

Select Committee Agenda



Stronger Communities Select Committee Tuesday, 1st March, 2022

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Stronger Communities Select Committee**, which will be held at:

Council Chamber - Civic Offices
on **Tuesday, 1st March, 2022**
at **7.00 pm**

G Blakemore
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services
Officer**

Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors J Lea (Chairman), R Balcombe (Vice-Chairman), H Brady, I Hadley, S Murray, C Nweke, D Plummer, S Rackham, J H Whitehouse, K Williamson and D Wixley

SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE:

6:00 pm

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman will read the following announcement:

"I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties).

Therefore, by entering the Conference Suite and using the seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes."

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

To report non-attendance before the meeting, please use the Members Portal webpage to report non-attendance at meetings https://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member_Contact to ensure your query is properly logged.

Alternatively, you can access the Members portal from the front page of the Council's website, at the bottom under 'Contact Us' <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/members-portal/>

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

5. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 3 - 38)

To agree the notes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 11 January 2022.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 39 - 46)

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have agreed the Terms of Reference and work programme for this Select Committee.

Members are invited at each meeting to review both documents.

The following updates have been given for items 18 Data Insight led review of customer service outlets and 19 Digital Inclusion (attached).

7. ALLOCATION SCHEME REVIEW (Pages 47 - 152)

(J Gould) To consider the attached report regarding the Allocation Scheme Review.

8. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY REVIEW (Pages 153 - 204)

(J Gould) To consider the attached report on the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Review.

9. TENANCY POLICY REVIEW (Pages 205 - 242)

(J Gould) To consider the attached report regarding the Tenancy Policy Review.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note that the next meeting of the Select Committee will be held at 7.00pm on 22 March 2022.

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 11 JANUARY 2022
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES
AT 7.00 - 8.30 PM**

Members Present: R Balcombe (Chairman), , H Brady, S Murray, C Nweke, D Plummer, J H Whitehouse, K Williamson and D Wixley

Co-opted Member: W Marshall

Other members present: None.

Other members virtually: H Kane, S Kane, A Patel, J Philip, L Burrows, D Sunger and B Vaz

Apologies for Absence: I Hadley and J Lea

Officers Present: D Fenton (Service Director (Housing Revenue Account)), R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), N Cole (Corporate Communications Officer),

Officers present virtually: A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer)

By invitation virtually:
A Marshall-Smith (HRA Consultant)

25. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Services Officer reminded everyone present that this meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

26. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

28. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

That the notes of the previous meeting held on 21 September 2021 were agreed as a correct record subject to Councillor R Balcombe apologies appearing only on the website and not in the notes.

29. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee made the following comments regarding the Terms of Reference;

1. Clarification was required under *Point 3 of the Core Areas of Responsibility*, on what Partnerships were within the corporate projects for this Committee, so they could be scrutinised;
2. That the Chairman/Committee completes a detailed review of their Terms of Reference;
3. That the Committee was notified of any Government actions and initiatives which affected the Select Committee areas of responsibility;
4. That in order for effective scrutiny to be carried out by the Committee, reports needed to be presented to the Committee as soon as possible before they were submitted to Cabinet, even if this was a verbal report;
5. That items 7,8,9,10, 15 and 16 on the work programme be organised to ensure that all Housing items were discussed at one meeting and the Presentation of the District Police Commander and Community Safety Report were to be considered at the other scheduled meeting.
6. Could the Committee receive a report on the figures requested under item 20. Unfordable rents.
7. Could a date be provided for items 17, 18, 19 and 20 in the work programme.

The Tenants and Leaseholders Chairman, W Marshall advised that between himself and Housing Department, he felt that any initiatives or consultations regarding housing were considered. The Director of Housing and Property advised that going forward she would ensure that the Committee were made aware of any consultations in relations to housing.

The Housing Services Portfolio Holder advised that she hoped, that all the Housing Policies and Strategies would be presented to Committee at first meeting in March to ensure that they could be recommended to Cabinet on 7 March 2022.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed the following points;

1. That a list of the partnerships which were covered by the Corporate Priorities for this Committee be provided;
2. That in future Members of the Committee should be informed of any Government actions and initiatives which affected the Select Committee areas of responsibility;
3. That items 7, 8, 9, 10 (7. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Review, 8. Allocations Scheme Review, 9. Tenancy Policy Review; 10 Overarching Housing Strategy); on the work programme be considered together at either of the scheduled meetings on 1 or 22 March 2022;
4. That items 15 and 16 (15. Presentation from the District Police Commander and 16. Community Safety Partnership Annual Report and Review of the District Strategic Intelligence Assessment) on the work programme be considered together at either of the scheduled meetings on 1 or 22 March 2022;

5. That items 17, 18, 19, 20 be discussed at the next Chairman's APG and either a report be provided, or a date set for the report to be considered by the Committee.

30. HRA BUSINESS PLAN

The Housing and Property Director presented a report on the HRA business plan, which had been developed in partnership with the retained consultant Abovo-Consult.

A bespoke HRA model had been used to enable the Council to provide a reasonable cashflow projection of the next 30 years and was based on evidential data from the Council's current systems and projections for economic assumptions in the social housing sector. Furthermore, the plan gives the Council the ability to stress test which was vital given the key dynamic risks such as the borrowing rate and changes in Government legislation regarding Social Housing.

Officers had taken both a safe and prudent approach when developing the business plan, with a balance between borrowing, developing, and improving the housing stock. The agreed minimum £2m revenue working capital balance had been maintained throughout the plan. Although all costs has been included in the plan, some potential income had not been included because at present it could not be quantified. The Plan would be amended and updated year on year and throughout, to respond to changes, which would maintain a safe and prudent approach.

The report set out the context, background and what the decent home standard were, in conjunction with factors that would affect the plan including the Council's house building programme, major works, a stock and condition survey and a sector risk profile.

The Housing Services Portfolio Holder advised that it was a very detailed and complex report which provided regeneration and the council's housing building programme, which would ensure that the more deprived areas of the community were invested, and it improved the health of those residents.

The Committee asked the following questions;

- Why had a consultant been used to produce the HRA business plan? The Housing and Property Director advised that EFDC had always used a consultant to write the HRA business plan due to its complexity and additional software required to produce the plan.
- If there were changes to the assumption within the plan, would it be altered? The Housing and Property Director advised that the HRA plan would be reviewed yearly by this Committee, O&S and Cabinet to give assurances and to monitor any changes.
- Why did the HRA Surplus assumptions increase extensively between the years 19 (2039/40) and 20 (2040/41) and 29 (2049/50) and 30 (2050/21) in the Financing Summary on page 45 of the agenda?
The Housing and Property Director advised that they would come back with clarification on this point, although the Consultant advised it could be a drop in terms of capital spend due the stock survey being 10 years old. Therefore, a Stock Control Survey was being commission.
- Would the HRA pick up any costs that the General fund should pick up? The Housing and Property Director assured the Committee that would not happen.

- Could further details be provided on the areas of the district that would receive urgent works funds set out on page 41 of the agenda. The Housing and Property Director advised that in each case an estate condition survey would take place to establish what upgrades and enhancements were required; what cyclical programme would be carried out in communal areas; and a detailed consultation with Ward members and residents. Therefore the figures were indicative at this time.

It was also mentioned that the wording 'urgent' should be reconsidered in relation to urgent works due to the period of time that these works would be carried out over.

- Had inflation and energy prices been taken into consideration? The Housing and Property Director advised that the current rate of inflation had been applied, although the business plan would be continually updated as well. The Consultant advised that in relation to energy costs, these did not really affect the HRA because they were costs related to the tenants themselves and the service charges that would be recharged to the tenants. It was worth pointing out that the tenant's rents were also linked to inflation, so if the consumer inflation rises, the rental figure would also rise. Therefore unless the Government put a limit on a rental increase, this would not affect the business plan.
- Could clarification be given on who set the limit for sharing the Right to Buy receipts between the Treasury and the local authority. The Consultant advised that the Treasury had set each of local authorities' limits, through a debt settlement arrangement populated by the Government in 2012. This figures for each authority was different depending on the amount of RTB properties sold, house prices and income collected from the rents which serviced the debt settlement.
- Why did the figures for the years 19 (2039/40) and 20 (2040/41) within the Financing Summary (on page 45 of the agenda) rise and fall significantly? The Consultant advised that this was due to a loan repayment of £33,656m in year 20 (2040/41) rather than a refinancing of a loan. It was noted that the HRA surplus would remain above the £2m requirement.
- What HRA assets were available to the Council to sell? The Housing and Property Director advised there were ransom strips, small parcels of land, possible properties that were no longer suitable and locations within the Local Plan.
- Had the Decent Home Standards been considered? The Housing and Property Director advised that it was widely expected that the Decent Home Standards would remain unchanged, although it was expected that within the Charter for Social Housing (White paper) there would be a focus on communities.
- In relation to the Decent Home Standards, had there been any consideration to the future removal of gas fires and boilers? The Housing and Property Director advised that the council were looking into a range of possibilities. The Stock Condition Survey would identify any work that would be required to enable the Council to meet its commitment to the Council's net zero target. Furthermore, the Council was currently looking at piloting a scheme for solar panels and Tesla batteries to assist with fuel poverty.
- What were the Decent Home Standards? The Housing and Property Director advised that there was a complex criteria, but for example things like the time taken to replace a kitchen, bathroom, rewiring and the quality of the fabric of the building. The criteria could be found

through the following link: [A decent home: definition and guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance)

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee noted the Safe and Prudent HRA business plan, and recommended to the Cabinet for approval;
- (2) That the Committee received a yearly performance update, that would include stringent stress testing;
- (3) That the Committee noted that the business plan included all assumed costs but not all income streams, as such the Committee also noted appendix B (attached) which was an alternative plan including some potential income; and
- (4) That the Committee noted the opportunity to improve the estates which would improve the life span of the Council's assets and feed into the ongoing work to 'create great places where people want to live'.

31. SHELTERED HOUSING - EMERGENCY ALARM SYSTEM UPGRADE

The Director of Housing and Property advised that the Council's current sheltered schemes worked on an analogue telephone system which was being switched off in 2025.

The current emergency alarm equipment was around 16 years old, although it still provided a reliable service it had limitations. These included residents needing to get to a pull cord to raise an alarm call and a link limited number of peripherals to the system. The Housing and Property Director advised that technology has moved on and so have emergency alarm systems. Therefore to ensure the alarm systems in the Council's sheltered housing schemes continued to provide a reliable service, and meet the needs of the residents, they needed to be digitally upgraded. Officers had undertaken a review of systems currently on the market and had recommended the Everon's Lyra alarm call system.

The Committee asked the following question;

- How was the system monitored and maintained? The Director for Housing and Property advised that the Council had KPI's to monitor how the system performed against expectations and as a cloud based product, it was continually updated.
- How would the removal of the old system be managed? The Director for Housing and Property advised that the old systems box would be covered, and the wiring would be left in place, as it was already internally covered. These issues had been included in the costings.
- Were the emergency calls dealt with in the same way? The Director for Housing and Property advised that the service was under a different contract and would be coming up for renewal in 2023, where a procurement exercise would take place in consultation with residents.
- Has the system been used elsewhere? The Director for Housing and Property advised that it has been used elsewhere, as well as winning a large contract with a local housing association.
- Was there a maintenance contract alongside the system? The Director for Housing and Property advised that there would be, although there was a guarantee to replace any faulty units and these units could be lifted and moved to other properties, if required.

- How did the system work? The Director for Housing and Property advised that the system was designed for residents who maintained independent living in sheltered accommodation, which was not 24 hour care, but officers did visit residents within working hours. The system was designed to allow tenants to continue independent living, however if further care was required officers would make the necessary referrals.
- What were the costs of the system to the residents? The Director for Housing and Property advised that the capital costs would be covered by the Council although for residents who were not on benefits there would be a weekly charge.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered and commented on the proposal to replace the Council's Hard-Wired Alarm system with Everon, as to be presented to Cabinet.

(A copy of the presentation from Everon had been attached to the Minutes for Members reference)

32. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting would be 1 March 2022.

Appendix B

Financing Summary including Income

The table below shows the financial summary including additional income. The income consists of income from disposing 'Ransom Strips' and Homes England Grant for the development programme.

HRA Business Plan | Epping Forest DC

Financing Summary

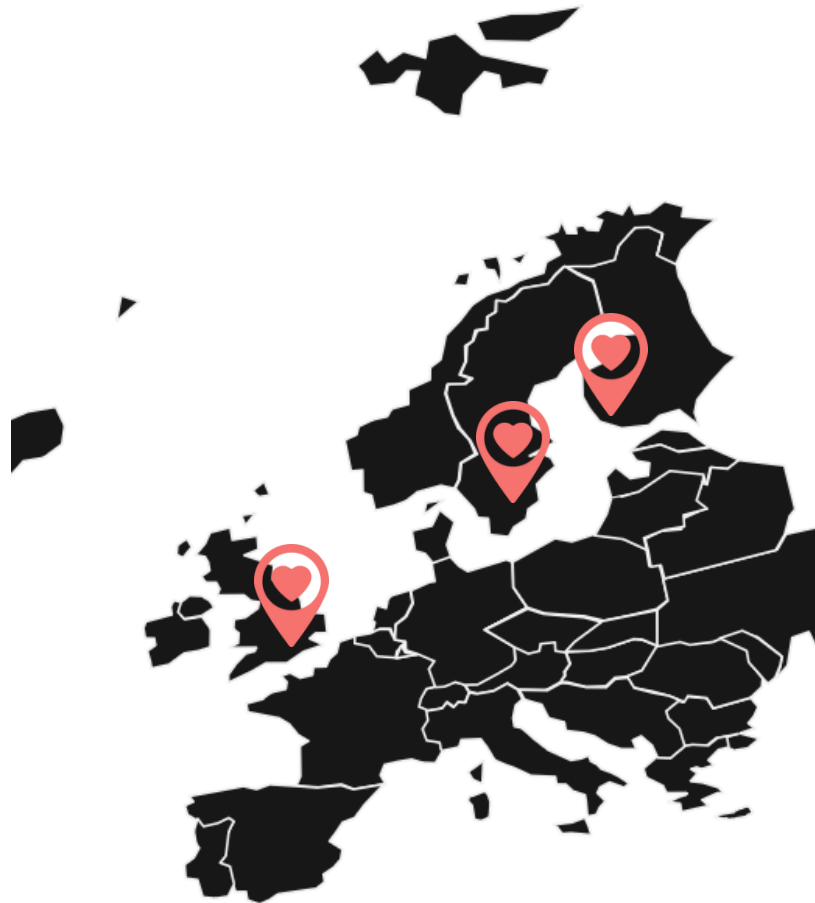
Year	Year	Opening Loan Balance £'000	Loan Drawdowns £'000	Loan Repayments £'000	Drawdown of Revolver £'000	Repayment of Revolver £'000	Closing Loan Balance £'000	HRA Surplus c/f £'000
1	2021/22	159,152	0	-5,496	0	0	153,656	4,969
2	2022/23	153,656	0	0	25,068	0	178,724	2,005
3	2023/24	178,724	0	0	26,836	0	205,560	2,002
4	2024/25	205,560	0	0	20,802	0	226,362	2,001
5	2025/26	226,362	0	0	8,178	0	234,539	2,001
6	2026/27	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	4,328
7	2027/28	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	3,627
8	2028/29	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	5,564
9	2029/30	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	4,859
10	2030/31	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	7,436
11	2031/32	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	5,386
12	2032/33	234,539	0	0	0	0	234,539	2,071
13	2033/34	234,539	0	0	2,773	0	237,312	2,007
14	2034/35	237,312	0	0	0	0	237,312	4,893
15	2035/36	237,312	0	0	0	0	237,312	5,441
16	2036/37	237,312	0	0	0	0	237,312	9,116
17	2037/38	237,312	30,000	-30,000	7,612	0	244,924	2,010
18	2038/39	244,924	30,000	-30,000	0	0	244,924	6,497
19	2039/40	244,924	30,000	-30,000	3,975	0	248,899	16,698
20	2040/41	248,899	30,000	-30,000	5,462	0	254,361	27,181
21	2041/42	254,361	0	-33,656	0	0	220,705	3,495
22	2042/43	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	4,859
23	2043/44	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	8,846
24	2044/45	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	12,053
25	2045/46	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	9,273
26	2046/47	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	5,583
27	2047/48	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	4,969
28	2048/49	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	10,521
29	2049/50	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	18,283
30	2050/51	220,705	0	0	0	0	220,705	27,215

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everon™

Technology

Digital Technology, Connecting Care



WE ARE CERTIFIED



Everon

Our company

The Group



Headquartered in Finland, with subsidiary companies in Sweden and the UK.

Own development



Our large in-house R&D facility is staffed with specialist SW & HW developers, many from Nokia and Microsoft.

We are growing



Our highly competitive pioneering Digital solutions are driving change in UK Assistive Living, Social Care & Healthcare environments and applications

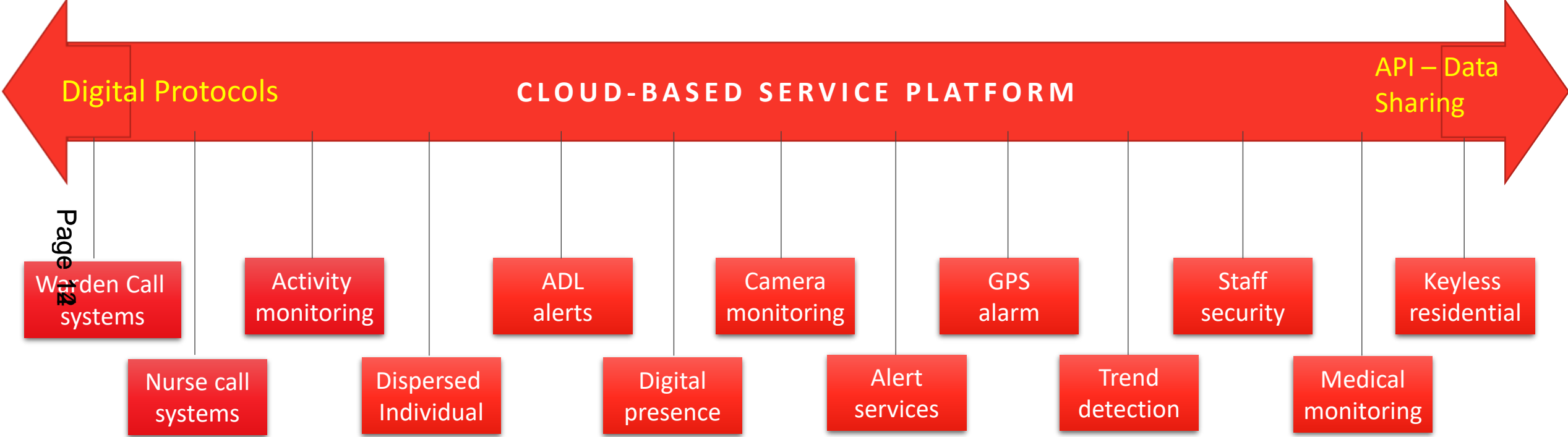
A close-up photograph of the Everon Lyra Alarm Call device. The device is white with a large black circular speaker grille at the top. Below the speaker, the brand name 'everon' is printed in white lowercase letters. Further down, there is a digital display showing the time '21:02' in white. Below the display are two oval-shaped buttons, one on each side, with the numbers '1' and '2' inside. At the bottom of the device, there is a red circular button with a white signal icon. The device is shown from a slightly angled perspective, highlighting its sleek, modern design.

Everon

Lyra Alarm Call

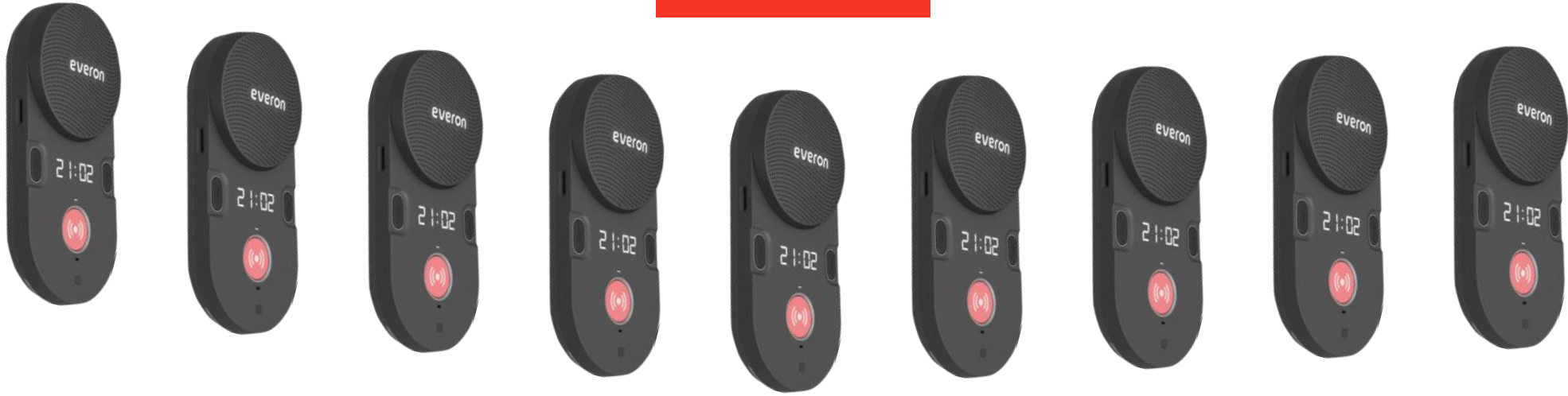
- Lyra is a wireless digital cloud-based IP alarm solution for sheltered and independent living homes and facilities. Lyra is based on a centralised server cloud infrastructure, which means that no PC or server is installed in any of your buildings.
- Lyra is a fully scalable system with positioning in real time. An extremely secure system with the highest possible reliability and constant monitoring of all components and peripherals.

Services overview



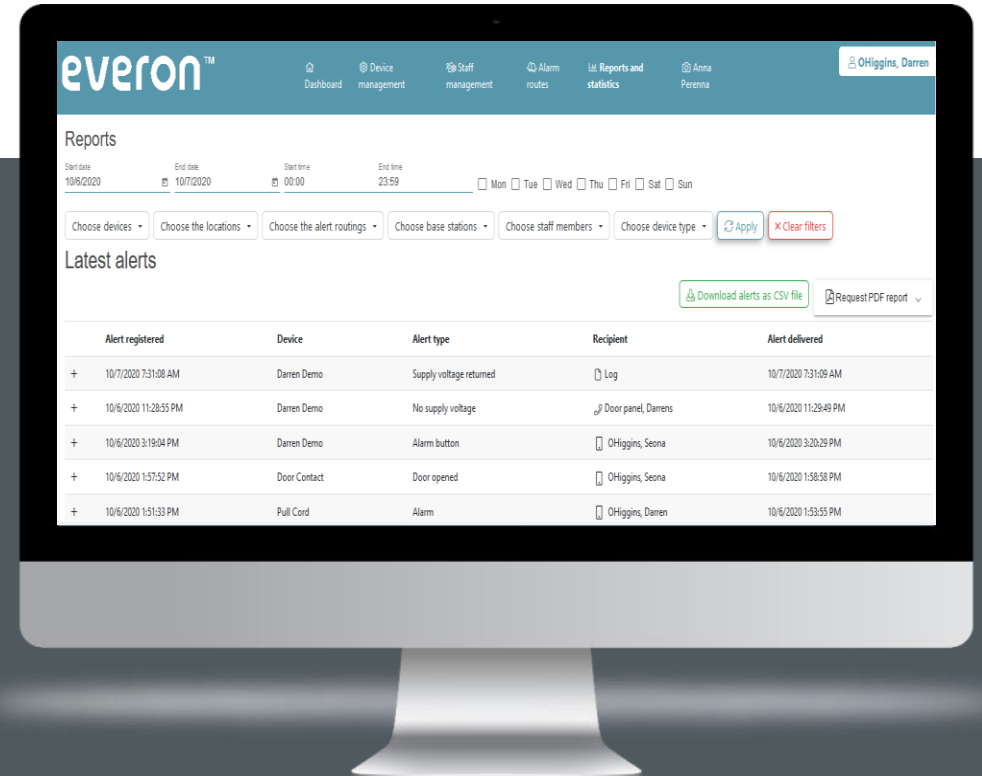
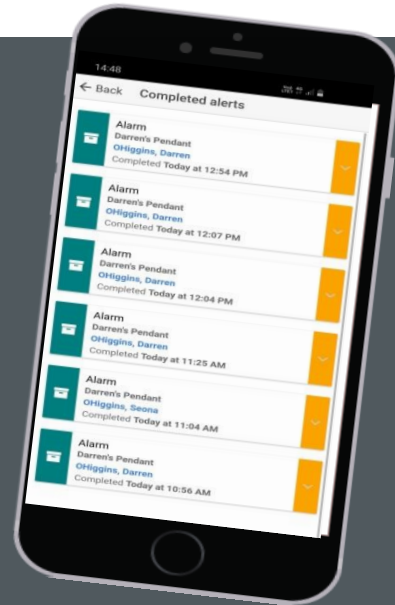
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Everon



Page 13

Small and smart Welfare Hubs, smartphones and the latest communication technology



The Origon hub



Smart Wireless Hub
Wireless devices easily programmed
3-level resilience (GSM, WiFi, LAN)
“I’m OK” functionality
Door Entry and Fire detection integration
Digital clock and LED reassurance lighting
Scheme-wide location of individual
Presence verification option (NFC)
Constant Heartbeat monitoring

Origon – Hub Connectivity

Class 1 Receivers
869MHz Frequency

Each peripheral
'pings' presence



Peripherals

Peripherals

In the Lyra infrastructure the connecting of all alarm accessories can be completed wirelessly and effortlessly. Connection is by "Press & Play", so that staff themselves can easily add new accessories – no need for engineer attendance.

As the Lyra system is fully monitored we also check the 'heartbeat' of our buttons and accessories constantly to ensure you have a reliable solution.

When new technologies arrive we can integrate anything with an alarm output – leaving you future-proofed and always able to offer the right solution and care



Door Entry

System can call
Residents Hub
unit

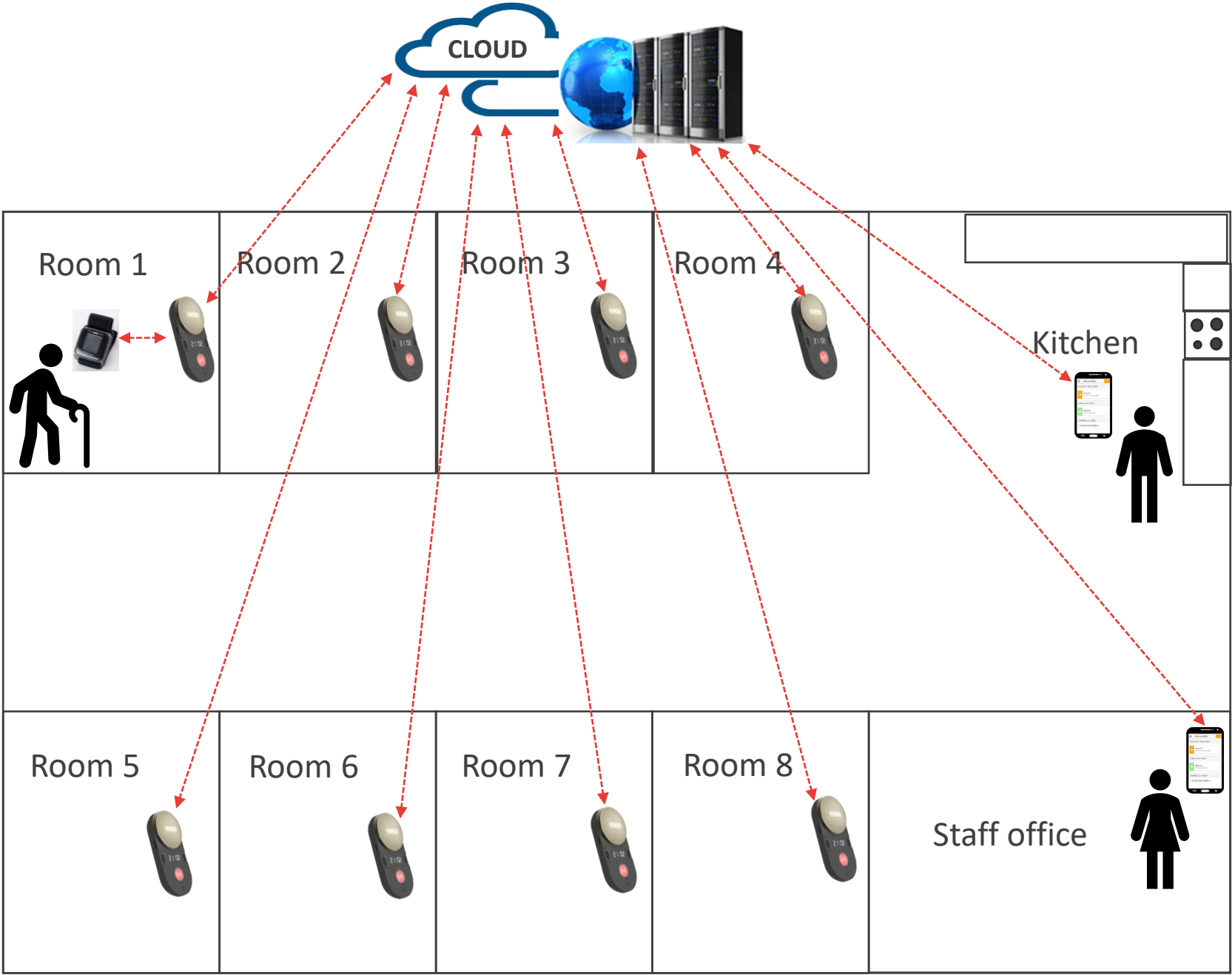
OR
Page 15

Personal mobile
or landline
number if
preferred

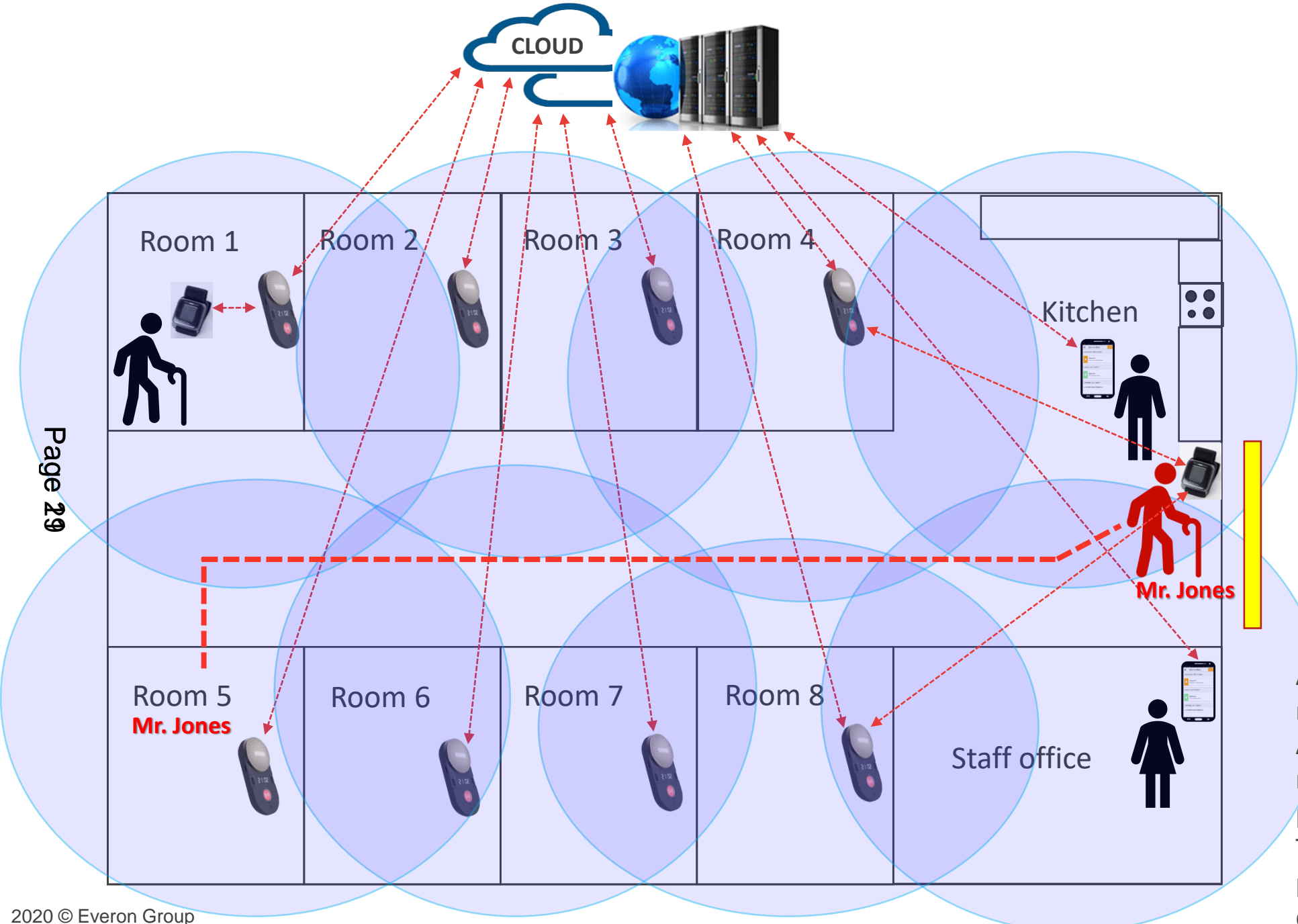


Sheltered or Extra Care scheme

Hub per room example



Grouped scheme location example



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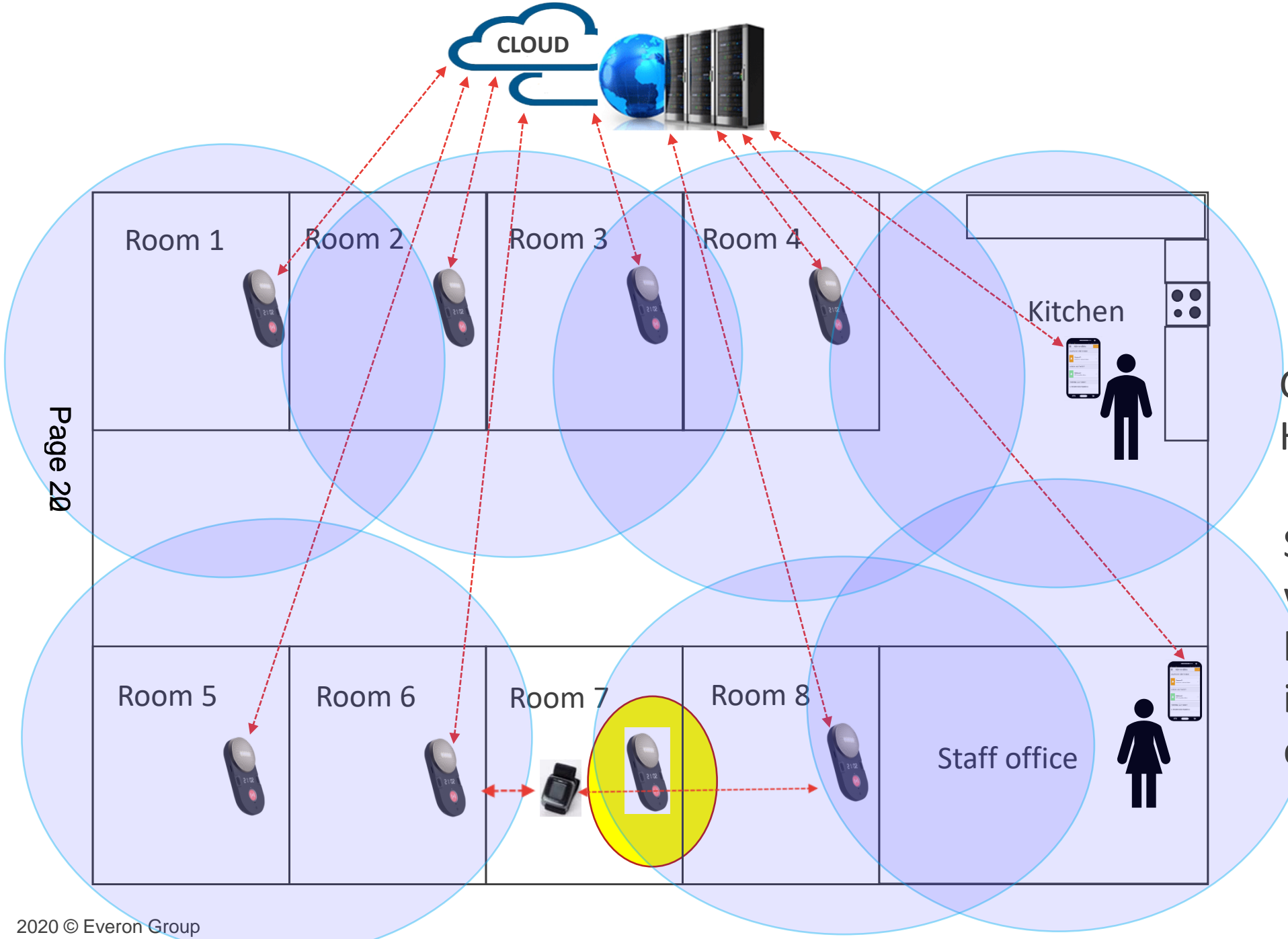
Door Access or Monitoring

As Mr. Jones walks from his room towards the kitchen, his Alert device moves through meshed radio zones, tracking his progress. The same device could also provide access through external doors

High Resilience

Constant connectivity
Heartbeats

System continues to work even if a room hub fails and will identify receiving device

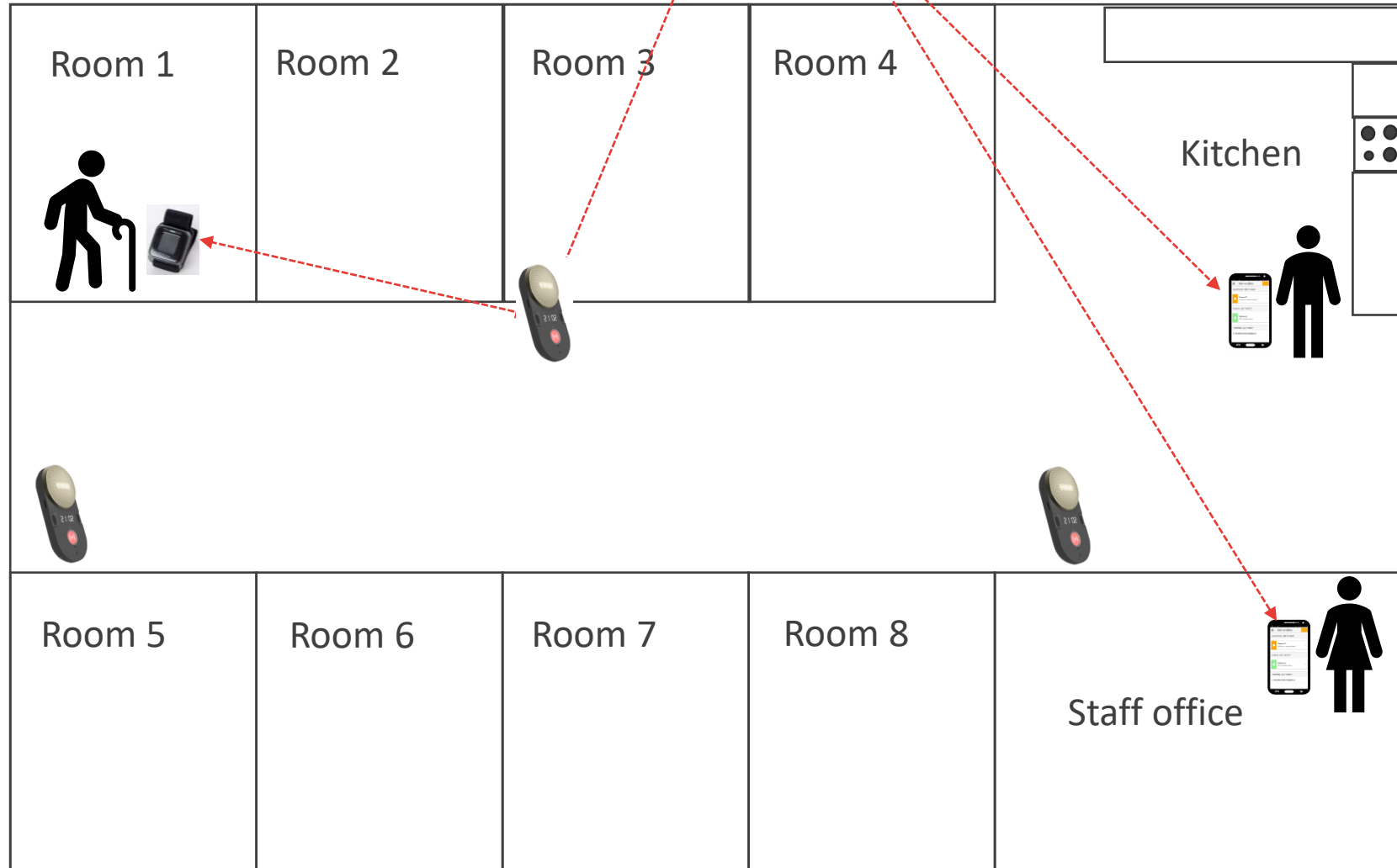


Page 20



Care home or LD facility Shared Hubs example

Page 23



Everon

Everon Mobile App

Alarm Handling

Alarms can be handled on an Android handheld device using the Everon Mobile Application. All users are uniquely identified allowing for trend and workforce planning analysis.

Attendance to any event or area can be recorded to the system using the NFC tags and notes system



Alarm Management

Intelligent Call Routing

Any alarm sensor can be renamed freely and alarms from any alarm accessories can be individually controlled according to need.

Alarms can also be switched to different routing destinations / people based on time / day of the week adding flexibility and the ability to use a skills based routing

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The screenshot displays the Everon alarm management interface. It is organized into three main sections, each with a light gray header:

- INCOMING ALERTS:** This section currently shows "No alerts".
- MY ALERTS:** This section currently shows "No alerts assigned to me".
- ALERTS TO OTHERS:** This section contains one alert card. The card is highlighted with a red hand-drawn circle. It features a blue bell icon on the left. The text on the card reads: "Alarm", "Darren's Pendant / Darren Demo", "OHiggins, Seona" (in blue), and "a few seconds ago". A yellow dropdown arrow is visible on the right side of the card.

Alarm Routing

Alarm route management

● = Default route ● = Route enabled ● = Route disabled

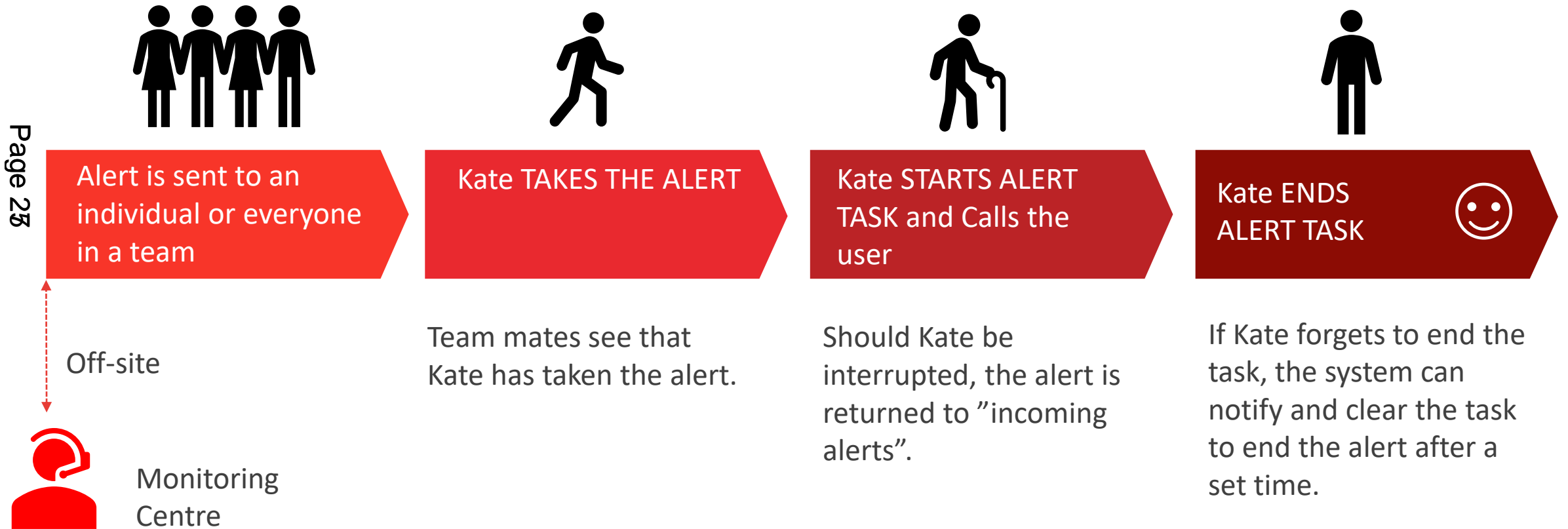
[+ New alarm route](#) Show default routes

🏠 Darren Demo

Name	Service time validity	Delivery type
● Darren Routing	00:00 - 23:59	📞
● Darrens Im ok	00:00 - 23:59	✉

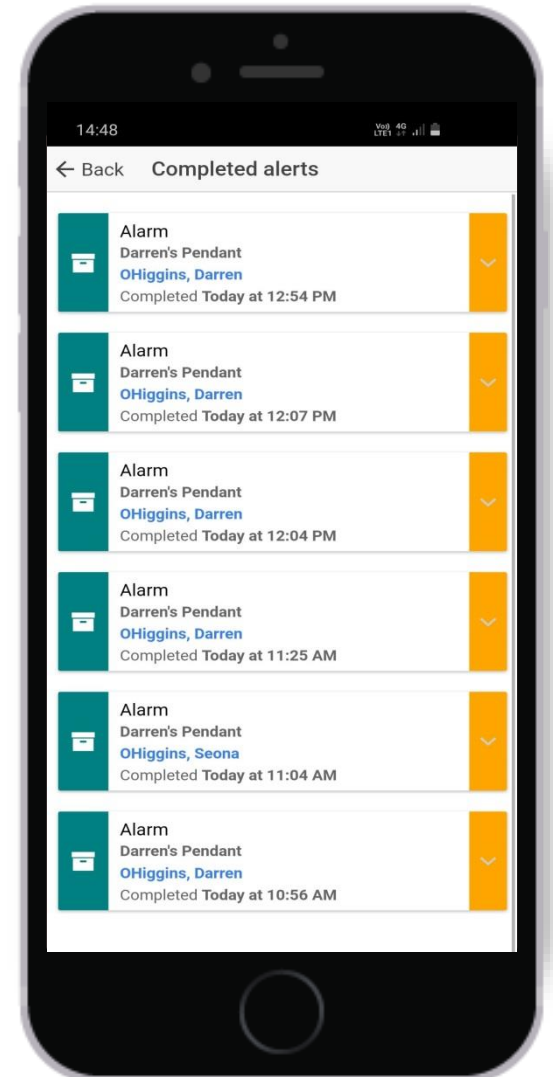
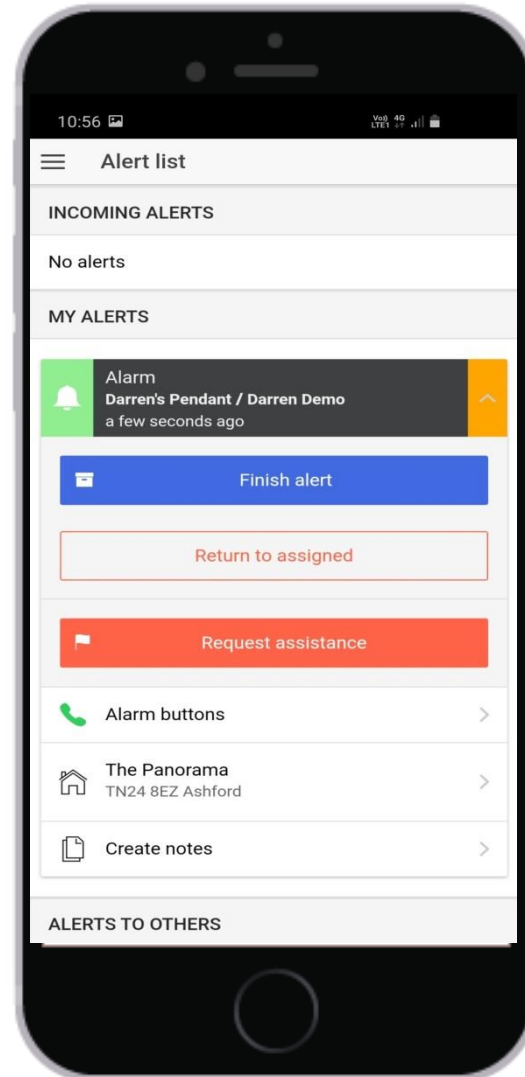
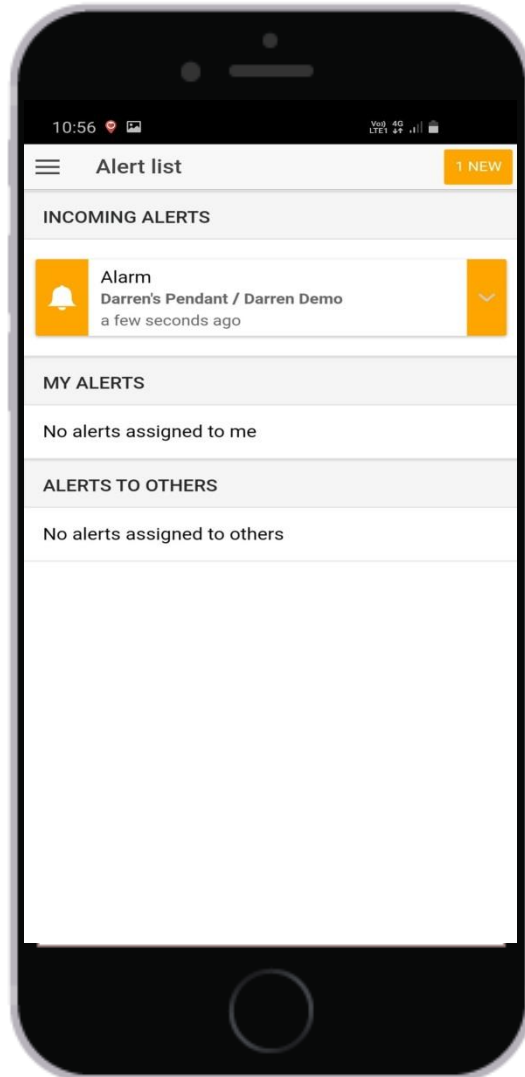
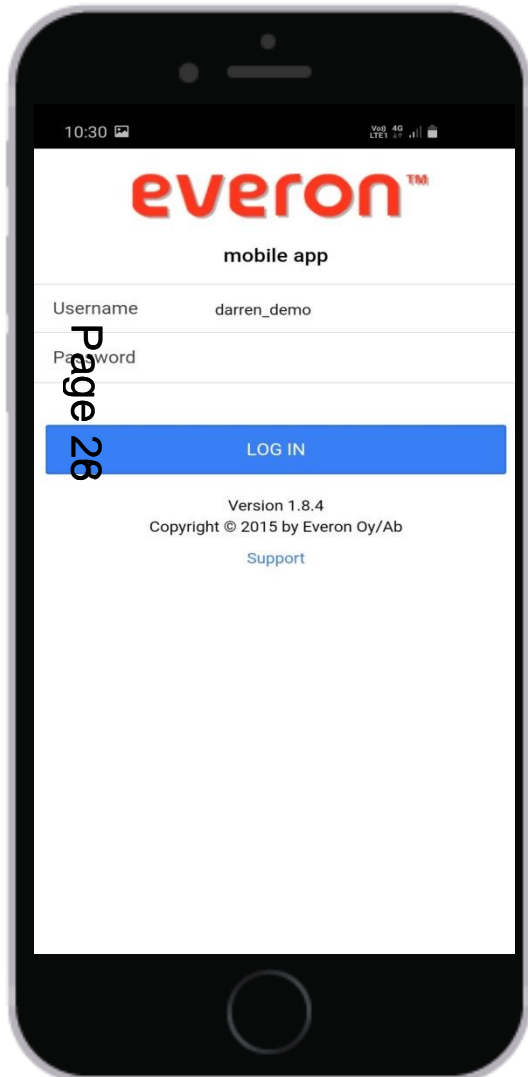
Multiple Alert Delivery options

Alert process



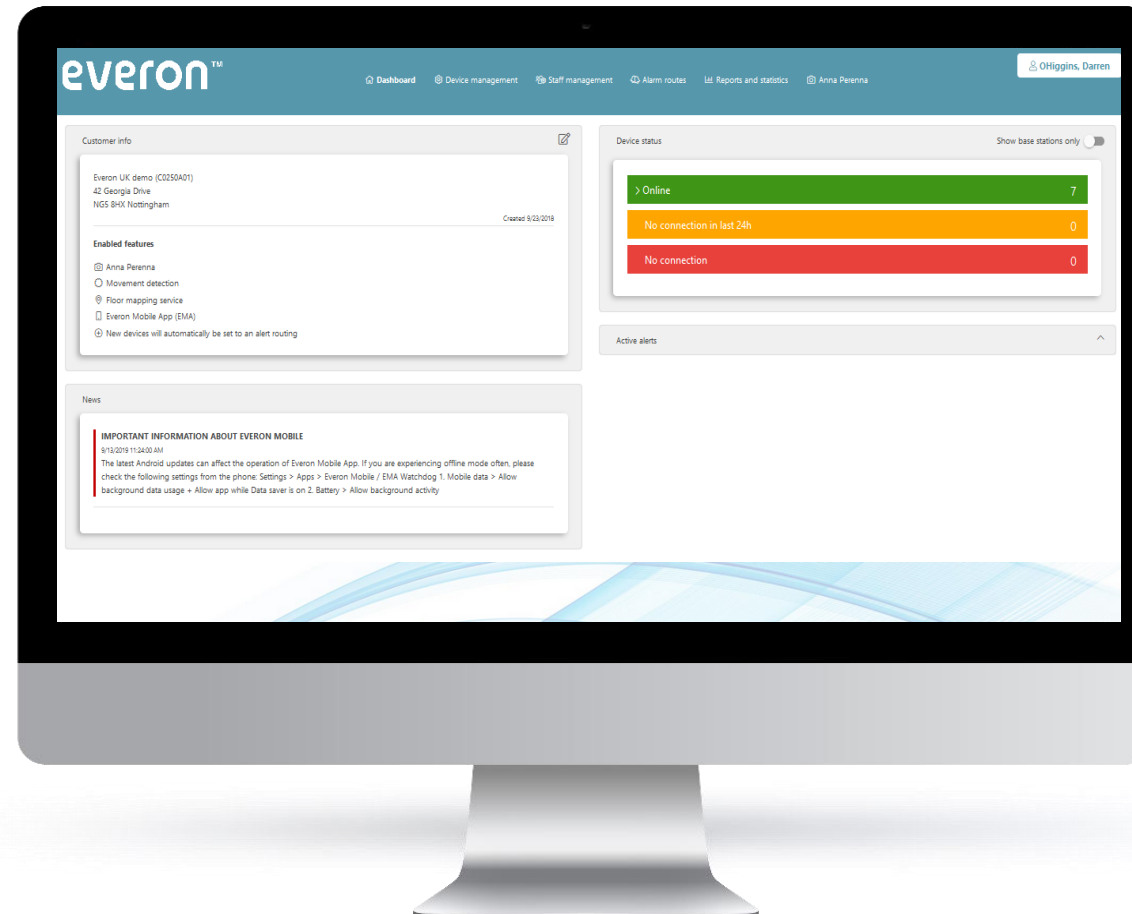
Everon

Everon mobile app



Web user interface MyEveron

In MyEveron you can handle teams, devices, routings, reports and statistics. Access to all these services is restricted on the basis of delegated authorisations.



