 - Continue to support the delivery of new homes by working with developers, land owners, Housing Associations, local communities and government agencies
 - Work to maximise the delivery of affordable housing across the borough (1,162 in 2018/19 including 456 (net) affordable homes)
- Increase supply of temporary and privately rented accommodation
 - Work with Fledge (supported housing provider) to deliver new units of supported accommodation
 - Work with the Society of St James to explore the expansion of their property portfolio within the Eastleigh borough for use by homeless households
 - Work with the Council's Asset Management team regarding use of housing acquisitions for homeless households
 - Work with local landlords to increase supply
- Increase throughput of temporary and privately rented accommodation
 - Work with support agencies to improve tenancy sustainment
 - Continual review of Tenancy Start Up scheme to ensure it remains attractive and user friendly to landlords

⁶ Connect 5 is a mental health promotion training programme developed from a unique collaboration between Public Health England and Health Education England. It is designed to increase the confidence and core skills of front line staff so that they can be more effective in having conversations about mental health and wellbeing, help people to manage mental health problems and increase their resilience and mental wellbeing through positive changes.

- Continue close working with the Housing Benefit team to expand use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness by providing financial assistance towards rent arrears, tenancy start up and removal costs
- Increase work with tenants to encourage move on (encourage repayment of debts to ensure housing register application is maintained, support to deal with debt and tenancy management issues, use of Rent Top Up loans and Discretionary Housing Payments to assist with arrears and shortfall)
- For tenants who have moved on, explore ways to encourage landlords to relet to other households requiring accommodation

Preventative Approach

- Offer advice and assistance to all customers on the day of approach regardless of whether they meet statutory requirements
- Ensure the out of hours service continues to be operated by experienced officers of the housing team with a homelessness background
- Identify support needs at an early stage and refer to appropriate services (social inclusion, mental health, young persons, domestic abuse, ex-offenders)
- Increase use of Discretionary Housing Payments and Rent Top Up loans to clear or reduce arrears in order to prevent homelessness
- Greater emphasis on mediation and negotiation between families, landlords and Housing Associations
- Collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities to review implementation of Hampshire-wide agreed protocol for Duty to Refer
- Creative use of Local Welfare Allowance for emergency situations (such as travel to access accommodation and utility bill top up)
- Ensure households on low incomes are assisted with essential items required to set up home
 - Provision of funding to SCRATCH⁷ to supply tailored furniture packages to households following the resolution of their homelessness
 - Continued partnership working with SCRATCH to expand the range of household items supplied (including paint, flooring and white goods)
 - Review progress of recently introduced Household Items loan scheme
- Continue and expand use of hard-to-let sheltered accommodation to provide housing options for applicants aged over 55
 - Identify low demand units advertised through Hampshire Home Choice
 - Further develop relationships with Housing Associations and Local Authorities operating outside of the Hampshire Home Choice framework to increase availability of hard to let stock
- Work in partnership with Citizens Advice Eastleigh (formerly Citizens Advice Bureau) to explore ways to more effectively share intelligence and develop sustainable individual client plans to prevent homelessness

Partnership Approach

- Deliver elected member and key partner training sessions to provide information about legislation change, service access and to promote Eastleigh Borough Council's strategic approach
- Build upon close working relationship with Members and continue monthly meetings with Portfolio holder
- Foster stronger relationships and pathways with Housing Associations and other accommodation providers

⁷ SCRATCH (Southampton City And Region Action to Combat Hardship)

- Negotiate reciprocal move arrangements with other Local Authorities to increase housing options for households needing to move out of area
- Expand on close relationship with the borough's largest housing provider VIVID Homes Limited
 - Joint appointments for arrears cases with a threat of eviction
 - Consideration of Management Moves where appropriate
 - Joint visits to households in temporary accommodation to encourage move on and address tenancy management issues
 - Improve links with VIVID's homelessness prevention support service
- Ensure suitability of emergency accommodation provision
 - Bed and Breakfast inspections
 - Introduce Out of Borough Placement Policy
 - Develop alternatives to Bed and Breakfast placements by expanding on close working relationships with Winchester Night Shelter and Housing Associations with guest rooms within their sheltered accommodation schemes
 - Increase use of mediation to sustain existing accommodation on a temporary basis whilst suitable alternatives are explored
- Continue the joint funded post of the Housing and Community Care Adviser who works across Housing and Adult Services ensuring close links and effective resolution for vulnerable cases
- Utilise Flexible Homelessness Grant to top up County social inclusion funding to secure continued provision of local drop-in support service for families and a wider range of single homeless cases
- Increase referrals into Supported Families Programme
 - Training frontline staff on referral process and benefits of programme
 - Input into weekly Early Help Hub agenda
- Input into regular agendas for Tactical Community Safety Partnership, MARAC and MAPPA (and attendance at meetings where appropriate)
- Attendance at regular meetings with local support providers (Two Saints and Together) to discuss referrals, move on and contractual issues and improvements
- Regular meetings with other Local Authorities and Housing Associations to share best practice and discuss any issues
- Work with Inclusion and other Hampshire Local Authorities to develop a Joint Working Protocol
- Provide input into development of a network of key partners to help tackle health inequality and deprivation (including Food Bank, Department of Work and Pensions, Citizens Advice Eastleigh, Two Saints and Fledge)

