

# **Community Homelessness Strategy**

## **2017 - 2022**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is not just a housing problem. Not having a decent home adversely affects all areas of a person's life - from their health, to their achievement at school if they are a child, and their ability to get work if they are an adult. Conversely, if they are struggling with their health or their employment, this may in turn affect their housing needs and the security of their home.

Homelessness can affect everyone. Stable situations can quickly change due to domestic violence and abuse, unemployment and relationship breakdowns, to name a few. In many cases people find their own solutions, often with the help of friends and family, whilst others need support due to underlying health problems and lack of financial resources.

Tackling homelessness remains a key priority in Adur and Worthing. Compared with prevention, homelessness is costly. Not only in terms of the consequences for the individuals involved but also to local communities and the taxpayer. Early identification and intervention is important to increase the chances of successfully preventing homelessness. Identifying the support and skills individuals and families need to attain and sustain accommodation requires a holistic and collaborative approach, with multi-agency assessments and action planning where appropriate

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness and homelessness services in their area, and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review.

This strategy has been developed collaboratively by partners and stakeholders within Adur and Worthing community through the Homelessness Forum. The strategy reflects the common goal to identify as early as possible, individuals and families at risk of homelessness and put in place appropriate intervention to help them sustain or secure suitable accommodation.

This strategy aims to build on the multi-agency and partnership work already in place and also where possible, to mitigate the effects of welfare reform and its impact on homeless households.

This strategy contributes to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy<sup>1</sup> to develop a more systematic approach so that services can integrate more easily, and to reduce gaps and duplication. This strategy will be overseen by the Adur and Worthing Homelessness Forum which is a partnership of both statutory and voluntary organisations in Adur District and Worthing Borough.

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<sup>1</sup> West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2018, Priority 2 - Wellbeing and Resilience

## **2.0 THE POLICY & LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND**

The strategy has been developed against a backdrop of unprecedented change in national policy.

### **2.1 ‘Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness’**

This is the Government’s cross-departmental report on tackling homelessness through early prevention and integrated services. Published in 2012, it sets out the Government’s approach to tackling the causes of homelessness focusing on prevention, early intervention and a local response. The report includes ten local challenges for local authorities to meet to achieve the highest homelessness standards. The challenges have been adopted and developed into a framework by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS).

### **2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 builds on both the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002. The new Act goes further and requires local housing authorities to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a ‘priority need’. It builds on the preventative approach in the 2002 Act, by requiring named public authorities to notify the housing authority if someone they are working with is facing homelessness. In addition to the duties under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), local authorities now have two new duties

- Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness: Councils will have to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness: Councils will have to help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are ‘intentionally homeless’ or priority need.

### **2.3 Welfare Reforms and the introduction of Universal Credit**

Welfare reforms policies are the single biggest influence on most partners’ service delivery over the next five years. The reforms will have significant implications for all homelessness services in Adur District and Worthing Borough including

- Additional costs incurred including temporary accommodation costs, housing management, children’s services etc.
- Families having to move homes either within local area or out of local area
- Larger families forced to move to smaller accommodation
- Increased debt and rent arrears leading to increased risk of eviction and housing management risks in terms of poor rent collection

## 3.0 LOCAL CONTEXT

### 3.1 Housing Demand

In recent years we have seen an increase in the demand for and the cost of housing in the private rental sector, private ownership, and public/social housing sector across Adur and Worthing. Market pressures (in particular growing house and rental prices) and government policies are presenting challenges for the Councils and our partners to meet this growing need within our community. Population increases and migration, combined with limited supply have seen rents and house prices increase.

Adur & Worthing Councils (AWC) have attempted to address this through their respective Local Plans - however land constraints mean that the Councils are not in the position to meet Objectively Assessed Need (OAN).

The full OAN for Worthing to 2033 is 12,720 dwellings or 636 per year, which would represent a 25 per cent increase in dwellings in 20 years. The annual housing need figure for Worthing increases to 865 dwellings per annum. It should be noted that the average level of housing delivery over the last 5 years is 280 dwellings per annum.