Reports

Start date: 10/6/2020 | End date: 10/7/2020 | Start time: 00:00 | End time: 23:59 | Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun

Latest alerts

[Download alerts as CSV file](#)

[Request PDF report](#)

	Alert registered	Device	Alert type	Recipient	Alert delivered
+	10/7/2020 7:31:08 AM	Darren Demo	Supply voltage returned	Log	10/7/2020 7:31:09 AM
+	10/6/2020 11:28:55 PM	Darren Demo	No supply voltage	Door panel, Darrens	10/6/2020 11:29:49 PM
+	10/6/2020 3:19:04 PM	Darren Demo	Alarm button	OHiggins, Seona	10/6/2020 3:20:29 PM
+	10/6/2020 1:57:52 PM	Door Contact	Door opened	OHiggins, Seona	10/6/2020 1:58:58 PM
+	10/6/2020 1:51:33 PM	Pull Cord	Alarm	OHiggins, Darren	10/6/2020 1:53:55 PM

Report tools



RemoteSupport Everon

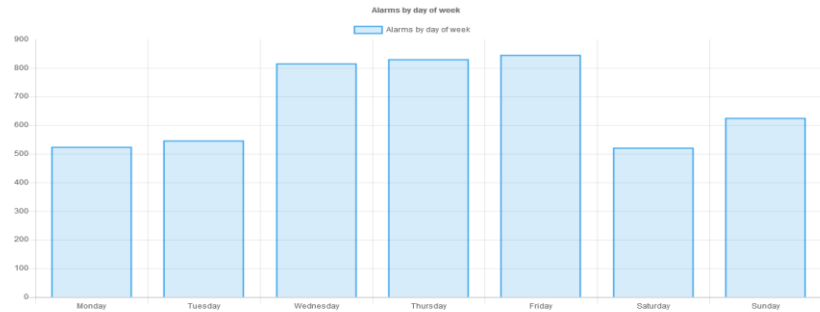
Sign out

- Dashboard
- Device management
- Staff management
- Reports and statistics
- Reports
- Statistics

Alert statistics

Alarms by day of week 5/1/2019 5/24/2019 Search

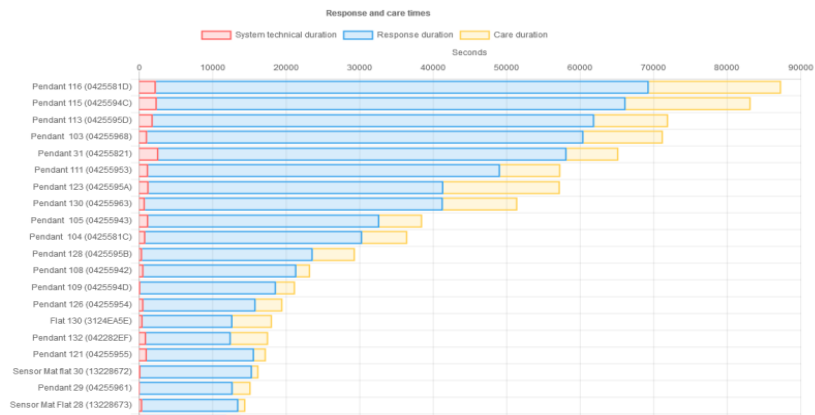
Additional settings



Alert statistics

Response and care times 5/1/2019 5/24/2019 Search

Additional settings



RemoteSupport Everon

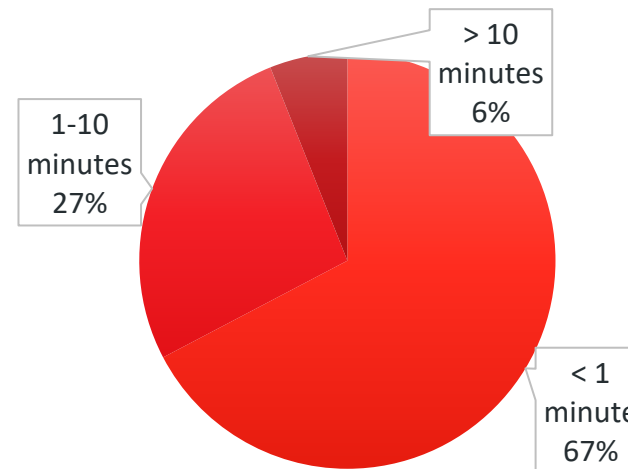
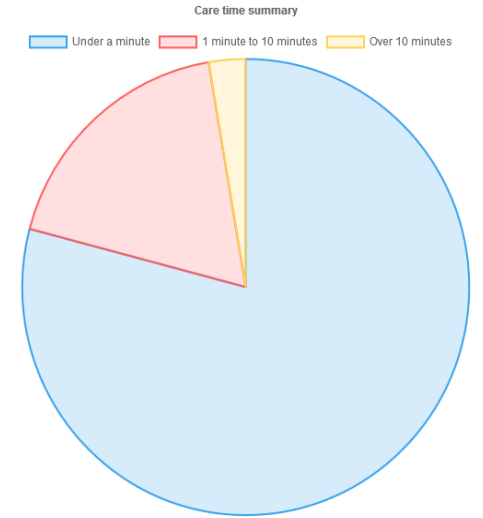
Sign out

- Dashboard
- Device management
- Staff management
- Reports and statistics
- Reports
- Statistics

Alert statistics

Care time summary 5/1/2019 5/24/2019 Search

Additional settings



RemoteSupport Everon

Sign out

- Dashboard
- Device management
- Staff management
- Reports and statistics
- Reports
- Statistics

Presence verification

For tagging staff presence we use small stickers containing NFC transmitters. These can be set in the users' rooms and communal areas to register staff presence by the use of their NFC capable smartphone. Even the bracelets can have built-in NFC tags.

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Simple

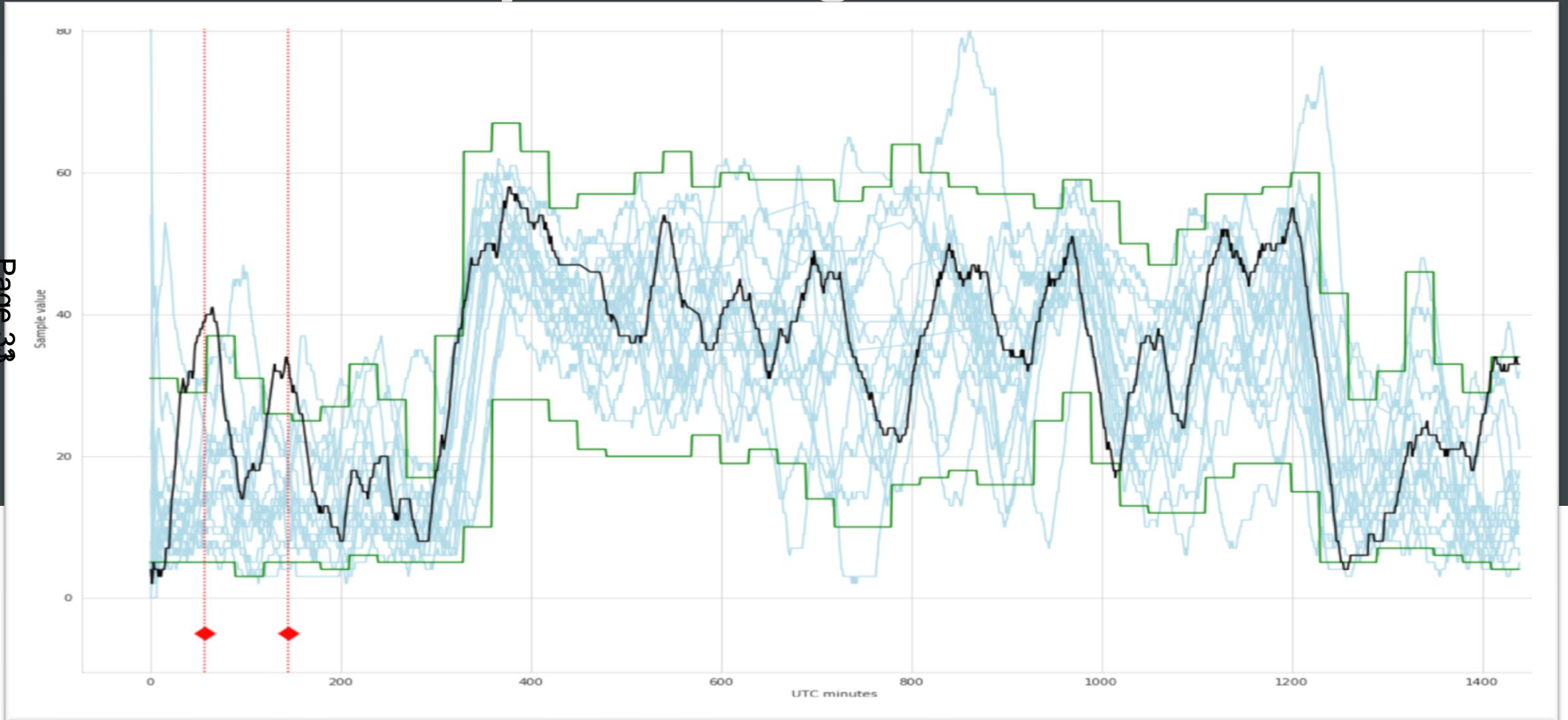
A team member places the mobile phone over the NFC tag, the task is started and their presence is registered for colleagues to see.



Logging in

NFC tags may also be used for 2-factor login to our apps.

Activity recording via PL-100 G



“OnOn - Digital presence”

Safety 24/7, even without a bracelet



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Voice activated

Alerts on leaving the bed

Alerts on user falling, including soft falls or slipping that could not be detected with other sensors

Alerts on bathroom delays or patterns


Exit alerts

OnOn Digital Observance



Fall, slow fall (3) (f: 20) s: 226x111px
Change: 106.6038% / 81.0219%
Speed: av: 0.9714 (h: 0.63, 0.62, 0.86, 1.20, 1.55)

Fall
slow fall (3)



ANNA Perenna: Fall Recognition v1.02



“EVER-ON” Features & Benefits Summary

- Wireless cloud-connected infrastructure with 100% up-time
- Dwelling Care Hubs available in stylish black or white
- Integrated Digital clock, with automatic time synchronisation
- Integrated low-power safety-orientation LED down lighting
- Integrated door entry access control may be answered on Hub or routed to any phone
- One 13A mains socket required for wall plug power supply
- Multi-purpose dwellings quickly ‘Care-enabled’
- No cable infrastructure
- No on-site central point of failure
- No onsite central processor control rack & battery bank
- No onsite network transceivers
- No practical limit to number of Hubs per site
- Stores practically unlimited global telephone numbers
- Unlimited speech paths per scheme: 100 residents = 100 simultaneous speech path possibility
- Up to 24-hours’ mains-fail backup per Hub
- Features & functionality set per user on cloud-connected Everon Portal
- Any Everon wearable wireless device will connect with any other UK Everon site Hub

- Software updates, upgrades, features, functionality & fixes via cloud-connected Everon Portal through whole lifecycle
- Connection via 2G,4G, WiFi or LAN
- Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) monitoring uses SCAIP Digital protocol connectivity (interoperability verified at Centra ARC)
- Call management uses Everon Android mobile phone app
- No DECT system required
- Calls may be routed to multiple care staff, ARCs, relatives, care organisations/agencies
- Flexible call routing by flat and device type
- I’m OK function checks residents’ daily mobility during a set time period. If adopted, residents may opt out of this service
- Key-less lock access control – Residents doors may be opened (or locked to prevent exit) using wireless NFC
- Fire detection system connection
- Extra Care cancel at source via NFC-enabled trigger , enabled GSM phone or NFC fob
- Permitted video care monitoring
- Polymorphic mobility monitoring (On-On)
- ISO 13485 Quality related to medical devices safety and efficacy
- ISO 9001 certified (continuously delivering improved Quality)

THANK YOU



Contact



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E-mail

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STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2021/22

Core Areas of Responsibility

- (1) To provide scrutiny for the following corporate projects:
 - Customer Excellence - Delivering services that put the customer at the heart of everything we do;
 - Behaviours and Insights - Future-proofing the Council's service provision by understanding customer needs and expectations over the next ten years and beyond; and
 - Partnerships - Working with public, private and third sector partners to deliver and develop services to our community, businesses and visitors to the district including shared and cross-border working.
- (2) To monitor levels of customer satisfaction and provide scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement. This will also include matters of concern that are identified by the Stronger Council Select Committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators.

Scrutiny Role of the Select Committee

- (1) To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved;
- (2) To develop a work programme each year that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above;
- (3) To consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- (4) To look outwards and show community leadership;
- (5) To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives that affect the Select Committees areas of responsibility and the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our district, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
- (6) To establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
- (7) To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy;
- (8) To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports; and
- (9) To engage with the community and encourage community engagement.

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Stronger Communities Select Committee

Work Programme 2021/22

Chairman: Cllr J Lea

Stronger Communities Corporate Programme Alignment focuses on People living longer, healthier and independent lives; Adult and Children were supported in times of need; and People and Communities achieve their potential.

No.	Item	Deadline	Progress and Comments	Owner (Officer)	Programme of Meetings
1.	The Social Housing White Paper	15 June 2021	COMPLETED	D Fenton	15 June 21 21 Sept 21 11 Jan 22 1 Mar 22 22 Mar 22 * (meeting solely for Ch/Inp Annual reports)
2.	Our new approach to resident's involvement	15 June 2021	COMPLETED	D. Fenton	
3.	Waltham Abbey Community & Cultural Hub (Feasibility on Epping Forest culture and community hub)	15 June 2021	COMPLETED Detailed proposal to be considered	J. Gould	
4.	"What are our customers telling us?" and update on the Customer Services Strategy	15 June 2021	Quarter 1 Report – Committee was updated. The figures for Q1 would not be available until 30 June.	S. Lewis/ R. Pavey	
		21 Sept 2021	Quarter 2 Report – Committee was updated.		
		22 March 2021	Reporting on a 6-month basis		
5.	Six-month report on the work of the Council-funded Police Officers	21 Sept 2021	COMPLETED	C. Wiggins	

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6.	EFDC Museum Collections	21 Sept 21	To consider the high-level action Plan for the programme of work over 3 years, sent out in the Corporate performance Reporting Q3 and requested at O&S on 19.11.20.	F. Pellegrino/ J. Gould	
7.	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Review	EFDC's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy reaches end of life in March 2022. A revised strategy will need to be taken through governance structure ahead of formal adoption in April 2022.		J Gould	
		21 Sept 21	Considering the initial consultation on the review of the Strategy.		
		1 March 22	Considering the draft Strategy and make recommendations to Cabinet.		
8.	Allocations Scheme Review	Current allocations policy due to expire March 2022. A revised Policy will need to be drafted, consulted on and be taken through governance structure ahead of agreement by Cabinet ready for implementation of new policy in April 2022.		J Gould	
		21 Sept 21	Considering the initial consultation on the review of the Policy.		
		1 March 22	Considering the draft Policy and make recommendations to Cabinet.		
9.	Tenancy Policy Review	Current tenancy policy due to expire March 2022. A revised Policy will need to be drafted, consulted on and be taken through governance structure ahead of agreement by Cabinet ready for implementation of new policy in April 2022.		J. Gould	
		21 Sept 21	Considering the initial consultation on the review of the Policy.		
		1 March 22	Considering the draft Policy and make recommendations to Cabinet.		
10.	Overarching Housing Strategy	EFDC's current Housing Strategy reaches end of life in March 2022. A revised strategy will need to be taken through governance structure ahead of formal adoption in August 2022.		J. Gould	
		21 Sept 21	Considering the initial consultation on the review of the Strategy.		
		June 22	Considering the draft Strategy and make recommendations to Cabinet.		
11.	Domestic Abuse Act	June 22	A briefing to members on the Act and the Strategy and impact on EFDC.	J. Gould/ C. Wiggins	

12.	Market Strategy	11 Jan 22	To be considered by O&S Committee	S. Devine	O&S 27.01.22
13.	Sheltered Housing	11 Jan 22	Alarm upgrades in Sheltered housing.	D. Fenton	
14.	HRA Business Plan	11 Jan 22	To consider the HRA Business Plan	D. Fenton	
15.	Presentation from the District Police Commander	22 March 2022	Annual Report	C. Wiggins	
16.	Community Safety Partnership annual report and review of the district Strategic Intelligence Assessment	22 March 2022	Annual Report	C. Wiggins	
17.	Housing Associations	TBC	To consider how the Council could scrutinise housing associations. Requested O&S 3.06.21 Supported by the Committee 15.06.21	J. Gould/ D Fenton	
18.	Data insight led review of customer service outlets	1 March	Options and recommendations for short, medium and long-term options *Update provided in the agenda.	S Lewis	
19.	Digital Inclusion	1 March	*Update provided in the agenda.	S Lewis	
20.	Unaffordable rents	TBC	To report on the numbers of social rents and affordable rents for properties being built under the Council Housebuilding programme and those being bought under right to buy receipts. (O&S 12.10.21)	J. Gould/ D Fenton	
21.	Resident Involvement Strategy	June/July 2022	To consider the proposed Strategy for Resident Involvement which meets the requirements of the 2020 White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing Residents"	R Smith/ C Bagan-Jones	

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Data insight led review of customer service outlets

Civic & Community Hub

Covid has impacted the way that residents interact with us and many are continuing to interact online. Residents who do require face to face support are seeing Officers or Partners within our Community Hub, this is often as a 'walk in' with partners advising clients on the specific days they are in the Hub. We do of course still have walk in's for emergency situations such as homelessness. Footfall for the Community Hub has declined in the last few months and we are working with partners on ways to promote and encourage footfall. Longer term, learnings from the Hub will be incorporated into the strategic direction of future Hubs.

The table below gives a full breakdown of visitors once we re-opened and reasons for visits. Comparison is shown for 2019 and 2020. In particular, in 2019 we had 949 visits for recycling sacks and 700 for sacks in 2020. Outlets are available throughout the district for collection of sacks and residents continue to use those which are closer to home and more convenient.

Row Labels	2021			Total	2022		Total	Grand Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb		
*Community Hub	49	101	40	190	58	22	80	270
*Community, Culture and wellbeing	1			1				1
*Democracy	2	1	1	4	2	1	3	7
*Directions within The Civic	15	103	117	235	114	34	148	383
*Environment	2	1		3	4	2	6	9
*Finance					1		1	1
*General Non-specific	70	5	19	94	14	5	19	113
*Housing	66	49	37	152	45	11	56	208
*Meeting	69	64	6	139	3	2	5	144
*Neighbourhoods and Community Resilience	6	1	1	8	5		5	13
*Non EFDC functions	6	5	3	14	3	3	6	20
*Other	11	14	5	30	7	8	15	45
*Parking & Travel	10	5	3	18	6	2	8	26
*Planning	9	8	2	19	7	3	10	29
*Recycling Bags	48	73	38	159	50	11	61	220
*Rev's & Ben's	110	97	60	267	94	15	109	376
*Support Services	4	1	2	7	2	1	3	10
*Waste	4	7	4	15	6	2	8	23
Grand Total	482	535	338	1355	421	122	543	1898

Row Labels	2019			Total	2020		Total	Grand Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec		Jan	Feb		
⊕ Community & Leisure		30	7	37	2		2	39
⊕ Democracy		106	80	186	9	1	10	196
⊕ Directions within EFDC	7	87	48	142	18	4	22	164
⊕ Environment	2	58	24	84	24	2	26	110
⊕ General Non-specific	4	62	51	117	57	8	65	182
⊕ Housing	10	170	93	273	147	14	161	434
⊕ Meeting	27	177	123	327	162	23	185	512
⊕ Non EFDC	1	20	7	28	11	1	12	40
⊕ Other		27	7	34	19	4	23	57
⊕ Parking & Travel	4	39	22	65	17	1	18	83
⊕ Planning	7	112	57	176	90	11	101	277
⊕ Recycling Bags	24	505	420	949	574	126	700	1649
⊕ Rev's & Ben's		37	17	54	34	5	39	93
⊕ Support Services	1	47	33	81	13	1	14	95
⊕ Waste	2	42	19	63	27	4	31	94
Grand Total	89	1519	1008	2616	1204	205	1409	4025

Digital inclusion

There is a strong appetite amongst partners and voluntary organisations to adopt a collaborative approach to digital inclusion and our role is to facilitate this working group. The group met in January to resume discussions, following the initial meeting last August, it was placed on hold due to lack of a Team Manager.

Clive Emmett from the West Essex Community Action Network (WECAN) described the challenge of how to reach those groups who struggle to access digital, kit, data, internet and training such as BAME groups and those with mental health issues.

The groups purpose will be to

- Connect, collaborate and identify how they can help each other
- Facilitate access to training, venues, hardware/devices
- Promote via our communication tools the support available to our residents
- Enable digitally excluded residents to access the support they need

WECAN have a programme of projects to support the use and uptake of digital technology. There are some great examples of how their projects can support our residents and we will be providing the team with nominations for the following.

- Access to six months Vodafone data for residents in need of data
- Wristbands for rough sleepers which will send alerts to their care worker if, for example, their temperature drops

The working group are meeting on a monthly basis to share updates and continue this work.

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 1 March 2022

Portfolio: Housing Services (Councillor H Whitbread)

Subject: Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme

**Officer contact for further information: Jennifer Gould
(07548145639)**

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee considers the 5 major changes and 11 minor changes to the current Allocations Scheme contained within this report.
- (2) That the Committee recommends the publication of the proposed revised Housing Allocations Scheme for 2022 – 2027 at Appendix 1 on 4 April 2022 with an effective date of 12 September 2022.
- (3) That the Committee considers the outcome and recommends the publication of the Stage 2 Public Consultation Report on the Allocations Scheme at Appendix 2B.
- (4) That the Allocations Scheme for 2022 -2027 is reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication.

Executive Summary:

Committee is being asked to consider the recommendations set out in this report to be included in the revised Housing Allocations Scheme for 2022- 2027.

As a Local Housing Authority, Epping Forest District Council has a statutory duty to publish a Housing Allocations Scheme (the scheme) for determining priorities - and the procedure to be followed - when selecting a household to be offered a tenancy of Council owned accommodation or to be nominated for an offer of housing from another registered provider with stock in the district.

The Council is required to review the scheme at least once every five years.

The current scheme became effective in July 2018 and is due for renewal by April 2022 along with the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Tenancy Policy and the overarching Housing Strategy.

A review of all four strategies and policies commenced in May 2021 including a co-ordinated 2-stage statutory consultation exercise.

The proposals for the Tenancy Policy 2022 – 2027 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022- 2027 are also being presented to this Committee and the proposals for the overarching Housing Strategy are due to be presented to Committee in July 2022.

The issue is a key decision.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable the Council to publish and implement the Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 and associated material.

Other Options for Action:

- (i) Not to recommend changes to the draft Housing Allocations Scheme
- (ii) To suggest alternative changes to the draft Housing Allocations Scheme (subject to further consultation where appropriate).

Report:

1. The current Allocations Scheme was published in 2018 and offers choice-based lettings for most applicants on the housing register. Qualifying eligible applicants are placed in one of three bands A, B or C depending on their assessed need. The applicants' bands and registration dates are used to prioritise expressions of interest, or 'bids' for vacant properties that are advertised on a weekly basis. The purpose of a choice-based lettings Policy is to enable applicants to exercise some degree of choice as to where they live (albeit entirely limited by supply and demand).

2. Under the current Policy some households are unable to bid for properties that are advertised. Rather, they receive a direct offer of accommodation. These households include but are not limited to:

- homeless single people and families to whom the Council has accepted a main housing duty under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- existing social housing tenants who qualify for a priority transfer
- applicants living in supported housing

3. The Social Housing Annual Lettings Report 2020 –2021 at Appendix 3 highlights that the demand for affordable rented housing in Epping Forest District continues to outweigh the supply of suitable accommodation.

4. The private rented sector is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many low to middle income families and single people who would have previously been able to secure their own accommodation without approaching the Council for help. This is largely in keeping with the national trend. Covid 19 has brought into sharp focus the need for key workers to ensure the local economy and local services continue to function. Many key workers have families with young children or are single people, often on low incomes, at the start of their career or are returning to work and need affordable local housing to sustain employment and deliver essential services.

5. Studies have consistently found that housing, health, wellbeing and life-chances are inextricably linked. A comprehensive, fair, transparent and flexible allocations scheme enables the Council to manage expectations, make the best use of current housing stock and plan for future housing supply across all tenures to meet the needs and aspirations of its current and future residents.

6. The full review of the scheme began in May 2021 along with simultaneous reviews of the Tenancy Policy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the overarching Housing Strategy which are all due for renewal in 2022.

Defining the priority bands

The current choice-based lettings scheme awards qualifying applications one of three priority Bands A, B and C. The proposal is to attribute a clearly defined category to each Band i.e. Band A is emergency need, Band B is urgent need and Band C moderate need with the following guiding principles:

- Band A Emergency Need – Band A will be awarded where an imminent move to alternative suitable accommodation is required to mitigate a serious and immediate risk to an applicant's life or a serious and immediate risk of a lifechanging detrimental effect on their mental or physical wellbeing or that of a member of their household.

The applicant will usually be offered a direct allocation as soon as something suitable becomes available, although the applicant can still bid for accommodation should an appropriate property be advertised in advance of the direct allocation.

It is anticipated that very few households will be awarded Band A, and those who do, will have their applications reviewed most frequently to ensure this band is only reserved for emergencies and does not become silted.

- Band B Urgent Need – Band B will be awarded where an applicant is living in unsuitable accommodation that is having or is likely to have a detrimental and long-term impact on their mental or physical wellbeing or that of a member of their household, and there are insufficient grounds to warrant an emergency move ahead of other applicants with an urgent need to move.

The applicant will usually be expected to secure an offer by bidding for advertised properties. Automated bidding or a direct allocation may be made (for homeless households) if the applicant fails to bid and/or secure an offer within a given timescale.

- Band C Moderate Need – Band C will be awarded where an applicant is living in undesirable accommodation, but they do not have an urgent need to move.

The applicant will be expected to pursue an offer by bidding for advertised properties and advised to maximise their limited prospects of securing an offer by considering the widest possible choice of suitable properties.

Five proposed major changes

Major changes are considered to be those which may affect the relative priority of a large number of applicants or a significant alteration to procedures. The following five major changes are being proposed

Medical priorities

The current scheme considers two medical priority categories; urgent medical need which places an applicant in Band A or moderate medical need which places an applicant in Band C.

These two categories do not account for those households with serious and/or progressive long-term medical conditions that are being exacerbated by their living conditions or would improve or stabilise by moving to more suitable accommodation, but do not require emergency rehousing.

The proposal is to replace the two existing medical priorities with three medical categories that accord with the three priority bands. i.e. Band A - emergency medical need, Band B - urgent medical need, Band C - moderate medical need.

With the applicant's consent the Council's medical advisor will be asked to review all live applications that have an existing medical priority. The proposal is for applicants to retain their original banding date unless they have other circumstances that have changed.

Examples of emergency, urgent and moderate medical needs for moving include, but are not limited to:

Emergency - life-threatening condition where the current housing circumstances are severely affecting their health e.g. home dialysis insufficient space to store dialysis equipment or unable to be discharged from hospital into current accommodation because it is unsafe and cannot be adapted.

Urgent - serious illness or disability where the current conditions are seriously affecting an individual's health to a marked degree and a move is recommended to improve health or slow down the deterioration of health of the individual e.g. mid-stage multiple sclerosis - applicant becoming increasingly immobile because they are effectively housebound or cannot access toilet, bathroom kitchen etc without substantial pain and property cannot be adapted, or a family with a severely autistic child with challenging behaviour who is sharing a bedroom with a sibling and has no outside space.

Moderate - illness or disability of a moderate nature which is adversely affected by their living condition and where a move is recommended to alleviate the condition, symptoms or the effects on the household. e.g. a person with arthritis who finds it uncomfortable to get up and down the three steps to the property during a flare-up or in and out of the bath/shower, and a wet-room cannot be fitted; or a couple in a 1 double bedroom property and one applicant has night-time incontinence.

Under occupiers

Under the current policy under-occupiers who wish to downsize can only be considered for properties of the right size and type based on their needs, and only qualify for the incentivised payment of £1,000 per room if they have a lifetime tenancy or in the case of fixed term tenants, have five or more years remaining on their tenancy.

It is recommended that:

- Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house with four or more bedrooms who are giving up two or more bedrooms can be considered for a flat or a house with a spare bedroom with or without a garden (i.e. a couple or single person can move from a 4-bed house to a 2-bed house or flat or a 1-bed house or flat with or without a garden).
- Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house to a flat where they are giving up one or more bedrooms, can be considered for a flat with a spare bedroom (i.e. a couple or single person can move from a 3-bed house to a 2-bed flat or a 1-bed flat) with or without a garden.
- Incentive payments are made to downsizers with fixed term tenancies with at least 6 months remaining on their tenancy (rather than 5 years) given the relative value of releasing a family-sized home to another household in need and the limited number of households whose fixed term tenancies this concession is likely to apply to 11 properties in 2023 and 22 properties in 2024.
- Incentive payments reflect the benefit to the Council of the size and type of property being surrendered relative to the size and type of property that the under-occupier is seeking to move to.

- The standard payment of £1,000 per room released will be adjusted to account for the relative demand for 2-bedroom properties and the surplus of sheltered housing units.
- Downsizers will typically be offered £1,000 per room they release . This will be reduced to £500 for those moving from a 3-bed if they opt for a 2- bed and only have a 1-bed need.
- Applicants aged 60+ who move from general needs accommodation into sheltered accommodation will receive an additional £1,000 top-up incentive payment regardless of whether they are downsizing.

Homeless households

Where the Council has accepted a duty to provide settled accommodation to a homeless household under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 it is required to give reasonable preference to their application for housing.

Appendix 4 point 1.2 of the current scheme sets out the policy for housing homeless applicants. However, it is silent on the reasonable preference that the Council gives to homeless households and this cohort is not listed under any of the priority bands. They receive a direct offer of accommodation (this is usually flatted accommodation unless they have been waiting for more than 2 years for an offer) and cannot currently bid for properties that are advertised.

The absence of banding and therefore lack of clarity over the reasonable preference given to part 7 homeless households puts the Council at risk of challenge. Solely relying on the Council to make a direct offer may inadvertently promote dependence whereas enabling homeless households to bid for houses and flats encourages them to proactively maximise opportunities to move out of temporary accommodation.

In addition, this reasonably allows for the removal of the option for applicants living in flats to re-join the housing register after a qualifying period, and be awarded priority band B to bid for houses

It is recommended that homeless households to whom the Council has accepted a duty to rehouse under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 are :

- awarded Band B under the scheme; and
- able to bid for suitable properties in accordance with their priority banding (on the understanding that if they fail to secure an offer via choice-based lettings within a reasonable timescale then they will also be considered for auto bidding and/or made a direct offer - which may be into the private sector - to enable the Council to discharge its duty).

Local lettings plans

The Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to agree local plans – allocating particular accommodation to people of a particular description - which may differ from the overall allocations policy. This is specifically to promote mixed communities and address crime hot-spots, economic regeneration and local skills shortages.

Examples may include:

- prioritising medical staff, blue light emergency officers or teachers on low incomes for affordable housing that is close to new or understaffed medical centres, stations or schools etc. ;or
- not allocating properties to vulnerable applicants in areas where there is a significant risk of being targeted by drug dealers seeking to take over their flat to supply drugs, otherwise known as cuckooing.

It is recommended that the scheme makes provision for introducing local lettings plans (LLPs) in exceptional circumstances where :

- there is an identified need to promote cohesion
- it is generated by the community
- is politically led rather than based solely on officer recommendation
- is approved by Committee
- is reviewed periodically; and
- the allocations do not affect overall compliance the scheme.

Serious unacceptable behaviour including rent arrears

Point 14.12 of the current Policy states that “any person or member of their household who within the past 7 years has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour...that would give sufficient grounds to issue possession proceedings if they were a secure, assured or fixed term tenant” will not qualify.

The 7-year disqualification rule also applies to serious rent arrears (including housing benefit and court cost arrears).

Point 18.4 of the current scheme states that an offer of accommodation will not be made to (anyone) who has rent arrears in excess of four weeks.

The 7-year rule does not take account of the cause of the arrears or behaviour (which may have been an isolated incident, and/or through no fault of the individual and/or triggered by a mental or physical health condition and/or has since been or is being resolved). The rule may also be counterproductive relative to the negative consequences of preventing a household in need access to the housing register.

The 7-year rule has largely been subsumed by recent legislation to protect vulnerable individuals from homelessness. Examples include but are not limited to the recognition of economic abuse as defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021; and mental or physical ill health, redundancy and addiction which could potentially trigger a Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space or Standard Breathing Space introduced by the Debt Respite Scheme Regulations 2020.

It is recommended that the 7-year rule for all unacceptable behaviour including rent arrears is replaced with a prescribed risk-based approach to determining whether a history of unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to warrant exclusion from the Housing Register.

The risk- based approach will look at patterns and severity of behaviour, cause and effect, recent history and support mechanisms that the applicant has or will engage with to prevent reoccurrence, including but not limited to income maximisation, debt management and payment plans and clinical and or social support.

Eleven recommended minor changes

The following minor changes are recommended which either relate to the above major changes or are standalone proposals which may not ordinarily warrant widescale public consultation but have been included for completeness.

Priority Date

Under the current scheme when applicants bid for advertised properties, whoever is in the highest band and has been on the housing register the longest will be considered first - regardless of how long they have been in that priority band.

This means that they will be housed ahead of other households that may have been waiting in the higher band (due to having a greater need to move) for longer.

It is recommended that the applicant's priority date will be the date that they join the housing register - unless or until they move up a band - in which case their priority date will be the date they join that band. If, however the applicant then moves down a band their priority date will revert to the date they originally joined the housing register (or previously joined that lower band as appropriate).

Direct offers and auto-bidding for priority Band A

Given the emergency nature of Band A it is recommended that where applicants have not been submitting bids for suitable properties, or the properties they need rarely become available the options should be made available to make a direct offer and/or set up auto-bidding

Downsizers and the refusal of offers

At present downsizers in Band A who bid for and then subsequently refuse 4 offers of accommodation are prevented from bidding for 12 months in order to reduce the burden of processing arbitrary bids.

This penalty may well be counterproductive as it is in the Council's interest to promote and support downsizing, and reasonable to expect a tenant who is downsizing through choice to be selective about where they decide to move to.

It is recommended that the policy is amended to stipulate that applicants who repeatedly bid for and then refuse offers of suitable properties will have their application suspended for six months - to allow for discretion based on individual circumstances, and act as a deterrent for casual bidders.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on the Local Authority to provide support to victims and children in safe accommodation and award all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse a priority need for housing. The current scheme already makes provision for victims of domestic abuse that are conducive to the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the pursuit of Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation is being proposed as part of the overarching Housing Strategy for 2022-2027.

It is recommended that the scheme makes explicit reference to the Council's compliance with the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Offer Policy

Existing tenants living in sheltered housing wishing to move to alternative sheltered accommodation within their own scheme and existing council tenants living in 1- bedroom general needs accommodation afforded Band B priority should be considered for bungalows on the scheme as well as flats.

Homeless applicants will be considered for all dwelling types in accordance with their need and priority banding (including houses where applicable) whether their suitable offer is made by way of choice based letting, auto bidding or a direct offer.

Applications from staff or Members of the Council or their relatives

The current scheme does not require applicants to disclose whether they are staff or Members of the Council or related to, partner of or living with staff or Members of the Council. It is recommended that this requirement be introduced to protect the Council's interest and that of its employees and elected Members. Their status will be flagged on the Council's computer system, and failure to disclose this information may result in the application being suspended or cancelled as determined by the designated manager

Definition of Household

The current definition of household is 'either one person or two persons or more who are intending to live together at the same property offered. Applicants should only include dependants as part of their household or persons who have been part of their household for at least a two-year period and shall occupy the accommodation offered as their only or principal home'. It is proposed that the definition of household for the purposes of the scheme is aligned to that which is used when assessing a homelessness application as set out on the homelessness legislation which reads: An applicant or any other person who usually lives with the applicant as a member of their family or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.

Priority transfers and management transfers

Appendix 3 to the current Policy refers to 'Priority Transfers' as an umbrella term to capture a range of unrelated reasons that a household may need to move from one Council property to another although there is limited detail about the offer policy that applies to each ground for transfer (i.e. like-for like, direct offer or bidding, single or multiple offers etc.)

It is recommended that Appendix 3 of the current scheme is deleted and replaced with relevant sections in the main body of the scheme that define the offer policy for management transfers, overcrowding and welfare grounds. And that the policy on temporary and permanent decants are addressed in a separate policy document regarding asset management.

Priority Bands

The reclassification of the Bands including all proposed major and minor changes are highlighted in the table at Appendix 5

Data Protection and Sharing of Information

The sharing of information shall be updated to reflect the amendments in the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities 2012 (as amended) following the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and the guidance that was issued on 26 January 2022.

Improving access to Social Housing for victims of Domestic Abuse

The wording of the Allocations Policy will be amended slightly to make clearer the obligations placed on local authorities and housing associations by section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 on secure tenancies following the guidance that was issued on 26 January 2022.

Resource Implications:

The implementation of the revised scheme shall be managed within existing staff resources and is anticipated to result in short term additional burden on officer time in the Housing Needs team which may impact on other administrative functions during this period.

The proposed changes to the medical priority shall require a review of all applicants with medical priority (currently 30 applicants in Band A and 141 in Band C).The additional fee for the medical advisor is anticipated to be 171 cases at £15 = £2,565

The changes shall require modifications to the software applications for the allocations scheme and an indicative charge is being sought

Finance have provided the following comments:

The report is fundamentally concerned with process changes to allocations and therefore the Financial consequences are limited. There are just a few comments to make:

1. The process change will be absorbed by current staffing levels and therefore there are no pressures on staffing costs.
2. The changes to Medical Priority will result in an increase of £2,565. There is a budget for this expenditure and it is felt that this could be absorbed within the service.
3. The changes to the computer system – the budget for Locata equates to the current quarterly charge of £5,250 so if there is an increase to this or a change to the system used, then there may be a budget pressure. Further information is required to determine the budget position when the cost have been received.
4. The change to the 7-year rule may have an effect on rent/benefit /court cost arrears and this is mentioned in the report. Unfortunately, I am not able to project what that might be and therefore whether this will have an impact on arrears levels. Hopefully it will be minor and only applicable to a minority of cases under the new risk-based assessment methodology.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Scheme enables the Council to fulfil its duties under the Housing Act 1996 as amended ('the 1996 Act') specifically Part 6 of the 1996 Act ('Part 6'); and complies with associated legislative requirements.

The review of the Scheme pays regard to The Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England 2012, and additional statutory guidance where appropriate.

The modifications to the scheme are consistent with the proposals being submitted to Committee in respect of the draft Tenancy Strategy 2022-2027 and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 (s.166A (12)).

A copy of the draft scheme and proposed alteration has been sent to every Private Registered Provider with which the Council has a nomination agreement along with an invitation to a workshop to provide a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed major changes and minor changes to the policy before altering the scheme (s.116A (13)).

All applicants on the Housing Register shall receive a letter giving 6 weeks advanced notice of the modifications and what this means for them. The information shall also be published on the established digital channels and emailed to partner organisations to ensure those likely to be affected by the changes have the affect brought to their attention within a reasonable time (s.168(3))

Legal Services considered the report and confirmed that they had no further comment.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Climate change is expected to disproportionately affect those in more vulnerable positions such as those in urgent need of affordable housing. This is because they are generally less able to protect themselves from the effects of climate change expected in the area, which are more extreme temperatures, flooding and drought.

Climate change is also likely to have a greater effect on those on low incomes and who have existing health conditions again as they will be less able to mitigate against the effects of climate change

Consultation Undertaken:

The recommendations within this review have all been subject to a comprehensive 2-stage public consultation exercise which included; bite-size briefings, webinars, workshops, surveys, on-line questionnaires, small meetings and one to one conversation.

In total 325 people were directly invited to participate in both stages of the consultation including:

- Council tenants, leaseholders and residents
- Partner agencies and community groups with an interest in housing
- Private registered providers of social housing
- EFDC staff and other statutory services
- Members of the Council
- Clerks of parish and town councils to forward to their respective elected members
- District, borough and city councils in the county

A full report on the outcome of the consultation can be found at Appendix 2A and 2B

Risk Management:

A number of significant risks are associated with the review of an allocations scheme :

The Council has a statutory duty to review the scheme within the timescales and parameters set out in the Allocation of Accommodation : guidance for local housing authorities in England 2012 as amended. Failure to pay due regard to this statutory guidance risks reputational damage and regulatory penalties.

A fair robust transparent and up to date allocations scheme enables the Council to make the best use of available housing stock for the benefit of applicants in need of affordable housing and mitigates the risk of judicial review and intervention by the Social Housing Ombudsman and other regulatory bodies for non-compliance with statute and regulation.

The provision of an efficient cost-effective scheme mitigates the financial pressure that inadequate housing can have on other statutory services, for the benefit of all residents. (particularly temporary accommodation, adult and children's social care, health and community safety).

Responding to stakeholder consultation feedback mitigates the risks of dissatisfaction and failure demand.

Failing to make the best use of available housing stock through assessed need and pre-determined priorities risks the immediate health and wellbeing of applicants in housing need and the wider community.

Disregarding the requirements to undertake and respond to a robust equalities impact assessment risks the provision of an unequitable housing service which may disproportionately affect vulnerable residents and those with protected characteristics.

Background Papers:

- Appendix 1 - Draft Housing Allocations Scheme 2022 – 2027
- Appendix 2A –Stage 1 Consultation and Feedback Report October 2021
- Appendix 2B - Stage 2 Consultation and Feedback Report February 2022
- Appendix 3 - Social Housing Lettings Annual Report 2020-2021
- Appendix 4 – Reclassification of Bands
- Appendix 5 – Schedule of under- occupation incentive rates
- Equality Impact Assessment February 2022 (to follow)

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Housing Allocation Scheme

2022 – 2027

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If you would like this document in an accessible format then please contact:
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SECTION ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This is Epping Forest District Council's proposed Housing Allocations Scheme ("the Scheme") for determining priorities and for the procedures to be followed when allocating social housing within the District between 2022- 2027.

The scheme covers all aspects of the allocations process and is intended to replace previous Housing Allocations Schemes (subject to Cabinet approval in March 2022) in respect of current and future applications.

1.1 Fair access to social housing

The demand for affordable rented housing in the District far outweighs the supply of social housing that becomes available every year.

The Council maintains a Housing Register ("the Register") of applicants who qualify and are eligible to be allocated social housing under the scheme.

We are committed to ensuring everyone has fair access to social housing. Every eligible applicant who makes a request to join the Register shall be considered by the authority.

We shall offer assistance to applicants who may have difficulty applying without help, and the policies described in the Scheme shall be applied consistently to all applications to join the Register.

Applicants who in the Council's opinion have sufficient funds to enable them to meet their own housing costs (currently £76,000) shall not qualify to join the register. For joint applicants (or more) then their combined funds shall be considered.

1.2 Health wellbeing and social recovery

Many people who approach the Council for help with housing also have concerns about their health and wellbeing or that of their families.

Although the Council cannot offer a settled home to everyone who approaches us, or even to those applicants in urgent housing need as quickly as we would like to, we aim to make every contact count towards improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing of our residents.

As well as assessing individual application for housing we will also let applicants know what free opportunities are available to promote positive mental health, positive activities and positive community initiatives for all residents as part of our road map toward social recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

1.3 Options

The Council shall support applicants to choose and access the most suitable housing options and shall provide information and advice on the range of alternatives to joining the Register including mutual exchange, low cost home ownership, and accessing accommodation within the private rented sector.

