



# Agenda

Meeting: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Date: **14 July 2020**  
Time: **7.00 pm**  
Place: **Remote meeting via Zoom**

To: **All members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The committee will consider the matters, listed below, at the date and time shown above. The meeting will be open to the press and public and will be streamed live at [bit.ly/YouTubeMeetings](https://bit.ly/YouTubeMeetings).

If members have any particular questions on the reports it would help the management of the meeting if they could send these on to [committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) or by contacting the report author. Members can raise matters in the meeting of course, however, knowledge of the areas of any concern prior to its commencement will aid the running of the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest (Pages 3 - 4)**

Members of the committee should declare any interests which fall under the following categories:

- a) disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI);
- b) other significant interests (OSI);
- c) voluntary announcements of other interests.

3. **Minutes (Pages 5 - 10)**

To consider and approve, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2020.

## Queries about the agenda? Need a different format?

Contact Kate Clark – Tel: 01303 853267  
Email: [committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:committee@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk) or download from our website  
[www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](http://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

4. **Vision For the Housing Management Service (Pages 11 - 20)**

This paper outlines the vision for the new Housing Management Service; describing the delivery principles that will provide operational clarity and accountability. The Vision is the long term destination for the Service; the initial work being to ensure the service is built on sound systems, processes and staff on which the culture and values will be shaped and embedded within the council.

5. **Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25 (Pages 21 - 80)**

This report sets out details of the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the district for the period 2020-25. It is proposed the draft strategy should be made available for an eight week consultation period.

6. **Otterpool Park Business Plan - Initial Presentation**

The Committee will receive a presentation on skeleton of the business plan for the development of Otterpool Park Garden Town together with a timetable for its completion.

## **Declarations of Interest**

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)**

Where a Member has a new or registered DPI in a matter under consideration they must disclose that they have an interest and, unless the Monitoring Officer has agreed in advance that the DPI is a 'Sensitive Interest', explain the nature of that interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a DPI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation permitting them to do so. If during the consideration of any item a Member becomes aware that they have a DPI in the matter they should declare the interest immediately and, subject to any dispensations, withdraw from the meeting.

### **Other Significant Interest (OSI)**

Where a Member is declaring an OSI they must also disclose the interest and explain the nature of the interest at the meeting. The Member must withdraw from the meeting at the commencement of the consideration of any matter in which they have declared a OSI and must not participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter unless they have been granted a dispensation to do so or the meeting is one at which members of the public are permitted to speak for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the matter. In the latter case, the Member may only participate on the same basis as a member of the public and cannot participate in any discussion of, or vote taken on, the matter and must withdraw from the meeting in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

### **Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI)**

Where a Member does not have either a DPI or OSI but is of the opinion that for transparency reasons alone s/he should make an announcement in respect of a matter under consideration, they can make a VAOI. A Member declaring a VAOI may still remain at the meeting and vote on the matter under consideration.

#### **Note to the Code:**

Situations in which a Member may wish to make a VAOI include membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items; where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person; or where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position. It should be emphasised that an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI.

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## Minutes

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

|                       |  |   |  |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Held at:              | Remote meeting via Zoom  |   |  |
| Date                  | Tuesday, 9 June 2020   |   |  |
| Present               | Councillors  | Miss Susan Carey,<br>Peter Gane,<br>Terence Mullard,<br>(Chairman) and Douglas Wade (In place of John Wing) | Laura Davison,<br>Michelle Keutenius (Vice-Chair),<br>Patricia Rolfe,<br>Rebecca Shoob |
| Apologies for Absence | Councillor Gary Fuller and Councillor John Wing  |   |  |
| Officers Present:     | Andy Blaszkowicz (Director of Housing and Operations), Kate Clark (Case Officer - Committee Services), Karen Everett (Customer Services Lead), Ewan Green (Director of Place), Tim Madden (Director of Transformation and Transition), Sarah Pinkstone (Environmental Health and Licensing Senior Specialist), Susan Priest (Chief Executive), Andrew Rush (Regulatory Services & Corporate Contracts Lead Specialist), Charlotte Spendley (Director of Corporate Services), Adrian Tofts (Strategy, Policy & Performance Lead Specialist) and Jemma West (Committee Service Specialist) |   |  |
| Others Present:       | Councillors David Monk, Mrs Jenny Hollingsbee, Ray Field, Stuart Peall and Lesley Whybrow  |   |  |

#### 6. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Peter Gane and Michelle Keutenius made a voluntary announcement as they are members of Folkestone Town Council. Councillor Keutenius is Mayor of Folkestone.

Councillor Patricia Rolfe made a voluntary announcement as she is a member of New Romney Town Council.

Councillor Douglas Wade made a voluntary announcement as he is a member of Hythe Town Council.

These voluntary announcements were made in respect of agenda items 4 (Corporate Plan), 5 (Recovery Plan) and 6 (Customer Access Strategy).

All members took part in discussions and affirmations on all items for the duration of the meeting.

**7. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2020 were agreed and approved. The Chairman agreed that her electronic signature could be added to these minutes.

**8. Update for discussion on the development of the New Corporate Plan 2021 - 2031**

Report OS/20/04 provided an overview of the work of the Corporate Plan Working Group and the development of the key themes emerging for the new Corporate Plan for the Council. The report sought feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny committee on the emerging key themes of the proposed Corporate Plan.

The Leader, Councillor Monk, portfolio holder for this item, presented this report and drew members attention to the five emerging themes.

Members were advised that their comments would be considered at the Corporate Plan working group on 1 July for the final report.

Members comments as follows:

**Housing & Infrastructure**

- Sustainability for all housing stock across the district which would ultimately reduce costs for tenants.
- Otterpool Park must be singled out as an important development for the future.
- A measure of child poverty was proposed so that improvements can be made and encourage ownership of communities.

**Economy**

- Ensure development of a sustained economy
- Consideration given to the finances of the Council since the pandemic and lockdown.

**Environment**

- Members were pleased to see the word 'exemplar' being used, important to have a definition of green exemplar.
- The next ten years are critical as flooding will affect parts of the district by 2050.

**Community Focused Services**

- Need to elaborate on health services such as physical, mental and social wellbeing.
- Although this is an early stage pre-pandemic report, consideration needs to be given to the impact on the district, especially the older population.

- Renewed efforts to the district's residents on waste reduction.
- Diversity and equality.

Transparency, Stability and Accountability

- Real opportunities exists to listen to our community during and after the pandemic.
- Important to ascertain residents' needs through effective consultation, engagement and representation.

Members were advised their comments would be fed back to the Corporate Plan Working Group which is represented by Group Leaders.

The Leader and Officers thanked the committee for their valued comments.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob  
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To receive and note report OS/20/04.**
- 2. To provide feedback to the Working Group on the proposed key themes for the Corporate Plan.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

9. **COVID-19 Response to Date and Recovery Plan Framework**

Report C/20/08 report provided an overview of the Council's response to date in relation to COVID-19 and sought approval of a framework which will guide the development and delivery of the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

The Leader introduced this framework report which is evolving.

Members were keen to thank the Chief Executive, all staff and volunteers in helping and supporting the community. They recognised that all have worked extremely hard during the pandemic in helping to keep residents safe and well.

It was agreed that this report was strong, and will ensure a sustained and successful recovery. It showed a holistic approach in linking in with the Corporate Plan.

High Street regeneration was a concern, however the High Street Funding programme is available for high streets district wide. The Folkestone Town Centre Regeneration scheme is at consultation stage at present and maybe the same kind of scheme is needed for Hythe and the Romney Marsh.

The Council's finances and budget impacts were a consideration, Mrs Charlotte Spendley, Director of Corporate Services, assured members that this is a priority with a report being prepared for Cabinet. It may be that there will be a

need to look at deferring projects, a review will also be undertaken on earmarked reserves and the capital programme.

Members also had concerns on staffing levels and asked for assurances that there would not be redundancies. The Leader gave this assurance at this time, along with staff support.

Mr Ewan Green, Director of Place, thanked members for their positive comments. He said this report is a starting point for the recovery phase, will be member-led and that there will further engagement on this in due course.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob  
Seconded by Councillor Douglas Wade and

**RESOLVED:**

**1. To receive and note report C/20/08.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

**10. Customer Access Strategy**

A central part of the Council's transformation programme is the relationship with the customer. The Customer Access Strategy seeks to set out the Council's future approach to that relationship enhancing new technology and the benefits of the digital age whilst also ensuring those most in need are not excluded. This is the draft strategy which sets out this approach and the move to channel shift and will form the basis of how the relationship is in the future.

Councillor Ray Field, Cabinet member and portfolio holder, presented this report and advised members it would be considered by Cabinet in July. The strategy forms part of the Transformation Project in providing improved access to customers, especially with the roll out of 'My Account' system, but not at the expense of residents who are unable to use online technology.

Members thanked Cllr Field for his introduction and felt encouraged that recognition was given to customers who use more traditional services, such as face to face and telephone contact.

Members commented as follows:

- Payment services, Paypal mentioned as an additional way to pay.
- Broadband issues in some parts of the district, especially the Marsh.
- Face to face services on the Romney Marsh. Prior to lockdown resident had weekly access to speak to an officer at New Romney Town Council.
- Elderly residents may not have access or knowledge to use online services which means face to face or telephone contact is paramount



Generally, members agreed most people prefer to use online services. It's convenient, 24 hour service, simpler and ultimately saves the Council money which can then be invested in other services to help people less able to use technology.

A comment was made that the district website can be quite difficult to navigate and there is scope to improve this.

The pandemic has provided a good incentive for better online services and customer access.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob  
Seconded by Councillor Michelle Keutenius and

**RESOLVED:**

**1. Note and consider the report OS/20/03.**

**2. Express the Committee's views so this can be fed back to the portfolio holder and considered prior to being presented to Cabinet for approval.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

**11. Revised Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Licensing Policy**

Report OS/20/02 set out proposed revisions to the Council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire (Taxi) Licensing Policy. The policy was last reviewed in 2012 and whilst not time limited it is good opportunity to refresh the policy. The new policy will be sent for public consultation and then to Planning and Licensing Committee for approval. The purpose of this report was to give the Overview & Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to review the proposed changes and give feedback that can be incorporated in the development of the final policy.

Miss Sarah Pinkstone, Environmental Health and Licensing Senior Specialist, presented this report.

Members raised the following points:

Certificate of Good Conduct – applicants will be required to provide a certificate if they have lived outside the UK within the last ten years, increased from 12 months under the current policy. Although some new drivers may have difficulty in obtaining a certificate, it is important that they are ascertained as fit and proper. The policy does allow for some flexibility on this.

Medical Certificates – drivers in the affected age bracket would be required to supply medical certificates every three years on renewal of their licence. However, if between these medicals they will be obliged to notify the council of any changes in health or medical conditions that may affect their fitness to drive.

CCTV – although this is encouraged ultimately it is the drivers/vehicle owners choice if they choose to install CCTV. There are logistical issues, re costs,

ownership of equipment, data controller and GDPR. However members were keen to point out that CCTV is for the protection of drivers as well as passengers.

Wheelchair access – there would be a need to encourage the purchase of vehicles with wheelchair access but this could be cost prohibitive and discourage new drivers. Information is available to residents showing operators with wheelchair access vehicles on our website. It was suggested that as part of the public consultation disabled user groups could be included.

Sub-contracting – the policy states that a licensed private hire operator may sub-contract bookings to another licensed private hire operator. This arrangement is expressly permitted by legislation. Licence conditions require operators to maintain records of bookings.

Overall members agreed this was a useful update to a good policy.

Proposed by Councillor Rebecca Shoob  
Seconded by Councillor Patricia Rolfe and

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To receive and note report OS/20/02.**
- 2. To consider and provide any feedback on the policy to be included in the consultation exercise and developed into final draft to be presented to the Planning and Licensing Committee for adoption.**

The Chairman sought and received affirmation from all members.

This Report will be made public on 6 July 2020



Report Number

## OS/20/05

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 14 July 2020  
**Status:** Non key decision  
**Responsible Officer:** John Holman – AD Housing  
Andy Blaszkowicz – Director, Housing & Operations  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Godfrey - Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects  
**SUBJECT:** VISION – FOR THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE

**SUMMARY:** This paper outlines the vision for the new Housing Management Service; describing the delivery principles that will provide operational clarity and accountability. The Vision is the long term destination for the Service; the initial work being to ensure the service is built on sound systems, processes and staff on which the culture and values will be shaped and embedded within the council.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report OS/20/05.
2. To consider the Vision along with consultation responses from the Tenant and Leaseholder Liaison Board.

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The housing management service transfers from East Kent Housing to the Council on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020. The Council is fully committed to building a world class housing service where officers work together with tenants and members to deliver the best possible housing outcomes. It is key that the Council has a clearly defined set of strategic principles that will guide the design and implementation of the new service.

## 2. THE VISION

- 2.1 The Vision sets out an efficient, customer centric way of working. Correctly delivered, it will reflect best practice (according to industry standards / House Mark etc.), drive continual improvement and create the conditions in which a truly excellent service will be delivered to FHDC tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.2 The Vision includes the following key principles;
- Tenants will be at the heart of the service.
  - Digital by default with processes in place for the more vulnerable.
  - Services provided by neighbourhood with specialists operating across the estate.
  - Housing management service fully integrated into the Council embracing case management.
  - Real time reporting and clear accountability.
  - New asset management strategy to establish framework for estates management, regeneration and new build, embracing modern methods of construction and the Council's zero carbon agenda.
- 2.3 The full **Vision for the Housing Management Service** is attached at appendix1

## 3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 The Vision document has been sent out to the Tenant and Leaseholder Liaison Board for their consideration. Tenant feedback will be provided to officers at the Tenant and Leaseholder board meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> July. This feedback will be provided via a separate document to members of OSC at this meeting, 14<sup>th</sup> July.
- 3.2 When feedback has been received from both the Tenant and Leaseholder Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the document will be amended as necessary and presented to Cabinet for final approval in September.

#### **4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

4.1 The only perceived risk is set out below.

| <b>Perceived risk</b>  | <b>Seriousness</b> | <b>Likelihood</b> | <b>Preventative action</b>   |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| Tenant and Leaseholder Board not willing to approve document | medium             | low               | Informal and formal consultation process set up to allow plenty of time for meaningful feedback. |

#### **5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

##### **5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NE)**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

##### **5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (CI)**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

##### **5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (AB)**

There are no diversities or equalities implications arising directly from this report

#### **6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

John Holman, Assistant Director, Housing  
[John.holman@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:John.holman@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Andy Blaszkowicz, Director, Housing & Operations  
[andy.blaszkowicz@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:andy.blaszkowicz@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Vision for the Housing Management Service

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Folkestone & Hythe District Council

# **Vision**

for the Housing Management Service

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# Vision for the Housing Management Service

## Introduction

Folkestone & Hythe District Council are in a unique position to create a new Housing Service for its tenants. To some extent the Council has a blank sheet of paper, not restricted by systems, procedures, previous methods of working and ways of communicating as well as staff wanting to play a part in shaping the new service. The new service has the opportunity to become the vanguard of the Council's transformation programme as it is not encumbered with history and being HRA funded it should be able to move swiftly and smoothly to adapt to new ways of working.

This paper outlines the vision for the new Housing Management Service; describing the delivery model that will provide operational clarity and accountability. The Vision is the long term destination for the Service; the initial work being to ensure the service is built on sound systems, processes and staff on which the culture and values will be shaped and embedded within the council.

## The Vision

The vision for the service is based around the following key principles:

1. Tenants will be at the heart of the new service and are our best advocates.
2. Success will be measured by the annual tenant STAR survey (if existing surveys are not up to date then a new survey will be completed in Autumn/Winter 2020).
3. FHDC staff will consider it a stimulating and rewarding place to work and stakeholders find us easy, flexible and professional to work with. (This will be measured by internally managed surveys).
4. Digital efficiency across the service will provide tenants with access to their rent accounts, tenancy sign up, repairs reporting, and details of their home e.g. location of asbestos, SAP levels, future planned maintenance work. Work and visits will be organised around the customer; we will be sufficiently confident to share our performances on line and in real time, e.g. Trip Advisor style. Invoices will be electronic, paper confined to history whilst systems will be put in place for customers who cannot interact digitally. Staff will operate remotely with full access to the housing systems requiring a minimal office footprint.
5. The Service will integrate with the wider Council from day 1 fully embracing the case management approach to service delivery whilst allowing specialists to deliver their expert areas of housing, i.e. estate & building management distinct but complementary to tenant management.
6. Neighbourhood management will be the backbone of the Service with Housing Officers and Area Surveyors being responsible for discrete geographical areas of the housing stock. Neighbourhoods will be determined by workload (rather than number of homes), and are likely to change with time and activity e.g. an area may

have significant repair demand that will reduce after a planned maintenance programme has been completed. Flexibility across the resources in neighbourhood management will be key to providing resilience in the service.

7. The specialist functions will operate across the housing stock and work closely with the neighbourhood team.
8. A new Asset Management Strategy will be designed alongside an HRA Acquisition and Development Strategy. These two documents will provide the framework to enable us to manage and improve our existing stock and develop our new build programme. New homes will be site specific and aspire to be constructed to carbon neutral standards, they will embrace new methods of construction and digitisation, supporting future technology and the self-service vision for the Service for tenants and equipment.
9. The Service will be reliant on contractors providing services (and the service will therefore include staff skilled in procurement and contract management). As contracts expire all methods of service delivery will be explored, e.g. directly employing, the use of contractors, or a mix of both to improve service delivery through critical areas. Where contracts are let scoring will be weighted in favour of local SME's and supply chains and companies that provide local apprenticeships, trainees and other employment opportunities.

