

Review of EDDC Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-23

June 2023



1. Introduction

A challenging period

The last 3-4 years have presented unprecedented challenges for everyone in the country. The Coronavirus pandemic required fundamental changes to how we delivered all our services at East Devon District Council. The disruption caused by the pandemic, government efforts to rebalance the books after significant financial investment, along with the war in the Ukraine has led to a cost of living crisis. With more people struggling to meet rising bills and rents support services, including those helping those at risk of homelessness, came under increasing pressure.

The housing landscape and rises in homelessness

The review sets out the marked increase in homelessness approaches over the past few years. This is due in a large part to the availability of suitable accommodation. These factors have also required us to re-shape the homelessness service in order to best respond to them.

There is huge competition for all forms of private sector housing which has pushed up rent prices further. As a result, this sector is out of reach for many of our customers. Even within social housing, there are disparities in affordability. The trend in this sector is more towards affordable rents (80% of market rent) rather than social rent (c. 60% of market rent).

There is also extremely limited availability of supported accommodation projects in the district. These would ordinarily provide a suitable accommodation option and pathway for many of our vulnerable customers, especially those with higher levels of support needs. Unfortunately there is now only one project of this type in East Devon.

The shortage of suitable accommodation available has been made worse by the cost of living crisis, increases in numbers of poverty cases, lasting effects of the pandemic and more recently the wars in Ukraine and Afghanistan. This increase in demand affects all forms of housing, in particular social housing. This is shown in the increase in the number of households registering for social housing through the Council's waiting list (Devon Home Choice).

This document sets out the context within which the Housing Options Team team and other stakeholders worked to meet the aims of the strategy, and reviews our performance against the strategy's key aims and objectives. It also provides a

platform for the development of our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy to be delivered in 2024-2028.

2. Key Legislation influencing service delivery

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) amends Part 7 of the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act 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 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-23 was published in the early days of the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which came into effect from April 2018 and expanded on the existing duties set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). The Act created the biggest change in homelessness legislation for over forty years.

Considerable additional responsibilities were placed upon local authorities with a statutory duty to assist individuals and households who are homeless. The definition of being threatened with homelessness was extended from 28 days to 56 days thereby significantly increasing numbers of those seeking assistance with housing. The expected impact of the Act and the actions taken to prepare for the implementation of the Act were major features of the strategy.

The main aim of the Homelessness Reduction Act is to give people the help they need to avoid becoming homeless in the first place, and to give those already experiencing homelessness access to help regardless of whether or not they are considered to have a priority need or are intentionally homeless. Everyone receives assistance and local authorities are expected to intervene at earlier stages.

The three main new duties at the time for local authorities were to:

- Assess all eligible applicants and agree a personalised housing plan (PHP)
- Take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness and
- Relieve homelessness by helping the applicant secure accommodation

There has been significant change in the way homelessness is tackled over the lifespan of the Strategy, driven by the principles of the Homelessness Reduction Act. These principles are now installed into the working practices, procedures and culture of the homelessness service in East Devon.

3. Local context

Population and Area Overview

Population

In 2021 the mid-year population estimates put East Devon’s population at 152,120. This is a rise of 19,663 (6%) from the last census figure in 2011.

East Devon has an older age profile with the median age of its residents being 50.9 years (the national equivalent is 40.7 years).

	Population aged (per cent) *note figures rounded up may not equal 100%					Median age (years)
	0–14	15–24	25 –44	45 – 65	65+	
East Devon	14.5	8.8	19.6	27.1	30	50.9
National avg.	17.4	11.7	26.5	25.8	18.6	40.7

Life expectancy for residents of East Devon is the highest of all Devon districts (just over 82 years) and is in the top 10% nationally.

Most East Devon residents are from a white British background, with just 5.8% coming from another ethnic background.

Salaries in East Devon

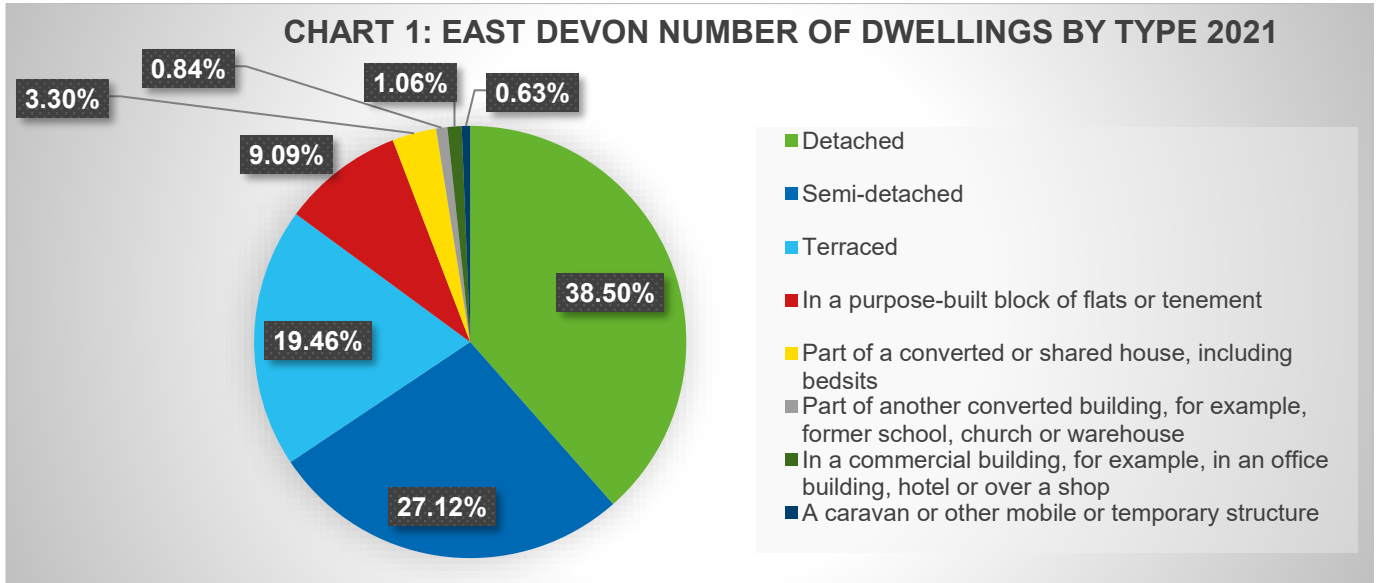
The average salary in East Devon in 2021 was £31,747 (ONS) which was 22.1% lower than the national average of £40,079. However the average salary is increasing at a higher rate than the national average.

Deprivation

Overall, the district is relatively well-off and is in the 40% least deprived districts nationally; it is also one of the lowest crime rate areas in Britain. However, there are pockets within the district where deprivation is high.

Housing in East Devon

The 2021 census figures show there were 66,786 dwellings listed in East Devon see Chart 1 below for breakdown by dwelling type.



The vast majority of dwellings are either houses or bungalows and most of these - over 25,700 - are detached.

