

Rochdale Borough Council Homelessness Strategy DRAFT

Intro

This strategy update represents Rochdale Borough Councils commitment to continue to empower and support vulnerable people in the community to prevent homelessness. Preventing Homelessness is a key priority and recognises that having a safe and secure home is a cornerstone requirement for people to be part of, to contribute to and flourish in the Borough. While Homelessness Prevention is the key outcome, the strategic theme is one of Partnership.

The strong partnerships that deliver current outcomes will need to be developed and strengthened to help us to maximise the potential use of resources and while services within the Council are beginning to work far more closely, this needs to be extended across all partners. The review has revealed high levels of experience and expertise, many examples of innovative approaches and beacons of success enabling people to achieve good outcomes but still many cases of single agencies trying to deliver holistic approaches. Over the next 3 years the Homelessness Strategy will seek to build upon the shared principles of homelessness prevention and housing sustainability to create a more joined up and seamless delivery of appropriate support.

The Aim of Rochdale's Homelessness Strategy is to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation, advice, support and assistance to enable people to live sustainable lifestyles.

The Strategy will describe through a thematic Delivery plan how we will:

- Provide timely interventions for people at risk of homelessness
- Provide pathways to short term and long term accommodation for those at risk of homelessness
- Contribute to the improvement of the health and wellbeing of people at risk of homelessness
- Prevent Rough Sleeping

As part of the Strategy we will support the need to provide:

- Good housing options services that are well informed and accessible
- Access to short term and supported accommodation to enable people to address issues and be better placed to identify longer term housing solutions.
- Support people to Move on and sustain their housing.

Under the Current Strategy there are a number of key areas that we need to continue to work towards and retain:

- Prevention
- Pathways to sustainable housing for young people
- Move On
- Better joined up working

Since 2010 the challenge for Rochdale has been to be able to continue to meet the needs of people at risk of homelessness and to enable and support people towards more independent living against diminishing public sector funding and a challenging economic environment.

Over the last 3 years significant progress has been made in all areas – some more effective than others. Service providers have been successful in continuing to innovate and to promote new and more effective ways of providing people with the type of support that they need in order to achieve lasting changes in their lives.

The strategy also recognises the role and opportunity to align Housing and Homelessness strategies with the broader Council aims to promote a prevention culture that will see a greater emphasis on engaging with the wider community to improve access to more timely support; earlier interventions and, early support.

Just as improving the health and wellbeing and economic prosperity for citizens of the borough is everyone's business, preventing homeless is of equal importance. Without a settled environment, achieving good health and wellbeing and being able to contribute to the community either through work or volunteering or just being a good neighbour is not possible. This strategy refresh goes hand in hand with and takes a lead from the Councils wider Prevention and Wellbeing Strategy, the Mental Health Strategy and Economic Development for the Borough.

1. Strategic Review

The Strategic review has been overseen by the Homelessness Strategy Board that has representation from elected members and key strategic partners and stakeholders. The Board meets jointly 4 times a year with the Borough of Rochdale Homelessness Action and Information Network (BRHAIN). BRHAIN is the main body that brings together third sector, voluntary and statutory services, and stakeholders with a shared interest in resolving and preventing homelessness. Stakeholders and providers were invited to be part of a Strategy Group that has helped to undertake the review and form the final strategy on behalf of the Council. A key part of the review has been to identify and consult upon current and future issues and in 2015 the Group undertook a Homelessness Survey, and this strategy has been informed and influenced in part by the information that the Strategy group gathered.

The Survey asked contributors to recognise barriers to enabling prevention and sustaining housing; how housing and homelessness issues impact upon people's health and wellbeing and how agencies can contribute to improving outcomes. It also recognised how a more joined up approach could contribute to better outcomes and better use of resources. As well as recognising some inspirational and excellent work being undertaken that can help share and inform future service development, it also recognised some common themes and common barriers to enabling people to achieve successful outcomes.

All ideas and every issue raised could not be included in the development of the Delivery Plan that will drive the future direction of the Councils strategic aims, but common themes around better partnership working, stronger strategic direction, practical measures to help households at risk and to create a more collaborative approach to assisting excluded households are included.

2. Homelessness

Since the last Strategic Review in 2012, demand for assistance has increased and numbers of contacts to statutory services has increased from just fewer than 5,000 in 2013/14 to nearly 16,000 in 2015/16. Although there has been an increase in telephone inquiries over the last two years, somewhere in the region of 1,500 households have been seen via appointments or drop in services. Similarly there has been an upward trend in the number of homelessness assessments reaching their full term although the trend across Greater Manchester (GM) has seen a steady increase in the number of Priority Households, in the Borough this has been static in the region of 300 households in each of the last 2 years.

The table below shows number of priority household by quarter

Year	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
2014/15	93	78	68	63	302
2015/16	66	67	63	89	285

Going hand in hand with the increased numbers of inquiries has been the continued demand and high occupancy rates of most types of supported and temporary accommodation and a waiting list for households seeking support via the Adult Care commissioned floating support services.

