

Central  
Bedfordshire  
Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands,  
Shefford SG17 5TQ



**TO EACH MEMBER OF THE  
SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

04 March 2015

Dear Councillor

**SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Monday  
16 March 2015**

Further to the Agenda and papers for the above meeting, previously circulated, please find attached appendices relating to the following reports, which were not circulated with the agenda due to their size:-

11. Park Homes Strategy

To consider and comment on the feedback received as a result of the public consultation on the draft Park Homes in Central Bedfordshire Offer document and agree the action plan which will drive improvements to services over the next 5 years.

12. Homelessness Strategy

To consider and comment on the feedback received as a result of the public consultation on the draft Homelessness Strategy. Consider the draft Homelessness Strategy (Appendix A), with particular regard to the Council's duty to promote equality and provide comment to the Executive.

Comment on the action plan which will drive improvements to services over the next 5 years and note the equality impact assessment of the Homelessness Strategy.

Should you have any queries regarding the above please contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team on Tel: 0300 300 4196.

Yours sincerely

Paula Everitt  
Scrutiny Policy Adviser  
email: [paula.everitt@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:paula.everitt@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank

**APPENDIX A**

**Park Homes in Central  
Bedfordshire – A unique  
environment and place to live  
2015-2020**



## Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction .....	4
Background.....	5
The National and Legal Context .....	6
The Park Homes context in Central Bedfordshire .....	9
The Needs and Aspirations of Park Home residents .....	11
The Challenges of the Park Home Lifestyle.....	13
Key Characteristics of Park Home Owners in Central Bedfordshire .....	17
Vision Statement.....	18
The Priorities.....	19

## Foreword

As the Council's Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing, I am delighted to introduce the council's offer for park homes residents in Central Bedfordshire. Its purpose is to set out our approach and commitment to creating a better offer and choice for older people.

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live, visit and invest in. Housing has a central role to play in everything we are seeking to achieve in Central Bedfordshire and we recognise the unique nature of the park home lifestyle, which can offer an affordable housing option within attractive rural locations.



The Council would like to use this opportunity to raise awareness of the park home sector, the role in which it plays in the local housing market and in meeting the needs and aspirations of older people.

Over 400 residents have told us about what it is like to live in a park home, the things that matter to them and some of the challenges they face. The council's objective is to enhance and protect the positive aspects of the park home lifestyle whilst helping residents to meet the challenges of living in a park home.

We have identified the following four priorities to help us to meet this objective:

Priority one: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to.

Priority two: To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for park homes residents.

Priority three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes.

Priority four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities.

Our vision is that all park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.

We will look creatively at existing resources and assets to help meet the above priorities, including the use of sheltered schemes that might be suitable as wider community hubs for older people, including park home residents.

The council will be ambitious in our approach to the delivery of this offer; it is critical that we work closely with park homes residents, site owners and the wider communities to help make this vision a reality.

Councilor Ms. Carole Hegley  
Executive member responsible for Social Care, Health and Housing

## Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the unique nature of the park home lifestyle, which can offer an affordable housing option within attractive rural locations.

This document aims to explore and gain a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of park home residents, and use this insight to set out how to improve the offer and choice for residents.

The document is structured to provide important contextual information and background about park homes, followed by the findings of the needs assessment survey and the council's initial response to these findings. Finally, the document captures the vision and priorities, and how the Council will work collaboratively with residents to improve the offer and choice.

The council will look to provide more opportunities for residents to become involved to strengthen the development of the park homes community whilst improving their ability to communicate and influence the council.

One of the key priorities of the offer is to develop and provide good quality, accessible information to residents and work in partnership across the council and with other organisations to ensure residents have access to support when they need it to enable them to plan their lives and their housing needs now and in the future.

The majority of park homes residents are over 65; the council aims to improve their health and wellbeing by encouraging collaborative work with the voluntary sector and within adult social care, health and housing services to enable residents to remain connected to local facilities and to live independently in their park homes for as long as residents wish.

The current arrangements for accessing utilities are some cause for residents concern; the council will explore options available to be able to give residents more choice and control in this area.

The council has developed four key medium term priorities to respond to the needs and aspirations of park home residents, the document contains an action plan, setting out key actions and the timetable for achieving them.

## Background

Park homes are residential mobile homes that require licensing, the homes are normally owned by the occupier, who rents a pitch from the site operator. Residents have to pay a monthly pitch fee to the site operator; they are required to comply with rules and regulations, prescribed in legislation and by the site operator.

Park homes have proved attractive to retired people wishing to release capital from the sale of a house and find a pleasant and peaceful location with a sense of community to live in permanently

A key characteristic of the park home sector is the age profile of its residents, with the majority of park homes occupied by older people. Many sites have age restrictions in place with the most common minimum age limit being set at 50 or over.

At the last census (2011), almost 160,000 people were living in approximately 84,000 park homes across 2,000 sites in the UK.

<i>Census 2011</i>		
	Total Number of Mobile Homes in the UK	Mobile Homes as a Percentage of all UK
Total number of people	160,000	0.3%
Total number of households	90,000	0.3%
Total number of dwellings	112,000	0.4%
<i>Berkeley Hanover Consulting (2002) Study for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister</i>		
	Park Homes	All of the UK
Proportion of households that are elderly	48%	33%
Proportion of households with children	4%	29%
Average Monthly Incomes	£600	£1,800
Proportion of households with savings	81%	65%
Households with savings less than £1,500	45%	58%

The council is currently administering site licenses for 82 park home and gypsy and traveller sites across Central Bedfordshire with the total number of units across all sites exceeding 1200.

47 of these 82 sites are more traditional gypsy and traveler occupied mobile home sites, which are different in character and not generally recognised as “Park homes”. Many of these 47 sites contain single unit gypsy and traveler homes.

The gypsy and traveller sites differ from more traditionally known park home sites. Whilst licensing responsibilities for the council are similar for park homes and gypsy and traveller sites, there are significant differences in the residential occupation of the sites.

The intention of this document is to focus primarily on park homes sites, whilst recognising that some of the issues for older residents on gypsy and traveller sites are going to be similar in nature to residents on park homes sites.

## The National and Legal Context

### The Care Act 2014

The Care Act overhauls the social care system in England, reforming and streamlining much of the legislation on access to, administration of, and responsibilities for care services.

The new statutory principle of individual wellbeing underpins the Act, and is the driving force behind care and support.

The council (and partners in health, housing, welfare and employment services) has a duty to take steps to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care and support for all local people. The council will aim to provide high quality information and advice about services that operate in the community, or commission universal services that seek to promote well-being and improve people's independence.

The implementation of the Care Act in Central Bedfordshire will transform the way care and support is delivered for potential and current people in need of support and their carers.

### Lifetime Neighbourhoods Concept

The Centre for Housing Policy at York University developed a concept known as Lifetime Neighbourhoods, brought together in a report, commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Lifetime neighbourhoods are places designed to be inclusive regardless of age or disability.

The report contributes to the government's commitment to help older people live independently. It should help to prompt thinking around how, for example, ageing; design, housing, transport, participation and green spaces can be linked when creating lifetime neighbourhoods.

### Projects

#### Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Older People Program

The council will ensure the park homes offer learns from good practice happening elsewhere in the council. Central Bedfordshire has developed a program approach towards the delivery of accommodation for older people. The vision for the program is that older people across all of Central Bedfordshire have access to a choice of local, high quality, value for money accommodation that enable them to lead healthy, independent lives within their community.

This should include a range of warm, safe and secure schemes where older people can live without losing touch with their family or community and will include:-

- Good quality sheltered housing, to rent or buy.
- Good quality independent living, to rent or buy.
- Good quality suitable general needs housing, to rent or buy.

- Good quality residential and nursing care homes, provided by partner organisations.
- Good quality community facilities at these schemes that bring in the local community.

### **Park Homes Site Licensing and Historic Breaches Standards**

The council can attach licence conditions under the amended Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1968. Site licence conditions can include the following:

- (a) Restricting the total number of homes on a site;
- (b) Controlling (whether by reference to their size, the state of their repair or, any other feature, the types of homes on a park;
- (c) Regulating the positions of homes, regulating the placing or erection of structures and vehicles;
- (d) Securing, preserving or enhancing the amenity of the land, including the planting and replanting thereof with trees and bushes;
- (e) Securing proper measures for preventing and detecting the outbreak of fire and adequate means of fighting fire;
- (f) Securing adequate sanitary facilities and equipment.

The Government provides model standards with respect to the layout of, and the provision of facilities, services and equipment for, caravan sites or particular types of caravan site; and in deciding what (if any) conditions to attach to a site licence. The Council adheres to these model standards, the most recent of which are the Model Standards 2008 for Caravan Sites in England (Appendix A).

Many of the park homes sites in Central Bedfordshire have been in existence for decades. Prior to 2011 there were significant inconsistencies with regards the conditions on site licences due to the practices adopted by the legacy Councils and the changes in standards that occurred over time.

During the period 2011 to 2013 the majority of legacy site licences for sites in Central Bedfordshire were re-issued with conditions that reflected the 2008 Model Standards. Where standards became more onerous this led to what was referred to as "historic breaches". The council developed a Historic Breaches Policy (HBP) in 2011 to give guidance on how such breaches should be dealt with, reflecting both risk and impact on site owners and residents. The 2011 HBP required certain issues to be addressed upon sale or transfer of a park home and introduced the flexibility of alternative measures to mitigate risk.

The Mobile Homes Act 2013 (MHA 2013) brought about a significant reduction in the role and influence that park homes site owners have in the sale and transfer of park homes. One of the most significant concerns that site owners raised during the engagement event held in September 2013 was that they would be unable to bring about the remedy of breaches upon sale or transfer in line with the 2011 HBP due to their exclusion from much of the selling and gifting process. Owners advised that this could result in the new owner of

a park home being unfairly penalised if they were unaware of the need to remedy a breach until after they had purchased the park home.

These concerns have been noted and the council has updated the 2011 HBP into a Historic Breaches Standards, to remove the instances where breaches are remedied at point of sale or transfer. The Historic Breaches Standards has been included as Appendix B alongside this offer document.

The MHA 2013 increased the enforcement powers available to local authorities to deal with breaches to site licence conditions. These new powers are covered by the Housing Solutions Enforcement Policy, which has been updated to reflect these changes.

### **Site Rules**

Site rules are a set of rules that park homes residents are required to adhere to as they form express terms of their pitch agreements with the site owner. The Mobile Homes Act 1983 (as amended) allows for site rules to be made which relate to the management and conduct of the site plus those matters prescribed in Section 4 of the Mobile Home Site Rule Regulations 2014. These are those necessary to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained on the site, which will be of general benefit to residents, or to promote and maintain community cohesion on the site.

These regulations set out the procedure that should be followed from the commencement date of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014 when new site rules are introduced along with prescribed forms that should be used and categories of site rules which would no longer be allowed and would have no effect. This procedure includes consultation with the residents and depositing the rules with the local authority at the end of the process. Residents have the right to appeal to the First-Tier Tribunal – Property Chamber (Residential Property) where site owners have failed to follow the prescribed procedure for making site rules or where the site owner proposes banned rules such as those that discriminate against any group of person or give the site operator discretion as to how they are applied. Local authorities have no legal authority to reject site rules or to check them for validity as part of the depositing process.

The changes brought about by the MHA 2013 meant that site owners would need to introduce new site rules through the new procedure before 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015 as on that date any site rules made before the introduction of the new procedure would become null and void.

The regulations introduced a requirement for local authorities to establish and keep up to date a register of site rules in respect of protected sites in its area and for this register to be published on-line. Whilst the local authority has a role with regards checking that site licence conditions are being adhered to, they do not have a similar role in respect to site rules, as these form part of the agreement between site owners and residents.

## The Park Homes context in Central Bedfordshire

The council is currently administering site licenses for 82 park home and gypsy and traveler sites across Central Bedfordshire with the total number of units across all sites exceeding 1200.

47 of these 82 sites are more traditional gypsy and traveler occupied mobile home sites, which are different in character and not generally recognized as “Park homes”. Many of these 47 sites contain single unit gypsy and traveler homes.

The intention of this document is to focus on the unique issues and characteristics presented by park homes, those homes on parks generally occupied by an older population, and not gypsy and Traveler sites.

### Key characteristics

The average number of homes on all licensed sites is 15, although sites range from 1 to 175.

The costs of Park homes vary as expected between double sized and single sized and new and used. Below is a summary of the typical costs of park homes:

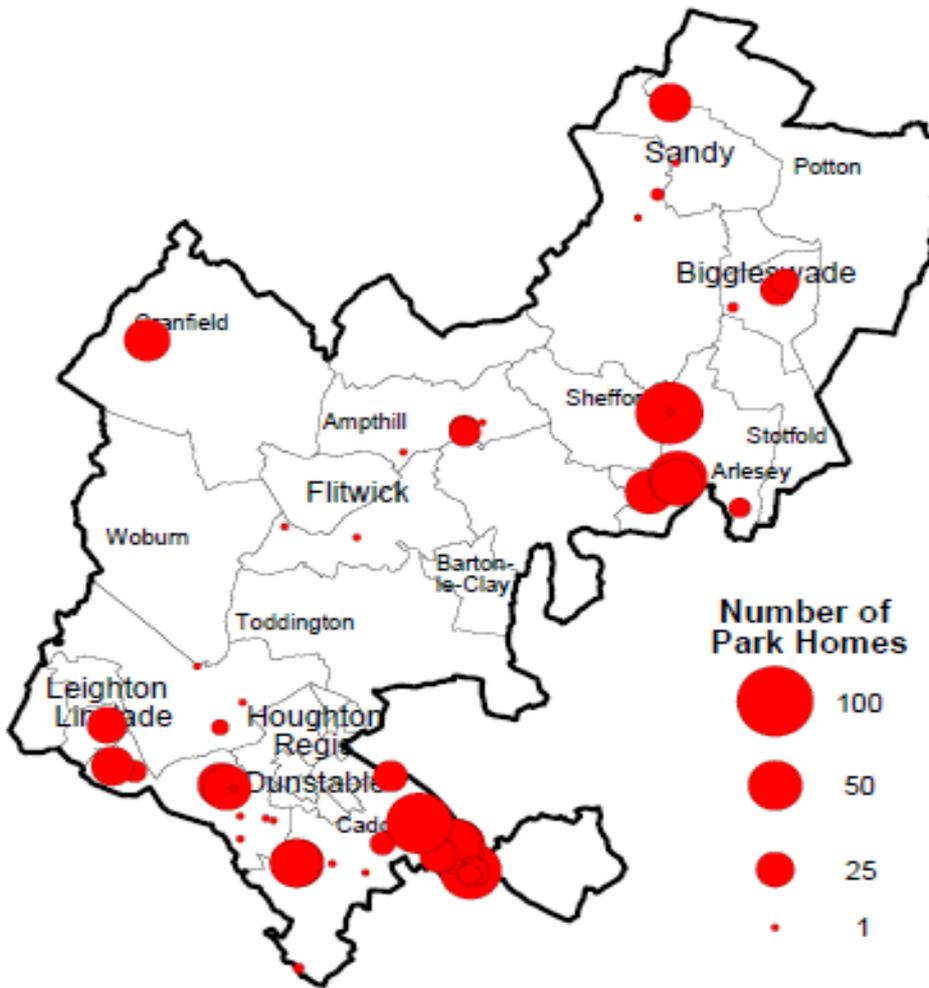
- Single home prices are generally lower and can be below £100,000.
- New double sized Homes range from around £164,000 – £235,000+ depending upon specification.
- Used Single Homes are around £35,000 to about £100,000 dependent upon location and condition.
- Used Double sized homes are around £78,000 to £235,000, again dependent on size, condition, & location

Park homes are built to comply with BS 3632 and from 2005 include the requirement for a minimum level of insulation. However some manufacturers now include ISO 12944 and BS3900:F4 1991(Anti-corrosion standard). They also include Double glazing with K glass in accordance with BS 6262 and BS 6206.

### Local Planning Information:

Park homes sites are those that only include mobile or park homes (static homes) with permanent pitches on the site for residents. They specifically exclude touring units and those of a holiday/vacation type.

The map below shows where park homes are located in Central Bedfordshire.



### The Adult Social Care and Housing needs of Park Homes residents

A review of all the adult social care interventions that took place between 2011 and 2014 was undertaken. 287 adult social care assessments leading to a service for park homes residents took place during this period. These services were received by 141 individual clients; this represents around 10% of park home residents.

42 of these residents received occupational health assessments,

As of December 2014, there are only 11 park home residents on the housing register waiting for re-housing. 7 of these require a move as their park home is no longer suitable. The majority of these cite health reasons whilst one applicant needs to move due to a breach of the rules around allowing children to reside in a park home.