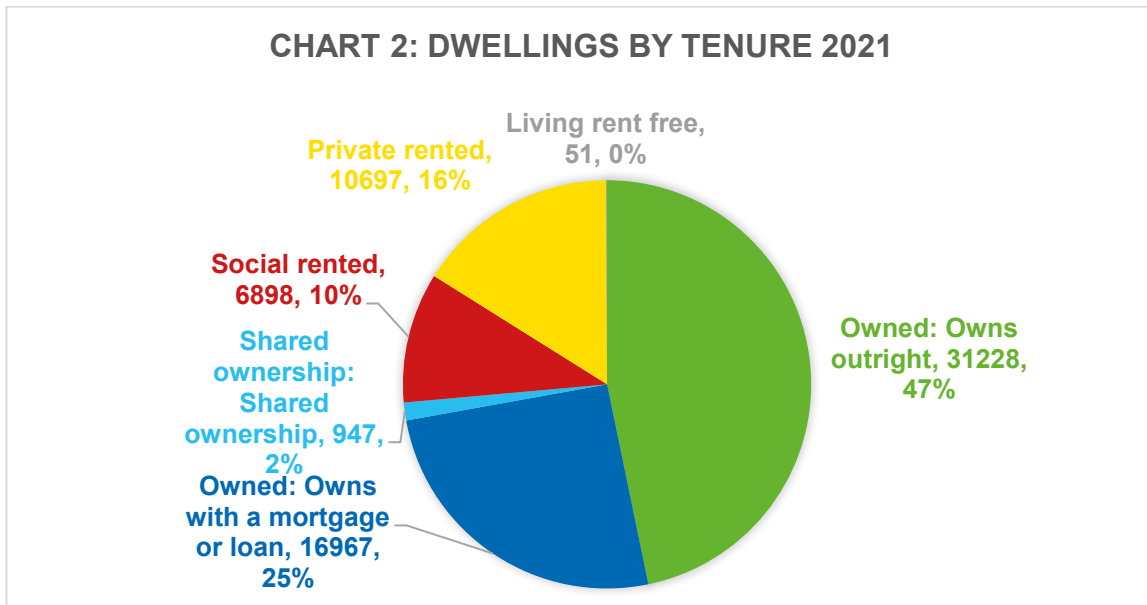


Chart 2 above shows the split of dwellings in East Devon by tenure. The proportion of owner occupied homes is quite high at 72%, compared to the national average of 62%. Of these 47% are owned outright, compared to 33% nationally.

Of those homes that are not owner occupied, 26% of the homes are rented, with 10% defined as social rented housing (17% national average) and 16% privately rented (20% nationally).

The number of empty residential properties, short and long term, increased since 2018. At 1 April 2023 there were 495 properties which had been empty for at least 6 months, up from 387 at the same time in 2018. However the number of those empty for at least 2 years has reduced slightly from 94 in 2018 to 81 in 2023.

As at April 2023, East Devon District Council currently owns 4179 properties. 2831 of these are classified as general needs properties, and 1348 are sheltered properties where residents have access to alarm and support services through Home Safeguard. Social housing is also provided by 11 Housing Associations with roughly 2650 homes in East Devon

EDDC is signed up to Devon Home Choice, alongside several other Councils and Housing Associations, to manage the allocation of social housing for local residents.

Affordability

East Devon has the second highest proportion of houses in the top three most expensive Council Tax bands in Devon - 15% in bands F, G and H. The Devon average is 9.9%, with 9.3% of homes falling into this category at a national level.

It also has the lowest proportion of houses in Council Tax band A - 9.1% (far below the Devon average of 16% and the national figure of 24%) presenting additional challenges to those wishing to get on the property ladder, and to the Council in acquiring new stock.

The Office of National Statistics reported that as at September 2022, East Devon is 116th out of 331 local authority areas for house prices and 125th out of 331 local authority areas in the affordability index. Table 2 below shows national and regional comparisons:

Table 2: Median house prices, Median earnings, and affordability ratio as at Sept 2022

Area	House Prices	Earnings	Affordability
England	£275,000	£33,200	8.3
South West	£294,645	£30,579	9.63
East Devon	£325,000	£32,000	10.2

Private rent levels are amongst the highest in Devon. Between April 2017 and March 2022, rents have risen by at least 8%, with smaller properties seeing the greatest rise (table 3 below). This may reflect the greater demand for smaller properties in the district.

Table 3: East Devon median private rent figures by bedroom number comparison 2017/18 and 2021/22

Bedroom	Studio	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed
2017/18	£378	£495	£650	£795	£1,100
2021/22	£450	£550	£725	£870	£1,195
% Change	16%	10%	10.3%	8.4%	7.9%

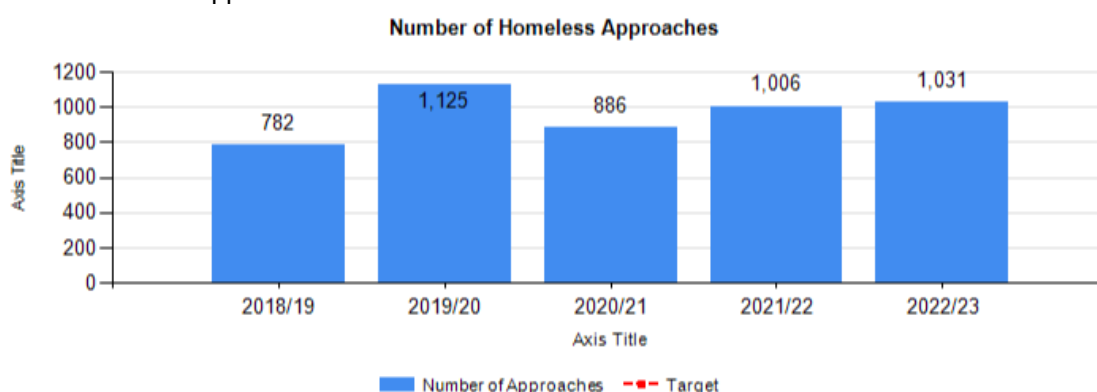
Across the region, private sector rents in the South West rose by close to 3.5% in the 12 months leading to March 2022. This was the 3rd highest increase in England, and way above the England average rise of 2.2%.

4. Housing Needs and Homelessness

Homeless Approaches

Chart 3 shows the number of approaches made to us from 2018/19 through to 2022/23.

Chart 3: Homeless approaches to EDDC 2018/19 – 2022/23



The number of approaches fluctuated in the early years of the reporting period. This is due in the main to restrictions put in place during the Covid pandemic. The last two years have shown a consistently high level of approaches. Overall, there has been a 24% increase in approaches over the last 5 years.

The majority of approaches have been by individuals rather than families, as demonstrated in chart 4 below. This is an ongoing trend that reflects the lack of single bedroom properties available in the district.

Chart 4: number of approaches by household

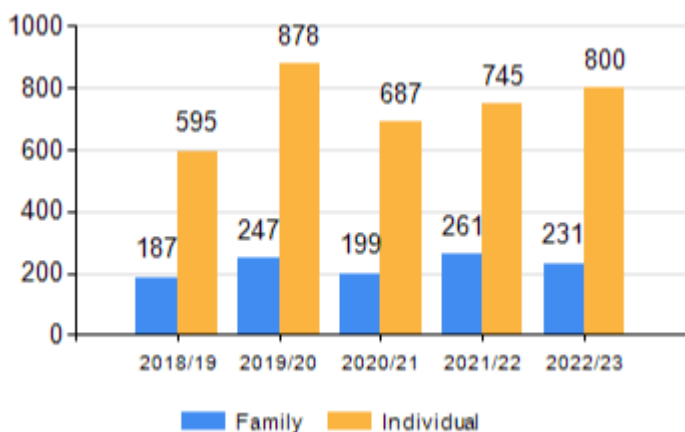


Table 4 below shows the top ten reasons cited for becoming homeless in applications made in 2022/23. A Section 21 notice being served was the most common single cause of potential homelessness, accounting for 17% of approaches. However, family breakdown events combined accounted for almost 30% of approaches.