The OAN for Adur is 325 dwellings per annum (6,825 dwellings 2011-2032). Due to constraints, the Adur Local Plan indicates a delivery target of 3,718 dwellings (177 dwellings per annum) from 2011-2032. The annual average delivery rate from 2011/12 - 2015/15 has been 121 dwellings per annum gross (112 dwellings per annum net).

### 3.2 Homelessness

Adur and Worthing have seen a rise in the number of people presenting homeless. This has resulted in an increase in the demand for temporary accommodation. Between April 2016 and March 2017, AWC made 321 statutory homeless decisions (Adur 81, Worthing 240). Of these,

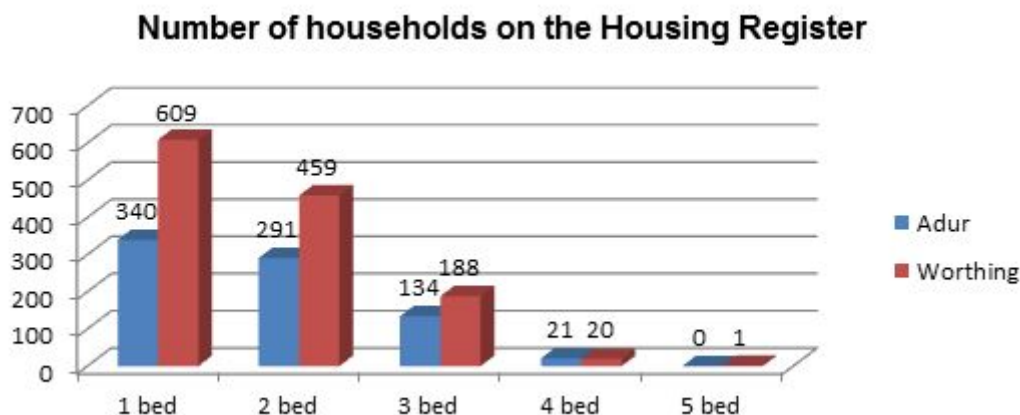
- 119 were accepted as owed full housing duty (Adur 31, Worthing 88)
- 37 were found to be intentionally homeless (Adur 7, Worthing 30)
- 96 were found not to be in priority need (Adur 27, Worthing 69)

The table below is a breakdown by household type of those accepted as owed the main housing duty.

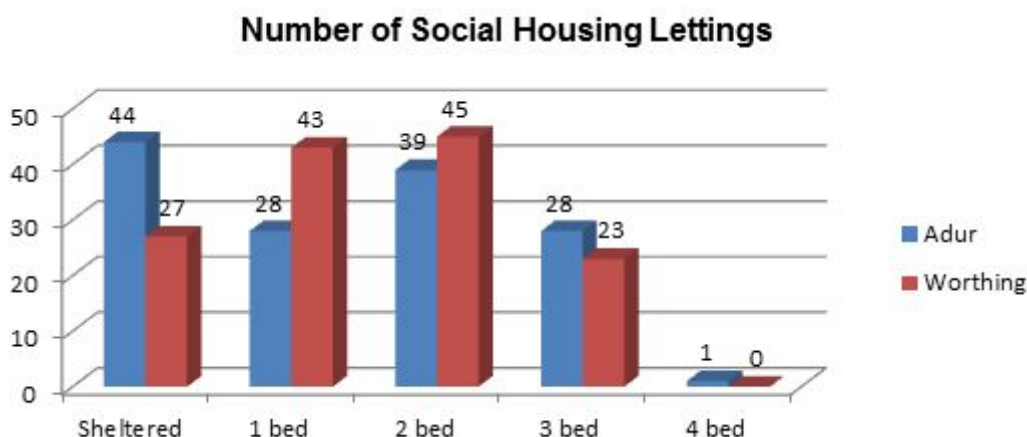
Household Type	Adur	Worthing	Total
Couple with dependent children	11	15	26
Lone parent household with dependent children	14	52	66
Single person household	6	19	25
All other household groups	0	2	2
<b>Total Accepted households</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>119</b>

### 3.3 Demand for social housing

Housing Services processed 576 new applications for the housing register in 2016/17. Of these applications, 183 were from Adur and 393 were from Worthing.



