

Report To:	EXECUTIVE CABINET
Date:	20 June 2018
Executive Member/Reporting Officer:	Councillor Gerald Cooney – Executive Member (Economic Growth and Housing) Emma Varnam – Assistant Director (Operations and Neighbourhoods)
Subject:	PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-21
Report Summary:	<p>This draft strategy aims to bring about a borough wide cultural change in our approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in Tameside Borough. It advocates a holistic and integrated approach to Preventing Homelessness which tackles the complexity of issues which can result in homelessness. It aims to broaden and deepen constructive collaboration between services, partner organisations, the Faith sector, and members of the community. It seeks to foster capacity to cultivate creative solutions to the ever-increasing problem of homelessness and focuses effort and resources to address the specific needs of the Borough. It complies with new statutory requirements which have been introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</p> <p>An inclusive and participatory approach was taken to develop this strategy. At the outset, key stakeholders were given the opportunity to shape the development of this strategy. The Preventing Homelessness multi-agency forum and the Registered Providers Forum were at the centre of its development and a project team with representatives from key services, led by the Senior Housing Strategy Officer, was set up.</p> <p>This strategy supports the Council and its partners to deliver Tameside Borough priorities and the GM pledges to prevent homelessness. This strategy will have an action plan with resources allocated to it and officers assigned to each action. This is currently under development.</p>
Recommendations:	That Executive Cabinet agrees the Preventing Homelessness Strategy for 2018/2021
Links to Community Strategy:	The strategy supports the corporate priority to support the most vulnerable
Policy Implications:	Preventing homelessness is a cross cutting policy area and this strategy will inform related strategies, policies and plans
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any actions taken must be contained within current resources.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The strategy must be renewed at least every 5 years. The social services authority must provide reasonable assistance.

The strategy must set out the 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.

Statutory guidance requires that the homelessness strategy is taken into account by Housing Services and Social Services when exercising their function

Risk Management:

A risk log and mitigation measures have been developed. Risk is considered in section 7 of this report

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer, Emma Varnam by:



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tameside Borough's draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy for 2018-2021 advocates a holistic and integrated response to preventing homelessness. It reinforces our commitment to work together to identify at an early stage potential risks and to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness before households reach the point of crisis. A one page summary of the draft strategy is provided in **Appendix 1** of this report. The strategy is supported by detailed appendices that are available on request.
- 1.2 This strategy has the support of local authority services and partners. Corporate and partnership involvement was secured in identifying the strategic priorities and this has helped to ensure that all relevant services and agencies are committed to supporting their delivery.
- 1.3 This strategy:
- Outlines the key achievements of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 and provides examples of new evidence-based initiatives which have recently been implemented.
 - Presents the national context of the new strategy in terms of legislation and policy and also the local policy and demographic context.
 - Explains how the strategy was developed and identifies its links with other key strategies and programmes that encompass aspects of local health and wellbeing, justice, economic policy, poverty and domestic abuse amongst other things
 - Describes homelessness in Tameside, the causes and those who may be at risk of homelessness.
 - Presents our approach to preventing homelessness and our strategic priorities.
 - States how we will identify homelessness issues and collect information to measure and monitor progress.
- 1.4 A detailed strategic action plan is currently under development and will set out the actions we will take to help prevent even more people from becoming homeless and provide tailored support to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At a national level homelessness is increasing and projections indicate that it is set to continue to rise in the coming years. There is an increased likelihood of becoming homeless due to the lack of availability and affordability of housing, changes to the benefit system through the Welfare Reform, and a range of risk factors. The National Audit Office (2017) in their recent report on homelessness have shown that homelessness has increased across all measures since 2010, with many local authorities now seeing it as a risk to their financial stability. The report states that the ending of private sector tenancies has overtaken all other causes to become the biggest single driver of statutory homelessness in England.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Monitor annual report (Crisis 2017) has predicted that there will be a surge in homeless families. This report shows that 70% of local authorities in England are struggling to find any stable housing for homeless people in their area, while 89% reported difficulties in finding private rented accommodation. The private rented sector is the largest rented sector in England but its ability to house those on low incomes or who are homeless is largely dependent on housing benefit and, consequently, on the Government's programme of welfare reform (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015).

- 2.3 In response to this many councils have had to place even more homeless people in emergency housing. If current homelessness trends continue it is predicted that more than 100,000 households will be living in B&Bs, hostels and other forms of temporary housing by 2020 (Crisis 2017).
- 2.4 The National Audit Report (2017) highlighted the limited options which local authorities have to respond to increased homelessness. In Housing in England: overview, the National Audit Office set out its assessment of the housing market and showed that there has been a significant reduction in social housing over the past few decades. While spending by local authorities on homelessness services such as temporary accommodation has steadily increased since 2010, spending on overall housing services has fallen by 2.1% in real terms over the same period. The proportion of homeless households in temporary accommodation outside their home borough increased from 13% in March 2011 to 28% in March 2017. Almost 90% of these households are from London boroughs.
- 2.5 In response to this increase in homelessness, the government has introduced fundamental change to homelessness legislation and has pledged to end rough sleeping by 2027 and to establish the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Implementation Taskforce.
- 2.6 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which took effect on 3 April 2018 has introduced fundamental change. It aims to give local authorities more responsibility for preventing homelessness. It places duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas and requires authorities to provide homelessness services to every household who is homeless or threatened with homelessness not just those considered to be in priority need. The Department expects that these responsibilities will lead to an increase in prevention cases and a fall in the number of households and a fall in the number of households that qualify for temporary accommodation.
- 2.7 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person who is at risk of homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live. The legislation has extended the period for which people are considered threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days before they are likely to become homeless. This is to ensure that local housing authorities can intervene earlier to avert a crisis.