#### **How the Vision will be achieved**

10. With a go live date for the Housing Management Service of 1 October 2020 focus will be on creating the initial operating structure, appointing staff (or interims) with the right attitude that will help deliver the service whilst ensuring clarity of roles and embedding the performance management framework from the start.
11. The heavy lifting of embedding the new structure, processes and systems will be completed over the next 2 years whilst the culture will emanate from the existing Council during service integration and beyond. The service will evolve as strategies are implemented and service areas become more efficient driving continual improvement.
12. New ways of working will not be limited to transactional services and will extend to all areas, such as the selection of products and materials used in the housing stock that will enable self-diagnosis and reporting of faults providing just in time solutions to be delivered over break down and fix arrangements.
13. Delivering a people centred business, such as Housing, with the ongoing threat of Corona Virus has necessitated new ways of working. Where appropriate these ways of working will be embedded and at the same time further approaches to work will be needed to ensure safe practices for tenants, contractors and staff.
14. This vision will not be delivered until the housing service is fully integrated throughout the Council. Methods of working, training, governance, performance

management etc. are the foundation on which the housing service will be constructed.

15. The vision sets out an efficient, customer centric way of working. Correctly delivered, it will reflect best practice (according to industry standards / House Mark etc.), drive continual improvement and create the conditions in which a truly excellent service will be delivered to FHDC tenants and leaseholders.

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This Report will be made  
public on 6 July 2020

Report Number **OS/20/06**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 14 July 2019  
**Status:** Key Decision  
**Responsible Officer:** Andy Blaszkowicz, Director- Housing and Operations  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor David Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Housing, Transport and Special Projects & Councillor Jennifer Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Communities

**SUBJECT:** Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25

**SUMMARY:**

This report sets out details of the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the district for the period 2020/25. It is proposed the draft strategy should be made available for an eight week consultation period.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) The Homelessness prevention Strategy is the Council's key tool for planning how the Council and its partners intend to respond to homelessness and related issues in the district.
- b) The Homelessness Act 2002, requires all local housing authorities to produce an effective homelessness strategy for their area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. To receive and note report OS/20/06.
- 2. Overview and Scrutiny are invited to comment on the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002, requires local authorities to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness and related provision in their area.
- 1.2 The draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy for this district is set out in Appendix 1 of this report. Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on this draft document. The document builds on past successes and existing partnerships across the district and with neighbouring authorities.
- 1.3 Officers have completed a detailed review of homelessness and related provision in the district, which forms the evidence base for the draft strategy. The review is set out in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 1.4 The proposed three key aims of the draft strategy are set out in section 7 of the draft strategy and are as follows:
  - To end Rough Sleeping
  - Early Intervention, Prevention & Support services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
  - Continued work to maximise access to affordable & suitable accommodation
- 1.5 The Strategy incorporates the development of new initiatives, such as a Housing First Project and Community-Led Housing Schemes as innovative ways to provide housing that incorporates different levels of support needed by the residents. It also includes a requirement to assess the need for a social enterprise to help employment prospects (of those who experience homelessness, particularly rough sleepers); and the need to implement a service specifically to assist individuals being discharged from other services (youth care provision, hospitals & prisons) to prevent them from becoming street homeless.
- 1.6 The draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025 sets out an action plan of how the Council proposes to work with its partners to achieve its priorities and monitor progress.

## **2. The Proposed Way Forward**

- 2.1 It proposed that the draft strategy be made available for an eight week consultation period. Following this, the document will be presented to Cabinet, along with a summary of the consultation feedback for final approval.

## **3. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS**

- 3.1 **Legal (NE)** – The Homelessness Act 2002 and parts 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996, place a variety of obligations on the Council towards homeless people. These include, homelessness prevention, housing advice, the provision of temporary accommodation and the provision of permanent accommodation for homeless people

who are deemed to be owed a full duty under the legislation. These duties were further enhanced in 2018 through the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. S1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002, requires a Local Authority to review homelessness in its area and to produce a strategy under s1(3). Section 1(4) requires that the strategy is reviewed and updated every 5 years.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25 describes how the Council will comply with its statutory duties. Failure to produce an up-to-date strategy will leave the Council open to legal challenge”.

**3.2 Finance (LH)** – There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

**3.3 Equality (AH)** – No equality or diversity issues have been identified during the preparation of the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy. A further Equalities Impact assessment review will be completed following the proposed public consultation period.

#### **4. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officers prior to the meeting:

Adrian Hammond  
Lead Housing Specialist  
[adrian.hammond@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:adrian.hammond@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01303 853392

Kimba Layton  
Housing Strategy and Initiatives Officer  
[Kimba.layton@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:Kimba.layton@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01303 853283

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

#### **Appendices**

1. Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020/25
2. Homelessness Prevention Strategy Review.

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# **Folkestone & Hythe District Council**

## **Homelessness Prevention Strategy**

**2020-2025**

## HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2020-2025

### 1. Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their district every 5 years and to publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings of the review. The legislation emphasises the importance of working strategically with social services and other statutory, voluntary and private sector partners in order to tackle homelessness more effectively. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 states that the strategy must set out the local authority's plans for the prevention of homelessness, and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support are, or will be, available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Throughout each person's life there are situations that could combine to lead to homelessness for a variety of reasons. Loss of employment, financial issues, relationship breakdowns, domestic abuse, harassment, bereavement are just some of the reasons people may find themselves with nowhere reasonable and secure to live. Whilst rough sleeping is the most extreme situation, homelessness is more than this. Individuals and families may find themselves staying with friends or family, or "sofa-surfing" with people they barely know, moving from one place to the next night after night with no solution to their housing problem in sight. The impact of homelessness can be far reaching and also affect the local community, impressions of community safety, appearance of town centres, confidence of local businesses and the perception of visitors.

It is important to continue to work closely with partners and agencies, in the statutory and community sectors, but to also involve local people in exploring and developing housing solutions for all those in need of assistance. Evidence suggests that the longer people are homeless the more complex their support needs become and the harder it can become to get their lives back on track. This is why Folkestone & Hythe District Council's key priority is to prevent homelessness occurring wherever possible.

## 2. Key Facts & Figures

### HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness approaches have increased by 25% since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2019 to the 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019:

- 1427 households approached the Council for housing assistance:
  - 498 of these households were prevented from becoming homeless through initial advice or a Personal Housing Plan and,
  - The Council relieved the homelessness of another 263 households.
- 60% of the 1427 approaches were from single person households:
  - Of the 60% of single person households approaching 33% were women, and 48% were aged 35 years or under.
- The number of young people aged 16-18 years approaching the Council for housing assistance increased by 55% on the previous years figures in 2019.

There has been a significant decrease in the use of temporary accommodation. Since 2017 the Council has reduced the use of temporary accommodation by 71%.

Almost 50% of all households approaching the Council for housing assistance have been issued with a Section 21 Notice to leave their private rented sector properties by the landlord; this reflects the same situation in the private rented sector nationally.

### HOUSING

- There are approximately 5300 units of social housing in the Folkestone & Hythe District; with housing associations providing approximately 1900 of this total.
- On average there are 1250 households on the housing list for social housing.
- The average wait for a 2 bedroom social housing property through the housing list is 356 days and the longest wait for this size property is 2 years.
- Since 2014 the Council & partners have created 351 new affordable homes.
- 122 empty homes were brought back into use between 2018/19 & 2019/20.
- The Council is committed to delivering an additional 300 Council homes for rent and shared ownership purchase in the period 2015/16 to 2025/26. As at 31/3/20, the Council has delivered an additional 100 homes with a further 70 homes due to start on site or be acquired during 2020/21.
- The Council has also committed to delivering a further 1000 Council homes for rent and shared ownership purchase in the period 2025 to 2035.

### 3. Summary of the Homelessness Review findings

#### HEADLINE HOMELESSNESS REVIEW FINDINGS

The full Homelessness Review and findings are contained in Appendix 1 of this strategy.

- Homelessness is a growing national issue and the 25% increase in approaches for housing assistance to the Council since 2017 is just under the overall national increase reported to date of 27.5%.
- Private rental prices increased by 1.5% in England in the 12 months to January 2020.
- The April 2020 uplift in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates has reduced the difference in Folkestone between the Average Mean Private Rent per month and the LHA Rates from 31% to 11%. The biggest difference is between the Average Mean Private Rent per month for 4 to 5 bed properties at £1215.00 and the LHA for this size property at £899.99pcm.
- Welfare Reform and rising rents continue to make all but a small percentage of private rented properties unaffordable for most low income households in the district.
- Almost 50% of households approaching the Council for housing assistance are being evicted from private rented sector properties; and almost half of these evictions are “No Fault Evictions”.
- The extra funding received from the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to end rough sleeping has already helped the Council implement services that have, in the first year of funding, reduced the number of individuals identified as sleeping rough in the district. The Council also funds an outreach service for people who are rough sleeping, together with a Prevention Plus service, focused upon support to prevent homelessness before it occurs.
- Further funding from the MHCLG has been secured for 2020/2021.

For further statistical information relating to homelessness within the district and the FHDC Housing Options Services see Appendix 1, the FHDC Homelessness Review 2020.

#### 4. Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 placed new legal duties on councils to ensure that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness has access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

- If an applicant is threatened with homelessness, the council must take reasonable steps to help them avoid becoming homeless. This is known as 'The Prevention Duty' and once triggered will continue for up to 56 days.
- If an applicant is homeless, the council must take reasonable steps to help all homeless eligible applicants to secure accommodation for at least six months. This is known as 'The Relief Duty' and once triggered will continue for 56 days.
- This is the first homelessness strategy to be informed by the new ways of working outlined in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and measured by the new method of collecting Statutory Homelessness statistics (H-CLIC – see Section 2.11 of the FHDC Homelessness Review 2020 in Appendix 1 of this Strategy).
- The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018, provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), advises local authorities on how they should exercise their homelessness functions in accordance with the HRA.

**Note:** For further details about the HRA see Section 2.7 of the FHDC Homelessness Review 2020 in Appendix 1 of this Strategy.

#### 5. Equality Act

Under the Equality Act 2010, public bodies such as FHDC must have due regard of the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Homelessness, unsuitable and insecure housing, have adverse effects on the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Housing inequality also impacts on other factors such as income, education, health and wellbeing and life experiences. Folkestone & Hythe District Council has a strong commitment to promoting equality and tackling disadvantage.

## 6. COVID-19

Since March 2020, the Covid 19 Emergency has placed considerable pressure on local homelessness services provided by the Council and its partners. In line with guidance from the MHCLG, the Council has provided emergency accommodation for people sleeping rough in the district and others made homeless following eviction by their families, friends and employers, due to the pandemic. Going forward we are working to find long-term housing solutions for the people affected and also planning to ensure the Council is able to effectively respond to any increase in homelessness as the emergency restrictions (including restrictions on evictions) are removed.

## 7. Our Strategic Priorities

### End Rough Sleeping

- Further develop Outreach Services & the support work begun by the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) & Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) funding first provided by the MHCLG in 2019.
- Continue to develop an early intervention support service for those with no accommodation to go to, such as care leavers, people leaving prison & hospitals to reduce the number of new rough sleepers.
- Continue to work with partners & local agencies to develop the holistic approach to supporting rough sleepers in relation to mental health, social care & substance misuse.
- Work with partners and agencies to increase the range of housing solutions & support available to rough sleepers, including development of a Housing First Project.

### Early Intervention, Prevention & Support

- To work closely with partners & agencies to improve identification of households at a very early stage, who are experiencing issues that could lead to homelessness, to ensure prevention work is targeted.
- Focus on tenancy sustainment, wherever possible, ensuring advice & information about homelessness & housing issues, welfare reform, local and national support services are up-to-date, relevant and accessible.
- Continue to seek and maximise new funding opportunities for prevention initiatives, including supporting funding submissions by local agencies.
- In partnership with local agencies, homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, explore the feasibility of developing a social enterprise to increase training & re-skilling opportunities, and employment prospects for homeless/threatened with homelessness people.

### Maximise Access to Affordable & Suitable Accommodation

- Continue to develop and grow Folkestone & Hythe's Property Solutions Service, engaging with and supporting private rented sector landlords.
- Actively seek innovative opportunities to maximise homes in the district with a range of accommodation options to meet the diverse needs of our residents, such as supporting Community-led Housing projects.
- Increase the supply of social or other affordable housing, including building more council owned properties, informed by research and evidence on the affordability of housing for our residents.

**Priority 1 - End Rough Sleeping Action Plan**

| WHAT WE WILL BE DOING   | HOW WE WILL DO IT   | HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS  |
|---|---|--|
| Further develop Outreach Services & the support work begun by the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) funding first provided by the MHCLG in 2019.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the second instalment of RSI funding for 2020/21 (awarded jointly to FHDC &amp; DDC by the MHCLG) to continue &amp; enhance the rough sleeper services currently being delivered by agencies via a contract.</li> <li>Continue to submit funding applications to MHCLG &amp; other relevant funders as appropriate to enhance services.</li> <li>Continue facilitating multi-agency meetings to encourage joint working, help services identify the most vulnerable, and prevent doubling up of assistance.</li> <li>Deliver the Council's homelessness recovery plan as part of our response to the COVID-19 Emergency. Our plan will be delivered in line with guidance set out by the MHCLG.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous reduction in numbers of individuals sleeping rough.</li> <li>Reduction in number of people becoming entrenched rough sleepers (e.g. they have been seen sleeping rough for 31 nights or more in a 3 month period).</li> <li>Evidence of timely and proactive adaption of rough sleeper services to meet changing needs.</li> <li>Rough sleepers placed in temporary accommodation during COVID-19 are supported into long-term, safe accommodation.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; voluntary sector partners</b></p> |
| Develop early an intervention support service for those with no accommodation to go to, such as care leavers, people leaving prison & hospitals to reduce the number of new rough sleepers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain the direct lines of communication with local Prisons Discharge Teams, Probation Services, 18+ Care Teams &amp; Hospital Discharge Teams.</li> <li>Complete a feasibility study to assess the need for dedicated FHDC Hospital, Prison &amp; Care Homeless Discharge Navigator.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the number of people being discharged from care, health &amp; detention services with "no fixed abode" (NFA) to go to.</li> <li>A drop in the number of individuals identified as new to rough sleeping</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; other statutory partners</b></p>  |
| Continue to work with partners & local agencies to develop the holistic approach to supporting rough sleepers in relation to mental health, social services care & substance misuse.        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share good practice through the FHDC Homelessness Forum, the FHDC Rough Sleeper Forum, Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG) and Kent wide partnerships.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FHDC Homelessness Forum to meet quarterly and to include representation from all key partners, with minutes taken to track actions &amp; progress.</li> <li>Rough sleepers' feedback about whether services are being more flexible, making access easier, with</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resume &amp; adapt the Multi-Agency Rough Sleeper Service (MARRS) to identify individuals needing one-to-one support from treatment &amp; support services, in the form of a bespoke wrap-around provision.</li> <li>• Continue to implement case conference arrangements to provide individual homeless solutions for the most vulnerable.</li> <li>• To consider the impact of drug and alcohol misuse in relation to homelessness.</li> <li>• Continue to fund the dedicated Mental Health Outreach Worker post through the RSI.</li> </ul> | <p>adjustments taking into account that the difficulties of sleeping rough make it hard to keep all appointments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved access &amp; sustained engagement with treatment services, particularly mental health services, by rough sleepers.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; statutory and voluntary partners</b></p> |
| Work with partners and agencies to increase the range of housing solutions & support available to rough sleepers, including development of a Housing First Project. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support the Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter. Assist the partnership to review the service delivered.</li> <li>• Develop the first units in the district of Housing First (see page 9 for details) accommodation in partnership with local agencies.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the set-up of at least 2 units of Housing First accommodation by 2025.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; statutory and voluntary partners</b></p>   |

### **Ending Rough Sleeping**

People sleeping rough remain one of the most vulnerable groups in society. The number of people recorded as sleeping rough during the last annual Folkestone & Hythe District Rough Sleeper Count in November 2019 was 10, which was a 55% reduction from the number identified the previous year. Whilst the number of people rough sleeping can vary considerably throughout the year, with some rough sleeper's also spending time sofa-surfing, this result is encouraging and demonstrates that the addition rough sleeper services provided through the MHCLG Funding are having a positive effect. The Council will ensure that these services are developed and adapted to keep it relevant to the changing numbers of rough sleepers and their ongoing need for support once housed.

### **The 'Housing First' Approach**

Housing First is a housing and support approach which:

- Gives people who have experienced homelessness, chronic health and social care needs a stable home to rebuild their lives.
- Provides intensive, person-centred, holistic support that is open-ended.
- Places no conditions on individuals; although, they should have a desire to have a tenancy for the approach to be successful.

The Housing First approach was first developed in America in 1992 and has since been widely adopted across the USA, Canada, Denmark, Finland and France, with widespread success. Since 2010 a growing number of local areas in England have established Housing First services to meet an identified need<sup>1</sup>. Whilst the outcomes from established Housing First projects are very positive, it can be challenging to set up this kind of project in the current housing market. Additionally, the support provided to individuals must be intensive for the project to be successful. This support needs substantial funding and is more costly up front but more positive and economical for all involved in the long-run; less health issues for the individual, less ambulance call outs, less visits to the doctor, less police involvement, less substance misuse in town centres, less crime (shoplifting for example), and a significant reduction in the cost of repeatedly housing individuals only for them to be evicted again in the future (for rent arrears and/or anti-social behaviour for example). FHDC is committed to continuing to work with local partners to explore ways a Housing First project can be set up and funded within the district.