Table 4: top reasons for approach 2022/23

Approach Reason	Number of cases
Section 21 notice	180
No reason recorded	164
Asked to leave by family	160
Fleeing domestic abuse	71
Evicted (NOT s21 or s8 notice)	68
Relationship Breakdown	60
Rough Sleeping	50
Friend no longer willing to accommodate	42
End of Homes for Ukraine scheme accommodation	41
Sofa surfing	41

Homeless Preventions and Relief

The Housing Options team have consistently delivered a significant number of preventions, stopping people from becoming homeless in the first place by identifying people at risk and intervening earlier with evidenced solutions.

It is not always possible to deliver proactive activities to prevent homelessness, with people presenting to the service already homeless or sleeping rough. When this occurs, the focus has been on helping more people to recover from and exit homelessness by getting them back on their feet, either by enabling people to remain in their existing home or by finding suitable alternative accommodation. If a

person is already homeless, we have a duty to help them secure accommodation for at least six months (the relief duty)

Table 5 below shows the number of successful preventions and reliefs over the last 3 years. The increase in total numbers reflects the increase in demand on the service.

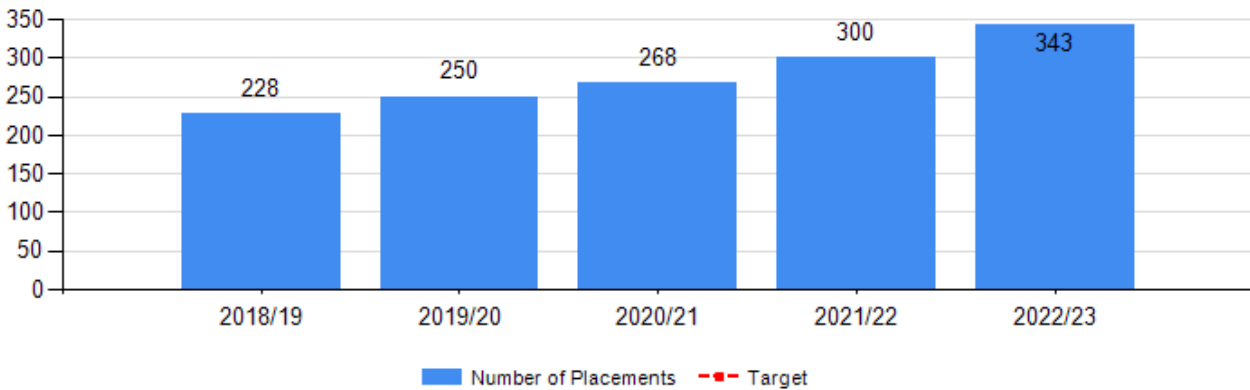
Table 5: Number of preventions and reliefs from April 2020 – March 2023

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Preventions	414	456	429
Relief	208	192	250
Total	622	648	679

Households in Temporary Accommodation

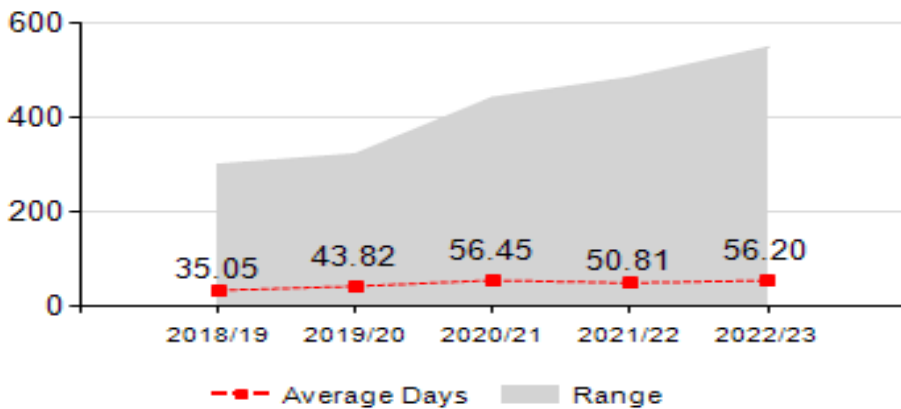
Chart 5 shows that number of households placed into temporary accommodation has risen consistently since 2018/19. This is likely to be a reflection of the growing impact of the cost of living crisis.

Chart 5: number of households placed into temporary accommodation by year



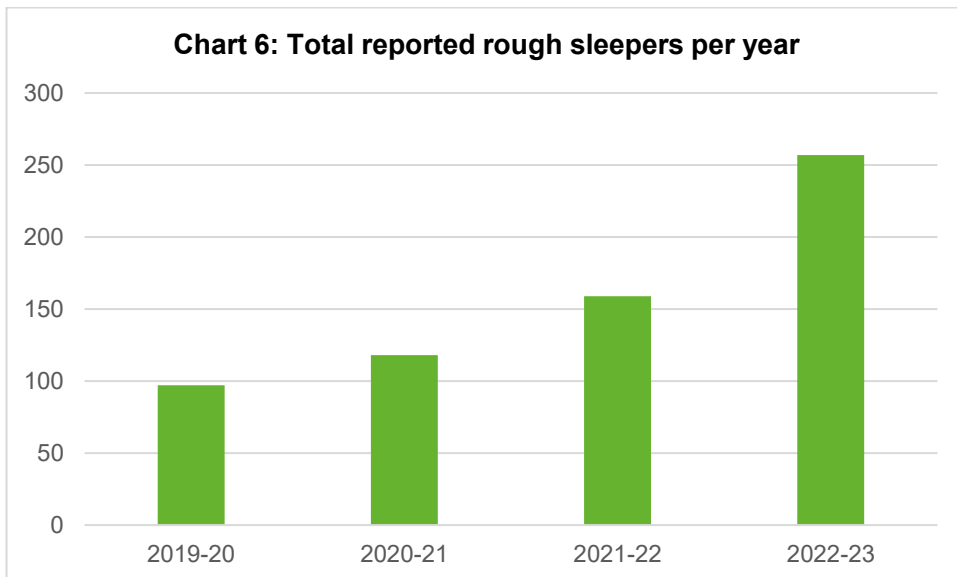
There has been a significant increase in the number of days that households have had to spend in temporary accommodation, with a 65% increase between 2018/19 and 2022/23. This reflects the lack of suitable accommodation in both private and social sectors to successfully move people on to, demonstrated in graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Average number of days and range of days in temporary accommodation by year.