The Council shall promote independent living for all applicants who are seeking assistance to meet their housing related support needs. Options shall include providing information and free advice about aids and adaptations, floating support, improved security, befriending and mobility schemes.

The Council shall very occasionally arrange a Landlord Management Transfer to alternative social housing outside of the scheme where it considers there is an emergency (or urgent) need to do so.

1.4 Managing the Housing Register

The Council shall not accept applicants onto the Register if it is evident that they have little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation. The Council considers this to be the fairest way of managing expectations.

1.4.1 Downsizers

Existing Council and Housing Association tenants who want to downsize shall be actively supported to do so. This may include financial incentives and allowing applicants who want to give up a larger family sized home to move to a smaller property with one spare bedroom for guests etc.

1.4.2 Removing Barriers

Where existing barriers to moving are shown to have unintended consequences alternative solutions will be proposed. Examples include easing the current restriction on the number of offers to downsizers and replacing automatic sanctions for rent arrears with repayment agreements where it is appropriate to do so.

1.5 Housing needs and priority Bands

The Council shall only allocate accommodation to people on the Register in accordance with this scheme and shall give reasonable preference to specified categories of people based on their assessed need for affordable housing.

Qualifying applicants who have been accepted on to the scheme shall be placed in one of three priority bands.

Band A - Emergency Need, Band B - Urgent Need, Band C - Moderate Need

1.6 Choice

The scheme aims to ensure that the accommodation offered meets the needs, circumstances, and wherever possible the preferences of the applicants and their households who are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register.

The majority of allocations shall be via the Councils Choice Based Lettings Scheme for properties that are advertised on the [HomeOption](#) website.

Housing staff can arrange assisted bidding for applicants on request if they would experience difficulty without this help.

As far as reasonably possible all applicants shall be offered:

(a) a choice of housing accommodation; or

- (b) the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

Some applicants may receive a direct offer of suitable accommodation or placed on the auto-bidding system depending on their assessed housing need and bidding history.

1.7 Preventing homelessness

Everyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and approaches the Council for assistance under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 shall be encouraged to apply to join the Housing Register.

The Council reserves the right to discharge its main homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to homeless households either by making an offer of settled social housing via the scheme, or by securing an offer of settled accommodation for at least six months in the private rented sector.

This option only applies to Part 7 offers to Homeless Households and shall be determined by the availability of suitable accommodation. An equivalent power does not apply for applicants that have been accepted onto the Register under the provisions of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. All Part 6 allocations will be for social housing.

1.8 Best use of social housing

In order to make the best use of all available housing the Council will continue to work closely with a number of private registered providers (also known as housing associations) to secure nomination rights for the homes that they own and manage in the District.

Registered providers agree to work in partnership with the Council by advertising vacant properties through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and accepting nominations for vacant properties from applicants on the Register under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 in accordance with the scheme.

Similarly, registered providers assist the Council with discharging its main duty to homeless households under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 by accepting nominations for settled accommodation from homeless applicants on the Housing Register.

Registered providers shall also consider direct allocations for vacancies (including those both inside and outside of the scheme) in accordance with nominations agreements and all local lettings policies and plans.

1.9 Stable settled mixed communities and local lettings plans

Occasionally the Council may consider introducing local lettings policies and plans in response to specific issues such as local skill shortages, community cohesion and economic regeneration. Any recommendations will be subject to an equalities Impact Assessment and Cabinet approval.

1.10 Scope of the Allocations Scheme

- (a) An allocation of accommodation for the purpose of the Scheme means
- (b) Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the council

- (c) Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- (d) Nominating a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider

1.10.1 The Scheme applies to the allocation of accommodation to existing secure or introductory tenants of the local housing authority and existing assured tenants of private registered providers only in the following circumstances:

- (a) the allocation involves a transfer;
- (b) the application for transfer is made by the tenant; and
- (c) the housing authority is satisfied that the tenant is to be given reasonable preference under the statutory framework.

1.10.2 The Scheme **does** apply to the following:

- (a) existing tenants who occupy an adapted property and no longer require those adaptations, but the Council requires the property for an applicant who does need them; and existing tenants who are under-occupying their accommodation.

The scheme **does not** apply to the following:

- (a) mutual exchanges between secure tenants (see Section 9);
- (b) mutual exchanges between secure and assured tenants, and those with flexible/fixed term tenancies (see Section 9);
- (c) assignments (see Tenancy Policy);
- (d) renewals/extensions of fixed term/flexible tenancies (see Tenancy Policy);
- (e) transfers to existing tenants where the Council is satisfied that the tenant does not have reasonable preference (see Section 9);
- (f) transfers to existing tenants that the Council initiates for management purposes, including temporary decants (see Section 9);
- (g) conversion of introductory tenancies to secure tenancies (see section 9);
- (h) successions under section 89 of the Housing Act 1985 (see Section 9);
- (i) allocations to persons who lawfully occupy accommodation let on family intervention tenancies (see Tenancy Policy);
- (j) provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duties or powers (see Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy);
- (k) transfer of tenancies by court order under family law or under the provision of the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 (see Tenancy Policy);
- (l) re-housing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by the Council or being re-housed by the Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973 (see draft Decant Policy)
- (m) temporary decants to allow property repairs to be carried out (see draft Decant Policy); and
- (n) Accommodation based care and support extra care or residential care for vulnerable adults or children which shall fall under the remit of Essex County Council.

SECTION TWO: THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2. Housing Legislation and Regulation

This draft Housing Allocations Scheme has been developed to comply with the provisions of:

- (a) The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011
- (b) The Code of Guidance on Allocations of June 2012, and the Supplementary Guidance of December 2013 Providing social housing for local people, of March 2015 Right to Move, of November 2018 Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges November 2018 and of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations June 2021
- (c) Other relevant legislation and guidance listed at Appendix G

The review of the Scheme coincides with simultaneous reviews of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Tenancy Policy, and the Overarching Housing Strategy.

2.1 Equality and diversity

The Council is committed to upholding the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and fulfilling its duty to:

- (a) eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity; and
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The recommended changes to the Allocations Scheme 2022 – 2027 that will be presented to Cabinet for approval shall be appended with the results of this consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment.

2.2 Data protection and freedom of information

Some or all of the information that an applicant provides is likely to be personal and sensitive and/or fall within special categories of data as defined under the General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018.

Data shall usually only be shared with a third party with the applicant's permission and then only for the purposes of assisting with their re-housing. Applicants shall be asked to sign a consent form as part of their housing application to enable the authority to share their information. Personal data will also be handled in accordance with the Electronic Communications Act 2000.

Members of the public shall not be informed that a person is an applicant for an allocation of housing accommodation without the applicant's consent.

Personal information may be shared without consent if a lawful basis can be identified, for example if an individual's safety is at risk. Further conditions apply where there is a need to share special category data.

The Council shall consider whether it is appropriate to share information regarding safeguarding concerns, including, but not limited to concerns about domestic violence and abuse, with other agencies (such as housing associations and GP surgeries).

The Council is responsible for determining whether data sharing is lawful under UK data protection law, and this shall be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Applicants shall have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 to see all information held regarding their application for housing.

Individuals shall have the right under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to see information on how the Scheme has been prepared and approved by the Council.

Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 must be made in writing, state the applicants name and address for a response and describe the information requested.

2.3 Prevention of fraud and false statements

Where an applicant provides false information in connection with their application and this subsequently comes to the Council's attention, the designated manager may reject the application on the grounds of fraud and/or arrange for further investigation including a referral to the Council's fraud team .

Any rejection from the Register on the grounds of fraud may be treated as a permanent exclusion (including subsequent applications from the same applicant) even if the application is made from a different address.

The applicant shall be advised of the terms of and the reasons for the exclusion. "Fraudulent Information Provided" will be recorded on their casefile.

It is a criminal offence for any applicant and/or anyone providing supporting information to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement or knowingly to withhold reasonably requested information relevant to the housing application.

If there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed, the Council may take proceedings that could result in a criminal record, a fine or imprisonment. The Council may also seek possession of any home obtained as a result of fraud.

2.4 Exceptional circumstances

Any provision in the Scheme may be waived in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the appropriate senior officer with delegated authority (as stated in the department's Scheme of Delegations). The application of such discretion will normally require a full report of the circumstances of the individual case to be prepared by the Team Manager for the consideration of the delegated officer (currently the Director of Communities and Wellbeing).

SECTION THREE: THE HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

3. Free advice and assistance

Choice based lettings scheme typically requires housing applicants to be actively involved in seeking accommodation and the Council understands that some applicants may require help with this. The Housing, Community and Wellbeing staff aim to ensure that no person is disadvantaged by the way the Scheme operates.

Advice and information shall be made freely available about the right to make an application for housing; including the ability to request any necessary assistance when completing an application and expressing an interest in advertised properties, specifically for those applicants who would normally have difficulty in doing so without assistance.

Applicants shall also be given information to enable them to assess how long it is likely to be before accommodation appropriate to their needs may become available for allocation. The details shall be published on the HomeOption website and provided to applicants in an alternative accessible format on request at no charge.

A list of general information and advice that shall be available and how to access it is listed at Appendix F

3.1 Alternative housing options

As there are likely to be many more applicants for social housing than properties available, the Council shall also provide information about other options, including but not limited to advice on:

- (a) aids and adaptations
- (b) security measures
- (c) renting in the private rented sector
- (d) available low-cost home ownership options
- (e) key worker housing schemes
- (f) mutual exchanges
- (g) floating support

3.2 Positive health and wellbeing

Often when people apply to the Council for help to find somewhere suitable and affordable to live they or other members of their household are experiencing a wide range of difficulties which may be having a serious effect on their health and wellbeing or that of their families.

We understand that for most applicants when they first register for housing their sole focus is to find out how the Council can help with their housing needs.

It is evident from the many applications that we receive each year that lots of households are struggling with social, emotional or health related issues such as loneliness, mental health difficulties, weight management, or beating an addiction.

Applicants are being encouraged to use the on-line housing registration process as an

opportunity to have a look (in their own time if and when they want to) at the many free activities that are available across the district specifically designed to help establish positive mental health, positive activities and positive community as part of our road map to social recovery following the pandemic.

Applicants can also ask housing, community and wellbeing staff for free confidential advice on what services are available and what may be suitable for them.

3.3 Choice based lettings

The Council has adopted HomeOption choice based letting scheme which advertises available Council and housing association properties on-line and gives applicants on the Register the opportunity to express an interest in suitable properties either on the website or by telephone. This is usually referred to as submitting a “bid” to be considered for the property.

In general terms, the property shall be offered to the applicant in the highest band, who bids for the property and has been in that band for the longest time.

Details on how the scheme operates shall be included in the letter that is sent out to applicants that are accepted onto the Register.

3.4 Assisted bidding

The Council can provide assisted bidding for applicants who need help and do not have the facilities or anyone else to support them. There are computer kiosks at all receptions and housing staff at the Civic offices are also available if required, depending on the type of assistance the applicant requires. With assisted bidding the applicant chooses which properties they would like to bid on and receive assistance to submit the bid.

3.5 Auto- bidding and direct offers

Although the majority of applicants shall be allocated a property that they have self-selected via choice-based lettings the Council may from time to time arrange auto-bidding or make a direct offer of accommodation.

Auto-bidding can be set up to automatically generate bids for suitable properties based on the applicants assessed need. The applicant does not make the selection.

The Council may also directly offer a property to an applicant rather than selecting an applicant from bids or auto-bidding for advertised properties.

Auto-bidding and direct offers will only usually be considered where the applicant has been unsuccessful in their bidding – or if the applicant has not been bidding, and then usually only after a period of at least 6 months for the following categories of applicants;

3.5.1 Band A – Emergency Housing Need:

- Households with an emergency need to move on medical, disability or welfare grounds as determined by the Council’s Medical Officer,
- Other emergency housing need situations where applicants are failing to bid on suitable properties, or it would be unreasonable to rely solely on waiting to secure something suitable via choice-based lettings.

3.5.2 Band B – Urgent Housing Need:

- Households who are in Temporary Accommodation and the Council has accepted a main duty to house them under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

*Applicants who are or could be considered for auto-bidding or a direct offer are usually still expected to bid for suitable properties via HomeOption.

All auto-bidding arrangements and direct offers of accommodation shall be authorised by the designated manager.

If an applicant refuses an auto-bid or direct offer and exercises their right to request a statutory review as to the suitability of the offer then, if the review finds that the offer was unsuitable, the applicant shall be able to continue to bid until they are successful or have been made another direct offer of suitable accommodation.

3.6 **Eligibility to join the Housing Register**

In considering applications to join the Register the Council shall first ascertain: Whether an applicant is eligible for an allocation of accommodation; and If they qualify for an allocation of accommodation.

3.6.1 Persons from abroad

The Government sets the rules for which persons from abroad are eligible to join a Housing Register.

In general, persons from abroad who need leave to enter or remain in the UK will only be eligible under certain circumstances the current regulations are summarised at Appendix B

The regulations are quite complex and subject to change by “statutory instruments” and subject to amendment during the lifetime of the scheme.

The Council shall not allocate housing to an ineligible person by granting them a joint tenancy with another, eligible person.

The rules do not apply to an applicant who is already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of accommodation in which case the applicant can apply for a transfer regardless of their immigration status.

Any part of a household who is not a qualifying person shall be disregarded when assessing the need and size of accommodation.

The Council has also set some local criteria to determine who does and does not qualify to join the Housing Register.

3.7 **Qualifying to join the Housing Register**

Applicants must qualify under each of the local eligibility criteria and not be disqualified under any of the grounds listed at paragraph 3.10

An applicant’s eligibility or qualification to join the Register shall be kept under review during the application process. Applicants who cease to be eligible and/or qualifying may be removed from the Register at any time.

3.8 Local eligibility criteria

3.8.1 Age

The Register shall be open to applicants of 18 years and over.

3.8.2 Residency criteria

To meet the residency criteria applicants are required to have lived in the District for seven continuous years or more immediately prior to the date of their application.

Any resident who moved out of the District for less than two years, but has lived within the District for at least seven continuous years immediately prior to moving out of the District, will be treated as an applicant who has lived in the District for more than seven continuous years prior to application.

3.9 Exceptions to the residency criteria

The following exceptions to the seven-year residency criteria shall apply:

3.9.1 Armed Forces

Through the Military Covenant, the Government has made clear its responsibility to support the British Armed Forces in return for the important contribution they make to the country. Therefore, in accordance with the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, the Residency Criteria shall not apply to the following applicants;

Applicants who:

- (a) are serving in the regular forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service;
- (b) formerly served in the regular forces where the application is made within 5 years of discharge;
- (c) are divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who live in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence;
- (d) have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service; or
- (e) are serving or have served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service where the application is made within 5 years of discharge.

The "regular forces" and the "reserve forces" have the meanings given by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

3.9.2 Households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Households who are owed a homelessness duty by the Council under Part 7 S193 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended:

who have already met the residency provisions in accordance with this legislation;

where there is a requirement to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness, and the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty.

3.9.3 Move-on from supported housing

Applicants who are leaving supported housing schemes where a lesser residency criterion of 2 years shall apply as set out at appendix x of this Scheme.

3.9.4 Victims of domestic abuse

Applicants who are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the district having escaped domestic abuse from within the district or from another local authority area.

3.9.5 Social housing tenants with specific employment needs

Applicants who are existing local authority or housing association tenants with a good tenancy record who are seeking to transfer from another local housing authority area in England.

They must provide appropriate evidence that they are in long-term work in the District, or have a genuine intention of taking up an offer of work in the District (work does not including short-term, occasional, ancillary, voluntary, marginal or economically insignificant employment), comprising a minimum of 16 hours each week or an apprenticeship.

They must also demonstrate that they are experiencing hardship as a result of the above due to one or more of the following factors:

- (a) they live in excess of 50 miles from their current or intended place of work
- (b) they have a return journey time on public transport which is generally in excess of 3 hours based upon Internet Journey Planners
- (c) the availability of transport is restrictive causing similar difficulties set out in (a) and (b) above
- (d) transport is unaffordable when taking into account earnings
- (e) there are medical and child-care factors which would be affected if the tenant could not move
- (f) the failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve an applicant's job prospects or in the opinion of the designated manager some other hardship factor not covered by this Scheme

3.9.6 Looked after children

Where an applicant has been placed outside of the District by Essex County Council's Children Services Department, but Epping Forest District is the location they would normally live in, then they will be considered to fulfil the Residency criteria.

3.9.7 Leaving secure accommodation

Where an applicant has been moved to secure accommodation outside of the District for example due to detention in prison or in hospital under the Mental Health Act, then the applicant shall retain the local eligibility afforded immediately before their detention.

Other exceptional circumstances

Applicants who in the opinion of the designated manager are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District to escape violence or harm.

3.10 Non- Qualifying Applicants

Every application shall be assessed on its own merits. Any applicant rejected as ineligible or non-qualifying shall be provided with a written explanation by the designated officer giving clear grounds for the decision, based on the relevant facts. The applicant shall have the right to request a review of the decision.

The following grounds shall disqualify an applicant from joining the Housing Register:

3.10.1 Housing need

Any applicant who does not have an assessed housing need, as listed within at least one of the priority Bands criteria detailed at Section 7 of the Scheme shall not qualify.

3.10.2 Financial resources

Any applicants who, in the opinion of the Council, have sufficient funds either individually or collectively to enable them to meet their housing costs shall not qualify. At present the total upper threshold is set at £76,000.

Total income and assets shall be determined by calculating the total combined annual gross taxable income added to any residential property equity, savings, shares or any other assets. All applicants shall be required to provide evidence of income and capital.

Where the designated manager is satisfied with the evidence that applicants have disposed of assets by means of wilful deprivation within the six years directly prior to making the application the applicant shall be disqualified.

Any lump sums received, as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service by either, members of the Armed Forces, former Service personnel, bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Regular Forces, or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces, shall be disregarded from the calculation.

3.10.3 Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

Any applicant who in the view of the designated manager is found to have deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify to join the Housing Register shall be disqualified. Examples include but are not limited to:

- (a) selling a property that is affordable and suitable for the applicant's needs;
- (b) moving from a secure tenancy or settled accommodation to insecure or less settled or overcrowded accommodation;
- (c) requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit; or
- (d) deliberately overcrowding a property by moving in friends and/or other family members who have never lived together with the applicant previously, and who then request rehousing to larger accommodation.

3.10.4 Serious unacceptable behaviour

The Council may decide that an applicant is ineligible for social housing if it is satisfied that:

they, or a member of their household, has been found to be responsible for unacceptable behaviour (such as non-payment of rent, causing a nuisance or annoyance, or domestic violence/ abuse, harassment, threats of harassment, or violence) serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council; and

at the time their application is considered, they are unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council by reason of that behaviour.

Acts of violence and aggression to employees will not be tolerated by the Council and any applicant who threatens or uses violence towards any Council employee or contractor will be removed from the Register immediately.

3.10.5 Rent arrears

Applicants with rent arrears shall be disqualified from joining the Register if they wilfully and persistently fail to pay their rent and show disregard for advice and assistance to address the arrears where it would be reasonable to expect them to do so (e.g. the behaviour is not attributable to an underlying vulnerability). The individual circumstances shall be considered every case and a proportionate risk-based assessment shall be taken to whether the applicant should be disqualified from:

- (a) Joining the Register; or
- (b) Being considered for a property if they are already on the Register

Generally, applicants are unlikely to be disqualified if they can evidence that:

- (a) They have made an arrangement with the landlord for paying arrears, kept to the arrangement for at least three months are continuing to make the payments and give an undertaking to continue to pay the debt if they are rehoused.
- (b) The arrears accrued due to an unavoidable life event for example health reasons, a period of unemployment, furlough, caring responsibilities or other crisis, and reasonable measures have been and/or are being taken to address the debt and the underlying cause where possible for example debt counselling.
- (c) The arrears accrued as a result of third-party financial abuse or deception.
- (d) The applicant has been granted a Mental Health Breathing Space or Standard Breathing Space and the appropriate support plans are in place or being pursued to ensure a longer terms solution.
- (e) The arrears amount to less than 1/12 of the annual rental charge.

Where appropriate applicants shall be invited to consider pursuing free local support (otherwise known as social prescribing) as part of the social recovery programme for the District.

3.11 **Future applications**

If a non-qualifying applicant considers that he/she should be treated as a qualifying person in the future, they may make a fresh application at that time.

3.12 **Reasonable preference**

The Council shall give reasonable preference to specific categories of people when prioritising applicants on the Register in accordance with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.

3.12.1 Reasonable preference shall be given to applicants:

- (i) who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act (including those who

- are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need)
- (ii) who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or s195(2) of the 1996 Act or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3)
- (iii) occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing
- (iv) who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability); and
- (v) who need to move to a particular locality within the district; where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

3.13 Determining priority

The Council shall determine priority between applicants with reasonable preference by:

- (a) assessing the level of housing need and categorising it as either Emergency, Urgent or Moderate; and
- (b) prioritising bids from or making direct offers to applicants who have been in the highest band for the longest time

3.14 Under-occupation and downsizing

The Council shall run targeted incentive schemes (which may from time to time include published financial incentives subject to resources being available) to encourage and support tenants with spare bedrooms to transfer or mutually exchange into smaller properties, in accordance with the Property Size and Type criteria (Appendix A).

3.15 Incentives and support for downsizing

Financial incentives

Where a lifetime tenant of the Council is under-occupying accommodation and

- (a) is downsizing accommodation and moves or
- (b) enters into a mutual exchange to any property with fewer bedrooms than their current property and
- (c) both properties are owned by the Council,

they shall be offered £500 to cover removal costs a payment of £500 to meet decoration costs (in addition to the amount paid under the Council's decorations allowance scheme) and £1,000 for each bedroom "released", subject to the tenant having a housing need for the downsized property, and a maximum payment of £4,000 being made.

If a Secure (fixed-term) Tenant wishes to transfer (or mutual exchange) to smaller accommodation, the financial incentives to downsize set out under this section of the Scheme shall apply, but only if they have more than 5 years remaining on their fixed- term tenancy.

The Council's incentive payments made to existing tenants who downsize accommodation

shall be made (subject to paragraph 3.14 above) to any of the Council's tenants who downsize accommodation by way of mutual exchange, providing all parties to the mutual exchange are tenants of the Council and are adequately housed as a result, in accordance with the Scheme.

Any tenant wishing to enter into this arrangement whose rent account is in arrears, must be prepared to accept that the arrears shall be deducted from the amount paid.

3.15.1 Size and type of offer

A lifetime tenant of the Council wishing to downsize from a house to a flat where they are giving up one or more bedrooms can be considered for a flat with a spare bedroom (e.g. a couple or single person can move from a 3-bedroom house to a or a 2-bedroom flat or a 1-bedroom flat) either with or without a garden.

A lifetime tenant of the Council or a fixed term tenant of the Council with more than x years remaining on their fixed term tenancy wishing to downsize from a 4-bedroom house or larger where they are giving up 2 or more bedrooms can be considered for a flat or a house with a spare bedroom (e.g. a couple or single person can move from a 4-bedroom house to a 2-bedroom house or flat or a 1 bedroom house or flat) either with or without a garden.

3.15.2 Exceptions to incentives

Where an under-occupier opts to downsize to a property with a spare bedroom, they shall not be eligible for the £1,000 incentive for any of the rooms they release.

Where a tenant of the Council is downsizing accommodation, they shall be considered for a bungalow if they wish provided, they are over 60 years of age.

The financial criteria shall be disregarded where a tenant of the Council is under-occupying accommodation and is downsizing accommodation and moves or enters into a mutual exchange to any property with less bedrooms than their current property and both properties are owned by the Council.

The Council's incentive payments shall not apply to all those downsizing in accordance with this paragraph where the financial criteria has been disregarded for this reason.

3.16 Insanitary, overcrowded housing or unsatisfactory conditions

The definition of insanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory conditions for the purpose of the Scheme is:

Where the Permitted Number, in accordance with the provisions of S. 326 of the Housing Act 1985 is exceeded, or in accordance with the legislation, the property is in a serious state of disrepair, of poor internal or external arrangement, or is lacking one or more of the following; kitchen facilities, inside W.C. or utility supplies.

3.17 Medical and welfare needs

The Housing Act 1996 states that reasonable preference on the Housing Register should be given to applicants who have a need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability and access needs and/or learning disability)

The medical and welfare category includes applicants, or members of the applicant's household, whose health is being affected by their current property, and where a move to another more suitable property would alleviate their condition or make it easier to manage.

3.18 Medical grounds (including disability)

Where it appears that there is a need to make enquiries into an applicant's medical condition, the designated officer shall refer the case to the Council's medical advisor or a company commissioned by the Council to provide medical advice on written evidence and taking into account all known facts relating to the application.

It is important to note that reasonable preference shall not be awarded based upon the medical condition itself, rather upon the impact the condition has upon the applicant's housing requirements and whether the applicant's current accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health.

Both reasonable preference and the associated priority awarded shall be determined by the extent to which the medical advisor considers alternative accommodation will assist with stabilising or improving the condition and the urgency with which alternative accommodation is required. The applicant can provide their own medical evidence if appropriate along with a medical/welfare assessment form, which will be sent to the Council's medical advisor.

If in the opinion of the medical adviser reasonable preference should be granted, then they shall recommend that the application is awarded the following priority:

- 3.18.1 Emergency medical need where it can be demonstrated that, due to an illness or disability, it would be unacceptable for the applicant to remain in their current dwelling;
- 3.18.2 Urgent medical need where it can be demonstrated that - due to a serious or chronic illness or disability - the health of and therefore quality of life of an applicant (or member of their household) is; significantly affected by their current dwelling; and, is likely to significantly improve (or any deterioration is likely to stabilise or slow down significantly) if they move.
- 3.18.3 Moderate medical need when it can be demonstrated that due to an illness or disability the applicant finds living in their current dwelling difficult and it is clear that remaining in that dwelling would contribute to deterioration in their health; or it would be beneficial for the applicant to move to alternative accommodation but, at present, the applicant can manage in their present dwelling.

The medical adviser shall also recommend the type of property most appropriate to the household's medical needs.

The medical award will determine the Band the applicant is placed in. Where two or more members of a household would qualify for medical priority, only the highest priority will be awarded.

3.19 Reassessment of medical priority

Any applicant who is awarded Band A or Band B on medical grounds shall have their medical position re-assessed if they refuse a suitable offer of a property that they have expressed an interest in, or have been selected for via auto-bidding or of a direct offer.

A re-assessment shall also be required if an applicant in Band A or B fails to fully participate in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme for more than 12 months.

If an applicant with reasonable preference on medical grounds moves from their existing accommodation but remains on the Register, then they shall require a new medical assessment.

3.20 Welfare grounds

Welfare grounds shall be assessed on written evidence by the designated manager in consultation with the Council's medical adviser.

Welfare issues shall encompass:

- (a) providing or receiving ongoing care and care and support needs for those who could not be expected to find their own accommodation such as young adults with a learning disability who wish to live independently in the community; and
- (b) social needs, for instance, where a secure base is required for a care-leaver or any other vulnerable person to build a stable life.

Those who are active foster carers or those who are adopting who need to secure larger accommodation in order to look after a child who was previously looked after by local authority will be considered for a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy (in accordance with the Council's Tenancy Policy) where additional priority is justified.

3.21 Hardship grounds

Hardship grounds shall be assessed on written evidence by the designated manager in consultation with the Council's Medical Adviser.

Hardship may include a need to move to give or receive care that is substantial or ongoing as well as for access to specialist medical treatment where there are severe mental health, medical or welfare issues and there are exceptional reasons why this support cannot be made available through a reliance on public transport or on the applicants own transport.

If the medical and welfare priority assessment was completed more than 12 months prior to the point of offer, then the designated officer shall arrange for it to be reviewed before the offer is made to ensure that the recommendations still apply.

3.22 Sheltered housing supplementary waiting list

The Council operates a separate Supplementary Waiting List for non-qualifying applicants over 60 years of age who do not meet certain aspects of the Local Eligibility Criteria.

Applicants shall generally only be able to bid on one-bedroom Council or Housing Association properties in sheltered accommodation or grouped dwelling schemes (not bungalows) for older people under the HomeOption Scheme. However, qualifying persons on the Council's Register who have submitted bids shall be given priority.

Any offers of tenancies made to applicants on the Supplementary Waiting List shall be prioritised in registration date order.

Prior to any offer, the Council shall undertake an in- depth assessment of the applicant to determine if the accommodation is suitable for the applicant. The following aspects of both the Local Eligibility Criteria set out within section xxx above and the provisions under Section xxx of the Scheme shall still apply when determining if the applicant is eligible for inclusion on the Supplementary Waiting List:

- (a) False statements or withholding information
- (b) A financial assessment
- (c) Serious unacceptable behaviour

SECTION FOUR: LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS

4. Local lettings plans

Occasionally the Council may propose a local lettings plan to allocate particular accommodation to applicants of a particular description (whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories listed under paragraph xx of the scheme) in an area that has specific issues, in order to promote stable, settled, safe communities.

The need for the plan shall be clearly defined in relation to the area, the type of property and affected applicants or potential applicants.

An Equalities Impact Assessment shall be carried out and explicit reference shall be made to how the community will benefit from the proposal. The decision whether to introduce a local lettings plan shall be subject to Cabinet approval and shall not affect overall compliance with the requirements of the Scheme.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

Lettings on a specific development to key workers where a shortage of other available affordable housing in the locality is having a serious impact on the ability of a particular statutory service to recruit and retain essential staff.

Temporarily halting allocations to vulnerable applicants in specific localities with social issues that are likely to leave them open to exploitation , whilst the Community Safety Partnership tackles the issues.

Restricting the allocation of high-density housing developments with minimal green space (such as commercial premises with permitted development rights) to households without young children.

Local Lettings Plans shall be kept under periodic review to determine whether they are fulfilling the need for which they were originally intended and are still required.

SECTION FIVE: JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER

5. How to apply to join the Housing Register

Applicants are required to complete the on-line application form at [Home Option](#) and submit the relevant supporting documents by the means specified on the application form.

Applicants who require advice or assistance can

Email rehousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Telephone 01992 564716
Visit The Community Hub
Civic Offices
323 High Street
Epping
CM16 4BZ

5.1 Applications from Members of the Council, staff, or their relatives.

Any housing applicant (including existing council tenants) must tell the Council when they apply to the Register if they are:

- (a) An elected member of the Council: or
- (b) A council employee: or
- (c) Related to any of the above
- (d) Partner of any of the above
- (e) Living with any of the above

The application from any of the above shall be flagged on the Council's computer system to show their status.

Where an applicant fails to disclose the above information and this subsequently comes to the Council's attention, the housing application may be suspended or cancelled, as determined by the designated manager.

5.2 Application forms

Application forms shall only be accepted by the Council as complete once all correct and relevant information and supporting documents have been received and verified.

5.3 Supporting information

An application shall not be progressed until applicants provide the necessary information. If the information is not supplied within the specified timescales (typically 14 days) then the application will usually be cancelled, and the applicants advised to reapply at a later stage when they are able to provide the necessary details in the required format.

However, if the applicants have made a homelessness application to the Council under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, then their application to join the Register shall still be processed. It will only be cancelled if the Council subsequently decides that no duty is owed to the applicants under the homelessness legislation, and the applicants fail to provide all of the relevant supporting documentation.

5.4 Proof of identity

Applicants and other members of the household shall, at the point of application, be required to provide documentary proof from two official sources of;

- (a) their identity; and
- (b) their residency.

Applicants shall be required to provide an original full birth certificate, a current passport and any other appropriate documents as determined by the designated manager.

If there is a valid reason why the required documents cannot be provided, then the designated manager may agree to accept alternative forms of evidence.

5.5 Proof of residency

Applicants shall be required to provide satisfactory evidence of residency. The Council reserves the right to validate the residency of the applicants and other members of the household by seeking information from other Council services and relevant statutory bodies as appropriate.

Eligibility may be reviewed before or when an applicant is considered for an offer of a particular property and the evidence required may be more extensive than was requested at the point of being accepted onto the Register.

Usually, if an applicant fails to provide the required evidence then they will not be offered the property.

5.6 Registration date

The registration date shall be the date that a fully completed application is received by the Council.

5.7 Household

A household is either one person or two persons or more who are intending to live together at the same property offered. Applicants should only include dependants as part of their household or persons who have been part of their household for at least a two-year period and shall occupy the accommodation offered as their only or principal home.

5.8 Residence and contact with children

Where applicants have children subject to residence and contact issues, the Council shall usually consider the children as permanent household members of the partner with the primary residence and control of the child/children. Where the other partner applies to join the Housing Register, it will not always be possible to consider the child/children as part of their household.

Documentary evidence detailing residence and contact arrangements such as a court order or solicitor's letter, and who receives the Child Benefit will be required to determine the property size that applicants will be considered for.

5.9 Change of circumstances

Applicants shall be required to report any change in circumstances that may affect their application by emailing the details to rehousing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk and providing the necessary supporting documents.

The onus shall be on the applicant to inform the Council when there is a change in their circumstances that may affect their application.

The designated officer shall inform the applicant in writing whether the change in circumstances affects the status of their application or priority status within 10 working days of receiving the details of the change in circumstances.

Where an applicant's change in circumstances results in a higher priority Band being awarded to their application then the date of moving to the higher Band shall become the priority order date for consideration within that Band.

5.10 Offers and refusals

5.10.1 Band A Emergency need

With the exception of downsizers, applicants in Band A who refuse one ~~two~~ offers of suitable accommodation for which they have expressed an interest (and/or received a direct offer if appropriate) shall have their application cancelled. Disqualified applicants will be able to re-apply and their application will be assessed on their current circumstances. If accepted they will receive a new registrations date and may be awarded a different priority.

5.10.2 Downsizers

The Council is keen to encourage downsizing, however administering refusals of suitable offers causes delays for other applicants waiting to move. If it becomes apparent that an applicant continually places bids and then refuses suitable offers and in the opinion of the designated manager this is placing a disproportionate burden on the service, then the downsizer may be suspended from bidding for six months.

5.10.3 Band B Urgent need

Any applicant in Band B who is owed a main housing duty under part 7 of the Housing Act and refuses one offer of suitable accommodation for which they have submitted a bid or been offered as a result of auto-bidding or received a direct offer in discharge of the duty shall have their application cancelled or reassessed if the applicant wants the change of circumstances to be reconsidered.

SECTION SIX : DECISIONS AND REVIEWS

6. Decisions

Applicants shall be notified of all decisions in writing and other formats on request. All correspondence notifying applicants of ineligibility or non-qualification for joining the Register, or about the Band that they have been awarded, or about any other decision concerning the facts of their case, shall state that the applicants have a right to request a review of the decision including how to request a review and given the opportunity for the information to be explained to them verbally.

6.1 Right of review

If an applicant considers they have been unfairly or unreasonably treated having regard to the provisions of the Scheme, they shall have 21 days of the date of the original decision letter within which to exercise their right to request a review.

In the first instance, applicants shall be required to seek a review by either writing to the designated manager, or by notifying the designated team by any convenient method and shall receive a written response within 8 weeks of the date the request is received. Upon request, the decision letter may be collected by the applicant within a reasonable period. If it is necessary to extend the deadline then the applicant shall be notified of the extension and the reasons for doing so.

The review shall be undertaken by the designated officer or manager who shall inform the applicant of any further rights of appeal as appropriate.

The review shall be undertaken by a person senior to the person making the original decision and who has had no significant involvement in the original decision.

In cases where the Council considers that an applicant may have difficulty in understanding the implications of a decision on ineligibility or disqualification, then the designated officer shall make arrangements for the information to be explained to the applicant verbally.

6.2 Periodic review of the Housing Register

Applicants shall not be required to annually re-register after first applying to join the Register, although they will be required to inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances, which may affect their housing application.

The Council may monitor the bidding patterns of applicants. In addition to the clauses at paragraph xxx if an applicant in any Band fails to submit a bid for 12 months or longer then the Council may cancel their application.

The Council shall inform the applicant of this decision in writing. The letter shall also advise the applicant that they can request a statutory review of the decision.

All applicants will have already been informed of this condition in the confirmation letter that they received when their application was originally accepted.

SECTION SEVEN: PRIORITY BANDS

Priority Bands shall be based on the following assessed needs

BAND A

	Band A – Emergency Need	Proposal
i	Any member of the Armed Forces, or former Service personnel, or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who joins the Council's housing register, where they are assessed by the Council's Medical Advisor as suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service, where the application is made within 5 years of discharge are given priority above all other applicants within Band A.	No change
ii	Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner and the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.	No change
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency medical grounds or emergency grounds relating to disability.	Change "urgent "
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency welfare grounds.	Change "urgent "
v	On the recommendation of the Council's Medical Advisor applicants with specific accommodation requirements will be given priority for suitable properties as they become available above other applicants in the Band (e.g. adapted or ground floor properties etc) regardless of the date they joined the Band. Home seekers with mobility problems will be given priority for ground floor flats and bungalows above other home seekers in this Band [with the exception of Band A (i)], regardless of their waiting time, on recommendation of the Council's Medical Advisor.	Replace
vi	Applicants with a Council or housing association tenancy in the District wanting to move to accommodation with fewer bedrooms than the property they currently occupy.	No change

BAND B

	Band B – Urgent Need	Proposal
i	Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing which poses a serious health hazard, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions (in accordance with housing legislation)* but not as a result of the introduction of a further household.	Change of Band from Band A
ii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent medical grounds or urgent grounds relating to disability including learning disabilities	New
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent welfare grounds.	New
iv	Applicants needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation.	Change of Band from Band A
v	Applicants who can demonstrate they would otherwise be one household, but are having to live apart from other members of their household because of a lack of accommodation, which would lead to statutory overcrowding if they occupied accommodation available to	No change

	Band B – Urgent Need	Proposal
	them individually but not for other personal reasons (i.e. family disputes).	
vi	Applicants with an assessed need to move to a particular locality within the District where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.	No change
vii	Applicants who have an agreed fostering or adoption agreement in place with Essex County Council, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child. Special guardians, holders of a residence order, and family and friend carers who are not foster carers but who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care shall also be included in this category.	New
vii i	Applicants accepted by the Council as being statutorily homeless and owed the main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).	New
ix	Existing tenants living in sheltered accommodation, who are wishing to move to alternative sheltered accommodation within their own scheme or to another sheltered scheme within the District (including sheltered bungalows).	Change: include “bungalows”
x	Existing tenants of the Council aged over 60 years, living in 1-bedroom Council accommodation wishing to move to sheltered accommodation regardless of their need (including sheltered bungalows).	Change include “bungalows”
xi	living in 2 or 3 bedroom flatted accommodation (including maisonettes) who meet the Local Eligibility Criteria under Paragraph 14 of the Scheme (apart from the Housing Need element), making expressions of interest for houses that meet with their housing need, with their registration date being the tenancy commencement date of their current property.	Delete

BAND C

	Band C – Moderate Need	Proposal
i	Any member of the Armed Forces or former Service personnel or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who have no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge.	No change
ii	Spouses and children (including step-children) of existing and former Armed Forces personnel (where the application is made within 5 years of discharge) seeking accommodation in their own right, provided that one of their family members (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) has lived within the District for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of application.	No change
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate medical grounds or moderate grounds relating to disability.	No change
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate welfare grounds.	No change
v	Applicants needing one additional bedroom compared to their current accommodation.	Change from Band B
vi	Applicants defined as a household, who are sharing accommodation with another household for a minimum of 2 years, which is resulting in a lack of at least one bedroom.	Change of Band from Band B

	Band C – Moderate Need	Proposal
vii	Applicants with an assessed need to move to be nearer to their place of work or to take up an offer of permanent employment or an apprenticeship (in accordance with Paragraph 14.3 (f) of this Housing Allocations Scheme).	No change
viii	Applicants placed in interim accommodation by the Council awaiting their homelessness decision under S.184 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.	No change
ix	Applicants to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness.	No change
x	Applicants who are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District.	No change

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SECTION EIGHT: ALLOCATIONS & NOMINATIONS

8. Social housing providers

The statutory register of social housing providers includes local authority providers and private non-profit and profit-making registered providers. Most private non-profit providers are also known as housing associations.

The Scheme operates in accordance with section 170 of the Housing Act 1996. At the Council's request, private registered providers with social rented housing stock in the District have a duty to co-operate to such extent as is reasonable in the circumstances in offering accommodation to people with priority under the Scheme.

8.1 Nominations agreements

The Council and those private registered providers with stock in the District shall have formal agreements in place to ensure that a negotiated percentage of lettings shall go to applicants on the Housing Register.

The District's private registered provider partners shall participate in the Council's common Housing Register and advertise their properties through HomeOption.

All nominations to private registered providers shall be prioritised in accordance with the Scheme.

The Government is proposing to introduce a new Duty to Collaborate to the Homelessness Reduction Act and any requirement shall be incorporated into the Scheme as it applies to Part 6 Allocations.

8.2 Available properties (voids or empty properties)

Void (empty) properties affect the Council in terms of a loss of rental income, the continuing provision of temporary accommodation for homeless families, the possible deterioration of the property, increased risks of squatting and vandalism, and a poor public image. It is therefore essential that void properties are let quickly and without unnecessary delay.

8.3 Advertising available properties

The type of properties that are advertised are likely to vary (sometimes considerably) from week to week, depending on what becomes available.

Adverts may include Council and private registered landlord properties for social rent or affordable rent.

8.4 Links to other available affordable housing

The Council may also provide links to schemes advertising other types of affordable housing in the locality that applicants may wish to consider including; key worker schemes, help to buy, mutual exchange and private rented accommodation.

8.5 The bidding and nominations process

Eligible applicants can make bids for properties up until the advertised deadline for that bidding round. Bids can be made by telephone online via the website, or at the Community Hub at the Civic offices

Full details of the bidding process are available on the HomeOption website.

Bids that are received after the advertised deadline, shall not usually be considered other than at the discretion of a designated officer or manager.

Applicants can bid for up to 3 affordable properties each bidding cycle. Bids can be cancelled and reassigned to other properties if desired.

All bids shall be checked by the Rehousing Team against the eligibility criteria. Ineligible bids shall be excluded from consideration by the designated manager. So far as is possible the Council shall use the Banding system and waiting time within the Band to allocate accommodation in accordance with paragraph xxx

8.6 Restrictive labelling

Restrictive labelling of properties through HomeOption may be applied to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations and to help achieve the intended outcomes of the Scheme, the District's Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

Restrictive labelling may also be applied to the allocation of sheltered housing or to properties that have adaptations to meet the needs of elderly, or vulnerable or disabled applicants.

On occasion, the Council may choose not to advertise a property through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme and offer the property as a direct offer. This may be due to the serious nature and needs of an applicant, or as part of the Council's effort to reduce the amount of time that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation. The details of individual direct offers shall remain confidential, in order to protect the applicant.

8.7 Viewings

The Council may arrange multiple viewings for some properties (i.e. inviting more than one applicant to view a property) and anticipates that all partner agencies shall follow a multiple viewing framework. All invited applicants shall be required to bring proof of their identity and original documentation for verification.

The applicants with the highest priority may be required to sign for the property immediately. At the point of sign-up, the successful applicant's photograph and National Insurance number shall be taken as further verification of their identity.

All applicants who have been allocated an Epping Forest District Council tenancy through HomeOption shall be encouraged to attend an appropriate tenancy and/or money advice workshop depending on the availability at the point of allocation.

All Council properties shall be let to the agreed lettable standard, and a copy of the standard shall be included with the offer letter.

8.8 Withdrawal of an offer

An offer may be withdrawn prior to the tenancy being signed, where:

- (a) the applicant has made a false declaration, or failed to provide up to date information which substantially altered their eligibility for the property offered;
- (b) the information available at the time of offer about the vacant property was incorrect, and it is subsequently discovered that the size and type is no longer suitable to the applicant's needs;
- (c) incorrect information on the applicant's computer records substantially alters the applicant's qualification to join the Register and/or their priority status.
- (d) the property was offered prior to being ready to let and there are significant delays to the date that the property is likely to be available for the applicant to move in to.

8.9 Feedback on let properties

All properties that have been let through HomeOption shall be listed in a future HomeOption newsletter showing the number of bidders for each property, and the profile of the successful bidder including their Band, and date of registration.

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SECTION NINE: ALLOCATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE SCHEME

9. Allocations may be made outside of the Allocations Scheme in the following circumstances:

9.1 Management transfers

Where the Council arranges a landlord transfer for housing management purposes, this is known as a management transfer.

Although a Council tenant can request a management transfer, it falls outside the rules of Part 6 because it is treated as a transfer that is initiated by the landlord.

In practice a management transfer is rarely offered as it shall only be used where no other housing solution is possible.

The tenant shall usually receive a single like for like direct offer of the next suitable property that becomes available. (A separate offer policy applies for temporary and permanent decants due to major works or regeneration)

9.2 Grounds for a management transfer

The Council may offer a management transfer because they require the tenant to move, or the tenant needs to move urgently due to, for example:

- (a) domestic abuse
- (b) violence, harassment, intimidation, or threats of violence likely to be carried out
- (c) the need to protect witnesses who have agreed to go to court to give evidence on matters of anti-social behaviour
- (d) urgent social reasons
- (e) major works to the property needing to be carried out (see regeneration and decant offer policy)*

9.3 Assessment, priority and offer policy

Where the Council agrees that a tenant meets the management transfer criteria, the Council does not need to apply the reasonable preference criteria.

The tenant is not assessed in the usual way through the allocations scheme, and

The Council shall generally give top priority to tenants who need to move under a management transfer, reflecting the urgent nature of the need.

Management Transfers shall be agreed by the designated manager housing needs and the designated manager for HRA (see appendix x) based on supporting evidence.

If a management transfer is agreed:

- (a) The applicant shall be offered a suitable property which may be a Council or housing property as soon as possible.
- (b) The offer shall be on a like for like basis i.e. a property that has the same number of bedrooms as the tenant's current home unless they are in a property that is too big for

their needs, in which case they may be offered a smaller property. Tenants granted management transfers shall not qualify for any under- occupation incentive payment.

- (c) The tenant shall be offered housing in any area in the district that removes them from the situation of immediate risk.

9.4 Joint Tenancies

If the existing tenancy is held by joint tenants and the management transfer does not include all tenants, then the tenancy shall need to be resolved first. The designated officer shall advise the tenant(s) of the available options including seeking independent advice.

9.5 Transfers due to domestic abuse

From 1 November 2021 certain social housing tenants who are transferred to a new property because of [domestic abuse](#) are entitled to a lifetime secure tenancy, rather than a fixed-term flexible tenancy.

If the Council offers a tenancy to someone who is or was previously secure tenant or fully assured tenant of a social landlord, and the new tenancy is being granted for reasons connected with the domestic abuse towards that person or a member of their household, the Council shall offer a lifetime secure tenancy, not a flexible tenancy.

9.6 Mutual exchange

A secure tenant has the right to exchange their tenancy, by way of assignment, with another secure tenant or with a fully assured tenant of a private registered provider of social housing (PRPSH).

The following three types of tenancy exchange are normally allowable:

- (a) assured shorthold tenant with a secure tenant
- (b) assured tenant with flexible tenant
- (c) assured tenant with assured shorthold tenant

The mutual exchange of tenancies falls outside the statutory criteria governing the allocation of housing.

A mutual exchange may only take place with written consent from the landlord. Exchanges can take place between more than two tenants if each landlord consents.

The most popular way to find another tenant who may be interested in exchanging their home is to register on [HomeSwapper](#). Full details of the regulations governing mutual exchanges can be found on [Gov.uk – swapping a council or housing association home](#).

9.7 Major works - regeneration or demolition*

Summary of (Draft) Regeneration and Major Works Decant Policy

9.8 Decants

Tenants who are required to vacate their home due to a Compulsory Purchase Order or

Council tenants who have to move, because their home requires major works, regeneration or demolition are rehoused in accordance with the Council's decant procedure.

The rules vary depending on whether the tenants are required to move permanently to another home or temporarily until they are able to return to their existing home.

9.9 Permanent decants

Permanent decants are usually subject to a maximum of two offers of suitable accommodation. If the tenant does not accept the second offer, then the Council is likely to have to initiate possession proceedings via the County Court which if granted is usually conditional on the availability of a final offer of suitable accommodation at the point of obtaining full vacant possession.

9.9.1 Statutory compensation

Tenants who are required to move permanently are usually entitled to a statutory home loss payment and/or a statutory disturbance payment.

9.10 Temporary decants

Temporary decants are usually subject to one offer of suitable accommodation.

9.10.1 Discretionary disturbance payments

Tenants who are required to move temporarily may be entitled to a discretionary disturbance payment to meet the main costs associated with the temporary relocation.

9.11 Persons living in supported housing

Persons to whom the Council does not owe the full homelessness duty, who and have been placed by the Council under its nomination rights or with the support of the Homelessness Prevention Team for at least 9 months and are ready to move on.

In respect of ~~xxxx~~ lesser Residency Criteria of 2 years shall apply. Such persons shall be made one offer of suitable accommodation at the end of their stay in supported housing, ~~generally in flatted accommodation (including maisonettes)~~. The Council shall offer such persons a 10-year Secure (fixed term) Tenancy.

9.12 Other allocations outside of the Housing Allocations Scheme

- (a) where a tenant succeeds to a tenancy (or an Introductory Tenancy) upon the death of a tenant;
- (b) to accommodate a successor tenant who is under-occupying Council accommodation;
- (c) where a tenancy is assigned to a person who would qualify to succeed to the tenant if the tenant died immediately before the assignment;
- (d) where a tenancy is either granted in response to a transfer request under Section 158 of the Localism Act 2011 or any other tenant transfers;
- (e) where an introductory tenancy becomes a Secure lifetime or Secure (fixed term) Tenancy on ceasing to be an introductory tenancy;
- (f) where an introductory tenant undertakes a mutual exchange with a Secure lifetime or Secure (fixed term) Tenant. In these circumstances, each party shall surrender their

tenancies, and the Council shall grant each party a new tenancy which reflects their previous tenancy status. Any period the affected tenant spent as an introductory tenant in their previous property shall count towards the fulfilment of the 12-month “introductory period” in the new property. It should be noted that some social landlords do not allow introductory tenants to enter into a mutual exchange within any trial period;

- (g) where a tenancy is disposed through a Property Adjustment Order in accordance with relevant legislation;
- (h) where a property is offered to an applicant on the Witness Protection Mobility Scheme.