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<sup>1</sup> Homeless Link Website <https://hfe.homeless.org.uk/about-housing-first>

## Priority 2 Early Intervention, Prevention & Support Action Plan

| WHAT WE WILL BE DOING   | HOW WE WILL DO IT   | HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS  |
|---|---|--|
| To work closely with partners & agencies to improve identification of households at a very early stage, who are experiencing issues that could lead to homelessness, to ensure prevention work is targeted.     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close work with local partners &amp; services to prevent homelessness amongst vulnerable households.</li> <li>Explore ways of gathering multi-agency intelligence, internal &amp; external, to identify households who are at risk of become threatened with homelessness in the future.</li> <li>Utilise the Kent &amp; Medway Information Sharing Agreement, which is in line with the GDPR<sup>2</sup> and the DPA<sup>3</sup> to identify vulnerable households for the Housing Options Team to offer early intervention too.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased early identification of vulnerable and a reduction in homelessness approaches to the Council.</li> <li>Increased number of successful homelessness preventions completed, which include assisting households to remain in their current accommodation, if it is suitable and affordable or if not to move to appropriate accommodation before eviction takes place.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; statutory and voluntary partners</b></p>   |
| Focus on tenancy sustainment, wherever possible, ensuring advice & information about homelessness & housing issues, welfare reform, local and national support services are up-to-date, relevant and accessible | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all housing &amp; homelessness related information contained in factsheets, handouts &amp; on the Council's website, which assist people to resolve their own housing issues, are up-to-date at all times and are accessible for households with &amp; without IT; and work to increase community awareness of homelessness issues.</li> <li>Using evidence &amp; good practice guidance to develop PHP's<sup>4</sup> that are person centred, suit each household's capabilities &amp; needs, reflect FHDC's Housing Options service provision &amp; local support service delivery, to ensure they are meaningful &amp; helpful to the districts households.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the amount of visits to homelessness advice webpages of the Council's website, &amp; the number of times Housing Factsheets are downloaded.</li> <li>Monitor the number of hardcopies of Housing Factsheets &amp; advice leaflets collected from the Civic Centre and other community agencies, such as the libraries (incl. mobile library).</li> <li>That the PHP template has evolved from the standard template to a local template that reflects the district's housing issues, &amp; the housing options &amp; homelessness service provision in the area.</li> </ul> |

<sup>2</sup> General Data Protection Regulation

<sup>3</sup> UK Data Protection Act 2018

<sup>4</sup> Personal Housing Plans

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   |  | <b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; statutory and voluntary partners</b>   |
| Continue to seek and maximise new funding opportunities for prevention initiatives, including supporting funding submissions by local agencies.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify funding options in addition to government provision, &amp; strengthen applications by submitting joint application with partners to promote combined multi-agency working.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased funding received and development of more multi-agency service provision for homeless &amp; threatened with homelessness households.</li> </ul> <b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; voluntary sector partners</b>  |
| In partnership with local agencies, homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, explore the feasibility of developing a social enterprise to increase training & re-skilling opportunities, and employment prospects for homeless/threatened with homelessness people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up a working group made up of the Council, local businesses, education establishments &amp; homelessness support services to look into setting up a social enterprise business that can provide training &amp; employment opportunities to services users of homelessness agencies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful creation of a social enterprise scheme that focuses on up-skilling/re-skilling of homeless or threatened with homelessness households, which can evidence that the experience gained leads to improved long-term employment prospects.</li> </ul> <b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; statutory and voluntary partners</b> |

### **Early Intervention, Prevention & Support**

Given the challenges around increasing homelessness it is critical that homeless prevention continues to be at the centre of everything the Council does. A person-centred housing and support solution approach will be adopted, to ensure effective advice and information is available at every stage to maximise the positive outcomes for those who are, or may face, homelessness. In 2019 the Council prevented 35% of all households that approached for assistance that year from becoming homeless. Prevention is the best way to tackle homelessness; stopping it happening in the first place is both cost effective and the best outcome for the people affected. Moving forward the Council will also focus on, and address the needs of, people falling into homelessness when they are discharged from the care system, hospitals and prisons.

### **Social Enterprise Scheme**

Social enterprise schemes are defined as businesses with social objectives, whose profits are reinvested into the business or the community, to create positive social change. There are many social enterprises projects in communities and high streets around the UK, from coffee shops, restaurants, catering companies, to pubs and cinemas, which involve people who are, or have been, homeless, ex-offenders or have issues with alcohol and/or substance misuse. The Folkestone & Hythe District has some very creative and successful business entrepreneurs, great further education establishments, as well as committed and experienced homeless support agencies. The Council plans to bring people from these different fields together, with some people who are, or have, experienced homelessness, to explore the potential for creating a social enterprise project in the area. The project would be for the benefit of those with housing issues that have been unemployed for long periods of time and need opportunities to build up confidence and gain further skills to broaden their employment prospects and stabilise their lives in order to maintain their accommodation.

**Priority 3 - Maximise Access to Affordable & Suitable Accommodation Action Plan**

| WHAT WE WILL BE DOING   | HOW WE WILL DO IT  | HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS  |
|---|--|--|
| Continue to develop and grow Folkestone & Hythe's Property Solutions Service (PPS), engaging with and supporting private rented sector landlords.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to have one main point of contact for PRS<sup>5</sup> landlords and a yearly landlord event due to the positive impact this has had on the Council's relationship with the PRS.</li> <li>Ensure the PPS Service is up to date on landlord &amp; tenant law at all times.</li> <li>Develop webpage/s on the Council's website to provide landlords with useful information, legislation updates, &amp; signposting for tenants.</li> <li>Set up a Tenancy Sustainment Course for households housed through the PPS Scheme; to ensure they can maintain their tenancy &amp; give landlords more confidence.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of landlords that join the scheme continue to increase.</li> <li>Monitor the number of tenancies secured through the PPS Scheme that are renewed, or continue, when the first tenancy issued to a household comes to an end.</li> <li>Development of webpage/s useful to local landlords. Monitor the number of landlords that register to receive updates.</li> <li>Successful set-up of an in-house Tenancy Sustainment Course.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC</b></p> |
| Actively seek innovative opportunities to maximise homes in the district with a range of accommodation options to meet the diverse needs of our residents, such as supporting Community-Led Housing (CLH) projects. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to bring empty homes back into use. The Council is committed to bringing at least 70 long-term empty homes back into use each year from 2018 to 2023.</li> <li>Launch the CLH Grant Scheme, complete procedures for the scheme, promote the scheme &amp; develop webpages on the Council's website.</li> <li>Support any CLH groups within the district to progress their project.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to meet the Empty Homes targets set in the Healthier Housing Strategy</li> <li>Successful promotion of the Council's CLH Grant Scheme and Support Programme.</li> <li>That there is at least one CLH project progressing to site and/or building stage.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; housing association partners</b></p>  |

<sup>5</sup> Private Rented Sector

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|--|---|--|
| <p>Increase the supply of social or other affordable housing, including building more council owned properties, informed by research and evidence on the affordability of housing for our residents.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council is committed to continuing to building affordable homes. In addition to the targets set out in the Healthier Housing Strategy the Council has committed to delivering a further 1000 Council homes for rent &amp; shared ownership between 2025 &amp; 2035.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the number of new affordable homes created against set targets.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Responsibility:</u> FHDC &amp; housing association partners</b></p> |
|--|---|--|

### **Maximise Access to Affordable & Suitable Accommodation**

Between 2014 and 2019 the Council and its partners created 351 new affordable homes within the district and 332 empty homes were brought back into use. The private rented sector has continued to grow, and it is more important than ever that low income households, and those experiencing housing issues, are able to access affordable accommodation. The Property Solutions Service was launched in 2018 and is growing steadily, the second year saw a 35% increase in properties obtained through the scheme on the previous year. The Council continues to respond to the current pressures in the housing market by working with housing providers to enable the provision of new affordable accommodation for those that are unable to access market housing.

### **Community-Led Housing**

Community-Led housing (CLH) is a growing movement where local people can take action to address their own and the local communities housing need. It allows communities to have more of say over what they want to build and where they want to build it, and it then continues to be controlled and in some cases owned by a community-led organisation or enterprise. FHDC received a grant from the MHCLG intended to provide seed funding to local CLH and cohousing projects whose aim is to deliver a community housing scheme. The grant makes funding available for groups in the first stages of coming together to enable them to pay for training, research, visits to other successful projects, and costs related to becoming a formalised group. Slightly larger amounts of funding are also available for groups that are ready to progress to the next stage when they have identified a possible site for their project. This is to help with the cost of developing a business case, feasibility and design work, paying for professional input, planning applications, and business planning and project management in the lead up to applications for capital funding from Home England.

Community led housing offers something for everyone:

- Properties must be affordable for low income households
- Projects can be aimed at specific groups of people; for example they can be for older people living in the private rented sector struggling with rent costs in retirement or people with support needs, or a more mixed community.

- Properties can be new built homes or purchase & refurbishment of an existing building.
- Because the project is led by the community, for the community, the end result is often a very well established community.
- This type of housing often deals with issues of isolation, anti-social behaviour, unemployment & inactivity.
- The properties created use space imaginatively and are environmentally friendly.

There are many inspired community-led housing projects around the country. These projects do take time & commitment, however, the Council is committed to supporting any community group who would like to develop this type of housing.

## **8. How the Council's Housing Options and Homelessness Services are Funded**

The statutory housing and homelessness services that the Housing Options Team deliver are mainly funded through the allocation of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) and Homelessness Reduction Grant (HRG) provided by the MHCLG to each local housing authority. The service also receives funding through the Council's General Fund. In addition to this funding FHDC's has submitted successful yearly joint bids with Dover District Council to the MHCLG's Rough Sleeper Initiative Fund for the last two years, and invested this funding directly into services to help individuals currently rough sleeping and to prevent others from becoming homeless and sleeping rough on the streets.

## **9. Governance and Delivery of the Strategy**

The objectives in this Strategy will be delivered through our action plan, which identifies the main task needed to tackle and prevent homelessness over the next five years. The actions will be delivered by the Council and our multi-agency partners. We will closely monitor our performance and the outcomes of this key Strategy will be reported on an ongoing basis to members and our partner agencies.

The Council is also required to report ongoing performance to the MHCLG. Going forward the MHCLG has indicated it intends to link future grant funding to a new Assurance Framework to ensure that all grant funded initiatives are fully outcome focused.



# **Folkestone & Hythe District Council**

## **Homelessness Review 2019**

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|  | Gender Ratio Single Homeless People Approaches 1st Jan 2019 - 31st Dec 2019                                 |  |
|  | Gender breakdown of FHDC Annual Street Count Figures 2016 – 2019  |  |
|  | Numbers of Rough Sleepers - MHCLG Statistics 2010 - 2018  |  |
|  | Number of Homelessness Approaches to FHDC from Young People   |  |
|  | New Affordable Homes delivered between April 2014 & March 2019  |  |

# HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose of Review

The purpose of this review is to set out relevant national and local information relating to homelessness and service provision within the district. It is also to provide an overview of the current circumstances, identify any service gaps and the priorities for the Folkestone & Hythe District Council (FHDC) Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025.

### 1.2. Homelessness

Homelessness as a term refers to a range of different people and experiences. In law, it means that a person or household does not have accommodation that is:

- Available for them to occupy
- That they have a legal right to occupy, and
- That it is reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

This includes families, people who sleep rough, people living in hostels, shelters and domestic abuse refuges, and hidden homeless households who rely on friends or family for accommodation in unreasonable circumstances. Local housing authorities are legally obliged under the Housing Act 1996 to house many homeless people/households as a result of their needs, for example those who are pregnant or already have children in their household, and those who are vulnerable as a result of their health<sup>6</sup> (Section 2.4 & 4.3).

## 2. Legal Context

### 2.1. Requirement for Review & Strategy

Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on a review of homelessness and related provision in their district. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has also said that all local housing authorities must develop new homelessness strategies to take into account the changes introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (Section 2.7).

This review has sought to set out the national context in relation to homelessness, the current circumstances within the Folkestone & Hythe District and assess the challenges ahead. The findings of the review will help us to identify the key priorities going forward to enable FHDC to develop a relevant and robust Homelessness Prevention Strategy, which will be a fundamental part of the FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> MHCLG Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018, page 13, Section 22.

<sup>7</sup> Folkestone & Hythe Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023

## **2.2. Homelessness Legislation**

The services that local housing authorities have a duty to provide, to help people who are threatened with homelessness, or already homeless, are set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

Additionally, the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 (Section 2.7), which came into effect on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018, introduced further duties that fundamentally changed the way in which local housing authorities respond to homelessness in their area; it is the biggest change in homelessness legislation since 1977. It not only imposes a duty to prevent and relieve homelessness, but it also provides opportunities for culture and systems change<sup>8</sup>.

**The following definitions of Homelessness are used by Local Housing Authorities under the above legislation:**

## **2.3. Statutory Homelessness**

Statutory homelessness refers to those people who have made a homeless application to their local housing authority (Council) and have met the necessary criteria set out in legislation to be accepted as eligible (Section 2.10) for assistance (according to immigration status), and homeless or threatened with homelessness.

## **2.4. Homelessness or Threatened with Homelessness**

When assessing whether a household is homelessness or threatened with homelessness a Council must look at their particular circumstances and the prevailing housing conditions within the district. The following describe situations in which a household might not be deemed as homeless or threatened with homelessness:

- Being overcrowding by one bedroom is unlikely to be deemed as unsuitable housing and/or threatened with homelessness. Overcrowding is only an issue if it is severe and causing a Category 1 Hazard<sup>i</sup>.
- Disrepair would not necessarily be deemed as unsuitable housing & threatened with homelessness. The nature of the disrepair would need to be assessed and involve the Council's Private Sector Housing Team working with the landlord.
- If a household has an invalid Section 21 from a landlord they will be deemed as not threatened with homelessness, and be provided with advice & information.
- A young person not wanting to live at home because they do not wish to abide by realistic and practical rules set by parents/relatives, providing reasonable accommodation, would be assessed as not homeless and able to return home.

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<sup>8</sup> Implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act, Homeless Link 2018 <https://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Implementing%20the%20Homelessness%20Reduction%20Act.pdf>

- If a household has an available property that is reasonable and available (or could be reasonably expected to be available) to occupy anywhere in the world.
- A person finding it difficult to live in their home because of their health and mobility would be assessed for adaptations to their property in the first instance (even in private rented with the landlords permission) and not always be deemed as living in unsuitable accommodation.

## **2.5. Priority Need Households**

The following fall into the groups of households that a Council must provide temporary accommodation to if it has reason to believe they are homeless<sup>9</sup>:

- Has dependent children living with them
- Is a pregnant woman or a person, with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside,
- Is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as fire, flood or other disaster,
- 16 or 17 year old who are not already under the care of Social Services<sup>ii</sup>
- Those under the age of 21 who were in care between the ages of 16 and 18, but who have left care and are not relevant children
- Individuals and households who meet the criteria to be classed as vulnerable (for example because of old age, physical and learning disabilities, mental health problems, fleeing domestic abuse or violence, time spent in care, prison or the armed forces – depending on all of their circumstances).

## **2.6. Non Priority Need Households**

These are generally households who are not assessed as being in priority need. People who fall into this group will be offered housing advice and support, however, Council's do not have a duty to provide these households with temporary accommodation.

## **2.7. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017**

The act ensures households can access support from local housing authorities earlier and for longer than they previously could. The aim of the act is to prevent homelessness, or if not to resolve housing issues another way before the Council has to decide whether main housing duty (Section 2.9) is owed. The act will have a significant influence on the priorities agreed within the new strategy. It introduced the following additional duties for local housing authorities:

### **Advisory Duty**

Under the HRA, everyone in a local housing authority's district should be able to access free initial advice and information<sup>iii</sup>, regardless of whether they are homeless/threatened with homelessness, eligible, in priority need or intentionally homeless. Services providing advice and information must be designed to meet the needs of particular groups, for example care leavers, people "suffering with a mental illness or impairment" and groups identified as being at particular risk of homelessness.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 189 Housing Act 1996

## Personal Housing Plans (PHP's)

The HRA states that local housing authorities will conduct an assessment with all eligible applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and develop a personalised housing plan (PHP) with them. The assessment should include the circumstances that caused them to become homeless or threatened with homelessness, what housing they need, and whether they need support.

The assessment of an applicant's support needs should be holistic and comprehensive. Some applicants can be reluctant to disclose their needs, and Housing Options Officers should have sufficient skills and training to conduct assessments. The PHP must set out the steps the individual and the local housing authority must take to enable the individual to remain in or find accommodation.

## The Prevention Duty

This duty means that every eligible (Section 2.10) household threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days, that approaches a Council, must be assessed and offered support and a PHP (regardless of whether they have a local connection, are in priority need or are intentionally homeless). If a household has been served with a valid section 21 notice they are automatically owed the prevention duty.

## The Relief Duty

This duty states that where a Council is unable to prevent homelessness, or an eligible household (Section 2.10) is already homeless when they contact the Council a Relief Duty will be owed for 56 days. The Relief Duty is activated as soon as a household becomes homeless. At this stage a household without a local connection can be referred to a Council where a connection exists. The Council may also need to offer temporary accommodation at this stage.

During the Relief Duty the Council will also investigate how the household became homeless and if it was the result of a deliberate act (Section 0). If the investigation does not end the duty to assist, and homelessness is not relieved within the 56 days, the Relief Duty can be extended. If the Council is still unable to relieve homelessness then an assessment is made under the Housing Act 1996 to decide whether the full homelessness duty is owed (Section 2.9).

## Duty to Refer

From 1st October 2018 the HRA required certain public bodies to refer people who they think may be homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to the local housing authority. The agencies subject to the new duty are:

**Table A. Statutory Agencies that have a Duty to Refer homeless households**

|                             |                       |                                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Youth Offender Teams        | Prisons               | Hospitals                      |
| Youth Offender Institutions | Probation Services    | Statutory Medical Departments  |
| Secure Training Centres     | Job Centre Plus       | Urgent Treatment Centres       |
| Secure Colleges             | Social Services Teams | Secretary of State for Defence |



## **2.8. Intentional Homelessness**

If a household knowingly undertakes an act that is likely to result in homelessness then following a full investigation of the circumstances under the Housing Act 1996 an intentionally homelessness decision can be made; ending the duty to provide housing assistance. This decision can be made at any time during the Prevention or Relief Duties although the household will continue to be owed these duties and in most instances will benefit from a period of temporary accommodation for 56 days, while seeking to make alternative rehousing arrangements.

If a household deemed to be intentionally homeless has not secured alternative suitable accommodation when the 56 days of the Relief Duty has ended then any temporary accommodation provided by the Council can be withdrawn and the household referred to other statutory agencies for assistance.

## **2.9. Main Housing Duty**

The HRA puts the household experiencing homelessness at the centre of homelessness services by encouraging them to seek a solution to their situation. The act lengthens the time Council works with households, with the emphasis on preventing homelessness, but if that is not possible to relieve homelessness.