Move on for households that have to use temporary and supported accommodation has become more difficult and the average period of time in accommodation at the Homeless Families Unit and Single Household Unit has increased from 12.5 weeks in 2014 to 14.5 weeks in 2016. For individuals using specialist housing services such as Stepping Stone Projects, rehousing is taking far longer.

Although supply has generally been able to cope with demand there continues to be intermittent use of B&B type accommodation. However, numbers of households with children having to use temporary accommodation has remained constant although this is partially due to an increase in refugee households over the last 2 years. The Council are determined to do all it can to prevent households with children from being placed in B&B type accommodation. The Council does not use B&B accommodation to house unaccompanied children. The table below shows number of children accommodated over the last 2 years.

	2014-2015	2015-2016
Number of children in B&B*	15	12
Number of children in Temp Accommodation	220	440

**NB Most households with children placed out of hours.*

3. Causes of Homelessness

The main causes of homelessness amongst priority households is Domestic Abuse, termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and Refugee households that have come to the Borough as part of the Asylum Dispersal programme. However, the greatest proportion of households that present for advice and assistance are single white males aged between 25 -45 years.

During the last review we identified that the general demography of households seeking advice and assistance had become much broader with a higher number of owner occupiers and households that are in employment or partial benefit seeking help. This trend has continued although numbers at risk due to mortgage default have reduced slightly. The continued funding of a bespoke service through the Councils partnership with CAB has been a key tool in helping households at risk of mortgage default. As well as being able to support households in liaising with the Courts and negotiating with lenders, a common aspect with these households are that they have multiple debts and have often entered into poorly advised or higher risk financial agreements.

Although there has been an increase in numbers of households becoming at risk of homelessness that are in paid employment or in receipt of partial benefit, the overwhelming majority of households seeking advice and support are fully reliant upon welfare benefits. While the secondary aim of most services and agencies is to enable people to achieve sustainable outcomes that includes help to get into work, access to and problems with benefit payments and the compounding effects of personal debt are significant factors in many cases. For example, in the last quarter of 2016 over

100 individuals at risk of homelessness in Middleton sought advice and support from Brentwood primarily around debt and benefit issues.

4. Prevention

Prevention has been the key priority for all services and partner agencies and we have continued to achieve year on year improvements in the number of households that are either prevented from becoming homeless or are helped to find somewhere to live before they become homeless. In the last full year +1700 households prevented from becoming homeless was reported to Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Rochdale continues to be in the top half of best performing Boroughs across Greater Manchester (GM). Much of this has been enabled through a continued commitment to partnership working across a number of third sector agencies and partners some of which are commissioned and many that have enhanced their services by bringing in additional funding from elsewhere. The colocation of Homelessness services within Rochdale Boroughwide Housing has also added to the numbers supported through housing options and prevention work. The Council acknowledges that without the support of partners across the Borough, that far fewer households would be able to achieve successful prevention outcomes.

Prevention is effective when it is timely and where possible can be aligned to individual issues and in the past it has often been due to a flexible and pragmatic approach. While longer term aims will always be to enable a household to achieve resilience and independence, there are times when direct action is what is required. In the past, services were able to make use of DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant and although this is still nominally part of the total government funding that the Council receives, it is subsumed within current costs that help pay for the delivery of the Homelessness service on behalf of the Council by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing. One of the key aims of the Delivery plan will be for partner agencies under the BRHAIN umbrella agencies to seek to acquire a Prevention fund that would be available for one off payments that can prevent an immediate or longer term threat of homelessness.

Further to this, previously Homelessness services and agencies were able to prevent immediate homelessness or loss of temporary accommodation through a more flexible arrangement to provide transfers between services or to share support delivery. This was particularly effective when trying to establish a more stable environment for chaotic individuals. The delivery plan will seek to re-establish these principles initially through the development of a Case managed approach based upon shared principles although, in the future, the Council would seek to embed partnership agreements amongst any services commissioned. The strategy will promote the idea of services working in partnership that will enable service users to retain some continuity with support workers and that where agencies are working together to identify a lead partner.

The Council will seek to continue to provide or facilitate support for all households at risk of homelessness and in particular to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available to all priority households that are unable to find their own solution including households experiencing domestic abuse, households with children, young people previously cared for and those at risk as a result of mortgage default. However, the Council recognises that resolving homelessness and supporting people to find suitable housing is vital for the economic and community wellbeing of the Borough.

5. Rough Sleeping

Partners have worked together to try and maintain the Councils commitment to No Second Night Out (NSNO) and to ensure that no one is at risk of sleeping rough particularly through periods of severe weather. In 2015 providers and partner agencies agreed to develop a new and more

formalised approach to supporting people at risk of sleeping rough and established a Cold Weather Protocol that has been adopted by service representatives of the Borough of Rochdale Homelessness Action and Information Network (BRHAIN). The number of people recorded as sleeping rough spiked significantly in November 2014 when we reported 17 to DCLG. As a result we undertook a Rough Sleeper headcount across the Borough in November 2015. Teams of volunteers visited sites across Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton and recorded only 2 individuals sleeping rough which is the lowest figure since 2003. While this is good news and indication that a more joined up approach has improved the situation, there continues to be a perception that there is an underlying issue and the evidence from partners gathered as part of the review is that there continues to be a number of people at high risk of sleeping rough and in transient and insecure arrangements. Further to this, successful attempts to support and resettle people within this cohort is often undone by other people and associates 'moving in' or destabilising secure tenancies, a term commonly referred to as Tenancy attrition or Tenancy sabotage.