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SECTION TEN: OTHER HOUSING POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Summaries to be inserted following outcome of Tenancy Policy Review and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review

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SECTION ELEVEN: APPENDICES

PROPERTY SIZE AND TYPE OFFERED

APPENDIX A

The following criteria shall determine the size and type of properties that applicants are considered for:

Property Size	Household Composition
Studio flat	Single person
1-bedroom flat	Single person Couple (Inc. where one is pregnant)
1- bedroom bungalow	Single older person Older couple Applicant who requires ground floor accommodation
1-bedroom sheltered flat or bungalow	Single older person Older couple Applicant who requires sheltered ground floor accommodation
2-bedroom flat, maisonette or house	Single person or couple with: family member, or family members of the same sex, or 2 family members of opposite sex both under 10 years Single person or couple downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms
2-bedroom sheltered flat or bungalow	Single older person or older couple with an assessed need for an extra bedroom Single person or couple who requires sheltered ground floor accommodation with and extra bedroom Single older person or couple downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms
3- bedroom flat, maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 2 family members of opposite sex with one family member over the age of 10 years Single person or couple with 3 family members 2 of whom are of the same sex Single person or couple with 4 family members 2 each of the same sex
4- bedroom* flat maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 4 or more family members where two are of opposite sex and over the age of 10 years
5-bedroom* flat maisonette or house	Single person or couple with 5 or more family members where 2 family members are of opposite sex and one is over 10 years of age

Exceptions

*Larger family sized homes are in the shortest supply. Therefore, applicants with an assessed need for four or more bedrooms may be considered for properties with one bedroom fewer than their assessed need provided this falls within the permitted number of occupants allowed under the Housing Act 1985.

Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house or maisonette or flat with three bedrooms to a flat can be considered for flat with one bedroom more than their assessed need (i.e. a 2-bed flat or a 1-bed flat) with or without a garden.

Under-occupiers wishing to downsize from a house with four or more bedrooms where they are giving up two or more bedrooms may be considered for a house or a flat with one bedroom more than their assessed need with or without a garden.

Under- occupiers with minor rent arrears shall not be prohibited from transferring on the condition that they give an undertaking to maintain a reasonable repayment agreement until the debt is paid in full.

Existing social housing tenants

Existing social tenants applying to the housing authority for a transfer who are considered to have reasonable preference for an allocation shall be treated on the same basis as new applicants.

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As per latest published Govt regulations at point of publication - to be inserted

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GLOSSARY**APPENDIX C**

Term	Meaning
Allocation	
Applicant	
Assessed Need	
Assured Tenancy	
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	
Assisted bidding	
Auto-bidding	
Bidding	
Choice Based Letting Scheme	
The Council	
Direct Allocation	
Duty to Co-operate	
Exceptional Circumstances Report	
Hardship Grounds	
HomeOption	
Household	
Housing Association	
Housing Register	
Key Worker Housing	
Landlord Transfer	
Leave to Remain	
Local Lettings Plan	
Looked After Children's	
Leave to Remain	
Management Transfer	
Medical Grounds	
Medical Officer	
Nomination	
Older Person	
Permanent Decant	
Personal Housing Plan	
Person from Abroad	
Proposed Duty to Collaborate	
Registered Housing Provider	
Secure Accommodation	
Sheltered Bungalows	
Sheltered Housing	
Social Prescribing	
Statutory Instruments	
Registered Provider	
Reviewing Officer	
Temporary Decant	
Tenancy Policy	
Tenancy Strategy	
Tenant	
True Void	
Welfare Grounds	

Proof of identification and eligibility

One of the following must be provided for each applicant:

- (a) birth certificate (a secondary form of photo identification shall be required if birth certificate is provided)
- (b) passport
- (c) EU identification card
- (d) National Insurance card
- (e) photograph of the applicant and all family members

Additional documents may also be required where an applicant (or in some circumstances a member of the applicant's household) is:

- (a) subject to immigration control;
- (b) a national of the European Economic Area (EEA); or
- (c) an Accession State National.

Where an applicant is accepted as a refugee or granted indefinite, exceptional, discretionary or limited leave to remain in the UK then the relevant Home Office documents shall also be required.

Nationals of the EEA shall be required to provide recent payslips as evidence of current employment (2 months or 6 weekly) to demonstrate eligibility.

Accession State Nationals shall be required to provide current registration documents and proof of current employment e.g. recent wage slips, contract details, self-employment reference number verification.

Proof of residence

Any two of the following recent documents must be provided for each applicant; documents that are more than 6 months old will not be accepted:

- (a) household bill
- (b) DWP Benefit document
- (c) current driving licence
- (d) bank, credit card or catalogue statement with current address
- (e) tenancy or licence agreement
- (f) rent book or letter from the current landlord
- (g) Section 21 or Section 8 notice from the current landlord
- (h) proof of marriage
- (i) proof of name change (if applying in a different name)

- (j) proof of pregnancy
- (k) Child Benefit award letter or a recent bank statement showing Child Benefit payments
- (l) custody or residency paperwork if access to children applicable
- (m) completion statement if an applicant has previously owned a property

The Council shall conduct credit reference checks to verify the information that the applicant has provided on their housing application in an attempt to reduce tenancy fraud. If false information has been provided at any stage then the offer of accommodation will be withdrawn, or the application will be removed from the Housing Register.

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Indicators of medical and welfare reasonable preference categories

(Source Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities 29 June 2012 updated 16 September 2021- for illustrative purposes)

Applicants given reasonable preference medical or welfare grounds shall be awarded either Band A, Band B or Band C based on their level of need

- (a) Emergency need
- (b) Urgent need
- (c) Moderate need

Insanitary, overcrowded and unsatisfactory housing conditions

- (a) lacking bathroom or kitchen
- (b) lacking inside WC
- (c) lacking cold or hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating
- (d) sharing living room, kitchen, bathroom/WC
- (e) property in disrepair
- (f) poor internal or external arrangements

People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (criteria may apply to any member of the household)

- (a) a mental illness or disorder
- (b) a physical or learning disability
- (c) chronic or progressive medical conditions (e.g. MS, HIV/AIDS)
- (d) infirmity due to old age
- (e) the need to give or receive care* including active foster carers or those who are adopting
- (f) the need to recover from the effects of violence or threats of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- (g) having escaped domestic abuse and are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation
- (h) ability to fend for self, restricted for other reasons
- (i) young people at risk
- (j) people with behavioural difficulties
- (k) need for adapted housing and/or extra facilities, bedroom or bathroom
- (l) need for improved heating (on medical grounds)
- (m) need for sheltered housing (on medical grounds)
- (n) need for ground floor accommodation (on medical grounds)
- (o) need to be near friends/relatives or medical facility on medical grounds
- (p) need to move following hospitalisation or long-term care

General information about the Scheme shall be made available as follows:

- (a) the procedures for applying to go onto the Register and for applying for advertised vacancies;
- (b) how applicants will be prioritised under the Scheme;
- (c) how successful applicants will be selected;
- (d) how properties will be advertised, including bidding cycles and restrictive labelling (for example, certain properties will only be allocated to applicants who meet the mobility requirements of the property);
- (e) how to request a review of the procedures; and
- (f) details of the private registered providers that advertise vacancies through HomeOption the Councils choice-based lettings website

Applicants shall be provided with information regarding their own application which shall include:

- (a) the Band they have been awarded under the Scheme
- (b) the type of properties they are entitled to bid for
- (c) their chances of bidding successfully on the property types and areas in which they are interested
- (d) how bidding, direct offers assisting bidding and auto-bidding applies to them
- (e) the documents they will need to supply in regard to verification and references, and when they will need to provide it
- (f) the average waiting time per property type for each priority housing needs group; and
- (g) whether their application has been rejected and the options that are available to them
- (h) Advertisements shall include as many of the following as possible:
 - (i) property location;
 - (j) property type, size and floor level;
 - (k) type of tenancy to be offered;
 - (l) amount of rent and other charges payable;
 - (m) the energy performance certificate rating;
 - (n) the type of heating;
 - (o) whether there is a heating charge payable that is not covered by housing benefit;
 - (p) any additional amenities such as a garden or parking with the property;
 - (q) photos of the scheme or the locality and links to guides about the local area; and
 - (r) adaptations to the property that may aid mobility within the home.

Applicants who require assistance to access the Scheme shall, upon request, be offered the following services:

- (a) an interpretation service if their first language is not English;

- (b) signing if speech or hearing is impaired;
- (c) provision of documents in large print or braille if they have a visual impairment; and/or
- (d) an interview to explain the Scheme and information about where independent advice can be obtained about the Scheme
- (e) An easy to read version of key documents

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To be inserted at point of publication

SECTION TWELVE: GOVERNANCE & VERSION CONTROL

12. Monitoring the Allocation Scheme

Performance information on applications and allocations shall be reviewed annually to establish whether the aims and objectives of the Scheme are being achieved. The findings shall be published in an Annual Lettings Report and made available on the Councils website.

12.1 Review of the Allocations Scheme

The review of the current Scheme is due to conclude in Spring 2022 (subject to consultation and Cabinet approval) with the publication of the Allocations Scheme 2022 – 2027

12.2 Consultation on changes to the Allocations Scheme

Before adopting a new Housing Allocations Scheme or making an alteration reflecting a major change of policy in its existing Housing Allocations Scheme, the Council will send a copy of the draft scheme or any proposed major change to the Scheme to all of the following interested parties giving them a reasonable opportunity to comment:

- Every private Registered Provider of social housing with which it has nomination arrangements
- Town and Parish Councils
- The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel
- Partner agencies with an interest in the Scheme

Designated Managers

Last updated 12 November 2021

	Decision	Designated Manager	Based on information provided by
	Exceptional Circumstances	Director Community and Wellbeing	Relevant Team Manager
	Fraudulent application	Director Community and Wellbeing	Relevant Team Manager
	Management Transfer	Director Community and Wellbeing	Director of Housing Revenue Account
	Permanent Decant	Director of Housing Revenue Account	Director Community and Wellbeing
	Temporary Decant	Director of Housing Revenue Account	Director Community and Wellbeing
	Mutual Exchange	Xxx Team Manager	XXX Officer

	Decision	Designated Officer	In consultation with

VERSION CONTROL LOG

Version	Date	Details of changes included in update	Author

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 High Street,
 Epping,
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Telephone: 01992 564000
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www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

(16 February 2022)



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REVIEW OF:
THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY
STAGE 2 DETAILED CONSULTATION
RESULTS

February 2022

SUMMARY

The stage 2 consultation for the Allocations was publicised on the Council's website, social media, residents' newsletters a press release and 325 direct emails. Detailed contributions were received from 67 stakeholders. The five proposed major changes and eleven proposed minor changes to the Allocations Scheme were largely supported and have remained in the recommendations with some minor adjustments for to establish clarity as listed in the main body of this report.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the stage 2 consultation on the Epping Forest District Council review of the Allocations Scheme (the Scheme) 2022- 2027 which forms part of a review of the Big 4 along with the Tenancy Policy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy and the overarching Housing Strategy.

The review began on 4 May 2021 and is due to conclude in Spring 2022.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the review will result in the publication of a new Allocations Scheme, and a Tenancy Policy (both of which will then be due for review again in 2027), along with an updated five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 and an overarching Housing Strategy for 2022-2027.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The consultation was coordinated across all four items; to take account of the interest of some, but not all, stakeholders in more than one of the service areas, and the interdependencies between many of the proposals.

The consultation was split into two stages.

Stage 1 Initial Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to influence the review from the outset by suggesting key themes and priorities they would like to be included in the draft updates of any or all the 'Big Four' policies and strategies.

The stage 1 consultation opened on 21 June 2021 and closed on 6 September 2021 and the findings were published on 22 October 2021.

Stage 2 Detailed Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to comment on the draft proposals and major changes to the Allocations Scheme for the Council to consider before any revision to the draft recommendations are presented to Cabinet in spring 2022.

The stage 2 consultation for the Allocations Scheme opened on 12 November 2021 and closed on 24 December 2021.

The same approach is being followed for the stage 2 detailed consultation for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the overarching Housing Strategy.

The Tenancy Policy did not go stage 2 consultation as no major changes were requested.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation was designed to give everyone with an interest in Housing in the district the opportunity to contribute to the review and was publicised in the same way as for stage 1.

Stage 2 consultation for the draft Allocations Scheme 2022-24 highlighted the proposed changes to the scheme, and included a workbook inviting comment on all or some changes and a presentation with key questions about the main changes.

The same audience was approached as for stage 1 via social media, a range of direct emails, bitesize briefing sessions and webinars, an on-line survey with specific questions.

325 stakeholders were invited to contribute and sent a link to the on-line survey including:

- Registered providers of social housing in the district
- The clerks to the town councils and parish councils in the district
- The Community Safety Partnership and other statutory services
- Community groups including the Faith Covenant and the Tenant and Leaseholders Panel
- Essex County Council and the district, borough and city councils in Essex
- Third sector partners with an active interest in Housing in the district
- All elected Members of the Council and Council staff

As well as a press release, the consultation and links to the survey (along with background reading material) were widely publicised on the Council's website, in the Residents newsletter, on Facebook, and at relevant forums including the Tenant and Leaseholders' Forum and Live Well, Be Well and Age Well groups.

RESPONSE RATE

Number of contributions

In total 92 people contributed to the stage 2 consultation. The majority of responses were provided during in-person meetings or Microsoft Teams meetings.

Contributors included:

- 12 Members of the Council
- 42 professional stakeholders
- 3 neighbouring Local Authorities
- 2 registered providers
- 3 Tenant and Lessee Panel
- 5 Town and Parish Council Members
- 25 members of staff

PROPOSED MAJOR CHANGES - FEEDBACK

1) Medical priorities: should the two current medical priorities be replaced with three, and if so, how should this be introduced?

Contributors predominantly agreed with the proposal to replace the two current medical priorities with three and that they should be introduced retrospectively without being too burdensome on tenants, starting with applicants in Band C

Several requests were received to see examples of the level of medical need that would be included in Bands A - C

Follow-up actions

The guiding principles for the three proposed medical priorities were established along with the recommendation to introduce the re-banding retrospectively.

2) Downsize: should downsizers be eligible for a spare bedroom, and should any allowance for an extra room and/or any financial incentive be extended to include fixed term tenants with less than five years remaining

Contributors generally agreed with the proposal to allow downsizers to move to a property with a spare room.

There was some difference of opinion on whether the financial incentive should be offered to people with less than 5 years remaining on their tenancy. More than one person suggested reducing the lower time limit to three years. A greater number suggested introducing a 6-month limit.

There was general agreement that cash incentive was unlikely to be the main reason a tenant would downsize but does enable those people to move who may not otherwise be able to afford to do so.

It was highlighted that 2-bed properties are most in demand and most likely to be taken by downsizers seeking a spare room, and that sheltered housing is in least demand. Some suggested adjusting the incentives to reflect the variable demand for property size and type.

Follow-up actions

Proposals were drawn up to generally offer £1,000 per room downsizers gave up, with the exception of downsizers moving from a 3-bed to a 2-bed that only needed a 1-bed who would be offered £500, and downsizers moving into sheltered accommodation being offered an extra £1,000 (including those tenants moving from 1-bed general needs accommodation to 1-bed sheltered housing).

3) Homeless households that the Council has a main housing duty towards – should this cohort of applicants be placed in reasonable preference Band B and given the opportunity to bid on suitable properties via Choice Based Lettings (CBL) for their one suitable offer, unless or until a suitable direct offer is made via auto – bidding or direct allocations.

The general consensus of opinion was that homeless households should be awarded reasonable preference Band B and allowed to bid on CBL unless or until they received a suitable direct offer.

One contributor asked for provision to be made to ensure people do not take advantage of the homelessness route to access a Council house. They were reassured that the same checks and balances would still apply.

Several asked whether awarding a priority band to homeless households would increase the waiting time for general applicants in Band B. It was explained that the increase in numbers of applicants in Band B should be counterbalanced by the increase in advertised properties which would have otherwise been allocated outside of CBL.

Follow-up actions

Proposals were drawn up to allow homeless households to whom the Council has a main housing duty to bid for a period of at least 6 months before being placed on auto bidding and/or receiving a direct offer.

4) Local Lettings Plans: should the option to include local lettings plans be introduced to the Allocations Scheme?

The proposal to include the option of local lettings plans was generally supported in exceptional circumstances for a set period of time and subject to scrutiny and Cabinet approval. Concern was raised that local lettings plans risked introducing discriminatory exclusion policies if not properly and transparently administered, and that the need for local lettings plans should be community led rather than officer led.

Follow-up actions

Proposals were drawn up to ensure that stringent rules be applied to introducing any local lettings plans that would be considered by Cabinet on a scheme by scheme basis, to address specific local, subject to periodic review and in accordance with legislation and regulatory guidance.

5) Rent arrears and unacceptable behaviour: should the 7-year disqualification period be replaced with case by case risk-based assessment

The vast majority agreed with replacing the 7-year disqualification period with a case by case risk assessment. There was greater consensus over rent arrears than anti-social behaviour on the condition that the applicant demonstrated a commitment to maintaining a satisfactory rent account with a repayment plan and pursue money advice and/or debt counselling as appropriate .

Some concerns were raised over rehousing applicants responsible for anti-social behaviour and whether a shorter time-limit of 3-5 years be introduced. A proposal was made to differentiate between ongoing anti-social behaviour and a spent conviction.

Follow-up actions

Proposals were drawn up to ensure fair consistent guiding principles be applied to proportionate risk-based assessments for disqualification due to rent arrears or anti-social behaviour that focus on support, accountability, probability of reoccurrence and community interest rather than penalty.

OTHER FEEDBACK

6) Affordability

Affordability of current accommodation in private rented sector was raised by several contributors who asked whether this should attract additional priority.

Follow-up action

After careful consideration it is recommended that affordability per-se includes too many variables to legitimately be included as a need, and that promoting and incentivising access to the private sector, and the safety net of the homelessness duty are preferable alternatives

7) Age threshold for young people to join the housing register

Several proposals were made to lower the age limit for joining the housing register from 18 to 16, primarily to enable looked after children to join before they risk becoming homeless if they leave care at 18.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to keep the age limit to 18 pending the outcome of the Countywide review of the Care-leavers Protocol due in 2022/23.

8) Supplementary waiting list

Concerns were raised about the existence of a supplementary waiting list if considerations to regenerate sheltered housing progress therefore making it more desirable to qualifying local households on the register.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to review the relative value of the supplementary waiting list in the event of a regeneration programme when anticipated practical completion dates are known.

9) Supported Housing Move on:

A request was made to work closely with Essex County Council (ECC) to achieve their aspirations to support adults with disabilities to step down to general needs accommodation.

Follow-up action

An agreement in principle was reached for the Rehousing Team Manager to continue to liaise with ECC regarding stepdown arrangements to improve the flow through supported housing, and to keep the Development Service Manager updated with demand for specific disability adapted accommodation.

10) Band A direct offers and auto bidding

The suggestion to consider Band A applicants for direct offers and auto bidding after a period of inactivity or failure to secure a suitable property (with the exception of downsizers) was largely supported.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to enable applicants in Band A to be considered for auto bidding and/or direct offers after a period of 6 months.

11) Waiting time

Contributors reached unanimous agreement that the priority date for an applicant moving up a band should be the date they moved up to that band rather than the date they joined the housing register.

The majority of respondents agreed that it would be reasonable for applicants who moved up a band then moved down again to retain the date they were originally placed in that band.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to modify the priority date to reflect the date that an applicant joined that band rather than the date they joined the Housing Register.

12) Band A management transfers

Opinion was split on whether Band A management transfers should be excluded from the under-occupation incentive payment where the applicant's need is for a smaller property than the property currently occupied.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to exclude Band A management transfers from the under-occupation incentive payment.

13) Definition of household

Opinion was split on whether the 2-year requirement to be considered a member of the household should be changed.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to align the definition of household for the purpose of housing allocations to the following definition for homeless households.

'An applicant or any other person who usually lives with the applicant as a member of their family or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with them'.

14) Cancel applications who failed to bid for 12 months

Opinion was split on whether to cancel applications where applicants failed to bid for 12 months.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to allow applicants to remain on the housing register even if they failed to bid for 12 months - in recognition of:

- a) the scheme being choice based; and
- b) the provision to allow auto bidding and direct offers for Band A management priority transfers and Band B main housing duty homelessness applicants.

15) Supported accommodation

The majority agreed to remove the restriction for applicants in supported housing to only be considered for flatted accommodation, largely because in most cases applicants leaving supported accommodation required 1-bed accommodation and by default virtually all 1-bed social rented housing is flatted accommodation.

Follow-up action

Proposals were drawn up to regularise the policy removing restrictions on bidding for flatted accommodation to include applicants leaving supported housing

16) Residents leaving supported housing

Opinion was split on whether residents leaving supported housing should be entitled to receive one suitable offer or two.

Follow-up action

Given the need to improve the flow through supported accommodation proposals were drawn up to keep with the current policy to make one suitable offer


NEXT STEPS

The draft Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 has been revised to take account of the stage-2 consultation feedback and will be presented to Stronger Communities Select Committee on 1 March 2022 for consideration, comment and approval prior to Cabinet on 7 March 2022.

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@Eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Janice Nuth
Housing Strategy Manager (Interim)
Communities and Wellbeing
21 February 2022

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Four blue house icons, each with a white outline, arranged vertically on the left side of the page.

REVIEW OF:
THE OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY
THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY
THE TENANCY POLICY
THE HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

STAGE 1 CONSULTATION – RESULTS

October 2021

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the stage 1 initial consultation on the Epping Forest District Council review of the following 'Big 4' Housing strategies and policies.

- The Allocations Policy
- The Tenancy Policy
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- The overarching Housing Strategy

The review began on 4 May 2021 and is due to conclude in Spring 2022.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the review will result in the publication of a new Allocations Policy, and Tenancy Policy (both of which will then be due for review again in 2027), along with both the updated five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 and the overarching Housing Strategy for 2022-2027.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The consultation has been coordinated across all four items; to take account of the interest of some, but not all, stakeholders in more than one of the Big 4, and the interdependencies between many of the proposals.

The consultation has been split into two stages.

Stage 1 Initial Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to influence the review from the outset by suggesting key themes and priorities they would like to be included in the draft updates of any or all the policies and strategies.

The stage 1 consultation opened on 21 June 2021 and closed on 6 September 2021.

Stage 2 Detailed Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to comment on the draft proposals and major changes to the individual policies and strategies for consideration before any revision to the draft recommendations are presented to Cabinet between March 2022 and May 2022 for consideration and approval.

The stage 2 consultation is due to open on 29 October 2021 and close on 10 December 2021 for all but the overarching Housing Strategy which is scheduled to open on 15 November 2021 and close on 24 December 2021.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation has been designed to give everyone with an interest in Housing in the district the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Stage 1 consultation consisted of a range of direct emails, bitesize briefing sessions and webinars, and an on-line survey with simple open-ended questions.

325 stakeholders were sent a link to the on-line survey including:

- Registered providers of social housing in the district
- The clerks to the town councils and parish councils in the district
- The Community Safety Partnership and other statutory services
- Community groups including the Faith Covenant
- Essex County Council and the district, borough and city councils in Essex
- Third sector partners with an active interest in Housing in the district
- All elected Members of the Council and Council staff

The consultation and links to the survey along with background information are widely publicised on the Council’s website, in the Tenant and Leaseholders newsletter, on Facebook, and at relevant forums including the Tenant and Leaseholders’ Forum and Live Well, Be Well and Age Well groups.

RESPONSE RATE

Number of Responses

In total, 68 contributors completed the survey. A further 96 surveys were started and abandoned. It is not known how many of these were duplicate entries from potential contributors who then went on to complete a valid survey, and how many were lost opportunities.

A user group was consulted on the possible reasons for the relatively high number of abandoned responses. The group suggested a few ways of improving the response rate that will be tested for future surveys of this type.

Contributor Interest

Contributors were asked to indicate whether they were responding as a resident of the district or as a representative of an organisation with an interest in Housing in the district. Those contributors with a dual interest were given the option of completing two surveys.

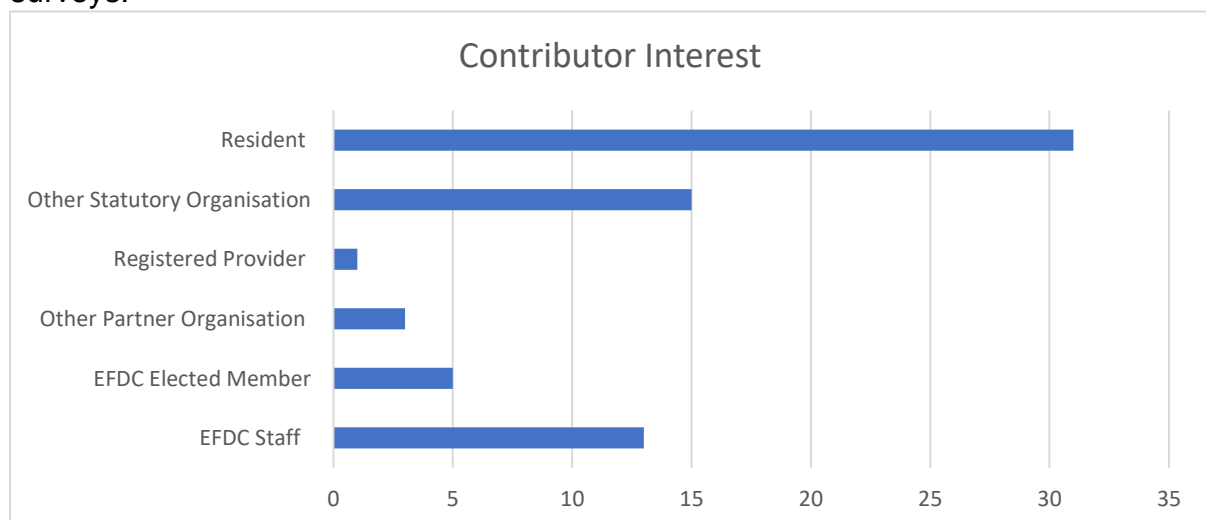


Fig 1

The vast majority of contributors were residents (46%) followed by other statutory organisations (22%) Council staff (19%) elected Members of the Council (7%) other partner organisations (4%) and other registered providers of social housing (1%).

Questions and Answers

Most questions were open ended and produced detailed qualitative data which was then grouped by themes for the purpose of analysis.

OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY

Question: Please list between three and five priorities and say why they are important.

Responses:

Answered: 68 Not answered: 0



Fig 2

The most frequently listed priority related to increasing the supply of affordable housing, either generally (28%), specifically social housing (23%), of the right size and type to meet needs (22%), for local people (13%), or suitably adapted properties for people with physical or mental impairment (13%).

Protecting the environment featured in a high number of responses (25%) as did the Council's local planning policy, particularly with regards to the location and tenure mix of new developments (i.e. social housing, private rent, homeownership (24%) and the regeneration of local areas (10%).

Other reoccurring themes included ensuring good quality safe homes in both the private and public sector (19%); enabling residents (particularly vulnerable residents) to access suitable housing and activities to help improve their wellbeing and life-chances (19%) tackling homelessness (19%) and the allocations policy (19%).

HEALTH HOUSING AND WELLBEING

Answered: 65 Not answered: 3

Question:

Can you suggest other services or organisations that may be interested in working in partnership with Housing to help improve health and wellbeing?

Responses:

The suggestions included 31 specifically named organisations, some of which already have established or developing relationships with Housing. Consideration is being given to engaging with each of the 31 organisations and all positive outcomes will be included in the relevant strategy or policy.

Question:

Do you have any suggestions or practical tips about how partners could work with Housing to help improve the health and wellbeing of residents?

Responses:

Over 25 different practical tips and suggestions are being followed up. These include community-based activities that could also improve the local environment, targeted information sharing on specific schemes and opportunities, design features to assist sensory impairment and social inclusion, and training to raise awareness of neurodiversity amongst staff. All suggestions that are adopted or will be referenced in the relevant strategy or policy.

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band A?

Responses

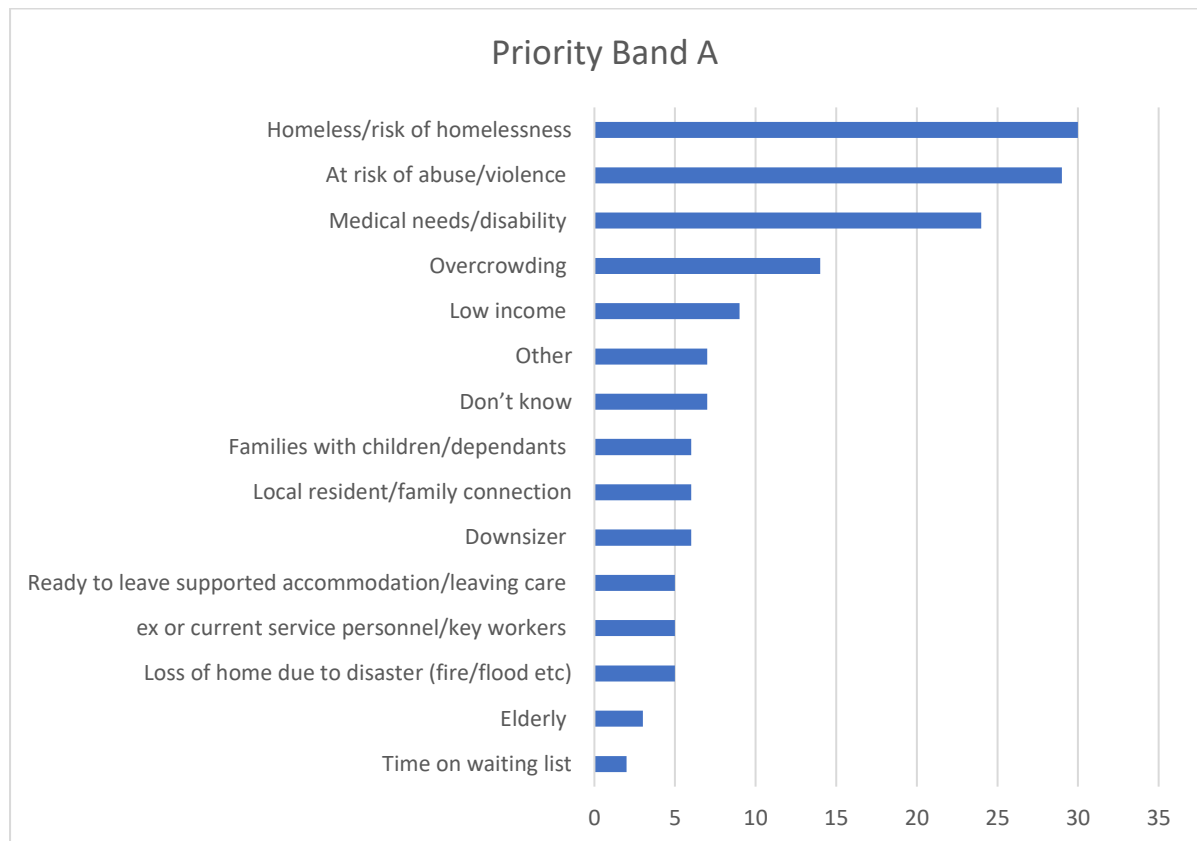


Fig 3

The most common reason that contributors said Band A should be awarded was to address homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless (50%) followed by risk of abuse or violence (48%), medical needs/disability (40%) and overcrowding (23%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band B?

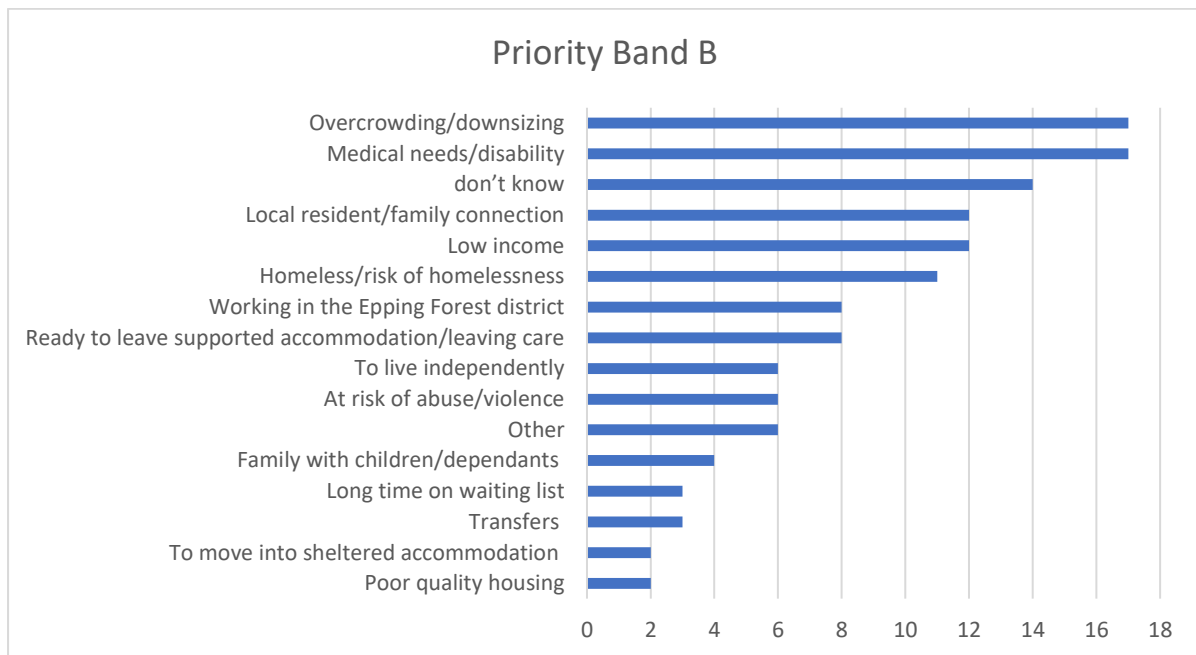


Fig 4

Overcrowding/downsizing (28%) and medical needs/disability (28%) were the most common suggestions for being awarded Band B. A relatively high number of contributors said they didn't know (23%). The next most frequent circumstances proposed for Band B were being a local resident or with a family connection (20%), or on a low income (also 20%) then Homelessness or the risk of homelessness (18%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band C

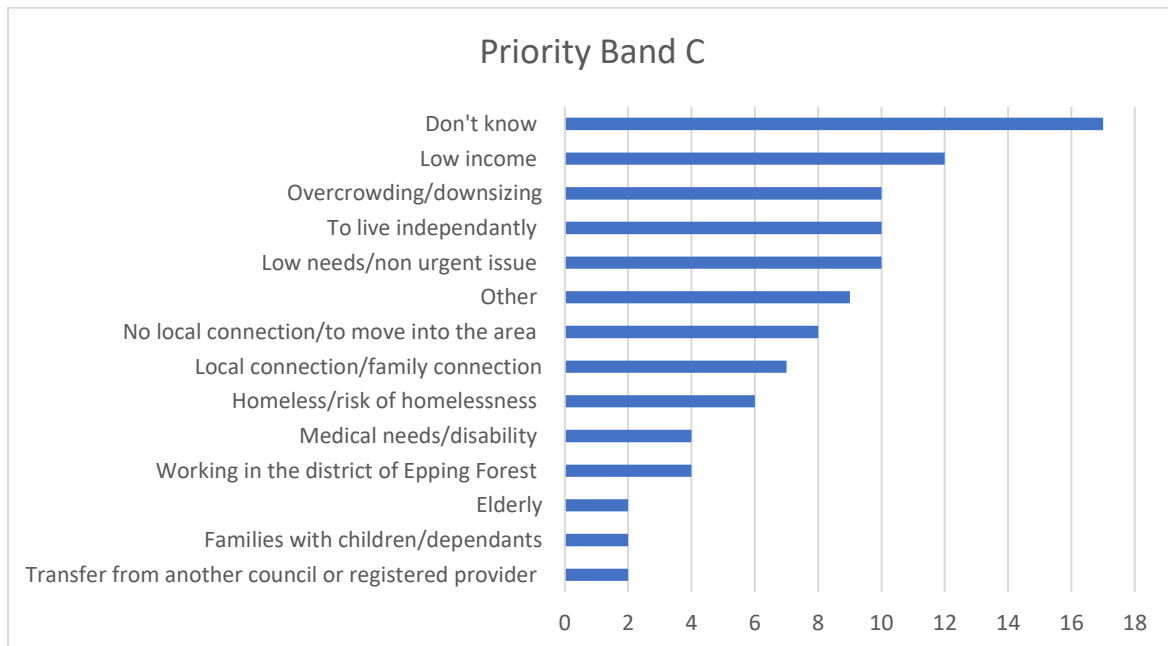


Fig 5

Fewer Contributors made suggestions for Band C than the other bands. The most common suggestion for Band C was low income (20%) followed by overcrowding/downsizing, or to live independently or low needs/non-urgent issues (all 17%).

TENANCY POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

How many years should a council or housing association tenancy be granted for? 10 years, 20 years, a lifetime, or other?

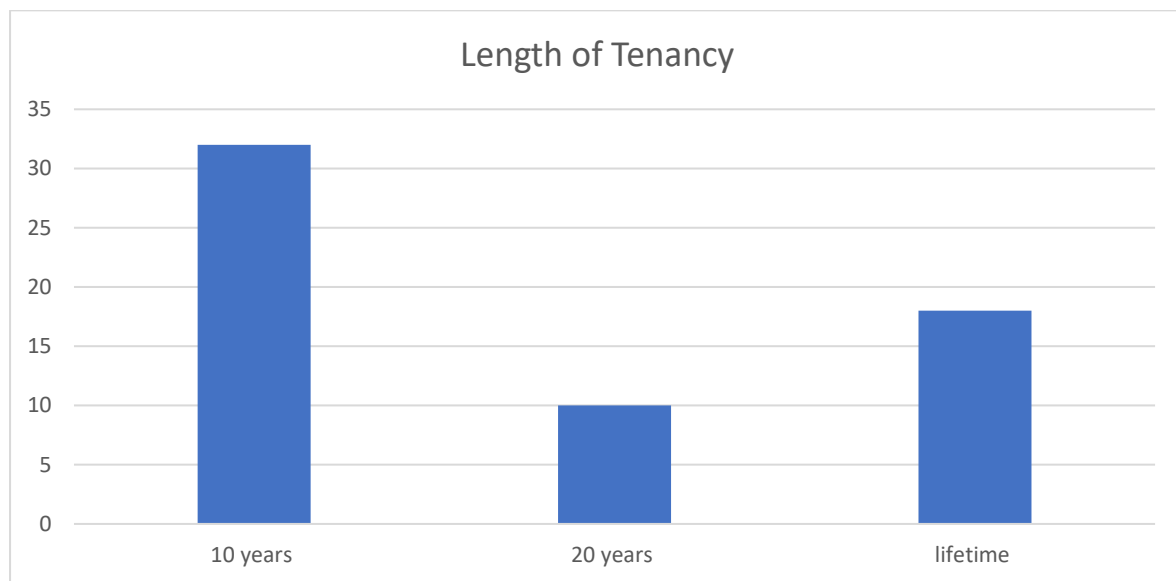


Fig 6

Over half of the respondents (53%) said tenancies should be for 10 years. Fewer respondents were in favour of lifetime tenancies (30%) and the least popular proposal was 20 years (17%).

Should every tenancy be granted for the same length of time?

Yes 53%

No 47%

If you answered no, then for what reason(s) should someone be offered a shorter tenancy or a longer tenancy?

The most common answer was that longer tenancies should be offered to older people, those with disabilities or learning difficulties, or families with young children.

And that shorter tenancies should be offered to households whose circumstances are likely to change and/or who have a realistic prospect of purchasing a property in the near or mid-term future.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Answered: 57 Not answered: 11

Question:

What help should the Council offer to households who are threatened with homelessness, to prevent them from becoming homeless?

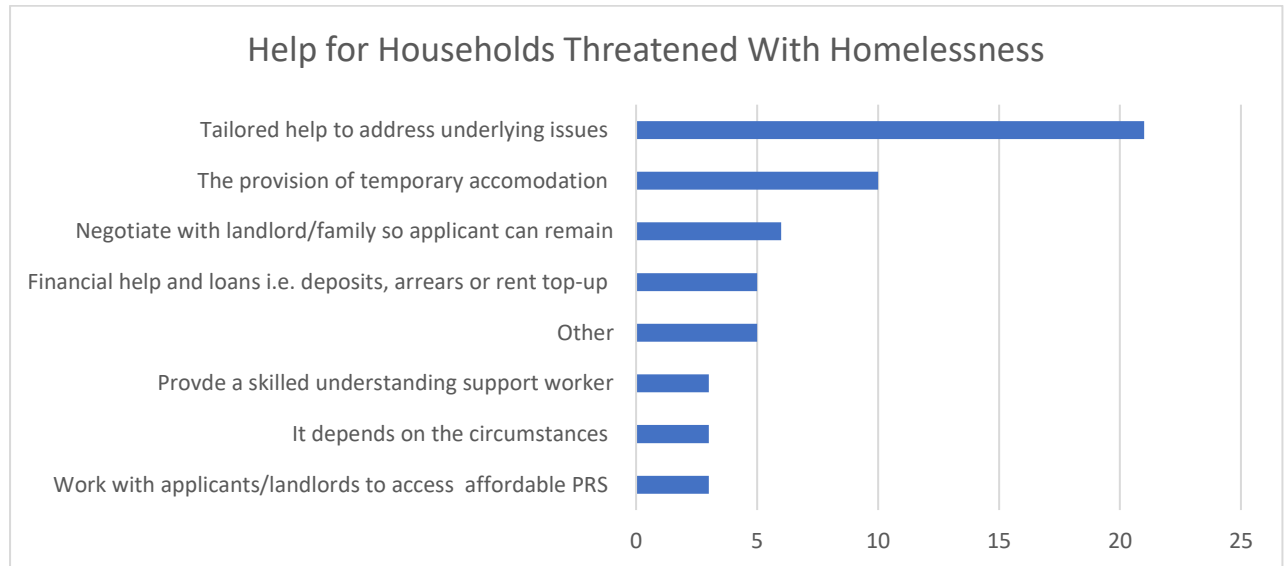


Fig 7

The most frequent suggestion was to offer tailored help to address the underlying causes of homelessness (37%), next was the provision of temporary accommodation (18%) and negotiating with the applicant's landlord or family member to allow the applicant to remain living there (11%).

What help should the Council offer households who are homeless?

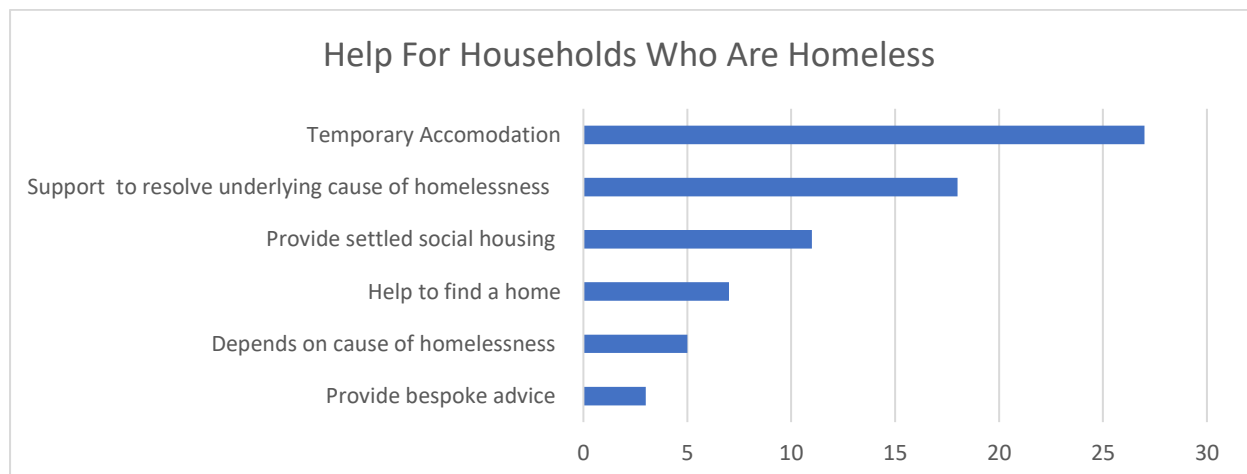


Fig 8

The most recurrent proposal was to offer temporary accommodation (47%), followed by support to resolve the underlying cause of homelessness (32%) and the provision of settled housing (19%).

What steps do you think the Council should take to end rough sleeping?

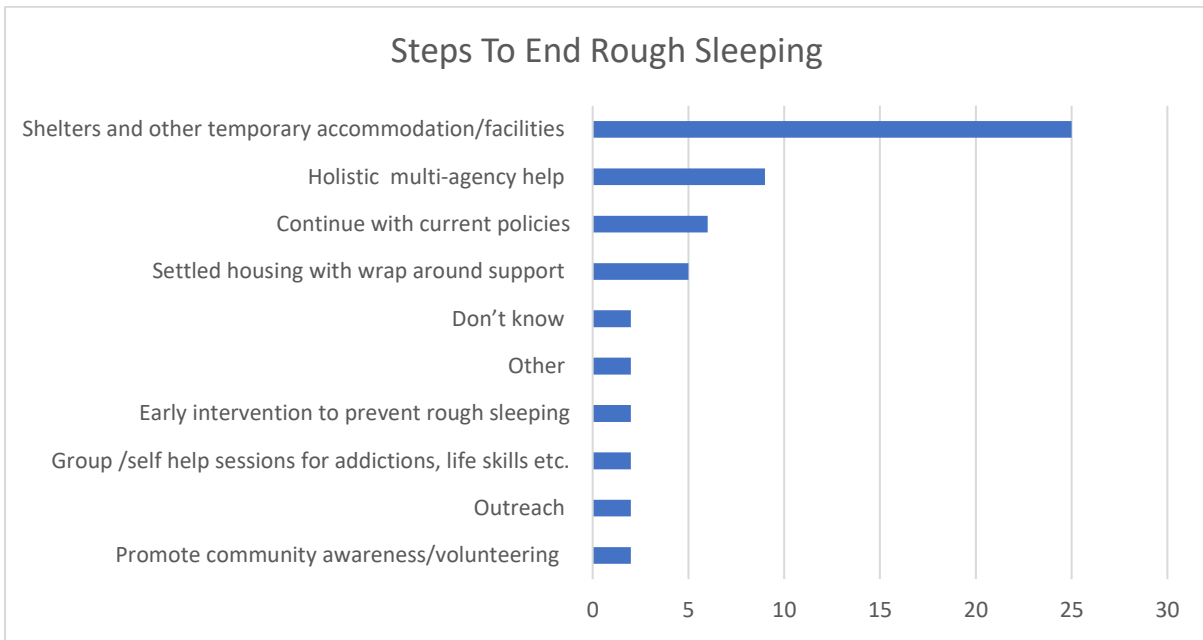


Fig 9

By far the most common suggestion was the provision of shelters and other temporary accommodation along with facilities such as access to a shower and a meal (44%). Holistic multi-agency help featured fairly frequently (16%), and a notable number of respondents suggested continuing with current policies (11%).

FURTHER INVOLVEMENT

Contributors were asked whether they were happy to be contacted to discuss any of their comments or suggestions and/or whether they would like the opportunity to be involved with more detailed consultation on any of the individual policies or strategies.

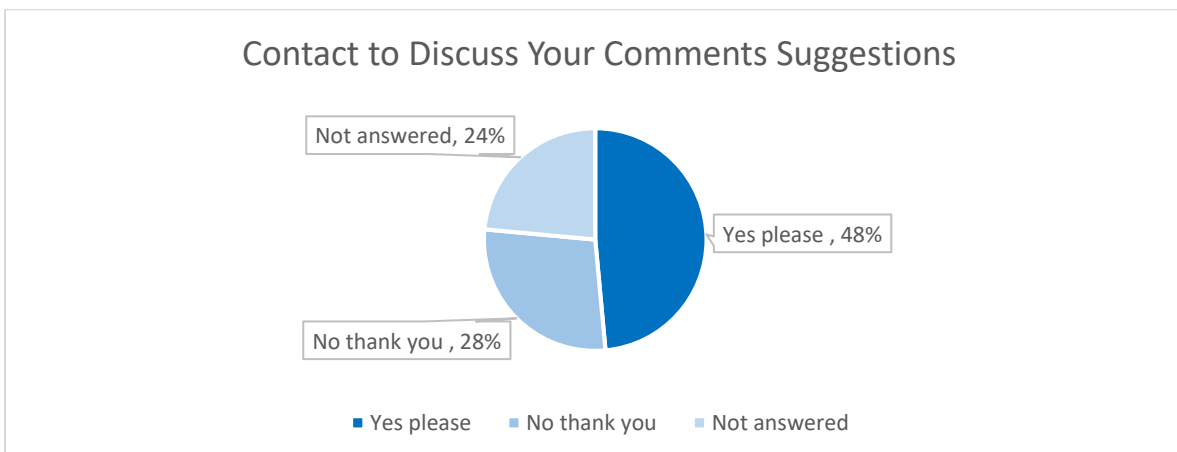


Fig 10

Nearly half of all contributors said they would be happy to be contacted to discuss the comments or suggestions they had made in their response to stage 1 consultation (48%).