These changes mean that very few households who are homeless, eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless will reach the end of the 56 days of both the Prevention and Relief Duties still homeless or threatened with homelessness. This is why local housing authorities have seen a dramatic drop in the number of statutory decisions to accept a Main Housing Duty to households, together with an increase in the number of homeless resolutions.

## **2.10. Eligibility**

From April 2018, local housing authorities must make sure that free advice and information to prevent homelessness or help the homeless find accommodation is available to anyone in their area. This is for everyone, regardless of immigration status or right to reside. However, to access further assistance under the Prevention or Relief Duty, including temporary accommodation, a household must be eligible.

The law defines who is and is not eligible, in terms of immigration status and habitual residence. The law is different for people from within the European Economic Area (EEA) and the UK than those from elsewhere<sup>iv</sup>.

## **2.11. Homelessness Case Level Information Classification (H-CLIC)**

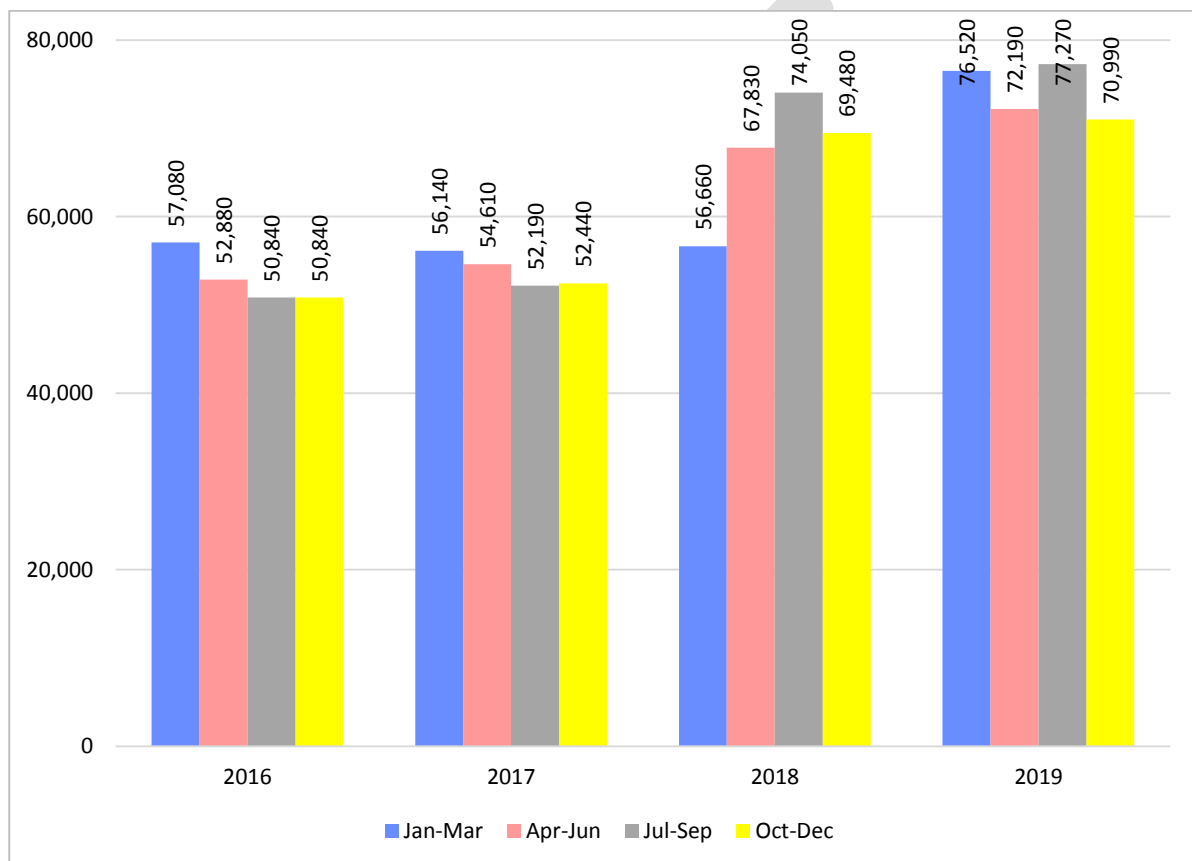
The H-CLIC is the new statutory homelessness case level data collection report that must be submitted to the MHCLG quarterly. It replaced the P1E<sup>v</sup> to monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 by local housing authorities. The H-CLIC return<sup>vi</sup> is computer generated and encrypted so it cannot be reproduced as a readable document at local authority level.

### 3. National Context

#### 3.1. Homelessness Nationally

Many factors nationally, such as changes in the housing market, the employment landscape and welfare reform have increased pressures on households in relation to their housing. Since the HRA was implemented in 2018 local housing authorities nationally have seen an increase in households approaching in need of housing assistance, as the table below shows.

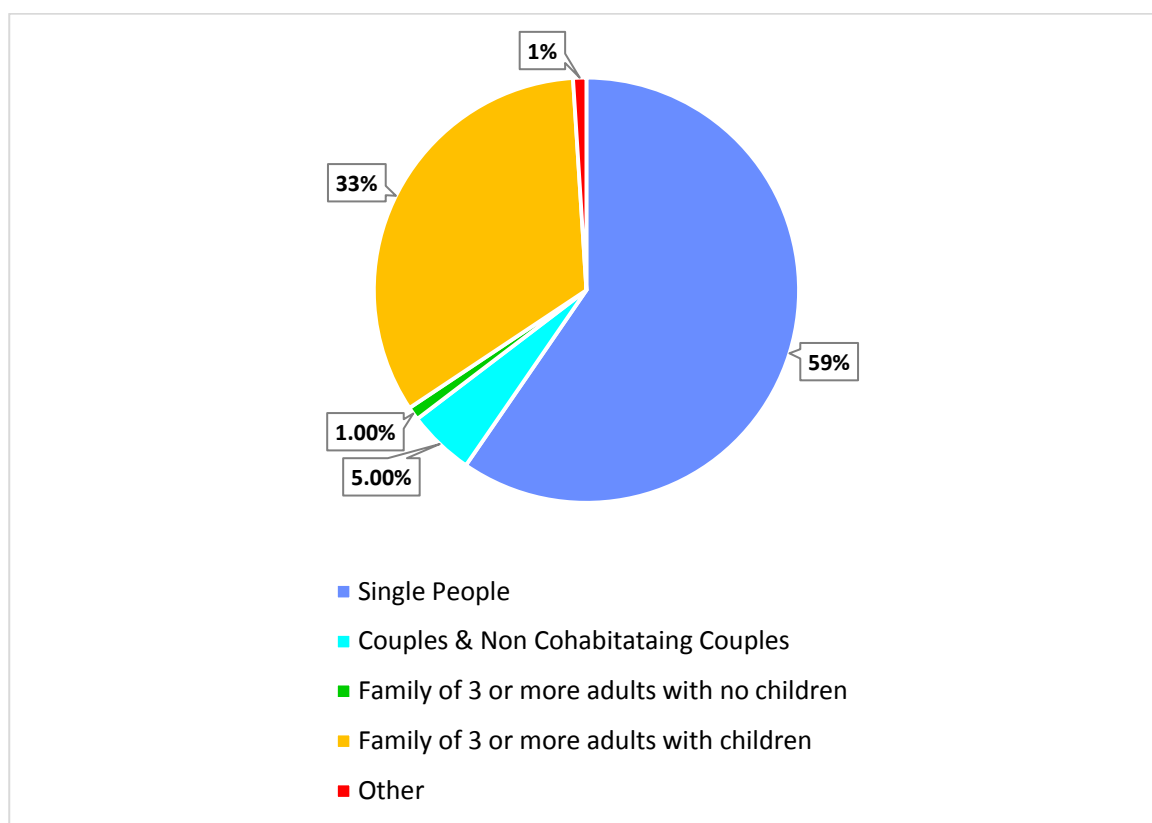
**Table B. Total number of households that approached English LA's for homelessness assistance from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019<sup>10</sup>**



The increase in housing assistance approaches nationally of 27.5% is in line with the increases in approaches in the Folkestone & Hythe District (Section 6.1). The HRA formalised the requirement on Councils to prevent homelessness wherever possible but many Councils, including FHDC, were engaging in homelessness prevention work prior to the implantation of the act.

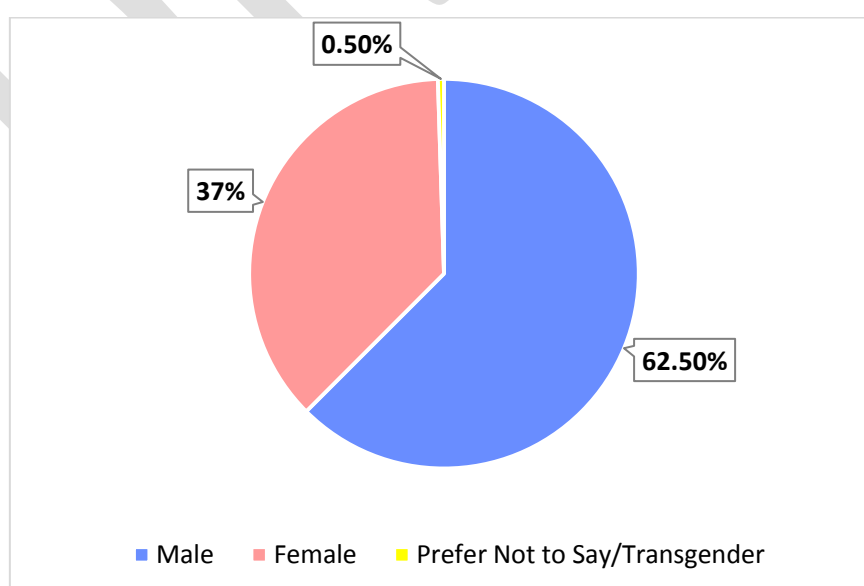
<sup>10</sup> Figures sourced from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Table C. Make-up of Households Approaching English Local Authorities for Housing Assistance in 2019<sup>11</sup>**



The percentage of single homeless individuals recorded by the MHCLG as making an approach to an English Housing Local Authority (LA) in 2019 is similar to the percentage of single homeless people that approach FHDC locally.

**Table D. Gender Ratio Single Homeless People Approaches to English Local Authorities 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2019 - 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>11</sup> Figures sourced from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

### 3.2. The National Housing Market

In 2018, the Office for National Statistics estimated that on average, full-time workers could expect to pay an estimated 7.8 times their annual workplace-based earnings on purchasing a home in England and Wales<sup>vii</sup>. Seventy-seven local housing authorities became less affordable between 2013 and 2018 (most were in London, the South East and the East of England); with no local housing authorities in which affordability improved<sup>12</sup>. Affordable<sup>viii</sup> Rents for typical two-bed properties work out 30% higher than social rents. On average this is £1,400 per year and Affordable Rents are more expensive throughout England, but the difference is noticeably bigger in Southern Regions<sup>13</sup>. Private rental prices increased by 1.5% in England in the 12 months to January 2020<sup>14</sup>.

Welfare reform has further impacted low-income households and while unemployment is down employment is often part-time and/or zero hour contracts. This type of employment can continue to leave households limited to private sector rented accommodation, or in some cases, social housing property through their Councils HWL. Individuals and households experiencing housing issues frequently have complex health and mental health needs. The amount of income some households are having to spend on housing can be linked to causing or worsening these health issues (Section 4.3); this can be compounded by poor housing conditions in properties that are at the cheaper end of the private rental market<sup>15</sup>.

### 3.3. Welfare Reform

The Government has introduced a number of changes as part of its welfare reform programme<sup>ix</sup>. These changes include:

- The introduction of Universal Credit.
- The Benefit Cap - limiting the amount of benefit that many working age households can claim. Within the FHDC district the limits are £20,000 per year for couples and lone parents and £13,400 for single claimants.
- The Two Child Limit - applied to children born after 6 April 2017 restricting the child element in universal credit and tax credits to the first two children in a household.
- Work-related benefit sanctions<sup>x</sup> were also reviewed and updated.
- Under Universal Credit single parents under 25 years old will be treated the same as other under 25s and will only qualify for the lower 'standard allowance' rate. This means they receive up to over £100 less per month than a single parent aged 25 years and over, which causes significant financial challenges.

These changes are aimed at driving the Governments policy to incentivise households to work and to take responsibility.

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<sup>12</sup>Office for National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2018>

<sup>13</sup> Affordable Rents Compared To Traditional Social Rents, report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation 13<sup>th</sup> July 2018

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/affordable-rents-compared-traditional-social-rents>

<sup>14</sup> Office for Natural Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/january2020>

<sup>15</sup> Brick by Brick - A Review Of Mental Health And Housing, Mind, November 2017 <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/26223865/brick-by-brick-a-review-of-mental-health-and-housing.pdf>

## **Universal Credit**

Universal Credit brings together a range of working age benefits into one payment; it is now the over-arching benefit for unemployed and low income households, with the amount a household receives dependant on their circumstances.

It is awarded monthly in line with the way the majority of working households receive their income; preparing individuals/households for when they return to work. Additionally, any Housing Benefit a household may be eligible for will be paid as part of the monthly Universal Credit payment. Households in employment may still be eligible for a part payment of Housing Benefit but this depends on how much earned income they are receiving.

## **Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax)**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, under the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the Government introduced what it called the “Spare Room Subsidy”. Under the changes, tenants in social housing have their benefit reduced by 14% if they have a spare bedroom or 25% if they have two or more spare rooms. Two children under 16 of the same gender are expected to share one bedroom, as are two children under 10, regardless of gender. New rules were also introduced which restrict the amount of Housing Benefit working age Council and Housing Association tenants can claim if they are deemed to be under occupying their home.

## **Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

In April 2008 the Government introduced Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. These rates are used to calculate Housing Benefit for tenants renting from private landlords. Each area has specific LHA rates that relate to the broad rental market areas (BRMA)<sup>xi</sup> in that locality. The Government calculates LHA rates by basing them on private market rents being paid in the BRMA, which can differ from advertised rents<sup>xii</sup> (Section 5.8 of FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details).

In 2014 the Government introduced measures to ensure that any increase in LHA would be capped at actual rent inflation, or 1%, whichever is the lower figure. Also from April 2016 LHA rates were frozen for four years, resulting in a disparity between housing benefit rates and actual market rents by 2020 (See Appendix 1 LHA rates). A report, published by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) in August 2018, stated that private rented accommodation is now unaffordable for most low income households<sup>16</sup>. The Government announced in January 2020 that from April 2020 the LHA rates will be raised in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (Section 5.2).

### **3.4. Rough Sleeper Strategy**

In August 2018 the Government published the national Rough Sleeping Strategy. The strategy sets out the Government’s commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it completely by 2027. The strategy sets out key areas of work around prevention, intervention and recovery. An important feature has been to highlight the importance of collaboration between statutory and community sector partners. When launched the

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Benefit\\_freeze\\_puts\\_private\\_renting\\_out\\_of\\_reach\\_for\\_low-income\\_tenants\\_and\\_risks\\_fuelling\\_homelessness](http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Benefit_freeze_puts_private_renting_out_of_reach_for_low-income_tenants_and_risks_fuelling_homelessness)

strategy is backed up by £100 million of funding. This funding was bolstered in September 2019 when the Government committed a further £422 million in 2020/21 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping following a 22% increase in deaths of homelessness people from the previous year.

This funding is distributed through numerous funding streams, which includes £30 million to the NHS to provide better access to mental health services for homeless people. The three main streams for local housing authorities to access are the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI), the Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) and the Private Rented Sector Access Fund (PRSAF) (Section 7.3.6). There is also a Cold Weather Fund to administer funding to charitable organisations that are not commissioned by local housing authorities, such as Winter Shelters.

### **3.5. Decision to leave the European Union**

The impact of the decision to leave the European Union is hard to predict. In relation to homelessness the most immediate potential impacts are likely to be experienced by EU nationals. It is recognised that the risks and opportunities posed by the UK's departure from European Union will have significant long-term consequences for homeless/threatened with homelessness households and the wider housing sector. However, whilst the exact impact of leaving the EU is impossible to predict the, 'Homelessness and the impact of Brexit' report<sup>17</sup>, endeavours to set out the key factors that may influence how homelessness and the experience of homeless people will be affected ([Homelessness and the impact of Brexit | Homeless Link](#)).

## **4. Local Context**

### **4.1. FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy**

The FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy deals with the topics under the housing agenda of new affordable homes (for rent and low cost home ownership), homelessness, the private sector, empty homes, managing the allocation of properties and providing support and accommodation for vulnerable groups within the community<sup>18</sup>. The overall housing priorities for the district have been grouped together as follows:

- Improve access to housing in the district and increase the supply of affordable homes for rent and low cost home ownership
- Work to ensure that homes are well maintained, safer and healthier
- Enable people to live independently
- Make the best use of the existing housing stock<sup>19</sup>.

Sections 5.13 to 5.21 of the Healthier Housing Strategy sets out an overview of homelessness, the needs of former members of the Armed Forces, Gypsy and Traveller communities, as well as rural housing need. Many of the other topics mentioned within this review document are expanded upon further within Healthier Housing Strategy.

### **4.2. Population**

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<sup>17</sup> Written by WPI Economics Report for Crisis and Homeless Link

<sup>18</sup> FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy, page 3

<sup>19</sup> FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy, page 9

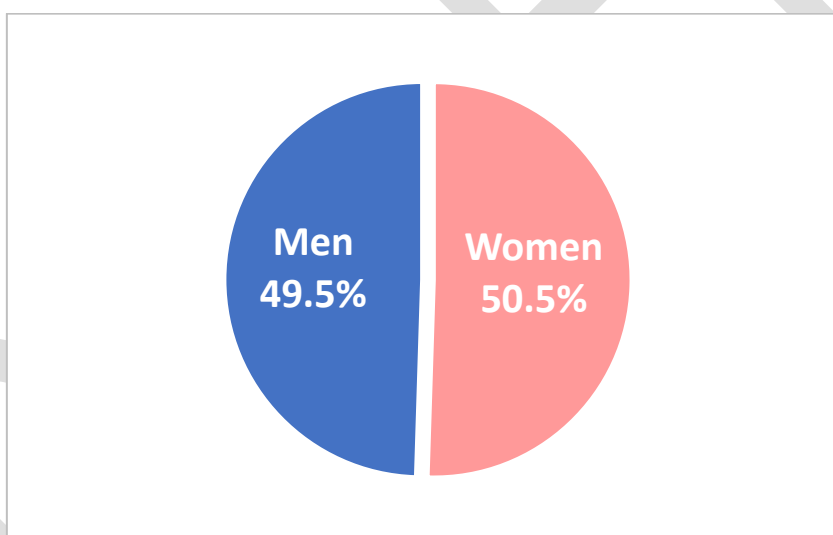
On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2019 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the 2018 mid-year population estimates (MYPE) for Kent and the Population of the Folkestone & Hythe District was estimated at 112,580<sup>20</sup> (Section 4.1 of FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details). The table below sets out the projected population change for the district.