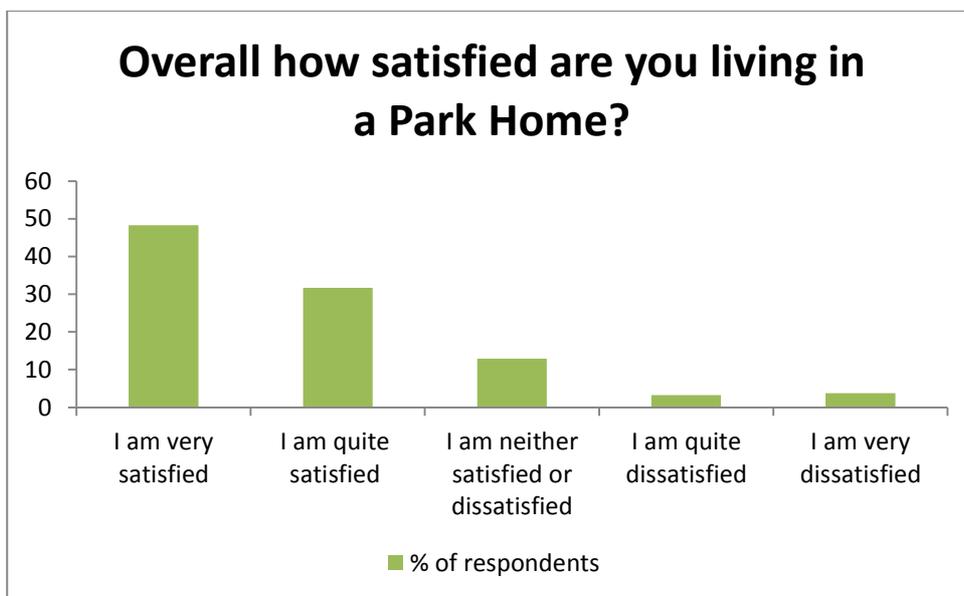
## The Needs and Aspirations of Park Home residents

Park home residents were given the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience of living in a park home at an engagement event in January 2014. Concerns were raised about the changes in legislation and how residents might be affected. Residents were also concerned about how they might obtain advice and information generally. There were misunderstandings about the level of costs to be passed on to residents, highlighting communication issues. A copy of the feedback is provided in Appendix C.

A park homes resident's needs assessment survey was conducted in October 2014 to help explore these issues with residents in more detail; it also provided an opportunity to gain further insight and understanding of the customer base, their needs and aspirations. The survey provided 426 responses from residents, which provides good insight into the needs and aspirations. The results of the survey are provided below:

### Overall Satisfaction

Residents are generally happy living on park homes; the overall satisfaction with living in a park home is 80%.



### Reasons for moving to a Park Home

Residents chose to live a park home as they are more affordable in comparison to a bricks and mortar property in the same area. The relative low maintenance of the property is also a desirable feature. Many residents were attracted to the peace and quiet of the park home lifestyle.

Residents enjoy the friendship and the community spirit of park home living. In addition to the peace and quiet of the environment, many residents find their park home easy to maintain, safe and secure. Park homes in Central Bedfordshire are favoured for their rural location and are seen as an affordable alternative to a “bricks and mortar” bungalow.

### Time spent living in a Park Home

Many park home residents have lived in their homes for a long period of time, 39.2% of customers lived in a park home for 11-20 years, 16.7% for over 20 years.

### Moving on from the Park Home

Many residents view their park homes as a home for life and 31.8% customers had not considered moving from their park homes.

23.8% of residents felt that only ill-health or disability would prevent them from being able to live in their homes in the future whilst 18.4% residents only felt a windfall of a large amount of money would give them sufficient money to be able move on from their home.

Providing support to enable park homes residents to remain in their homes for as long as they wish is a key priority for the Council.

### Information requirements

Residents would like to receive the following information from Central Bedfordshire Council. As residents were able to provide more than one answer, this total does not equal 100%.

Park homes Information Requirements	
Improved access to information	61.7%
Financial assistance available to Park homes Residents	59.9%
Fees information	53.6%
Help available when moving on from Park homes	50.3%
Opportunities for resident involvement	36.2%

## The Challenges of the Park Home Lifestyle

Residents provided feedback on the challenges of living in a park home in Central Bedfordshire through the needs assessment survey. In many cases the concerns of residents were consistent with national findings, which are reflected below along with recommendations on how the council can help to meet these challenges

Residents were asked to describe the worst three aspects of park home living. They were able to provide free text to respond to this question, the common themes cited in the responses were:

- Charges
- Rules
- Park owners
- Park homes
- Location
- Utilities

### Charges

21.6% of residents were unhappy with amount of the ground rent / pitch fees and the annual increases they are subjected to. Residents do not feel they receive value for money in relation to the service they receive from park home owners.

Residents were unhappy that they are required to pay 10% commission to owners on sale of their property with some feeling that the fee may be a barrier to them to moving on in the future.

It is not clear whether residents were aware of the existence of the rules when they first purchased the property.

### Recommendations

The council has little influence over park home fee charges and commissions charged, other than the setting of Annual Licence Fee charges to owners, which are normally passed onto residents (but are controlled by the Mobile Homes Act 2013). The council, does, however, intend to improve the provision of information for residents and prospective residents. This will include provision of Lease Holder Advisory Service (LEASE) guidance on buying and selling park homes.

### Rules

A variety of feedback was received about the park rules, some residents felt that there were too many and they were too stringent whilst others were unhappy with the lack of enforcement of the current rules. Site rules are a set of rules that park homes residents are required to adhere to as they form express terms of their pitch agreements with the site owner.

Family members not being able to stay and pet ownership were some of the more problematic rules cited in the responses.

It is not clear whether residents were aware of the existence of the rules when they first purchased the property.

A report by the Consumer Focus Group on park homes<sup>1</sup> shows that many residents do not take legal advice before buying a park home and are not carrying out adequate research before entering in to an agreement with a site operator or outgoing resident. The focus group evidence goes on to suggest that many residents have never received an agreement, in some cases false information is given to new owners insisting that they sign new written statements and new terms

Recommendations:

- The council needs to improve the information and advice offer to potential and existing park homes residents to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and obligation.
- The council (Trading Standards) should consider the use of consumer protection legislation available to them to pursue site operators who continue rely on unfair terms and who seek to impose unreasonable conditions upon residents.
- The council will ensure that the Park Home Site Rules Register is maintained and published on the council's website to enable residents and prospective residents to view.

### **Park owners**

A large amount of feedback was received in relation to the park owners, residents complained that owners lacked visibility, were unfriendly and lacked respect towards them.

A general theme throughout the comments were around a lack of communication and help from the park owners

Recommendations:

- The council's primary focus with park home owners is that they comply with licence requirements. On occasion, however, the council will receive complaints from residents concerning the actions or behaviour of owners. In some cases harassment might be alleged, in which case, the council has a duty to investigate. In most cases, however, the council will explore the issues and mediate to resolve these issues as far as it can.

### **Park homes Construction and Comfort**

Residents cited poor insulation amongst the problems with the park homes, they are too cold in winter and too hot in summer and some suffer from damp. The lack of space and storage was also a problem in some cases.

---

<sup>1</sup> Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012)

These findings are supported by research<sup>2</sup> which also found that residents are struggling to heat their homes due to poor insulation. Many residents would benefit from external cladding and other energy efficiency measures and should be provided with information and support to enable them to do so.

Park home owners may be able to apply for Green Deal Finance, Green Deal Home Improvement Fund, or Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding to help towards the cost of certain heating and insulation measures.

The council is piloting a Warm Homes Healthy People approach for the 2014/15 winter period. This work includes researching good practice and case studies for improving the thermal comfort of park homes.

Recommendations:

- The council should assist more residents to make their homes warmer ensuring lessons are learned from other successful energy efficiency schemes.
- The council has a framework contract with Climate Energy (an approved Green Deal and ECO provider), who will keep the council informed as to any changes in respect of ECO funding changes.
- Council Officers will keep abreast of DECC announcements in relation to park homes funding and will provide appropriate information.
- The council will continue to offer residents advisory “affordable warmth” type surveys to help residents identify priorities for improving their park homes. These will not be approved “energy rating” assessments for the reasons given above.
- In certain circumstances, the council can provide some grant assistance to vulnerable households at risk of cold conditions.

## Location

The location of some park homes was cited as a problem for a number of respondents. The lack of transport provision in some areas mean that residents felt isolated are unable to access amenities without the use of a car.

This view was also supported by residents who responded to the survey in the park Home Living in England report<sup>3</sup> which states “One negative issue was accessibility to shops and services, particularly for older people who could no longer drive. A feature of many parks is their rural location, and, just like any rural community, there is the potential for poor accessibility”.

Recommendations:

---

<sup>2</sup> Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012)

<sup>3</sup> Park Home Living in England: Prospects and policy Implications, Mark Bevan (2009)

- The council will engage with the voluntary sector to ensure park home residents are aware of and able to access support in the wider community to help prevent social isolation, such a village care schemes.
- The council will ensure the views of park homes residents are considered as part of the overall review of transport services in Central Bedfordshire.
- The council will ensure information and advice is provided to park homes residents about full range of transport services available in Central Bedfordshire.

## Utilities

No mains gas running to the park homes sites is an issue for residents, calor gas is very expensive and they find it too expensive to heat their homes in the winter.

Residents do not have a choice over utility suppliers, do not benefit from government schemes and many do not have their own individual supply for electric and water.

National research<sup>4</sup> shows that park Home residents generally do not have a contractual relationship with their supplier of gas or water. Instead the site operator buys in services and then resells them to the resident. Many residents do not have their own meters and often do not understand how the gas, electric or water costs are worked out.

The Mobile Homes (Site Rules) (England) Regulations 2014 contain prescribed matters that are not allowed as site rules. This includes site owners no longer being able to demand residents obtain their gas/electricity from them.

The findings of the national study revealed the following:

- 19% had problems with their electricity supply, cost or billings
- 7% had problems with their gas supply costs or billing
- 19% had problems with their water supply, cost or billing.

Recommendations:

- The council needs to ensure park homes residents know how to exercise their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates.
- The council will aim to ensure that park homes residents are fully aware of their rights as domestic users of gas, electricity and water.
- The council will explore the potential for the extension of mains gas network to park homes sites.

---

<sup>4</sup> Living the dream? An investigation into life on park home sites in England, Consumer Focus (2012) p32

## Key Characteristics of Park Home Owners in Central Bedfordshire

### Age

A key characteristic of park homes is the age profile of its residents, with the majority of park homes occupied by older people. 80.2% of residents in park homes are over 65 years old.

Age	
Under 16	-
16-19	-
20-29	-
30-44	0.7%
45-59	9.5%
60-64	9.5%
65-74	43%
75+	37.2%

### Carers

25.8% of park home residents identified themselves as carers.

Caring responsibility	
None	74.2%
1-19 hours a week	13.4%
20-49 hours a week	2.3%
50 or more hours a week	10.1%

### Disability

25.5% of residents who responded to the survey have a disability.

### Length of time living in a park home

Park Home Occupancy	
1 adult	49.6%
2 adults	48.4%
3 adults	1.5%
2 adults + child	0.5%

### Employments status

Employment status	
Employed – Full time	8.9%
Employed - Part time	4.5%
Self employed	1.7%
Unemployed and available for work	0.7%
Permanently sick/ disabled	3.7%
Retired	79.5%
Looking after the home	7.4%

## Vision Statement

### Our Vision

All park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.

## The Priorities

**Priority One: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to.**

### Introduction

Lifetime neighbourhoods offer everyone the best possible chance of health, well-being and social, economic and civic engagement regardless of age. They provide the built environment, social spaces that enable all people to pursue their own ambitions for a high quality of life. They do not exclude people as they age nor as they become frail and disabled<sup>5</sup>.

The key components of a lifetime neighbourhood are:

- Working with residents to develop lifetime neighbourhoods
- Housing
- Social inclusion
- Access
- Services and amenities
- Transportation
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services
- The build environment and outdoor spaces

Central Bedfordshire will work with residents and site owners to explore the lifetime neighbourhood concept. The council will join up work across housing, adult social care, health and transport departments to improve the information, advice, support and services that we offer so that residents are able to plan their lives and their housing needs now and in the future.

**To deliver priority one, the Council will do the following:**

1. Develop the information and advice offer for adult social care support, through the implementation of the Care Act. The Council will provide comprehensive information, advice and advocacy to help older people make choices about their housing and support.
2. Explore with park owners opportunities for developing park homes sites into lifetime neighbourhoods, the development of community facilities, handyman schemes and assistive technology are possible areas to consider as part of this review.
3. Explore the possibility of providing targeted prevention work with park homes residents to help prevent care needs from developing.

---

<sup>5</sup> Lifetime neighbourhoods

4. To explore and look to address issues that can lead to social isolation. This includes rural transport issues and potential solutions provided by the council, voluntary sector and local communities.
5. To ensure that council policies concerning park homes licensing are suitable and applied appropriately, in providing safe environments for residents and visitors.

## Priority Two: To develop and provide good quality accessible information for park homes residents.

### Introduction

It is important that residents have access to good quality information and resources about the areas that affect them; this includes information specific to living on park homes and information about care and support, transport and community resources.

This information needs to be made widely available to enable residents to make informed decisions in relation to their lives.

The council has an opportunity through the implementation of the Care Act to transform the way care and support is delivered to our residents, the provision of information and advice is key to this and the council will take a holistic approach to the development of information and advice resources.

### To deliver priority two, the Council will do the following:

- As part of the implementation of the Care Act the council will provide the following information and advice about care and support:
  - Information about how the local care and support system works
  - How people can access care and support services
  - What types of care and support are available, and the choice of providers
  - Care and support related financial information and advice, including how to access independent financial advice
  - How to raise concerns about the safety or wellbeing of someone who has care and support needs
- Review the Housing Solutions team service standards to include an escalation process linked into the complaints procedure
- Develop the role of the Technical Officer specialising in park homes to provide a single point of contact for residents.
- To improve the information and advice offer to potential and existing park homes residents to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and obligations. This includes information on relevant council policies.
- Development of a range of leaflets and factsheets for park homes residents and ensuring these are accessible through a range of channels such as libraries, the council webpage and community centres.
- Publishing an approved list of park homes specialists.

## Priority Three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes

### Introduction

Park home customers do not always benefit from national funding opportunities to help with heating costs and they are not always exercising their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates. Park home residents have told us that they are unhappy with the current approach to billing for their utilities and they would like our assistance to bring about improvements in this area.

The council will work to ensure customers are better informed of their options and will work with partners and other agencies to ensure park home residents have the opportunity to take advantage of schemes which aim to reduce fuel costs.

### To deliver priority three, the Council will do the following

#### Key actions

- The council will provide appropriate information and advice to ensure park homes residents know how to exercise their choice and control in the purchasing of LPG gas at more affordable rates.
- The council will provide appropriate information and advice to ensure park homes residents are fully aware of their rights as domestic users of gas, electricity and water.
- The council will look to explore the potential for extension of mains gas network to park homes sites
- The council will provide advice and assistance to residents impacted by cold homes and unaffordable heating costs. This includes keeping abreast of changes in national funding opportunities for park home residents.

**Priority Four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities.**

**Introduction**

The community spirit is one of the unique characteristics of life on a park home. Residents have told us that they value the support and friendship of their neighbours who look out for each other and provide support to one another.

The council would like to help to enhance this positive aspect of the park home lifestyle and assist residents to form formal residents associations where they wish to do so.

Due to the rural location of park homes, residents can sometime experience difficulty accessing amenities, services and linking into the wider community. The council will work with local community organisations to help improve these links and work to remove the barriers to social inclusion for park homes residents.

**To deliver priority four, the Council will do the following**

**Key actions**

- The council will help residents where it can to set up qualifying residents associations as it is recognised that such associations can play an important role in building supportive communities and ensuring that information that may benefit residents is disseminated to all.
- To hold stakeholder events for park homes annually in order to bring important/useful information to site owners and residents and to give them the opportunity to raise concerns that they may have.
- The council will engage with the voluntary sector to ensure park home residents are aware of and able to access support in the wider community to help prevent social isolation, such a village care schemes.
- The council will ensure the views of park homes residents are considered as part of the overall review of transport services in Central Bedfordshire.
- The council will ensure information and advice is provided to park homes residents about the full range of transport services available in Central Bedfordshire.

The following appendices are available marked as background papers on the following link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/modgov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=644&MId=4750&Ver=4>

Appendix A - Model Standards

Appendix B - Historic Breaches Standards

Appendix C – Feedback from Residents Engagement event Jan 2014

Appendix D - Feedback from Site owners Engagement event Sep 2013

Appendix E – Housing Solutions Enforcement Policy (updated)

**APPENDIX B**



**Draft Offer to Park Homes  
Residents**

**Response to Formal Consultation**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live, and housing has a central role to play in everything the council is seeking to achieve in Central Bedfordshire.

Among the many different forms of housing are park homes, and the council is now seeking to raise awareness of the park home sector, the role in which it plays in the local housing market and in meeting the needs and aspirations of older people.

Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the unique nature of the park home lifestyle, which can offer an affordable housing option within attractive rural locations. The Council is keen to raise awareness of the park home sector where there are currently 1,200 people living in park homes across Central Bedfordshire.

The feedback received on the initial engagement survey, has helped the Council to gain a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of park home residents. The feedback has informed the development of a draft Offer to Park Home residents.

It proposes that Central Bedfordshire will work with residents and site owners to explore the lifetime neighbourhood concept. These offer everyone the best possible chance of health, well-being and social, economic and civic engagement regardless of age. They provide the built environment and social spaces that enable all people to pursue their own ambitions for a high quality of life.

The Offer to Park Home residents will be complementally around information, advice & guidance and will help us prepare for the new duties the Council will have under the Care Act 2014. The Care Act is about Care & Support, brings all the different laws into one new law and was made law in May 2014.

CBC formally consulted on its draft Offer to Park Home residents from Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014 until Monday, 9 February 2015 which aimed to find out more about residents' requirements and aspirations. The council is keen to include the views of key partners and stakeholders who support people impacted by the development of the Offer to Park Home residents in some way, particularly park home residents and site owners.