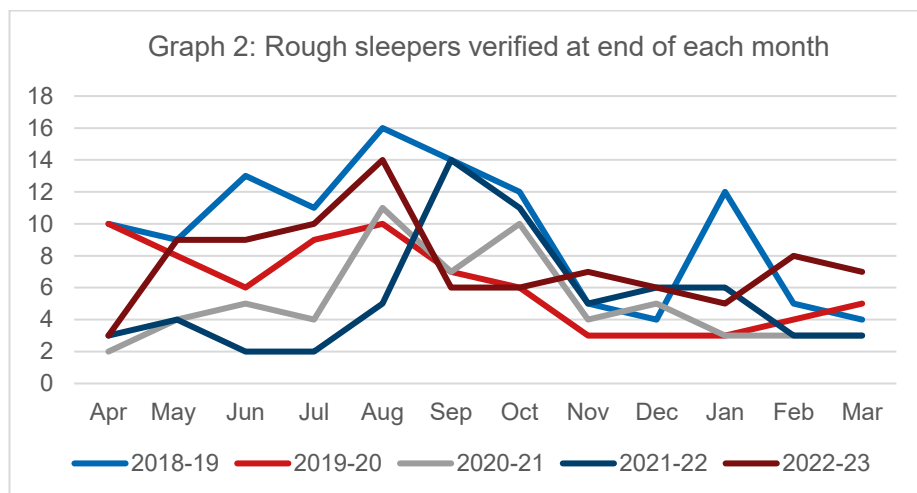
Rough Sleepers

There has been a marked increase in the number of rough sleepers reported to us in the last 4 years as shown in Chart 6 below. There were 97 recorded in 2019-20 and 257 in 2022-23. This is an increase of 62%. It is not possible to confirm whether these were all unique cases (e.g. the same rough sleeper could have been reported to us more than once). However, it is clear that there has been an increase in visibility and awareness in the public sphere.



There has been considerable fluctuation in the number of people verified as sleeping rough over the last 5 years.

As detailed in the graph 2 below, there is a clear pattern of increased rough sleeping in the summer months, which is in keeping with long terms trends for the district.



Numbers of verified rough sleepers have not exceeded 14 at any one time in the 3 years from April 2019, demonstrated through table 6 below:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2019-20	10	8	6	9	10	7	6	3	3	3	4	5
2020-21	2	4	5	4	11	7	10	4	5	3	3	3
2021-22	3	4	2	2	5	14	11	5	6	6	3	3
2022-23	3	9	9	10	14	6	6	7	6	5	8	7

Maintaining relatively low figures has been possible due to the funding streams specifically aimed at reducing rough sleeping, in particular the Rough Sleeper

Initiative (RSI) which provides local councils with long-term funding to support those sleeping rough or at risk of rough sleeping.

Other Indicators of Housing Need

The Housing Options Team deal with people in housing need on a day to day basis and it is clear from their activity that single people of working age are facing particular difficulties in finding a home. This is due to the lack of suitable, affordable, single and shared accommodation. Single people claiming financial help with housing costs are subject to shared accommodation Local Housing Allowance rates, and there is very little accommodation available in that price range.

Demand for Social Housing – Devon Home Choice Registrations

As at April 2023, East Devon has the highest number (nearly 5,374) of Devon Home Choice registrations of all Devon districts for those seeking social housing. There are 2588 East Devon registrations in Bands A – D an increase of 16.5% from the previous year.

The largest number (977) is for one bed accommodation comprising 56% of the total number in Band A – D.

East Devon has a much larger number of registrations in Band E (2786) indicating no current housing need, but clearly a wish to be considered for social housing.

From Devon Home Choice applications as at May 2023, the following information relating to perceived housing needs was identified:

- 33% were sharing facilities
- 22% said they had a Health or Wellbeing Need
- 22% said they were in overcrowded accommodation (3% severely so)

In 2022/2023 251 general needs homes were allocated in East Devon (8 in Band A, 127 in Band B, 75 in Band C, 31 in Band D, and 10 in Band E).

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5. Homelessness Strategy 2019 – 2023 Overview

The four key strategic priorities of the strategy were:

1. Maximising prevention activities and outcomes

2. Increasing accommodation options
3. Minimising rough sleeping and
4. Improving health and wellbeing

Underneath each of the four strategic aims, supplementary objectives were agreed through consultation with internal and external partners. These were listed in the strategy.

In addition, a live action plan has been produced to track our progress against these objectives. This was a live document enabling us to respond to changing circumstances as they arose. The impact and recovery from Covid 19 is an example of this; this led to a prioritisation of core service delivery.

A working Homelessness Strategy Review Group was set up made up of service users, colleagues from partner organisations, councillors and staff in order to co-ordinate and report on progress against objectives over the period of the strategy. The initial intention was for the review group to meet every six months. In practice the group has been meeting on a quarterly basis and has proven to be a useful checking mechanism in our approach to tackling homelessness as well as a vehicle for approving actions, for example the Ending Rough Sleeping Plans which were approved by the group prior to submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

6. Review of performance against strategic objectives

Full details on our performance against all the objectives set out in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy are contained within Appendix A. Provided below is a summary of overall performance

Areas of success

In summary, East Devon achieved success in:

- Achieving high levels of homeless preventions and reliefs (Table 5)
- Addressing a lack of one bed housing options for single homeless applicants through the establishment of an HMO (house in multiple occupation) which provides an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation provision. This eight bed HMO has been in operation since February 2020, with an additional six bed HMO in the process of being delivered at the time of this review.
- Expanding collaborative working with partners across the district, including charities and organisations focused on tackling homelessness, also private sector landlords.

- Rough sleepers form a relatively small proportion of the overall number of homelessness cases, and we have managed to maintain relatively low numbers of rough sleepers throughout the lifespan of the Strategy. At the time of this review we are in the second year of a three year RSI funding programme that runs from April 2022 to March 2025. The funding stream has been used to bring four additional posts to the service all with the objective of reducing rough sleeping.
- Instigation of the Housing First project
- We have produced Rough Sleeping Delivery Plans as and when required throughout the lifespan of the Strategy to outline in detail how we intend to tackle rough sleeping, complementing the strategy.
- Building strong relationships with private sector landlords to reduce the risk of evictions
- Interdepartmental protocols set up to minimise risk of evictions from council tenancies leading to homelessness applications.

Areas of challenge

- No expansion of supported accommodation has been possible, with current services now under threat as at April 2023
- Failed to influence planning teams and Housing Association Partners to help the delivery of more purpose built shared accommodation in the district
- Developing a Landlord Charter to encourage good practice in the private sector
- No night shelters in East Devon, although Cold weather funding has enabled emergency accommodation to be provided.
- No work undertaken to determine the need for a women-only hostel in East Devon
- Little progress in removing barriers to access to primary care for those who are homeless
- Mental Health Strategy action plan has been delayed in part due to lack of resources as a result of Covid response. It is hoped this will be developed during 2023/24
- No work directly related to the Public Health Strategy has been carried out, although support has been given as part of existing work by officers

7. Lessons learned and Next Steps

Staff across the housing service as well as those in our private and charitable sector partners have made considerable efforts made over the strategy period to achieve our objectives. Much has been achieved over the last 4 years, and many

people across our district have been helped to escape and avoid homelessness and rough sleeping over this period.

This has been done against a backdrop of a national and regional rise in homelessness, as outlined in the introduction, and a local context of high average property prices, low wage levels for those in employment and difficulties in maintaining the level of social housing stock, with acquisitions struggling to offset 'Right to Buy' losses.

Bearing all this in mind, as well as the unpredictable fall out from the Covid pandemic, it may be that the pure number of actions included in the strategy have meant that some failures were inevitable. However, there are lessons to be learned from these setbacks.