**Table A. Projected population change – Folkestone & Hythe District<sup>21</sup>**

| Total Population |         |                |             |
|------------------|---------|----------------|-------------|
| 2016             | 2026    | 10 year change | % of change |
| 111.000          | 117,500 | 6,500          | 5.9%        |

The further two tables below provide information relating to the male/ female ratio with districts population. This is relevant with regards to the male/female ratio of individuals rough sleeping within the district (Section 6.2).

**Table B. Folkestone & Hythe Gender Profile 2018 <sup>22</sup>**

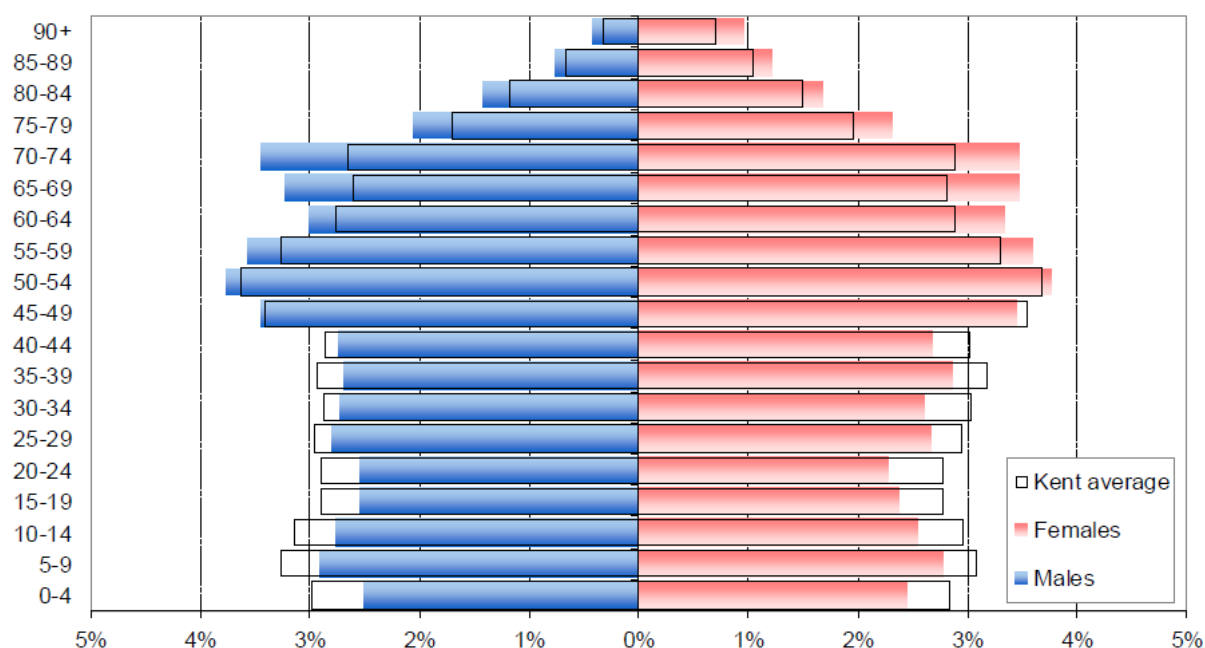


<sup>20</sup> KCC Statistical Bulletin, October 2019: 2018 Mid-year population estimates: Ward level population in Kent

<sup>21</sup> KCC Statistical Bulletin, May 2018, 2016-Based Subnational Population Projections

<sup>22</sup> Strategic Commissioning Statistical Bulletin, July 2019, 2018 Mid-Year Population Estimates: Age and gender profile

**Table C. Folkestone & Hythe 2018 Population Estimates – Age distribution<sup>23</sup>**



The male/female ratio changes with age. Generally, there are more males compared to females in the younger age groups, but as age increases there become more females to males<sup>24</sup> As shown in Table C, 45.5% of the population in the district are aged 50 years and over. The district has one of the highest proportions of over 65 year olds in the country<sup>25</sup>.

### 4.3. Health Profile

The Crisis Report ‘At what cost?’<sup>26</sup>, published in July 2015, suggests that at worst the cost to public services of allowing homelessness (rough sleeping) to persist for an individual for a 12 month period could be as much as £20,128 in some circumstances. The Kent Housing Group’s (KHG) paper, ‘Think Housing First’<sup>27</sup>, states that it is a well-known fact that housing is intrinsically linked to health inequalities. In short, without access to good quality and affordable housing, the chances of enjoying good health and a long life are hindered<sup>28</sup>.

The report also advises that rough sleepers (Section 6.2) experience significant health inequalities. They have higher rates than the general population of hepatitis, hypothermia, pneumonia, respiratory disease, tuberculosis, poor condition of teeth, skin conditions, infection, poorer mental health, greater prevalence of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, and injuries following violence<sup>29</sup>. In 2010 the average death of a rough sleeper was 30 years before the general population. Recent Office of National Statistics (ONS) information shows that the mean age of death of homeless men is 44 years, and homeless women-42 years.

<sup>23</sup> KCC Statistical Bulletin, July 2019, 2018 Mid-Year Population Estimates: Age and gender profile

<sup>24</sup> KCC Statistical Bulletin, July 2019, 2018 Mid-Year Population Estimates: Age and gender profile

<sup>25</sup> See Section 5.2, FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237022/costsofhomelessness\\_finalweb.pdf](https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237022/costsofhomelessness_finalweb.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/assets/uploads/2016/07/ThinkHousingFirstNov13-Final.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Think Housing First 2013-2015, Kent Housing Group and the Joint Policy & Planning Board, page 5

<sup>29</sup> Think Housing First 2013-2015, Kent Housing Group and the Joint Policy & Planning Board, page 12

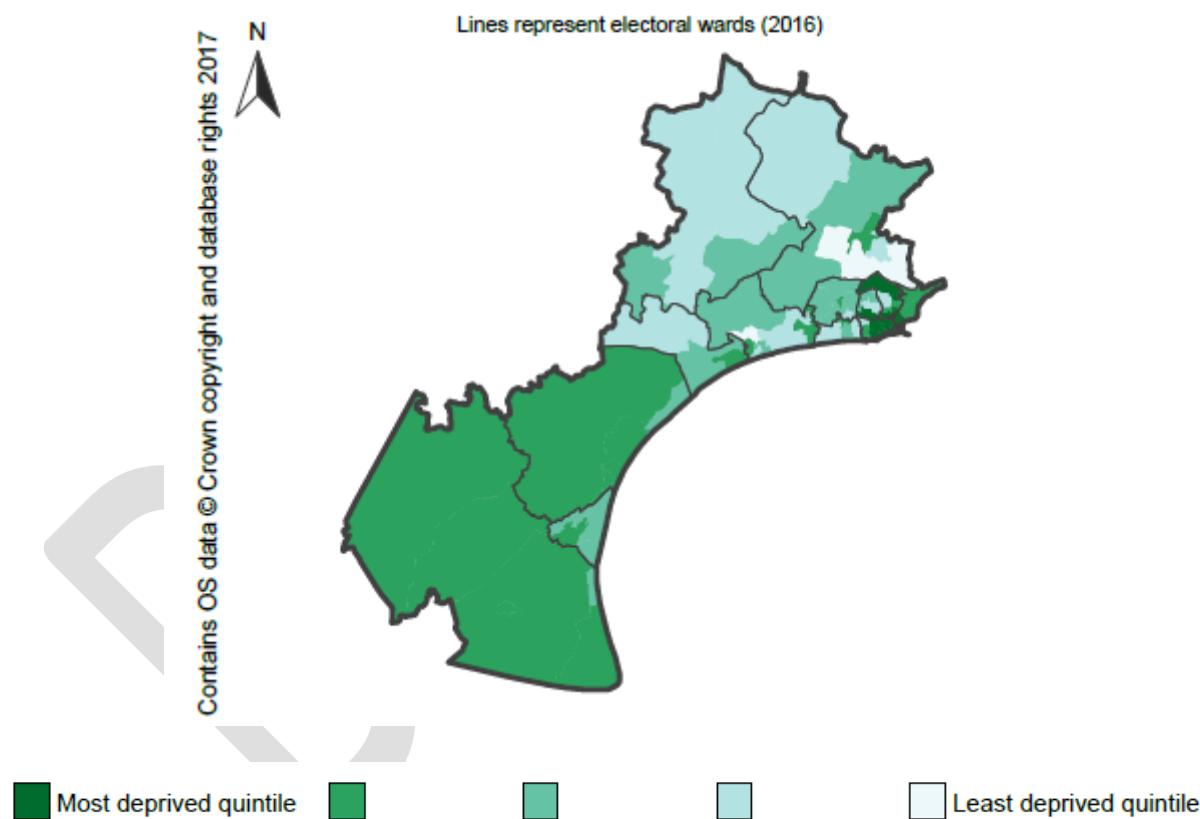


The health of children can be dramatically affected by their housing conditions. This can impact on their growth and development and their educational achievement. The Public Health England’s 2017 Health Profile for the district advised that life expectancy within the district for both men and women is similar to the England average<sup>30</sup>. However, life expectancy is 6.7 years lower for men and 3.5 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of the Folkestone & Hythe district than in the least deprived areas; and about 22% (4,100) of children live in low income families.

**Areas of Deprivation**

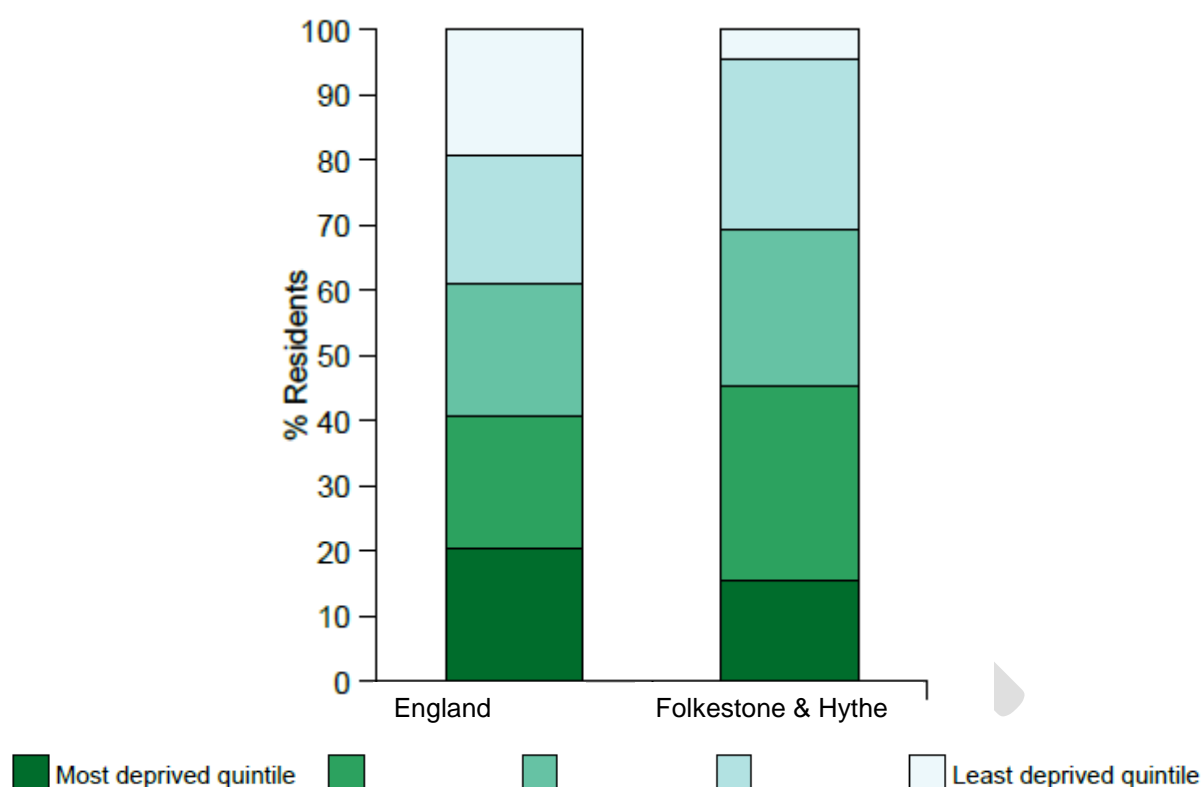
The map shows differences in deprivation in Folkestone & Hythe district based on national comparisons. The darkest coloured areas are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

**Table D. Folkestone & Hythe Areas of Deprivation (2015)**



<sup>30</sup> Office for National Statistics reported life expectancy for England in 2017 was 79.2 years for males and 82.9 years for females.

**Table E. Percentage of the population who live in areas at each level of deprivation.**



## Employment in the District

The 'Unemployment in Kent' Workbook, published by KCC in November 2019, looks at the total number of people aged 18 to 64 years in the district claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit for the reason of being unemployed. The report puts the percentage of these people in relation to the working-age population in the Folkestone & Hythe area at 3.5% of the districts population. The 'Kent Economic Indicators' report published in April 2019 includes 16 & 17 year olds in the information recorded and puts the unemployment rate for 16 to 64 year olds in the district at 4.2% of the working-age population (Section 4.5 & 4.6, FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details). In December 2019 the ONS stated that the current unemployment rate for England was 3.8% (for people 16 years & over).

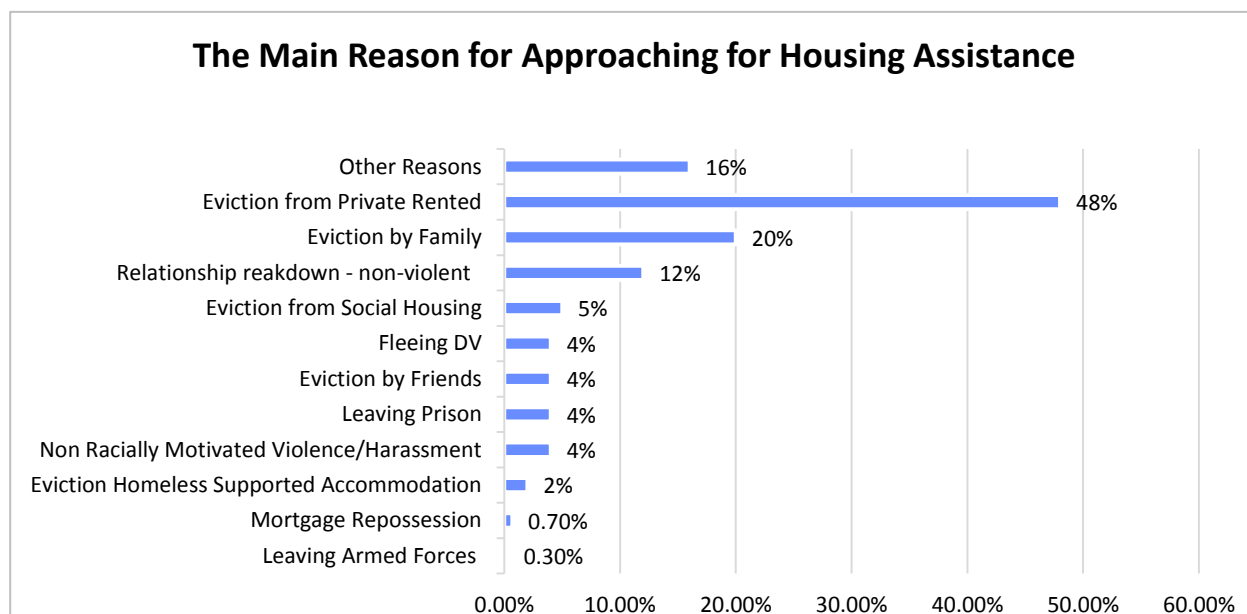
### 4.4. Reasons for Statutory Homelessness in FHDC 2018-2019

The prevailing reasons for households requiring assistance from the Council is due to eviction either by a landlord from the Private Rented Sector or by family; this is line with national evidence and similar statistics published by neighbouring authorities. A breakdown of all the main reasons why households approached the Council in need of housing assistance during 2018-2019 is shown in Table F.