All park home site owners and park home residents were notified about the consultation in writing to provide notice of the formal consultation and to provide information about they could respond to the consultation.

A Park Home Forum was held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2015 for residents at the Rufus Centre in Flitwick to enable people to receive information and advice and gave the opportunity to inform and feedback around the Offer document.

The formal consultation was managed via a formal consultation document. This was available in paper format; downloadable from the CBC website, CBC main offices & Park Home site offices where available or was obtainable by telephoning or writing to the contact details provided in the letters to Park Home residents and owners.

CBC staff and elected members were informed about the formal consultation, social media was utilised and press releases were issued to the media to raise awareness of the consultation with Central Bedfordshire residents.

## **2. RESULTS OF SURVEY: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

- 2.1 In total, 16 people responded to the draft Offer to Park Home residents formal consultation.
- 2.2 63% of respondents were male, 19% were female, 12% preferred not to say, and 6% did not answer.
- 2.3 69% of respondents were aged 60 years or over.
- 2.4 31% of respondents stated that they had a disability.
- 2.5 88% of respondents were White: British, 6% White: European, 6% respondents preferred not to state their ethnicity.
- 2.6 Appendix 1 provides a full demographic statistical profile of respondents.

## **3. RESULTS OF SURVEY: QUESTION RESPONSES**

The formal consultation was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents, with results summarised as follows:

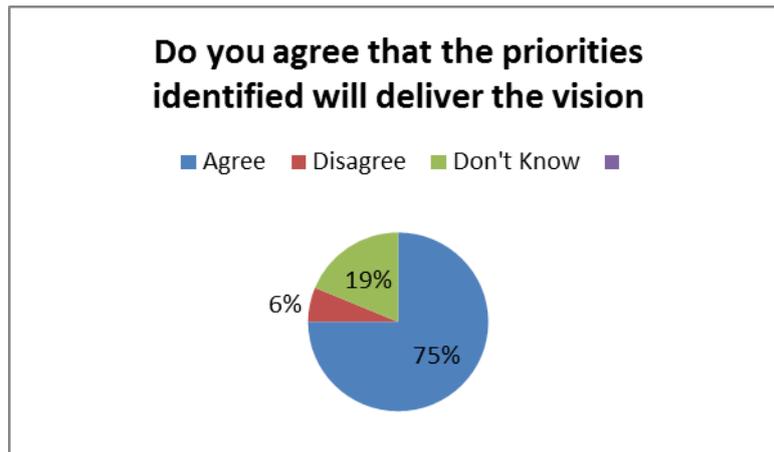
### **3.1 Q1. Central Bedfordshire Council has identified the following priorities within the Offer to Park Home residents:**

- 1) To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to.
- 2) To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for the park home residents
- 3) To improve the experience of residents living in park homes
- 4) To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities

We asked if people agreed that this will deliver our vision “All park home residents will enjoy an independent retirement lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.”

Agree	12	75%
Disagree	1	6%
Don't Know	3	19%

12 respondents (75% of respondents) agree that the priorities and related actions within meet the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver the vision. 1 respondent (6% of respondents) disagree, 3 respondents (19% of respondents) don't know



**CBC Response:** We are pleased that the majority of respondents felt that the priorities contained within the offer document will deliver the vision “All park home residents will enjoy an independent retirement lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.” The feedback would suggest little (if any) change is required to the document and that many of the concerns had already been incorporated as a result of the Needs Assessment that was carried out.

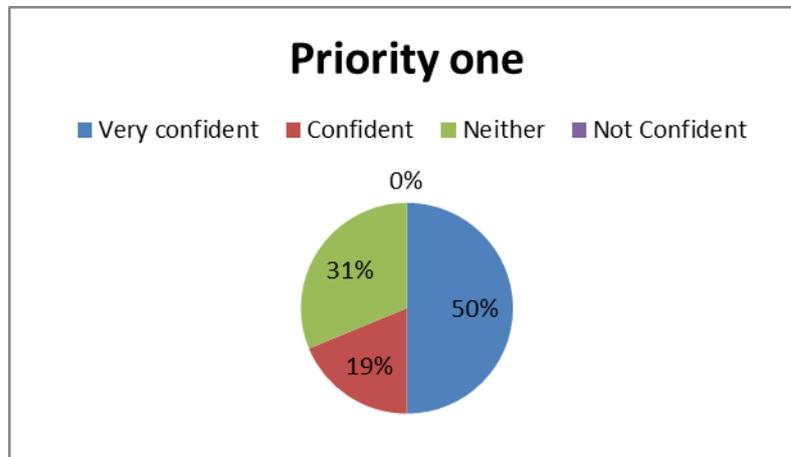
**3.2 Q2. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority one: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to. (The lifetime neighbourhoods concept is a way in supporting a unique environment and place to live. This is made up of key components which include: Supporting residents to develop lifetime neighbourhoods- especially residents empowerment; Access; Services and amenities; Built and natural environments; Social networks/well-being and housing)**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Very Confident	8	50%
Confident	3	19%
Neither	5	31%
Not Confident	0	0%

8 respondents (50% of respondents) were very confident priority one and related actions within meet the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver the vision. 3 respondents (19% of respondents) were confident, 5 respondents (31% of respondents) stated they were neither



**CBC Response:** We are pleased that most respondents were either confident or very confident that Priority One and related actions would meet their needs and aspirations and deliver our vision.

Whilst a full account of the qualitative feedback is presented in Appendix 2 some examples are given below:

**Examples of qualitative information:**

**Comment:** Projects of this type can involve serious costs and the co-operation of owners so the impact of this aim could falter but equally could do a deal of good.

**CBC Response:** We understand that residents are concerned about the perceived lack of influence that the Council has concerning site owners and how this may impact on our plans. As the Council's enforcement powers only relate to licensing aspects our influence over other aspects relies on us working with site owners to achieve our objectives. It is the Council's intention to hold regular workshops with site owners to develop our relationships with them.

**Comment:** Most residents seem to be of the older generation. Provision should be made to ensure they know what assistance is available and to try to ensure those needing it take it up.

**CBC Response:** A recent restructure of the Housing Solutions Service of the Council has enabled the creation of a specialist post to deal specifically with park homes and older persons. They will be responsible for ensuring that park homes residents are aware of the assistance available to them from various teams within the Council, and other providers.

**Comment:** Residents are elderly and independent owners. Parks are not retirement villages & should not become ghettos.

**CBC Response:** It is the Council’s intention for park home residents to live independently where able to. As a consequence of the feedback we will replace the phrase “independent retirement” with “independent living” in our vision which will therefore become “All park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.”

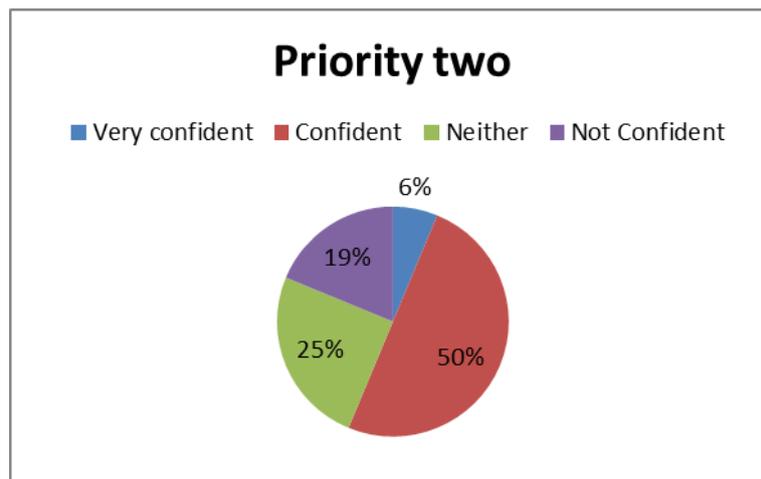
**3.3 Q3. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority two: To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for park home residents.**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Very Confident	1	6%
Confident	8	50%
Neither	4	25%
Not Confident	3	19%

1 respondents (6% of respondents) were very confident priority one and related actions within meet the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver the vision. 8 respondents (50% of respondents) were confident, 4 respondents (25% of respondents) stated they were neither and 3 respondents (19% of respondents) were not confident



**CBC Response:** We are pleased that many of the respondents were either confident or very confident that Priority Two and related actions would meet their needs and aspirations and deliver our vision.

**Examples of qualitative information (full survey feedback is in appendix 2):**

**Comments:** Information provision will be a valuable asset. The council clearly has access to all the relevant information which needs to be published. If I have a concern here it's how readable and understandable that information will be. Keeping residents aware of their rights is a big boost to resident confidence which up to now has only been done by private bodies such as IPHAS. A reliable leaflet drop should help and perhaps residents meetings.

**CBC Response:** The Council will ensure that relevant information is made available to park home residents. This will include use of the Council's website in addition to making hard copies of factsheets available at council office receptions, libraries, community centres, and site offices. The information will be reinforced through annual resident events.

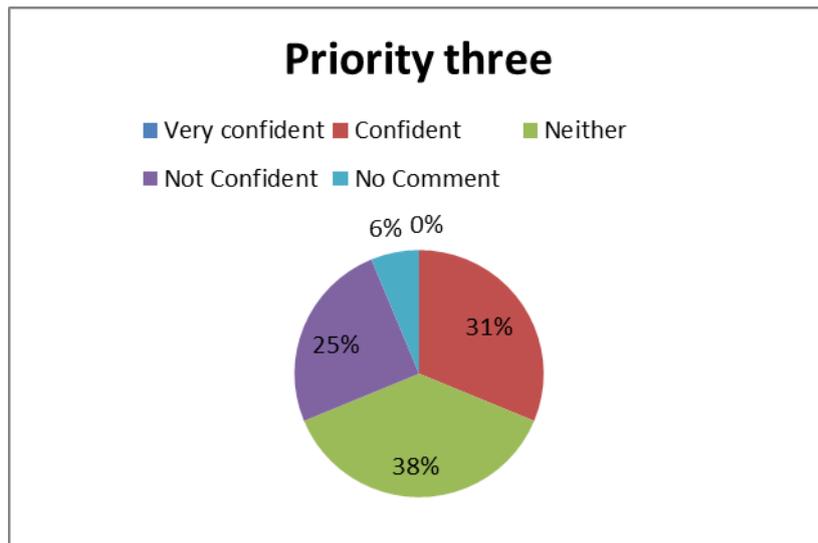
**3.4 Q4. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes.**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Very Confident	0	0%
Confident	5	31%
Neither	6	38%
Not Confident	4	25%
No Comment	1	6%

No respondents (0% of respondents) were very confident priority three and related actions within meet the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver the vision. 5 respondents (31% of respondents) were confident, 6 respondents (38% of respondents) stated they were neither, 4 respondents (25% of respondents) were not confident and 1 respondents (6% of respondents) did not comment



**CBC Response:** A greater number of respondents were confident as opposed to not confident that Priority Three and related actions would meet their needs and aspirations and deliver our vision. However, we recognise that some residents have concerns and we will work with them to address these.

**Examples of qualitative information (full survey feedback is in appendix 2):**

**Comment:** Again, this would require the Council to have influence over the site owners.

**CBC Response:** We understand that residents are concerned about the perceived lack of influence that the Council has concerning site owners and how this may impact on our plans. As the Council’s enforcement powers only relate to licensing aspects our influence over other aspects relies on us working with site owners to achieve our objectives. It is our intention to hold regular workshops with site owners to develop our relationships with them.

**Comment:** Information may be useful but funding is not likely to be available.

**CBC Response:** The Council has provided funding every year to date to fund adaptations in park homes for residents with disabilities and to fund certain repairs, install heating systems, and improve insulation. In order to ensure that funds are directed at those most in need there are eligibility criteria. We will also be encouraging residents to utilise other funding sources where appropriate. We will ensure that park home resident’s awareness of such assistance is raised through promotional work etc.

**Comment:** Not sure. Will this be an opt, in opt out situation?

**CBC Response:** Residents will not be forced to take advantage of assistance such as that described above.

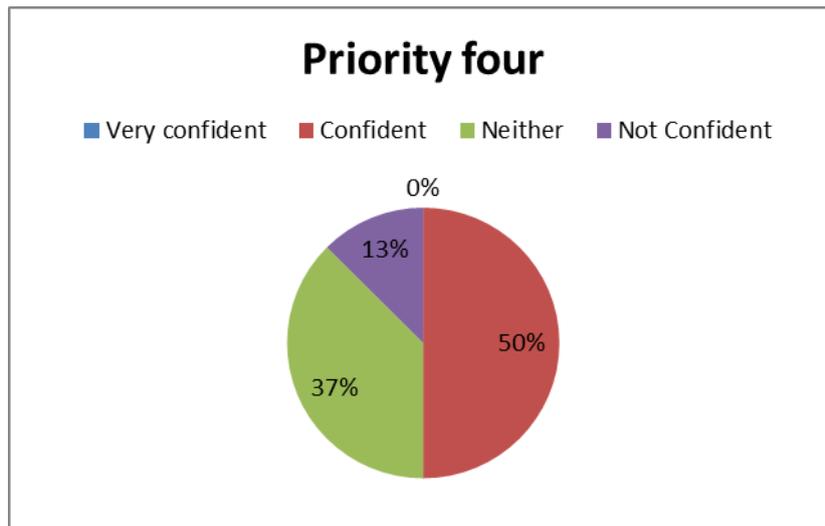
**3.5 Q5. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Very Confident	0	0%
Confident	8	50%
Neither	6	38%
Not Confident	2	12%

No respondents (0% of respondents) were very confident priority four and related actions within meet the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver the vision. 8 respondents (50% of respondents) were confident, 6 respondents (38% of respondents) stated they were neither and 2 respondents (12% of respondents) were not confident



**CBC Response:** We are pleased that many of the respondents were confident that Priority Four and related actions would meet their needs and aspirations and deliver our vision.

**Examples of qualitative information (full survey feedback is in appendix 2):**

**Comment:** I am confident that the council can ensure park residents are treated similarly to all other home owners and tenants

**Comment:** Sites need to be encouraged to have a communal meeting area suitable for various activities but the space and finance for this will hinder development

**CBC Response:** This would be a good idea and is certainly something that we will discuss with site owners during the regular workshops that we propose to hold with them.

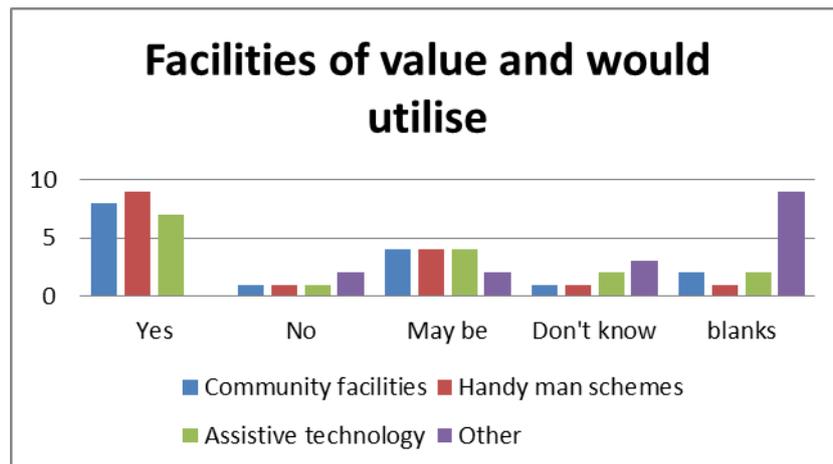
**3.6 Q6. In developing the park home environment, we aim to work with park home site owners to explore and increase opportunities in developing community facilities, handy man schemes and assistive technology.**

**We asked if the below facilities would be of value and utilise:**

	Yes	No	Maybe	Don't Know
Community facilities	8	1	4	1
Handy man schemes	9	1	4	1
Assistive technology	7	1	4	2
Any other: specified below:				

Summary of comments received in 'Other' are listed below and a full account of the qualitative feedback is presented in Appendix 2

- Local transport
- Ensure roads are safe
- Trading Standards regulated local tradesman
- Gardeners if not under handy man service
- Mobile library
- Access to emergency phone number for site owner out of hours
- Legal representatives
- To explore experiences of other park home sites.



**CBC Response:** These are certainly aspects that the Council will look further into. With respect to roads on sites, certain aspects such as being maintained in good condition with adequate surface water/storm drainage, and providing adequate access for emergency vehicles are covered by site licence conditions and therefore would be something that the Council could control. In

addition to this, site licence conditions require emergency contact details to be displayed in a prominent position.