Partners will continue to address and prioritise Rough Sleeping and in particular the wider issues relating to perceptions and Tenancy attrition. The Council will seek to continue to facilitate a partnership approach and where possible assertive outreach. A proposed action as part of the Delivery plan will be to seek to improve the BRHAIN website or to link it with any Borough wide initiative based upon similar models being established in other areas. This could include the development of a Community Charter that allows a broad range of agencies including statutory, voluntary, business, housing and community based to agree to work towards promoting shared solutions to resolving and actions relating to rough sleeping and associated issues.

6. Housing and Move On

Access to housing and move on for those in supported accommodation has continued to be an issue particularly for those with poor housing records and those that are excluded by social landlords. The introduction of welfare reform has exasperated this in a number of cases with some households building up rent arrears due to reduced HB or in some cases benefit sanctions. Nearly all social landlords have introduced 'rent in advance' and all continue to operate exclusions for households with previously unaddressed rent arrears and costs, in some cases going back years. In addition, social landlords are now providing pre-tenancy assessment with prospective tenants to look at whether the household will be able to afford the property and to work them on developing personal financial strategies to help them sustain their housing. Providers are very reluctant to offer tenancies for any household they consider cannot afford to sustain.

Recent research shared across the Housing partnership has already recognised that there are proportionality higher numbers of families relying upon benefit in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) in the Borough compared to similar boroughs. While this will be partially due to demand for households wishing to live within a number of key neighbourhoods such as central Rochdale, Milkstone and Deeplish, it may also be due to barriers to social housing or a miss-match in availability and demand. However, in the last 6 months, demand for support from the councils rent guarantee scheme operated by the Bond Board has been at an all-time high. To help meet demand and to continue to grow choice and opportunity in the PRS, the Bond Board are now working with Rochdale Housing Initiative (RHI) and Strategic Housing Services (SHS) to help bring empty properties back into use. This is proving to be particularly valuable when seeking housing options for households that need specific property types or locations that cannot be met by social landlords.

While it is clear that all social landlords across the Borough have introduced new ways of trying to support households that are vulnerable to losing their homes and to assist them to take up opportunities to build personal resilience and improve health and wellbeing, there is still often a barrier to social housing for some. Some Social landlords will cite a lack of support from statutory

and other services and, while there has been a significant improvement in involvement and recognition of how housing and providers and services should work, there is still some distance to go to give landlords the confidence to house higher risk households. Hence, the refresh recognises this need and will promote the development of a Case managed approach with services and partner agencies agreeing to a common way of working and sharing the lead role in delivering multi-agency responses. For many the 'customer journey' is still one where a household may pass from one service to another and from one 'key worker' to another. Households need consistency and those housing them need responsive partners.

Further to this Social landlords are seeking to be proactive and support the Council in developing housing solutions for young people and particularly around engaging in the health and wellbeing agenda. This is leading to a much better joined up approach between statutory services, council services and housing providers and we will hope that this increased partnership working will enable more vulnerable households to find housing solutions in the social housing sector.

7. Young People

Since the last Strategic review and the implementation of a joint protocol between Children's Social Care (CSC) and Strategic Housing Services, there are much better and safer pathways for any young person (16/17yr old) at risk of homeless. However the prospects for young people that are not able to remain at home or have no family or friends to support them has continued to be challenging.

In 2014 we recognised that housing options for cared for children were not good enough and SHS has been working with CSC under the guidance and leadership of the Corporate Parenting Board to improve the offer. We are able to promote a new sharers scheme and by extending the Trainer flats opportunity to young people that want to share. In addition, we are in the process of developing some creative and exciting opportunities to link housing to vocational training and employment. However, we want to go further and following a Peer assessment in 2015 we are proposing to invite all social landlords to sign up to the principles of becoming Corporate Parent and recognise that we all have a responsibility to do our best to support young people that have been in care. As part of the Councils commitment we will review how we choose to interpret intentionality when considering previously cared for young people. We will consult on a proposal to adopt the good practice being operated elsewhere that recognises that previously cared for young people that become homeless should not be excluded from further help and housing. We will need the support from all social landlords and services to help make this a reality in the Borough.

The Council is also working in partnership with a number of Boroughs and DePaul UK to provide an intensive housing and employment support service for over 40 young people that are excluded from existing housing and not in Employment Education or Training. This is being directly funded through the Social Investment Model at no financial risk to the Council. It has allowed DePaul UK the freedom to work intensively and to offer bespoke support that can best match the individual needs and issues of each young person and we will hope to benefit from the ongoing learning from this project that can be applied to the wider young community. This project has been in operation since January 2015 and 31 young people are currently in sustained accommodation and 3 have completed more than 13 weeks in fulltime employment.