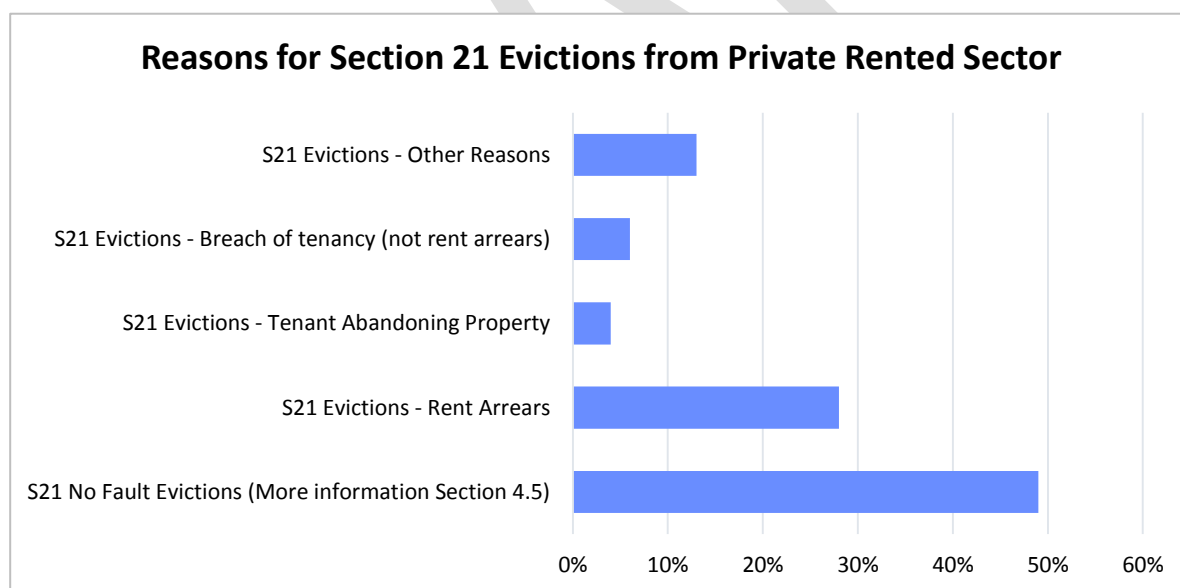
The information in Table G. breaks down the reasons why households approaching the Council for housing assistance were issued with S21 Notices in 2018-2019. It is important to note that although 49% of these households were confirmed as being evicted through 'no fault' of their own, this information can be misleading. There are some landlords, for varying reasons, who do not wish to report rent arrears or anti-social

behaviour to the Council, preferring to evict a household via a S21 Notice without providing a reason, or advising that it is because they wish to sell the property<sup>31</sup>

**Table F. Main Reason for Approaching FHDC for Housing Assistance 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018-31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**



**Table G. Main Reasons for being evicted from Private Rented Sector 2018-2019**



<sup>31</sup> House of Commons Briefing, The end of 'no-fault' section 21 evictions <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-8658/CBP-8658.pdf>

## 5. Profile of Accommodation in the Folkestone & Hythe District

### 5.1. Housing Profile of District

There are approximately 50,000 residential dwellings in the district. Owner-occupation is the dominant form of tenure—albeit at lower levels than in other areas of the country with Council Housing Stock also considerably smaller than the national average. In contrast, the Private Rented Sector (Section **Error! Reference source not found.**) is markedly larger than in other areas of the country and neighbouring council areas<sup>32</sup> (Section 3, FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details).

**Table H. Housing Tenure in the Folkestone & Hythe District 2017 with National and UK Comparisons**

| Tenure   | Proportion of Stock - Folkestone & Hythe % | Proportion of Stock - Kent % | Proportion of Stock - UK % |
|--|--|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Owner Occupation   | 67%  | 74%                          | 75%                        |
| Private Rented   | 17%  | 11%                          | 10%                        |
| Council Housing  | 7%   | 8%                           | 12%                        |
| Housing Association Properties   | 3%   | 7%                           | 3%                         |
| Section 4.5 & 4.6 of FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023 for further details |  |                              |                            |

### 5.2. Affordability & the Private Rented Sector

The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was completed by the Council in early 2017. This assessment put the then house prices in the district at nine times the current average household income for local residents. The assessment also showed that 73% of newly forming households, within the district each year, are unable to afford to access entry level private rented sector accommodation. The evidence suggested that an increasing number of households would be required to spend in excess of 35% of their gross household income in order to meet their housing costs<sup>32</sup>.

The High Speed 1 (HS1) train route brings more visitors to the area and allows the local population to access employment in London through a faster commute. However, it has also had an impact on house prices in Ashford, Folkestone & Dover due to Londoners moving down to areas where house prices are cheaper in view of improved travel options.

As previously mentioned in Section 3.3 of this review the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates covering most of the district are set quite low and as of 2016 these were frozen for four years, which has placed increasing pressure on households in the district. With rents tending to continuously rise and the overall restriction of household welfare benefits, including the benefits cap and the restriction for single people under 35 to the LHA shared accommodation rate (see Appendix 1), the types of private rented accommodation accessible to households in receipt of benefits or low income is increasingly restricted.

<sup>32</sup> FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy, page 10

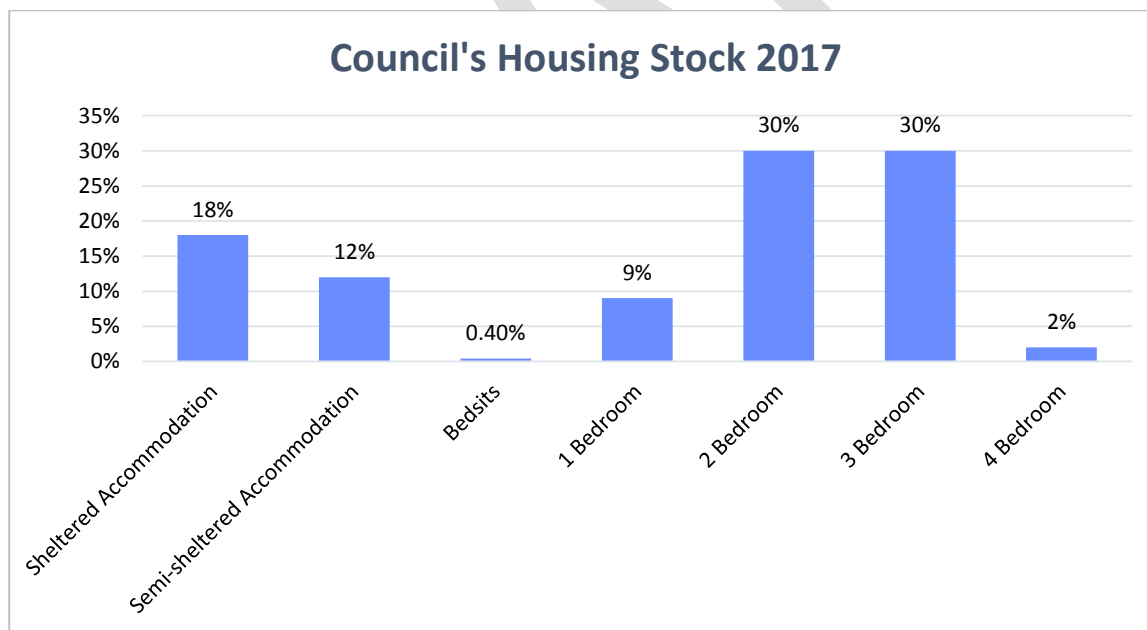
**Table I. Average Mean Private Rents compared to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rates**

| Number of Bedrooms                       | The Average Mean Private Rents pcm 2017/2018 <sup>33</sup> | LHA for FHDC pcm 2019/2020 | LHA for FHDC pcm 2020/2021 (see Appendix 1 for more detail) |
|--|--|----------------------------|---|
| .Room/Bedsit (shared bathroom & kitchen) | £340.00  | £264.45                    | £282.44   |
| Studio (own bathroom & kitchen)          | £420.00  | £386.25                    | £435.00   |
| 1 Bed                                    | £478.00  | £386.25                    | £435.00   |
| 2 Bed                                    | £632.00  | £500.01                    | £575.01   |
| 3 Bed                                    | £810.00  | £625.02                    | £749.99   |
| 4 Bed+                                   | £1215.00   | £730.00                    | £899.99   |

### 5.3. Social Housing

The Council provides approximately 3400 affordable rented homes and about 30% of these are specifically for older people. Housing Associations provide approximately 1900 homes in the district<sup>34</sup>.

**Table J. Profile of the Councils Housing Stock**



Approximately 250 to 300 Council and Housing Association properties become available each year (inclusive of Sheltered, Semi-sheltered, bedsits, 1, 2, 3 & 4 bed properties) and are let in accordance with FHDC's Housing Allocations Policy.

<sup>33</sup> KCC Statistical Bulletin 'Housing rents in Kent Local Authorities' March 2019

<sup>34</sup> FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy, page 12

The Council has approximately 1200/1300 households registered on the Councils Housing Lists. Table K below shows the number of households in each priority band and what size property they need (see Chapter 8.1 FHDC Housing Allocations Policy).

**Table K. Number and size of Households on the Housing List 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019**

| Property Size Required | Band A    | Band B     | Band C     | Band D    | Band E     | Total       |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <b>1 Bed Need</b>      | 7         | 112        | 162        | 2         | 323        | <b>606</b>  |
| <b>2 Bed Need</b>      | 2         | 24         | 166        | 5         | 193        | <b>390</b>  |
| <b>3 Bed Need</b>      | 3         | 44         | 80         | 2         | 51         | <b>180</b>  |
| <b>4 Bed Need</b>      | 1         | 21         | 34         | 1         | 23         | <b>80</b>   |
| <b>5 Bed Need</b>      | 0         | 10         | 11         | 0         | 2          | <b>23</b>   |
| <b>Total = 1279</b>    | <b>13</b> | <b>211</b> | <b>453</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>592</b> | <b>1279</b> |

#### **5.4. Supported Housing**

There are currently 60 units of supported accommodation in FHDC (this does not relate to any type of sheltered or supported accommodation for older persons, care or residential homes). There are different types of supported accommodation, such as:

- Providing emergency refuge and support for victims of domestic violence, helping them to stabilise their lives and engage with other services.
- Homelessness Accommodation Projects working with homeless people that may have complex and multiple needs to help them transition from life on the street to a settled home, training, education or employment.
- Young Persons Accommodation Schemes for care leavers and homeless young people that provide tailored support to assist young people to be able to live independently.
- Supported Housing for people with mental health needs to stabilise their lives, recover and live more independently.
- Supporting living projects for people with learning disabilities in the longer term to maximise their independence and exercise choice and control over their lives.

Most Supported Accommodation projects across Kent are commissioned by KCC and are managed by the various charities and agencies that are awarded contracts. In Kent there are homelessness support services and housing projects specifically for young people aged 16 & 17 years old, and separate services for adults aged 18 to 65 years and over.

Most supported accommodation is usually temporary in nature and it can often be difficult to find a suitable and affordable move-on accommodation. This reduces the turnover of units in supported accommodation and can restrict access for people who require a higher level of support.

**Table L. Supported Housing Provision in the District 2018 (excl. older persons)**

| Client Group                                | Number of Accommodation Units |
|---|-------------------------------|
| People with physical or sensory disability  | 17                            |
| People with learning disabilities           | 7                             |
| People with mental health issues            | 11                            |
| People who have suffered domestic violence  | 7                             |
| People with substance/alcohol misuse issues | 11                            |
| Vulnerable young people                     | 7                             |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>60</b>                     |

A recent review into the future funding of supported housing has required the Government and the sector to evaluate how this type of accommodation works across the country to help end people's homelessness. There is limited data available in relation to the outcomes that a supported housing project achieves in comparison to approaches like Housing First which has an excellent international evidence base<sup>35</sup>, and which is now fast becoming the Governments focus in relation to support and housing provision for single homeless people.

Housing First Projects (See Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025) places no conditions on individuals before they are housed. They also have a positive impact on the community because the projects have a better success rate leading to fewer people sleeping rough, which often leads to a reduction in crime and substance misuse in towns and surrounding areas.

### **5.5. Supply of new Accommodation**

The Council's Action Plan for housing in the District can be found in Appendix 1 of the FHDC Healthier Housing Strategy 2018-2023. The plan sets out the targets for building new affordable homes within the District, improving the condition of private rented accommodation, bringing empty properties back into the housing market, and making the best use of council and housing association properties, as well as reducing the time these properties are vacant between lets. Any increase or decrease in the level of resources the Council has to deliver this strategy will clearly impact on the ability to deliver the targets.

There are a growing number of communities across the UK that want to have more of a say, and much more involvement, in solving their own housing problems; and the Government is supporting these Community-Led-Housing Projects through funding initiatives (See Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025). These community housing projects yield many positive results that traditional building programmes do not

<sup>35</sup> Homeless Link website <https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2018/jun/28/future-hostel-%E2%80%93-what-do-we-know-about-how-hostels-can-help-end>

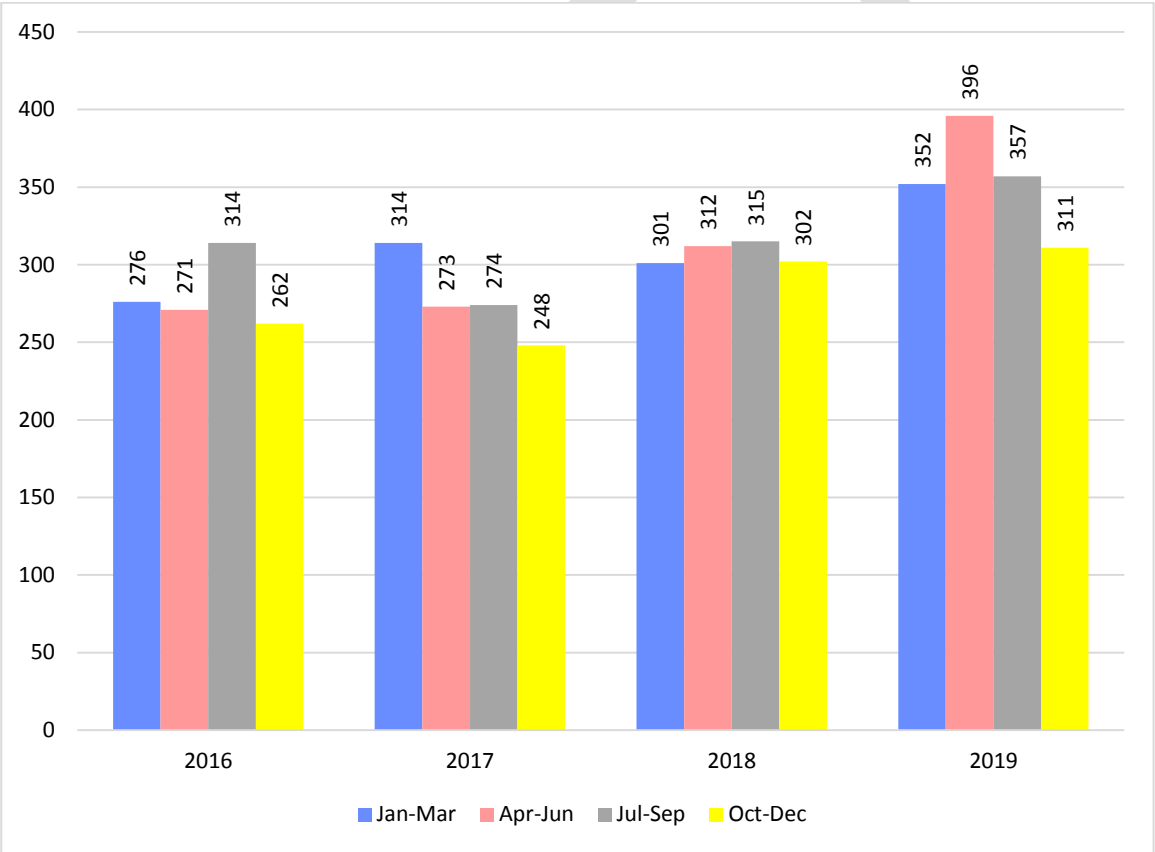
always deliver, such as improvements in feelings of self-worth and well-being, as well as increasing the employability of those involved and those who come into contact with these projects. These types of housing initiatives often organically establish a sense of community naturally as the project evolves, and before the new housing is even complete; in much the same way as a village community may have developed over decades in the past.

6. Who Uses FHDC Housing Options (Homelessness) Services

6.1. Homelessness Approaches for Assistance to FHDC

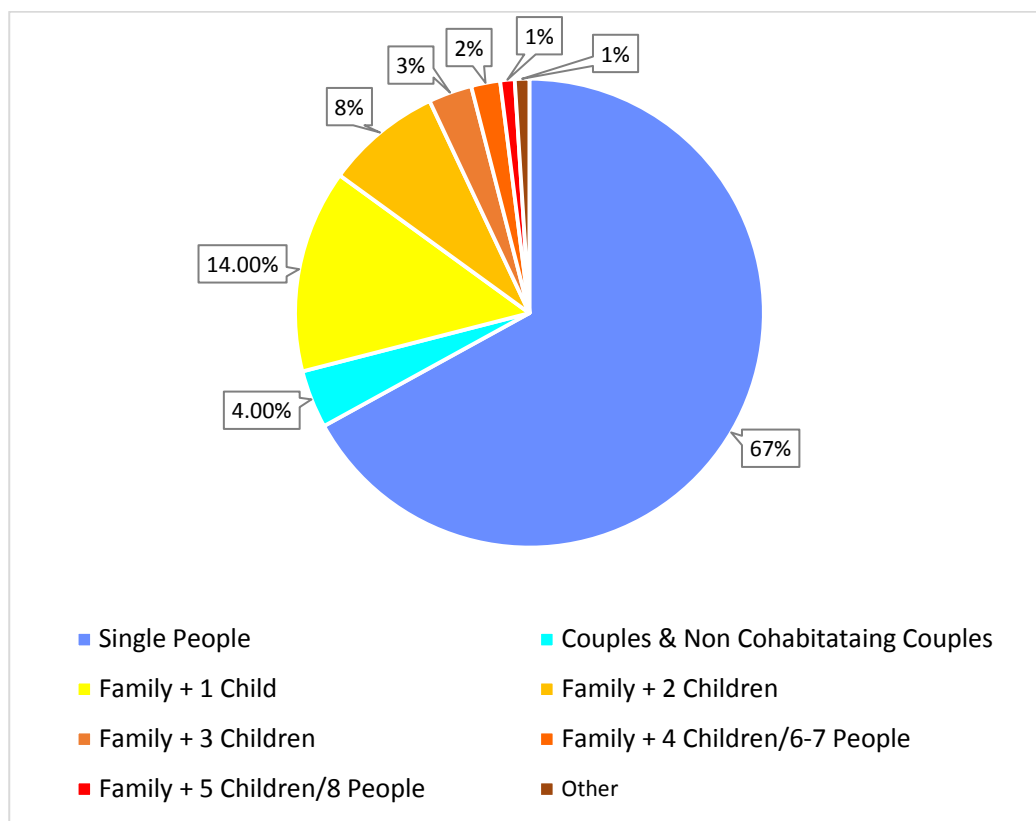
Following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act the Council saw a 10% increase in homelessness approaches for housing assistance in 2018 and in 2019 the approaches were 25% higher than in 2016 and 2017 as the chart below shows.