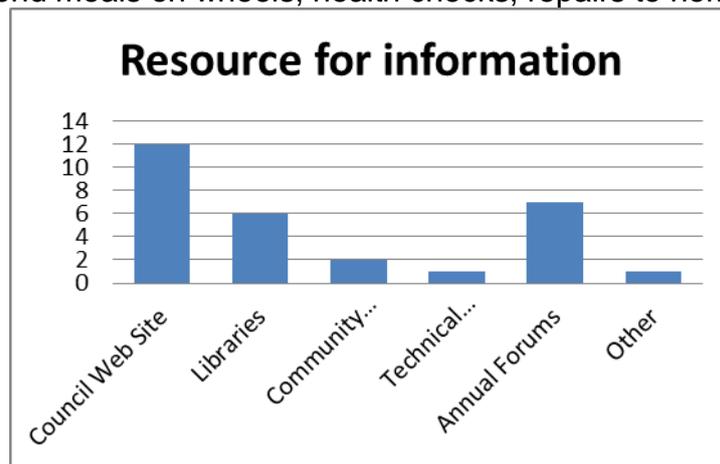
**3.7 Q7. We are hoping to introduce a range of information & leaflets to provide information and advice to the residents.**

**We asked what types of resources would be used to access information**

Council Web Site	12	75%
Libraries	6	38%
Community Centres	2	12%
Technical Officer for Park Homes Central Bedfordshire Council	1	6%
Annual Forums	7	44%
Other	1	6%

Summary of comments received in 'Other' are listed below and a full account of the qualitative feedback is presented in Appendix 2

- Local monthly Park Home magazine
- Mobile friend meals on wheels, health checks, repairs to homes



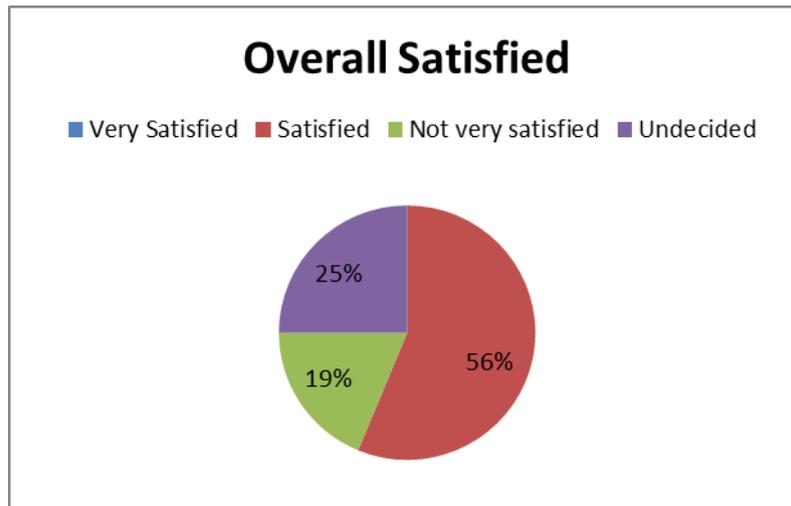
**CBC Response:** It is interesting that the majority of respondents would visit the Council's website to access the information that they require and support the emphasis that we are putting on providing the required information on our website. However, we will not lose sight of the fact that not all residents can or want to receive information in this way and we will therefore ensure that it is provided in hard copy format at council office receptions, libraries, community centres, and site offices. The information will be reinforced through annual resident events. We will look at producing a magazine or similar for park home residents, although it is unlikely to be on a monthly basis. We will consider publishing information on any relevant aspect that residents feel would benefit them.

**3.8 Q8. Overall how satisfied are you with the Offer to Park Home residents**

Very satisfied                      0                      0%

Satisfied	9	56%
Not very satisfied	3	19%
Undecided	4	25%

No respondents (0% of respondents) were very satisfied with the Offer to Park Home residents. 9 respondents (56% of respondents) were satisfied, 3 respondents (19% of respondents) stated they were not very satisfied and 4 respondents (25% of respondents) were undecided



**CBC Response:** We are pleased that many of the respondents were satisfied with the Offer to Park Home Residents as we believe that this is an important piece of work and will help us deliver our vision.

### 3.9 Q9. Space provided for any further comments

**Examples of qualitative information (full survey feedback is in appendix 2):**

**Comment:** Still not sure exactly what it means. To much wording but not enough specifics.

**Comment:** There is no reference to planned reviews of progress or timescales to implement the offer

**CBC Response:** An action plan will form part of the Offer to Park Home Residents. This action plan will set out what actions we plan to take to achieve each of the priorities, the associated timescales, and who will be responsible for these actions. Progress against these will be monitored at appropriate intervals.

**Comment:** Park Homes are not retirement villages, council estates or sheltered housing. Owners are in many cases downsizers.

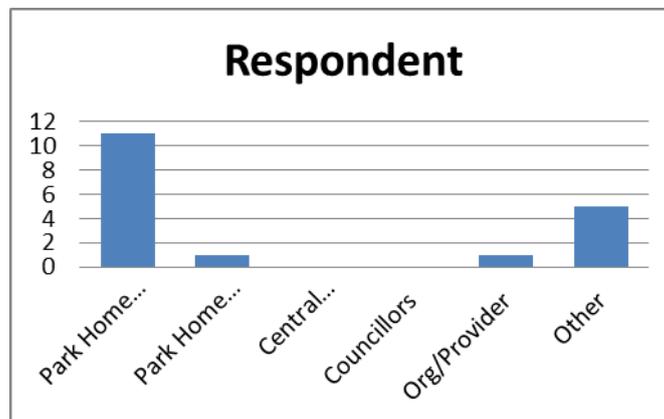
**CBC Response:** We understand that residents choose to live in park homes for a number of reasons. As a consequence of the feedback we will replace the phrase “independent retirement” with “independent living” in our vision which will therefore become “All park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.”

**3.10 Q10. Tell us what type of respondent are you**

See feedback below, received comment in other to say they had ticked site owner in error

Park Home resident	11	69%
Park Home site owner (ticked in error)	1	6%
Central Bedfordshire Council staff member	0	0%
Councillors	0	0%
Organisation / Provider	5	31%
Other: please specify below -		

1. Member of the public who knows a fair amount what I'm talking about
2. Full time carer
3. Chairman of Residents Association
4. Caddington resident
5. Parish Council



**4. SUMMARY**

Response received was low in numbers compared with the previous Needs Assessment survey which helped shape the draft Offer to Park Home residents

In summary 75% of respondents (12 respondents) agree that the four priorities will deliver the vision and that 69% of respondents were aged 60 years or over.

There was an emphasis throughout the survey around support and cooperation required from site owners to implement the priorities and related actions.

We were asked to bear in mind that residents do not necessarily view park home sites as retirement villages. As a consequence of the feedback we will replace the phrase “independent retirement” with “independent living” in our vision which will therefore become “All park home residents will enjoy an independent living lifestyle in a unique community environment that meets the needs and aspirations of older people in Central Bedfordshire.”

Consideration was needed of the legal obligations, rights and restrictions associated with living in a park home environment.

The need was identified to develop a full range of information and advice specific to living in park homes including rights and obligations, available services, approved park homes specialists, and to ensure that residents are able to access this information.

We will need to explore community resources, transport and services available to support the needs of the residents and to ensure park homes are safe environments to live.

A full account of the formal consultation qualitative feedback is presented in appendix 2.

**Appendix 1:  
Results of Survey: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**12. Please tell us your gender**

Male	10	63%
Female	3	19%
Prefer not to say	2	12%
Blank	1	6%

**13. Please tell us your age**

Under 16	0	0%
16-19 years	0	0%
20-29 years	0	0%
30-44 years	1	6%
45-59 years	3	19%
60-64 years	2	12%
65-74 years	4	25%
75+	5	32%
Prefer not to say	1	6%

**14. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Yes	5	31%
No	10	63%
Prefer not to say	1	6%

**16. Please tell us your ethnicity**

White: British	14	88%
White: Irish	0	0.0%
White: European	1	6%
White: other background (please specify below)	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0.0%
Mixed: other background (please specify below)	0	0.0%
Asian: Indian	0	0%
Asian: Pakistani	0	0.0%
Asian: Bangladeshi	0	0.0%
Asian: Chinese	0	0%
Asian: other background (please specify below)	0	0.0%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	0	0.0%

Black or Black British: African	0	0%
Black or Black British: other background (please specify below)	0	0%
Other (please specify below)	0	0%
Prefer not to say	1	6%

## **Appendix 2: Results of Consultation: Qualitative Feedback**

**Q1. Central Bedfordshire Council has identified the following priorities within the Offer to Park Home residents:**

**Q2. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority one: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to. (The lifetime neighbourhoods concept is a way in supporting a unique environment and place to live. This is made up of key components which include: Supporting residents to develop lifetime neighbourhoods- especially residents empowerment; Access; Services and amenities; Built and natural environments; Social networks/well-being and housing)**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Comments received from the survey are listed below:

1. If site is privately owned and runs well will changes upset things?
2. To achieve this the Council would have to have influence upon the company who own the sites.
3. its a good start but it doesn't go far enough. you need to lobby parliament to force through as a matter of urgency
4. the concept of lifetime neighbourhoods sounds fine in principal I wonder whether changes in council politics will interfere with the objective
5. SITE OWNER. WOULD NOT CONFORM
6. Residents are elderly and independent owners. Parks are not retirement villages & should not become ghettos
7. Under the 1983 MH Act owners profit comes from 10% commission on sales. No profit from long term residents
8. Most residents seem to be of the older generation. Provision should be made to ensure they know what assistance is available and to try to ensure those needing it take it up
9. Projects of this type can involve serious costs and the co-operation of owners so the impact of this aim could falter but equally could do a deal of good.

**Q3. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority two: To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for park home residents.**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Comments received from the survey are listed below:

1. I was unaware of the previous meetings. Also unaware of this paper and questionnaire. I happened to get an email, as a Parish Councillor NOT as a resident
2. In our experience, the majority of residents do not have access to the internet/social media. Any communication would need to be paper format.
3. Information is available everywhere these days especially on the internet, it's the rules set by the park owners that restrict the resident. No good just having info, it's got to be legally enforced.
4. The council clearly has access to all the relevant information which needs to be published. If I have a concern here it's how readable and understandable that information will be.
5. Information provision will be a valuable asset –
6. Residents want peaceful environment & security of pitch. No interest of (Illegible). They do not meet or bother with information and gullible to owners demands
7. A reliable leaflet drop should help + perhaps residents meetings
8. Keeping residents aware of there rights is a big boost to resident confidence which up to now has only been done by private bodies such as IPHAS.

**Q4. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority three: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes.**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Comments received from the survey are listed below:

1. Not sure. Will this be an opt in opt out situation
2. Again, this would require the Council to have influence over the site owners.
3. It still doesn't go far enough
4. I suspect the council has little or no experience of living in residential park homes. Consultation is no substitute for experience.
5. IDEA GOOD. FOR RESIDENT OWNER WILL NOT AGREE
6. Information may be useful but funding is not likely to be available
7. How are you going to enforce them? site owners v residents !
8. But again only if you have the full assistance of site owners.

**Q5. Thinking about the identified priorities within the offer:**

**Priority four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to work in collaboration with residents to strengthen the development of the park homes communities**

We asked how confident people felt that the priority and related actions meets the needs and aspirations of the residents and will deliver our vision:

Comments received from the survey are listed below:

1. SITE OWNER WILL NOT CONFORM
2. I am confident that the council can ensure park residents are treated similarly to all other home owners and tenants
3. Site owners want money! residents weak give in to get peace
4. Sites need to be encouraged to have a communal meeting area suitable for various activities but the space and finance for this will hinder development

**Q6. In developing the park home environment, we aim to work with park home site owners to explore and increase opportunities in developing community facilities, handy man schemes and assistive technology.**

**We asked if the below facilities would be of value and utilise and feedback received for other forms listed below:**

Comments received from the survey under other are listed below:

1. Local buses. Mobile Library.
2. Gardener, unless covered by handy man
3. need to ensure roads are safe both for residents and others coming onto the site such as postman, refuse collection and visitors. H and S
4. A large proportion of residents on our park would benefit from local transport.
5. Legal representative
6. Don't live in a park home because of age restrictions, visitor restrictions, selling on rules and regulations but would like to ....
7. Exploring the experiences of other parks
8. SITE MANAGER ACCESS TO EMERGENCY PHONE NO. FOR OWNER OUT OF WORKING HOURS
9. It would be valuable if local tradesmen were requested with trading standards. The correct commercial schemes should not be relied upon
10. People want peace & privacy. Do not form communities. Need help in home (Illegible)
11. Not a park resident

**Q7. We are hoping to introduce a range of information & leaflets to provide information and advice to the residents.**

**We asked what types of resources would be used to access information and feedback received for other forms listed below:**

Comments received from the survey under other are listed below:

1. Monthly Park Homes magazine.

2. Magazine like Park Home News that we have delivered. But as Bedfordshire not countrywide please
3. Mobile friend Meals on wheels. Health checks. Repairs to homes

**Q9. Any further comments:**

1. Still not sure exactly what it means. To much wording but not enough specifics.
2. We were not aware of the Council's proposals (we moved to Central Beds 11 months ago). The scheme has our full support though we consider the proposals ambitious given that the owners of the sites wield the power and we are virtually helpless in that respect.
3. It's a start, you need to do more though to be honest
4. There is no reference to planned reviews of progress or timescales to implement the offer
5. Park Homes are not retirement villages, council estates or sheltered housing. Owners are in many cases downsizers.
6. All talk but no action or enforcement. Site owners want to make money as main aim for owning site. information under Q1 - Park Homes sites are NOT retirement homes and do not have facilities for older people who need care or needs. Park Homes are 'residences' not communities. Need security of tenure for Occupiers. ARE source OF INCOME FOR OWNERS!

**Q10. Tell us what type of respondent are you for other see listed below:**

6. ticked site owner in error
7. Member of the public who knows a fair amount what I'm talking about
8. FULL TIME CARER
9. Chairman of Residents Association
10. Caddington resident.
11. Parish Council

## Appendix C – Park Homes in Central Bedfordshire – A unique environment and place to live 2015-2020 - Action Plan

Key Actions	Lead	To be Started by	To be Completed by	Resources Needed	Measurable Outcomes
<b>Priority one: To develop the park home environment into lifetime neighbourhoods where people can live independently in their home for as long as they wish to</b>					
Explore with park owners opportunities for developing park homes sites into lifetime neighbourhoods	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st March 2016	1st December 2016	Assistance from other teams within the Council and “Buy in” from site owners through workshops etc	An Options paper on developing park home sites into lifetime neighbourhoods with aspects relating to sites in general in addition to site specific opportunities.
Targeted prevention work with park homes residents to help prevent care needs from developing.	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st January 2016	Prevention plan by 1st March 2016; Prevention work ongoing thereafter	Assistance from CBC Adult Social Care, Public Health etc	Prevention plan and subsequently a reduction in the proportion of residents developing care needs in the targeted areas.
Engage with the voluntary sector to ensure park home residents are aware	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st December 2015	Engagement plan by 1st January 2016; All identified voluntary sectors	Assistance from CBC SCH&H Commissioning and “Buy in” from	Suitable information available leading to increased awareness and

of and able to access support in the wider community to help prevent social isolation, such a village care schemes.			organisations engaged by 1st March 2016	voluntary sector organisations	access to wider community help by residents
<b>Priority two: To develop and provide good quality, accessible information for park homes residents.</b>					
Expansion of existing service standards to include links to complaint procedure	Housing Solutions - Technical Support Officer	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> January 2016	Officer time	Updated service standards
Promotion of a dedicated helpline for park home site owners and residents	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2015	Officer time, publicity material, and space in publications	Increased customer satisfaction scores
Providing existing park homes factsheets in council office receptions, libraries, community centres, on the	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2015	Officer time and printing costs	Availability of factsheets

council website, and via residents associations					
Developing new park homes factsheets for areas not already covered and providing them in council office receptions, libraries, community centres, on the council website, and via residents associations	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2015	Officer time, branding and printing costs	Availability of factsheets
Providing park homes frequently asked questions on the council website	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2015	Officer time	Availability of frequently asked questions
Providing relevant strategies and policies on the council website	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2015	Officer time	Availability of strategies and policies
Providing an on-line public register of park home site licences and site rules	Housing Solutions - Technical Support Officer & Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2014	1 <sup>st</sup> February 2015	Officer time	Availability of on-line register
Providing clearer	Housing Solutions -	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2015	Officer time	Clearer fee

information on park home fees on the council website	Technical Officer (Park Homes)				information on website
Publishing grant and loan assistance factsheets on the CBC park homes webpage	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2015	Officer time	Availability of grant and loan assistance factsheets on park homes webpage
Publishing a list of contractors and legal firms able to specialise in park homes on the council website	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2015	Officer time	List of specialist contractors and legal firms on the council website
Review of the renewal policy to consider additional financial assistance in relation to park homes/sites	Housing Solutions - Locality Manager (North)	1 <sup>st</sup> June 2015	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2016	Manager time, and additional monies in the Housing Solutions discretionary capital budget	Reviewed/amended policy
<b>Priority three action plan: To improve the experience of residents living in park homes</b>					
Promoting community bulk oil buying schemes to park home residents	Housing Solutions - Affordable Warmth Officer	1st June 2015	1st September 2015	Officer time, publicity material, and space in publications	An increase in the number of schemes and/or residents taking part
Investigating the viability of district	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer	1st August 2015	1st December 2015	Officer time	A feasibility report

heating systems for park home sites	(Park Homes)				
Liaising with National Grid on the possibility of extending the mains gas network to “off gas” park home sites.	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st August 2015	1st December 2015	Officer time	A feasibility report
Promoting external wall insulation (EWI) to park home residents	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st April 2015	1st October 2015	Officer time, publicity material, and space in publications	An increase in enquiries from park home residents about EWI and installations.
Developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fire and Rescue Service on fire safety on park home sites	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	1st December 2015	1st April 2016	Officer time and FRS resource	Signed MOU
Priority four: To provide more opportunities for residents to become involved and to strengthen the development of the park homes communities					
Hold regular stakeholder events	Housing Solutions - Technical Officer (Park Homes)	Annually from January 2015	N/A	Officer time, venue and speakers	Completed event evaluation forms
Devise and	Housing Solutions -	1st June 2015	1st November 2015	Officer time	An increase in the