The graph above shows the number of households on the housing registers as at 23.05.2017. There were 786 households on Adur District's register and 1277 on Worthing Borough's housing register.

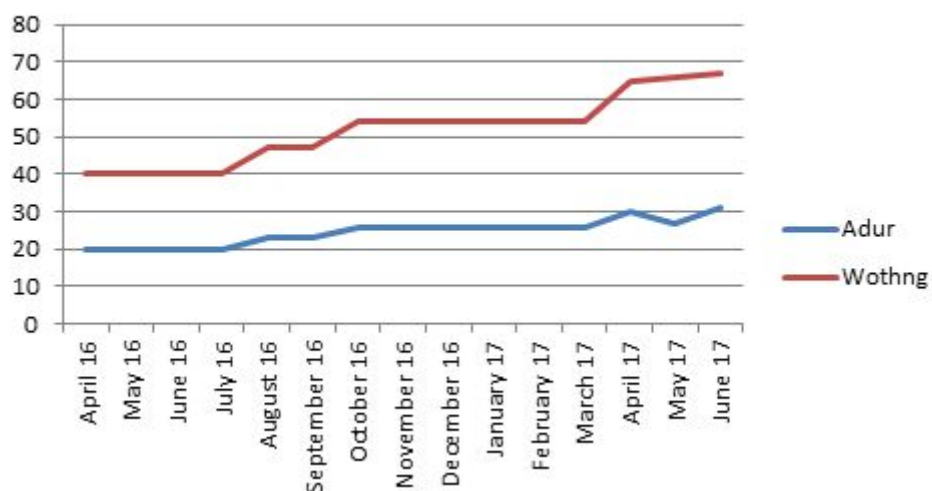


More than half of those on each register have a one or two bedroom need. In 2016/17, AWC let 259 properties through the both councils' housing registers (Adur – 127, Worthing 132). The table above shows a breakdown of these lettings.

### 3.4 Temporary Accommodation

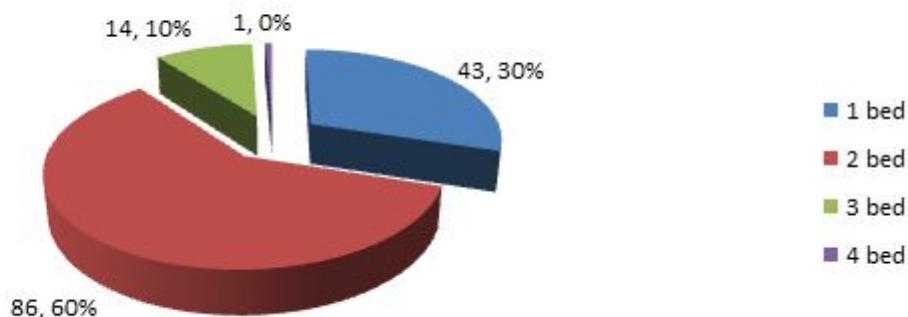
There has been a significant increase in the number of households presenting homeless on the day, resulting in an increase in demand for emergency accommodation. For these households, prevention is almost too late when they present. Households in emergency accommodation have increased by an average of 35% over a 14 month period for both Adur and Worthing.

### Households in emergency accommodation



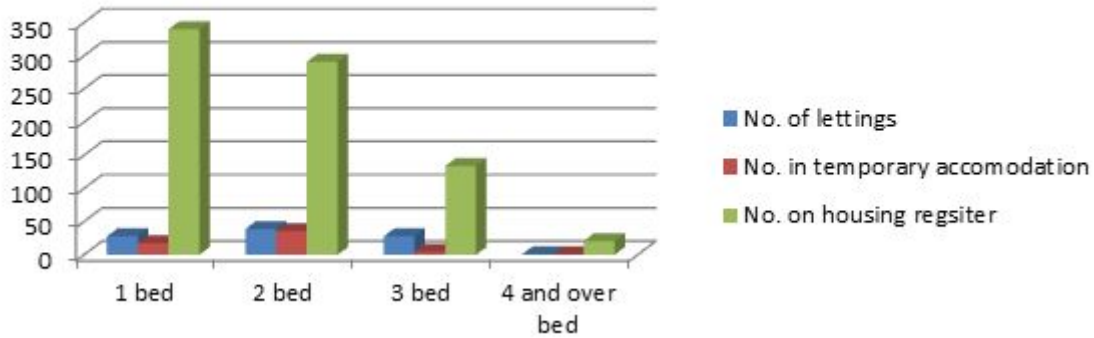
Households are staying longer in temporary accommodation while they wait for social housing. The demand for social housing is significantly more than the supply available. Some households only bid on a limited choice of areas, while some will only bid for houses but not flats.