We overestimated the ability of housing staff to commit sufficient time over and above the requirements of their day job, which may have limited the progress that was possible. There are existing conflicts of interest that can negatively impact on the performance of the Housing Options team (e.g. evictions of tenants leading to subsequent homelessness applications). More foundation work to explain how the Housing Service as a whole does can influence the ability of the Housing Options team to carry out their tasks could help to improve outcomes in the future.

It was clear from the consultation during the formation of the 2019-2023 strategy, that operational staff were keen to assist, and had some great ideas on what they could do to assist. However, it has become apparent that more evaluation of these raw ideas was needed. A more ruthless approach to suggesting which actions should be progressed would have resulted in a leaner but more deliverable set of actions. In addition, firmer agreement to commit resources to the objectives at senior management level would help operational staff feel that they are in a position themselves to commit time to tasks that are not directly related to their day jobs.

A number of the actions arising from the strategy were not easily measureable. More consideration will need to be given to ensure that any actions in the future strategy will be SMART.

As we prepare to write our strategy for 2023-28, this review will be used to inform our development process alongside comprehensive stakeholder consultation. There will be key areas that will always form part of any homelessness strategy.

- Continuing to focus on the prevention and relief of homelessness.
- Continuing to concentrate on tackling rough sleeping
- Expanding our accommodation options to tackle the ongoing supply and demand scenario in order to resolve homeless cases wherever possible, including reviewing our own housing supply options

- Taking actions to improve sustainability for social and private sector tenants in order to prevent homelessness and repeat homelessness against a backdrop of the current housing and environmental landscape including the cost of living crisis

We will work with our stakeholders to expand on these principles to develop a robust deliverable strategy to deliver achievable and measurable objectives.

8. Acknowledgements

EDDC appreciates that we cannot tackle homelessness alone as a local authority, and we have a strong history of partnership working. We could not have delivered this strategy alone and delivery of the objectives required effective partnership working. We are grateful to our partners that continue to work with us to tackle homelessness and work with us to address our key priorities. A full list of our partners can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Achievements against Aims of the EDDC Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-23

Priority 1 – Maximising prevention activities and outcomes

Additional support

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
1.1. Work to identify and maintain existing informal support networks for tenants	Yes	As a landlord we use the Financial Resilience team to help us give financial support to tenants. We are guiding, where possible, through budgeting help through our own staff and signposting to other free debt support agencies. Mobile Support Officers (MSO's) introduce new sheltered tenants to support networks such as Together, tenant social groups and much more. Tenant handbook details support groups also. We link up with Foodbank, Turntable, Axminster recycle, Age Concern (UK), local charities.
1.2. Investigate upskilling or recruiting specialist support officers to offer more intensive support to tenants	Yes	<p>There are a number of specialised posts that have been created within the Housing Options team over the lifetime of the Strategy. List as follows with brief summary of their purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x Temporary Accommodation Officers providing support to homeless applicants provided with temporary accommodation, with a focus on assisting them to move on to more stable accommodation options • 2 x Rough Sleeper Navigators focusing on providing outreach and support for new and existing rough sleepers with a focus on moving them off the streets and into accommodation, then supporting them towards more stable accommodation options. Both posts funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) scheme

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing First Officer – providing intense wraparound support to former rough sleepers accommodated in EDDC properties through the Housing First programme. Post funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) scheme • 2 x Private Sector Liaison Officers (PSLO’s), assisting people at risk of homelessness into private sector accommodation, through the Council’s rent deposit and bond scheme. As well as assisting people into accommodation, the PSLO’s provide ongoing support to both tenants and landlords to ensure sustainability of the accommodation arrangements. One of the PSLO posts is funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) scheme <p>There is also a specialised post within Housing Services, namely a Mental Health Officer. This post focuses on providing support to EDDC tenants with mental health concerns.</p>
1.3.Explore how transitional support to help tenants settle into new accommodation can be provided	Yes	For new tenants we liaise with internal department and signpost to external agencies to support that tenant. A tenant handbook is also provided for information purposes.
1.4.Examine how floating support into private sector properties can be delivered	Yes	Over the lifetime of this Strategy floating support has been provided by Sanctuary for tenants who are struggling with their tenancies in the private sector, referrals are made for this service through the Housing Options team. In addition, see comments under 1.10

Life skills

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
1.5.Introduce more personal budget education for tenants	Yes	Tenants are provided with budgeting help through the Rentals team on a one to one basis, referrals involving more complex cases are also made to an independent financial advice service, Homemaker.

1.6.Tie in personal development and life skills into each housing applicant’s personal housing plan before sign up	Yes	Personal skills, life development and signposting to appropriate organisations and partner agencies are included within the Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) for every homeless applicant
1.7.Address isolation through promoting and supporting meaningful activities	Yes	As a landlord, enrichment activities have been organised and run for tenants to instil confidence and learn new skills
1.8.Identify working and volunteering opportunities for tenants and rough sleepers to increase skills	No	This has not been pursued
1.9.Tap into existing and develop new life-skills projects in partnership with the Community Development Team	No	This was discussed during consultation for the 2019-23 Strategy but has not materialised. Examples given at the time included assistance from the Community Development Team in providing life-skills for the occupants of temporary accommodation. This is an ongoing action for the live action plan, action currently postponed until September 2023.

Partnership working

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
1.10.Engage with landlords at an earlier stage to reduce the risk of evictions – intervening at the earliest opportunity when rent arrears arise, or other tenancy breaches are identified	Yes	Strong relationships with landlords within the private sector have been formed over the period of the Strategy, in main through the Private Sector Liaison Officers (PSLO’s) who manage the Council’s rent deposit and bond scheme. Tenancy sustainment plan is in place with the PSLO’s carrying out checks after one month and three months of the tenancy where we have accommodated people in the private sector through the tenancy deposit and bond scheme. Checks are made with landlords and tenants. Landlords can refer into the service if requiring assistance or if

		<p>there is an issue ie when there are rent arrears, attempts will then be made to resolve the issues.</p> <p>Due to these strong relationships landlords and letting agents know to refer issues for all tenants in the private sector where there is a tenancy issue, and potential eviction, at the earliest stage possible.</p>
1.11.Share training opportunities with partner agencies and volunteers so that we can increase the skills of all partners	Yes	Young Devon’s Homelessness Prevention Workers have been included in various training sessions alongside members of the Housing Options team
1.12.Identify and build up links with support workers in the community	Yes	There has been considerable expansion of joint working over the lifespan of the Strategy, in particular with regards to tackling rough sleeping. Joint working with other agencies and charities across the district focused on assisting rough sleepers includes, but is not limited to, Young Devon, the Police, Open Door (Exmouth), Gateway (Sidmouth), Pippins (Axminster), Waffle House (Axminster), Honiton Church, Exmouth Welfare Trust, foodbanks across the district and outreach nurses, covering the large geographical area of the district. The RSI funded Rough Sleeper Navigators at the centre of much of the joint working arrangements in an acknowledged joined up response to tackling rough sleeping.
1.13.Work with all Housing teams to ensure that procedures focus on early identification of potential risk of homelessness and intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring	Yes	As a landlord, protocols have been set up between the Housing Options team and the Rentals and Estate Management teams within the Housing Service. Protocols have been in place since 2019 as these are the two avenues where EDDC tenants would be evicted ie for significant rent arrears or for anti-social behaviour. The protocols centre on early intervention when a tenant gets into difficulty in sustaining their tenancy, alerting and involving the Housing Options team at the earliest appropriate stage in order to provide a joined up plan to prevent the tenant from becoming homeless. Protocols in the spirit of ‘duty to refer’ principles.