3. TAMESIDE BOROUGH'S HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

- 3.1 A detailed review of homelessness in Tameside was undertaken to provide an evidence-based Preventing Homelessness Strategy for 2018-2021. This review has provided a clear picture of homelessness within the Borough. The review involved gathering and analysing both Qualitative and Quantitative data. The Quantitative data used included:
- The national statutory homelessness data returns
 - Contract monitoring data of the homelessness services commissioned by Tameside Council
 - National research data
 - Service activity data
 - Census data
 - The Joint Strategic Needs Analysis for 2016/17
 - Tameside's Housing Needs Assessment 2017
- 3.2 At the outset, key stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in the Homelessness Review and to shape the development of this strategy. The Preventing Homelessness multi-agency forum and the Registered Providers Forum were at the centre

of the development of the strategy and a project team with representatives from key services, led by the Senior Housing Strategy Officer, was set up

3.3 Extensive consultation was undertaken. This included:

- Face to face interviews with senior managers from partner organisations which took place from September 2017 to March 2018
- Two break out groups focusing on the Preventing Homelessness Strategy attended by members of the public and representatives of partner organisations. This took place at the Tameside Partnership Engagement Network (PEN) workshop held on 13 October 2017
- The Preventing Homelessness Workshop held on 16 November 2017
- A focus group with commissioned and non-commissioned service providers in November 2017
- A focus group with staff at Tameside Housing Advice Service, Ashton under Lyne held on 15 December 2017
- An interview with representatives of the Church of the Nazarene Ashton under Lyne held on 12 December 2017
- A group interview with the manager and staff at the Women's Centre, Cavendish Mill on 6 March 2018
- A group interview with homeless men living in temporary accommodation at Greystones on 7 March 2018
- An interview with the Commissioning Officer for Supported Accommodation
- A focus group with the Working Well Board
- Face to face interviews with people with offending histories

3.4 Key messages from the Homelessness Review are:

- It is difficult to calculate how many people are homeless since many homeless people are the "hidden homeless" and do not appear in the official statistics.
- Many people perceive homelessness to be sleeping rough on the streets and are not aware that homelessness can include people:
 - Staying with friends or family
 - Staying in a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation
 - Squatting
 - At risk of violence or abuse in their home
 - Living in poor conditions that affect their health
 - Living apart from their family because they don't have a place to live together
- Demand for assistance from the Tameside Housing Advice Service has increased by 47% during the year 2017/18 compared to the level of demand in 2016/17. (This statistic does not include telephone contact.)
- The top reason for homelessness in Tameside during 2017-18 identified in the statutory homelessness returns is that other relatives or friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate. The consultation undertaken in Tameside has revealed a wide range of factors which cause homelessness.
- During the year 2017/18 there was an increase of 11% in the number of placements into all types of temporary accommodation used by Tameside Housing Advice in comparison with the number of placements made in 2016/17.
- There is a high level of demand for supported housing in Tameside. In the year 2017/18, 151 referrals were received for supported housing commissioned by Tameside Council however only 57 placements were made.
- There are a wide range of services for homeless people within the borough but not everyone is aware of the services provided. There is a need to raise awareness of these.

- There are examples of numerous initiatives from the Faith Sector in Tameside to help the homeless and a desire to prevent homelessness.
- There are untapped resources in the community which need to be nurtured and empowered to prevent homelessness.
- The Housing Needs Assessment has shown a projected increase in the 15-29 years age cohort of (3.5%) and most notably an increase of 96.9% in the 80+ years age cohort
- There is a significant increase in the number of households active on Tameside's housing register. As at 31st March 2018, there were 434 households active on the housing register in comparison to 301 for the same period in 2016/17. In quarter 4 of 2017/18, 421 new applications were received compared with 325 in the same quarter the previous year 2016/17
- The current housing offer in Tameside is focused around 2 and 3-bed properties with very few smaller and larger properties
- There is increasing demand for affordable housing, a very high demand for one bed accommodation and also a demand for housing for large families.
- Access to a wider range of affordable permanent accommodation options is needed. For example, an increase in the range of affordable options for:
 - Large families
 - Single people
 - Young people
 - Care leavers
- There are continuing financial pressures and uncertain circumstances.
- There is a dramatic increase in levels of rough sleeping in Tameside and data collected during the implementation of cold weather arrangements suggests that the number of those sleeping rough is greater than the estimate undertaken on 2 November 2017. (It should be noted that the data collected for the estimate complied with strict national criteria and was verified, whereas the number of those presenting for shelter during cold weather was a count of those who presented.)
- During the period 29 November 2017 to 31 March 2018 cold weather provision was triggered on 37 nights and there were 414 placements made available.