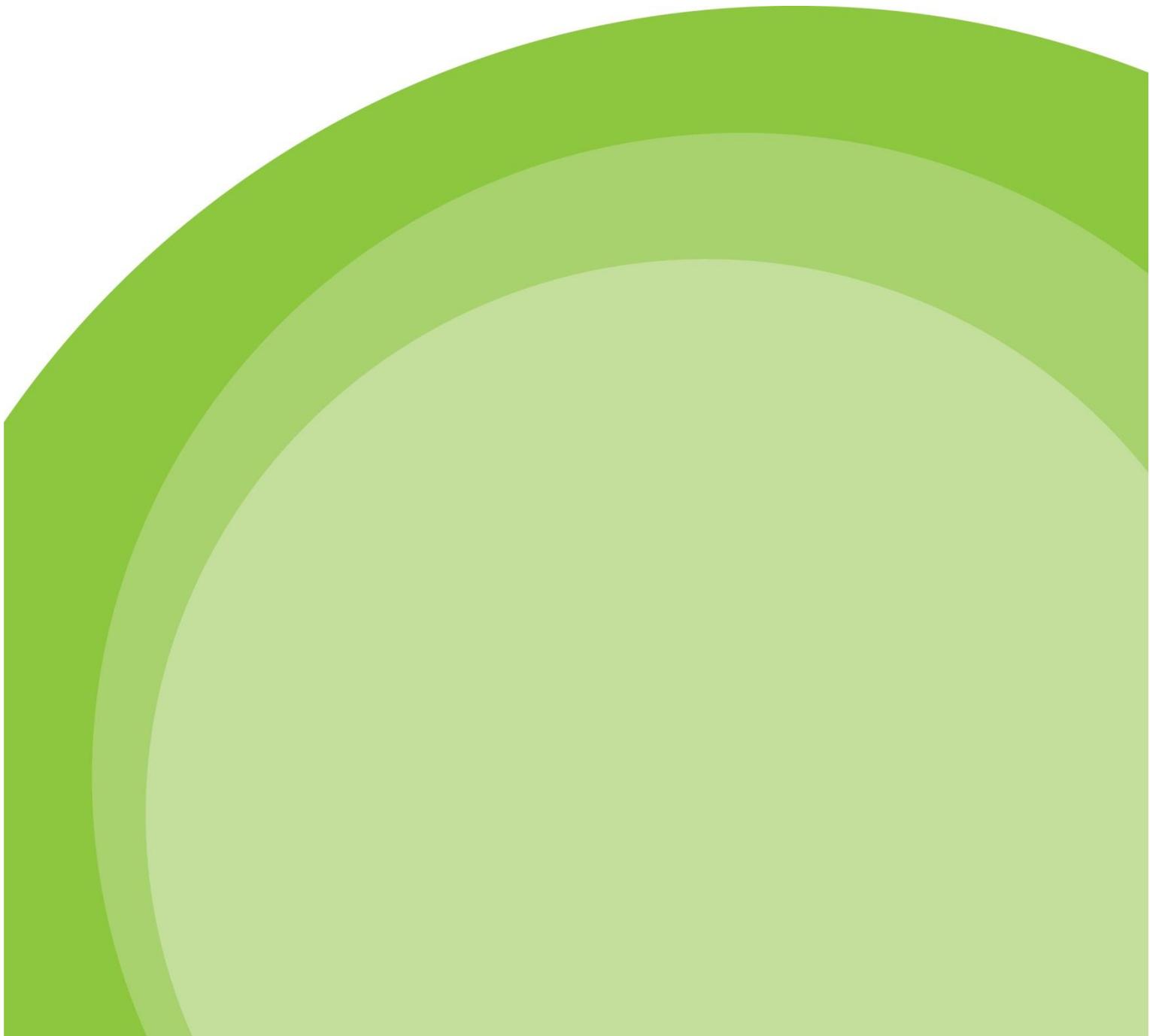
implement a plan for assisting with the formation of residents associations	Technical Officer (Park Homes)				number of residents associations in Central Bedfordshire
Explore issues that can lead to social isolation. This includes rural transport issues and potential solutions provided by the council, voluntary sector and local communities.	Head of Housing Solutions	1st March 2016	1st December 2016	Other staff and teams within the Council including Highways & Transport and SCH&H Commissioning	Options paper on tackling Social Isolation

**Appendix A**

# Homelessness Strategy

## 2015-2020

Draft



# Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020

Draft

## Contents

	Page
Foreword	3
What do we mean by 'homelessness'?	4
Introduction	5
Our Vision	6
Building on Success	7
Summary of the Homelessness Review Findings	8
National and local policy context	11
Strategic Priorities	17
Priority one: Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness	17
Priority two: Meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people	20
Priority three: Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast	23
Priority four: Minimise the impact of welfare reform, whilst assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations	24
Priority five: Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness	25
Implementing the Strategy	26



## Foreword

As the Council's Executive Member for Social Care, Health & Housing, I am pleased to present our new Homelessness Strategy. Its purpose is to set out our strategic approach and commitment to preventing homelessness. The strategy identifies current issues and sets out how we plan to address the housing needs and aspirations of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live, visit and invest in. A place where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity. The vision articulated within this strategy requires all to take responsibility for supporting our vulnerable communities and this includes striving to reduce and prevent homelessness.

Despite a small reduction in both homeless applications and acceptances in the last year, the demand and pressure on the Housing Solutions service remains high. Each year over 2,000 households approach the service seeking advice and assistance with regard to housing and homelessness issues. The use of both temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast accommodation reached a three-year high during 2014.

There is a limited supply of affordable housing in the social and private rented sectors. The pressure is mainly for 1 and 2 bedroom properties, as well as supported and specialist accommodation. Need is most pressing in the market towns – Sandy, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, and Leighton Buzzard/Linslade.

It is essential that we make best use of our existing stock and seize every opportunity to enable the development of affordable provision to meet local housing needs. The Council's Landlord Business is delivering an ambitious programme of new build development, whilst we also support Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable housing.

This strategy reflects our strong commitment to early intervention and prevention, by continuing to invest in and improve the effectiveness of the Housing Solutions Service. We seek to enable people to make their own informed choices for housing they can afford and sustain. Our approach is to develop person-centered solutions, minimising the impact of homelessness on people's lives, whilst developing local solutions to create opportunities to enable people to help themselves – with support when and where needed.

Alongside our actions to prevent homelessness, we have a clear social purpose. We strive to raise the aspirations of our customers, supporting them to access sustainable and affordable housing whilst also assisting them to access education, training and employment. Our offer of accommodation is tied to our social purpose and through our Homelessness Strategy we will change lives and raise aspirations.

Our vision is simple – a **new start with our help – helping you to help yourself**

Councillor Ms Carole Hegley  
Executive member responsible for Social Care, Health and Housing.

## What do we mean by 'homelessness'?

Homelessness is a term that is often misunderstood, with many people believing that the definition is restricted to those who sleep on the streets. However the legal definition is far wider, and there are many instances in which a person would be considered legally homeless or at risk of homelessness. Our strategy has regard to this wider legal definition.

In Autumn 2013 it was estimated that there were 13 rough sleepers in Central Bedfordshire, compared to the regional average of 6 and in December 2014, the estimate increased to 18. Nationally an increase in rough sleeping has been witnessed since 2010, and is thought to be due to a range of factors including the current economic climate and limited housing options available to young single people. Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness, and one where we need to focus our efforts on immediate intervention and support.

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to meeting the Government's 'No Second Night Out' vision. In partnership with our neighbouring authorities we have developed a local 'No Second Night Out' offer, which ensures that anyone who sleeps rough is contacted immediately through outreach services and an offer of emergency accommodation and support is made to ensure that they do not need to spend a second night on the streets. We are committed to ending rough sleeping and will work with our partners and communities to ensure this commitment is met.

The majority of people who are homeless in Central Bedfordshire do not sleep rough. It is much more likely that homeless people are the 'hidden homeless', and may be living in insecure or unsuitable accommodation, temporarily staying with family or friends or at risk of homelessness as they cannot afford to meet their housing costs. Homelessness can happen to anyone for a multitude of reasons.

A wide number of factors play a part in someone becoming homeless. Individuals can arrive at the point of homelessness after a long chain of other life events. Some factors and experiences can make people more vulnerable to homelessness: these include poor physical health, mental health problems, bereavement, experience of care, alcohol and drugs issues, and experience of the criminal justice system.

Central Bedfordshire Council has a clear legal responsibility in relation to homelessness. Our primary role and legal duty can be described as –

- To prevent homelessness and in a broader sense to promote health and wellbeing
- To fulfil our statutory responsibility to secure accommodation where there is a clear legal duty to do so. The Council will typically discharge its legal duty by securing suitable accommodation, which may be in the private rented sector.

In line with the Government's Code of Guidance, Central Bedfordshire Council does not encourage or incentivise homelessness, rather the Council will work with its partners to prevent homelessness. The Council does not see homelessness as being a route to access social housing, though in some cases it will be appropriate to offer a homeless person a council or Housing Association home. The Council has two main policies which determine access to accommodation –

- Allocations Policy – adopted in May 2014 and implemented during October 2014
- Policy to Discharge Homelessness Duty to a Suitable Home – adopted and implemented September 14

## Introduction

Reducing homelessness is a key priority for Central Bedfordshire. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to carry out a Strategic Review of Homelessness in their area and then formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy based on the findings from the review.

The outcome of the recent homelessness review highlights high levels of demand on the Housing Solutions service. Whilst preventative services have had success in preventing homelessness over the past 5 years, the ongoing high demand for services coupled with the impacts of welfare reform indicate that new approaches are required to meet the needs of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

A copy of the full review can be found at

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/150217-Final-Homelessness-review\\_tcm6-62930.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/150217-Final-Homelessness-review_tcm6-62930.pdf#False)

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) published its previous Homelessness Strategy in 2010. Since this time, significant socio-economic change has continued to take place both nationally and regionally as a result of the economic downturn and Government Spending Review decisions, particularly in relation to welfare reform. The combined effect of this change has in turn placed greater pressure on vulnerable households to maintain secure accommodation whilst also dealing with an increased cost of living, lack of security of tenure in the private sector, rising private rents and ongoing growth in house prices.

The Council is ambitious to deliver new housing in Central Bedfordshire through the Local Development Framework, and is determined to work with partners and businesses to create new jobs; 2,000 jobs have already been achieved as part of an ambitious target to achieve 27,000 new jobs through our strategy for growth. The Council's aim is to focus on local people contributing to, and benefiting from, economic success. Our plans for reform across the whole spectrum of public services, are based on supporting people into work and improving quality of life for all, young and old.

Central Bedfordshire is committed to delivering efficient and effective services; by working in new and innovative ways the Council has demonstrated that it can do more for less, and in doing so save money for our local residents. Given the high demand on the Housing Solutions service and the pressures on the housing market, we need to radically rethink the way we tackle these challenges including the way people who are homeless are supported to regain their independence, access sustainable and affordable accommodation and make a contribution to the community.

This strategy sets out a response to homelessness to the above challenges. The involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including Registered Providers of social housing (RP's), health services, voluntary and community groups, and customers has been invaluable in developing the strategy.

The Strategy is based firmly on the findings of a comprehensive review of homelessness undertaken during 2014. This included both primary research and an in-depth desk-top analysis of data from the Council and other agencies to identify key issues and trends. This analysis has been supplemented by wider data on the population of Central Bedfordshire, economic factors, health inequalities, and the housing market.

The Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 builds on the success of Central Bedfordshire's first strategy, which has encouraged more people to resolve their housing situation through preventative measures and housing options interventions. However social and economic factors have led to an increase in demand for housing options and advice services, housing register applications, homelessness declarations and a substantial increase in the use of temporary accommodation.

The strategy's priorities are therefore focused on continuing to improve preventative services, supporting homeless people and ensuring an adequate supply of appropriate, affordable accommodation. The Council recognises that a range of public bodies and third sector providers have an essential and invaluable contribution to make towards preventing homelessness. This strategy can only be successfully delivered through effective partnership working.

## Our vision

Our Homelessness Strategy is forward looking; all of our interventions lead, through a range of different options, to our offer of accommodation being a springboard into work and financial stability.

Our vision is simple – a **new start with our help – helping you to help yourself**

The challenge we continue to face is that of housing supply, against a difficult economic backdrop. With a limited supply of affordable housing provision in both the social and private rented sectors and a lack of appropriate supported housing, it is essential to make the best use of the existing supply, whilst at the same time enabling the development of affordable provision to meet the housing needs of the area.

Our approach is to develop person-centered solutions, minimising the impact of homelessness on people's lives, whilst developing local solutions to create opportunities to enable people to help themselves – with support when and where needed.

We are working to increase housing supply through the following initiatives:

- Council's new build homes programme
- Targeted approach to the allocation of social housing to those in housing need
- Enabling chains of moves to free up social housing
- Lets Rent scheme to increase supply in the private rented sector
- Shared houses to meet the housing needs of single under 35 year olds

This approach to increasing supply will be coupled with a range of solutions to resolve a crisis and at the same time, we will expect people to use our 'Hand Up' to move on and to leave troubled times behind.

Our objectives are to:

- Effectively prevent homelessness by offering good realistic advice and support together with practical help.
- Understand and tackle the root causes of homelessness at a local level.
- Where people do become homeless, help them to find and sustain suitable homes as

soon as possible.

- Involve people affected by homelessness in planning services to meet their individual needs.
- Improve how we work together so services are easier to use and make the best use of available resources.
- Work in partnership with Children's Services to develop bespoke and sustainable housing solutions for young people and care leavers, including the provision of supported housing.
- Ensure our responses to homelessness promote customer choice, equality of opportunity, reduce social exclusion and contribute to community cohesion.
- Delivery of high quality front line services, which consistently achieves great results, whilst making the best use of resources.

Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to plan ahead and work in partnership with others who can assist in delivering solutions, as we strive to meet our housing ambitions.

## Building on Success

Housing has a central role to play in everything we are seeking to achieve in Central Bedfordshire. During 2013, a Councilor led Task and Finish Group worked closely with stakeholders and local residents to develop our local Housing Green Paper, which sets out the Council's thinking to date on housing issues and challenges and our priorities for action in driving forward with a new agenda. Our Green Paper sets out an innovative and ambitious approach to meeting the housing needs of our residents.

- In 2012 we developed our first Tenancy Strategy, which ensures the most effective use of our housing stock through the introduction of flexible tenancies.
- In 2014 we launched our new Allocations policy, which takes advantage of the opportunities provided by the Localism Act in creating a truly local Allocations Scheme, based upon research into our local housing needs. The new policy seeks to make the best use of housing stock, focusing resources on those households in housing need and supporting our residents into employment, education and training.
- In 2014 we approved a policy to discharge the homeless duty into the private rented sector, and have renewed and strengthened our 'Let's Rent' scheme, which increases affordable housing supply in the private rented sector.
- In 2014 the Council launched its new Tenancy Sustainment approach, which includes one to one support provided by Tenancy Support Officers, improved risk assessments before the tenant moves in to ensure the best start to the tenancy and incentives for tenants struggling financially to downsize. The Council has received national recognition for this innovative approach.
- In 2014, we created a locality model of service – Housing Solutions – amalgamating Housing Needs and Private Sector housing teams, creating generic roles and closer operational collaboration across specialist areas to more effectively deal with issues and problems (and create solutions) mainly in the private rented sector.

There have been many successes since the development of the last Homelessness

Strategy, in spite of the high housing demand in Central Bedfordshire. These successes have been achieved through the high priority placed on homelessness prevention in the area and the continuing work in delivering practical homelessness solutions. As a consequence, a strong network of partnerships and services has been developed to support those who are either threatened with or experiencing homelessness.

Since the previous strategy there have been significant changes in legislation such as the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Localism Act 2011. This has provided the opportunity to develop new ways of delivering services and has led to radical revisions in the way in which we deliver our housing services, including closer integration with employment and education.

We are proud of what we have achieved since the publication of our last Homelessness Strategy, including:

1. The successful harmonisation of the north and south housing needs services following the north service being brought back in house. This has ensured there is a consistent approach across Central Bedfordshire.
2. Development of a new local allocations scheme which meets our local needs.
3. The Let's Rent scheme, which facilitates private sector tenancies, has been developed to increase the housing supply available.
4. Troubled families now have additional support through the implementation of the Supporting Families programme.
5. A Homelessness and Mediation Service for young people has been introduced.
6. Debt and budgeting information and advice provision has been improved.
7. A new policy has been implemented to enable the use of the power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector.
8. Emergency night shelter facilities have been provided through the No Second Night Out Initiative.

## Summary of the Homelessness Review findings

In developing this Strategy, a comprehensive review of homelessness across Central Bedfordshire was undertaken over a period of ten months and involved active engagement with service providers and partner agencies.

The Review provides a sound evidence base for preventing and addressing homelessness across Central Bedfordshire and reflects on the factors known to affect future homelessness. Its findings and recommendations are the basis for the development of this new Homelessness Strategy.

- Since Central Bedfordshire Council's last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there have been many changes affecting local residents such as the welfare reforms and continuing economic challenges. This and other factors have led to an increase in demand for housing options and advice services, housing register applications, homelessness declarations and a substantial increase in the use of temporary accommodation.