8. Withdrawal of Housing Benefit 18-21yr olds

One of the biggest challenges we may face as a Borough is the potential impact of the withdrawal of housing benefit entitlement for 18-21yr olds.

In the 12 months 2015-2016, the Homelessness Service recorded 110 18-21yr olds seeking advice and assistance. A snapshot taken as part of the strategic review revealed that 15 single young people between the age 18-21 were in some form of supported accommodation, (11male, 4female). A further 9 were living in shared accommodation in the PRS as part of the Bond Boards Sharers scheme, (4 male, 5 female). Brief analysis of the 15 young people showed that 9 had no actual or effective family support; several had experienced abuse; 6 had offending history.

As part of the Chancellors welfare reform programme, the right to Housing Benefit for all 18-21yr olds will be withdrawn in April 2017. While it is yet to be announced whether the Government will allow any exemptions to this new rule, the Council should be aware that there may be some financial impact upon the council and partners in providing emergency accommodation. What is most likely is that exemptions may apply to schemes that link housing provision with training and vocational support and the Delivery plan recognises the need for us to work with all potential providers to develop suitable housing solutions for 18-21yr olds that are unable to remain at home or have no viable home to go to.

A priority action for the Delivery Plan will be to engage with all partners to look at how we can work together to try and find suitable resolutions to this issue.

9. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and Single Room Rate

All single people under the age of 35yrs that are on benefit and living in the private rented sector (PRS) are affected by welfare reform and are only entitled to the single room rate Housing Benefit allowance – somewhere in the region of £56p/wk. The weekly rental cost of a one bedroomed flat across the Borough is between £80-110p/wk. The latest round of reform will extend this to all tenures including social housing. As part of our previous response the council supported the Bond Board to develop a Sharers Option in the Private Rented Sector. This has proven to be successful but labour intensive to promote and maintain. The project which was part funded by the Council and part funded by outside grants provides both housing and support with an emphasis in helping people to get into employment and to lift them out of the Local Housing Allowance constraints.

Further to this, even for young people in employment, housing costs and costs of living is making it increasingly difficult to afford for those on modest to low incomes and we all need to work together to create realistic and sustainable options for people that will struggle. In particular we need to consider how services, agencies and housing providers can work together to provide opportunities and support, to develop a sharers option across social housing providers and where possible to seek to link housing opportunities to training and employment.

10. Homelessness Health and wellbeing

While motivating and helping people to access training and vocational opportunities is a key aim in enabling people to improve their wellbeing and develop personal resilience, a significant proportion of households coming into contact with homelessness services are not at a level where they can realistically take up such opportunities. In some circumstances there are more practical barriers such as single parents with young children and access to suitable child care. Evidence from partners recognised that households with complex dependencies need a greater amount of intervention and support to get them to a level where by they can get involved. Services have responded to this challenge through a diversity of opportunities. Coffee and cake mornings to encourage people to attend training sessions – Bond Board; Creative Arts projects – Petrus and Gabriel Court; Health Trainers and Outward Bound weekends – Sanctuary Trust; Health Walks- Brentwood are a few of the activities that have been introduced to engage people and the Life Coach project that has been

funded through Public Health England has proved that a bespoke and targeted support can help even the most entrenched individual to achieve.

Key points in housing sustainment and risk of homelessness include issues around social isolation and this is an increasingly recognised issue relating to the health and wellbeing of all sectors of the community. For homeless households this is often compounded by a lack of wholesome networks and while some disadvantaged or vulnerable people can often find mutual support and strength together, it can often have a detrimental effect. The opportunity and ability for providers to engage people in social, creative and confidence building activities is an essential element towards sustainable outcomes and a better community engagement. It is essential that partners continue to work together to share opportunities, pool resources if possible and to record outcomes and future commissioning should include space within contracts to allow for this type of development.

However, there is further work to be done. Pathways into statutory services can still be difficult and access to timely interventions particularly around mental health is still reported as being a significant barrier. The issue of individuals considered having a dual diagnosis, that is mental health issues and issues usually relating to drug or alcohol misuse, being unable to access health services is seen as a significant barrier by homelessness service providers. Demands upon health services appear to have resulted in high thresholds with support only becoming available when at crisis point. As a result, Homelessness services have been proactive in informing the development of the locality plan and the Mental Health Strategy for the Borough and support the proposals that will help people get support at an earlier point.

Further to this, the chaotic and transient lifestyles of some of our people with complex dependencies mean that they struggle to engage properly with primary healthcare services. As well as mitigating against timely response to health issues and gaining access to specialist health services, it has led to contributing to the number of frequent flyers attending local Urgent care and A&E type services. This issue has been recognised across CCG and Public health partners and local homelessness services. In late 2014, Rochdale in partnership with Bolton Council and Wigan Council were successful in acquiring some modest funding from DCLG to provide targeted support for Frequent Flyers. This small team of outreach workers has been able to work in partnership with the already highly effective CCG service that has been targeting frequent flyers with alcohol issues. Both services have worked in partnership and the established link between Health and Housing services has proven to be invaluable in being able to share information and deliver packages of support.

