

The Housing Needs Team at East Devon District Council can help prevent homelessness by:

- **Providing applicants with an 'options' interview.** A 'duty' officer will see all visitors to the offices in Sidmouth or Exmouth. This initial interview takes about 15 to 20 minutes and aims to resolve most housing and homelessness issues. If a more in-depth 'options' interview is required this is organised the same day or at another convenient time. This will involve a lengthy interview where detailed information about the applicants housing situation and needs are explored. At this time extensive efforts are made to resolve the housing issue and/or prevent homelessness.
- **Liaising with other agencies** to assist the applicant, such as Social Services, Children and Young Persons Services, the Prison Service, Probation, Youth Offending Team, Primary Care Trust and Community Mental Health Team.
- **Visiting the homes of young people excluded from the family home** and speaking with the parent(s). Housing officers will negotiate with parents to allow young people to remain home.
- **Referring applicants to Young Devon.** Young Devon work with young people, either preventing them being excluded from home or helping them access suitable alternative accommodation such as, a supported lodgings placement or a support housing project.
- **Supporting elderly or disabled applicants and preventing their homelessness by offering settled accommodation.** In exceptional circumstances we are able to offer accommodation in our Sheltered Housing Schemes rather than go through the usual process of taking a homeless application and placing an elderly or disabled person in temporary accommodation.
- **Negotiating with landlords** to help applicants remain in their home and sustain their existing tenancy.
- **Referring to SmartMove** to assist in accessing accommodation in the private sector. SmartMove provides homeless or vulnerably housed people with comprehensive housing advice and access to good quality accommodation in the private sector. It offers landlords a guarantee in place of the traditional deposit. It can provide the tenants with ongoing support and advice to enable them to sustain their tenancies.

- **Providing a Rent Deposit Guarantee Bond Scheme** to assist applicants in accessing accommodation in the private rented sector. A signed undertaking is given to the landlord so that at the end of the tenancy, should there be rent arrears or damage caused by the tenant, the provider will honour those costs to the value of the deposit. The scheme has been set up to assist those applicants who are faced with homelessness and deemed to be in priority need.
- **Referring applicants with housing related financial issues to Homemaker South West.** Homemaker South West provide debt and money advice to households who are threatened with homelessness because of rent and mortgage arrears or other debts that may place them at risk of homelessness. The primary purpose of Homemaker is to prevent homelessness and promote independence by offering specialist advice and support to individuals and families who may be at risk of losing their home. They also offer advice to people who may be moving into new accommodation and living independently for the first time.
- **Negotiating with landlords or mortgage lenders** to delay or prevent homelessness.
- **Assisting victims of domestic violence and abuse** through the Devon Sanctuary Scheme, which aims to help applicants feel safe and secure where they chose to remain in their own homes, by improving the security with professionally installed security measures.
- If it is not possible to 'prevent' homelessness a homelessness application is made and if the Housing Assistant has 'reason to believe' an applicant is homeless, it may be necessary to **provide temporary accommodation** and begin an investigation into the households homelessness situation.