- In 2013/14 2,158 households approached the Housing Solutions service for assistance, whilst this is a 9% reduction on the previous year, there continue to be high numbers of customers accessing the service.
- In 2013/14 183 homeless decisions were made, compared with 219 in 2010/11, representing a 16% decrease. This is due to pro-active prevention work and an increased use of private rented accommodation through the Council's Let's Rent scheme. There were 124 acceptances in 2013/14 compared with 159 the previous year. However, in the first half of 2014/15 there have already been 72 acceptances, suggesting an annual increase on the previous year.
- Young people are significantly over-represented in the homeless population in Central Bedfordshire, 57% of acceptances were There are a number of factors, which make young people vulnerable to homelessness and restrict their housing options; including high numbers of young people not in employment, education or training. Young people face challenges in finding accommodation through a combination of Local Housing Allowance restrictions and shared accommodation rates, a lack of resources for a deposit, and competition in the private rented sector. from people aged under 34 years.
- The number of households placed in temporary accommodation under a homeless duty has increased by 55% since 2010/11, which is at odds with the reduction in homeless decisions over the same time period. Hostel accommodation makes up the largest proportion of placements, however the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation increased significantly over the three year period to 2012-13 with a reduction in 2013-14. The cost of placing homeless households in temporary B&B accommodation has increased from £31,000 in 2011/12, to £71,000 in 2013/14. Both the increase in the use of B&B and the length of stay in B&B are of considerable concern. The majority of households placed in temporary accommodation were households with dependent children (71%).
- However data from the first two quarters of 2014/15 indicates that the rate of statutory homeless applications is likely to increase from the previous year, whilst the number of homelessness preventions is lower in comparison. At the same time, the number of placements in TA has roughly doubled in comparison to previous years. This demonstrates very clearly that there is extra pressure on the Housing Solutions service, and specifically on temporary accommodation. A considerably higher proportion of the homelessness caseload for 2014-15 has led to a placement in Temporary Accommodation, than in the previous two years.
- The majority of households accepted as homeless were lone females with dependent children, accounting for 40% of acceptances.
- The main reason for homelessness in Central Bedfordshire is family or friends not willing to accommodate, accounting for nearly a third (31%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14.
- This second biggest reason for homelessness locally is due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. Nationally the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy is the main cause of homelessness. In order to effectively prevent homelessness arising from the private rented sector a range of prevention tools are required including early intervention and immediate responses to problems as they arise.

- 537 households were prevented from becoming homeless either by providing support to remain in the existing home (275) or assistance to find alternative secure accommodation (262). This equates to 4.88 preventions per 1,000 households, which is below the national average of 9.28. This is an 18% reduction compared with the previous year.
- The most successful prevention measure used to enable households to remain in their existing home was through mediation, and the most successful measure to enable households to secure alternative accommodation was through assistance to access the private rented sector. The Lets Rent scheme is a significant success story locally.
- In 2013/14 there were 1,337 new Housing Register applications. The number of households joining the Housing Register has decreased by 10% over the last three years. It is anticipated that a further reduction will be witnessed following the implementation of the new Allocations Policy, which introduces a range of new eligibility criteria, however this may impact upon a higher demand on the Housing Solutions service. Currently the highest proportion of applications is made up of lone female parents, followed by couples with dependent children.
- There was estimated to be 13 rough sleepers in Central Bedfordshire in Autumn 2013, compared to the regional average of six.
- The Homelessness Review highlighted the link between homelessness and health, and illustrated the significant health inequalities experienced by homeless people, especially those sleeping rough. Whilst some aspects of poor health are attributable to being homeless, some health problems such as substance misuse and mental health problems can lead to homelessness, and be a barrier in moving from the streets or temporary housing into more stable accommodation. Access to appropriate and timely drug and alcohol and mental health treatments can therefore play an important role in moving people out of homelessness and into long term recovery.
- In undertaking the review a number of engagement events were held with staff and external stakeholders to gather views on the effectiveness of homelessness service provision within Central Bedfordshire. The key messages that arose through the consultation event were:
  - Effective support and key worker provision, however the demand for the service is very high.
  - Lack of supported accommodation for young people.
  - Lack of emergency accommodation.
  - Lack of one and two bedroom properties across the area.

## National and local policy context

Central Bedfordshire's Homelessness Strategy has been developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans.

### Homelessness Duty

Legal provisions covering statutory homelessness prevention and relief are set by the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002. The legislation places a general duty on housing authorities to deliver advice and information on preventing homelessness along with providing assistance to priority need households that are threatened with or become homeless.

### **National Social Policy Change**

Since the last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there has been a period of rapid social policy change, including major welfare and social housing reform.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 is a key part of the Government's approach to social and economic reform and includes the introduction of Universal Credit and Benefit Cap, the replacement of Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments and the introduction of the under occupancy penalty for Housing Benefit claimants in social housing.

In addition to this, in 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in the private sector were decreased and national caps were introduced. Further changes were made to the LHA in 2012 where there was an increase in the proportion of single people with no dependents restricted to the same rate as those renting a single room in a shared house due to a change in the age limit to 35.

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a raft of local government reforms across finance, planning, governance and housing. The changes relevant to homelessness include:

- a) The right for housing authorities to grant fixed-term tenancies
- b) A requirement for local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy
- c) Greater flexibility in the allocation of social housing
- d) Discharging homelessness duties using private rented accommodation.

### **The Government's Policy on Homelessness**

The Government has established a cross- Government working group made up of Ministers from eight government departments. This group set out its strategy in its Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide published in July 2011.

NSNO has five standards:

1. New rough sleepers can be identified and helped off the streets immediately.
2. The public can alert services if they see anyone sleeping rough so they get help.
3. Rough sleepers can go to a place of safety, where their needs can be assessed and they can get help.
4. Rough sleepers are able to get emergency accommodation and other services they need.
5. Rough sleepers from outside their area can be reconnected with their community.

### **Making Every Contact Count: a joint approach towards homelessness prevention**

In August 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the Making Every Contact Count report. The report sets out the Government's approach to homelessness prevention by focusing on the contribution that a commitment around troubled families, health, crime prevention and employment and skills can make. The report calls for central Government, local authorities, government agencies and the voluntary sector to work together to support those at risk of homelessness.

It also gives an indication of the Government's direction and expectations for homelessness prevention. This emphasises a number of important factors, including; greater integration of local authority services (Housing, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, etc.); increased focus on a payment by results approach to funding; increased reliance on the private rented sector; and a focus on wrap-around services to tackle youth homelessness.

The report also set ten local challenges, which the Government has recommended local authorities should take forward. This strategy recognises the importance of these challenges and acknowledges existing work already undertaken or underway in response to them. CBC will ensure that the ten 'Gold Standard Pledges' remain key to its targeted approach in addressing homelessness prevention and homelessness.

### **Care Act 2014 requirements**

The Care Act introduced the wellbeing principle where local authorities must promote the wellbeing of adults in a number of its functions. Promoting well-being means actively seeking improvements in the aspects of wellbeing. A number of these aspects are relevant to homeless people such as physical and mental health and emotional well-being, participation in work, education, training or recreation, social and economic well-being and suitability of living accommodation. Suitable living accommodation includes adaptations, assistive technology and advice and assistance on housing options.

This Care Act also requires local authorities to be pro-active to prevent, delay or reduce the need for social care support and this applies to the whole population, whether or not they currently use services. Local authorities will need to work with other organisations to identify people who might have support needs that are not being met and to make available services that will enable a person to stay independent.

Access to information and advice in the right format at the right time is also a key requirement of the Care Act. The guidance contains key principles for local authorities on information and advice, which should be considered in the context of this strategy in helping meet Care Act requirements:

- Be accessible for whole population
- Gives choice and control
- Supports the integration agenda
- Prevents or delays need for care and support
- Independent living – core part of well being principle

Local authorities have a duty under the Care Act to carry out their care and support responsibilities with the aim of joining-up services with those provided by the NHS and other health-related services (which includes housing and leisure services). Partnership working and integration is therefore important to implement the Care Act requirements.

## Children and Families Act

The Children and Families Act 2014 seeks to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families. It underpins wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background.

The changes to the law to give greater protection to vulnerable children, better support for children whose parents are separating, a new system to help children with special educational needs and disabilities, and help for parents to balance work and family life.

It also ensures vital changes to the adoption system can be put into practice, meaning more children who need loving homes are placed faster. Reforms for children in care can be implemented including giving them the choice to stay with their foster families until their 21st birthday.

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities for joint commissioning and assessment of Education, Health and Care needs, to support Young People that have Special Educational Needs or disabilities, from birth to the age of 25.

## Central Bedfordshire Council's medium term plan

'Delivering Your Priorities 2012-16' sets out the priority of 'enhancing your local community – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow'. One of the targets is to ensure the availability of high quality, appropriate housing including affordable housing, supported by suitable infrastructure.

Affordable housing supply is an essential element of a strategy to prevent homelessness. Our customers mainly ask for a property to rent. Providing a home is an important element of the overall – personal – solution we are working towards, though it is always true that a sustainable solution typically requires much more besides, than just "bricks and mortar".

The Council's Landlord Business is delivering an ambitious programme of new build development, whilst we also support Housing Associations to increase the supply of affordable housing. Below, we set out summary information for completions within our affordable housing programme during 2013/14 and the first two quarters of 2014/15. Our programme is weighted towards low cost home ownership and within the rented provision, we typically see provision of mainly general needs 2 and 3 bed properties.

### 2013/2014 (12 month period)

Tenure	Number of completions
Social Rent	22
Affordable Rent	55
Shared Ownership	63
First Buy	13
Help to Buy	284

### 2014/2015 (Q1&Q2, 6 month period)

Tenure	Number of completions
Social Rent	6

Affordable Rent	82
Shared Ownership	84
Help to Buy	212

Looking to the future and in particular to the supply of rented housing, it is imperative that the Council and our partner Housing Associations seek to deliver new provision of rented accommodation as follows –

- **Accommodation based supported housing** in line with our Market Position Statement for Vulnerable People. In particular, provision for young people and care leavers. This is particularly true in the Ivel Valley and West Mid Beds localities. However, new provision of accommodation based services is required across Central Bedfordshire and is the main priority related to Housing Supply. For example, a Foyer scheme for young people.
- **Accessible housing, provided to full mobility standards** to address a shortfall of accommodation for those households where a member is disabled.
- **Suitable housing for older people**, on the basis that the Council and our partners are proactive to enable older people living in general needs accommodation to downsize, so freeing up general needs properties, enabling the council to meet multiple needs through ‘chains of moves’. This can include specialist provision of Independent Living accommodation, as well as ordinary housing that is attractive and accessible to older people.
- **1 and 2 bedroom properties, in the market towns** – Sandy, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, and Leighton Buzzard/Linslade.
- Approximately **six large 5 bedroom, mobility standard homes**, which typically are required on the basis of 1 property per year for a period of 7 years across Central Bedfordshire, in each of the market towns.
- The Council’s Landlord Business is committed to directly provide **new provision of temporary accommodation (TA)** in either Biggleswade or Sandy, and Flitwick, in suitable locations. This additional provision will compliment the existing provision in Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis, providing suitable and reasonably accessible coverage of TA across Central Bedfordshire.

**Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy**

The Council’s priority to ‘enhance your local community’ is mirrored by the Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2031 which has the priority of ‘maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities’ with a commitment to:

- Helping people to access good quality, suitable housing by ensuring that at least 35% of our new homes are affordable,
- Ensure that all new homes meet new sustainable home standards and
- Ensure that all accommodation is safe, healthy, accessible and affordably warm.

### **Housing Strategy 2011-16**

The existing Housing Strategy 2011-16 set out the Council's priorities for providing a comprehensive housing service, which aims to improve quality of life for all residents through effective housing need solutions and the development of stable communities across Central Bedfordshire.

The key priorities identified in the Housing Strategy included meeting the accommodation and support needs of older persons and vulnerable people and providing housing options for the whole community. The Housing Strategy is due for review during 2015/16

### **Looked After Children Placement Strategy 2013**

Section 22G of The Children Act 1989 requires a council to take steps, as far as reasonably practicable, that secures accommodation for looked after children within the authority's area and which meets the needs of those children. Councils should consider the number of accommodation providers in their area that is sufficient in the Council's opinion, and take account of the range of accommodation in their area capable of meeting different needs.

The Looked After Children Placement Strategy sets out the position in relation to placements for looked after children in Central Bedfordshire, including actions needed to ensure sufficient placements to meet future need.

### **Tenancy Strategy 2013-18**

In response to new tenancy arrangements introduced by the Localism Act 2011 the Council developed the Tenancy Strategy 2013-18 to outline its approach to flexible tenancies and delivering a new housing offer for local people. The Tenancy Strategy focusses on using tenancy arrangements to maximise the use of social housing stock for those in most need and incentivise employment, social responsibility and social mobility. The strategy introduced:

- Five year fixed term tenancies across the CBC social housing stock for all new tenants from 1 April 2013;
- Guidance for Registered Providers to use fixed term tenancies and provide options advice as tenancies finish; and
- Criteria for assessing the renewal of tenancies based on changing circumstances (priority need and financial) and conduct.

### **Housing Support Services Market Position Statement**

As of October 2014, the Market Position Statement (MPS) is being developed and it identifies the level and type of housing-support services that CBC currently wishes to see being made available to vulnerable residents. These services are required in order to promote access to suitable homes and help people to remain in them.

The evidence available to the Council suggests that there is unmet need for housing support services across Central Bedfordshire. The MPS is due to be published in 2014/15 at which point Commissioning colleagues will develop a commissioning plan to shape the supported housing market based on the findings of the MPS.

### **Allocations Policy**

In 2014 the Council revised its existing housing allocations scheme to help applicants in housing need to find suitable housing, provide an incentive for applicants to seek employment and make efficient and best use of social housing stock in the area.

The new allocations scheme has been developed on the principles of fairness and transparency when allocating social or affordable lets and has simplified the banding system to make eligibility clearer for local people to understand. The new allocations scheme seeks to meet the following objectives:

- a) Encourage applicants who are out of work to seek employment,
- b) Balance reasonable preference with local priorities,
- c) Provide support for low paid workers in the private sector,
- d) Deliver practical help for those threatened with homelessness,
- e) Support households who work locally, and
- f) Offer choice.

It is anticipated that the implementation of this policy will have an impact on the number of clients approaching the Housing Options Service as clients that are unable to join the Housing Register because they do not meet the criteria may seek alternative options for housing. The Council is monitoring the impact of this policy on demand for Housing Options services and the length of time households accepted as homeless spend in temporary accommodation.

### **Joint Commissioning Strategy for Mental Health Services for Adults and Older People in Central Bedfordshire**

The Joint Commissioning Strategy recognises that meeting the mental health needs of key groups at the greatest risk of homelessness is a priority across Central Bedfordshire. Key points highlighted in the strategy were:

- Access to mental health services if not registered with a GP.
- Support for hostels/temporary accommodation providers when dealing with mental illness.
- Discharge processes, particularly late on a Friday.

### **Strategic priorities**

The magnitude and complexity of the issues that face us in the next 5 years must not be under-estimated. However, Central Bedfordshire Council will strive to meet its housing ambitions and will continue to plan ahead and will work in partnership with others who can assist in delivering solutions. We have prioritised issues and proposed actions to build on our past success, mitigate the impacts of changing housing markets, social and welfare

reform but, above all, prevent homelessness.

This 5 year strategy covers the period 2015– 2020, and seeks to further strengthen partnership across Central Bedfordshire and to continue to make significant improvements across homelessness services. We need to challenge the conventional approach to public sector intervention – intensifying and accelerating our action. This will be achieved through adoption of the following priorities. Key actions across each of the priorities are detailed in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

The following strategic priorities have been adopted and are based upon the Homelessness Review findings.

- Priority 1: Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness**
- Priority 2: Increase Housing Supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people**
- Priority 3: Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast**
- Priority 4: Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations.**
- Priority 5: Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness**

### **Priority one: Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness**

In order to strengthen our approach to tackling homelessness we will seek corporate endorsement to preventing homelessness across the Council. We will seek commitment from both Members and Senior Managers across all service areas to work together to deliver a joined up and holistic approach to preventing and ending homelessness.

We will continue to prevent homelessness, and we will strategically commission and work with our partners to deliver effective, pro-active homelessness prevention services. These services will be targeted, accessible and be able to respond to the diverse needs of all customers, providing innovative and flexible solutions.

The Homelessness Review showed that homeless prevention services within Central Bedfordshire have been more effective in recent years. Since the last review of homelessness in 2009 Central Bedfordshire has seen increasing demand for housing options support to assist local people to maintain their existing accommodation, overcome difficulties and prevent people becoming homeless.

Whilst the increased housing options activity has had a positive impact on reducing homelessness, there is still much more that can be done to help customers sustain their current accommodation. Through our locality model we will ensure that our Housing Solutions service provides a holistic approach to preventing homelessness and tackling its root causes; whilst at the same time providing a range of affordable housing options in both the social and private rented sector e.g. our work around illegal evictions.

In 2014, we created a locality model of service – Housing Solutions – amalgamating Housing Needs and Private Sector housing teams, creating generic roles and closer operational collaboration across specialist areas to more effectively deal with issues and problems (and create solutions) mainly in the private rented sector.