The evidence and good practice learned across the Homelessness partnership about supporting people to acquire healthier lifestyles and the experience of working with colleagues from Health is being recognised within the updated Delivery plan. As well as encouraging and supporting front line workers to become trained and confident in delivering Brief Interventions and the concept of Making Every Contact Count, services recognise the need to address underlying issues of which homelessness is a symptom. In order to properly assist people and particularly those at greater risk of homelessness or repeat homelessness due to lifestyle issues, partners have agreed that we need a better understanding both in general terms and individual terms. Partners will agree to undertake a Survey to measure the current health issues of our homeless cohort and we will share this information across colleagues and commissioners. In order to help individuals better understand their personal issues and challenges we aim to introduce a common set of health and wellbeing indicators as part of any assessment and referral processes. Further to this we intend to review existing information sharing protocols across the Homelessness partnership and as part of the wider joined up work with housing providers and health we will seek to improve information sharing between health and housing partners.

In 2011 a great deal of work was done to introduce a GM Hospital Discharge Protocol between Hospital services and Homelessness services to end the common practice of people being discharged directly to Homelessness advice services. This has worked well until relatively recent times. As part of the evaluation of the Frequent Flyers project, Salford University has been asked to review the Hospital Discharge protocol across GM. Feedback has not been encouraging with some districts including Rochdale reporting significant slippage. As part of the Delivery plan, we will seek to re-establish this link either separately or as part of any wider information sharing protocol.

11. Families

Improved partnership working between Children's Services and Housing Providers including homelessness services has contributed to a reduction in complex families accessing statutory homelessness services. Since the last strategic review there has been some significant developments particularly in the approach that the Council and other services have taken towards supporting family households where there are complex dependencies. The development of the MASS and Early Help services, the additional resource of Stronger Families and the lessons that are being learnt from the Kirkholt Pilot project has shown the longer term benefit of a much more integrated and cross service approach to delivering a whole family approach. The Delivery plan recognises the need to continue to promote and develop the whole family approach to supporting households at risk of homelessness. Where resources allow, services working with families and young mothers would seek to introduce the CAF as a standard model although we recognise that existing resources may make this difficult to achieve.

The council has continued to recognise the need to help to support young parents particularly those from an unsettled background. The council works in partnership with Barnardo's to provide both an accommodation based service and support for young families as they move on into the community. Many of the issues faced by young parents are the same as those faced by all young people that are seeking to live independently in the community, particularly around income and sustaining a home but these are often compounded by not having the benefit of strong and supportive networks. The need for services to help enable people to develop personal resilience and to acquire life skills and confidence needs to go hand in hand with seeking out and developing opportunities in the communities in which people are living. This can help create both social and supportive networks.

The approach and type of work done to assist families at risk of homelessness can be similarly applied to single people with complex dependencies at risk of homelessness.

12. Complex Dependencies

Services share commitment and ambition in assisting single people with complex dependencies and we recognise that there are people whose lifestyle and behaviours are entrenched and struggle to access and maintain any housing. It will and does take time and effort to encourage and motivate individuals to change lifestyles and to address the significant personal challenges that they face. Often exasperated by mental and physical ill health, drug and alcohol issues and anti-social behaviours, we need to establish suitable housing options to assist them away from rough sleeping and the transient lifestyles that impact upon the wider community. The Delivery plan recognises that by working across partners we should seek to adopt a Housing First approach and provide greater support to services that are already working with individuals with complex dependencies. We recognise that this cannot be achieved by seeking additional financial resources, but by a more shared and joined up approach. We will introduce a Housing First approach and seek to build upon the models being delivered across the borough by a number of the providers. Individuals will be caseload managed by the most appropriate service provider with the support of other agencies through a Multi-Agency Risk Management model.

Further to this partners recognised that a key barrier for many homeless households and those at risk of homelessness is social isolation. Homeless households and particularly single people are often socially isolated. Often estranged from or without family and social networks, usually unemployed and very often experiencing depression or similar mental ill health, they find it difficult to establish relationships that will help them flourish and recover. Very often the social networks that they do develop or enter into can be counterproductive and more likely to lead to a more entrenched situation. Partners are committed to continue to provide opportunities to encourage meaningful activity and involvement. As part of the Delivery plan we want to explore the opportunity to seek wider support by making better use of community champions, pooling social and creative activities and harnessing the expression of support that we have received from faith groups.

13. Ex service personnel and veterans

Although ex-services personnel and service veterans are not overly represented in numbers that seek assistance, the strategy recognises that they may need additional assistance and support. Rochdale Council has agreed to prioritise ex-service personnel and support them through existing partnership arrangements with Royal British Legion, SSAFA and White Ensign Society.

14. Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse (DA) continues to be one of the main reasons for households being assessed as statutorily homeless and preventing domestic abuse and supporting victims of abuse is a primary priority for the Council. The Council is part of a partnership of agencies across the whole of the Borough including, Police and Victim Support. Housing and Homelessness services are represented as part of the Domestic Abuse Working Group and the group is currently reviewing provision of services and identifying priorities for commissioners. Key developments over the last two years has been the piloting of projects aimed at working with perpetrators; the inclusion of Homelessness services as part of the MASS to be part of a multi-agency response for children affected by DA; and Homelessness joining with colleagues from across the Borough to become part of STRIVE – an assertive approach to provide early interventions to households experiencing DA. Further to this, the Council has commissioned Women’s Housing Action Group to continue to provide Refuge support but the service has also developed support for male victims of DA and support for households experiencing DA in the community.