Table M. Total number of households that approached FHDC for homelessness assistance 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019

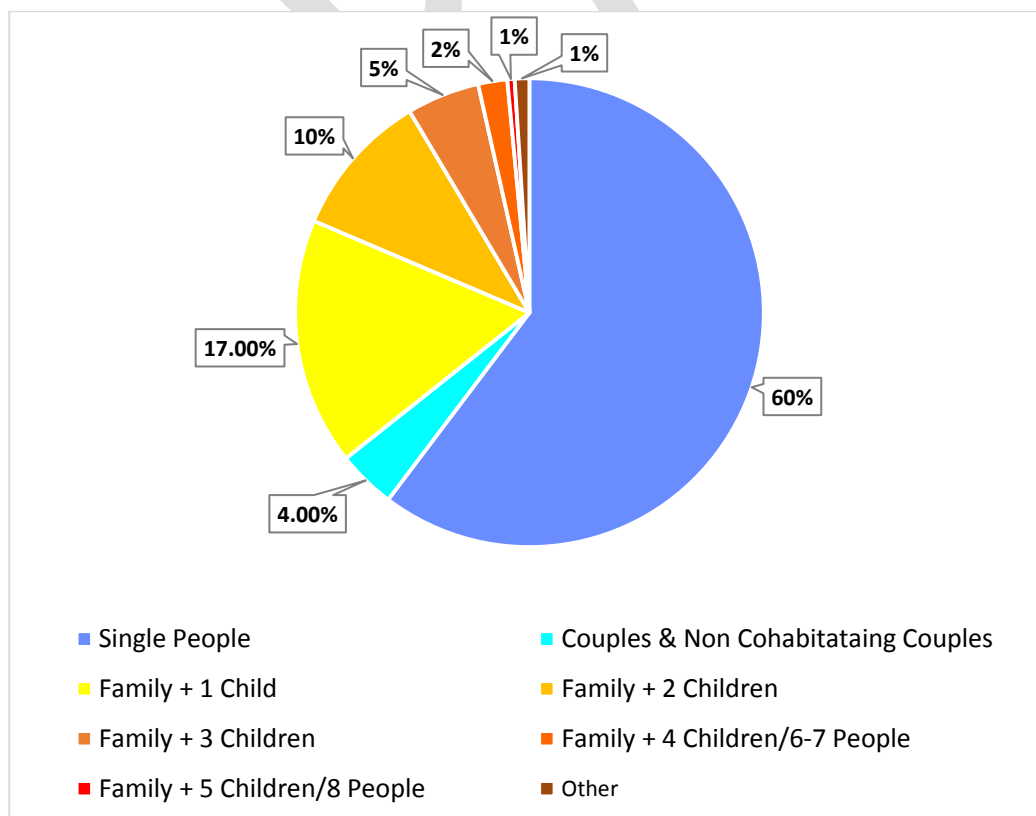




**Table N. Make-up of Households Approaching the Council for Housing Assistance in 1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2018**

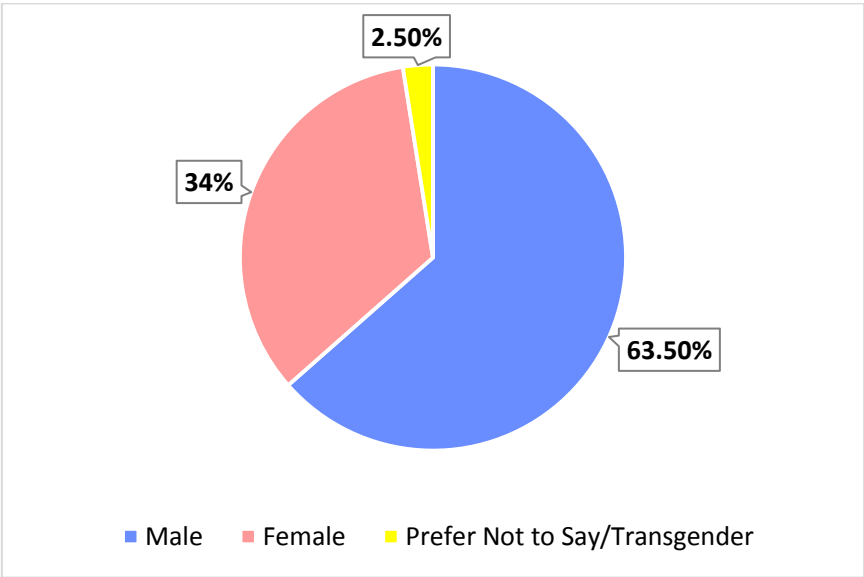


**Table O. Make-up of Households Approaching the Council for Housing Assistance in 1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019**

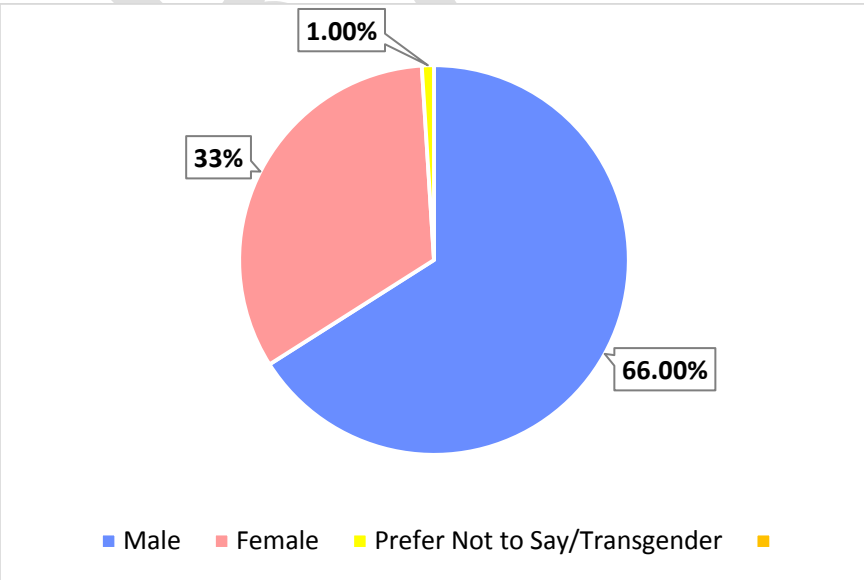


The two pie charts above show that in 2018 and 2019 the majority of all homelessness approaches were from single person households, and 28% to 35% have been from families; mostly those with 1 child. The extra funding (Section 7.3.6) the Council received from the MHCLG at the beginning of 2019, to provide additional services for single homeless people, has had a positive effect, reducing these approaches from single people by 9% during 2019.

**Table P. Gender Ratio Single Homeless People Approaches 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2018 - 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2018**



**Table Q. Gender Ratio Single Homeless People Approaches 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2019 - 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2019**



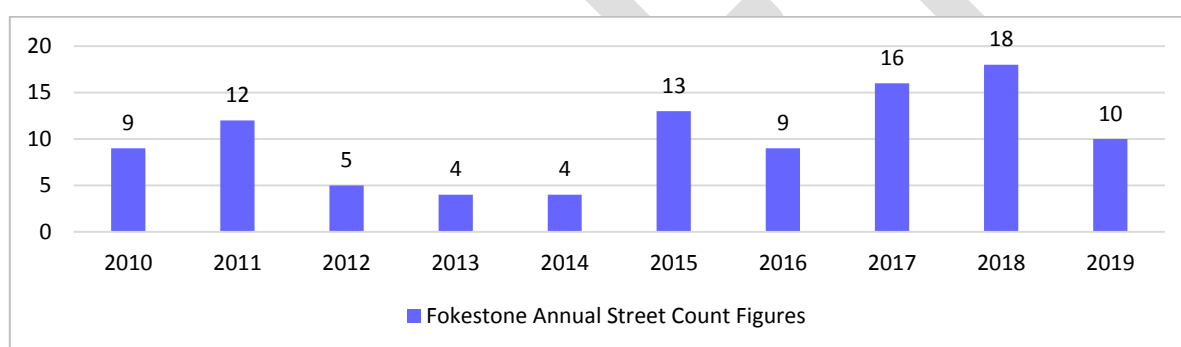
In the Folkestone & Hythe District there are fewer women sleeping rough than men, although in the district’s population overall there are more women than men. The Rough Sleeper services in Dover and Folkestone, funded by the MHCLG (Section 7.3.6), includes a female rough sleeper worker to support women who may not wish to be supported by a male worker, due to their past, and present, experiences.

## 6.2. Rough Sleepers

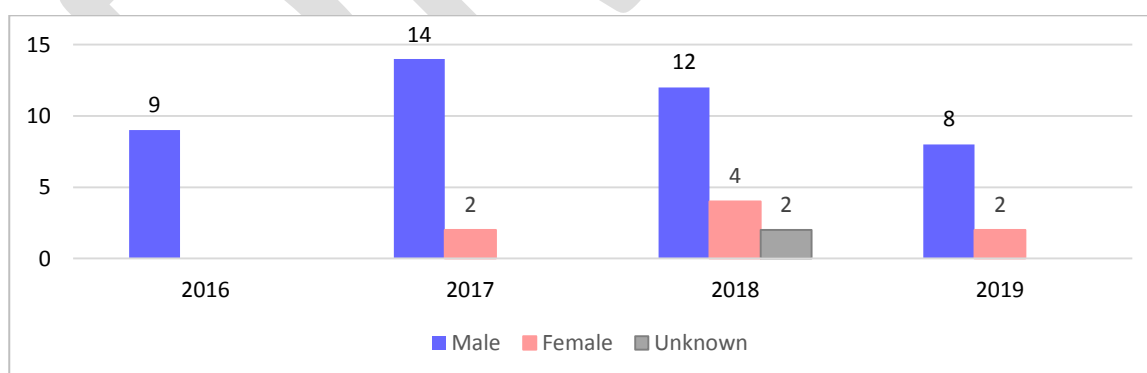
Homelessness amongst vulnerable single people, including people sleeping rough, continues to be an issue in the district. The MHCLG requires local housing authorities in England to undertake either an annual count or an intelligence-led estimate of the number of people rough sleeping in their district. The counts and estimates process is not designed to arrive at a single irrefutable number of people sleeping rough. Instead, it is a snapshot of the numbers of people likely to be sleeping rough each night during a given period each year, and which can subsequently be used to track trends nationally and locally.

The rough sleeping count completed in November 2019, identified 10 individuals sleeping rough in the Folkestone & Hythe area. This figure is a substantial reduction from the 18 individuals identified rough sleeping during the count in November 2018 (0). This reduction is likely to be as a result of a change to the Council's Rough Sleeper Outreach Service (Section 7.3.3) and additional rough sleeper service provision funded by the MHCLG from April 2018 (Section 7.3.6).

### FHDC Annual Street Count Figures 2010 – 2019

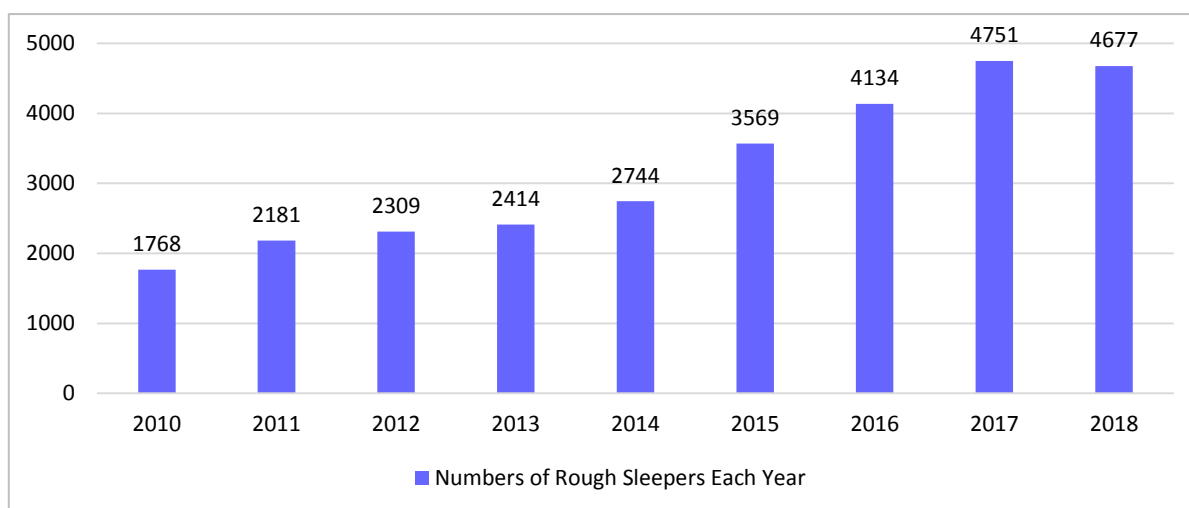


**Table R. Gender breakdown of FHDC Annual Street Count Figures 2016 – 2019**



The rough sleeper count results across England in 2018 showed a slight drop in the numbers of people sleeping rough (Table S). It is anticipated that this trend has continued and there will be a further drop in 2019, which is in line the local numbers reported for the Folkestone & Hythe District. The reduction follows the implementation in 2018 of the Governments Rough Sleeper Strategy (Section 3.4).

**Table S. Numbers of Rough Sleepers - MHCLG Statistics 2010 - 2018**



We consider that the support provided will continue to proactively prevent people from becoming homeless wherever possible, and assist those already rough sleeping off the streets. However, there is a group of about 4 to 6 people with complex needs, and histories of longer-term rough sleeping, who continue to decline offers of support or assistance from the council and partner agencies.

### 6.3. Youth Homelessness

Relevant legislation sets out that primary responsibility for homeless 16 and 17 year olds, who require accommodation, lies with the relevant, local social services team. However, there remain some circumstances when the local housing authority (the district or borough council) will have duties towards homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

The MHCLG advise that all young people who approach a local housing authority or social services team should have access to an advocacy services, which tailors the way information is explained, to assist them to make the right choices. FHDC Young Persons Advocacy Service is provided by Young Lives <https://ylf.org.uk/>.

**Table T. Number of Homelessness Approaches to FHDC from Young People**

| Homelessness Approaches to FHDC from Households Aged 16 to 18 years |          |          |          |       |
|---|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| Age Breakdown   | 16 years | 17 years | 18 years | Total |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan to 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2018                    | 1        | 16       | 27       | 44    |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan to 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec 2019                    | 5        | 26       | 37       | 68    |

All local social services teams now include an 'Adolescent Team' specifically to carry out preventive work around homelessness issues with 16 & 17-year-olds, and to undertake mediation with their families. The principal aim is to divert young people from the care system and the teams typically provide a short-term, intensive, preventive service to help young people and families resolve issues.

## **6.4. Victims of Domestic Abuse**

According to “The Domestic Abuse Report 2020: The Hidden Housing Crisis”<sup>36</sup>, nearly 70% of women responding to a survey by Women’s Aid told the national charity that their housing situation and concerns about future housing, including fears of homelessness or lack of safe housing, prevent them from leaving an abuser<sup>37</sup>.

The government plans to change the law so anyone fleeing domestic abuse is automatically in priority need. This change hasn’t been introduced yet, however, the Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-2021, which will contain the legislation to change the law once it becomes an Act, is currently being scrutinized by the House of Commons, before being examined by the House of Lords, then finally given Royal Assent.

During the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, just under 2.5% of households approaching the Council housing assistance due to becoming homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse.

## **6.5. HM Forces Personnel & Ex-servicemen**

A local authority must consider whether any person who makes an approach for housing assistance, and who is leaving, or has left the HM Forces, (including someone who had been detained in a military prison or corrective training centre) is vulnerable as a result of that service, and therefore in priority need. If a household approaches who is leaving, or has left, HM Forces includes children in the household, a vulnerable adult with a priority need, or a person who is pregnant, the household will automatically have a priority need.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 less than 1% of households that approached the Council for housing assistance were homeless due leaving HM Forces, or had a priority need due to having served in HM Forces.

FHDC has made a commitment to support local HM Forces personnel and is signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant (for more information see <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/armed-forces/community-covenant/>).

## **6.6. Gypsies & Travellers**

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 amended the Housing Act 1985 so that the duty to assess the housing needs of the districts inhabitants includes consideration of the needs of people residing in, or resorting to the district for, caravan and houseboat mooring sites. The ‘East Kent Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show-people Accommodation Assessment’ completed in 2014 estimated that the gypsy and traveller population in the Folkestone & Hythe District was 164 individuals or 42 households. It is difficult to obtain accurate information about the number of households in the area who identify as being from this ethnic group, because they do not always wish to declare their background.

The Council is aware that there are communities in this district requiring housing support, who identify as a gypsies and/or travellers. The Council will follow the advice and guidance available from Government, as well as any up-to-date data and local anecdotal

<sup>36</sup> The Domestic Abuse Report is a series published by Women’s Aid that brings together the most comprehensive set of data on domestic abuse in the country

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/fear-of-homelessness-prevents-women-leaving-their-abuser/>

information from the FHDC Community Safety Specialist, Environmental Services and Planning to formulate a best practice approach for working with these households in relation to their housing need.

## **6.7. Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)**

Through the SVPRS<sup>xiii</sup>, launched in January 2014, the Council is working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) via KCC to identify those in the greatest need, and most at risk, to bring them to the UK. The Community Sponsorship Scheme, also enables community groups to directly welcome and support refugees in the UK, and this will continue. Refugees resettled under this new community-led scheme will be in addition to the Government commitment<sup>38</sup>.

In 2015 FHDC agreed to work with KCC, along with the 11 other local authorities in Kent, to house 10 families over 5 years. To date 8 Syrian families have been housed in the Folkestone & Hythe area, leaving a further 2 families to be resettled here from Syria from the original programme. FHDC has also agreed to rehouse another 2 families in 2020 and 2 more each year thereafter.