Welfare reforms, economic uncertainty, a buoyant private rented sector and lack of security in the private sector is squeezing the housing options available for working age, low income households in Central Bedfordshire. Finally the economic crisis has led to uncertainty in the employment market, stagnant wages and an increased cost of living, putting pressure especially on low income families.

It is anticipated that these factors will continue to place increased demand on the Housing Solutions service, and as such service delivery models need to be reviewed to ensure effective and strategic approaches to customer demand management.

A high number of individuals were estimated to be sleeping rough in 2013, it is essential to ensure effective provision for this vulnerable group to ensure that no rough sleeper spends a second night sleeping rough.

The Review found that in 2013/14 31% of homelessness acceptances were due to family or friends no longer able to accommodate and 18% were due to the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy. The service needs to respond to these main causes.

In order to effectively prevent homelessness arising in the private rented sector a targeted approach is required. Early intervention is essential to prevent the landlord and tenant relationship breaking down irrevocably. As such support to both tenant and landlord is essential in the early stages of a new tenancy, as too is mediation when a tenancy is at risk. A toolkit will be developed to prevent homelessness from arising from the private rented sector, and where homelessness cannot be prevented, notice periods will be used to source alternative sustainable accommodation to ensure that households do not have to go into temporary accommodation. We will not wait until the household is in crisis to assist.

Young people are significantly over-represented in the homeless population in Central Bedfordshire, 57% of acceptances were from people aged under 34 years. The service needs to develop effective solutions to prevent young people from becoming homeless, alongside affordable housing options for those that do become homeless.

In particular a coordinated approach with Children's services is required to prevent Care Leavers from becoming homeless. Currently advice is often sought at a point of crisis e.g. breakdown of a supported housing arrangements, or failure of planned arrangement. The established protocol is not well known or understood.

A Care Leavers Accommodation Working Group has recently been established, recognising that Housing and Corporate Parenting colleagues need to collaborate more

effectively on the operational response to Care Leavers with housing needs; and on the strategic response to vulnerable Young People.

A Shared Homes accommodation pilot is currently being explored. The intention is to lease a council property to a specialist provider. Three vulnerable people with a pre-existing friendship, able to provide mutual support and a preference to share would live in the property, receiving intensive support from the provider. This model has the potential to work well for the right group of people, and will be rolled out if successful.

It is not always possible to keep people in their homes, and sometimes a move can be the only realistic option. As far as possible we will ensure that people are supported to move home in a planned way, either into supported accommodation or into alternative permanent accommodation.

We aim to ensure all homeless people are able to access meaningful advice and assistance, regardless of whether or not there is a statutory duty. This means being realistic about what we can do, and creative in finding solutions, which should be tailored to meet individual need and circumstances.

Homelessness prevention measures will also be embedded within local communities as many people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless are likely to seek advice from local services first. This strategy therefore supports the need for local agencies to develop and maintain the necessary skills and resources to be able to identify those at risk of homelessness and to give them appropriate advice, or to refer them to a more appropriate service for support.

We are committed to ongoing service improvement and pledge to meet the Government's national Gold Standard.

## Objectives

	What we will do to Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness
1	Undertake a comprehensive review of service delivery arrangements to ensure effective demand management and customer satisfaction.
2	Ensure homelessness is prevented through an effective homelessness prevention toolkit.
3	Ensure a targeted approach to meeting the housing needs of young people and Care Leavers.
4	Undertaken a review of rough sleeping services to ensure that the 'No Second Night Out' vision is met.
5	Achieve the Government's Gold Standard

## **Priority Two: Increase housing supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people**

We are committed to housing growth in the area, especially the growth of affordable housing to increase the housing options available, together with economic growth; maximising employment opportunities.

Alongside our strategic commitment to the development of affordable housing, which is outlined at pages 13 and 14 above, related to the main areas of supply where there is a shortfall or deficit, Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the increasingly important role that the private rented sector plays in meeting the housing needs of the community, including those households who are homeless.

The Council has successfully developed the Let's Rent scheme, which increases the provision of private sector housing available to Housing Solutions clients. The scheme has provided good quality, well managed, private sector accommodation in the local area. Client demand for the Let's Rent scheme is growing and work is underway to develop relationships with letting agents in the north of the area to expand the need to meet this growing demand. In order to ensure the sustainability of this tenancy model effective and timely support to both tenants and landlords is critical.

In 2014/15 the Council adopted a policy that allows its homelessness duty to be discharged by offering to house an applicant in a suitable private rented sector property. It is anticipated that this approach will underpin and strengthen existing housing advice and homelessness prevention activities and ensure homeless households are able to access suitable and secure accommodation within improved timescales. The ability to make a PSO has introduced more flexibility in preventing homelessness but the Council needs to increase the availability of these private sector properties to maximise the benefits.

The increased use of the private rented sector will need a coordinated approach to ensure that all private rented sector schemes work effectively together and maximise resources.

We are also committed to the best use of our own housing stock in meeting the needs of our communities as signaled through our Tenancy Strategy and new Allocations Policy. Through the development of specialist accommodation for our older residents, we hope to free up general needs accommodation, facilitating chains of lets and meeting housing needs. Alongside this we will make the best use of our two bed units and facilitate house shares to meet the needs of single people.

The role that supported housing plays in preventing homelessness is critical. The Council is committed to investing in a supported housing model that acts as a place of change, not only meeting the housing needs of homeless people; but supporting them to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness, raising their aspiration and assisting them to access training, education and employment.

The Council commissions a range of supported housing accommodation and floating support services for those that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We are developing our first Supported Housing Services Market Position Statement (MPS) to signal to the provider market the services we want to meet the housing needs of vulnerable people. The MPS, which is due to be published in 2015, sets out our

aspirations for the type of housing support services we want to be available to local people. These aspirations are:

- A mixed market of providers of different sizes offering different types of service, in order to promote choice to local people in the way they access housing and support.
- Accommodation Based Services available in a range of locations across Central Bedfordshire.
- Providers of all kinds offering bespoke services as far as possible, designed in conjunction with the customer.

The evidence gathered in the development of the MPS suggests that there is significant unmet need for housing support services across Central Bedfordshire for several client groups, and no apparent areas of 'over-supply'. The MPS, Homelessness Review and stakeholder engagement activity indicates that provision of accommodation and support for the following groups in particular should be reviewed to better meet individual needs:

1. Single homeless people (including rough sleepers)
2. Young people (16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged 18-24)
3. People with mental health problems
4. People that have difficulties with substance misuse
5. Ex-offenders

The MPS, once finalised, will provide the evidence base and commissioning priorities for the future of accommodation and non-accommodation based housing support in Central Bedfordshire. The Council's Commissioning Service in the Social Care, Health and Housing directorate will then develop a commissioning plan to shape the supported housing market based on the evidence presented in the MPS.

Demand for supported accommodation in Central Bedfordshire is high and we need to ensure that it is used appropriately. It is therefore essential to ensure that an effective eligibility criteria is in place to ensure that supported accommodation is available to those who need it most, and we can prioritise places when demand is high. Alongside this it is essential that there is effective move on from supported accommodation.

Nationally, health outcomes for homeless people were much poorer than the general population. In 2012 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire identified unmet health needs and service gaps with recommendations for improvement.

Key issues identified were:

1. Access to GP services where the client does not have a fixed address and cannot register for services.
2. Over-use of Accident and Emergency services for conditions that could have been treated earlier if the patient had accessed primary care services.
3. Homeless people can drop out of services that do not have case management.
4. No health input is available to support hostel staff in complex health and homeless cases to reduce rough sleeping, prevent mental health crisis and reduce hospital admissions.
5. Lack of training on homelessness and health for provider health staff.
6. Lack of a multi-agency approach to health and homelessness.

To improve the health outcomes of homeless people there is a requirement for a multi agency partnership between health, housing and third sector professionals to enable a collaborative approach to meet the complex needs of homeless people, especially rough sleepers.

## Objectives

	<b>What we will do to increase housing supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people.</b>
1	Develop a coordinated approach to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.
2	Ensure the best use of the Council's Housing Stock to meet customer need, through the Allocations Policy, the Annual Lettings Plan, tenancy sustainment approaches and shared tenancies.
3	Increase the provision of affordable housing, including both market and rented.
4	Develop a coordinated approach to increase the provision and through put of supported accommodation services to meet identified needs.
5	Improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people.

### Priority three: Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast

We will undertake a full scale review of our approach to temporary accommodation to ensure that it meets the current needs, eliminates the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and supports our approach to use private sector offers to discharge the homeless duty. This review will respond to the immediate need, but will take a longer term approach to ensuring a model that is flexible and responsive to the changes that Universal Credit will bring in relation to both demand and funding subsidies.

The Council uses a range of short to medium term stay accommodation from a variety of providers for clients that are homeless or where enquiries are pending. This includes:

- Temporary accommodation schemes owned and managed by the Council, mainly hostel based accommodation,
- Dispersed, self-contained temporary accommodation owned by a Registered Provider in an area where the Council does not have any stock,
- Referral to Domestic Abuse refuges,
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation for emergency, short-term use only.

The Review highlighted that there has been a 55% increase in the use of temporary accommodation since 2010-11. The majority of households stay in temporary accommodation for less than three months, and almost all less than six months.

Bed and Breakfast is only provided as a last resort when other accommodation is not available, usually as interim accommodation whilst investigations are being carried out on a homeless application. However the use of B&B accommodation has increased significantly with spend on B&B increasing from £31,000 in 2011-12 to £71,000 in 2013-14.

Both the increase in the use of B&B and the length of stay in B&B are of considerable concern. As a result, the Council is carrying out a review of Temporary Accommodation to find solutions to reduce its use.

Any review of temporary accommodation needs to be undertaken in the context of the ability to discharge the Council's homeless duty into the private rented sector, and the impact that Universal Credit will have on the funding arrangements for temporary accommodation.

#### Objectives

	What we will do reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed & breakfast
1	Carry out a comprehensive review of the use of Temporary Accommodation.
2	Minimise the use of unsuitable and expensive B&B accommodation.
3	Review temporary accommodation in light of the ongoing and forthcoming reforms made by the DWP and establish which properties will be affected.

**Priority four: Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations**

We will work with our key partners to reduce the impact that welfare reform has on homeless levels.

Welfare reforms have reduced income for a number of households and placed restrictions on the housing they can access through a reduction in Local Housing Allowance rates and the under-occupancy penalty for social housing tenants. This has led to increased pressure on the availability of affordable one and two bedroom properties. Due to increased competition in the private sector market, some landlords are becoming more selective of their tenants with a preference for those not claiming benefits.

The Council is also monitoring and responding to the impact of welfare reform by providing additional support targeted at those affected. The Welfare Reform Working Group has commissioned research on how residents are responding to the reforms and is seeking ways to improve financial resilience through increasing funding for Citizens Advice Bureau services and providing funding to encourage the use of Credit Unions.

The next significant challenge for benefit claimants that the Council is preparing for is the introduction of Universal Credit, which will increase financial pressure on households and may result in increased evictions due to failure to pay housing costs.

We will help homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations.

Losing or being without a job can be a cause and consequence of homelessness. The majority of people who approach the Housing Solutions Service in Central Bedfordshire are economically inactive, yet many homeless people want to work. Homeless people can face multiple and complex barriers to finding and staying in employment. These challenges can include poor qualifications, long term unemployment, unspent convictions, drug and alcohol misuse, poor physical and mental health, and low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Central Bedfordshire has an ambition to create 27,000 new jobs through our strategy for growth. Increased prosperity and economic growth will have a positive impact on reducing the factors that lead to homelessness.

The link between aspiration, life outcomes and dependency on public services is well established. Homeless people must be enabled to make their own lives better, and raising aspiration is an important driver of change. This will often involve changing culture, attitudes and behaviour over the long term to ensure that they play a full and active part in the growth and prosperity of our communities.

Helping homeless people back into the labour market or into the labour market for the first time needs increased focus. This is essential if we are to reduce the number of people trapped in dependency.

The Review highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for homeless people to learn life skills and access education and training so that they can maintain their independence. Young people that have experienced homelessness often do not have the

skills to manage a tenancy such as managing income, adjusting to the behaviour expected of a tenant and managing a property.

**Objectives**

What we will do to minimise the impact of welfare reform.	
1	Develop an approach to manage the impact of Universal Credit on social housing tenants.
2	Deliver Housing Landlord’s Tenants Incentive Scheme to free up under-occupied homes and create shared houses.
3	Work with DWP to raise awareness of the impact of Universal Credit with partners and customers and develop a range of mitigations.
4	Ensure that the Housing Solutions service actively works with customers to raise their aspirations and help them to access employment, education and training.
5	In partnership explore the feasibility of developing a social enterprise to create employment opportunities for homeless customers.

**Priority five: Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness**

We recognise that to effectively prevent homelessness a partnership approach is critical. Many people have multiple needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home; the Council working in isolation cannot meet these needs. Working in partnership is fundamental if homelessness is to be effectively prevented. Therefore a partnership needs to be developed alongside effective governance arrangements for ensuring the delivery of the Strategy and its ongoing review.

Central Bedfordshire does not have a forum solely dedicated to homelessness. Instead there are a number of forums that CBC colleagues, partners and service providers attend with links to the agenda.

A Homelessness Multi-Agency Assurance Group (MAAG) will be established with membership made up of managers with decision-making powers, commissioning responsibilities and statutory responsibilities for tackling homelessness from a range of key agencies. This group will oversee the delivery of the strategy.

A further integrated partnership approach will be established through the development of a homelessness forum, which will meet quarterly to discuss with a wide variety of partners key homeless issues including current trends, information sharing, establishing best practice and improving working practices.

The Review also highlighted an issue with referrals between agencies, leading to poor customer outcomes and an un-coordinated response.

The availability of information about current service provision was seen by several stakeholders as limited or out of date. Better information sharing would allow service providers to make more accurate referrals to a wider variety of services allowing more choice for clients and reducing pressure on over-subscribed services.

## Objectives

	What we will do to develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness
1	Through this strategy, develop a clear vision for Homelessness across Central Bedfordshire.
2	Establish a Multi-Agency Assurance Group (MAAG) to govern and lead the delivery of the vision and the Homelessness Strategy implementation.
3	Establish a homelessness forum.
4	Improve access to information and review referral arrangements.

## Implementing the Strategy

In order to meet our commitment to deliver the strategic priorities we need to ensure that together with partners, we have the skills, structures and infrastructure for the delivery of the Strategy's objectives, and to deliver the radical and innovative agenda that will be essential to successfully tackling homelessness over the next five years.

To achieve the strategic priorities and objectives an action plan has been developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders to outline key objectives and tasks to be delivered over the 2015 - 2020 period. This is a separate document that will be published together with this strategy.

The Homelessness Multi Agency Assurance Group will be responsible for the delivery and monitoring of this Homelessness Strategy and action plan. The action plan will be monitored and reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs, policy and legislative changes and achieves the priorities contained within it. Actions will be further developed each year and included in the Housing Service Plan annually.

By adopting the Homelessness Strategy Central Bedfordshire Council is making a commitment to achieve the ambitions made by the Government to end rough sleeping and prevent homelessness.

The Council recognises that only through partnership working can we develop sustainable housing solutions that will provide a hand up into employment and financial sustainability.



**A great place to live and work**

This page is intentionally left blank

**APPENDIX B**



**Central Bedfordshire Council  
Homelessness Strategy  
2015 – 2020**

**Response to Formal Consultation 16 Feb 2015**

DRAFT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal duty on local authorities to undertake a comprehensive review of homelessness in their area and produce a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years based on the findings of the review.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Review must consider:
- Current and future levels of homelessness,
  - Resources available to the housing authority, the social services authority for the district, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the above activities
  - Activities which are carried out for any of the following purposes:
    - Preventing homelessness
    - Securing that accommodation is available for homeless people
    - Providing support for people in the district, who are homeless, may become homeless or were formerly homeless.
- 1.3 The Homelessness Strategy must include actions to:
- Prevent homelessness;
  - Ensure there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become homeless;
  - Ensure there is satisfactory support for people who are, or may become homeless, or need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
- 1.4 As a result of this Central Bedfordshire Council undertook a review of Homelessness within the area which included development and use of engagement/feedback questionnaires and two engagement events to gather the views of partners, service providers and colleagues to inform the development of the draft strategy. Copies of the final Review can be accessed by contacting the Housing Solutions Team on 0300 300 8302. (Website \*\*\*)
- 1.5 Taking into account the views received regarding the Homelessness Review via the engagement activities, the Council development the Draft Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2020 for consultation.
- 1.6 A formal consultation of the draft Homelessness Strategy took place for 7 weeks from 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015.
- 1.7 All Private and Social Landlords were contacted along with Housing support providers and housing and social care colleagues to provide notice of the formal consultation and to provide information about how they could respond to the consultation.

- 1.8 The formal consultation was managed via a formal consultation document. This was available in paper format; downloadable from the CBC website, or was obtainable by telephoning or writing to the contact details provided in the letters to stakeholders.
- 1.9 CBC staff and elected members were informed about the formal consultation and press releases were issued to the media to raise awareness of the consultation with Central Bedfordshire residents.
- 1.10 A further consultation event was also held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to explore the experiences and opinions of key partners and stakeholders who support people affected by homelessness. Invitations to this event were sent to voluntary organisations, supported housing providers and health and social care (Children's and Adult's services) professionals, and recognised the potential sharing knowledge and experiences. Feedback from this event has been included within this report (appendix 2).