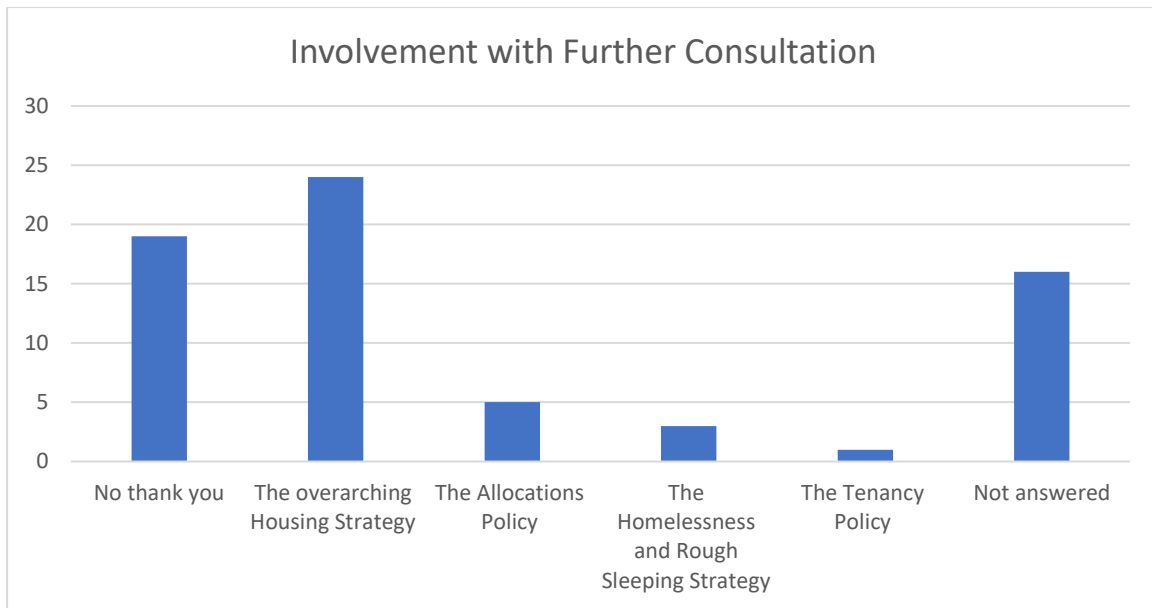


Fig 11

The Overarching housing Strategy generated the most interest in further involvement (35%) and the Tenancy Policy the least (1%).

Overall, 36 contributors said they were happy to discuss their responses to the stage 1 survey and/or would like to be more involved with the detailed stage 2 consultation.

At the time of writing the report arrangements were being made to contact the 36 contributors and discuss opportunities to have more direct involvement with the stage 2 consultation.

PROFILE OF CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors were invited to provide some additional confidential information about their personal characteristics to enable the Council to check whether the consultation process is fair and transparent and to monitor the impact of any recommendations on groups with particular characteristics. The findings will form part of the Equalities Impact Assessment to be published along with the outcome of the full review.

Contributors were given the option to skip the section or indicate that they would prefer not to answer a specific question.

Of the 68 Contributors to the survey, 70% answered most but not all the questions about their personal profile and 22% skipped the section entirely.

Age

Please indicate your age group

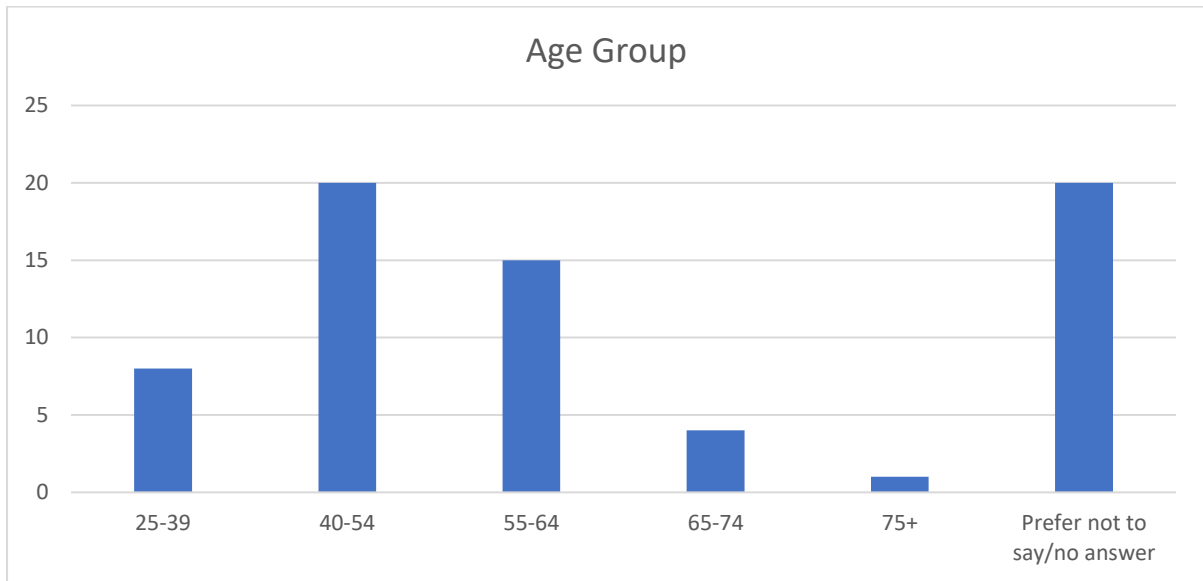


Fig 12

The majority of contributors who specified their age group were between 40-54 years old (29%) and 55-64 years old (22%).

Ethnicity

Please indicate your ethnic origin.

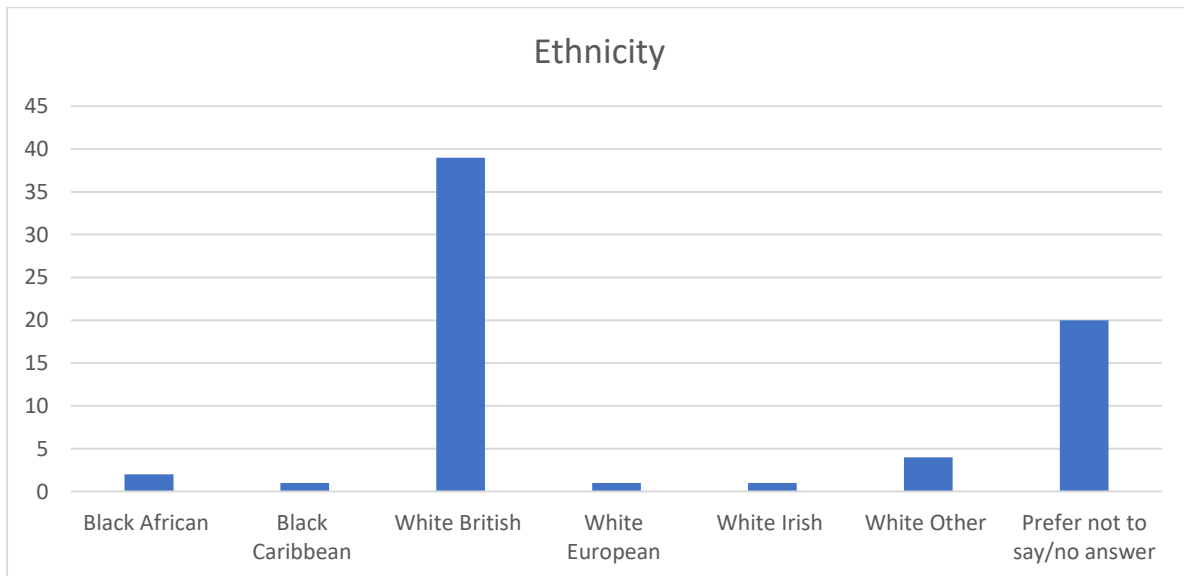


Fig 13

The majority of contributors described themselves as White British (57%) or opted not to provide details (29%).

Gender Identity

How would you describe your gender identity?

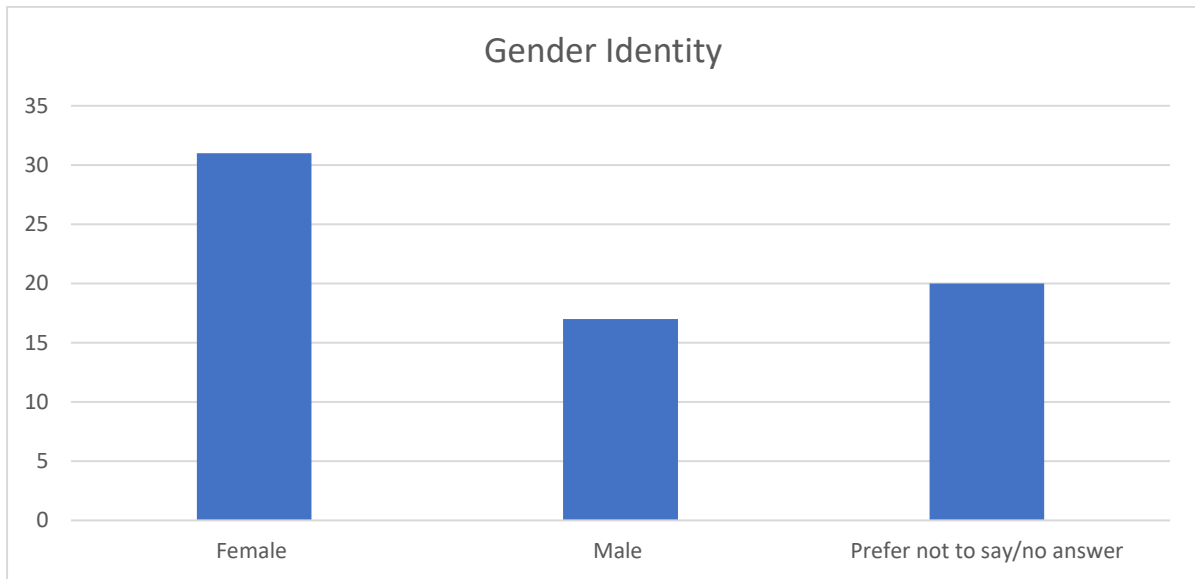


Fig 14

Contributors described themselves as female (46%) male (25%) or chose not to provide details (29%).

Religion

Please indicate your religion

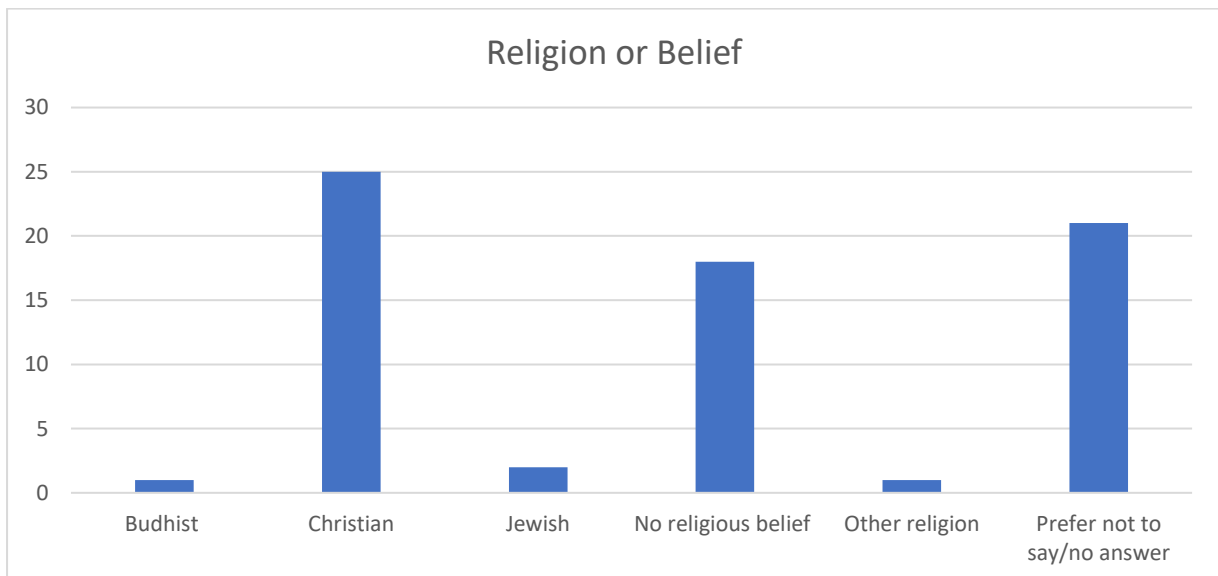


Fig 15

The religion or belief most frequently selected was Christian (37%) followed by no religious belief (26%). A fairly high proportion of contributors opted not to answer (31%).

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

By disability we mean whether you have a long-term difficulty with mental or physical health, or a learning difficulty that affects your ability to carry out day to day activities.

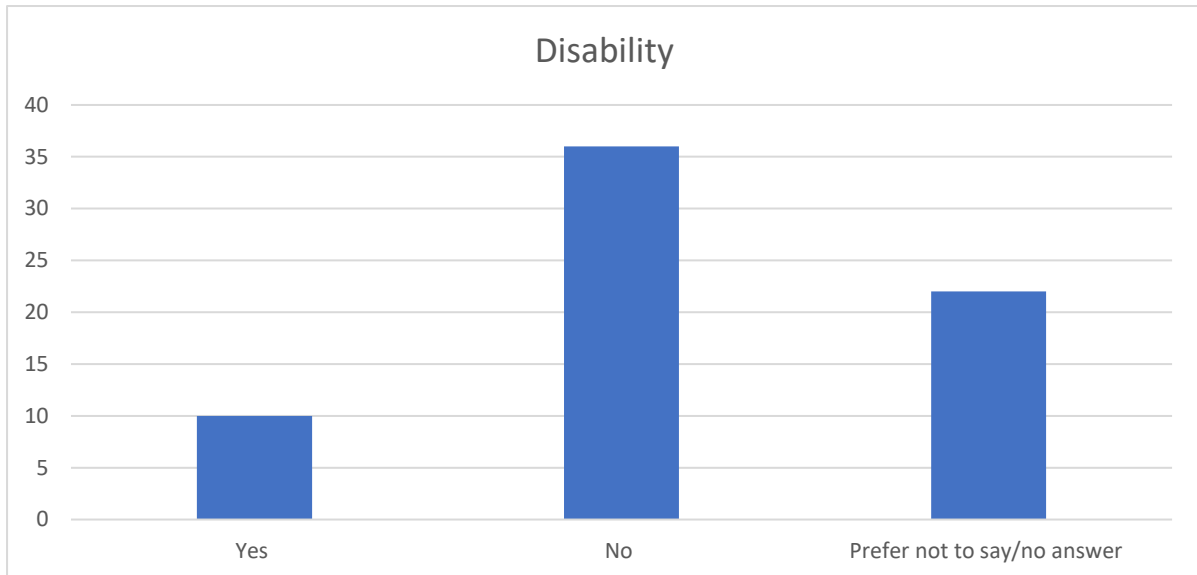


Fig 16

Overall, 15% of contributors said they had a disability, and a notable number chose not to answer (32%).

Sexual orientation

Please indicate your sexual orientation.

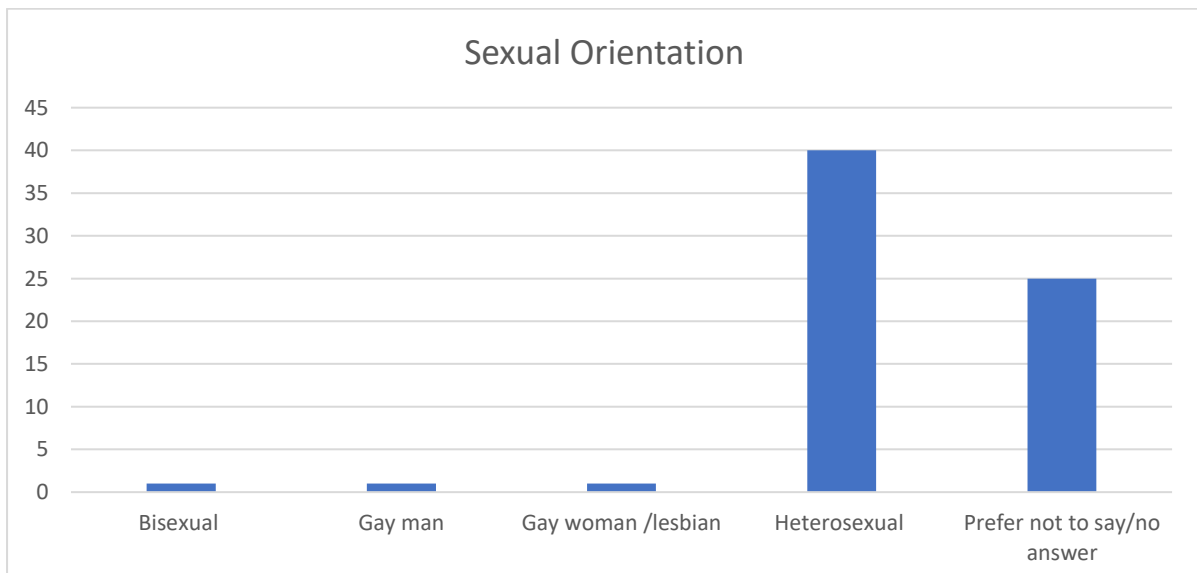


Fig 16

Most contributors said they were heterosexual (58%) or opted not to answer (37%).

NEXT STEPS

The results of the stage 1 consultation have been carefully considered in conjunction with the Councils corporate objectives, a range of staff workshops and its statutory obligations as a Local Housing Authority to inform the recommendations contained within the following four reports for stage 2 consultation.

- [Review of the Allocations Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Tenancy Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the overarching Housing Strategy- Recommendations](#)

Stronger Communities Select Committee scrutinised the reports on 21 September 2021 and approved all recommendations contained therein.

Stage 2 Consultation will begin on 29 October 2021 and details can be found on [the Big 4 Housing strategies and policies consultation](#) page on the Council's website.

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@Eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Janice Nuth
Housing Strategy Manager (Interim)
Communities and Wellbeing
22 October 2021

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Social Housing Lettings Annual Report

2020/21



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Social housing lettings - April 2020 to March 2021

This report provides information on the number, size, and type of social rented properties that Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) let to qualifying households in 2020/21. The figures include lettings to the Council owned stock, and successful nominations to housing associations (hereafter referred to as Registered Providers or RPs).

Supplementary information is also provided on; the number of applicants on the housing register, the number of mutual exchanges that have taken place and the number of properties that former tenants have purchased from the Council under the Right to Buy, between 2016/17 and 200/21.

Registering for housing

The housing register is a list of home seekers who qualify for at least one offer of a council or RP property. The term 'home seeker' includes those applicants who have applied to the Council for housing, and existing Council or RP tenants who have been approved for a transfer to alternative accommodation.

Applicants are only accepted onto the housing register if they fulfil the local eligibility criteria specified in the Allocations Scheme.

Homeseekers on the housing register are awarded one of three priority bands; band A, band B, or band C. Band A represents the highest priority and band C represents the lowest.

Choice-based lettings and direct offers

EFDC operates a choice-based letting (CBL) scheme to let vacant social rented housing to home seekers on the housing register. Home seekers actively search for available council and RP properties that are advertised on a database known as LOCATA.

Homeseekers access LOCATA via the HomeOption website (www.homeoption.org).

Vacant properties are advertised weekly and home seekers can express their interest in the advertised properties by making a 'bid'.

The Council expanded the LOCATA functionality in April 2020 - to record and monitor households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days, to comply with its statutory duties listed in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Shortlisting

When home seekers bid for an advertised vacant property HomeOption will automatically compile a shortlist of applicants.

Typically, the bid from a qualifying home seeker in the highest band with the earliest registration date will generate an offer to that household first.

Housing Allocations Scheme - categories of need by band

All housing applications are assessed in line with the [Housing Allocations Scheme](#). The current scheme can be viewed in full on the EFDC website.

The following table gives a breakdown of the main categories of need within each priority band for a choice based letting within the current scheme.

Band	Main categories of need
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Armed Forces with serious injury, illness, or disability • Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces • Downsizers seeking fewer bedrooms than current social housing property • Home seekers needing to move on urgent medical/welfare grounds • Home seekers living in insanitary, overcrowded, or unsatisfactory conditions • Home seekers with mobility problems • Home seekers needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home seekers sharing accommodation, lacking at least one bedroom • Home seekers needing to move to a particular locality • Home seekers needing to be one household but are having to live apart • Home seekers needing one additional bedroom • Existing council tenants living in 2/3-bedroom flatted accommodation needing houses • Existing council sheltered tenants wishing to move within their scheme or to another scheme • Existing council tenants over 60 living in 1 bed property wishing to move to sheltered accommodation
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home seekers needing to be closer to their place of work • Home seekers sharing accommodation with another household • Members of the Armed Forces with no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge • Spouses and children of existing and former Armed Forces Personnel • Home seekers needing to move on moderate medical/disability grounds • Home seekers in the Council's interim accommodation awaiting homelessness decision • Home seekers demonstrating an exceptional need to move to the district • Home seekers to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness

The periodic review of the Housing Allocations Scheme is in progress and is due to be published in April 2022 (subject to statutory consultation and Member approval).

Number of properties let by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

Year	Total	EFDC General Needs	RP General Needs
2020/21**	397	356	41
2019/20	450		
2018/19	449		
2017/18	437		
2016/17	493		

Source: Local Authority Housing Statistical Returns (LAHS) 2015-2020. **Provisional figures 2020/21

Fig.1

This table shows the number of properties that have been let to home seekers each year over the last five years.

From 2020/21 the table includes a breakdown of the number of lettings between EFDC stock and RP stock.

Number of properties let by bed size in 2020/21

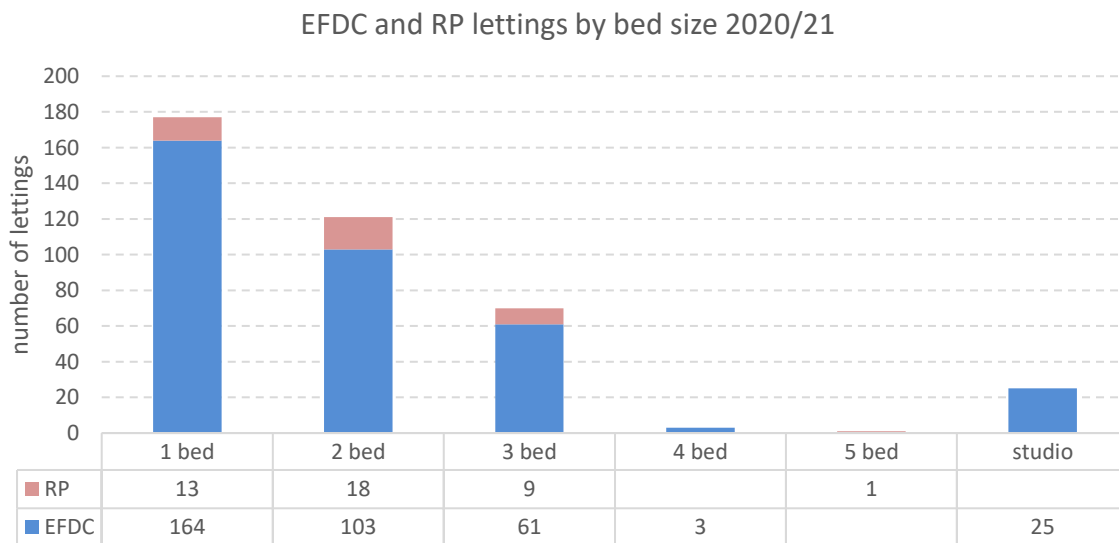


Fig. 2

Most lettings in 2020/21 were for 1-bed properties. These generally have the highest turnover of occupants and therefore become vacant more frequently than family sized accommodation.

Percentage of properties let by age of main applicant in 2020/21

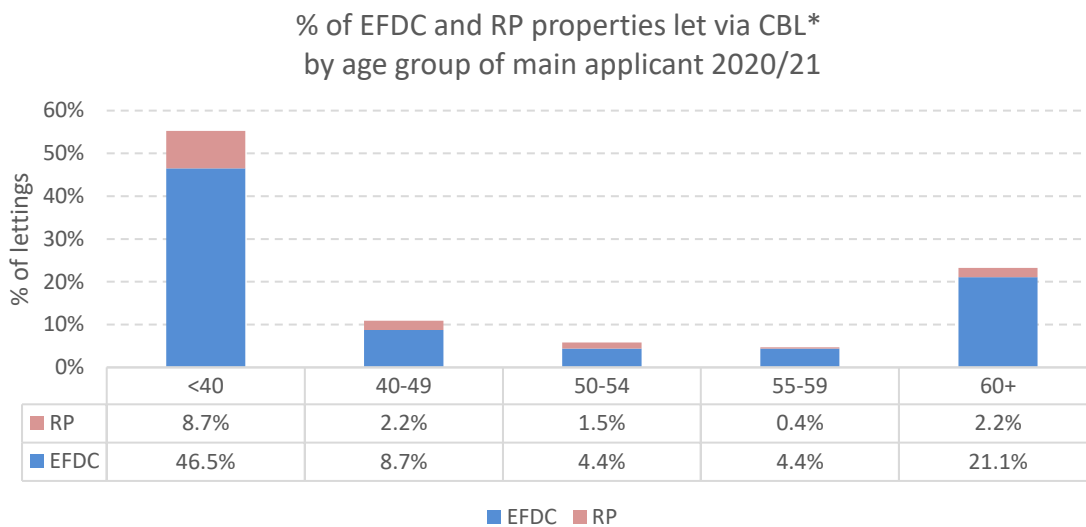


Fig.3

The majority of CBL lettings were to households where the main applicant was under 40 or over 60 years old.

Number of properties let by bed size and age of main applicant in 2020/21

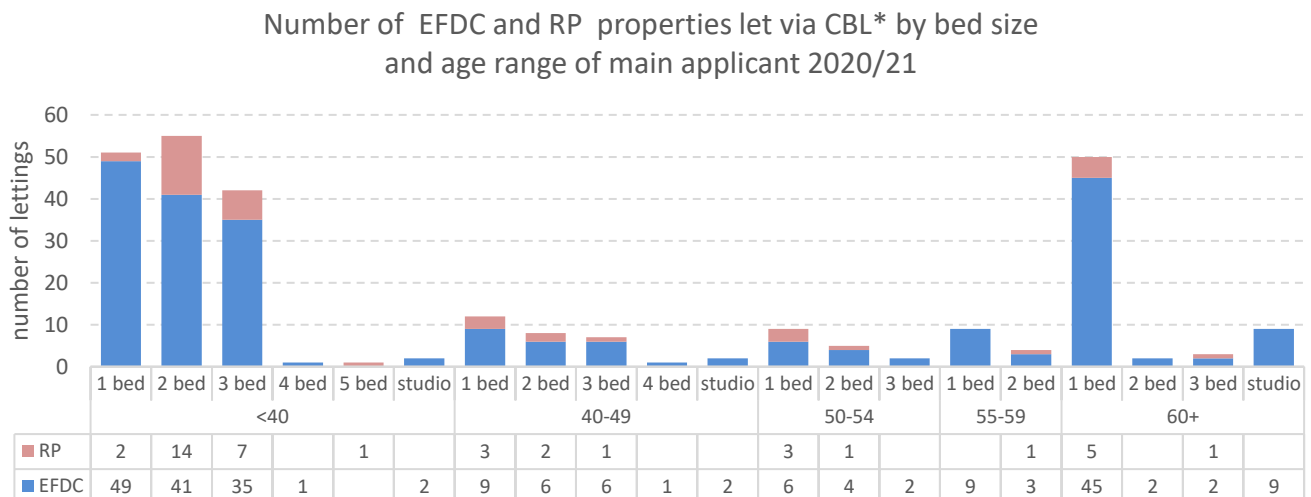


Fig.4

This comparison between the age of the main applicant and the size of the property is used to help with projecting the size, type and number of properties required to meet future demand.

*The data in Fig 4 and Fig 5 relates to households that moved via CBL and does not include the 122 direct allocations that were made to management transfers and homeless households.

Percentage of properties let by priority band in 2020/21

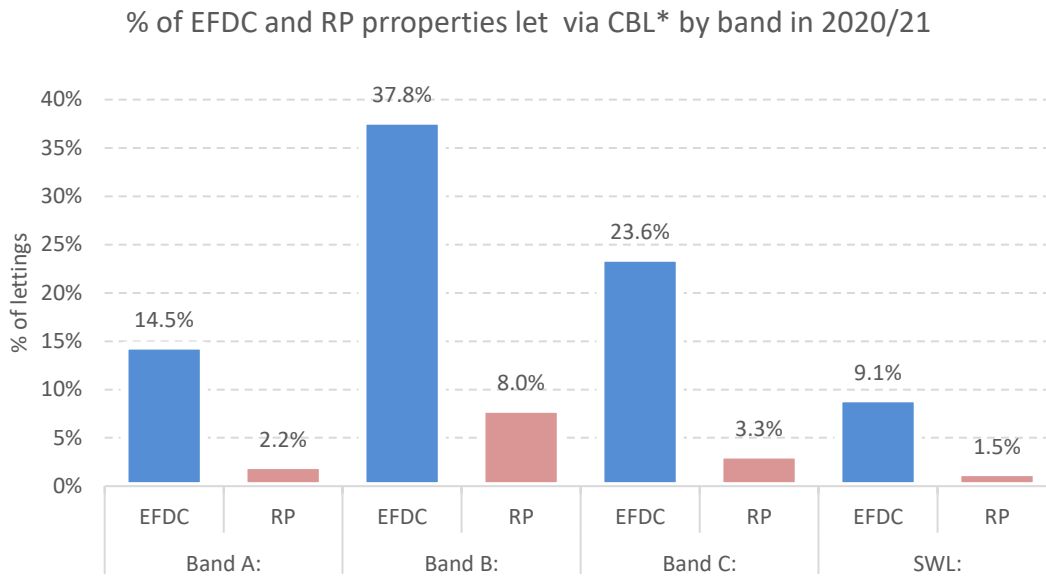


Fig.5

The majority of properties were let to applicants in band B.

Applicant categories

Applicants fall into three categories:

Direct applicants – Homeseekers, the majority of whom are households currently renting in the private sector or living with their family.

Transfer applicants – Existing Council or RP tenants seeking a move to another property.

Homeless applicants – Homeless households that EFDC has accepted a legal duty to house, the majority of whom will be in temporary accommodation.

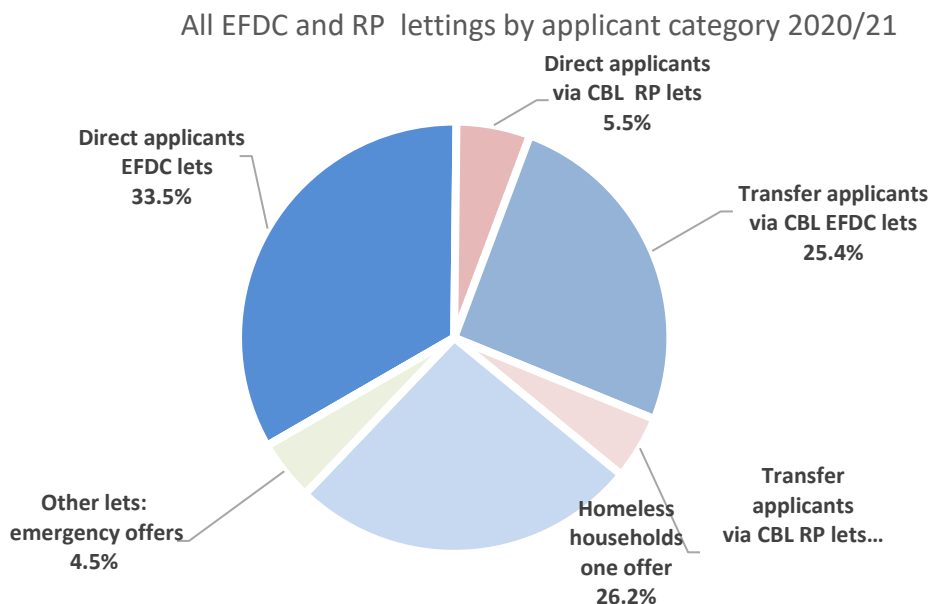


Fig.6

Accessibility and adaptations in 2020/21

A significant number of households include one or more occupants with disabilities. Most commonly mobility is restricted, and a property is required with level access such as a bungalow or ground floor flat. Occasionally additional adaptations may be necessary such as a level-access shower, handrails, a stair lift or a fully wheelchair adapted property.

When adapted properties become available to let then households with an identified need for those specific adaptations are usually prioritised above households without that need.

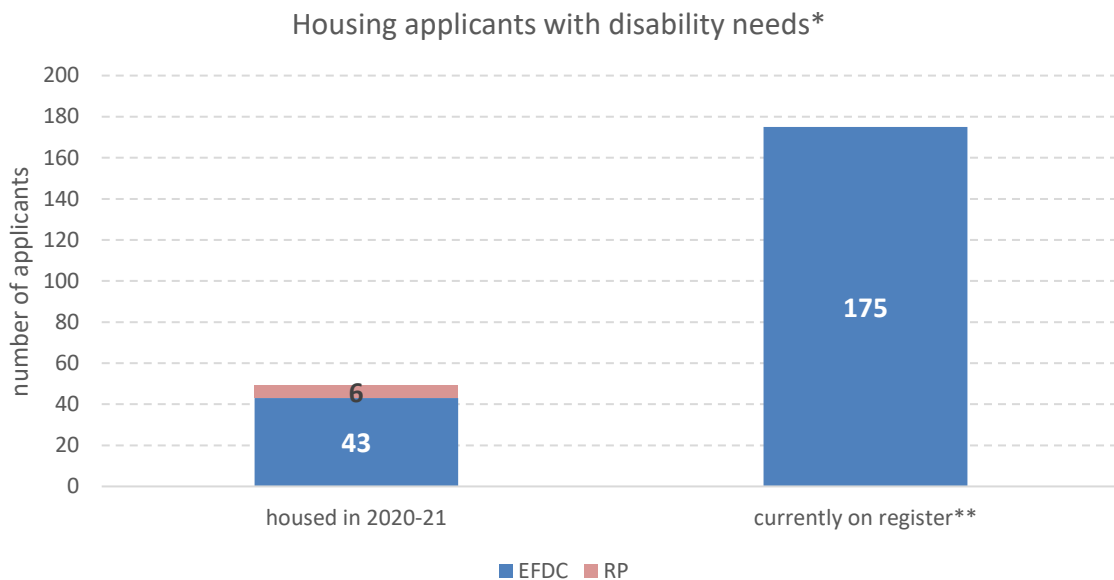


Fig.7

*This data relates to all applicants who have identified a household member with a permanent physical disability including but not limited to those with supporting occupational health or medical evidence.

** This data includes 35 applicants' households with a member who uses a wheelchair some or all the time.

Waiting times to move via CBL by band in 2020/21

Waiting times for applicants to move to an EFDC or RP property via CBL in 2020/21

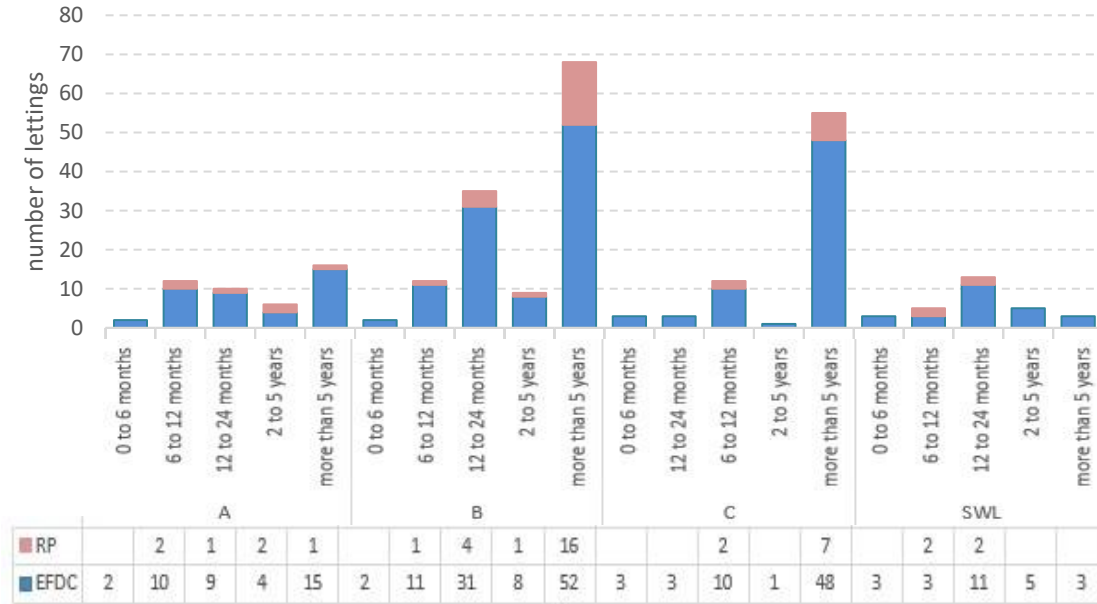


Fig.8

The above chart shows the number of months that households have waited to move to an EFDC or RP property via CBL.

The high number of households in band A that appear to have been waiting for longer than 12 months, and the very high number in band B waiting for longer than 5 years will have their applications reviewed to establish and (where possible) address the cause.

Local connections in 2020/21

The following chart compares the percentage of lettings made to home seekers already living in EFDC with the percentage of lettings made to home seekers from other local authority areas.

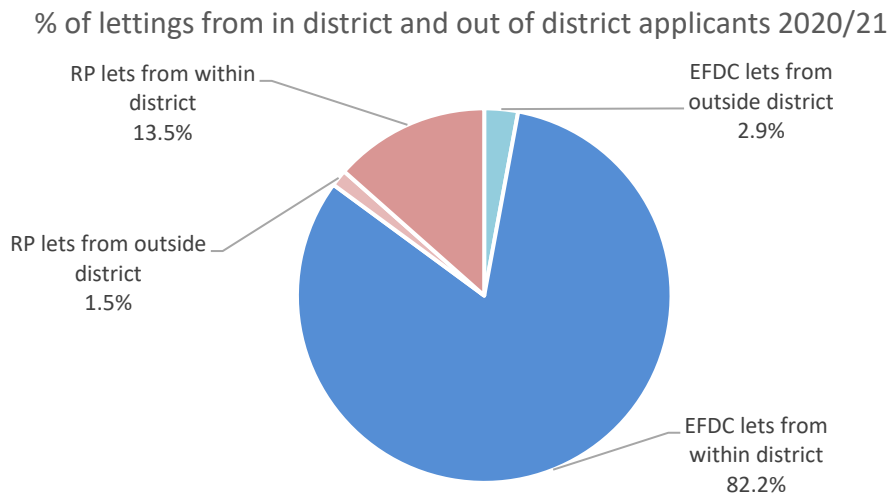


Fig.9

Number of properties let via CBL by property type in 2020/21

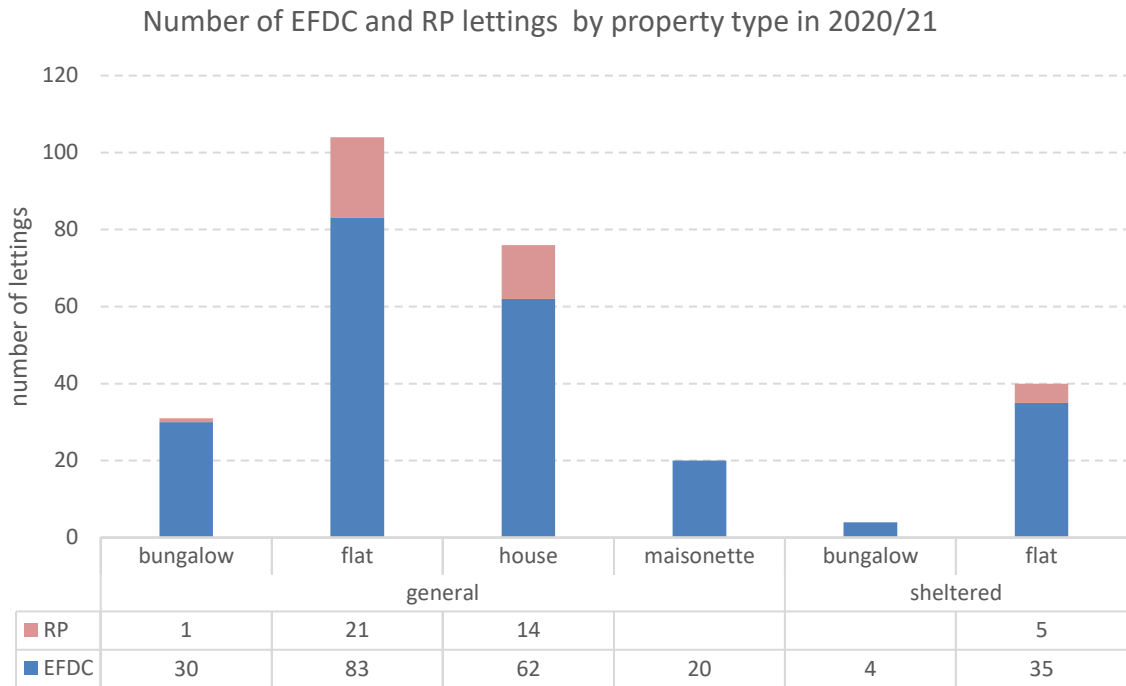


Fig.10

Most properties that were let via CBL in 2020/21 were flats, followed by houses then bungalows.

Invariably sheltered housing properties are flats in purpose-built schemes designed for older people, although the Council does have some individual properties (usually bungalows) that are linked to neighbouring sheltered schemes.

Percentage of EFDC and RP new - build lets compared with re-lets in 2020/21

The graph below compares lettings of new-build Council and RP housing with the re-letting of existing Council and RP stock.

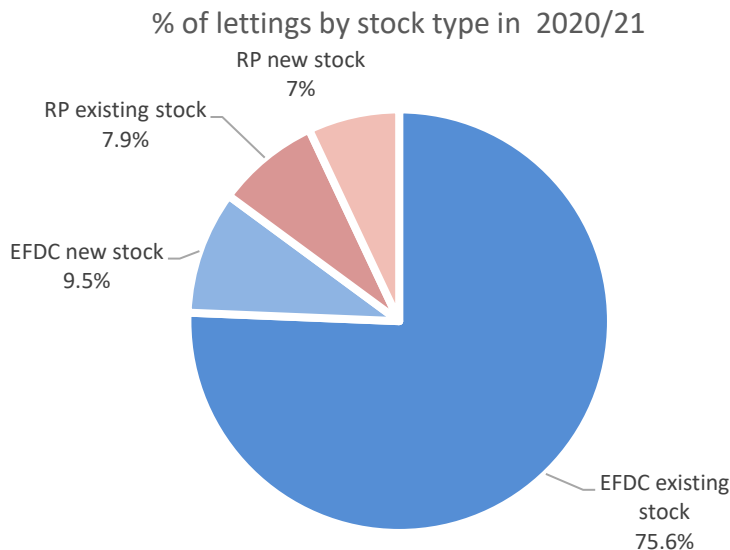


Fig.11

Members of the Armed Forces or their bereaved partners

Number of members of the Armed Forces or their bereaved partners on the housing register or housed in 2020/21

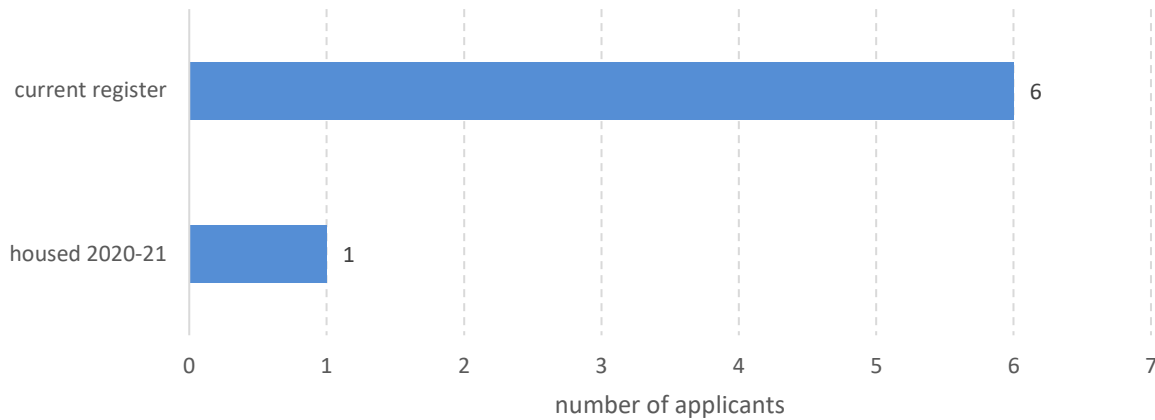


Fig. 12

Members of the Armed Forces and former members of the Armed Forces, or their bereaved partners are given specific consideration and priority is awarded based on their circumstances in relation to their service.

Number of mutual exchanges by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

Year	Total	Intra- district	Inter - district
2020/21	69	59	10
2019/20	74	63	11
2018/19	96	82	14
2017/18	92	82	10
2016/17	75	63	12

Fig.13

The vast majority of mutual exchanges over the last five years have been between tenants who already live in the district.

Number of Right to Buy Sales by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

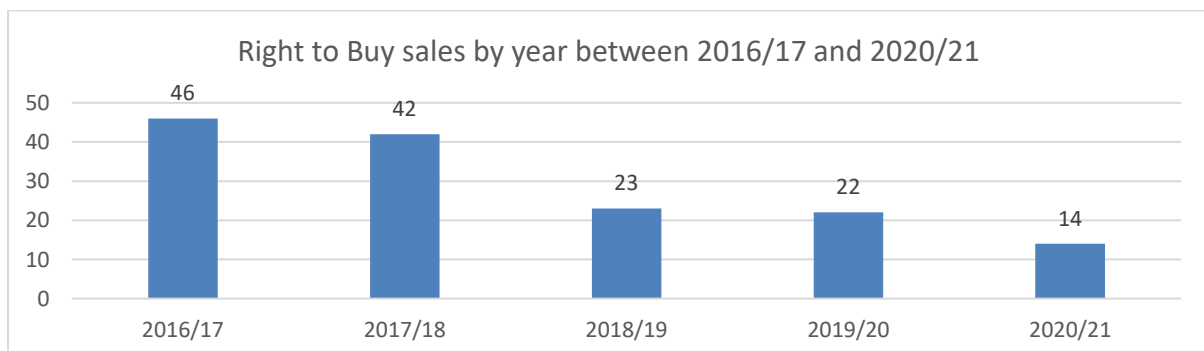


Fig. 14

There has been a steady reduction in the number of RTB sales per annum since 2016/17.

Ethnic profile of households who moved via CBL in 2020/21 compared with the ethnic profile of the general EFDC population as recorded in the 2011 Census

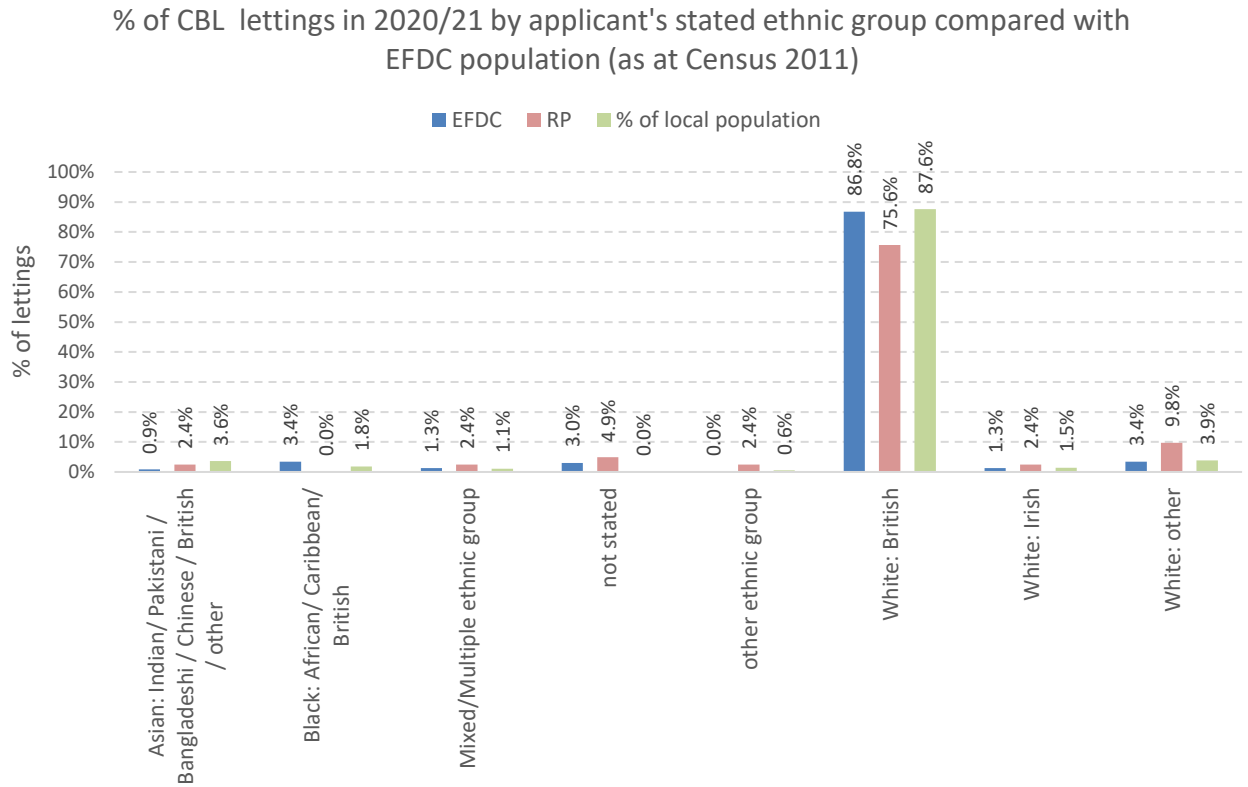


Fig.15

The ethnic profiling data comparison may not be robust enough to draw firm conclusions as the comparison is between current information for people who moved via CBL with 2011 Census statistics for the general population of EFDC.

More meaningful analysis can be undertaken once the 2021 Census data is published.

Applicants on the housing register by year between 2016/17 and 2020/21

This is a snapshot per annum as at 1 April of the total number of active applicants on the housing register between 2016/17 and 2020/21.