Rough Sleeping

- Continue to implement and review recently updated SWEP which takes a compassionate and reactive approach to the provision of shelter to rough sleepers during periods of severe weather
- Continue to work closely with social inclusion provider to respond quickly to reports of rough sleepers in the borough by providing efficient and effective outreach advice and assistance
- Increase public awareness of Street Link to encourage reporting of rough sleepers

Summary

The objectives and approach within this strategy are cross-cutting and interrelated to tackling homelessness.

The key to implementing this strategy is to take a person centered approach, whilst working with key partners in a proactive style.

The housing team at Eastleigh Borough Council has a clear understanding of what needs to be achieved and the approach required in order to achieve the key targets within the annual Business Plan and personalised action plans.

Eastleigh Borough Council is passionate about tackling health inequalities and social deprivation and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy compliments the overarching Health and Wellbeing Strategy of the Council to achieve corporate objectives.

Action Plan

	Action	Who	When
Person-centred Approach	Review drop in service	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	November 2019
	Review template letters and forms	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Ongoing
	Website	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	June 2020
	Staff training	All housing staff	Ongoing
	Application reviews	Housing and Homelessness Specialists Housing Case Management Team Leader	Ongoing
Housing Supply	Affordable housing programme	Housing Enabling Officer	Ongoing
	Supply of temporary and privately rented accommodation	Housing and Homelessness Specialists Asset Management team Housing Case Management Officers	Annual review at end of Financial Year
	Throughput of temporary and privately rented accommodation	Housing and Homelessness Specialists Housing Case Management Officers	Ongoing
Preventative Approach	Provision of advice and assistance	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Community Care Adviser	Daily through duty service
	Out of hours service	Housing and Homelessness Specialists Housing Case Management Officers	Responsive service
	Identification of support needs and appropriate referrals	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Community Care Adviser	Daily
	Use of Discretionary Housing Payments and Rent Top Up loans	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists (review) Senior Housing Benefit and Homelessness Specialist (review)	Ongoing Annual review at end of Financial Year
	Mediation	Housing and Homelessness Specialists (training) Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Community Care Adviser (implementation)	December 2019 (training) Ongoing
	Duty to refer	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Quarterly Homelessness Officers Group
	Local Welfare Allowance	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service
	Household items	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service Ongoing review
	Hard to let sheltered accommodation	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Community Care Adviser Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Ongoing
	Partnership working with Citizens Advice Eastleigh	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Ongoing
Partnership Approach	Member and partner training	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	February 2020
	Partnership working with Members	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Ongoing Monthly meetings
	Housing Associations	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Bi monthly meetings
	Reciprocal arrangements	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service
	VIVID Homes Limited	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service Periodic meetings
	Emergency accommodation	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	August 2020

	Joint funding of Housing and Community Care Advisor	Operational Manager	Ongoing
	Social Inclusion service	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Quarterly review meetings
	Supported Families Programme	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Periodic meetings Weekly input
	Agenda input	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Input as per periodic meetings
	Local support providers	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Quarterly (social inclusion) Monthly (mental health)
	Local Authorities and Housing Associations	Housing and Homelessness Specialists Senior Housing Benefit and Homelessness Specialist	Quarterly (homelessness) Bi monthly (Hampshire Home Choice)
	Inclusion Joint Working Protocol	Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Quarterly Homelessness Officers Group
	Health inequality network	Health and Wellbeing Lead Specialist	Ongoing
Rough Sleeping	SWEP	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service Annual review in March
	Joint working with outreach service	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Responsive service
	Street Link	Housing Case Management Officers Housing and Homelessness Specialists	Ongoing