The review of services and support for households experiencing DA will allow commissioners to join up funding streams and services and to achieve a more joined up approach aimed at both preventing DA and supporting people at risk of DA. It recognises that new and creative ways of working need to include early interventions and strategies and opportunities to bring about behaviour change. Housing providers and our partner social housing providers will continue to have a key role in identifying people experiencing DA and facilitating multi agency responses. The review also recognises that there are still gaps within the support and provision for households and over the coming months the Homelessness service will bring on stream some additional accommodation to help accommodate households that are unable to access Refuge services.

15. Welfare Reform, austerity and the government programme to make work pay.

The introduction the coalition Governments Welfare Reform programme coincided with an increase in numbers of households making inquiries to statutory homelessness services and while this cannot account for all increased demand, it would suggest that it has contributed to an increased number of households becoming at risk.

Further reforms including those already previously referred to above are likely to impact upon households on low incomes and particularly those that rely on welfare or do not have sufficient resilience and networks. This includes

- The lowering of the of benefit cap
- Introduction of Single room rate for under 35yrs in all rented accommodation
- Withdrawal of HB element of UC for 18-21yr olds

To compound the situation, the government has not yet established whether or what exemptions may be applied to for people using supported accommodation. It is likely that the government will agree to allow exemptions for some types of supported accommodation but that these will be time limited and linked to training, education and vocational opportunities.

Further to this the government have introduced a number of measures as part of their housing programme that in the short to medium term are likely to impact adversely upon vulnerable households and those most at risk of becoming homeless. These include

- 1% reduction in social housing rents over the next 4 years – this equates to a significant loss of income equivalent to approximately 8% for each housing provider. This will make social landlords more risk averse and reluctant to accept people with previous poor rent histories or are likely to struggle to afford to live independently. Similarly, the reduction in income is causing all providers to make efficiencies including potential cuts to front line staff and is likely to undermine initiatives to provide support to more vulnerable households.
- Extension of Right to Buy without a mechanism that will easily replace ‘lost’ housing will lead to a further reduction in choice and availability for those that rely upon rented housing.
- The introduction of changes to the Local Housing Allowance will encourage the encroachment of fixed term tenancies across the social housing sector

Added to this the obvious concerns that all landlords will have with the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) across the Borough and how this may adversely affect income. Under UC the government has withdrawn the automatic facility for rent to be paid directly to the landlord and responsibility has been transferred to the benefit recipient. It is likely that some households on welfare will struggle to make ends meet or may sacrifice rent payments when experiencing some sort of crisis. The potential impact upon social landlords of increased arrears will further undermine the role they can contribute to in supporting households that are vulnerable. The delivery plan will set out how we will need to work with all social landlords to help develop sustainable housing options including the development of sharers schemes and to pursue potential opportunities to develop housing schemes for young people linked to training and educational opportunities.

16. Benefit Cap

In November 2016 the DWP will begin the roll out of the new lower benefit cap to all households as part of the Governments policy to make work pay. This will mean a reduction in income for between 300-500 households across the Borough mainly those with 3 children or more. When the first wave of welfare reform was introduced, Councils received additional funding to assist them to support their communities. Through partnership working and with the additional resource we were able to implement a number of initiatives to help prepare households for change. This included targeting those households most at risk and pro-active support and a wider range involvement of our community champions to help to upskill people. However, this time apart from an increase in the Discretionary Housing Payment allocation, there will be no additional support. This means that all agencies will need to combine any resources they can bring to bear if we are aiming to undertake any targeted activity.

17. Asylum and Refugee

Numbers accessing Homelessness services and other charitable and third sector services has increased as a result of a relatively high number of Asylum households being accommodated within the Borough as part of the Governments Asylum Dispersal Programme. Across the region there has been a 45% increase in numbers accommodated since 2010 – far higher than most other regions. While it is difficult to quantify the overall contribution Asylum dispersal makes to the local economy against the impact upon costs to services, we recognise that this does bring additional pressure upon homelessness and other statutory services. In response to this the Council negotiated a moratorium upon any further expansion of units of accommodation being developed within the Borough and is working with colleagues across the Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) to develop a planned reduction in households being dispersed within the Borough. The council has met frequently with representatives of Serco who manage the Governments Asylum Dispersal contract in the Borough to consider issues and how we can ensure that Asylum seekers placed in our district are receiving adequate support. Further to this, through the Councils involvement in the RSMP we are working with regional representatives of DWP to improve timely access to benefits and employment support for refugee households.