### Bedroom size need of households in temporary accommodation in both Adur and Worthing

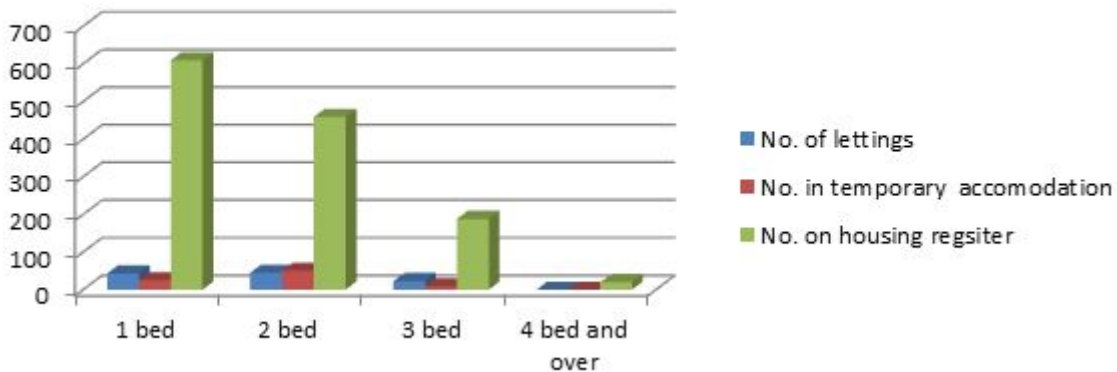


As at 23.05.2017, nearly 90% of all households in temporary accommodation were waiting for either a 1 or 2 bedroom property. Below is a comparison of the households on the housing registers with the number of properties let between April 2016 and March 2017. The demand for 1 and 2 bedroom properties is significantly higher than the available supply.

### Social housing supply and demand - Adur



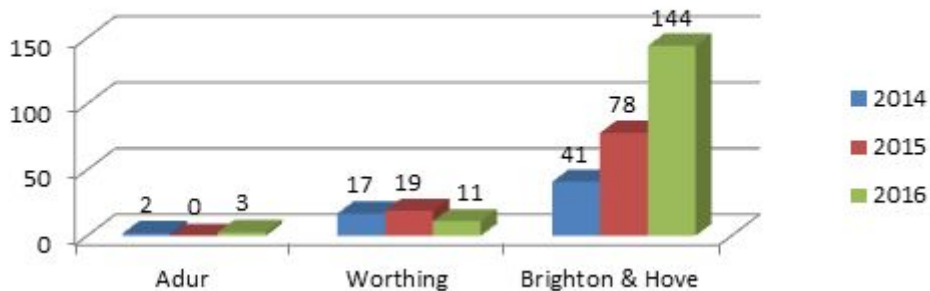
### Social housing supply and demand - Worthing



### 3.5 Rough Sleeping

The vast majority of people who are homeless and not in priority need are single or childless households. These group of people are more likely to be ‘sofa surfing’ with friends or relatives, or literally roofless and some sleeping on the street. The figures in the charts below are based on figures submitted annually by local authorities to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

### Level of Rough Sleeping (2014 - 2016)



A rough sleeper count done on 08 November 2017, identified 19 people sleeping rough in Worthing and none in Adur. However, based on intelligence we believe there are 35 in Worthing and 2 in Adur.