		<p>Measurement is provided through one of the ongoing live objectives which records the number of evictions throughout the respective year – numbers as follows for the period of this review:</p> <p>2019-20 = 7 (all Rentals cases) 2020-21 = 3 (2 x Rentals and 1 x ASB case) 2021-22 = 4 (2 x Rentals and 2 x ASB cases) 2022-23 = 3 (2 x Rentals and 1 x ASB case)</p> <p>A pre- eviction protocol exists between local LA’s (Devon & Cornwall Housing Options Partnership, DCHOP) and Devon County Council that focuses on the homelessness prevention contract and provides good practice for avoiding and managing accommodation breakdowns for young people in supported projects.</p> <p>In addition to evictions, there have been a number of existing EDDC tenants who have made homeless applications for a variety of reasons – this is an area to focus on within the next Strategy and with a view to enhanced tenancy sustainability.</p>
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Referrals

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
1.14.Ensure that protocols are in place to successfully implement the duty to refer	Yes	Devon & Cornwall duty to refer protocol in place
1.15.Produce a clear referral process for GPs	Yes	See response to 1.14
1.16.Work with Community Mental Health teams to streamline a two-way referral process	Yes	See response to 1.14

1.17. Adopt duty to refer principles across all Council teams to facilitate referrals of customers who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Yes	See response to 1.13 In addition to colleagues within the Housing service, there are also close ties with the Private Sector Housing team and the Revenues & Benefits team whereby they will alert the Housing Options team to any potential homeless situations for people residing at home or in the private sector
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Publicity

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
1.18. Provide more information on what support is available and existing responsibilities for tenants and landlords	Yes	Information is available on the EDDC website
1.19. Produce a communications plan to ensure that any messages are distributed as widely as possible	Partial	There is no specific communication plan, any messages that need to be distributed are assessed and actioned on a case by case basis
1.20. Produce and publicise a simplified summary of the Homelessness Reduction Act duties	Yes	A summary of the Homelessness Reduction Act duties is publicised on the EDDC website

Priority 2 – Increasing accommodation options

Planning and policy

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
2.1. Make use of data becoming available from the longitudinal study created in partnership with Birmingham University and LiveWest Housing Association	Yes	A number of initiatives focussing on mental health. Driving this will be a new mental health specialist who will help to support our officers through increased training and tenants who might require additional support. Officers are continuing to provide financial support to our tenants referring them, where necessary, to agencies if additional advice is needed. Our Mobile Support Officers also ran some Exeter Community Energy sessions across our community centres looking at tips on how to make their homes more energy efficient and save money. The private sector housing team and homelessness team are also working hard to refer cases and to ensure poor standards of housing in the private sector are picked up. Going forward we also have the opportunity to change how we make our decisions on what planned works and upgrades need to be done to our properties by not just considering the condition of our properties but thinking about how improving the suitability of the property will impact on the tenant's needs and wellbeing.
2.2. Review our Empty Homes policy with the wider Housing teams including Rentals and Private Sector Housing to coordinate and agree the most appropriate use of empty properties	Yes	Full time Empty Homes Officer employed to bring empty homes back into use. Priority given to problematic empty homes and empty homes in areas and of types in high housing demand across East Devon. Empty Homes policy/ action plan and Housing enforcement policy reviewed by PSH in 2022. Consultation required with wider Council services. New policies to go to Cabinet/ Council in 2023.

		Please note disruption to Council services including Private Sector Housing team during Covid 19 restrictions 2020-2021 and resource implications for Homes for Ukraine project on officer time and availability.
2.3. Provide robust data on the need for different types of accommodation and work with the planning team to ensure that temporary and move on accommodation is spread across the district	Yes	Reports are provided to the EDDC Cabinet on an annual basis, and more frequently when appropriate and necessary, to provide an overview of the homelessness situation in East Devon. The report includes data specific to current challenges and objectives at the time ie to support the need for different types of accommodation (the purchase of HMO's to be utilised as temporary accommodation, see 2.11, or for general stock to be utilised as move-on accommodation following the 'everybody in' project during the pandemic in 2020) or when addressing staff resource levels
2.4. Provide clarity on the role of Housing staff in meeting the needs of residents in all accommodation, taking account of more complex needs and the increased need for support of some residents	Yes	See response to 1.2 EDDC tenants with support needs are supported by a combination of Mobile Support Officers, referrals to floating support services and signposting to other organisations and agencies. Signposting and floating support referrals are also made for individuals and households in the private sector.

Supported Accommodation

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
2.5. Explore a 'Housing First' model for the most vulnerable applicants to build resilience to address addiction or other issues before moving to mainstream accommodation. The model is designed to provide open-ended support to long-term and recurrently homeless people who have high needs	Yes	The Housing First project has been in operation from 2019 and currently consists of six former rough sleepers with tenancies in EDDC properties and receiving intensive support from a dedicated Housing First Housing Officer. This post is funded by the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and has been in place since 2019, originally outsourced jointly with Mid Devon District Council with one post covering six Housing First tenancies between both LA's, then progressing the following year to an internal member of staff managing six EDDC Housing First tenancies. The current funding stream covers three years, up until 31.03.25.

2.6.Look to increase supported accommodation in partnership with other districts, public bodies and Housing Associations	No	Not pursued
2.7.Identify any privately run supported accommodation and scope for referring into this accommodation	No	Not pursued
2.8.Identify the need for women only temporary hostel accommodation	No	Not pursued
2.9.Explore the possibility of allowing pets in temporary accommodation	Partial	This is managed on a case by case basis – in general it is acknowledged that there is a significant shortage of temporary accommodation providers (spot purchase) that allow pets. There is no designated temporary accommodation available that allows pets.

New types of accommodation

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
2.10.Identify any suitable Council owned land/property which could be used for temporary housing solutions (e.g. adapted containers, modular, pre-fab buildings, caravans)	Yes	There has been no work towards using Council land for temporary accommodation solutions over the lifespan of the Strategy, and a shift in focus from ideas such as adapted containers and caravans towards modular and pre-fab buildings. Six existing council properties that are not available to let on a long term basis have been utilised as designated temporary accommodation in order to provide a more stable form of temporary accommodation for residents, alongside budgetary priorities

		including reducing expenditure on spot purchase temporary accommodation and maximising income from assets.
2.11.Explore alternative tenure options (e.g. rent to buy, short-term move on accommodation to equip people to manage and sustain a tenancy)	Yes	Two houses of multiple occupation (HMO's) have been purchased utilising right-to-buy receipts specifically for use as temporary accommodation for single people, aimed at being a short-term arrangement with support to equip people to move on to manage and sustain a tenancy. The first, an 8 bed HMO, has been in operation since February 2020 and the second, a 6 bed HMO, is expected to become available for use at a later date in 2023.
2.12.Increase options for single people including self-contained accommodation as an alternative to shared accommodation	Yes	See response to 2.11
2.13.Explore 'fostering'/supported lodging schemes similar to those in place for young people and care leavers	No	Not pursued
2.14.Work with the planning team to encourage more purpose-built shared accommodation for all age groups (including older people)	No	We have not had any success to date due to the perceived challenges shared living presents from a management perspective although we will continue to aim for this
2.15.Encourage responsibility and stability through tenure agreements (licences/tenancies)	Yes	See response to 2.11 – the HMO model works well in encouraging responsibility and stability in that occupants are only moved on when they are considered ready by the members of staff working with them and they have demonstrated that they are ready to so (ie by maintaining rent and service charge payments) in order to increase the chances of longer term stability when they have moved on to alternative tenancies
2.16.Explore more affordable accommodation schemes	Partial	A significant amount of work has been and is being done with planners and volume builders to ensure the continued delivery of high quality & numbers of affordable housing across the district