18. No Recourse to Public Funds

While Refugee households are given leave to remain in the UK, like most authorities, we have always experienced small numbers of households that become homeless and are deemed to have No Recourse to Public Funds. The type of households or individuals that may fall into this include spouses from abroad where there has been a breakdown in relationship or persons from abroad that have entered the country on a temporary visa that has expired. Recent changes in legislation governing migrant workers also means that people from EU countries that become unemployed will often be excluded from claiming benefits including housing benefit. There are also circumstances where asylum seeker households have not been granted leave to remain but are unable to return to their country of origin.

Rochdale works in partnership with colleagues across GM and the Booth Centre based in Manchester City Centre provides a 'reconnection service' for homeless and destitute people from EU countries. Services work in partnership with the Home Office to encourage any failed Asylum household to take advantage of the government programme to assist households to return home. However, numbers of NRPF households are likely to increase over the next few years as a result of human trafficking, false marriages and the new Immigration Act which will transfer the responsibility of supporting NRPF households where there is a statutory duty from the Home Office to local authorities.

19. Gypsies & Travellers

The Council provides a site for gypsies and travellers and since the last strategic review, occupancy has continued at near to 100% and although there is relatively low demand for longer term pitches, in the last 18 months numbers of illegal encampments has seen a significant increase. In order to meet increased demand, the Council has sought to reduce pressure on local communities by piloting use of short term temporary sites. The present site has been upgraded and is being managed on behalf of the council by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing as part of their contract to deliver Homelessness services and is currently fit for service however, over the next few years the Council will need to review existing and future demands upon the service in line with GM wide review.

Households living on the site continue to be supported by colleagues in education and health although there may be some additional work to be done to ensure that transient households are

able to access primary healthcare services more easily. SHS will seek to ensure that this is picked up as part of the development of the locality plan and the proposed neighbourhood service access.

20. Equality and Diversity

Rochdale are proud to support the research undertaken on behalf of the Albert Kennedy Trust into the link between homelessness and young LGBT people. It focused upon the needs and experience of LGBT young people and it revealed a stark picture across the UK of lack of understanding, lack of support and high levels of street homelessness experienced by this cohort. Research showed that young people and particularly those still coming to terms with their sexuality became homeless as a result of issues this caused them at home and many found it difficult to be open about these issues when seeking support from services. 77% of young people felt that family rejection of their status was a causal factor in them becoming homeless and up to 69% had experienced abuse including physical abuse from family members prior to becoming homeless. Due to young people often not feeling confident about disclosing such issues the true cause of homelessness was often hidden. This in turn often resulted in lack of or inappropriate support from agencies.

The Delivery Plan recognises that we need to ensure that services and support we offer is accessible and will be able to understand and meet the needs of any group or individual that may be at risk of being excluded.

21. GM Housing Needs Group and Devolution Agenda

The partnership across GM to respond to homelessness continues to be strong and in the last 3 years is evidenced by continued successful cross authority initiatives around tackling frequent flyers and supporting people with complex dependencies into employment. GM partners meet regularly and exchange information and good practice and inform policy makers. The development of the devolved budgets and potential freedoms to the 10 GM authorities provides opportunities to bring to the fore a more collective approach across the sub region. It is the role of the GM Housing Needs Group (HNG) to ensure that the needs of those at the bottom of the community are being met and there is a growing understanding that regional regeneration will be under mined if not tackled. The increase in rough sleeping and pressures to find accommodation solutions for the increasing number of excluded households across most of the region will not be resolved by a housing strategy reliant upon regional investment in a programme in building aspirational houses. Lead officers for both PHE and GM have acknowledged that creative investment in enabling currently excluded parts of the community to contribute should be a priority. As such, at the invitation of the City Region Mayor GM partners are looking at whether Social Investment Fund models that could be supported through the £300m Housing Investment Fund that will be available over the next 10 years can be mobilised to meet some of the common challenges we face.

22. Legislation and regulatory change

Running alongside the opportunities created through the Devolution of powers to the region will be the outcome of the Governments Select Committee consultation on Homelessness, the possible changes to the Homelessness legislation and the devolved powers that would allow some regulatory changes to how GM authorities may shape homelessness and housing rules locally.

GM HNG has provided a joint response to the Government's homelessness survey confirming the pressures as described above as contributory factors to causing homelessness and the concerns that we share that will make it more difficult for us to support households at risk. However, it also points to the success of increased partnership and the intention to continue to develop this through the public sector reform programme.

Further to this although the Government has not reported upon the outcome there is a growing expectation that there will be some proposed changes to homelessness legislation or that there may be a proposal that this could be piloted within the GM area. This could include adopting the recent legislative changes introduced in Wales (Housing (Wales) Act 2104), that places the authority under a duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent homelessness within 56 days of someone becoming homeless. It also enshrines the need for government and statutory partners to work more closely together and has removed rules around local connection. GM HNG has begun to consider how a regional wide approach towards homelessness and statutory responsibilities could be made to work and how this may be a blue print to a wholly integrated GM Homelessness delivery plan.

23. Partnership Working

Performance around Homelessness prevention and the outcomes services have been able to help households to achieve over the last 10 years has been exceptional. Much of what has been achieved and the way services have developed has been as result of strong partnership working. However, the challenges that we now face cannot be overcome by simply continuing to do what we already do.