Year	Total Active Applicants
2020/21	1,555
2019/20	1,291
2018/19	1,494
2017/18	1,376
2016/17	1,353

Fig.16

Applicants on the housing register by band as at 1 April 2021

The chart below gives a snapshot as at 1 April 2021 of the number of home seekers in each band waiting to move, by the size of property that they require.

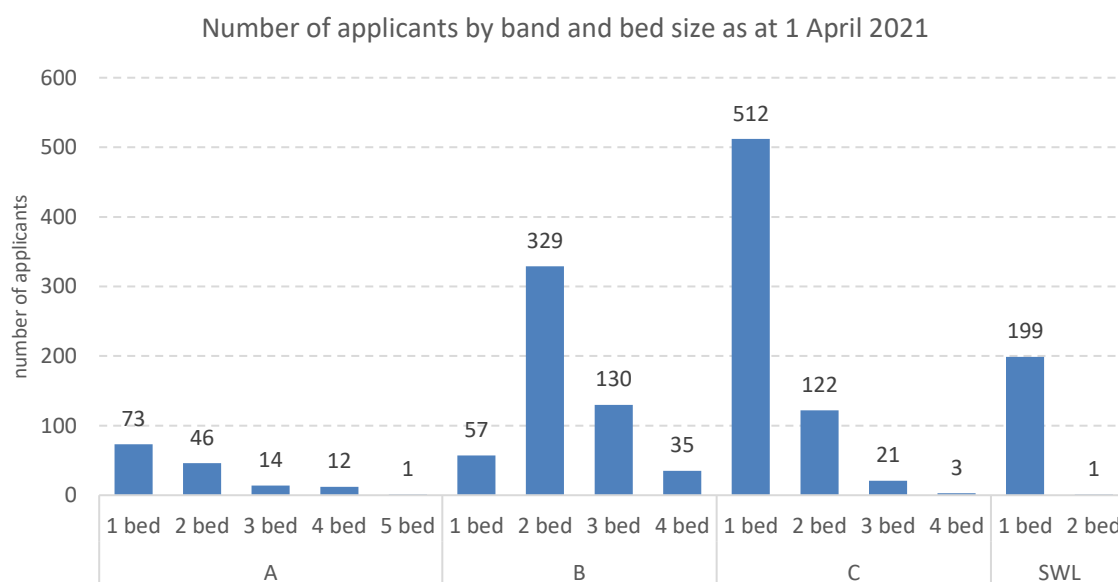


Fig. 17

There were 146 applicants in band A, 551 applicants in band B and 658 applicants in band C. An additional 200 applicants were on the Supplementary Waiting List.

The demand from band A applicants is mainly for 1 bed properties. The overwhelming demand from band B applicants is for 2-bed family sized accommodation.

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June 2021

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Schedule of payments for downsizing

Vacates	Needs	Wants	Incentive
2- bed	1-bed	1bed	£1,000
3 - bed	1-bed	2-bed	£500
3-bed	2-bed	2-bed	£1,000
4 – bed	1- bed	2-bed	£2,000
4-bed	2-bed	3-bed	£1,000
4-bed	3-bed	3-bed	£1,000
Any GN (inc.1 bed)	1-bed	1-bed sheltered	amount per room + bonus £1,000

Janice Nuth

26.01.21

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PRIORITY BANDS

Priority Bands shall be based on the following assessed needs

BAND A

	Band A – Emergency Need	Proposal
i	Any member of the Armed Forces, or former Service personnel, or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who joins the Council's housing register, where they are assessed by the Council's Medical Advisor as suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service, where the application is made within 5 years of discharge are given priority above all other applicants within Band A.	No change
ii	Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner and the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.	No change
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency medical grounds or emergency grounds relating to disability.	Change "urgent "
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on emergency welfare grounds.	Change "urgent "
v	On the recommendation of the Council's Medical Advisor applicants with specific accommodation requirements will be given priority for suitable properties as they become available above other applicants in the Band (e.g. adapted or ground floor properties etc) regardless of the date they joined the Band.	Replace
	Home-seekers with mobility problems will be given priority for ground floor flats and bungalows above other home-seekers in this Band [with the exception of Band A (i)], regardless of their waiting time, on recommendation of the Council's Medical Advisor.	
vi	Applicants with a Council or housing association tenancy in the District wanting to move to accommodation with fewer bedrooms than the property they currently occupy.	No change

BAND B

	Band B – Urgent Need	Proposal
i	Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing which poses a serious health hazard, or otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions (in accordance with housing legislation)* but not as a result of the introduction of a further household.	Change of Band from Band A

	Band B – Urgent Need	Proposal
ii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent medical grounds or urgent grounds relating to disability including learning disabilities	New
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on urgent welfare grounds.	New
iv	Applicants needing two or more additional bedrooms compared to their current accommodation.	Change of Band from Band A
v	Applicants who can demonstrate they would otherwise be one household, but are having to live apart from other members of their household because of a lack of accommodation, which would lead to statutory overcrowding if they occupied accommodation available to them individually but not for other personal reasons (i.e. family disputes).	No change
vi	Applicants with an assessed need to move to a particular locality within the District where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.	No change
vii	Applicants who have an agreed fostering or adoption agreement in place with Essex County Council, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child. Special guardians, holders of a residence order, and family and friend carers who are not foster carers but who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care shall also be included in this category.	New
viii	Applicants accepted by the Council as being statutorily homeless and owed the main housing duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).	New
ix	Existing tenants living in sheltered accommodation, who are wishing to move to alternative sheltered accommodation within their own scheme or to another sheltered scheme within the District (including sheltered bungalows).	Change: include “bungalows”
x	Existing tenants of the Council aged over 60 years, living in 1-bedroom Council accommodation wishing to move to sheltered accommodation regardless of their need (including sheltered bungalows).	Change include “bungalows”
xi	<p>living in 2 or 3 bedroom flatted accommodation (including maisonettes) who meet the Local Eligibility Criteria under Paragraph 14 of the Scheme (apart from the Housing Need element), making expressions of interest for</p> <p>houses that meet with their housing need, with their registration date being the tenancy commencement date of their current property.</p>	Delete

BAND C

	Band C – Moderate Need	Proposal
i	Any member of the Armed Forces or former Service personnel or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who have no housing need, and the application is made within 5 years of discharge.	No change
ii	Spouses and children (including step-children) of existing and former Armed Forces personnel (where the application is made within 5 years of discharge) seeking accommodation in their own right, provided that one of their family members (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) has lived within the District for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of application.	No change
iii	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate medical grounds or moderate grounds relating to disability.	No change
iv	Applicants with an assessed need to move on moderate welfare grounds.	No change
v	Applicants needing one additional bedroom compared to their current accommodation.	Change from Band B
vi	Applicants defined as a household, who are sharing accommodation with another household for a minimum of 2 years, which is resulting in a lack of at least one bedroom.	Change of Band from Band B
vii	Applicants with an assessed need to move to be nearer to their place of work or to take up an offer of permanent employment or an apprenticeship (in accordance with Paragraph 14.3 (f) of this Housing Allocations Scheme).	No change
viii	Applicants placed in interim accommodation by the Council awaiting their homelessness decision under S.184 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.	No change
ix	Applicants to whom the Council does not owe a full homelessness duty, where there is a requirement under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended to afford reasonable preference on the ground of homelessness.	No change
x	Applicants who are entitled to a reasonable preference under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended and can demonstrate an exceptional need to either leave their current local authority's area or move to the Epping Forest District.	No change

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Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 1 March 2022

Portfolio: Housing Services (Councillor H Whitbread)

**Subject: Review of the Homelessness and Rough
Sleepers Strategy 2022 - 2027**

**Officer contact for further information: Jennifer Gould
(07548145639)**

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee considers and recommends the five proposed priorities and associated themes within the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027 at Appendix 1 and recommends to Cabinet for approval
- (2) That the Committee considers the findings and approves the publication of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review at Appendix 2 and recommends to Cabinet for approval
- (3) That the Committee notes the recommendation to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Property to consider and approve the annual update of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan
- (4) That the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022-2027 is reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication.

Executive Summary:

Committee is being asked to agree the recommendations set out in this report and recommend for approval the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022 - 2027 (the strategy) and the evidence base that supports the strategy including the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review (the review) and the Public Consultation Outcome Report (the consultation report).

The current strategy was published in August 2018 and is due for renewal in April 2022 as is the Housing Allocations Scheme, the Tenancy Policy and the overarching Housing Strategy.

A review of all four strategies and policies commenced in May 2021 the draft strategy is being presented to Cabinet along with the draft Allocations Scheme and draft Tenancy Policy for the same 5-year period.

The issue is a key decision.

The review of the overarching Housing Strategy is due to be presented to Committee in July 2022.

Reasons for Proposed Recommendation:

To enable the Council to publish the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 - 2027, along with the review and the consultation report.

Other Options for Action:

- (i) Not to agree the recommendations for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027
- (ii) To make alternative recommendations for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 (subject to further consultation where appropriate).
- (iii) Not to recommend the publication of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review
- (iv) Not to recommend the publication of the Public Consultation Outcome Report

Report:

1. Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis.

2. The current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was published in 2018. It set out the achievements since 2015/16, incorporated the needs and demands on the service and an action plan to address these needs.

3. The review identified:

- Achievements and outcomes to date
- Causes of homelessness
- Profile of applicants
- Current demand
- Current supply
- Pipeline supply
- Anticipated demand
- Shortfall / resources

Style and format of the draft strategy for 2022 -2027

The current strategy is a text rich document over 52 pages covering detailed requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as it had just been introduced at the time of publication and was therefore relevant to that document.

It is recommended that the strategy for 2022 – 2027 is a streamlined accessibility compliant publication. The associated policy and procedure for preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping are produced as separate stand-alone documents.

Consistent format with the Overarching Housing Strategy

The critical part of the strategy will be the associated action plan, as this sets out how the objectives and intended outcomes are to be delivered and measured.

If a consistent style and approach is taken to the formulation of the overarching Housing Strategy, then the objectives contained therein can be delivered and measured in the same way.

It is recommended that an Action Plan with SMART targets is produced which follows the same style and format as the proposals for the overarching Housing Strategy. They can then both feed into service plans, team plans and individual one-to ones.

Priorities and themes

It is recommended that the draft strategy is presented as a set of 5 strategic priorities and associated themes framed within the national context, the local context, and Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Objectives. Each priority and theme will have a corresponding set of outcomes and targets.

The five proposed priorities and themes are:

Priority 1 Working Together

Theme: Make every contact count

Priority 2 Preventing Homelessness

Theme: Early intervention

Priority 3 Building Resilience

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

Priority 4 Access to Suitable Accommodation and Support

Theme: More than bricks and mortar

Priority 5 Ending Rough Sleeping

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

Priority 1: Working together

This will focus on making every contact count, multi-agency interventions, maximising the take-up of a range of services aimed at levelling up, maximising opportunities for grant funding and partnership bids, pooling resource and training, skills shortages and employment opportunities.

Priority 2: Preventing homelessness

This will focus on the importance of early intervention, access to information and digital inclusion, communities supporting mental health, landlord incentives, education, family mediation and money advice, holistic services for people leaving institutions, joint bids for homelessness prevention and household support funds.

Priority 3: Building resilience

This will focus on the guiding principles of positive mental health, positive activities and positive community, launching the 'Say Something' campaign, developing a strong resilient and motivated workforce support services encouraging aspirations, Personal Housing Plans, community initiatives that are available to enable homeless households or those threatened with homelessness to improve their overall life-chances and avoid the 'revolving door' of repeat homelessness.

Priority 4: Access to suitable housing and support

This will emphasise the EFDC More than Bricks and Mortar report and the role of the home as a place of safety, making the best use of housing including; temporary accommodation, the private rented sector adaptations and the housing register.

The focus on support will include the importance of the right statutory and voluntary help at the right time, pursuing Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, specialist supported housing Epping Forest's aging population, and the needs of gypsies and travellers.

Priority 5: Ending rough sleeping

This will include learning from lived experiences, a co-ordinated approach across the Essex Rough Sleeper partnership, expanding the outreach service to include supporting former rough sleepers and building on the success on the Houses in Multiple Occupation to achieve the Government's prescribed objective to end rough sleeping by 2024.

Resource implications

The strategy includes an action plan that has been produced in collaboration with named partner organisations listed at Appendix 2 who have all given an undertaking to jointly own responsibility for driving the strategy and achieving the agreed outcomes, including appropriate joint bid submissions for grant funding as it becomes available.

Delivery shall be managed within existing staff resources across the Community and Wellbeing Directorate and progress will be tracked by the Housing Strategy Team

Legal and Governance Implications:

The review and draft strategy enables the Council to fulfil its duties under the Homelessness Act 2002: to have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in the district, and to renew the strategy at least every 5 years.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018-2022 focussed on the significant reforms that were introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which placed duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas, and provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'. The draft provides evidence of how the Council is currently performing in this regard.

The review and draft strategy comply with the statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities February 2018 as amended.

The draft strategy incorporates the requirements of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse, extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse, and brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

The draft strategy is consistent with the proposals being submitted to Cabinet in respect of the draft Allocations Scheme 2022 – 2027 and the draft Tenancy Policy 2022 -2027.

Legal Services have reviewed the draft report and have no suggested amendments.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Climate change is expected to disproportionately affect those in more vulnerable positions such as the homeless. This is because they are generally less able to protect themselves from the effects of climate change expected in the area, which are more extreme temperatures, flooding and drought.

The development of the homelessness strategy will therefore help to protect against the societal effects that climate change will have.

Consultation Undertaken:

The recommendations within this review have all been subject to a comprehensive 2-stage public consultation exercise which included; bite-size briefings, webinars, workshops, surveys, on-line questionnaires, small meetings and one to one conversation.

In total 325 people were directly invited to participate in both stages of the consultation including:

- Council tenants, leaseholders and residents
- Partner agencies and community groups with an interest in housing
- Private registered providers of social housing
- EFDC staff and other statutory services
- Members of the Council
- Clerks of parish and town councils to forward to their respective elected members
- District, borough and city councils in the county

Risk Management:

A number of significant risks are associated with the review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy including :

Disregarding the requirement to review the strategy within the timescales and parameters set out in the statutory guidance may attract a reputational damage, and/or a penalty for non-compliance.

Responding to stakeholder consultation feedback mitigates the risks of dissatisfaction and failure demand.

Disregarding the requirements of or findings of an equalities impact assessment risks the provision of an unequitable housing service which may disproportionately affect vulnerable residents and those with protected characteristics.

Background Papers:

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan 2022-2027

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review

Equality Impact Assessment

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HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY
Draft **2022- 2027**

**If you would like this document in a more
accessible format, then please contact:**

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DRAFT

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FORWARD

To be provided by Holly Whitbread

INTRODUCTION

Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local housing authorities have a duty to review and publish their Homelessness Strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis.

The purpose of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (the Strategy) is to set out the plans that Epping Forest District Council (the Council) has agreed with its partners to prevent and reduce homelessness in the district between 2022-2027.

The Strategy takes into account new legislation and guidance and is based on a review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the district and the open consultation with residents and organisations with an interest in homelessness and rough sleeping; both of which have been published alongside this document.

The National Context

Major changes have been introduced in recent years to the duties that Local Housing Authorities have towards families and single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into effect in 2018, and the associated Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 (as amended) are considered to be the most significant changes to primary homelessness legislation and guidance since 1985 .

In August 2018, The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (now Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC)) published its national Rough Sleeping Strategy.

There continues to be a range of homelessness related legislative and regulatory directives, initiatives and funding opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness. Most recently; the Prime Ministers 2019 pledge to end rough sleeping by 2024, the Coronavirus Act 2020 as amended which placed temporary restrictions on the residential possession processes, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which strengthens the support for victims of abuse, and the Levelling Up White Paper 2022 to spread opportunity more equally across the UK.

The Local Context

The district of Epping Forest (the District) is one of 12 district, borough and city local housing authorities in the County of Essex. It is classified statistically as urban with significant rural populations, covering an area of approximately 339 square kilometres. In 2018 the resident population was estimated to be 131,137 people.

EFDC is the ninth (out of 12) most densely populated district in Essex, well below the County average. It is divided into 24 town and parish councils which are mainly rural and sparsely populated in the north and east, and more densely populated in the south where it borders the London boroughs of Enfield Waltham Forest Redbridge and Havering.

The majority of residents live across four suburban settlements; in Loughton, Waltham Abbey, Epping and Buckhurst Hill.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks areas in relation to six indices; Income, employment, health, education, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the environment. In 2019 EFDC was ranked 200 out of 317 lower tier authorities in England (1 being the most deprived) and its ranking has improved gradually to its highest level since 2007. However this belies the contrast of mainly affluent geographical areas with several pockets of significant deprivation.

EFDC is split into 78 neighbourhoods known as 'Lower Super Output Areas' Whilst 17 neighbourhoods were ranked in the top 20% of the least deprived areas nationally, 5 neighbourhoods were ranked in the bottom 30% of most deprived areas of the Country of which one was ranked in the bottom 20%.

Housing Supply and Demand

The demand for affordable housing in the district far outweighs the supply across all tenure types. In 2017 there were estimated to be approximately 55,630 homes in the district. Around 85% in the private sector, about 70% being owner occupied and 15% are private rented.

Social housing accounts for approximately 14% of accommodation in the district. The Council is the largest social landlord with 6,384 general needs properties which equates to 11% of all properties and Housing Associations own just over 3%.

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (or local plan) forecasts that 12,573 properties are required to meet demand across the district over the 12-year period 2011- 2033.

Urgent Housing Need

As at 31 March 2021 there were 1,555 people on the housing register who qualified for social housing. Of these 697 had an urgent need for rehousing.

Between April 2020 and March 2021 a total of 567 households approached the Council for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness. The Council provided information and advice to 186 households, accepted a duty to prevent or delay 123 households from becoming homeless and provided relief to 258 households who had lost their home (typically offered temporary and supporting them to find somewhere else). A main duty was accepted to provide settled accommodation for 96 households.

The Council has a development plan to build circa 195 homes for affordable housing between 2021/22 and 2025/26 to be allocated to people on the housing register including homeless households.

The Effects of Covid 19

The effects of and the response to the pandemic has changed many of the patterns of homelessness and rough sleeping in EFDC, as with the rest of the country. These include risks to public health, financial and social hardship, relationship breakdown and the supply of suitable housing for those most in need.

Links with other strategies and programmes

In order to achieve maximum impact, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 is being aligned with:

- The Social Recovery Map for Epping Forest District
- The Allocations Policy 2022-2027
- The Tenancy Policy 2022-2027
- The Overarching Housing Strategy 2022-2027
- Levelling Up Essex – An Essex White Paper 2022
- The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028 (which is due to be refreshed in 2022)
- The Essex County Council Housing Strategy 2021-2025
- The Local Plan
- The More than Bricks and Mortar Estate Improvement Programme 2020

THE STRATEGY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 aims to achieve a whole systems partnership approach to preventing and relieving homelessness and to ending rough sleeping in Epping Forest District in line with the Council's corporate objectives and the levelling up agenda.

The Council's key corporate objectives are:

- People live longer, healthier and independent lives
- Adults and children are supported in times of need
- People and communities achieve their full potential
- Delivering effective core services that people want
- Improving the district housing offer

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Make a significant contribution to social and economic recovery and social mobility within Epping Forest District to redress the impact of the pandemic.
- Support the Community and Wellbeing commitment to build strong, resilient, cohesive and healthy communities.
- Extend this commitment to our staff by providing the opportunities and environment to develop their skills, achieve their aspirations and thrive as a strong and motivated workforce.
- Help households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the District to access the appropriate support to enable them to live well and achieve their aspirations in suitable good quality affordable housing.
- Strengthen the partnerships and shared services that already exist within the District and create opportunities for new initiatives, partnerships and volunteers to jointly own the strategy and be responsible for its delivery.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Identifying the priorities

This strategy is made up of five evidence-based priorities with associated themes and clear measurable outcomes that we aim to achieve over the next five years.

Priority 1 Working Together

Theme: Make every contact count

Priority 2 Preventing Homelessness

Theme : Early intervention

Priority 3 Building Resilience

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

Priority 4 Access to Suitable Accommodation and Support

Theme: More than bricks and mortar

Priority 5 Ending Rough Sleeping

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

We have identified these priorities, themes and intended outcomes through a review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the district and additional research and analysis in collaboration with members of our community who have an interest in preventing and relieving homelessness.

Open Consultation

We undertook a 2-stage open consultation exercise between May and December 2021.

On-line consultation was combined with targeted events to enable residents, professional partners, other statutory services, staff and Members of the Council to express their ideas and views on what priorities should be included in the strategy.

The events included bitesize briefing sessions, detailed workshops, webinars, surveys and smaller meetings, underpinned by a review of local and national statistical data and lived experiences of homeless households.

We then went back to the same audience with the Councils proposals for the strategy for consideration and comment.

The findings of the review, and the outcome of the consultation form the evidence base for this strategy and have been published in two standalone documents.

For the full list of partnerships and organisations consulted see Appendix 2

The Action Plan

Together with our key strategic partnerships we have agreed in principle a draft action plan that will include year 1 SMART targets relating to each priority and named signatories. (subject to approval at Stronger Communities Select Committee and obtaining signatories final sign off).

We will collectively record the progress, review the outcomes, and update the targets on an annual basis for the duration of the strategy.

For the draft action plan see section 8

PRIORITY 1: WORKING TOGETHER

Theme: Make every contact count

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed and jointly owned with local partnerships who are taking collective responsibility for its delivery.

As well as the 12 partner organisations that are based at the Epping Community Hub there is the potential to strengthen collaborative working with over 150 statutory services, community groups, charities and social enterprises and countless individual volunteers to share skills, expertise and resources, make every customer contact count and maximise opportunities to secure funding and develop integrated services and improvements by working together.

Together we will:

Make Every Contact Count

The majority of residents who approach the Council for help because they are homeless or at risk of homelessness report one or more support needs. The most common issues are a history of mental health problems, physical ill health or disability, domestic abuse and substance misuse.

Making every contact count is an approach that uses the day to day interactions between organisations and people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing. We propose to extend this principle so that it becomes a whole systems approach to homelessness prevention that recognises the interdependencies between housing and the environment, income, vulnerability employment, education and crime in the wider determinants of health for our residents.

We will work with the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a skilled workforce equipped with the knowledge and referral mechanisms to services to make every contact count in our interactions with residents so that we can offer the right support at the right time.

Review the Duty to Refer

Public authorities such as hospitals, job centres, children's services, the armed forces, prison services etc have a duty to refer service users who they think may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to a housing authority.

This is a vital tool in the prevention and early resolution of homelessness. Although there has been a year on year increase in referrals since the duty was introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, more work can be done with agencies to facilitate appropriate timely referrals. We will review the duty to refer arrangements with statutory and non-statutory services with a view to increasing the number of appropriate early interventions.

Develop a support service with the NHS for people with substance misuse

The link between mental health, substance misuse and homelessness is indisputable both locally, nationally and globally. Not all people who become homeless struggle with their mental health or misuse drugs, alcohol or other substances, but substance misuse can be both a cause and result of homelessness.

To further complicate matters mental illness is often an underlying cause of substance misuse, and therefore homelessness as well. Around 10% of all households that approached EFDC for

help with homelessness reported having either drug or alcohol dependency needs. Public Health England statistics demonstrate that for people sleeping rough this is likely to increase to around 42% having alcohol misuse needs and 41% having drug misuse needs. Building on the success of the recently appointed Mental Health Navigator we will undertake a joint venture with NHS to fund and recruit a substance misuse navigator to work directly with affected homeless households help end the cycle of substance misuse, mental health and repeat homelessness.

Maximise opportunities for grant funding and shared resources

Our network of partners span an increasing range of statutory and non-statutory not-for-profit organisations, social enterprises, community interest groups and local businesses all of whom consistently demonstrate a passion and commitment to preventing and tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness.

Much of the innovative partnership work that we do, for example converting two single dwelling homes into housing with support to end the cycle of rough sleeping, community development projects at our temporary accommodation scheme, and the co-location of specialist clinicians to address the health and support needs of homeless households is made possible by successful multi-agency bidding for government and charitable trust grant funding as it becomes available, often at short notice, and we are keen to maximise access to these funds.

The majority of joint bids are made in collaboration with the Essex sector wide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Partnership, members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership.

Collectively we have a powerful voice and comprehensive portfolio of skills experience and resources, but also acknowledge that bid submissions can be labour intensive and require flexible co-operation when dealing with competing priorities. We will continue to build on our shared and individual strengths to secure grant funding and deliver initiatives that are conducive to all five priorities within this strategy.

Promote social and economic mobility

In 2020/21 32% of households who were eligible for help from the council due to homelessness or at risk of homelessness were registered unemployed, and one of the main causes of homelessness was loss of rented accommodation in the private rented sector which is largely unaffordable for many families. Despite being a relatively affluent district overall, there are several neighbourhoods that fall in the bottom 30% of the most deprived areas in the Country.

A local and national skills shortage is affecting all parts of the community including the construction industry to develop much needed affordable housing, and supply chain for essential consumables like food and materials.

Epping Forest District Council is one of a group of large not for profit organisations in Essex known as 'anchor organisations' that are working together to identify how our employment, procurement and workforce development practices can support local people.

A network of over 30 partners have began work on several employment initiatives including work coaches, and reverse job fairs. We are bidding for funding to help make these bespoke to address the needs of homeless households and those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.

PRIORITY 2 PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Theme: Early intervention

Where possible, we believe that the best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. The purpose of early intervention is to prevent homelessness in the long term - not just the 56 days leading up to a household potentially losing their home. We want to minimise the risks of the problems that lead to homelessness and take action to prevent future homelessness that reach far beyond the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Our early intervention will include:

Accessible community information and advice

The lived experiences of homelessness that Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex shared in section 5 highlights that a whole systems approach to early intervention is wholly dependent on good communication and access to information.

Kiera, Ahmed and Somaiya and Tex all had very different reasons for finding themselves homeless and all described how they benefited from multi-agency support.

We will establish what more we can do so that people finding themselves in these situations know who to approach for help before the situation reaches crisis point. For example Tex knowing he could turn to the council before turning to the street, the range of people that are available for Kiera to talk to and provide emotional support, and Ahmed and Somaiya being aware of alternatives to temporary accommodation such as key worker housing or affordable home ownership.

We will continue to learn from lived experiences and talk to other agencies, both those who are co-located to find out where there are gaps in information and agree practical solutions to plug these gaps.

Identifying and removing barriers to digital inclusion

Digital inclusion or rather reducing digital exclusion is about making sure that residents have the capability to access the internet to do the things that benefit them from day to day including access to information, advice and services.

Digital exclusion is inextricably linked to wider inequalities in society and is more likely to be faced by homeless households, those on low income, people over 65 and people with disabilities. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, nationally only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 had internet access compared to 99% of households with an income over £40,000.

This strategy is being aligned with the Council's Digital Strategy 2022-2025 to reinforce wider practical measures to improve access to online services for vulnerable and disadvantaged residents. Central to this will be staff responsible for providing customer facing services in the Community hub and providing outreach support.

Community responders at Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) will offer home visits or telephone support to anyone who is struggling with digital access and can provide free SIM cards with 6 months unlimited calls and texts and 20GB of data to qualifying vulnerable residents via their partner organisation WECAN.

VAEF and the Housing and Wellbeing Service will be looking at other ways of offering digital support to access housing related services.

Landlord incentives to provide settled accommodation

Private rented accommodation accounts for about 15% of all properties in the District, and over recent years has become increasingly unaffordable for residents on low incomes. Prior to the pandemic loss of private rented tenancy was the main reason for being threatened with homelessness.

The Council still depends on private sector landlords who provide decent affordable accommodation both to prevent people from becoming unnecessarily homeless and to assist the Council to discharge its main housing duty to provide settled accommodation to those who have lost their home.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 provided protection to social and private tenants through a variety of restrictions between March 2020 and October 2021 to delay when landlords could evict tenants.

Now these restrictions have been lifted and the backlog of bailiff eviction warrants reduces the Council is anticipating an increase in homelessness, which is likely to be compounded by concerned landlords pre-empting the proposed abolition of s.21 no fault evictions.

The Housing Needs service employs a skilled negotiator to liaise with private sector landlords on a case by case basis to reconsider allowing tenants to stay who they'd asked to leave, or to charge an affordable rent and provide a tenancy for a minimum of 12 months to a household in need. This flexible bespoke approach is proving to be a very successful way of using limited homelessness prevention grant funding to provide help where its needed to maximum effect.

Maximise support and accommodation options for people leaving institutions

The Council has protocols in place so that people leaving institutions including hospital, care, prison, and the armed forces do so in a planned way and have the necessary support plans and housing options arrangements in place to enable them to adjust and thrive.

Our profiling information shows that too many people leaving institutions still find themselves homeless and vulnerable to exploitation, addiction poverty and mental and physical health problems either straight away, after a period of hidden homelessness such as sofa surfing, or struggling to sustain a tenancy.

Over the period of the strategy we will work with the Essex Housing Officers Group and the Essex Homeless Officers Housing Group and the relevant agencies to review the effectiveness of our protocols.

Raise awareness of homelessness

The donations and support that individual volunteers, local community groups and businesses give to our temporary accommodation scheme at Christmas and throughout the year is a reflection of the social capital that exists within the district.

Part of our strategy is to harness that social capital and raise awareness of homelessness, the causes, impact and lived experiences from a wide range of residents. We want to work with CHES to go into schools and colleges and talk with the students about homelessness from their perspective to really think about how it can be avoided.

PRIORITY 3 BUILDING RESILIENCE

Theme: Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community

The guiding principles of Positive mental health, positive activities, positive community feature in all of the housing related services we provide, and our plans for economic and social recovery from the pandemic.

We embrace our duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to take appropriate steps for improving the health of the people in the District. Our review of homelessness informs, and is informed by, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment; and our homelessness strategy is intended to achieve complete synergy with the current Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Levelling Up Essex White Paper.

We believe that building resilience within the community and amongst staff and partner organisations is central to diminishing the human cost of homelessness. We are keen to learn from peers in clinical and third sector services.

Our approach to building resilience will include:

Developing our workforce

The housing profession can be as physically and emotionally challenging as it is rewarding. We want to develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce that is well equipped to meet the demands of the constantly changing environment, that recognises and understands vulnerability and the complexities of trauma that many of our customers have experienced, and has an awareness of neurodiversity including the associated strengths and weaknesses.

We will consult our Human Resources team and experienced partnership organisations to provide staff with suitable training to develop their skills and improve their communication with people who may be affected by trauma or neurodiversity.

Launch the 'Say Something' campaign

We have a moral and legal obligation to say something if we come across a potential safeguarding issue. This may be easier to do when something is obviously not right, for example if physical abuse is disclosed during an interview. However sometimes things just don't feel 'right', and sensitive curious questioning can help staff to establish whether there is cause for concern and the appropriate response.

The Domestic Abuse Act has highlighted the need for refresher training on data protection and when personal information can and should be shared without consent if a lawful basis can be identified for example if an individual's safety is at risk.

The 'Say Something' campaign is not just speaking up about other people. Staff will be encouraged to let their managers know what their career aspirations are during 1-2-1s and a safe space to say when they are struggling with their own mental health, workloads etc.

Promoting opportunities to engage in Health and wellbeing initiatives

Part of both the homelessness prevention duty and the homelessness relief duty includes agreeing a personal housing plan with the applicant which sets out what the Council will do and what the household will do to address their housing needs. With the agreement and support of members of the Health and Wellbeing Board housing staff will receive training on how to offer to connect applicants to community

groups and non-clinical statutory services for practical and emotional support with community health initiatives (e.g. weight management, stop smoking, diabetes reversal).

A whole systems approach to assisting residents with mental health needs

Funding has been secured to appoint a clinical practitioner from the NHS to work as a specialist Mental Health Navigator across Epping Forest Braintree and Uttlesford to help homeless households to link with mental health services to prevent rough sleeping. The shared learning from this service includes a greater awareness of the link between mental health and homelessness including staff training and delivering trauma informed services.

Meaningful participation and volunteering

Many homeless applicants in temporary accommodation mention feelings of loneliness and isolation, across all age groups and all personal circumstances. Kiera expressed this clearly when sharing her lived experience of temporary accommodation in section 5.

The Temporary Accommodation Team will research what befriending and buddying services already exist in the County and seek advice on the merits of signposting to one or more

PRIORITY 4 ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

Theme - More than bricks and mortar

The pandemic has brought into sharp focus the role of the home as a place of safety and the need to access to the right statutory services and community support when and where it's needed.

Suitable housing conditions and knowing who to talk to can save lives, prevent disease, increase quality of life, reduce poverty, protect the public purse and help alleviate climate change.

Our focus on access to suitable housing will include:

Making the best use of all available housing

We will continually review our practices and supply and demand across all tenure types to ensure we are making the most effective use of all available accommodation including temporary accommodation, private rented sector and home ownership in the context of both financial and human resources, and based on the needs of the applicant.

Although there is a wide range of temporary accommodation available we will always consider council owned stock in the first instance, and only ever place people in Bed and Breakfast as a last resort and as an emergency if there is nothing else suitable and immediately available. We will review average waiting times on an annual basis and incentivise downsizing to maximise the availability of stock that is in shortest supply.

The right support at the right time

The majority of homeless applicants reported having one or more support needs at the point of application or in the past. This may range from clinical intervention for illness or disability, social support from children or vulnerable adults to financial support from DWP. In many cases the individual's level of need and ability to cope fluctuates or varies as their circumstances change.

In order to have maximum impact for the maximum number of applicants in need and promote independence services must be responsive enough to provide the right support at the right time. The principles of the right support at the right time will be imbedded into the review of the protocols and move on arrangements for supported housing.

Support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse

The number of applicants who lost their last settled home because of domestic abuse has increased year on year from 12 in 2018/19 to 51 in 2020/21, a trend that is being reflected nationally. The Domestic Abuse Act 2022 brought with it an allocation of New Burdens Funding the Council will use to employ a Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Officer who will join the Community Safety Unit to provide a service to victims of domestic abuse across the District.

We will pursue Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK, and build in processes that help guide staff to adequately address the needs of survivors and hold abusers to account.

Synergy with the National Disability Strategy

18% of applicants seeking help with homelessness or the threat of homelessness informed the council of physical ill health or disability.

We will incorporate the housing related elements of the national disability strategy into this strategy. We will review our policies on the use of Disabled Facilities Grants, provide the appropriate supported housing for people with specific needs and ensure that measures are in place to ensure disabled people can be fully involved in consultation and share their stories as part of the lived experience activities.

Our Aging Population

Epping Forest has an aging population and it is estimated that by 2033 there will be an increase of circa 22% in the 65+ household population and circa 24% in the 75+ household population.

Very few people over the age of 65 present as homeless or at risk of homeless and there is an oversupply of sheltered housing for rent although conversely there is an undersupply of 'retirement homes' in the private sector.

Our staff will continue to receive training on what it means to create dementia friendly communities and we are considering the feasibility of including sheltered housing schemes in our regeneration plans. We are also proposing to offer better incentives and more options for older people to downsize to accommodation that meets their assessed needs and their personal preferences where it is reasonable to do so.

The needs of Gypsies and Travellers

Between 2018/19 and 2020/21 two households who identified themselves as Gypsies or Travellers approached the Housing Needs service for assistance due to homelessness or the threat of homelessness and one person approached to flee domestic abuse.

The Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) supports Gypsies and Travellers to access services and accommodation related issues including 12 local authority sites across the County.

We shall continue to develop a co-ordinated approach with the ECTU for the services we provide for gypsies and travellers with particular focus on support for women who experience domestic abuse, and the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

PRIORITY 5 ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING

Theme: Proportionate prevention, intervention and recovery

Historically relatively few people have been known to be sleeping rough in the district on any given night. However; one person sleeping rough is one too many. Our approach to ending rough sleeping will be proportionate and focus on prevention intervention and recovery.

Prevention – Stopping people from sleeping rough for the first time

Intervention – Support to those currently sleeping rough to move off the streets

Recovery – Support to those who have slept rough to ensure they don't return to the streets

We know that rough sleepers are largely transient travelling from district to district across the County. We are part of **the Essex Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group** and are able to pool resources, share expertise and pursue joint funding bids.

Our commitment to achieving the Government's target of ending rough sleeping will be underpinned by a holistic approach to improving the life chances of individuals with a history of sleeping rough or who are at risk of sleeping rough.

Our plans to end rough sleeping will include:

Collaborative working with our neighbours

We are keen to continue to build on the success of membership of the sector wide Essex Homelessness Officers Group and the Greater Essex Rough Sleeper Strategy Group to secure RSI funding and taking a co-ordinated approach to working with potential rough sleepers who are often transient.

By pooling resources and expertise we are able to see the proportionate benefits of joint initiatives like the Horizons scheme where intensive support is provided to a small cohort of individuals impacted by significant multiple disadvantage (homelessness, offending and substance misuse).

Learning from lived experiences

We will expand the learning from lived experiences to understand the stories of those rough sleepers who have returned to the streets on more than one occasion with those who avoided doing so and will look at whether people who are happy to share their stories may also be interested in participating in future reverse job fairs that may be developed across the County.

Expanding the outreach service to include supporting former rough sleepers

We are keen to follow up on the success of the everyone in programme which accommodated 23 people and granted settled tenancies to 12 people who had been previously sleeping rough. We are arranging to collaborate with Peabody Outreach Team to develop an enhanced outreach service for former rough sleepers to provide longer term support if and when its needed that compliments the work of the mental health navigator and the planned substance misuse navigator.

Understanding the impact of hidden homelessness e.g sofa surfing and sleeping in cars

We recognise from the increase in numbers of people who became street homeless during the pandemic that hidden homelessness is still an issue - and we are working with the Community Safety Unit to ensure that anyone who is found to be sleeping in a car is referred to the Housing Needs service in the first instance - so that all residents without a settled home can access the appropriate information and advice on the options that are available to them. We will also develop a publicity programme about sofa surfing and the early intervention measures for single homeless people to avoid having to rely on friends and associates to put them up for a few nights here and there.

CASE STUDIES – LEARNING FROM LIVED EXPERIENCES

Lived Experiences of Homelessness

During the consultation a variety of residents said they were happy to give in depth accounts of their experiences of becoming homeless in Epping Forest to help us to gain insight into the causes and help that's available from their perspective.

We asked the following questions and considered the feedback when formulating the strategy;

- What were the main reasons you became homeless?
- What have you found to be most challenging and have you overcome these challenges?
- How do you think your homelessness could have been prevented or avoided?
- What organisations or services have been particularly helpful?
- What do you think could help you to keep somewhere settled to live?

We are very grateful to the residents who shared their stories so openly and honestly. With their permission we have published the accounts of three different households whose names we have changed to protect their privacy.

Lived Experience 1

Keira

Keira became homeless as a young adult. She was living with her mum and younger siblings until Children's Social Care intervened. Keira was too old to go into foster care and was suffering mental ill health so she was referred to the Council's Housing services who provided temporary accommodation.

Keira said that her homelessness was caused by complex family issues so she doesn't think it could have been avoided. She said the help she received from the winter clothes fund, food from the foodbank and donations to the temporary accommodation have kept her going and she has managed to stay in full time education.

Keira still struggles with her mental health and is currently dealing with this on her own. She said she is worried about how she will manage when she moves out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home. Keira said she finds being homeless with no family support very lonely and she is anxious that this will increase if she moves to an area she doesn't know.

Keira would like to find an organisation that could help her to find someone to talk to. She suggested more activities for single people in temporary accommodation to connect and make friendships and perhaps motivational monthly challenges like cooking or exercises.

Lived experience 2

Ahmed and Somaiya

Ahmed and Somaiya have two children and have always lived in private rented accommodation. Their landlord decided to sell the house and gave them notice to leave. Despite both being in employment Ahmed and Somaiya could not find somewhere affordable to rent that was within travelling distance of work and school.

Ahmed and Somaiya said the biggest challenge was trying to find somewhere else to live with such short notice, because rents had increased so much and they didn't have enough time to find higher paid jobs

and get the money together in time. They went to the Citizens Advice Bureau who they found were very helpful and are now in Council owned temporary accommodation.

Ahmed and Somaiya would still like to live in private rented accommodation that was affordable but worry that most landlords only offer 1-year tenancies so they could find themselves in the same position within 12 months which is no good for their children.

Lived experience 3

Tex

Tex is an older male who had been living in accommodation tied to his low paid job, until the company went into liquidation without warning. Tex found himself homeless and with no money and began sleeping rough. He said his health quickly deteriorated and his overwhelming memories were of being cold and fearing that he wouldn't survive.

Tex had been sleeping in a variety of parks and open spaces for about three weeks when a minister from the Church approached him and offered practical and emotional support to get back on his feet.

The minister made a referral to the Council's outreach team who provided Tex with temporary accommodation and arranged for Peabody Housing Association to give housing related support - including access to benefits and help to move into the temporary accommodation.

Tex has now left the temporary accommodation and has moved into a settled home with support. He said that the temporary accommodation made him feel secure and everyone had been really nice and supportive.

We will continue to listen to and learn from the lived experiences of our residents as part of our strategy to work together to prevent and tackle homelessness.

ACHIEVING THE INTENDED OUTCOMES

Monitoring arrangements and accountability:

- The plan will be updated every quarter.
- Lead organisations and officers will be identified for each task on the delivery plan.
- The lead organisation for each action will be responsible for informing partners of any issues or risks between quarterly progress update with a view to resolving.

PARTNERS SIGNED UP TO THE STRATEGY

The following key strategic partnerships have signed up to this strategy (in principle subject to reviewing the final draft and detailed delivery plan)

- *CHESS Homelessness
- *EFDC Community Safety Partnership
- *EFD Cultural Forum
- *EFD Health and Wellbeing Board
- *EFD Tenant and Leaseholders Panel
- Epping Community Hub (individual members to be listed pending confirmation)
- *Epping Team Ministry
- *Essex County Council Adult Social Care
- *Essex County Council Children's Services
- *Essex County Council Disability and Autism Team
- *Essex County Council Housing Growth Lead
- *Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- *Peabody Outreach Support

APPENDIX 1 - DELIVERY PLAN – 2022/23

PRIORITY 1 – WORKING TOGETHER – Make every contact count

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Launch Make Every Contact Count campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Review the Duty to Refer (DTR) working arrangements and incorporate the principles of the proposed Duty to Collaborate if introduced			<u>Lead</u>		
	Joint venture between Housing Needs and Health Services to fund and recruit a Substance Misuse Navigator			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise opportunities for grant funding			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote social and economic mobility by bridging the gap between skills shortage and employment and training			<u>Lead</u>		

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PRIORITY 2 – PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS- Early intervention

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Information and Advice: Review the levelling up, wellbeing and homelessness prevention and housing advice that is available at all touchpoints			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the needs of people most at risk of homelessness are fully catered for as part of the Corporate Digital Strategy			<u>Lead</u>		
	Landlord incentives to maximise access to affordable private sector rented accommodation			<u>Lead</u>		
	Maximise accommodation options for those leaving institutions to reduce hidden homelessness and the need to sleep rough			<u>Lead</u>		
	Raise awareness of Homelessness: Schools and Colleges and Museum programme			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 3 – BUILDING RESILIENCE

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Develop a resilient motivated and empowered workforce skilled in curious questioning and respectful of neurodiversity and vulnerability			<u>Lead</u>		
	Launch the Say Something campaign			<u>Lead</u>		
	Promote opportunities to engage in health and wellbeing initiatives			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop a whole systems approach to assisting clients with mental health needs			<u>Lead</u>		
	Reduce the stigma of homelessness and rough sleeping through initiatives that are informed by people with lived experiences			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 4 – ACCESS TO SUITABLE HOUSING AND SUPPORT

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Make the most effective use of temporary accommodation in the context of both financial and human resource			<u>Lead</u>		
	Secure Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation			<u>Lead</u>		
Page 181	Incorporate the Housing related aspects of the National Disability inclusion programme in to the service			<u>Lead</u>		
	Ensure the right support is provided at the right time and in the right place			<u>Lead</u>		
	Develop pathway to homelessness prevention, domestic abuse and health services for Gypsies and Travellers			<u>Lead</u>		

PRIORITY 5 – END ROUGH SLEEPING

REF	TASK	START	END	LEAD PARTNER & OTHER PARTNERS	SMART TARGET	PROGRES (RAG) & COMMENT
	Continue to maximise the successful shared outcomes from working with our neighbours across the County			<u>Lead</u>		
	Learn from the lived experiences of homelessness of the widest range of residents			<u>Lead</u>		
	End the cycle of homelessness by working with partners to expand the outreach service to include former rough sleepers			<u>Lead</u>		
	Understand the scale and impact of hidden homelessness across the district			<u>Lead</u>		

Version Control Log

Version	Date	Details of changes included in update	Author

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Draft REVIEW OF
HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING
IN THE DISTRICT OF EPPING FOREST
2021-2022

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DRAFT

Introduction

This review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the District of Epping Forest (the District) was carried out between May and December 2021 to inform the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2022-2027.

The review seeks to:

- Assess the comparative levels of homelessness or risk of homelessness between 2018/19 and 2020/21
- Establish the direction of travel to anticipate likely future levels of homelessness
- Identify what is being done and by whom, and the resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness
- Form part of the evidence base for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027

Summary

In 2020/21 a total of 567 households approached (or were referred to) the Council for assistance to prevent or resolve homelessness.

Of these, 186 households were provided with information and advice, 123 households received assistance to prevent or delay them from becoming homeless and 258 households who were homeless at the point of contact were provided with temporary relief (generally in temporary accommodation) and help to find somewhere to live. The Council assessed whether it owed a main housing duty to 143 households and accepted a main duty to make an offer of settled accommodation for 96 households.

The majority of approaches were made by households that had been living with family or friends who were no longer willing or able to accommodate them, or households that had been asked to leave private rented accommodation.

The pandemic had a notable impact on the profile of households seeking help from the Council. Fewer households were asked leave private rented accommodation and more households told to move out by family and friends. Homelessness due to domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown also increased as did the number of households placed in temporary accommodation, although the use of Bed and Breakfast reduced to emergencies only.

Many more people were found to be sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough than pre-pandemic (where typically very few if any were identified on a given night), and 23 people were identified provided with accommodation and support as part of the Everyone In campaign.

The council has been particularly effective at preventing homelessness and supporting families and single people in temporary accommodation to build resilience and providing activities to improve the wider determinants of long-term health and wellbeing across all sections of the community.

Evidence base

Statistics

The evidence base for the review draws statistical information from a variety of local and national sources including periodic submissions to Department of Levelling Up Homes and Community ((DLUHC) formerly Ministry for Housing and Local Government (MHCLG)), independent data gathered by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), cross cutting multi-agency needs assessments such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), statutory planning documents like the Local Plan, and routine financial and performance management information.

Wherever possible the most up to date and consistently defined data has been used to identify trends and patterns and make projections. However, allowances should be made for variations depending on the source and data definitions at the point of collection.

(e.g. the latest Local Authority Profiling information relate to 2020/21 whereas the Census data typically used for control purposes was gathered in 2011)

Consultation

The statistical evidence has been combined with qualitative information gathered through surveys, meetings, personal accounts, lived experiences and comprehensive formal and informal consultation events with partner organisations, statutory agencies, residents, and community groups. The outcome of the consultation has been published alongside this review.

Research

The qualitative and quantitative data has been supported by research of social policy publications and peer comparisons.

Analysis

The information has been analysed by a multi-skilled team of in-house professionals including officers responsible for delivering the service in conjunction with strategists and those responsible for governance and budgets. The review and associated documents have been scrutinised by the Housing Growth Lead at Essex County Council acting in the capacity of an external critical friend.

Findings of the review

Achievements and positive outcomes

The following positive outcomes have been achieved since April 2020

Accommodation solutions

- 23 people sleeping rough were accommodated as part of the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative.
- 12 people sleeping rough were granted tenancies of settled accommodation.
- 2 people sleeping rough were reunited with their families.
- A 6-bed property was purchased and converted into a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to provide affordable accommodation for former rough sleepers or those at risk of sleeping rough.

- A Council house was converted into a 4-bed HMO and leased to CHES (the Council's commissioned rough sleeper service) to provide supported housing pathway for rough sleepers (or those at risk) with multiple and complex needs.
- There was a 73% reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation which is now only used in emergencies if nothing else is available.

Funding solutions

- The Essex RSI partnership successfully bid for Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) year 4 funding in 2021-2022.
- Additional RSI funding was secured to appoint a mental health specialist to work within the homelessness team in 2021/2022.

Practical solutions

- During the first lockdown, 200 cooked meals per week provided by 3Food4All were distributed to Norway House temporary accommodation scheme (Norway House) and three local sheltered housing schemes.
- Over 100 toilet rolls were donated to residents.
- Activity packs and craft kits were donated to children living in temporary accommodation.
- Norway House continued to receive 2-3 food donations per week of fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, dried foods and canned goods from local businesses and members of the community.
- Christmas food hampers distributed to 76 households in need.
- Upper Clacton Rugby Club provided a Christmas present for every child living in Norway House.

Inclusion solutions

- All residents at Norway House received weekly welfare calls since being introduced in March 2020.
- Fully inclusive Community Culture and Wellbeing projects, activities and courses were provided for households in temporary accommodation including:
 - Garden Project
 - Arts Projects
 - Cooking and nutrition courses
 - Enrichment after school clubs
 - Trauma awareness training for staff

The Homelessness Reduction Act and the Council's duties

The HR Act increased the duties placed on the Council and other statutory bodies primarily to intervene at an earlier stage, to prevent and relieve homelessness, in addition to the established main housing duty to provide somewhere settled to live for those who qualify.

The Council is also now obliged to provide tailored support to those without a priority need, typically single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and applicants who are classed as intentionally homeless. However; those seeking assistance are required to actively co-operate with an agreed personal housing plan. There are 12 duties in total and associated measures.

Comparative data 2018/19-2020/21

The measures are designed to identify the reasons why people become homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless, the numbers and characteristics of the people who approach the Council for help, and the Council's activity in regards to preventing, relieving and securing housing where it has a duty to do so.

