

Further information on Homelessness Acceptances (YA&H PM06)

Context

The structural issues affecting homelessness are well documented by charities such as Crisis and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

- Housing supply has not kept pace with demand for many decades. **In total, just over 140,000 new houses were supplied in 2013-14**, well below the estimated 250,000 required to keep up with demand*.
- The welfare and housing systems have traditionally acted as a buffer between unemployment, poverty and homelessness. **Cuts in central government support** to local authorities are coupled with falls in support and funding streams to other statutory agencies and those in the voluntary and community sector. In particular, reductions in Housing Related Support (HRS) are believed to have a direct impact on the levels of homelessness. Overall housing Benefit has been **reduced by around £7bn**.
- **Homelessness has risen already** and the housing shortage combined with welfare changes mean that all forms of homelessness are likely to increase further despite signs of a recovering economy. In 2014, 112,330 people in England made a homelessness application, a 26 per cent rise since 2009/10*.

*For further info, see CRISIS [Briefing on key homelessness facts and statistics- England](#)

In Derby we have seen greater incidence of local homelessness - applications are rising, the numbers assessed as statutorily homeless to whom the local authority owe a main housing duty are rising, and the numbers we are able to prevent becoming homeless are falling. Changes resulting from the economic downturn and in particular Welfare Reform are impacting detrimentally on many low income groups and those susceptible to homelessness. These changes include reductions in local housing allowance rates, the housing benefit cap, the 'bedroom tax' and the abolition of council tax benefit.

Reducing homelessness remains a challenge in the current economic climate however we aim to manage this demand pressure through effective use of **temporary accommodation** and **increasing the housing supply** and **affordable housing**.

Latest Performance Information at Q1 2015/16

a) Homelessness acceptances

In 2014/15 we managed to keep within our monitoring target of **300 people being accepted** as statutorily homeless, with a year-end figure of **278**. This was a lower figure than 2013/14 when we accepted 316 people as homeless.

However the first quarter of 2015/16 has seen an increase in acceptances, in particular in the number of households whose main reason for homelessness is the loss of an assured short-hold tenancy or domestic abuse. The former is often as a result of landlords needing to sell their properties or their family members wishing to occupy. Some landlords are wishing to realise their capital and renting property is not always a profitable concern especially with the recent changes announced regarding tax relief and the introduction of

new regulations and requirements placed on landlords. Others have the opportunity to charge higher rents than those covered by local housing allowance thus rendering tenancies unaffordable. This may well be as a result of the economic situation. ***There were 89 acceptances in Q1 with the latest forecast for 2015/16 as 330, compared to a monitoring target of 300.***

b) Temporary Accommodation

Over the last five years we have consistently limited the use of temporary accommodation to below 30 families / households, which is below the national average of 218 households for 2014/15 (excluding London Authorities the average falls to 62 placements, which Derby remains below). We maintained this for quarter 1 but are seeing more pressure in quarter 2.

A key component within successfully managing temporary accommodation is limiting the use of ***bed and breakfast accommodation to no more than 8 families / households*** which Derby has done successfully for the last two years. This is also below the national average of 22 households for 2014/15 (excluding London Authorities the average falls to 11 placements, which Derby remains below).

Our current positive performance is due to effective case work, good flow through to temporary accommodation and also the supply of permanent accommodation available for households accepted as statutory homeless. However there has been a decrease in the number of social housing vacancies which has resulted in some delays in moving households on from temporary to permanent housing (there were 2,280 vacancies in 2013/4, 2,015 vacancies in 2014/15 and 980 vacancies in the first 6 months of this year).

c) Affordable Housing and Increasing Housing Supply

The other way we tackle homelessness is through the provision of ***affordable housing*** to those on the housing waiting list. This is a challenge locally and nationally. Our new build target was to deliver **100** homes between April 2014 and March 2015 and a total of **99** homes were delivered. These units are focussed on areas of key need and now represent a grand total of **177** homes against a target of **700** to be delivered by 2018/19. This target and timescale is currently under review given the government's recent announcement relating to a mandatory 1% rent reduction for the next few years.

Actions we are taking

Reducing homelessness and increasing housing supply are key objectives of our Housing and Homelessness Strategies. They are also key objectives of the Derby Homes Delivery Plan 2015-16.

Our specific achievements over the last year are as follows:

- Refreshed the Homelessness Strategy for the period covering 2015 – 2019.
- Worked in partnership with targeted services to support vulnerable people across the city. Projects have included:
 - Riverside with 'No Second Night Out' project which targets people sleeping rough and aims to help individuals to access services and support so they do not spend a second night on the streets.

- 'Ambitions East Midlands', which is focused on those aged 18 – 25 years of age and aims to provide intensive support into suitable housing.
 - 'Healthy Futures' that have been supporting effective hospital discharges and minimising the need for repeat admissions through stable and appropriate housing.
 - 'USDL' (Universal Services offered locally) to support single individuals experiencing financial difficulties.
 - 'Housing Framework' provision for vulnerable children and young people aged 16 and 17 years to support them within agreed temporary accommodation placements and to stop the use of Bed and Breakfast making sure they are safe.
- Effective case management to support both individuals and families.
 - Working towards the Gold Standard Accreditation by 2017, which is a government scheme to encourage local authorities to continually improve their front line housing provision using the resources they have available.

In addition our Homelessness Strategy includes the following actions for 2015/16 and beyond:

Setting up a Homelessness Liaison Forum (HLF) comprising members from partnership agencies (both statutory and voluntary). The purpose is to oversee implementation of the strategy and where appropriate amend as circumstances change. It may also coordinate funding bids where collaborative working is a requirement. The HLF meets every 6 months.

Increase financial support and advice to prevent homelessness caused by debt and financial issues. One of the major causes of homelessness is the ending of a tenancy, often triggered by financial issues. Promoting financial inclusion is therefore a key action.

Mitigate the impact of benefit sanctions by ensuring a process is in place to prevent housing benefit being suspended unnecessarily. This has been identified by partners as a relatively new but significant threat to people maintaining their homes.

Develop written procedures outlining the 'steps from homelessness to settled accommodation'. These will include an assessment of the full range of support needs of the household, along with a specification of which agency will deliver on them and at what stage in the process.

The Homelessness Strategy 2015-19 can be found here:

<http://www.derby.gov.uk/media/derbycitycouncil/contentassets/documents/councilanddemocracy/DerbyCityCouncil-Homeless-Strategy-2015-19-April-2015.pdf>