The previous independent review carried out in 2012/13 recommended that the council should seek to transfer statutory and mandatory Homelessness services to a partner housing provider to facilitate an improved housing options offer. It also recommended that future commissioning of services should become more integrated. In 2014 the homelessness services transferred over to Rochdale Boroughwide Housing as an addendum to the previous Stock Transfer agreed between the Council, the Tenants and the housing provider. While this has brought about a number of benefits including colocation of the Homelessness service within the new public access office on Drake Street, the strategy refresh presents an opportunity to review the way we do things and to respond to the changes and challenges of the future. Further to this, although there has been a far greater joined up approach to commissioning of complimentary services, the outcome is that there continues to be a relatively fragmented approach with no single point of access or universal approach to assessment and delivery.

Across the Borough there are a number of service providers and agencies working with specific groups or cohorts. All are committed; all are enabling good outcomes but often working with similar and same cohorts while there are still gaps and weakness in addressing others. Other services are trying to meet the needs of all households and there is a drift towards either spreading a resource too thinly or a one size fits all approach. Contracts are very tight and resources stretched but we believe better outcomes could be achieved by services combining a resource rather than services separately trying to achieve outcomes wholly by their own endeavours. Similarly, current arrangements mitigate against a case manager approach and as the journey for many households can often mean moving between services as part of a planned approach, it invariably means moving from one keyworker to another.

A key outcome of the strategy refresh is to recommend that we should take the opportunity to re-align existing provisions and work with current and potentially future providers to provide a more cohesive housing offer. As part of a revised specification we would seek to establish a single route of entry into services potentially supported by housing representation at community Hubs linked to locality agenda. We would expect triage and assessment services to be undertaken as part of the enhanced role of the Homelessness assessment service and that partner agencies will agree to a single assessment. The triage and Assessment service will take a lead role in moving individual households towards the most appropriate service or outcome that will most closely meet their needs as well as undertaking the statutory homelessness assessment that will run parallel to any prevention and housing options.

An enhanced universal assessment previously piloted would consider all aspects of households needs including Health & Wellbeing, education and access to employment and subsequent progress measured against an accompanying suite of performance indicators. It would allow people accessing the service to identify their own issues and pathways. We would recommend that statutory and currently commissioned or supported partner services to be commissioned in partnership with the councils Prevention and Community Wellbeing Group and or via an integrated commissioning process. This would enable the council to establish agreement across the partner services to the universal assessment and that the triage and assessment would take a lead role in referring individual households into the most appropriate service or outcome. We would expect all or any partner services to agree that they are effectively part of a whole service and that risk and outcomes are shared across the partnership.

The proposal is that we seek to design a more integrated offer and that we draw together the existing funding streams to support the commissioning of a whole service approach based upon a relatively simple specification. The specification would encourage current and future providers to work together, to work to their strengths and specialisms and to deliver on a suite of shared performance indicators. Services would be focused upon outcomes that are clearly set out to deliver improved health and wellbeing, to prevent all households from becoming homeless and having both a short term and longer term housing solution for all households. This would enable partners to work together and be more flexible, resources and opportunities shared, the scope for future development improved.

24. Delivery Plan

The Borough requires a response that essentially is easily accessible and available to all households at risk of homelessness to allow for timely interventions. It requires a service that seeks to meet the needs of all households and particularly those that are currently are at high risk of exclusion or failure. It will be required to work proactively with all stakeholders to develop easier pathways to sustainable housing for those at low to medium risk. It requires a collective response that recognises that all partners will be equally responsible for effecting positive and sustainable outcomes.

The Delivery Plan that accompanies this Strategic Refresh sets out in both broad and detailed way how the council intends to achieve the outcomes that we need to aim for if we are to meet the challenges of the next few years.

Strategic Housing Services will take a key role in driving the actions forward and performance will be measured against the DCLG Performance Indicators (PI's) that are recorded on a quarterly basis and additional local Health and Wellbeing PI's as identified. However, as a key element of the Strategy, there is a hope and expectation that these are recognised as shared priorities and that there is a responsibility on all agencies and services to work together to achieve these outcomes for the people of the Borough.

Performance Indicators

P1E indicators

Numbers of Households Prevented	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of Priority Households	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of Households accommodated	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of priority households	Quarterly/Annually	

accommodated in B&B		
Number 16/17 homeless	Quarterly/Annually	
Number homeless as a result of Domestic Abuse	Quarterly/Annually	
Number repeat homelessness	Quarterly/Annually	

Additional Indicators

Number of children (all households) accommodated	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of (all households) accommodated in B&B	Quarterly/Annually	
Average length of time in temporary accommodation	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of households resettled as part of a planned move on	Quarterly/Annually	

Health & Wellbeing

Number of brief interventions carried out	Quarterly/Annually	
Number assisted into primary healthcare	Quarterly/Annually	
Number assisted into dental services	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of people in training	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of people engaged in wellbeing activity 3 times per week	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of health and wellbeing assessments completed	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of people into employment	Quarterly/Annually	
Referrals to Safeguarding	Quarterly/Annually	
Number of CAF begun	Quarterly/Annually	