2.17. Develop the role of the Council's recently established Housing Company to flexibly address specific housing need	No	The Council's Housing Company closed during the lifespan of the Strategy, and has been replaced with the Housing Task Force
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Partnership working

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
2.18. Liaise with Managing agents and larger estate companies to explore options for increasing and improving accommodation, including incentives to become a 'social' landlord	No	Not pursued
2.19. Develop and implement a Landlord Charter to encourage good practice and cooperation with private sector landlords in avoiding eviction	No	Not pursued
2.20. Build relationships with Housing Association colleagues to develop accommodation options for people who become homeless in East Devon	Partial	All social housing landlords in Devon subscribe to the Devon Home Choice Forum and play a significant part in reducing homelessness by offering tenancies to individuals and households from homeless situations. Livewest Housing Association own and manages an 8 unit supported accommodation project that is used specifically as temporary accommodation for 6 single homeless applicants and 2 homeless families. Arrangement has been in place for several years and works well
2.20. Work with accommodation providers to build positive relationships with people who become homeless	No	Not pursued

Priority 3 – Minimising rough sleeping

Developing a new ethos

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
3.1.Proactively engage with rough sleepers with greater flexibility, adapting to individual circumstances and needs	Yes	The additional funding received through the RSI (Rough Sleeper Initiative) has allowed us to expand on our work with rough sleepers considerably. From outreach when rough sleepers are first located right through until a positive outcome has been achieved, each case is dealt with by our Rough Sleeper Navigators according to the situation and the needs of the individual
3.2.Take a holistic approach to supporting rough sleepers by not just focusing on problems, but also identifying skills, aspirations, hobbies, and other interests	Yes	As above – in addition – identifying and encouraging skills, aspirations, hobbies and other interests are a key factor in managing Housing First customers
3.3.Improve public awareness of what to do if they suspect that someone is sleeping rough	Yes	Details of how to report instances of rough sleeping, so that we can follow up the report and assists the person sleeping rough, are included on our website

Partnership working

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
3.4. Investigate ways of breaking down the barriers and building trust with rough sleepers through joint working with our partners.	Yes	Positive, collaborative joint working with partner agencies and organisations has expanded over the course of the Strategy, again in main due to the additional resources provided through the RSI and the additional focus on rough sleeping cases this allows. Examples of strong joint working within the community include ‘police link’ meetings in Exmouth and Sidmouth where our Rough Sleeper Navigators meet with colleagues from the police, mental health services, Young Devon, and charities/agencies specialising in

		homelessness support including Open Door (Exmouth) and Gateway (Sidmouth) – in the meetings cases of rough sleeping are discussed, existing and new, with a collaborative response to reaching a positive solution
3.5. Liaise with Community Mental Health Teams and other health services to develop better ways of working with rough sleepers.	Yes	As above – community mental health teams participate in the ‘police link’ meetings

Additional support

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
3.6. Work with health services to further develop the range of outreach services to people who experience homelessness	Partial	With relatively low rough sleeper numbers this area has not expanded, although throughout the pandemic there were examples of joint working with health services through a programme to provide rough sleepers, and homeless applicants in temporary accommodation, with vaccinations. Additionally, the ‘everybody in’ programme around that time also enabled accommodation options for many rough sleepers, where there may not have been otherwise
3.7. Better communicate with rough sleepers to explain the support that is available, making clear the responsibilities that fall on them	Yes	The approach from the Rough Sleeper navigators is very much a collaborative one, with set responsibilities agreed with engaging rough sleepers in order to achieve a positive outcome. Positive outcomes are recorded by the Navigators and have averaged 46 a year between 2019-20 and 2022-23 with the main outcomes being accommodation arrangements in supported projects, the private sector and social housing.
3.7. Investigate whether additional Mental Health training can be given to Housing Officers to support rough sleepers into accommodation	Yes	Mental health training is provided for all members of the Housing Options team

Supported accommodation

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
3.8. Work with our partners to identify viable areas to offer night shelters in East Devon	Partial	An arrangement existed previously over two winters with Exeter City Council where we financially contributed towards the provision of a temporary night shelter based in Exeter, the funding enabling us to refer rough sleepers from east Devon. However, this practice has been replaced by funding streams from central government including Cold Weather Funding that has enabled us to provide emergency accommodation for rough sleepers in East Devon (in the main B&B's), and whilst they are accommodated we can work with them to ensure there is no return to rough sleeping
3.9. Investigate if shelters should be available year round, or restricted to times of extreme weather	No	No longer pursued – see response to 3.8
3.10. Investigate the merits of 'pop-up' night shelters	No	No longer pursued – see response to 3.8
3.11. Look to develop 'Safe Sleep' schemes, and investigate if churches might be a possible location for these schemes.	No	No longer pursued – see response to 3.8

Temporary accommodation

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
3.12. Consult on whether the establishment of a designated area or areas for rough sleepers to sleep outdoors would be a positive way forward	No	This has not been pursued and would not fit in with EDDC's aspirations to end rough sleeping and commitment to this programme.

3.13. Establish whether there is a need for a women-only hostel in East Devon	No	Not pursued (see response to 2.8)
3.14. Explore using alternative accommodation options, including a Housing First model	Yes	See response to 2.5

Priority 4 – Improving Health and Wellbeing

Working with local GPs to improve access

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
4.1.Promote shared understanding of roles and the need to act jointly to address the housing and health needs of vulnerable individuals	Yes	Housing Options Manager attends multi-agency meetings held fortnightly in order to share on complex cases
4.2.Explore the possibility of extending the provisions of the duty to refer, introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act, to GPs in East Devon	Partial	GPs are not part of the public body duty of the Duty to Refer. A two way referral process with GPs has been deemed not achievable in practice. However, team members attend multi-agency meetings to share information on complex cases.
4.3.Explore what can be done to remove current barriers and improve access to primary care services locally for people experiencing homelessness	No	No progress
4.4.Explore potential social prescribing options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	No	Initial investigations into linking in with Countryside were not successful, due to perceived risk of upsetting existing groups.

Access to mental health and drug and alcohol addiction services

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
4.5.Work more closely with Devon Partnership Trust and the local agencies providing support for	Partial	Participation in the prevention of alcohol and other drug related deaths and clinical safety of substance misuse services forum

drug and alcohol addiction to ensure the needs of people experiencing homelessness are taken into account in their service plans		
4.6.Explore the Housing First model and supported housing as a means of providing a more stable base for the most vulnerable people to address the issues impacting negatively on their health and wellbeing	Yes	See response to 2.5
4.7.Implement the actions arising from the forthcoming Housing Mental Health Strategy	No	There is no action plan developed from Mental Health Strategy to date. This is an ongoing action for the live action plan, reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Homelessness Strategy review Group, action currently postponed until March 2024.