## **4.0 HOMELESSNESS REVIEW**

### **4.1 Approach to consultation**

Consultation to inform the draft Strategy included

- Two multi-agency focus groups one on preventing homelessness among families and the other on preventing homelessness among single households
- Interviews with residents who had experience homelessness
- local authority meetings covering homelessness
- individual officer meetings and contact with partner organisations

### **4.2 Summary of the findings from consultation**

The focus groups concentrated on four main issues

- How do we make preventing homelessness everyone's business?
- What advice and information do households need to achieve sustainable tenancies and independent living?
- Where else can families find affordable housing?
- If Temporary accommodation is not the solution, what is?

Below is a summary of the findings from the consultations

- All agencies need to be involved in early identification and early intervention to increase the chances of preventing homelessness
- First points of contacts need better and quicker access to the homeless prevention assistance the Councils' provide and AWC Housing service's specialist knowledge on housing regulations
- Proactive homeless prevention should be rewarded or incentivised rather than statutory homeless solutions
- An evictions reduction protocol is required to reduce evictions from social housing and supported accommodation
- A pathway style approach to joined up working will create a structured and clearer method of preventing homelessness
- An open minded approach is required to utilising all forms of housing supply e.g. Containers, dormitories in universities during off season
- MARAC style meetings are useful for complex cases that require multi-agency intervention
- Incentives and support are needed to assist households relocate to affordable accommodation out of the Councils' area
- AWC and all agencies need to collate and share data to better understand key issues and trends on housing demand and supply and also to help manage expectation within the community

## **5.0 KEY PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS**

### **5.1 What have we done so far?**

#### Adur and Worthing Rough Sleepers Team

This team is a partnership involving AWC, Worthing Churches Homeless Project (WCHP), Probation, Change Grow Live (CGL), Southdown, Health Central Surgery (NHS), Sussex Police and STORM Ministries. The team which meets weekly is focused on preventing rough sleeping. The team targets vulnerable adults at risk of sleeping rough, those sleeping on the streets for the first time, known sleep site hot spots and those who have been supported off the streets. This multiagency effort has improved communication between the services and outcomes for those sleeping rough.

#### The Mental Health and Homelessness Strategic Group

The Mental Health and Homelessness Strategic Group utilises Systems Leadership methods to ensure a holistic client centred approach which enables the system to deliver a service that supports the needs of people with mental health who were at risk of homelessness.

A group of frontline professionals from various services were asked to “develop productive connections, activate and generate new ideas to help each other and promote key ideas which can be communicated to the Strategic Group”. Using the MEAM approach, the professionals delivered a multi-agency led intervention to a specified cohort of locally identified people who had multiple and complex needs. The individuals the pilot worked with recorded an improvement in their health, successes in attaining suitable accommodation, and reduction in Accident and Emergency attendances and a reduction in Police intervention<sup>2</sup>.

The success of the pilot led to a successful bid to DCLG for WCHP to recruit two complex need workers. The workers hold the most complex cases in Adur and Worthing (based on chaos Index assessments). This MEAM pilot has now been developed to create a Single Homeless MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) with representations from WCHP, AWC, Police, CGL, Sussex Partnership Trust Probation, NHS. This group will coordinate interventions and improve outcomes for people with complex needs who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.

#### Single Persons Sub Group

This group, a subgroup of the Homelessness Forum, has been tasked with working with supported housing providers to agree an evictions protocol and

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<sup>2</sup> Worthing Making Every Adult Matter Pilot Evaluation Report

defining a pathway for single persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. A clearer pathway will provide agencies with the relevant information to assist single people to access the support they need. It will also create an integrated approach to preventing homelessness among agencies that work with this client group, reducing the need for single people to sleep on the street.

## 5.2 Our Key Priorities

This strategy aims to help create the conditions for more successful homelessness preventions. Partners and stakeholders involved in producing this strategy accept the need to reduce the number of households presenting homeless on the day, eliminate the need for anyone discharged from an institution needing to sleep on the streets and increase the resilience in our communities wherever possible.