## **7. Previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy & FHDC Corporate Delivery Plan 2017-2020**

### **7.1. East Kent Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-2019**

In 2008 Folkestone & Hythe, Canterbury, Dover & Thanet adopted a joint East Kent Homelessness Prevention Strategy, this was subsequently reviewed and updated in 2014. Over the last 8 years local housing authorities have experienced significant reductions in core funding, this combined with welfare reforms (Section 3.3), the challenges of leaving the European Union (Section 3.5 **Error! Reference source not found.**) and the recent recommissioning of homelessness services across Kent by KCC, has left each Council with their own particular issues in relation to homelessness. Therefore, each Local Housing Authorities will have their own Homelessness Prevention Strategies.

Under the East Kent Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-2019 six priorities were identified as follows:

- Preventing and responding to homelessness before a crisis point is reached.
- Preventing and responding to rough sleeping.
- Providing high quality housing options advice before a crisis point is reached and appropriate advice, accommodation and support if crisis occurs.
- Providing good quality housing that local people can afford and making best use of the housing stock.
- Promoting partnership working and shared good practice.
- Deliver excellent homelessness services.

### **7.2. FHDC Corporate Delivery Plan 2017-2020**

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-global-resettlement-scheme-for-the-most-vulnerable-refugees-announced>

The Corporate Delivery Plan provides details of what the Council proposes to achieve between 2017 and 2020. Six priorities were identified, one of which is More Homes. Under this priority the five following goals in relation to homelessness were adopted:

- Provide advice and alternative housing options to prevent more people from becoming homeless.
- Preventing 550 families at risk of homelessness from losing their home per year.
- Increase the availability of suitable temporary accommodation through a review of use and type.
- Prevent rough sleeping by delivering a Rapid Response Service with local partners:
- Increase availability of private rental properties through the promotion of the Social Lettings Agency.

### **7.3. Achievements against the Previous Homelessness Strategy and Corporate Delivery Plan**

#### **7.3.1. Housing Options Service – Advice, Information & Support**

The FHDC Housing Options Service has always strived to provide the best available advice, information and support to customers needing housing assistance. Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (Section 2.7) this service has developed further. This included a renewed emphasis on prevention work and creating several detailed Housing Advice Factsheets. A Landlord Liaison Officer was recruited in early 2018, with specialist lettings background, to set up the Council's Property Solutions Scheme (Section 7.3.5) for private sector landlords. This role and the scheme has greatly improved the Council's relationship with, and access to, the private rented sector, resulting in more properties in the private sector being offered to our customers.

#### **7.3.2. Prevention Approach**

Prevention has always been a key focus of all Housing Options Services and over the last 5 years FHDC has worked jointly with many different Housing Support Agencies to provide wide-ranging support to households to maintain their housing or source other suitable accommodation. Over the last three years the Council has invested in a Prevention Plus Service to further support households at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point. This service is constantly adapting to meet the needs of the local community, also signposting when necessary to other local agencies who can also strengthen and booster the support.

| <b>FHDC</b>  | <b>2018/2019</b> | <b>2019/2020</b> |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Cases closed at Triage due to advice provided to prevent homelessness</b> | 243              | 338              |
| <b>Cases closed as prevented under the Prevention Duty</b>                   | 118              | 96               |
| <b>Cases closed as relieved under the Relief Duty</b>                        | 84               | 154              |

#### **7.3.3. Working with the Voluntary Sector**



The Council leads several forums such as the Homelessness Forum and the Rough Sleeper Forum to promote and support joint working between all local agencies that may be involved in assisting those with housing issues. These meetings help to identify the most vulnerable households and how agencies resources can best be deployed to have the most positive and effective impact.

In 2018 the Council re-commissioned the FHDC Rough Sleeper Outreach Service and relocated the service to the Council Civic Centre resulting in improved communication between Customer Services, the Housing Options Team and the Outreach Service. This enhanced and simplified the assessment and support process for single homeless individuals. The joint working enables access to a broader range of housing options for these individuals that includes supported accommodation, private rented accommodation, social housing and specialist housing support for those with complex issues, such as residential detox units across the county.

The Council continues to work with and support all agencies and charities supporting households experiencing housing issues, particularly the Rainbow Centre, the Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter, Porchlight, Sanctuary Outreach Service, the Job Centre Plus and the Forward Trust.

#### **7.3.4. Temporary Accommodation**

By working hard to prevent homelessness, or to source alternative suitable accommodation for households to move to before eviction takes place, the Council has reduced the number of households who require temporary accommodation and reduced the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation.

| <b>Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation as of the 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.</b> |             |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>2015</b>   | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2018</b> | <b>2019</b> |
| 36  | 44          | 72          | 38          | 21          |

Over the last five years the Council has improved the quality of temporary accommodation used by working with several organisations who provide self-contained<sup>xiv</sup> temporary accommodation. The Council has also delivered 8 units of self-contained temporary accommodation. The Council continues to monitor the need for this type of accommodation and will consider increasing the number of owned temporary accommodation as required. Bed & Breakfast accommodation is rarely, if ever, used. On the rare occasions when families with children have to be placed in this type of accommodation they are not there for more than 6 weeks in line with legislation.

#### **7.3.5. Property Solutions & Social Lettings Agency**

Property Solutions Scheme connects a landlord with the right tenant for their property and provides support and guidance to both parties. Although the service does not continue to manage the property or the tenancy for the landlord once it is let to the customer, access to support is available to assist with any issues that arise, which may put the tenancy at risk. To date this scheme has successfully obtained 49 private sector properties, and the numbers of properties is increasing each year.



| Property Solutions   | 2018 | 2019 | As at 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 |
|--|------|------|----------------------------------|
| Number of PRS properties obtained through the scheme.  | 15   | 43   | 14                               |
| Another 6 PRS properties were obtained through the scheme during 2018 & 2019 for the SVPRS (Section 6.7) |      |      |                                  |

The Council also works with ABC Lettings, which is a Lettings and Property Management Service run by Ashford Borough Council across both the Ashford and Folkestone & Hythe Districts. It offers landlords a safe property management service for letting their rental properties to customers of both Councils. ABC Lettings has been creating and successfully managing tenancies in the private sector for more than seven years in Ashford and for five years in the Folkestone & Hythe District.

### 7.3.6. MHCLG Funding/Rough Sleeper Provision

Folkestone & Hythe and Dover District Councils received joint funding award of £414,000 in 2019 from the MHCLG to tackle rough sleeping in their areas. This funding has allowed both Councils to employ local homeless agencies, including Porchlight, Serveco and Sanctuary Supported Living, to help people sleeping rough and assist them into accommodation.

A further £33,500 funding was awarded late in 2019 to help rough sleepers into emergency accommodation throughout the winter months. This money has allowed the Councils to take 17 rough sleepers off the streets of Dover and Folkestone. A new bid for continuing these services into 2020/2021 has been made to the MHCLG through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, as has a request to join the Prison Navigator Service currently operating successfully in 4 Kent council areas.

### 7.3.7. Increased Housing Stock

Over the last 5 years 351 new properties of various types of tenure have been delivered in the Folkestone & Hythe area as set out in the table below.

**Table U. New Affordable Homes delivered between April 2014 & March 2019**

|                               | 2014/15 |     | 2015/16 |     | 2016/17 |     | 2017/18 |     | 2018/19 |     | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|-------|
| Type of New Housing Delivered | HA*     | LA* | HA*     | LA* | HA*     | LA* | HA*     | LA* | HA*     | LA* |       |
| Affordable Rent               | 75      | 0   | 38      | 17  | 0       | 9   | 0       | 23  | 8       | 22  | 192   |
| Social Rent                   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 9       | 0   | 9     |
| Intermediate Rent             | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 0   | 14      | 0   | 14    |
| Shared Ownership              | 44      | 0   | 26      | 0   | 0       | 0   | 0       | 5   | 20      | 2   | 97    |

|   |     |   |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |     |
|---|-----|---|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| Shared Equity   | 0   | 0 | 20 | 0  | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 26  |
| LA Mortgage Scheme  | 0   | 5 | 0  | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 6   |
| Wheelchair Accessible                                       | 0   | 0 | 0  | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2  | 0  | 4  | 7   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | 119 | 5 | 84 | 19 | 6 | 9 | 0 | 30 | 51 | 28 | 351 |
| <b>*HA = Housing Association &amp; LA = Local Authority</b> |     |   |    |    |   |   |   |    |    |    |     |

## 8. Strategic Priorities Going Forward

The findings of the homelessness review have helped inform the priorities for the new Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025. The three priority areas are:

- End Rough Sleeping
- Early Intervention, Prevention & Support
- Maximise Access to Affordable & Suitable Accommodation

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2020-2025 sets out an action plan of how the Council plans to achieve these priorities and monitor progress.

## **Glossary**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>FHDC</b>                            | Folkestone & Hythe District Council  |
| <b>MHCLG</b>                           | Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Government  |
| <b>HRA</b>                             | Homelessness Reduction Act 2017  |
| <b>Local housing authority</b>         | In Kent the local housing authority is the district and borough councils.  |
| <b>PHP</b>                             | Personalised Housing Plan  |
| <b>HWL</b>                             | Housing Waiting List   |
| <b>Affordable Rent</b>                 | Are rents of up to 80 per cent of market rent which registered providers can charge for certain residential properties. This limit is set by the rent standard, which is one of the regulatory standards imposed by the Regulator of Social Housing in England. The Regulator has issued guidance on how market rent should be calculated, and service charges are included. |
| <b>Social Rents</b>                    | Are pegged to local incomes to keep rents more affordable. Changes to social rents – whether up or down – are controlled by central Government. Social rents are lower than so-called 'affordable' rents which are set at up to 80% of the market rate.  |
| <b>Pcm</b>                             | Per Calendar Month   |
| <b>Section 21 (S21) -</b>              | A Section 21 is the most common form of notice a landlord give tenant to request that they leave their private rented tenancy.   |
| <b>Section 8 (S8) -</b>                | A Section 8 Notice is used to gain possession of a property at any time during a tenancy. It can only be used if there are grounds for eviction, such as over 8 weeks rent arrears, reported & recorded (i.e. to the Police) anti-social behaviour.  |
| <b>Local Children's Authority</b>      | In Kent the local children's authority is Kent County Council.   |
| <b>KCC</b>                             | Kent County Council  |
| <b>County Councils</b>                 | County councils cover the whole of the county and are responsible for: education, highways, transport planning, passenger transport, social care, libraries, waste disposal and strategic planning.  |
| <b>District &amp; Borough Councils</b> | Each county is divided into several districts. District councils, which may also be called borough councils or city councils, provide the following local services: housing, leisure & recreation, waste collection, environmental health, planning & taxation collections.  |
| <b>Unitary authorities</b>             | Many large towns and cities and some small counties are unitary authorities. Unitary authorities are responsible: education, highways, transport planning, passenger transport, social care, housing, libraries, leisure and recreation, environmental health, waste collection, waste disposal, planning applications, strategic planning and local taxation collection.    |
| <b>ONS</b>                             | Office for National Statistics   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Social Services</b>                    | For the purpose of this review Social Services for Children & Families will be referred as 'Social Services' or 'local children's authority'. These Services are provided by KCC and assist families with children and teenagers up to the age of 16 years old.       |
| <b>Adult Social Services</b>              | Services provided by KCC for Adult Social Services, for older people or adults with a physical or learning disability.  |
| <b>P1E</b>                                | A quarterly statistics return managed by MHCLG, containing data as reported by 326 local authorities that covers: Households dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, and homelessness prevention and relief.                            |
| <b>Rainbow Centre</b>                     | The Rainbow Centre is a Christian charity that delivers a range of services in Shepway to provide support and hope to individuals and families experiencing deprivation or hardship; through its Homeless Support Service, Foodbank and Food Stop                     |
| <b>Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter</b> | The Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter project was established in 2009 by Churches Together Folkestone and other local interests. For the last ten years the Folkestone Rainbow Centre has overseen the operation of the shelter project.                             |
| <b>Porchlight</b>                         | Are a Kent-wide homelessness charity, supporting individuals and families through a variety of different services across the county. Porchlight are also providing the rough sleeper support services in Folkestone & Dover funded by the MHCLG.                      |
| <b>Sanctuary Outreach Service</b>         | Based in the Folkestone and Hythe district, the Folkestone & Hythe Rough Sleeper Outreach service is commissioned by FHDC and currently delivered by Sanctuary Supported Living and provides floating support for adults aged 18 and over, who are sleeping rough.    |
| <b>Jobcentre Plus</b>                     | Jobcentre Plus is the part of the Department for Work and Pensions which delivers working-age support service in the United Kingdom, including Universal Credit.  |
| <b>Forward Trust</b>                      | The Forward Trust manages a diverse range of drug and alcohol recovery services to provide individuals with the care and support to stabilise their lives. The Folkestone & Hythe District Service is a mobile & outreach/drop-in service with the main hub in Dover. |

## Appendix 1.

The LHA rates from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 for properties within the Folkestone & Hythe District are as follows:

| <b>FOLKESTONE &amp; HYTHE DISTRICT LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE (LHA) RATES</b>  |               |                    |                |
|---|---------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>For the Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Hawkinge – this is a guide please check LHA rates at <a href="https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx">https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx</a></b>                             |               |                    |                |
|   | <b>Weekly</b> | <b>Four Weekly</b> | <b>Monthly</b> |
| Shared accommodation*   | £65.00        | £260.00            | £282.44        |
| One bedroom   | £100.11       | £400.44            | £435.00        |
| Two bedrooms  | £132.33       | £529.32            | £575.01        |
| Three bedrooms  | £172.60       | £690.40            | £749.99        |
| Four bedrooms & above   | £207.12       | £828.48            | £899.99        |
| <b>For New Romney, Greatstone, Littlestone, Lydd-on-Sea, Lydd, Newchurch, Ivychurch &amp; St Mary's-in-the-Marsh – this is a guide check LHA rates at <a href="https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx">https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx</a></b> |               |                    |                |
|   | <b>Weekly</b> | <b>Four Weekly</b> | <b>Monthly</b> |
| Shared accommodation*   | £78.00        | £312.00            | £338.93        |
| One bedroom   | £143.84       | £575.36            | £625.02        |
| Two bedrooms  | £168.00       | £672.00            | £730.00        |
| Three bedrooms  | £207.12       | £828.48            | £899.99        |
| Four bedrooms & above   | £260.05       | £1040.20           | £1249.99       |
| <b>Elham – this is a guide please check LHA rates at <a href="https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx">https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/search.aspx</a></b>  |               |                    |                |
|   | <b>Weekly</b> | <b>Four Weekly</b> | <b>Monthly</b> |
| Shared accommodation*   | £78.59        | £314.36            | £341.49        |
| One bedroom   | £136.93       | £547.72            | £594.99        |
| Two bedrooms  | £182.96       | £731.84            | £795.00        |
| Three bedrooms  | £224.38       | £897.52            | £974.98        |
| Four bedrooms & above   | £287.67       | £1150.68           | £1249.99       |

**Please Note:**

Shared Accommodation rates apply to single occupiers under 35 years of age. Care leavers should be entitled to the 1 bed rate up until they turn 22. Please ask staff for more details.

## **Endnotes**

- <sup>i</sup> If a hazard is a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety, this is known as a Category 1 hazard. If a hazard is less serious or less urgent, this is known as a Category 2 hazard. For example, if an officer assessed the hazard of Excess Cold and it scored over 1000 it would be a category 1 hazard and the council must take action to remove or reduce the hazard.
- <sup>ii</sup> For the purpose of this review Social Services for Children & Families will be referred to throughout the document as 'Social Services' or 'local children's authority'. These Services are provided by KCC and assist families with children and teenagers up to the age of 16 years old.
- <sup>iii</sup> The free initial advice and information should at least cover the following:
- Preventing homelessness or securing accommodation
  - The rights of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
  - The duties of the authority
  - Any help that is available from the authority/agencies, and how to access that help
- <sup>iv</sup> More up-to-date information about eligibility for housing assistance can be accessed on the Chartered Institute of Housings "Housing Rights" website ([www.housing-rights.info](http://www.housing-rights.info)).
- <sup>v</sup> P1E – A quarterly statistics return managed by DCLG, containing data as reported by 326 local authorities that covers: Households dealt with under the homelessness provisions of the 1996 Housing Act, and homelessness prevention and relief.
- <sup>vi</sup> The H-CLIC report relies on accurate data entry by Housing Option Teams.
- <sup>vii</sup> Copeland, in the North West of England, remained the most affordable local housing authority in England and Wales in 2018; with average house prices being 2.5 times average workplace-based annual earnings. Kensington and Chelsea remained the least affordable local housing authority in 2018, with average house prices being 44.5 times workplace-based average annual earnings.
- <sup>viii</sup> Affordable Rents are rents of up to 80 per cent of market rent which registered providers can charge for certain residential properties. This limit is set by the rent standard, which is one of the regulatory standards imposed by the Regulator of Social Housing in England. The Regulator has issued guidance on how market rent should be calculated, and service charges are included. Lettings at affordable rents are defined as 'low cost' rental accommodation and as such are 'social housing'. They are therefore regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- <sup>ix</sup> Through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.
- <sup>x</sup> Benefit sanctions. When claiming benefits you must follow certain rules, otherwise you may lose your benefits or have them reduced. This is known as a sanction.
- <sup>xi</sup> A BRMA is an area within which a person could reasonably be expected to live having regard to facilities and services for the purposes of health, education, recreation, personal banking and shopping, taking account of the distance of travel by public and private transport, to and from these facilities.
- <sup>xii</sup> Mathematical calculations are applied to the list of private market in the BRMA to determine the LHA rate which continues to be set to the 30th percentile of all rents in the Folkestone & Hythe District Area.
- <sup>xiii</sup> On 7 September 2015, the then Prime Minister announced that the scheme would be expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection by 2020. On 3 July 2017, the Home Secretary announced that eligibility for the scheme would be extended to all those refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria, regardless of their nationality and thus become the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). From 2020 the Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and the Gateway Protection Programme will be consolidated into one global scheme. There will also be a new process for emergency resettlement, allowing the UK to respond quickly to instances when there is a heightened need for protection, providing a faster route to resettlement where lives are at risk.

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<sup>xiv</sup> Self-contained temporary accommodation are mostly flats, terraced and semi-detached houses (all with their own kitchen & bathrooms) that are leased to the Council on a nightly let basis, by reputable companies, for use as temporary accommodation.

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