A cautionary note

The Government staggered the introduction of the HR Act in recognition of the burden that it would place on local housing authorities. Therefore conclusions drawn from the early data should be made with caution as the figures do not include legacy cases (applications received prior to the new duties) and may not account for retrospective adjustments (following data consolidation exercises).

Number of assessments and duties owed

Households assessed under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and duty owed

Households assessed and duty owed	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of households assessed	335	378	389

Reason for prevention or relief duty decision

Total households assessed as owed a duty	331	99%	376	99%	381	98%
Prevention duty owed - (Threatened with homelessness)	189	56%	216	57%	123	32%
Relief duty owed - (Homeless)	142	42%	160	42%	258	66%
Not threatened with homelessness within 56 days - no duty owed	4	1%	2	1%	8	2%

Overall, the number of households presenting to the Council and receiving a homelessness assessment has increased over the last three years from 335 in 2018/19 to 389 in 2020/21.

There was a reduction in the number of households threatened with homelessness and owed a 56-day homelessness prevention duty which went from 189 in 2018/19 to 123 in 2020/21. This was largely attributed to the Coronavirus Act 2020 as amended which provided protection to social and private tenants between March 2020 and October 2021 by delaying when landlords could evict tenants.

However, the number of households presenting to the councils as homeless, increased from

160 in 2019/20 to 258 in 2020/21, primarily due to being asked to leave by friends or family, domestic abuse and non-violent relationship breakdown

Reason for risk of loss of last settled home – Prevention duty

Risk of loss of last settled home – Prevention duty	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	58 31%	77 36%	49 40%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	91 48%	79 37%	31 25%
Domestic abuse	7 4%	2 1%	8 7%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	3 2%	13 6%	13 11%
End of social rented tenancy	3 2%	6 3%	0 -
Eviction from supported housing	3 2%	3 1%	2 2%
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	2 1%	1 0.5%	3 2%
Other violence or harassment	0 -	1 0.5%	3 2%
Left institution with no accommodation available	0 -	2 1%	0 -
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other reasons / not known ⁶	22 12%	32 15%	14 11%

The main reason for the loss of the last settled home for people at risk of homelessness has changed over the past three years. In 2018/19 the main reason was the end of a private rented tenancy (48%) followed by family or friends no longer willing to accommodate (31%).

By 2020/21 the trend had reversed with the main reason being friends or family no longer willing to accommodate (40%) then end of private rented tenancy (25%). The largest increase was due to non-violent relationship breakdown which rose from 2% to 4%.

Ending the prevention duty

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total households where prevention duty ended^{1,2}	151	223	108

Reason for households' prevention duty ending:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Secured accommodation for 6+ months	76 50%	95 43%	57 53%
Homeless (including intentionally homeless)	50 33%	76 34%	18 17%
Contact lost	7 5%	13 6%	9 8%
56 days elapsed and no further action	11 7%	25 11%	10 9%
Withdrew application / applicant deceased	4 3%	10 4%	13 12%
No longer eligible	1 1%	4 2%	1 1%
Refused suitable accommodation offer	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Refused to cooperate	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Not known ⁶	0 -	0 -	0 -

The Council was able to end its prevention duty in around half of all cases by successfully working with applicants for 56 days to stop them from becoming homeless (either by

negotiating to remain in their current home or finding alternative accommodation). Between 33% -34% of those receiving prevention support became homeless between 2018/19 and 2020/21. This reduced to 17% in 2020/21. This can be attributed in part to the success of the Councils interventions and the interim measures that the government introduced to prevent evictions during the peak of the pandemic.

Relief duty

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	40 28%	52 33%	102 40%
End of private rented tenancy - assured shorthold	19 13%	15 9%	16 6%
Domestic abuse	12 8%	27 17%	51 20%
Non-violent relationship breakdown with partner	15 11%	19 12%	31 12%
End of social rented tenancy	10 7%	4 3%	5 2%
Eviction from supported housing	0 -	0 -	0 -
End of private rented tenancy - not assured shorthold	1 1%	2 1%	7 3%
Other violence or harassment	5 4%	4 3%	11 4%
Left institution with no accommodation available	4 3%	4 3%	2 1%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0 -	0 -	0 -
Other reasons / not known ⁶	36 25%	33 21%	33 13%

The majority of households to whom the Council owed a relief duty were already homeless when they first approached the Council. The main reason for homelessness being family or friends no longer willing to accommodate. The nom which increased between 2018/10 and 2020/21 from 28% to 40% and in real terms more than doubled from 40 households to 102 households.

The number of households becoming homeless due to domestic abuse significantly increased during the same period from 8% to 20 % and in real terms from 12 households to 51 households.

The percentage of social rented tenancies that were ended reduced from 7% to 2% during the period.

Household type of households owed a prevention duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Single parent with dependent children - Male	2 1%	8 4%	3 2%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	67 35%	72 33%	42 34%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	4 2%	0 -	0 -
Single adult - Male	31 16%	46 21%	28 23%
Single adult - Female	40 21%	49 23%	36 29%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	0 -	0 -	0 -

Couple with dependent children	25 13%	19 9%	9 7%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	12 6%	15 7%	3 2%
Three or more adults with dependent children	6 3%	6 3%	0 -
Three or more adults without dependent children	2 1%	1 0.5%	2 2%
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	0 -

Female single parents with dependent children consistently formed the largest cohort of households to whom the council owed a prevention duty, followed by single adult females and single adult males. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of single adults qualifying for assistance compared to other cohorts.

Household type owed a relief duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Single parent with dependent children - Male	5 4%	3 2%	10 4%
Single parent with dependent children - Female	39 27%	24 15%	49 19%
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender not known	0 -	0 -	1 0.4%
Single adult - Male	43 30%	78 49%	118 46%
Single adult - Female	33 23%	38 24%	65 25%
Single adult - Other / gender not known	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Couple with dependent children	12 8%	12 8%	4 2%
Couple / two adults without dependent children	8 6%	5 3%	9 3%
Three or more adults with dependent children	0 0%	0 -	2 1%
Three or more adults without dependent children	1 1%	0 -	0 -
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	0 -

Single males formed the largest cohort of households requiring a relief duty, accounting for just under half of all applicants in 2019/20 (49%) and reducing slightly in percentage terms in 2020/21 (46%) – but increasing in real terms from 78 to 118 during the period.

Support needs

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
History of mental health problems	95 29%	81 22%	104 27%
Physical ill health and disability	58 18%	49 13%	67 18%
At risk of / has experienced domestic abuse	40 12%	29 8%	52 14%
Offending history	25 8%	20 5%	20 5%
History of repeat homelessness	23 7%	12 3%	16 4%
Drug dependency needs	13 4%	18 5%	16 4%
History of rough sleeping	10 3%	9 2%	18 5%
Alcohol dependency needs	10 3%	22 6%	19 5%
Learning disability	20 6%	13 3%	10 3%
Young person aged 18-25 years requiring support to manage independently	13 4%	10 3%	19 5%

Support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Access to education, employment or training	10 3%	4 1%	4 1%
At risk of / has experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse)	3 1%	13 3%	17 4%
At risk of / has experienced sexual abuse / exploitation	3 1%	6 2%	8 2%
Old age	4 1%	1 0.3%	6 2%
Care leaver aged 21+ years	4 1%	2 1%	3 1%
Care leaver aged 18-20 years	2 1%	4 1%	6 2%
Young person aged 16-17 years	2 1%	3 1%	6 2%
Young parent requiring support to manage independently	9 3%	5 1%	2 1%
Former asylum seeker	2 1%	3 1%	2 1%
Served in HM Forces	1 0.3%	3 1%	2 1%

More than half of applicants had one or more support needs. The most commonly reported being a history of mental health problems which remained fairly constant at between 29% - 27%, followed by physical ill health or disability of around 18% and between 12-14% at risk of or having experienced domestic abuse.

There was a notable increase in the number of people who reported being at risk of or having experienced abuse (non-domestic abuse) and a slight increase in the number of applicants reporting sexual abuse/exploitation, both of which may correlate with the increase in single homeless males and females over the same period.

The percentage of people with learning disabilities who became homeless or threatened with homelessness reduced from 6% to 3% .This may have been due to the reduction in evictions and a reluctance to exclude vulnerable people from the family home during the pandemic.

Temporary Accommodation

Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Norway House Council owned hostel	36	30	33
Hemnall House self-contained block with floating support	4	8	7
Council owned self- contained general needs housing	29	51	50
Brook Haven and Women's refuge	3	3	2
Nightly purchased self-contained private sector units	N/A	5	14
Zinc Arts Charity temporary accommodation	1	4	12
Other registered providers	1	3	4
Bed and Breakfast	25	11	1
Total	99	115	123

The Council has access to a range of temporary accommodation units at its disposal including council owned a general needs hostel, pods and chalets with shared facilities and on-site housing support staff at Norway House, a block of self- contained flats at Hemnall House with out-reach support, and self-contained houses and flats pepper-potted across the Council stock.

This is supplemented where necessary with women's refuge spaces nightly purchased self-contained private sector housing, nominations to Zinc Arts Charity accommodation and as a last resort emergency bed and breakfast (which has all but been phased out).

Main housing duty decisions

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of main duty decisions made	84	146	143
Main duty decision	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Homeless + priority need + unintentionally homeless (accepted*)	60 71%	99 68%	96 67%
Homeless + priority need + intentionally homeless	7 8%	8 6%	7 5%
Homeless + no priority need	10 12%	36 25%	31 22%
Not homeless	7 8%	3 2%	9 6%

The number of main duty decisions that were recorded for 2018/19 presents a false low as it only included cases assessed under the HR Act, excluding legacy cases.

The number of main duty assessments and acceptances have remained stable over the last two years. In 2019/20 146 decisions were made and a main duty was accepted for 99 households or 68% and in 2020/21 143 decisions were made and 67% were accepted.

Priority need of households owed a main duty:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Household includes dependent children	47 78%	58 59%	28 29%
Mental health problems	2 3%	15 15%	13 13%
Physical disability / ill health	6 10%	16 16%	20 21%
Household includes a pregnant woman	0 -	2 2%	4 4%
Domestic abuse	0 -	2 2%	4 4%
Young applicant	0 -	1 1%	7 7%
Old age	1 2%	0 -	1 1%
Homeless because of emergency	0 -	0 -	3 3%
Other	3 5%	3 3%	11 12%
Vulnerable with children	1 2%	2 2%	5 5%

The most common priority need for being owed a main housing duty remains being a household with young children. However the ratio has reduced significantly from 78% of all cases in 2018/19 to 29% in 2020/21.

Referrals from other agencies

Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of assessments following Duty to Refer		12	32

Households assessed as a result of a referral, including under the Duty to Refer	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Adult Secure Estate (prison)	No data*	0 -	2 4%
Youth Secure Estate	No data*	0 -	0 -
National Probation Service	No data*	2 12%	3 6%
Community Rehabilitation Company	No data*	0 -	3 6%
Hospital A&E, Urgent Treatment Centres or in-patient care	No data*	3 18%	4 8%
Mental Health in-patient care	No data*	0 -	4 8%
Jobcentre Plus	No data*	3 18%	5 10%
Adult Social Services	No data*	1 6%	2 4%
Children's Social Services	No data*	1 6%	6 12%
Nil Recourse Team	No data*	0 -	0 -
Secretary of State for defence in relation to members of the armed forces	No data*	0 -	0 -
Other / not known	No data*	2 12%	6 12%
Households referred by an agency (not subject to the Duty to Refer)	No data*	5 29%	15 29%
Households referred by another local authority	No data*	0 -	2 4%

There is no data for 2018/19 as the duty to refer was not introduced until 2019/20
There has been an increase in referrals as agencies have become familiar with the process.
Further work is required to increase the referrals that are made via this route to make every contact count.

Profile of households who have experienced homelessness

Employment status

Employment status of main applicants owed a duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Registered unemployed	73 22%	66 18%	121 32%
Not working due to long-term illness / disability	74 22%	94 25%	66 17%
Full-time work	45 14%	57 15%	38 10%
Part-time work	47 14%	57 15%	46 12%
Not seeking work / at home	54 16%	48 13%	48 13%
Not registered unemployed but seeking work	8 2%	11 3%	22 6%
Retired	6 2%	10 3%	12 3%
Student / training	5 2%	12 3%	2 1%
Other	19 6%	21 6%	19 5%
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	7 2%

In 2018/19 22% of accepted applicants were registered as unemployed and an equal number were not working due to long term illness or disability. By 2020/21 this had changed to 32% registered unemployed and 17% not working due to long term illness or disability.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
White	262 79%	315 84%	307 81%
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	35 11%	34 9%	26 7%
Asian / Asian British	13 4%	4 1%	11 3%
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	13 4%	8 2%	13 3%
Other ethnic groups	7 2%	5 1%	6 2%
Not known ⁸	0 0%	10 3%	18 5%

The data on the above table has been reproduced and published by DLUHC from more detailed ethnicity classifications that the Council routinely gathers.

The vast majority of households described their ethnicity as white at between 79% and 84%. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British saw a marked decrease from 11% in 2018/19 to 7% in 2020/21 and the 'Not known' cohort increased from 0% to 5% over the same period.

Age

Age of main applicants owed a prevention or relief duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
16-17	3 1%	7 2%	3 1%
18-24	62 19%	58 15%	86 23%
25-34	108 33%	122 32%	117 31%
35-44	69 21%	75 20%	73 19%
45-54	60 18%	65 17%	53 14%
55-64	19 6%	37 10%	37 10%
65-74	8 2%	11 3%	10 3%
75+	2 1%	1 0.3%	2 1%
Not known ⁸	0 -	0 -	0 -

The majority of households fall within the 25-34 age group over the three year period and remaining fairly constant, decreasing slightly from 33% in 2018/19 to 31% in 2020/21.

The most significant variation is in the percentage aged between 18-24 which has increased from 19% to 23% and aged between 55-64 which has increased from 6% to 10% over the same period.

Sexual identification

Sexual identification of main applicants owed a duty⁷:	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Heterosexual	No data*	No data*	326 86%
Homosexual (Gay/Lesbian)	No data*	No data*	5 1%
Other	No data*	No data*	8 2%

Prefer not to say	No data*	No data*	42	11%
Not known	No data*	No data*	0	0%

The sexual identification of the main applicants was not captured in this format until 2020/21 when 86% identified as heterosexual, 1% as homosexual 2% as other and 11% preferred not to say.

People sleeping rough

Compared to neighbouring London Boroughs and several of the other Local Authority Areas in Essex, there are typically very few if any people known to be sleeping rough in the District on any given night.

The data is gathered from a variety of sources. One night a year a snapshot is taken of the whole area where volunteers count the number of people they find bedded down in the open. This is combined with the numbers of people who are found to be sleeping rough by Chess the Councils commissioned outreach service or approach the service for assistance.

When the MET office forecasts the temperature dropping to zero or below (or 'feels like' zero or below) the Council triggers the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol and offers immediate temporary accommodation to everyone sleeping rough until the temperature rises above zero once more.

Emergency Covid Accommodation (1 ST wave)	Temporary Accommodation (s188/s193)	Temporarily staying with friends	NSAP, Project Protect etc.	Move-on Accommodation
	2	4	0	20

Gypsies, travellers and boat moorings

Homelessness

Year	Amount	Outcomes
2018/2019	1	Homelessness prevented
2019/2020	0	N/A
2020/2021	1	Case closed - no contact

In 2018/19 one household that approached the Councils Housing Needs service for help with homelessness prevention identified as a member of the Gypsy and Traveller community and another household presented in 2020/21.

Domestic Abuse

Year	Amount	Outcomes
2018/2019	0	N/A
2019/2020	0	N/A
2020/2021	1	Lost contact

One household from the Gypsy and Traveller community approached the Councils Housing Needs service fleeing domestic abuse in 2020/21

Source - Management Information

Factors affecting future levels of homelessness in the district

Top 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in Epping Forest

The table below lists the 10 most deprived neighbourhoods in EFDC in 2019 and the wards where they are located.

	LSOA Name	Ward Name	Rank	Decile
10 Most Deprived Areas	Epping Forest 013A	Loughton Alderton	5,221	2
	Epping Forest 007E	Waltham Abbey Paternoster	6,610	3
	Epping Forest 009A	Waltham Abbey High Beach	8,666	3
	Epping Forest 003C	Passingford	9,468	3
	Epping Forest 007A	Waltham Abbey North East	9,594	3
	Epping Forest 017A	Grange Hill	9,597	3
	Epping Forest 011C	Loughton Broadway	10,408	4
	Epping Forest 009B	Waltham Abbey North East	10,509	4
	Epping Forest 011B	Loughton Broadway	10,606	4
	Epping Forest 011A	Loughton Broadway	11,012	4

Social and economic mobility

In 2019 Loughton Alderton was ranked in the most deprived 20% of areas in England, with a population of 1647 people.

Between 2015 and 2019 Waltham Abbey Paternoster moved up from being ranked in the bottom 20% of the most deprived areas of England to the bottom 30%.

Between 2015 and 2019 a total of 48 neighbourhoods increased in their rank and 30 decreased their rank.

The neighbourhood which saw the most improvement between 2007 and 2019 was in the ward of Lower Sheering.

Population growth

The age distribution of the estimated population of 131,137 in 2018 was 0-15 (18.9%) 16-64 (61.4%) older people 65+ (19.6%).

All age categories

EFDC household population for all age categories was projected to increase to approximately 131,695 people in 2021 then by 3.9% to 136,762 people by 2033 and by 4.9% to 138,197 people by 2037.

Older people

It is estimated that by 2033 there will be an increase of circa. 22% in the 65+ household population and circa.24% increase in the 75+ household population.

By 2037 it is estimated that there will be an increase of c.29% in the projected 65+ household population and a circa.34% increase in the projected 75+ household population

Source: Assessment of need for housing and accommodation for older people in Epping Forest District to 2033 Housing LIN December 2021

Housing supply for older people

EFDC has a relative undersupply of housing for older people for sale/shared ownership, compared to its comparator authorities, and to the all-England average. However, it has an oversupply of housing for older people to rent.

EFDC has a relative undersupply of housing with care compared to both its comparator authorities and to the all-England average and a substantially higher prevalence of residential care beds. Conversely it has a relative undersupply of nursing care beds compared to comparator authorities, but a higher prevalence compared to the all -England average.

Older people and disability

There are approximately 11,000 people 65+ in Epping Forest District with a long-term disability or health problem who experience limitations in terms of their day-to day activities.

Dementia

There are approximately 1,052 people 65+ with dementia in Epping Forest District, projected to rise to 1,639 by 2033 and 1,879 by 2037.

Source: Assessment of need for housing and accommodation for older people in Epping Forest District to 2033 Housing LIN December 2021

Council housebuilding scheme

The Council is undertaking an ambitious housebuilding programme and plans to develop circa 195 homes for affordable housing between 2021/22 and 2025/26.

More than Bricks and Mortar estate regeneration schemes

Major regeneration schemes are currently underway at Limes Farm in Chigwell and Nine Fields in Waltham Abbey.

Garden Towns

Harlow and Gilston is a designated Garden Town with sites in EFDC, Harlow and East Herts. The intention is to develop around 3,900 new homes in EFDC between 2020 and 2033.

- 2,100 in Water Lane (to the south west of Harlow)
- 1,050 in Latton Priory (to the south of Harlow)
- 750 in East Harlow (the site will provide 3,350 new homes in total. The remaining 2,600 will be delivered on land within Harlow district)

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
Housingstrategy@Eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Communities and Wellbeing

21 February 2022

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Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2022/2027 - List of organisations consulted

Organisation
Ability Housing
Active Essex
Adult Social Care
Age Well Action Group
Alzheimer's Society
B3 Housing
Barnardo's
Basildon Council
Be Well Action Group
Braintree Council
British Red Cross
Castlepoint Council
Chamber of Commerce
Changing Pathways
Chelmsford Council
CHESS Homeless
Children's Social Care
16+ Accommodation Team – Essex County Council
Churches Together in Epping and District
Citizens Advice Bureau Epping Forest District
City of London Corporation
Colchester Council
Community, Culture and Wellbeing – EFDC
Community Safety Partnership
Community Tree Network
Creative Network
Cultural Forum
Department of Work and Pensions
Disability and Autism Team- Essex County Council
DLUHC – Rough Sleeping Advisor
Epping Forest Foodbank
Epping Forest Ministry
Epping Forest ReUSE
Epping Forest Tourism Group
Epping Forest Youth Council
Epping Team Ministry
Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service
Essex Developers Group
Essex Fire & Rescue
Essex Housing Officers Group
Essex LGBTQ+ Alliance
Essex LOC
Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
Essex Police
Estuary Housing
Frontline
Futures in Mind
Genesis Housing
Harlow Council
Hastoe Group Housing
Home Group Housing
Housing Growth and Strategy - Essex County Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2022/2027 - List of organisations consulted

Independent Living - Essex County Council
Kings Medical Centre
London & Quadrant Housing
Looked after children – NHS West Essex CCG
Maldon Council
MAPPA Crime & Public Protection
Mental Health Navigator – NHS
Mental Health - NHS West Essex CCG
Mental Health Recovery and Accommodation
MIND
MOAT Housing
Nacro
Neighbourhood Watch
Occupational Therapist - Essex County Council
Older Peoples Services – Essex County Council
Optometry - NHS England & NHS Improvement
Orbit Housing
Peabody Housing
Peabody Outreach Support
Phoenix Futures
Places for People Housing
Primary Care Commissioning – NHS West Essex CCG
Probation Services
Public Health – Essex County Council
Red Balloon Foundation
Relate
Revenue and Benefits -EFDC
Rochford Council
Royal British Legion
St Claire's Hospice
Safeguarding -EFDC
Safeguarding - NHS West Essex CCG
Safer Places
Sanctuary Housing
Start Well Action Group
Strategic Commissioning and Policy - Essex County Council
Tendering Council
Transformation (Primary Care, Adult Mental Health & Vulnerable Adults) – NHS West Essex CCG
United in Kind
Uttlesford Council
Voluntary Action Epping Forest
Warm Works
Wellbeing and Public Health – Essex County Council
Youth and Community Commissioner - Essex County Council
Zinc Arts

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 1 March 2022

Portfolio: Housing Services (Councillor H Whitbread)

Subject: Review of the Tenancy Policy

**Officer contact for further information: Jennifer Gould
(07548145639)**

Democratic Services Officer: R Perrin (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee considers the review of the current Tenancy Policy
- (2) That the Committee recommends to Cabinet the proposal for two amendments to be made to the terms of the current policy that reflect the Council's statutory obligations
- (3) To renew the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027
- (4) To approve the publication of the draft refreshed Tenancy Policy 2022 -2027 at Appendix 1

Executive Summary:

As a stockholding Local Housing Authority Epping Forest District Council has a statutory duty to publish both a Tenancy Strategy or framework (setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing within its district are to have regard when formulating their tenancy policies), and a Tenancy Policy with regards to its own stock.

The current Tenancy Policy is due for review by July 2022; the same calendar year as the Housing Allocations Scheme, the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy, and the overarching Housing Strategy.

A review of all four strategies and policies commenced in May 2021. The draft Tenancy Policy is being presented to Committee with two proposed amendments to take account of legislative changes along with the draft Allocations Scheme and draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the same 5-year period.

The proposals for the overarching Housing Strategy are due to be presented to Committee in July 2022.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To enable the Council to publish the refreshed Tenancy Policy 2022-2027

Other Options for Action:

- (i) Not to recommend renewing the Tenancy Policy without making amendments
- (ii) To recommend changes to the draft Tenancy Policy (subject to further consultation where appropriate)

Report:

1. The Tenancy Policy must incorporate:
 - a. the kind of tenancies that will be granted
 - b. the circumstances in which a tenancy of a particular kind will be granted
 - c. where tenancies are granted for fixed terms, the lengths of the terms
 - d. the circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted upon expiry of the existing tenancy.
2. EFDC adopted the West Essex Tenancy Strategy on 22 October 2012 and published Version 1 of the current Tenancy Policy on 27 July 2015. The Tenancy Policy was originally due for review in July 2020.
3. In July 2020 the Portfolio holder for Housing agreed minor changes to the Tenancy Policy including the extension of 2-year tenancies to 10-year tenancies, and to postpone the full periodic review of the policy by two years to July 2022 (to take account of the impact of Covid 19 on the consultation process).
4. The full review of the Tenancy Policy began in May 2021 along with simultaneous reviews of the Housing Allocations Policy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the overarching Housing Strategy (as there are a number of interdependencies and they are all due for renewal in 2022). A series of consultation events took place between July 2021 and August 2021 including bitesize briefing sessions with Members of the Council, residents, professional partners, other statutory services and staff, and an on-line survey which closed on 30 August 2021.
5. The initial stage 1 consultation found the majority of respondents thought that EFDC should continue to issue 10-year fixed term tenancies for general needs applicants. Half of the respondents said some tenancies should be longer or shorter than 10 years depending on the household circumstances. Typically suggesting longer or lifetime tenancies for elderly or vulnerable people, and shorter tenancies for families who may eventually be able to afford to buy or downsize as their children move out.
6. A Government Equalities Impact Assessment in 2016 found that nationwide far fewer councils and housing associations had introduced fixed term tenancies than had been anticipated. A recent desk-top analysis of councils in Essex found that of the other stockholding councils Castlepoint, Colchester, Basildon and Harlow are issuing lifetime tenancies rather than flexible tenancies. And whilst Rochford is not a stockholder it has reported that many of the Registered Providers operating in the area have ceased issuing flexible tenancies because of the disproportionate burden of the review process on their resources.
7. To date none of the 10-year fixed term tenancies in EFDC have reached the point of review. The first reviews are due in October 2022 (six months prior to the first fixed term tenancies coming to an end).

8. Between the time of preparing the draft recommendations for APG and preparing the report for Executive Briefing a letter was issued by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) highlighting Section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which places new obligations on social landlords to ensure that, where they are offering a new tenancy to existing lifetime social tenants as a result of domestic abuse, such tenancies are granted on a lifetime basis.
9. The DLUHC has updated the Statutory Guidance Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse to say;

‘The lifetime tenants who suffer domestic abuse will retain lifetime security if they are granted a new tenancy by a local authority for reasons connected with the abuse.’

This protection applies to victims who have a lifetime tenancy, or victims who have had a lifetime tenancy in the past and have fled their social home to escape domestic abuse.

The protection also applies to victims of domestic abuse who have a joint lifetime tenancy and who wish to continue living in their home after the perpetrator has left.

The provisions apply to lifetime tenants of local authorities and private registered providers of social housing.’

10. It is recommended that point 3.5 of the Tenancy Policy be inserted to reflect this requirement (Appendix 1).
11. The current Tenancy Policy makes reference to the Race Relations Code of Practice in Social Housing which has been superseded by the Public Sector Duties placed on the Council under the Equalities Act 2010. It is recommended that point 13 of the Tenancy Policy is updated to reflect this (Appendix 1).

Resource Implications:

None

Legal and Governance Implications:

Section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 1 November 2021. It places new obligations on social landlords to ensure that, where they are offering a new tenancy to existing lifetime social tenants as a result of domestic abuse, such tenancies are granted on a lifetime basis.

Legal services have reviewed the report and confirmed that they have no comments or suggested amendments.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None

Consultation Undertaken:

The recommendations within this review have been subject to a comprehensive public consultation exercise which included; bite-size briefings, webinars, workshops, surveys, on-line questionnaires, small meetings and one to one conversations.

In total 430 people were directly invited to participate in the consultation including:

- Council tenants, leaseholders and residents
- Partner agencies and community groups with an interest in housing
- Private registered providers of social housing
- EFDC staff and other statutory services
- Members of the Council
- Clerks of parish and town councils to forward to their respective elected members
- District, borough and city councils in the county

The consultation did not include reference to the two proposed changes that are recommended in this report.

A full report on the outcome of the consultation can be found at Appendix 2

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

None

Appendix 1 Draft Tenancy Policy 2022 – 2027 Attached

Appendix 2 Consultation Report – Attached

Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment – To follow



Tenancy Policy

2022-2027

Tenancy Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The effective date of this Tenancy Policy is xxx
- 1.2 Under the Localism Act 2011 and the Homes England's Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, Registered Providers (predominantly, but not exclusively, housing associations and local authorities) must publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies, preventing unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud and set out:
- The types of tenancies granted
 - Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted, and the length of the term
 - Circumstances where a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term of less than 5 years will be granted
 - Circumstances where another tenancy will be granted on expiry on the same or another property
 - How applicants/tenants can appeal against the length or type of tenancy or the decision not to grant a further tenancy
 - Taking account of the needs of vulnerable people
 - Provision of housing advice and assistance if another tenancy is not granted at the end of the term; and
 - Discretionary succession rights
- 1.3 This Tenancy Policy, in conjunction with the Tenants' Handbook and the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, meets with the requirements of:
- The Localism Act 2011
 - The Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England on the Allocation of Accommodation June 2012 (as amended)
 - The Right to Move 2015; and
 - Section 79 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which came into force on 1 November 2021 places new obligations on social landlords to ensure that, where they are offering a new tenancy to existing lifetime social tenants as a result of domestic abuse, such tenancies are granted on a lifetime basis.

2. Tenancy Strategy

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to publish a Tenancy Strategy, which must set out the matters to which Registered Providers are to have regard in formulating their tenancy policies relating to:
- The types of tenancies they grant
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular type
 - Where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the lengths of those terms and
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy

2.2 The West Essex Housing Forum, comprising the three local authorities in West Essex, being Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils has adopted one joint West Essex Tenancy Strategy.

2.3 All Registered Providers with housing stock in West Essex are required by the Localism Act 2011 to have regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating and implementing their own Tenancy Policies. The Tenancy Strategy was produced to give guidance to Registered Providers on the 3 councils' expectations of how their Tenancy Policies should be framed. The Council has had regard to the West Essex Tenancy Strategy when formulating this Tenancy Policy.

3. The Types of Tenancies Granted

Introductory Tenancy Scheme

3.1 The Council operates an Introductory Tenancy Scheme whereby all new potentially Secure Tenants (sometimes referred to as lifetime tenants) and Flexible Tenants (fixed-term tenants) are on trial for a period of 12 months in order that the Council can satisfy itself that the introductory tenant can sustain a tenancy and meet with the conditions of the Council's Standard Tenancy Agreement. Should any conditions be breached, the Council will be able to seek possession of the property through the County Court with the judge having to grant possession, provided all of the procedures have been followed correctly.

In circumstances where the Council has concerns about an introductory tenant, but not serious enough to apply to the County Court for possession, the introductory period can be extended by a further 6 months. If the trial period is successfully completed, Introductory Tenancies automatically become either Secure Tenancies or Flexible (fixed term) Tenancies.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Periodic (Lifetime) Tenants

3.2 Introductory, potentially Secure Tenancies will be granted to appropriate home seekers in accordance with this Tenancy Policy. The legislation governing Secure Tenancies is found in Part IV of the Housing Act 1985. The rights of a Secure Tenant are set out in the Act and are commonly referred to as the Tenants Charter. A Secure Tenancy can only be ended by way of a Possession Order granted by the County Court.

Existing Secure Tenants Who Transfer or Mutual Exchange

Transfers

3.3 Under the Localism Act 2011, all tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 will be given a tenancy with no less security where they choose to move to another social rented home. This means that such tenant's security of tenure is protected if they transfer to another social rented home. Such protection only applies on one occasion.

Although such tenants will retain their secure tenancy status, there will be a reduction in tenancy rights. This is due to their new tenancy being a tenancy granted after the commencement of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 on 1 April 2012 which,

although secure, will have reduced succession rights for family members. This does not apply where tenants choose to move to accommodation let on Affordable Rent terms.

In addition to the statutory requirement above, the Council will generally grant its existing Post-Act Secure Tenants who are under-occupying their current accommodation and are transferring to a property with less bedrooms (where both properties are owned by the Council), a Secure Tenancy on their new smaller accommodation. As with pre 1 April 2012 tenancies, such protection will only apply on one occasion.

Mutual Exchanges

- 3.4 Where any tenant enters into a mutual exchange, in law, this is done by way of an assignment of the tenancy. However, it is important to note that if one of the exchange partners is a Flexible (fixed term) Tenant then, in law, the tenancy of each party will end and an appropriate new tenancy will be granted on the new property. The Council offers HomeSwapper, an internet-based mutual exchange service, free of charge to assist qualifying tenants who want to enter into a mutual exchange. Any tenant who does not have access to the internet will be provided with support on request.

New Tenancies as a result of Domestic Abuse

- 3.5 Lifetime tenants who suffer domestic abuse will retain lifetime security if they are granted a new tenancy by a local authority for reasons connected with the abuse.

This protection applies to victims who have a lifetime tenancy, or victims who have had a lifetime tenancy in the past and have fled their social home to escape domestic abuse.

The protection also applies to victims of domestic abuse who have a joint lifetime tenancy and who wish to continue living in their home after the perpetrator has left.

The provisions apply to lifetime tenants of local authorities and private registered providers of social housing.

Advice on transfers, mutual Exchanges and new tenancies as a result of domestic abuse

- 3.6 The law on transfers and mutual exchanges is complicated. Any tenants who are considering either a transfer or a mutual exchange should seek advice from their Housing Officer.

Introductory, Potentially Secure, Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

- 3.7 The Localism Act 2011 provides for a new type of fixed-term tenancy to Council tenants – the Flexible Tenancy. Flexible Tenancies (or Fixed-Term Tenancies) are tenancies that are offered for a specified period of time, as opposed to traditional lifetime tenancies. A Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is a form of secure tenancy, and generally, tenants with a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy have the same rights as other secure tenants (as set out in the Tenants Charter under the Housing Act 1985).
- 3.8 The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to allow Introductory Tenancies to become Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies at the end of the introductory

period, if local authorities wish to provide Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies. All Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies granted in accordance with this Tenancy Policy will have an introductory period of 12 months added to the beginning of the fixed term, which may be extended by a further 6 months where there are minor breaches of tenancy conditions. A written notice will be served before the Introductory Tenancy is granted making clear the arrangements for the transition from Introductory to Flexible status providing no possession proceedings have been commenced, setting out the length of the fixed term and other expressed terms of the tenancy. Tenants have the right to request a review of an extension to the introductory period (review procedure - paragraph 3.14).

Assessment Criteria – Decision on re-granting a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy

3.9 At the commencement of each Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy, the tenant will be informed of the assessment criteria that will be applied to determine, at the end of the flexible term, if a further tenancy will be granted. At least 6 months prior to the ending of the fixed term, the Council will provide Notice in writing to the tenant stating that it either proposes to grant a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure – on the same or another property) on the expiry of the existing fixed term, or that it intends to end the tenancy. Prior to serving the Notice, the Tenant will be assessed against the assessment criteria. The general presumption will be that a further tenancy is granted. However, a further tenancy (Flexible or Secure) will generally not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Where the tenant (or a member of their household) who, during the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term, has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour. Such behaviour is behaviour that would give sufficient grounds to issue possession proceedings if they were a Secure or Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant and includes rent arrears (including housing benefit and court cost arrears), and other breaches of tenancy conditions.
- Where the tenant is under-occupying the accommodation (when taking into account people required to live with the tenant, for example family members and not lodgers), then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) will be offered on a suitable smaller property, provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where the tenant is statutorily overcrowded in the accommodation a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy will be granted on a larger property, subject to availability and provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where the property has been extensively adapted and there is no one in occupation who is in need of these adaptations, and there is an applicant on the Housing Register who is in need of the adapted accommodation, then a further Flexible or Secure Tenancy (as appropriate) of an alternative suitable property will be offered, provided all of the other requirements of the assessment criteria are met.
- Where, from the effective date of this Policy, in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme (in force on the date when the 6 months' Notice is served), the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant, in the opinion of the Council, has sufficient income and/or assets to enable them to meet their housing need themselves.

3.10 At the end of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term, where the tenant meets one or more aspects of the above assessment criteria but there are special circumstances including, where:

- the tenant is an active Foster Carer;
- the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant, or member of their household, has a terminal illness or a long-term disability;
- the tenant is a care leaver who is still in need of support; and/or
- there are dependent vulnerable children.

3.11 In such special circumstances, a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy term of 10 years may be granted. This is in order for the special circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed at a later date.

3.12 The Council recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances not covered by this Tenancy Policy. In such instances, the Housing and Property Service Director will have delegated authority (subject to the provisions made under Paragraph 7.2 of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme), to make decisions as considered appropriate.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies (Review Procedures)

3.13 All Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy reviews will be undertaken in accordance with The Flexible Tenancies (Review Procedures) Regulations 2012 as follows:

Start of the fixed term

3.14 There is no right to a review of the type of tenancy offered. There is only one ground for a review at the commencement of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy, being that the length of the tenancy offered is inconsistent with the Council's published Tenancy Policy. In these circumstances, the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant (the applicant) must make an application for a review in writing including:

- The applicant's name and address;
- A statement of the reasons why, in the applicant's opinion, the length of the tenancy does not accord with the Tenancy Policy as to the length of the term of the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy it grants;
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing; and
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by email and, if so, the email address to which such communications should be sent.

End of the fixed term – decision not to grant a further tenancy

3.15 If a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is not granted, a written Notice informing the tenant will be served at least 6 months before the expiry of the tenancy term. The Notice will set out the reasons for the decision and, at the same time, notify the

tenant of their right to request a review and the time within which a request may be made. An application for a review must be made in writing and include:

- The applicant's name and address;
- A description of the original decision in respect of which the review is sought, including the date on which the decision was made;
- A statement of the grounds on which the review is sought;
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, require the review to be conducted by way of an oral hearing; and
- A statement to the effect that the applicant does, or does not, agree to receive communications relating to a review by email and, if so, the email address to which such communications should be sent.

3.16 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken without an oral hearing, the Council will:

- Send a written Notice to the applicant stating that the applicant may make written representations in support of the application (which will be taken into account by the person undertaking the review) not less than 5 days after the day on which the Notice is received by the applicant.

3.17 Following receipt of the application, if the review is to be undertaken by way of an oral hearing, the Council will, in addition to sending the Notice referred to in paragraph 3.16 above:

- Notify the applicant of the day on which, and the time and place at which, it is proposed that the oral hearing is to take place, which will not be earlier than five days after the day on which Notice is received by the applicant.

Procedure at the hearing

3.18 The hearing will be conducted by an officer senior to the officer who made the original decision and who was not involved in the original decision. The tenant will be given every opportunity to make written or oral representations and be able to call persons to give evidence on any matter relevant to the decision to be made on review and put questions to any person who gives evidence at the hearing. The applicant will be able to be accompanied or represented by another person (appointed by the applicant) who will have the same rights and obligations as the applicant for the purposes of the conduct of the hearing.

3.19 If the applicant fails to attend the hearing, the person conducting it will either proceed with the hearing or re-arrange the hearing if it is considered appropriate. If the hearing is adjourned for more than one day, the person conducting the hearing will specify the date on which it will be resumed by sending a Notice in writing to the applicant.

3.20 The decision on review will be made by the person conducting the review who will notify the applicant in writing of the decision.

3.21 If, generally, there is no engagement from the tenant in the review process then the Council (if considered appropriate) will commence possession proceedings.

Ending the Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy

- 3.22 The Council, when it considers appropriate, during or at the end of the tenancy will apply for a Court Order to end any Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy during the fixed term if any of the grounds for possession (being the same grounds available for a Secure Tenancy) can be proven following any breaches of tenancy conditions.
- 3.23 If, in accordance with this Tenancy Policy, a further Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy is not granted, and the tenant has either requested a review and it is dismissed, or decided not to seek a review, the Council will seek possession of the property. The tenant will then be given no less than 2 months' Notice in writing stating that the Council requires possession of the property, prior to starting an ordinary claim for possession in the County Court.
- 3.24 If the tenant refuses to vacate when the Notice period expires, possession proceedings will be taken. A Court can only refuse possession if the correct procedures have not been followed or if the decision was wrong in law.
- 3.25 A Flexible (fixed-term) Tenant may give 4 weeks' Notice in writing to end the Flexible Tenancy at any time during the fixed term; this may only be accepted by the Council provided there are no arrears outstanding and any other breaches of tenancies are remedied.

Advice and Assistance if a further tenancy is not granted

- 3.26 Where a further tenancy is not granted, the Council will provide advice and assistance to the tenant at least 56 days prior to the ending of the fixed term to help the tenant find alternative housing.

This advice and assistance will be provided by the Council's Homelessness Team and will include:

- Assistance with securing privately rented accommodation;
 - Assessing eligibility for a rental loan, damage deposit guarantee, a discretionary housing payment to assist with securing accommodation in the private rented sector, or any other forms of assistance available at the time;
 - Advice on securing owner-occupied accommodation; and
 - Advice on joining the Council's Housing Register.
- 3.27 Tenants should contact the Council to arrange a housing advice interview. The Council has a Service Agreement with the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau in the District, who tenants can contact and be provided with a range of independent advice and support.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies and the Right to Buy

- 3.28 The Right to Buy extends to Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies, subject to the same qualifying criteria for Secure Tenancies.

4. Demoted Tenancies

Secure Tenancies

4.1 If the Council has concerns about the way in which a Secure Tenant has been conducting their tenancy, but the concerns are such that seeking possession is not felt appropriate, it may proceed to Court and seek a Tenancy Demotion Order. If the tenancy is demoted, the tenant will hold a lesser form of tenancy with reduced security of tenure for a period of 12 months. During this period, Demoted Tenants do not have the same rights as secure tenants, for example they do not have:

- The right to exchange;
- The right of succession;
- The right to take in lodgers; or
- The right to buy which is suspended until the tenancy is no longer demoted.

4.2 If the tenant continues to breach their tenancy conditions, then the Council can proceed to Court for possession when the Judge will have no alternative, providing the correct procedures have been followed, other than to grant the Council possession.

Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

4.3 In the case of Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants, if the 12 month demotion period is successfully completed, then the Council will serve the Demoted Tenant with a Notice stating that the tenancy is to be restored from a Demoted Tenancy to a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy and specifying the length of the fixed term and other express terms of the tenancy.

5. Joint Introductory Potentially Secure and Flexible Tenancies

5.1 A Secure or Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy can be held by one person or by up to four joint tenants all of whom must be qualifying persons. However many tenants there are, there is still only one tenancy and the rights and duties relating to the tenancy apply jointly and severally to all joint tenants.

5.2 When a joint tenant dies, the remaining tenant/s will continue to hold the tenancy by survivorship. The names of any joint tenants cannot be removed from the tenancy unless by an Order of the Court. If one joint tenant surrenders the tenancy, then the tenancy comes to an end.

5.3 Introductory potentially secure joint tenancies will be offered to:

- (a) married couples or civil partners, provided that both home seekers are named on the application form, unless both parties request the tenancy to be granted in a sole name;
- (b) unmarried couples, or those living as civil partners who can demonstrate a relationship similar to marriage or a civil partnership, providing that both request it and the partner of the lead home seeker is registered on the application form; and

(c) home seekers and their live-in carers, where the live-in carer has occupied the property as their only or principal home for over 12 months and the Council considers it to be justified.

5.4 When an existing tenant applies to change their sole tenancy to a joint tenancy, this will be subject to any new joint applicant meeting with the Local Eligibility Criteria of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme apart from the housing need element.

In all other circumstances, sole tenancies will be offered to the lead applicant.

6. Non-secure Tenancies

6.1 Non-secure tenants have less security of tenure than Secure, Introductory and Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants and normally apply where short-term temporary accommodation is provided.

7. Circumstances where a tenancy of a particular type will be granted and the length of the term

Introductory, Potentially Secure Periodic (Lifetime) Tenancies

7.1 The Council will grant Introductory potentially Secure Tenancies to home seekers allocated permanent accommodation in sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes.

5.4 In addition to the above, the Council will generally grant its existing Post-Act Secure Tenants who are under-occupying their current accommodation and are transferring to a property with less bedrooms (where both properties are owned by the Council), a Secure Tenancy on their new smaller accommodation. As with pre 1 April 2012 tenancies, such protection will only apply on one occasion.

Introductory Potentially Secure Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancies

7.3 Introductory potentially Secure Flexible Tenancies (fixed-term tenancies) will be granted to all home seekers who sign-up to a tenancy of any property. The fixed term for the Flexible Tenancy will generally be 9 years subject to paragraphs 7.1, 7.2 and 7.6.

7.4 An introductory tenancy term of 12 months (or 18 months where the term is extended due to minor breaches of tenancy conditions) will be added to the 9-year Flexible Tenancy making a total fixed term of 10 years. The Flexible Tenancy term will be for 8 ½ years where introductory tenancies are for 18 months. At the commencement of the Introductory Period, the Council will serve a Notice on the tenant stating that a Flexible Tenancy will be granted at the end of the introductory period and what the length of the fixed term will be, provided the terms of the Introductory Tenancy are not breached.

7.5 Flexible (fixed-term) Tenants will be granted, through their Tenancy Agreement, both the Right to Improve and the Right to Compensation for Improvements. The financial incentives under the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme for council tenants to transfer to smaller accommodation will apply to Flexible Tenants during the fixed term, but only within the first 7 years of the fixed term (inclusive of the Introductory Tenancy period).

8. Non-secure Tenancies

- 8.1 Non-secure tenancies may be granted when a tenant is moved to alternative accommodation whilst major works are undertaken or in extremely rare circumstances in order for the Council to provide temporary housing under its homelessness duties. The Council shall grant tenants who have been moved into alternative accommodation during any redevelopment or other works a tenancy with no less security of tenure on their return to settled accommodation.

9. Contractual Succession Rights – Family Members

Pre-April 2012 Tenancies

- 9.1 All of the Council's secure tenants who signed up to their tenancy prior to 1 April 2012 enjoy many rights under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV (Tenants Charter). One of these is the right of succession to a tenancy which takes place upon the death of the tenant. Any successor tenant who is either a spouse or a Civil Partner is able to remain at the accommodation regardless of any under-occupation. Under the legislation, in the case of succession by a family member who meets all of the rules, if the accommodation afforded by the dwelling-house is more extensive than is reasonably required by the tenant, then the Council can serve a Notice of Seeking Possession more than 6 months but less than 12 months after becoming aware of the tenant's death. The Notice requires the tenant to vacate and move to smaller accommodation unless the Council's under-occupation policy applies.

Post April 2012 Tenancies

- 9.2 Under the Localism Act 2011, for all tenancies (including Flexible Tenancies) commencing after 1 April 2012, the right to succeed was repealed for family members. However, from 1 April 2012, all of the Council's secure tenants have been granted additional contractual succession rights within their Tenancy Agreement, in addition to those set out in the Localism Act. If at the time of the tenant's death, the dwelling-house is occupied by a family member (as defined by Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985) and not occupied by a spouse or a civil partner of the tenant as their only or principal home, the following additional rights will apply through the terms of the Tenancy Agreement:

- Provided there is no under-occupation, a family member will be allowed to succeed to the tenancy provided they meet all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over 3 years
- Where the property is under-occupied by a family member, if the family member meets all of the succession rules set out under the Housing Act 1985 Part IV and has been residing at the property as their only or principal home for over 3 years, they will be made one offer of suitable alternative accommodation. If the successor tenant refuses to move, then the Council will take court action to seek possession under Ground 16 of the Housing Act 1985
- Where the property is under-occupied by a family member who has resided at the property for less than 3 years then they be required to vacate. If the occupier refuses to vacate, then the Council will take court action to seek possession

10. Tenancy Management

10.1 The Council offers a range of support to tenants in order to assist them in sustaining their tenancy and preventing evictions, including:

- Undertaking in-depth sign up interviews with all new tenants to ensure the tenant understands the terms and conditions of their tenancy
- Housing Officers undertaking new tenant visits within 12 weeks of the commencement of the tenancy to offer advice and support and to clarify the conditions of tenancy
- Recognising that early identification and intervention in response to unpaid rent can prevent long term difficulties for the tenant, including the use of standard letters, regular rent statements, home visits, office interviews and pre-court visits
- Housing Officers undertaking visits to all tenants who have been identified as being affected by the social sector size limits of the Welfare Reforms to discuss their options and to offer advice and support
- Working in partnership with the floating support provider Peabody, who provide support to vulnerable tenants
- Housing Management working closely with the Council's Homelessness Team
- Safeguarding polices including staff training and reporting procedures;
- Undertaking in-depth special needs assessments whereby an officer visits a prospective tenant of sheltered accommodation to ensure the property will meet their needs
- All tenants receiving the Council's tenant newsletter 'Housing News' which includes articles on tenancy issues
- Offering mediation services to assist in resolving neighbour disputes
- Liaising regularly with the Council's Safer Communities Team and Environment and Neighbourhood Team in order to design out anti-social behaviour, working in partnership to seek methods to avoid neighbour conflict and attend network meetings with partner agencies to resolve cases
- Meeting regularly with representatives from the Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau in the District to give them an opportunity to raise any concerns and to update them on major issues and policy changes; and
- Meeting regularly with senior staff in the Council's Benefits Team to raise any concerns and to update on policy changes.

11. Tackling Social Housing Fraud

11.1 The Council employs a Corporate Fraud Team as part of the Government's national initiative to tackle social housing fraud, which in the main includes:

- The unlawful sub-letting of Council properties
- The detection of Right to Buy fraud
- The detection of fraudulent housing register applications
- The detection of fraudulent grant applications
- The investigation of all joint tenancy applications
- The investigation of all applications for succession to a tenancy; and
- The investigation of all mutual exchange requests

11.2 As social housing is a very valuable asset, the Council considers it is important to ensure that properties are let fairly and are occupied by legitimate tenants. For this reason, all applications listed above are subject to anti-fraud vetting.

11.3 During the tenancy, the tenant must inform the Council if they own a residential property or have another residential lease or tenancy.

12. Taking account of the needs of tenants with care and support needs

12.1 When a Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy comes to an end, in accordance with the assessment criteria, if the Council's Medical Advisor confirms that the tenant or a member of their household:

- has a terminal illness or a long-term disability;
- is a care leaver who is still in need of support; and/or
- there are dependent vulnerable children.