The 2017-21 Strategy contains three key priorities

**Prevention** - Maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness through an enhanced housing options provision

**Partnership** - Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness

**Pathways** - Reduce the risk of single people sleeping rough

These key priorities contributes towards achieving Platform 4 (Services and Solutions for our Places) of Platforms for our places and the Councils' Housing Matters Strategy 2017- 2020.

The Councils' social housing allocation policies, which will also be reviewed, will encourage and support households to proactively prevent homelessness.

## **PRIORITY ONE**

### **PREVENTION - Maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness through enhanced housing options**

#### Why is this a priority?

We want to build on the resilience in our community by increasing the opportunities individuals and families have to access advice and assistance to prevent homelessness.

#### How will we do this?

- Develop a self-help housing options tool
- Make appropriate advice and information on housing options, tenancy sustainment and homelessness services available through various media
- Improve opportunities for early identification and intervention
- Improve opportunities for joint work among agencies to identify and provide holistic support to households at risk of homelessness
- Raise awareness of homeless, financial responsibility, budgeting skills and help services using a targeted campaign through social media channels, websites and other relevant institutions e.g. schools and colleges, libraries.
- Positive use of enforcement powers to discourage rogue landlords and improve housing conditions
- Develop a better understanding of homelessness in the area through better data collection and sharing.
- Ensure the limited supply of social housing is used effectively to maximise homelessness prevention

## **PRIORITY TWO**

### **PARTNERSHIPS - Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness**

#### Why is this a priority?

We want to identify those at risk of homelessness as early as possible and work with them to remove or reduce this risk. This requires more agencies being involved in identifying the risk of homelessness among those they support and work collaboratively to manage such risk.

#### How will we do this?

- Strengthen existing partnership working arrangements to achieve a better homeless prevention outcome
- Achieve a better understanding of the needs of all categories of homeless households or those at risk of homelessness
- Reduce evictions from social housing through targeted multi-agency support

**PRIORITY THREE**

**PATHWAYS - Reduce the risk of single people sleeping rough**

Why is this a priority?

We want to eliminate the need for anyone discharged from an institution needing to sleep on the streets and reduce the risk of vulnerable people sleeping rough

How will we do this?

- Explore opportunities to develop a vulnerable adults pathway
- Explore opportunities to establish an integrated homeless prevention service for single people
- Vulnerable single people with complex needs who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough received specialist support from a multidisciplinary team
- Establish a protocol with hospitals to ensure no one is discharged to the streets

No	Action	How	Target	Partners	Lead	Outcome
<b>Priority 1: Prevention - Maximising opportunities to prevent homelessness through an enhanced housing options provision</b>						
1.1	Develop a self-help housing options tool	The new Sussex Homemove IT system will include an online self-help housing options tool.	Apr 2018	Sussex Homemove Partners	AWC	Relevant information and advice can be accessed quicker by those at risk of homelessness
1.2	Review and revise current information available on housing and homelessness services	Information is available online and through leaflets on housing options and support available to prevent homelessness across different tenures	Apr 2018	AWC	AWC	Relevant information and advice can be accessed quicker by those at risk of homelessness
1.3	Improve opportunities for early identification and intervention	Through the 'Preventing Homelessness Project' work more agencies are able to identify early signs of risk of homelessness	Dec 2018	AWC	AWC	All agencies look out for early indicators of homelessness and provide early intervention or signpost appropriate
1.4		Frontline officer across all agencies have access to information and advice to be able to provide intervention or	Dec 2018	AWC	AWC	All agencies are able to access appropriate advice to provide early intervention or signpost to appropriate service

		signpost to appropriately				
1.5	Improve opportunities for more joint work among all agencies to identify and provide holistic support to households at risk of homelessness	Agencies carry out more joint assessments and create multidisciplinary action plans to better support households at risk of homelessness	Oct 2018	AWC	AWC	Households receive holistic and multidisciplinary support to prevent homelessness and sustain existing accommodation
1.6	Create a pathway to access advice and assistance on managing debt and maximising income	Work with DWP, CA and other services to ensure advice on debt and money management is available	Oct 2018	AWC CA DWP	AWC	Households and agencies are able to access advice and assistance on managing debt and their finances.
1.7	Raise awareness of homeless, financial responsibility, budgeting skills and help services using a targeted campaign through social media channels, websites and other relevant institutions e.g. schools and colleges, libraries.	Develop short information films that can be shared on social media and websites and in schools, colleges, relevant forums etc	Mar 2018	AWC	AWC	Improve households' resilience to prevent homelessness occurring throughout their lifetime
1.8		Involve schools and colleges in the Preventing Homelessness Project		AWC Schools Colleges		
1.9	Maximise homeless prevention through effective use of	Review the Councils' Allocation Policy	Mar 2019	AWC		The Allocations Policy supports and rewards homeless