Advice and support

Aim	Achieved?	Detail
4.8.Apply principles from the Public Health Strategy into our approach to improving the health and wellbeing of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless	No	Not pursued
4.9.Equip our frontline staff with appropriate information and skills to work with our most vulnerable and complex clients to influence behaviour towards recovery and improved health	Partial	Some training has been required when available. Covid restrictions limited opportunities

and wellbeing, as part of personalised housing plans		
4.10.Improve partnership working with local homeless support organisations and agencies who deliver drug and alcohol support services	Yes	See response to 1.12
4.11.Improve cross-department and multi-agency working to identify people with support needs at the earliest opportunity as part of our homelessness prevention work	Yes	Cross department working: see response to 1.13 and 1.17 Multi-agency working: see response to 1.12
4.12.Consider the inclusion of people experiencing homelessness in Community Development, initiatives to improve life skills and resilience	No	See response to 1.9
4.13.Increase understanding of, and facilitate signposting to, community support and resources across the Housing service	No	Looking at the bigger picture, this is an area in need of improvement across the Housing Service.
4.14.Explore the options for more outreach, floating services, and social prescribing to promote improved health and wellbeing	Yes	Our outreach capabilities and programme has been expanded significantly due to introducing two Rough Sleeper Navigator posts to the team from 2019. These posts are funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) with the current funding stream covering three years, up to 31.03.25. A main objective of the Navigators is to undertake assertive street outreach sessions and hot spot visits, often outside of usual office hours, to verify, engage and welfare check people sleeping rough from their first point of contact and to help encourage long-term change

		Referrals are made for floating support services for people in need via the Housing Options team, again an area that requires improvement across the Housing service.
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9. Appendix B – Partnership Working

10. External Partner Agencies

Examples of current external partnership working include:

- **DCHOP (Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership)** – aims to improve the consistency of housing options and homelessness services across Devon and Cornwall Local Authorities by developing shared policies, practices and service standards, to ensure equality of access.
- **DCRSP (Devon and Cornwall Rough Sleeper Partnership)** - monitors the development and implementation of services across Devon and Cornwall that deliver interventions to rough sleepers.
- **Devon Home Choice Partnership** – reviews and updates policies and practices of social landlords throughout Devon who use Devon Home Choice for housing allocation.
- **MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)** - meetings to share information on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between local police, probation, health, child protection, housing practitioners, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Discuss options to safeguard the adult victim and develop a co-ordinated action plan.
- **MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements)** – local authorities assist the Police, Probation and Prison Services in working together with other agencies to manage the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community to protect the public.
- **Police Link** – meetings to share information on individuals who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, across the district to resolve housing problems and related issues.
- **Homeless Prevention Panel** – a multi-agency panel co-ordinated by the Housing Resolutions Team Leader from Young Devon as part of the Devon-wide protocol for preventing homelessness for young people aged 16/17 and care leavers.
- **Devon Interpersonal, gender-based violence and abuse Local Partnership Board** - a collaborative group working towards improving outcomes for victims and survivors of interpersonal and gender-based violence including domestic and sexual violence and abuse. This is achieved through a strategic approach to sharing knowledge and intelligence, identifying and, where possible, addressing gaps in support and is founded on listening and engaging with those with lived experience and supported by expert evidence base, to continuously learn and improve.
- **Prevention of alcohol and other drug related deaths and clinical safety of substance misuse services forum** - to reduce the number of suicide, alcohol and other drug related deaths in Devon and Torbay. Seeking opportunities for prevention and early intervention.

11. EDDC Services

Our Housing Services are based at the council offices in both Honiton and Exmouth. Both Blackdown House in Honiton and Exmouth Town Hall currently operate a drop-in and appointment service for people who are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The number of callers and type of enquiry - in person, by phone and by email - is constantly reviewed so that we can provide a more effective service. Customer culture has changed considerably within the review period – prior to the pandemic there was significantly more footfall at the drop in services at both Honiton and Exmouth, this has dropped substantially since re-opening the offices after the pandemic with subsequent rises in telephone and online approaches.

EDDC preventative actions/tools include the following:

- **EDDC Rent Deposit and Bond Scheme** – a key tool in preventing homelessness, this scheme assists people who are threatened with homelessness to secure accommodation in the private sector by arranging for a bond or loan to cover the deposit and rent in advance payment.
- **Sanctuary Scheme** - aims to help victims of domestic violence and abuse feel safe and secure when they choose to remain in their own homes by improving the security of the home with professionally installed security measures.
- **Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) for Council Tax** -DHPs are funding provided by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) and can be used to help support residents who are receiving either Housing Benefit or the Housing costs element of Universal Credit and are struggling to afford the shortfall in their rent. The fund can also be used to help with deposits, rent in advance and sometimes removal costs. The Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to help those who are struggling to pay any remaining council tax due after Council Tax Reduction has been applied to their account. Awards from DHP and EHF funds are decided at the Council's discretion after careful consideration of individual circumstances.
- **Financial Resilience** -the Financial Resilience Team work with residents who are experiencing financial hardship and/or living in poverty. The team work to identify the underlying issues causing the hardship and work with partners to try to address and solve these. The team has access to the DWPs Household Support Fund and EDDC's Cost of Living Hardship Fund. Through this fund financial awards can be made to those who are unable to pay for food or other essentials. This could be in the form of shopping vouchers for local supermarkets and help with energy costs. We may also

be able to help with other non-emergency requests such as whitegoods and carpets. Support is subject to availability and eligibility. Referrals may be made to partner organisations such as Exeter Community Energy and Citizens' Advice East Devon. More information and details of wider support available and applications to discretionary funds can be found at Financial Support and Advice - Help with household bills - East Devon. The Housing Benefit, Financial Resilience Team will continue to work closely together with officers from the different housing teams to ensure that preventing homelessness is a key consideration when making decisions on awards from any of the discretionary funds.

EDDC Funded Support Services

We work in partnership with and contribute funding towards the following organisations to tackle specific areas of homelessness:

- **Young Devon** - working with young people aged between 16 and 24 and help those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, assisting them with accommodation options including supported housing and lodging schemes. Young Devon produce detailed quarterly reports demonstrating their work and achievements.
- **Homemaker** – providing financial assistance to customers with the primary purpose to prevent homelessness and promote independence, offering specialist advice and support to individuals and families who may be at risk of losing their home, also offering support to people who may be moving into new accommodation and living independently for the first time

Additional services/projects

- **Supported accommodation** - the sole remaining supported housing project in East Devon is Alexandra House in Exmouth, owned and managed by Westward Housing and delivering a range of services providing people with opportunities to shape their own lives and have an improved quality of life, enabling individuals to live the life they want and contribute to their communities. We also work in partnership with supported accommodation providers based in neighbouring Exeter, including Gabriel House, Exeter YMCA, the Foyer and Mortimer House.
- **Open Door Centre, Exmouth** – provide support for rough sleepers including the provision of counselling, showers, laundry, clothing bank, sleeping bags, food and use of the telephone and internet.

- **Gateway Homeless Action Group, Sidmouth** – aim to help homeless and vulnerable people in Sidmouth to access existing provision and to act as an advocate for individuals within the wider community.
- **Waffle Houses in Axminster and Seaton** – community projects helping with food, clothing, advice, facilitating access to services, help with furnishings and essentials through charity when moving home
- **Exmouth Community Larder, Honiton Food Bank, Axminster Food Bank and Seaton Soup Kitchen and Food Drop In** – all providing support with the provision of food for people facing financial problems.