4. TAMESIDE BOROUGH'S DRAFT PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

- 4.1 Our vision is of a borough wide approach where those living, working and visiting Tameside understand the catastrophic effects of homelessness on the lives of people and its causes, and work together to tackle and prevent homelessness.
- 4.2 Our approach is a proactive approach to work together to identify those at risk of homelessness at the earliest stage and to prevent people from losing their homes.
- 4.3 7 strategic priorities emerged from the consultation. These include:
1. A holistic and integrated response to preventing homelessness
 2. Proactive information management
 3. Raised awareness of the causes of homelessness and services, and a shared understanding that preventing homelessness is everyone's business
 4. Early intervention before a crisis
 5. Increased resilience and targeted support
 6. Access to a wide range of affordable, permanent accommodation options
 7. Identifying, cultivating and empowering untapped resources in the community
- 4.4 The following briefly describes each strategic priority.

A Holistic and Integrated Response to Preventing Homelessness

- 4.5 The consultation undertaken clearly identified the need for more integrated holistic responses to homelessness issues. Key to this is effective cross service and multi-agency working in partnership at the outset of the issue. Working in partnership to prevent homelessness is vital in order to address the complexity of issues which may result in homelessness such as: poor mental health, debt, domestic violence, disability, an offending history, leaving care, leaving the armed forces, being discharged from hospital etc. A combination of factors may lead to a person being homeless for example, a young person leaving care, may have substance misuse problems, have poor mental health and is unemployed. Each factor needs to be addressed. A multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to arriving at solutions is needed to provide a holistic response. A range of skills, knowledge and resources need to be deployed to address the factors giving rise to homelessness.

Proactive Information Management

- 4.6 The consultation revealed the need to have a proactive approach to giving and receiving information to ensure that prompt action can be taken to prevent homelessness and timely decisions can be made about homelessness. It also demonstrated the importance of having an effective approach to obtaining a client's consent at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and ensuring that this consent covered all the partners who are engaged in this.
- 4.7 Raised Awareness of the Causes of Homelessness and Services and a Shared Understanding that Preventing Homelessness is Everyone's Business.
- 4.8 The consultation revealed the need to raise awareness of all forms of homelessness, the causes of homelessness and the preventing homelessness services which are available to them. The consultation showed that there was a lack of knowledge about some of the homelessness services available in Tameside and a need to raise awareness about the new homelessness legislation.
- 4.9 The consultation indicated the need to work with schools and colleges to target those aged 16, 17 and 18 to provide information about housing, preventing homelessness, and to enable them to develop realistic expectations about the accommodation options which may be available.

Early Intervention before a Crisis

- 4.10 The main theme emerging from the consultation was that homeless people are not considered a priority until they reach crisis point. This could make people misrepresent their circumstances or put themselves at greater risk to get help. This strategy aims to promote intervention at the earliest opportunity and put in place triggers for the early identification of those at risk of becoming homeless.

Increased Resilience and Targeted Support

- 4.11 The consultation suggested that there were gaps in support. This strategy advocates a targeted approach to support to those who need it and the importance of promoting the resilience.
- 4.12 In 2016/17, the Council reduced the financial resources allocated to supported housing for single homeless people by 60%, reducing the number of available spaces from 111 to 47. This has severely hampered the Council's ability to prevent homelessness via a placement in supported housing.

Access to a Wider Range of Affordable Accommodation Options

- 4.13 The data revealed that the housing labelled "affordable" was not in fact affordable. It showed the lack of affordable housing, the lack of large houses for families, and the need for more longer-term accommodation options for single people.

Identifying, Cultivating and Empowering Untapped Resources in the Community

- 4.14 The consultation demonstrated a commitment within the community to prevent homelessness and a desire to provide help but in some instances, they lacked the technical skills, contacts and knowledge to take forward initiatives. This strategy aims to identify, cultivate and empower untapped resources and remove barriers which could prevent them from playing a full part in working together to prevent homelessness.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The success of this strategy relies on partnership working and requires the full engagement of all partners and services.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is currently under development. This complies with the requirements of the public sector duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.2 There is strong evidence that homeless people suffer from multiple disadvantages. Homelessness is not just one of the most extreme forms of physical deprivation; it also defines a group that is subject to extreme forms of discrimination and violence. It is anticipated that the Preventing Homelessness Strategy will have a positive impact upon the protected groups.

7.0 RISKS

- 7.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Section 1(4), we are required to publish a new Preventing Homelessness Strategy in 2018, based on the results of a homelessness review. Our former Preventing Homelessness Strategy covers the period 2013/2018. A failure to agree and implement an effective Preventing Homelessness strategy in 2018 could increase the risk that the local authority will fail to comply with its statutory obligations.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 As detailed at the front of this report.