	social housing allocation					
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**Priority 2: Partnerships - Creating strong partnerships to tackle homelessness**

2.1	Strengthen existing partnership working arrangements to achieve a better homeless prevention outcome	Explore opportunities to deliver a joined up service through co-location of frontline officers	Oct 2018	All agencies		
		Explore opportunities to carry out joint assessments and joint action planning which include actions to prevent homelessness	Oct 2018	All agencies		
		Share specialist knowledge and improve access to services through the Directory of Services	Mar 2018	All agencies		Detailed and specialist knowledge based within other agencies is accessible to support professionals who are working with families and/or individuals through a key contact



2.2	To collect and analysis wider homelessness prevention data across various agencies	Develop and implement a format for collecting and sharing multi agency data through the Homelessness Forum	Oct 2018	Housing Services CA WCHP Southdown Hospitals IOMS		There is a better understanding of the needs of homeless households in the area, any trends and how to make best use of the available resources
2.3	Reduce evictions from social housing through targeted multi agency support	A protocol is established with social landlords, Housing services and other relevant agencies on targeting support at tenants at risk of losing their tenancies	Mar 2019	RPs Supported housing providers AWC Housing services Southdown WSCC		Those at risk becoming homeless from social housing receive multi agency support to sustain their accommodation
	Reduce evictions from private rented sector and increase supply available through better relationship and support for private landlords	Provide a single point of contact where landlords can access information and assistance	Oct 2018	AWC	AWC	Landlords able to receive free advice on how to ensure their property meets the required standard and
		Review Opendoor Scheme to ensure it provides better support to landlords and prospective tenants including rent in advance and deposit	Oct 2018	AWC	AWC	

		Continue to work with the National Landlord Association to improve relationship with landlords		AWC	AWC	
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**Priority 3: Pathways - Reduce the risk of single people sleeping rough**

3.1	Explore opportunities to develop a vulnerable adults pathway	The Single Persons Homeless sub group will develop a pathway for vulnerable adults	Apr 2019	All agencies		There is an integrated approach to preventing homelessness among agencies that work with single people with a consistent and fair process for accessing supported housing and planned moves to independence
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3.2		The Single Person's subgroup will work with supported housing providers to agree an evictions protocol	Apr 2018	Single Persons Subgroup		All evictions from supported housing follow a coherent process and reflects best practice
3.3	Explore opportunities to establish an integrated homeless prevention service for single people	Create a single point where single people can have access to a wide range of services and support to improve their wellbeing and prevent homelessness	Dec 2018	All		Single people are able to receive holistic and multidisciplinary support to improve their wellbeing and prevent homelessness
3.4	Vulnerable single people with complex needs who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough received specialist support from a multidisciplinary team	The MEAM Team will coordinate interventions and improve outcomes for people with complex needs at sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough		WCHP AWC CGL Police NHS WSCC	MEAM MARA C	

3.5	Establish a multi agency protocol with hospitals to ensure no one is discharged/evicted to the streets by all providers	Work with the local Community Networks to establish a protocol for identifying those in hospital at risk of homelessness	Oct 2018	All		
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**Abbreviations**

AWC	Adur & Worthing Councils
CA	Citizens Advice (formerly Citizens' Advice Bureau)
CGL	Change Live Grow
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
IOMS	Integrated Offender Management Services
MEAM	Make Every Adult Matter
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NHS	National Health Services
Police	Sussex Police
RP	Registered Providers
WCHP	Worthing Churches Homeless Project
WSSC	West Sussex County Council