12.2 A further Flexible Tenancy for a fixed term of 10 years will be granted. This is in order for the exceptional circumstances to be monitored and re-assessed.

12.3 The Council has granted all new tenants whose tenancy commences after 1 April 2012, additional contractual succession rights to family members above those set out in the Localism Act 2011. This will ensure that family members in the district will continue to be housed by the Council provided that they meet the requirements of the Policy.

12.4 The Council's Introductory Tenancy Scheme has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour and neighbour nuisance and continues to allow the Council to ensure that unsuitable tenants do not cause difficulties to tenants with care and support needs.

12.5 The Council has a comprehensive Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy review process which will take into account the needs of any tenants with care and support needs prior to any decision not to grant a further tenancy. In addition, the circumstances of tenants with care and support needs will be taken into account with any Introductory Tenancy review decisions.

12.6 A range of support is offered to tenants which are set out under the Tenancy Management section of this Tenancy Policy.

13. Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to fulfilling its public sector duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to :

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

To this effect an Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and published alongside the publication of the Tenancy Policy 2022-2027

13.3 As an aid to ensuring that home seekers are not discriminated against on the grounds of their protected characteristics, the Council will monitor the protected characteristics of home seekers on the Housing Register and home seekers allocated housing.

13.4 The practices and procedures of the Housing and Property Service will be monitored by the appropriate Service Manager to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly.

14. Consultation on the Tenancy Policy

14.1 The Council sent a copy of a draft version of this Tenancy Policy to all of the following interested parties giving them a reasonable opportunity to comment:

- Every private Registered Provider of social housing;
- Local Councils;
- The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel; and
- Partner Agencies with an interest in the management of the Council's housing stock.

15. Publishing the Tenancy Policy

15.1 The final version of this Policy was sent to all those consulted above. It is also published on the Council's website at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

16. Reviewing the Tenancy Policy

16.1 This Policy will be reviewed after 5 years of commencement. The review will be

undertaken by the Council's Stronger Communities Select Committee in consultation with the interested parties outlined in paragraph 14.1 above. It will then be agreed by the Council's Cabinet.

DRAFT

17. Types of Tenancy - Overview

Tenancy type	Who can be offered	Property type	Length of tenancy
Introductory Tenancy	Those who are not already a Secure (Lifetime) tenant with the Council or another Registered Provider. Applies to Flexible and Secure Tenancies.	All properties	12 months (or 18 months where the term is extended due to minor breaches of tenancy conditions).
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy Pre 1 st April 2012	Those who were either Council or Registered Providers' Lifetime tenants before 1st April 2012.	All properties	No limit on the length of tenancy.
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy Post 1 st April 2012	Those who have successfully completed an Introductory Tenancy in sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes. Under-occupiers who transfer to another council property with less bedrooms.	Sheltered housing or grouped dwelling schemes All properties	No limit on the length of tenancy.
Secure (Lifetime) Tenancy New Tenancy for victims of domestic abuse	Lifetime tenants who suffer domestic abuse will retain lifetime security if they are granted a new tenancy by a local authority for reasons connected with the abuse. This protection applies to victims who have a lifetime tenancy, or victims who have had a lifetime tenancy in the past and have fled their social home to escape domestic abuse. The protection also applies to victims of domestic abuse who have a joint lifetime tenancy and who wish to continue living in their home after the perpetrator has left. The provisions apply to lifetime tenants of local	All properties	No limit to the length of tenancy.

	authorities and private registered providers of social housing.		
Secure Flexible (fixed-term) Tenancy	Those who are not already a pre 1st April 2012 Secure (Lifetime) tenant with the Council or another Registered Provider.	All properties	9 years plus introductory term of 12 months, making a total fixed-term of 10 years.

DRAFT

Tenancy Policy 2022- 2027


Epping Forest District Council
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www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing

Draft 15 February 2022

DRAFT

Four blue house icons, each with a white outline, arranged vertically on the left side of the page.

REVIEW OF:
THE OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY
THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY
THE TENANCY POLICY
THE HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

STAGE 1 CONSULTATION – RESULTS

October 2021

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the stage 1 initial consultation on the Epping Forest District Council review of the following 'Big 4' Housing strategies and policies.

- The Allocations Policy
- The Tenancy Policy
- The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
- The overarching Housing Strategy

The review began on 4 May 2021 and is due to conclude in Spring 2022.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the review will result in the publication of a new Allocations Policy, and Tenancy Policy (both of which will then be due for review again in 2027), along with both the updated five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 and the overarching Housing Strategy for 2022-2027.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

The consultation has been coordinated across all four items; to take account of the interest of some, but not all, stakeholders in more than one of the Big 4, and the interdependencies between many of the proposals.

The consultation has been split into two stages.

Stage 1 Initial Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to influence the review from the outset by suggesting key themes and priorities they would like to be included in the draft updates of any or all the policies and strategies.

The stage 1 consultation opened on 21 June 2021 and closed on 6 September 2021.

Stage 2 Detailed Consultation: An invitation to stakeholders to comment on the draft proposals and major changes to the individual policies and strategies for consideration before any revision to the draft recommendations are presented to Cabinet between March 2022 and May 2022 for consideration and approval.

The stage 2 consultation is due to open on 29 October 2021 and close on 10 December 2021 for all but the overarching Housing Strategy which is scheduled to open on 15 November 2021 and close on 24 December 2021.

METHODOLOGY

The consultation has been designed to give everyone with an interest in Housing in the district the opportunity to contribute to the review.

Stage 1 consultation consisted of a range of direct emails, bitesize briefing sessions and webinars, and an on-line survey with simple open-ended questions.

325 stakeholders were sent a link to the on-line survey including:

- Registered providers of social housing in the district
- The clerks to the town councils and parish councils in the district
- The Community Safety Partnership and other statutory services
- Community groups including the Faith Covenant
- Essex County Council and the district, borough and city councils in Essex
- Third sector partners with an active interest in Housing in the district
- All elected Members of the Council and Council staff

The consultation and links to the survey along with background information are widely publicised on the Council’s website, in the Tenant and Leaseholders newsletter, on Facebook, and at relevant forums including the Tenant and Leaseholders’ Forum and Live Well, Be Well and Age Well groups.

RESPONSE RATE

Number of Responses

In total, 68 contributors completed the survey. A further 96 surveys were started and abandoned. It is not known how many of these were duplicate entries from potential contributors who then went on to complete a valid survey, and how many were lost opportunities.

A user group was consulted on the possible reasons for the relatively high number of abandoned responses. The group suggested a few ways of improving the response rate that will be tested for future surveys of this type.

Contributor Interest

Contributors were asked to indicate whether they were responding as a resident of the district or as a representative of an organisation with an interest in Housing in the district. Those contributors with a dual interest were given the option of completing two surveys.

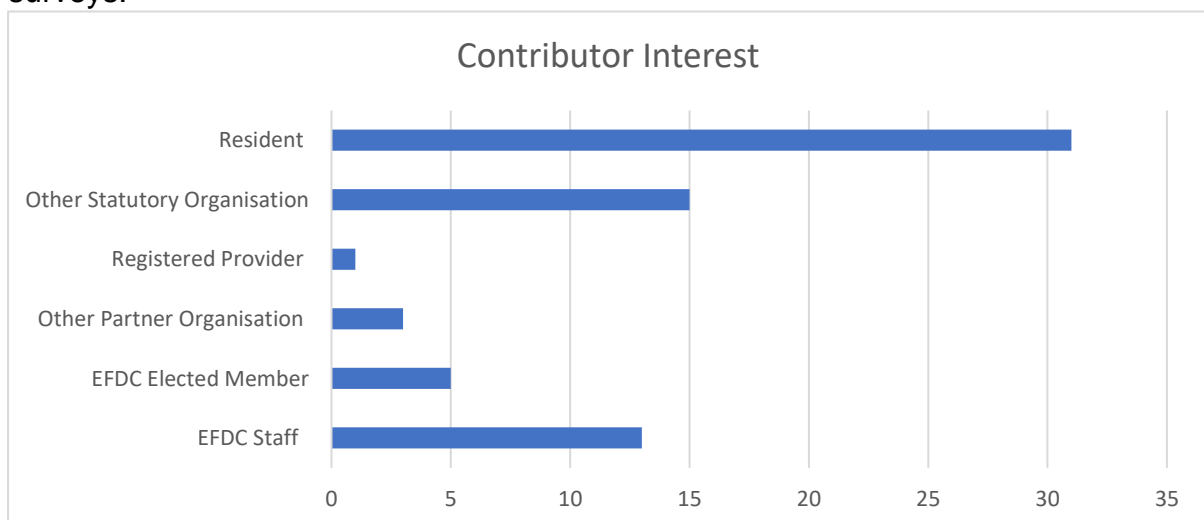


Fig 1

The vast majority of contributors were residents (46%) followed by other statutory organisations (22%) Council staff (19%) elected Members of the Council (7%) other partner organisations (4%) and other registered providers of social housing (1%).

Questions and Answers

Most questions were open ended and produced detailed qualitative data which was then grouped by themes for the purpose of analysis.

OVERARCHING HOUSING STRATEGY

Question: Please list between three and five priorities and say why they are important.

Responses:

Answered: 68 Not answered: 0



Fig 2

The most frequently listed priority related to increasing the supply of affordable housing, either generally (28%), specifically social housing (23%), of the right size and type to meet needs (22%), for local people (13%), or suitably adapted properties for people with physical or mental impairment (13%).

Protecting the environment featured in a high number of responses (25%) as did the Council's local planning policy, particularly with regards to the location and tenure mix of new developments (i.e. social housing, private rent, homeownership (24%) and the regeneration of local areas (10%).

Other reoccurring themes included ensuring good quality safe homes in both the private and public sector (19%); enabling residents (particularly vulnerable residents) to access suitable housing and activities to help improve their wellbeing and life-chances (19%) tackling homelessness (19%) and the allocations policy (19%).

HEALTH HOUSING AND WELLBEING

Answered: 65 Not answered: 3

Question:

Can you suggest other services or organisations that may be interested in working in partnership with Housing to help improve health and wellbeing?

Responses:

The suggestions included 31 specifically named organisations, some of which already have established or developing relationships with Housing. Consideration is being given to engaging with each of the 31 organisations and all positive outcomes will be included in the relevant strategy or policy.

Question:

Do you have any suggestions or practical tips about how partners could work with Housing to help improve the health and wellbeing of residents?

Responses:

Over 25 different practical tips and suggestions are being followed up. These include community-based activities that could also improve the local environment, targeted information sharing on specific schemes and opportunities, design features to assist sensory impairment and social inclusion, and training to raise awareness of neurodiversity amongst staff. All suggestions that are adopted or will be referenced in the relevant strategy or policy.

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band A?

Responses

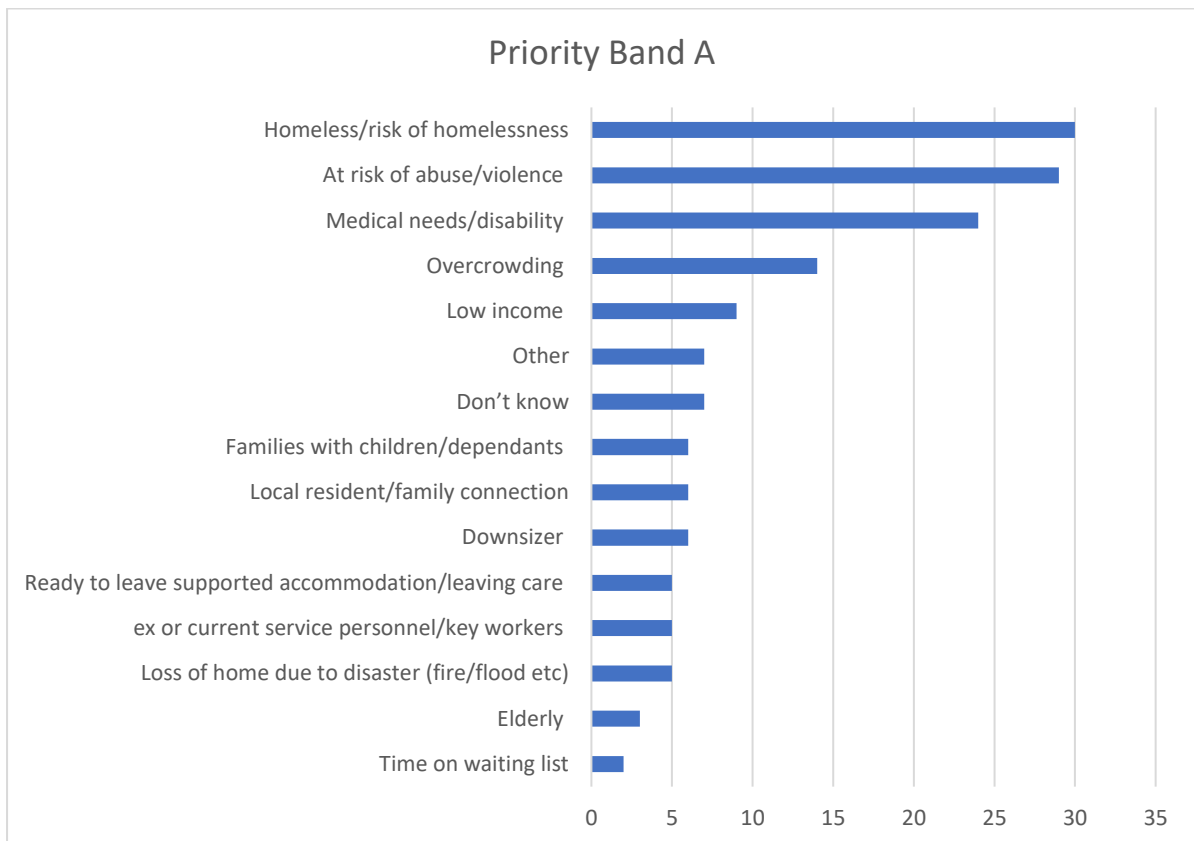


Fig 3

The most common reason that contributors said Band A should be awarded was to address homelessness or the risk of becoming homeless (50%) followed by risk of abuse or violence (48%), medical needs/disability (40%) and overcrowding (23%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band B?

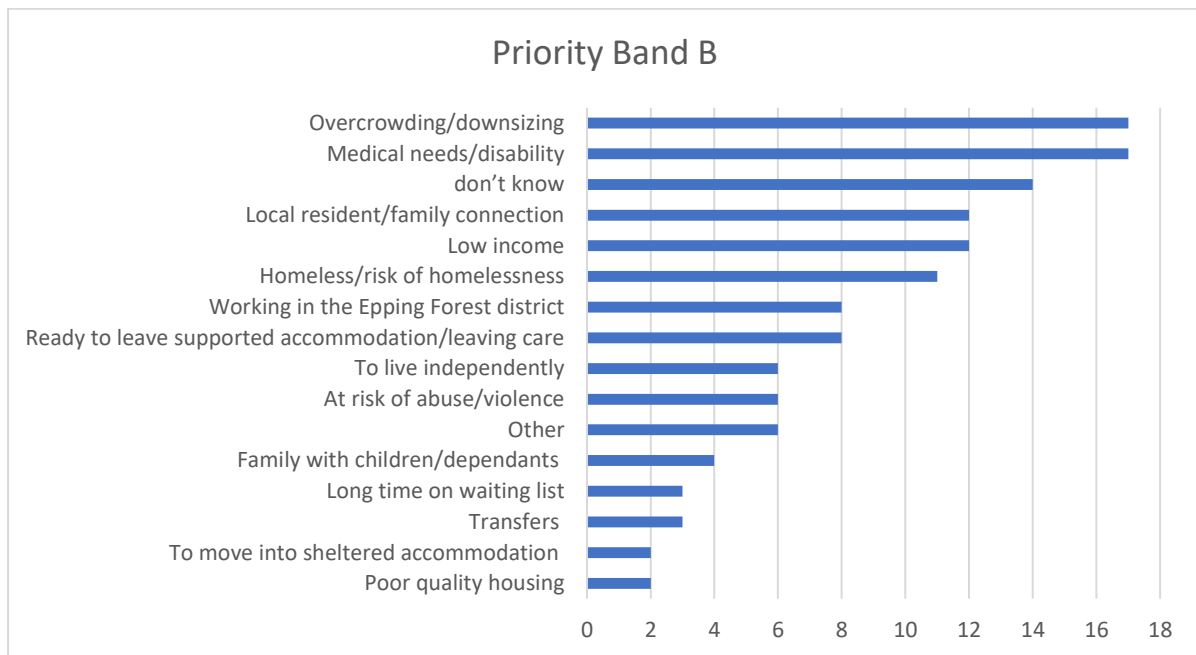


Fig 4

Overcrowding/downsizing (28%) and medical needs/disability (28%) were the most common suggestions for being awarded Band B. A relatively high number of contributors said they didn't know (23%). The next most frequent circumstances proposed for Band B were being a local resident or with a family connection (20%), or on a low income (also 20%) then Homelessness or the risk of homelessness (18%).

For what circumstances or reasons should applicants be awarded Band C

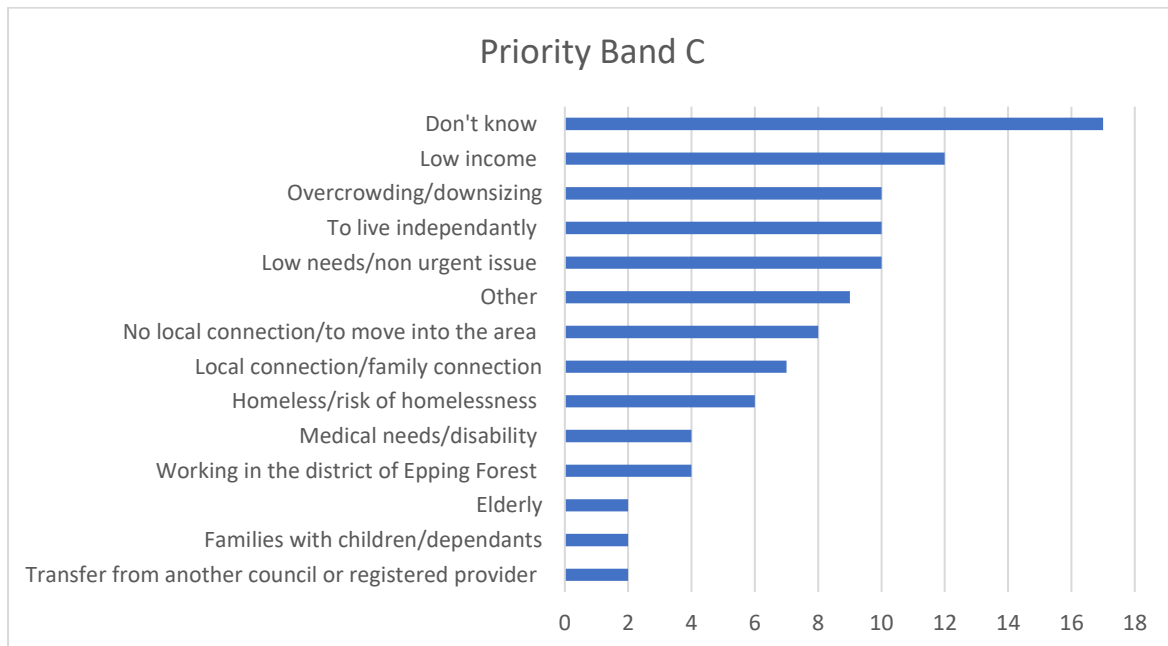


Fig 5

Fewer Contributors made suggestions for Band C than the other bands. The most common suggestion for Band C was low income (20%) followed by overcrowding/downsizing, or to live independently or low needs/non-urgent issues (all 17%).

TENANCY POLICY

Answered: 60 Not answered: 8

Question:

How many years should a council or housing association tenancy be granted for? 10 years, 20 years, a lifetime, or other?

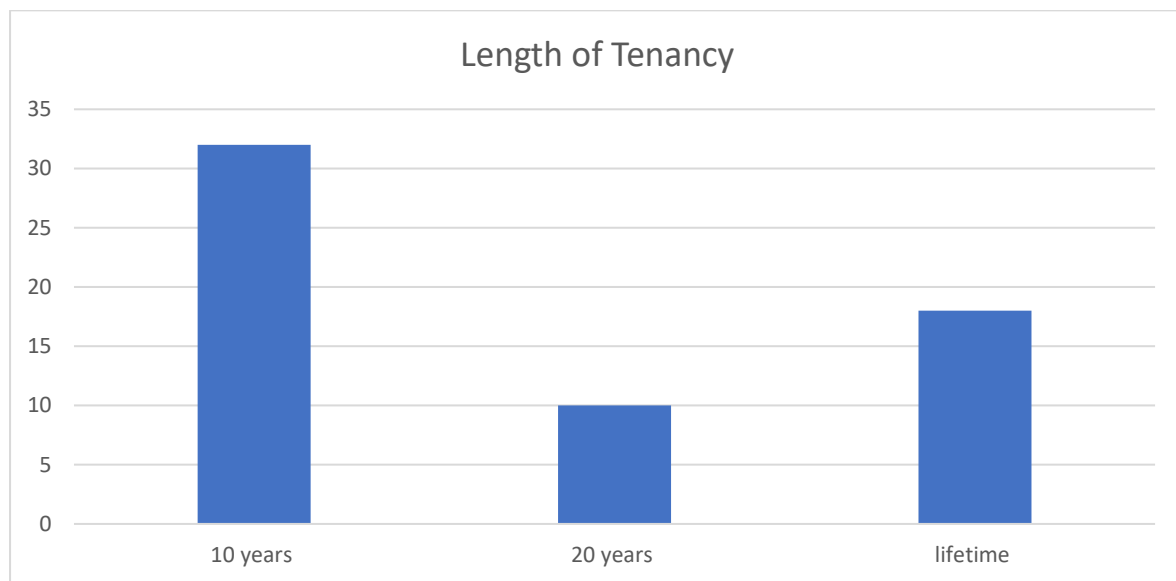


Fig 6

Over half of the respondents (53%) said tenancies should be for 10 years. Fewer respondents were in favour of lifetime tenancies (30%) and the least popular proposal was 20 years (17%).

Should every tenancy be granted for the same length of time?

Yes 53%

No 47%

If you answered no, then for what reason(s) should someone be offered a shorter tenancy or a longer tenancy?

The most common answer was that longer tenancies should be offered to older people, those with disabilities or learning difficulties, or families with young children.

And that shorter tenancies should be offered to households whose circumstances are likely to change and/or who have a realistic prospect of purchasing a property in the near or mid-term future.

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

Answered: 57 Not answered: 11

Question:

What help should the Council offer to households who are threatened with homelessness, to prevent them from becoming homeless?

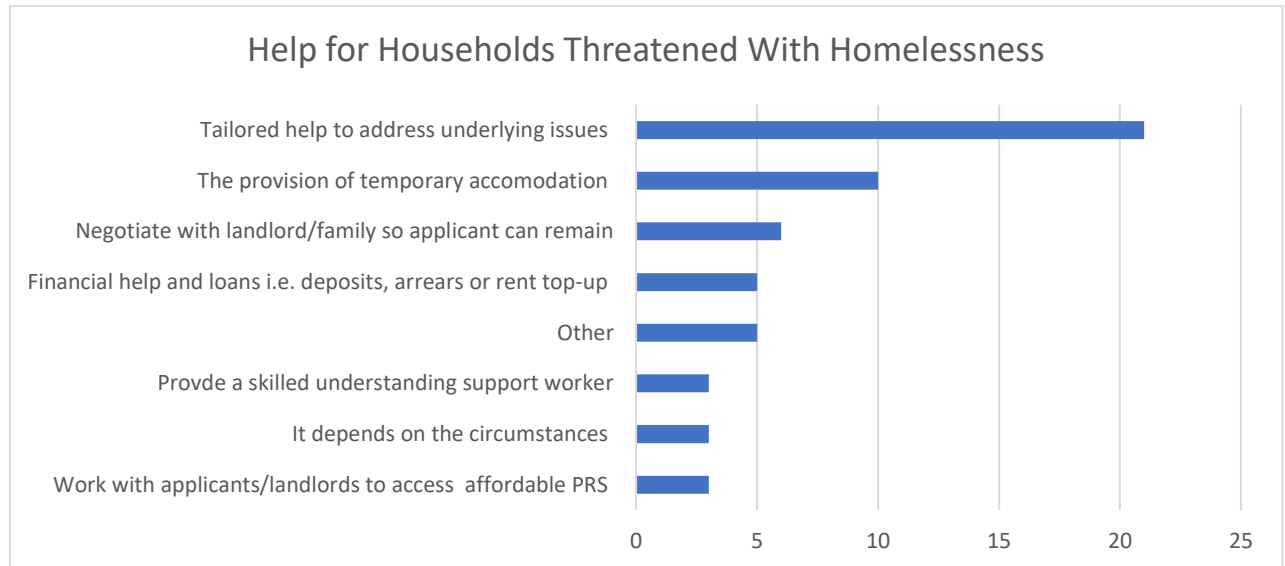


Fig 7

The most frequent suggestion was to offer tailored help to address the underlying causes of homelessness (37%), next was the provision of temporary accommodation (18%) and negotiating with the applicant's landlord or family member to allow the applicant to remain living there (11%).

What help should the Council offer households who are homeless?

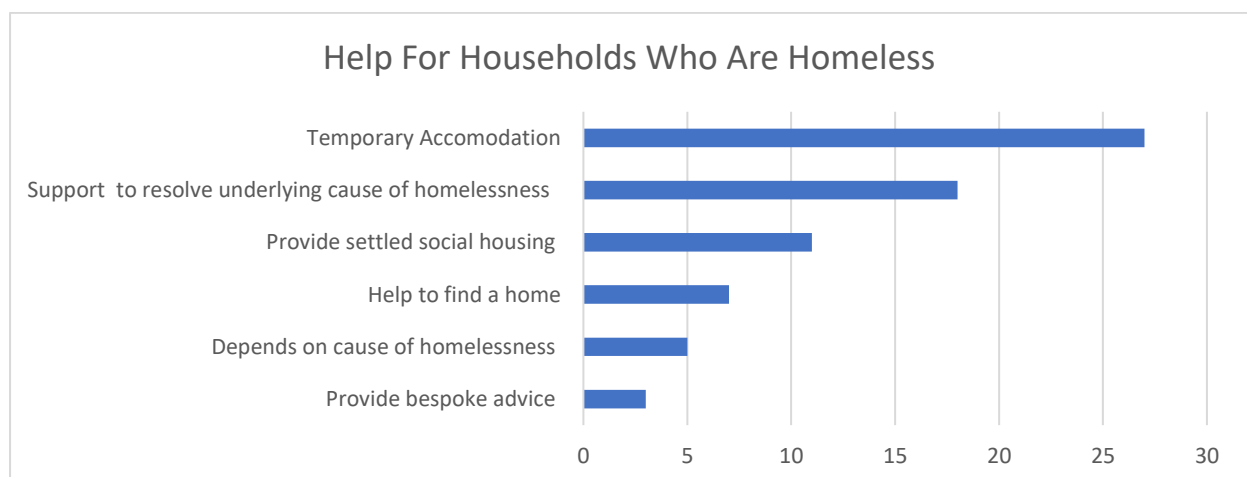


Fig 8

The most recurrent proposal was to offer temporary accommodation (47%), followed by support to resolve the underlying cause of homelessness (32%) and the provision of settled housing (19%).

What steps do you think the Council should take to end rough sleeping?

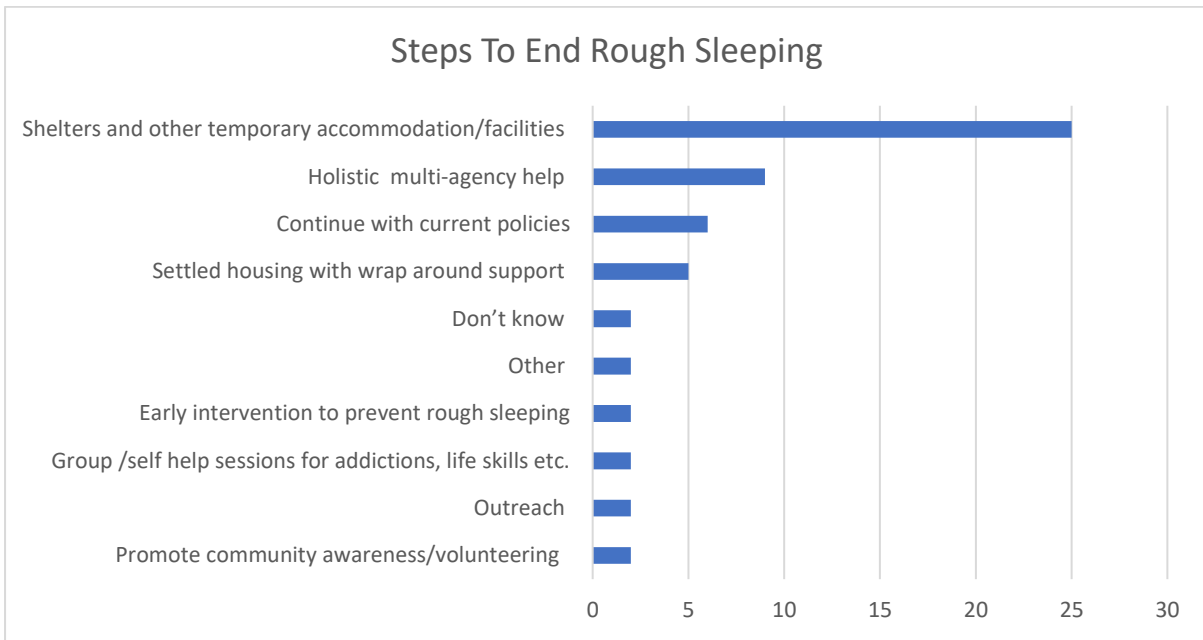


Fig 9

By far the most common suggestion was the provision of shelters and other temporary accommodation along with facilities such as access to a shower and a meal (44%). Holistic multi-agency help featured fairly frequently (16%), and a notable number of respondents suggested continuing with current policies (11%).

FURTHER INVOLVEMENT

Contributors were asked whether they were happy to be contacted to discuss any of their comments or suggestions and/or whether they would like the opportunity to be involved with more detailed consultation on any of the individual policies or strategies.

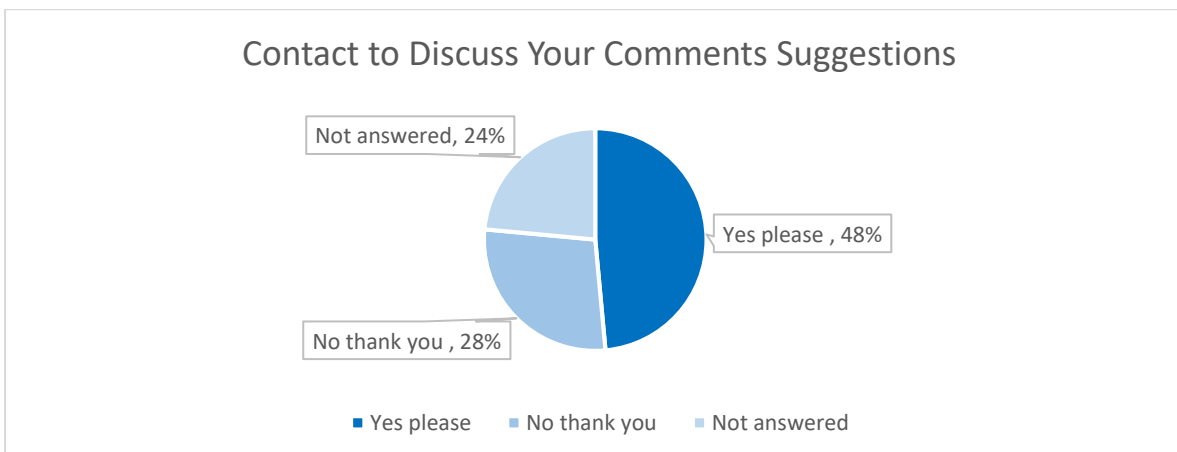


Fig 10

Nearly half of all contributors said they would be happy to be contacted to discuss the comments or suggestions they had made in their response to stage 1 consultation (48%).

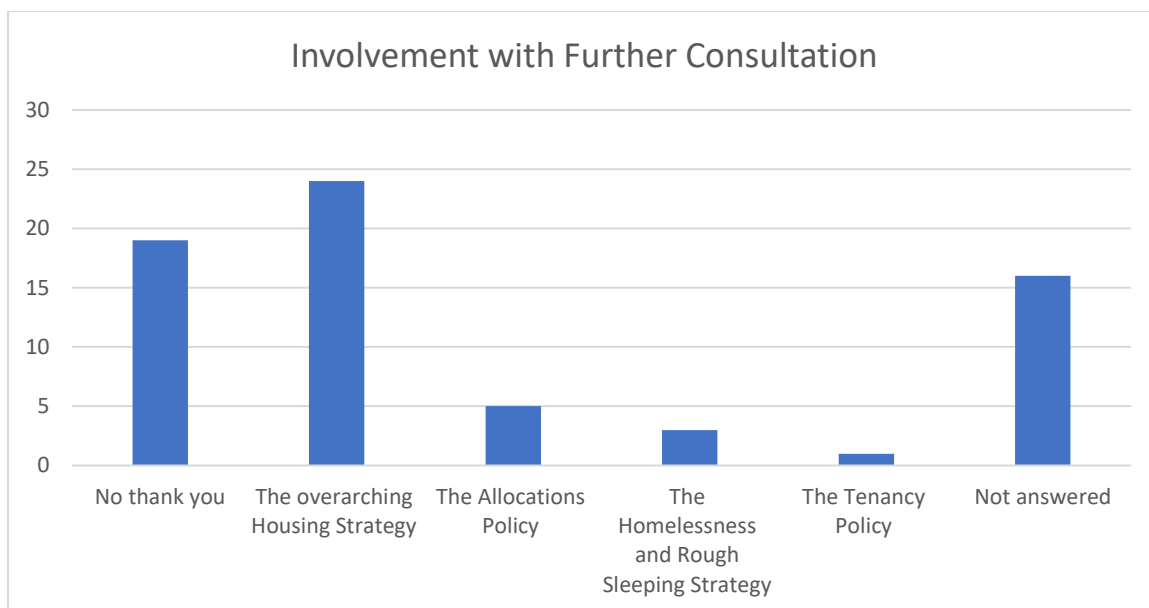


Fig 11

The Overarching housing Strategy generated the most interest in further involvement (35%) and the Tenancy Policy the least (1%).

Overall, 36 contributors said they were happy to discuss their responses to the stage 1 survey and/or would like to be more involved with the detailed stage 2 consultation.

At the time of writing the report arrangements were being made to contact the 36 contributors and discuss opportunities to have more direct involvement with the stage 2 consultation.

PROFILE OF CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors were invited to provide some additional confidential information about their personal characteristics to enable the Council to check whether the consultation process is fair and transparent and to monitor the impact of any recommendations on groups with particular characteristics. The findings will form part of the Equalities Impact Assessment to be published along with the outcome of the full review.

Contributors were given the option to skip the section or indicate that they would prefer not to answer a specific question.

Of the 68 Contributors to the survey, 70% answered most but not all the questions about their personal profile and 22% skipped the section entirely.

Age

Please indicate your age group

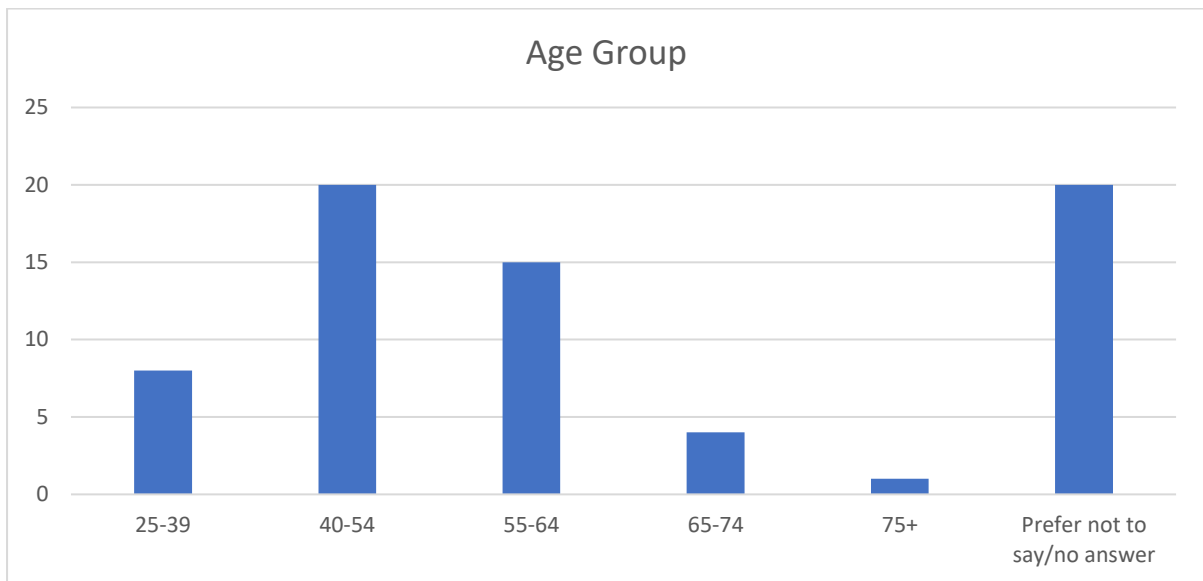


Fig 12

The majority of contributors who specified their age group were between 40-54 years old (29%) and 55-64 years old (22%).

Ethnicity

Please indicate your ethnic origin.

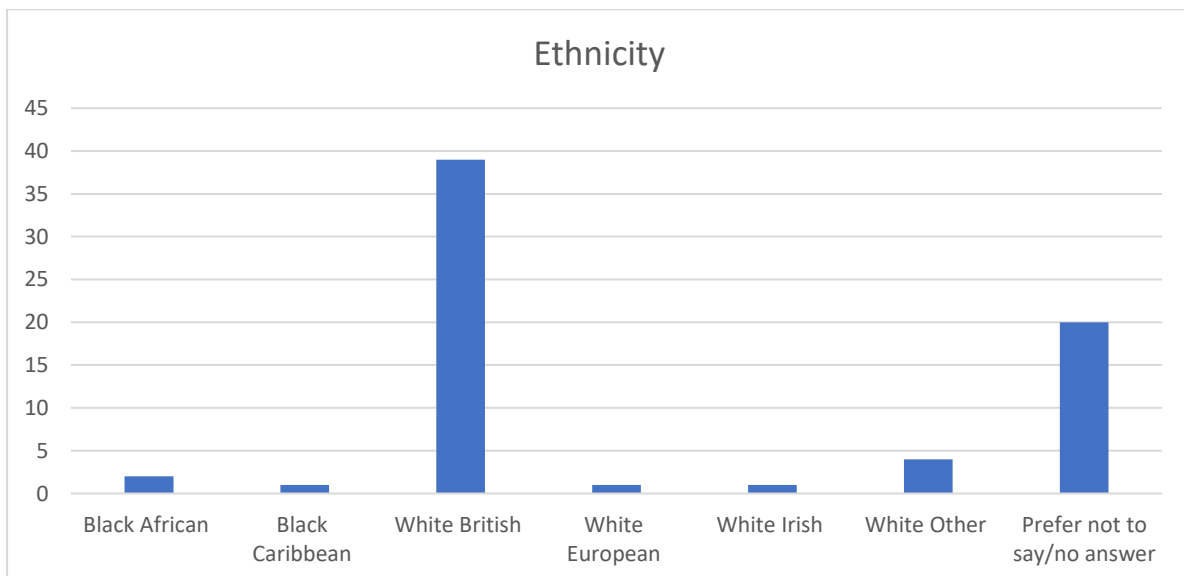


Fig 13

The majority of contributors described themselves as White British (57%) or opted not to provide details (29%).

Gender Identity

How would you describe your gender identity?

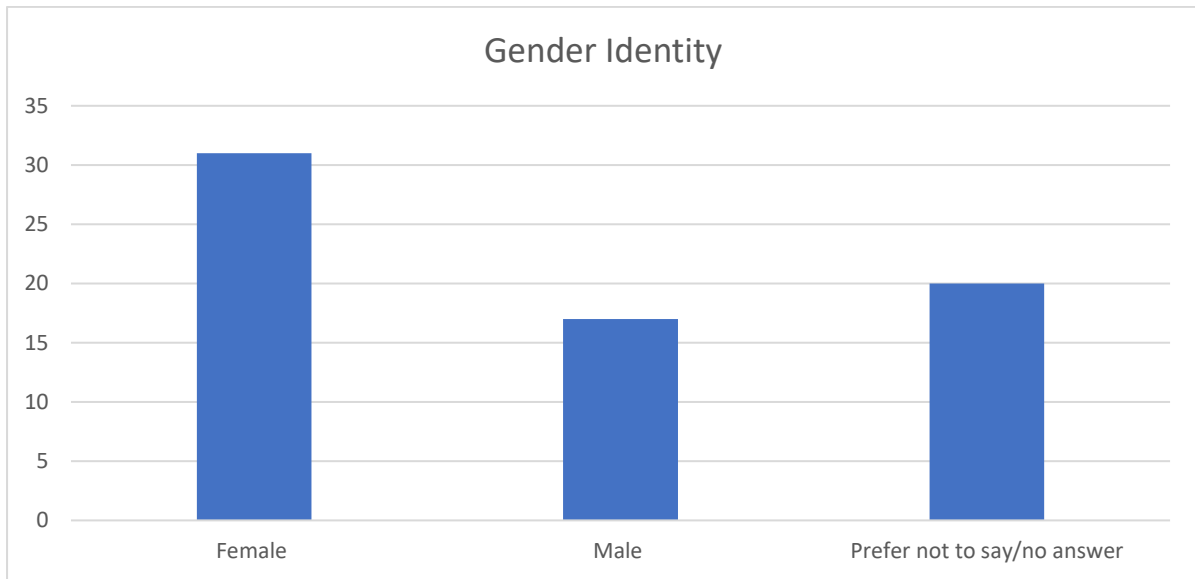


Fig 14

Contributors described themselves as female (46%) male (25%) or chose not to provide details (29%).

Religion

Please indicate your religion

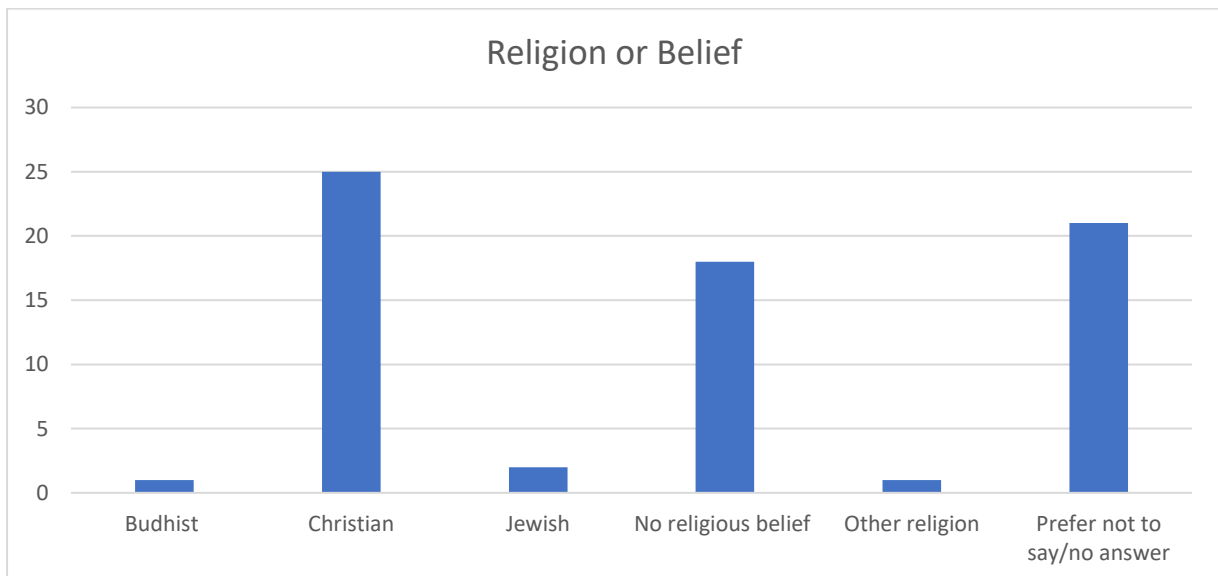


Fig 15

The religion or belief most frequently selected was Christian (37%) followed by no religious belief (26%). A fairly high proportion of contributors opted not to answer (31%).

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

By disability we mean whether you have a long-term difficulty with mental or physical health, or a learning difficulty that affects your ability to carry out day to day activities.

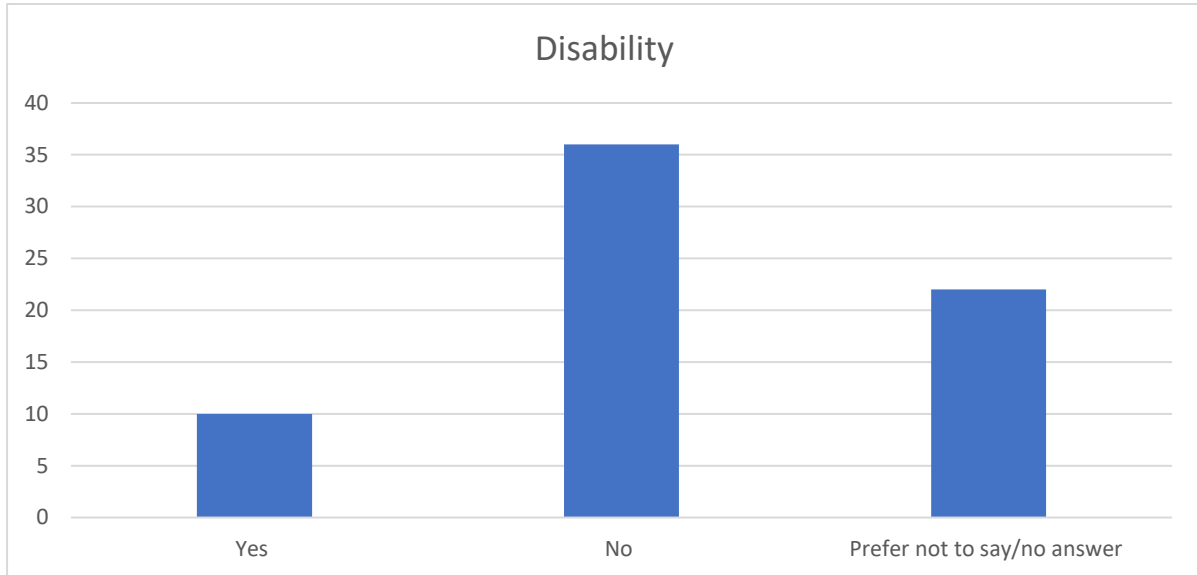


Fig 16

Overall, 15% of contributors said they had a disability, and a notable number chose not to answer (32%).

Sexual orientation

Please indicate your sexual orientation.

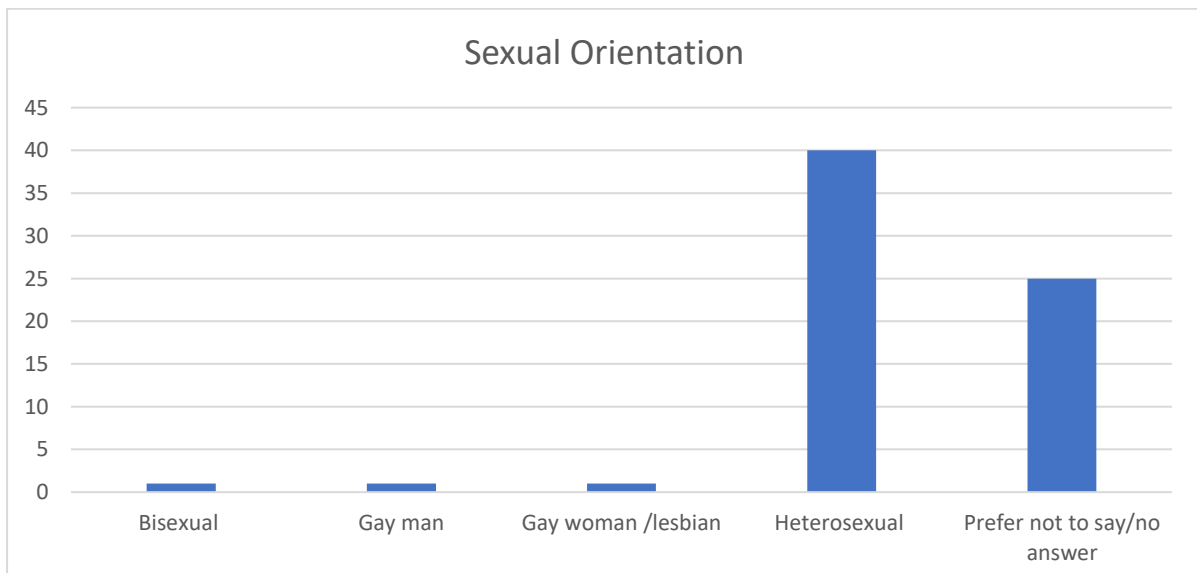


Fig 16

Most contributors said they were heterosexual (58%) or opted not to answer (37%).

NEXT STEPS

The results of the stage 1 consultation have been carefully considered in conjunction with the Councils corporate objectives, a range of staff workshops and its statutory obligations as a Local Housing Authority to inform the recommendations contained within the following four reports for stage 2 consultation.

- [Review of the Allocations Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Tenancy Policy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy- Recommendations](#)
- [Review of the overarching Housing Strategy- Recommendations](#)

Stronger Communities Select Committee scrutinised the reports on 21 September 2021 and approved all recommendations contained therein.

Stage 2 Consultation will begin on 29 October 2021 and details can be found on [the Big 4 Housing strategies and policies consultation](#) page on the Council's website.

For further information please contact the Housing Strategy Team
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Janice Nuth
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Communities and Wellbeing
22 October 2021

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