## **2. RESULTS OF CONSULTATION: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

- 2.1 In total, 18 people responded to the Draft Homelessness Strategy formal consultation.
- 2.2 50% of respondents were residents of Central Bedfordshire, 23% were from Homelessness Support Providers or Council Partners, 6% were homelessness service users and 22% were recorded as "other".
- 2.3 44% of respondents were male, 39% were female and 17% preferred not to say or did not answer.
- 2.4 39% of respondents were aged 60 years or over.
- 2.5 6% of respondents stated that they had a disability and 17% preferred not to say.
- 2.6 72% of respondents were White: British and 17% of respondents preferred not to state their ethnicity.
- 2.7 Appendix 1 provides a full demographic statistical profile of respondents.

## **3. RESULTS OF CONSULTATION: QUESTION RESPONSES**

The formal consultation was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents, with results summarised as follows (percentages are rounded up or down as appropriate):

**Central Bedfordshire Council has identified the following priorities within the draft strategy:**

**Priority 1:** Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness

**Priority 2:** Increase Housing Supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people

**Priority 3:** Reduce to use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts

**Priority 4:** Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their aspirations.

**Priority 5:** Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness

**3.1 The Strategy strives to raise the aspirations of our customers, supporting them to access sustainable and affordable housing whilst also assisting them to access education, training and employment. The Strategy's vision is "Homelessness: your opportunity for a new start with our help - helping you to help yourself"**

**Q1. Do you agree with the vision, and do you believe that the priorities support the Strategy's aim?**

Agree	15	83%
Disagree	1	6%
Don't Know	2	11%

15 respondents (83% of respondents) agreed with the Council's vision and that the priorities supported its aims.

4 respondents, (17% of respondents) who did not agree or did not know if they agreed with the vision provided qualitative feedback, stating that they were concerned that the Strategy appears to state that supporting people is policy led and that the Council will only support people in employment.

*Central Bedfordshire Council response in blue text*

*The council is keen to make it absolutely clear that the protection and assistance provided by the homelessness legislation is available to all – not only to those clients who are in employment. The homelessness legislation is very clear about the council's duties towards homeless people. What we are aiming to do is to provide assistance focussed on getting people back on track so they can continue to participate in community life. One aspect of this is helping those who are out of work in*

*their efforts in seeking employment. This is an important part of the support that will be provided to those facing homelessness.*

**3.2 Thinking about the identified priorities within the draft Homelessness Strategy:**

**Priority One:** Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness

**Q2. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

Strongly Agree	9	50%
Agree	9	50%
Neither	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%

All respondent either strongly agreed or agreed that the objectives and actions within the draft Strategy supported Priority One. Qualitative feedback was also provided by respondents including that “Prevention is better than cure” and that partnership working and good infrastructures will support this aim.

*The council believes that working to prevent homelessness provides significantly better outcomes for clients. We can only ever achieve this by working in partnership with other council departments, statutory and voluntary agencies. This is why Priority Five has been included in this homelessness strategy.*

**Priority Two:** Increase Housing Supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people

**Q3. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

Strongly Agree	7	39%
Agree	7	39%
Neither	1	6%
Disagree	3	17%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%

14 respondents, (78% of respondents), either strongly agreed or agreed that the objectives and actions within the draft Strategy supported Priority Two; 4 respondents, (23% of respondents), who neither agreed nor

disagreed or did not agree provided qualitative feedback stating that emergency housing had not been identified as a need within the strategy, excluding this would impact on the fundamentals of the Strategy's priorities.

*Priority Two focuses on meeting both the accommodation and support needs to homeless people. This includes both long term housing, and short term / emergency accommodation. The first objective set out under this Priority intends to address the need for more private sector accommodation for occupation by homeless households.*

**Priority Three:** Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts.

**Q4. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

Strongly Agree	8	44%
Agree	6	33%
Neither	1	6%
Disagree	3	17%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%

14 respondents, (78% of respondents), either strongly agreed or agreed that the objectives and actions within the draft Strategy supported Priority Three; 4 respondents, (23% of respondents), who neither agreed nor disagreed or did not agree provided qualitative feedback including that there are currently no alternatives to Bed & Breakfast accommodation and the costs of any alternative needs to be considered. The option of night shelter provision was also suggested.

*The council is committed to reviewing its temporary accommodation portfolio and this will look at how the existing supply can be better used. A leasing scheme was recently commissioned to will bring forward more private sector properties for use by homeless households. This means that the way in which other existing accommodation is used can be reviewed. Existing temporary accommodation could be freed up more quickly as clients move on into the private sector, effectively providing an alternative to bed and breakfast. There are no current plans for night shelter provision although this will be kept under review.*

**Priority Four:** Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their expectations.

**Q5. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

Strongly Agree	7	39%
Agree	7	39%
Neither	3	17%
Disagree	1	6%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%

14 respondents, (78% of respondents), either strongly agreed or agreed that the objectives and actions within the draft Strategy supported Priority Four; 4 respondents, (23% of respondents), who neither agreed nor disagreed or did not agree provided qualitative feedback including that there are a finite number of jobs available to people and volunteering should be included alongside employment within these objectives.

*This Priority is specifically aimed at helping clients to become economically active so that they are not negatively impacted by welfare reform. We appreciate that volunteering may be part of the “training and education” journey, although in itself, it does not serve to lift people out of being impacted by the benefit cap, or remove them from reliance on benefits. For this reason it is not specifically included.*

*The Council’s allocations policy recognises the value of volunteering and gives additional priority for households who are formally engaged in volunteering.*

**Priority Five:** Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness

**Q6. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

Strongly Agree	8	44%
Agree	6	33%
Neither	4	22%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Don't know	0	0%

14 respondents, (78% of respondents), either strongly agreed or agreed that the objectives and actions within the draft Strategy supported Priority Five; 4 respondents, (22% of respondents), who neither agreed nor disagreed unfortunately did not provide qualitative feedback with their response.

**3.3 Q7. How confident do you feel that the delivery of the draft Homelessness Strategy will lead to the prevention of the following groups becoming homeless?**

**Families with Children:**

Very confident:	2	11%
Confident:	7	39%
Not too confident:	5	28%
Not at all confident:	2	11%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	0	0%

**Single homeless:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	4	22%
Not too confident:	8	44%
Not at all confident:	4	22%
Don't know:	1	6%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-24 year old care leavers):**

Very confident:	2	11%
Confident:	4	22%
Not too confident:	7	39%
Not at all confident:	3	17%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	0	0%

**People with mental health difficulties:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	5	28%
Not too confident:	6	33%
Not at all confident:	5	28%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	0	0%

**People with alcohol and substance misuse problems:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	6	33%
Not too confident:	4	22%
Not at all confident:	5	28%
Don't know:	3	17%
Did not answer:	0	0%

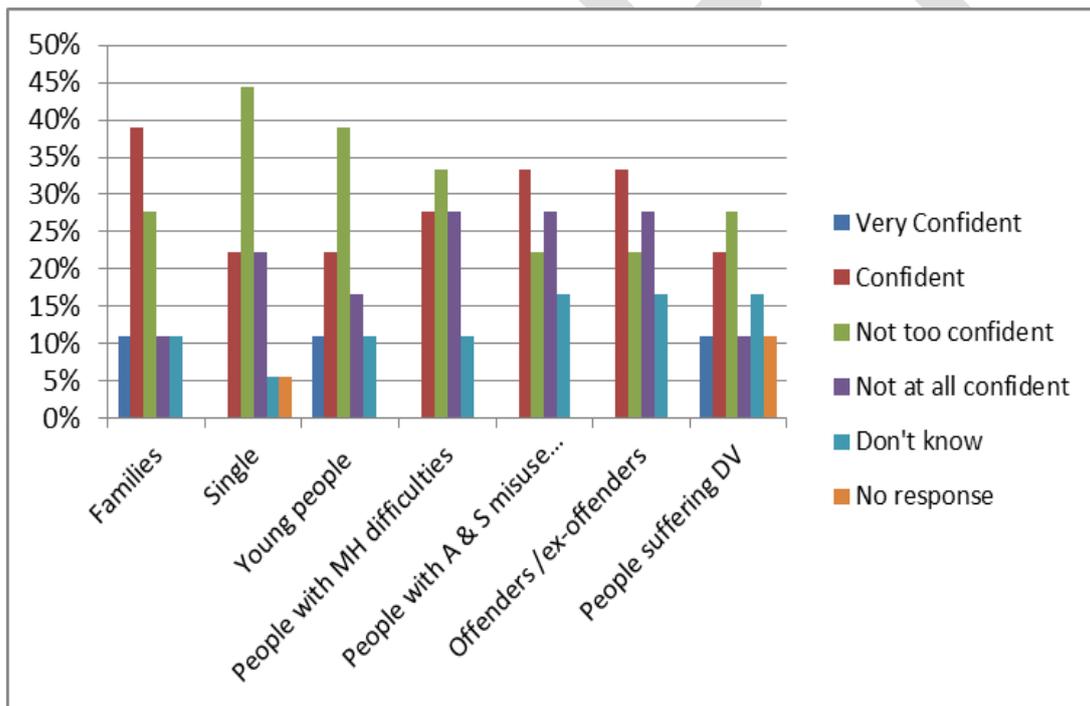
**Offenders and ex-offenders:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	6	33%
Not too confident:	4	22%
Not at all confident:	5	28%
Don't know:	3	17%
Did not answer:	0	0%

**People suffering from domestic violence:**

Very confident:	2	11%
Confident:	4	22%
Not too confident:	5	28%
Not at all confident:	2	11%
Don't know:	3	17%
Did not answer:	2	11%

**Graphical Breakdown:**



**Respondents were asked to explain their feedback, qualitative feedback received includes:**

The Strategy is “heading in the right direction”; the additional provision of accommodation will support homelessness prevention however respondents also stated that budget implications should be considered.

*The Council is aware of the need to deliver this strategy within existing agreed budgets. The actions set out in the delivery plan can all be delivered within existing budgets.*

**3.4 Q8. How confident do you feel that the delivery of the draft Homelessness Strategy will provide sufficient support to homeless people from the following groups?**

**Families with Children:**

Very confident:	2	11%
Confident:	5	28%
Not too confident:	7	39%
Not at all confident:	1	6%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**Single homeless:**

Very confident:	1	6%
Confident:	4	22%
Not too confident:	8	44%
Not at all confident:	2	11%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**Rough Sleepers**

Very confident:	1	6%
Confident:	1	6%
Not too confident:	9	50%
Not at all confident:	3	17%
Don't know:	3	17%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-24 year old care leavers):**

Very confident:	1	6%
Confident:	2	11%
Not too confident:	10	56%
Not at all confident:	1	6%
Don't know:	3	17%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**People with mental health difficulties:**

Very confident:	1	0%
Confident:	5	28%
Not too confident:	6	33%

Not at all confident:	3	17%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**People with alcohol and substance misuse problems:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	5	28%
Not too confident:	6	33%
Not at all confident:	3	17%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	2	11%

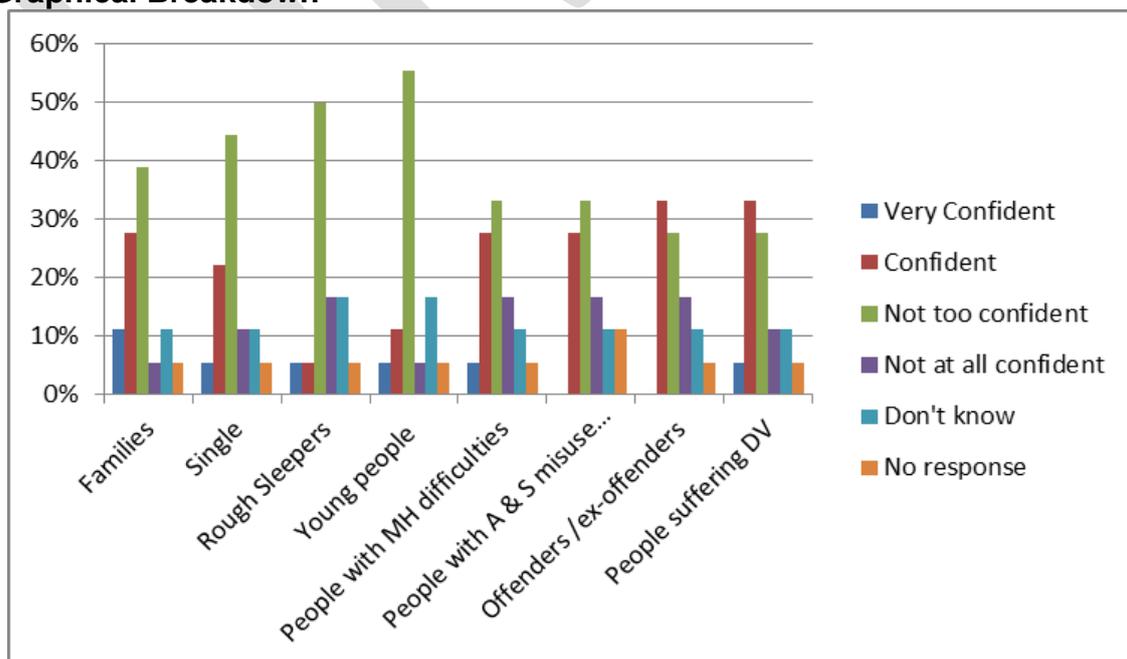
**Offenders and ex-offenders:**

Very confident:	0	0%
Confident:	6	33%
Not too confident:	5	28%
Not at all confident:	3	17%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**People suffering from domestic violence:**

Very confident:	1	6%
Confident:	6	33%
Not too confident:	5	28%
Not at all confident:	2	11%
Don't know:	2	11%
Did not answer:	1	6%

**Graphical Breakdown**



**Respondents were asked to explain their feedback, qualitative feedback received includes:**

The Strategy is “heading in the right direction”, there is a need for additional provision of accommodation, and respondents also stated that budget implications should be considered.

*The Homelessness Strategy seeks to provide additional accommodation for those facing homelessness, by securing properties in the private rented sector. This is covered in Priority Two.*

**3.5 Q9. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the draft Homelessness Strategy has addressed the needs of the nine protected characteristics, set out below, in relation to homelessness?**

**Age**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	10	56%
Dissatisfied	1	6%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	4	22%
No response	1	6%

**Disability**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	9	50%
Dissatisfied	2	11%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	4	22%
No response	1	6%

**Gender Re-assignment**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	7	39%
Dissatisfied	3	17%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	2	11%

**Marriage/Civil Partnership**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	7	39%

Dissatisfied	3	17%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	2	11%

**Pregnancy/New Parent(s)**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	8	44%
Dissatisfied	2	11%
Very dissatisfied	4	22%
Don't know	1	6%
No response	3	17%

**Race**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	9	50%
Dissatisfied	0	0%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	3	17%

**Religion / Belief**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	8	44%
Dissatisfied	1	6%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	3	17%

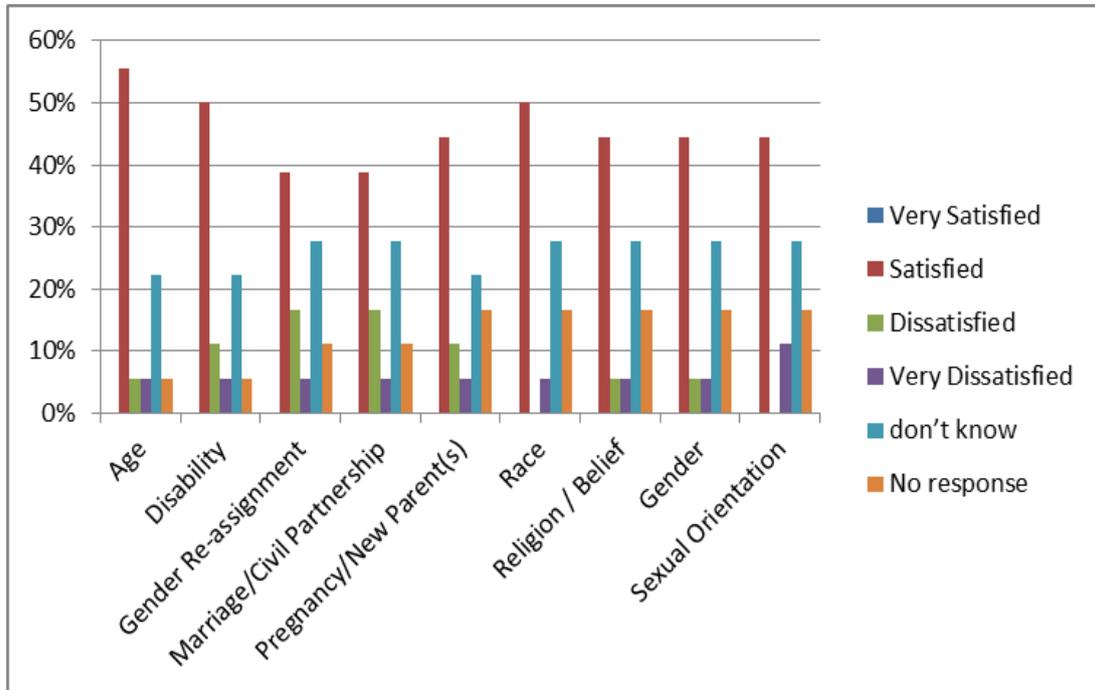
**Gender**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	8	44%
Dissatisfied	1	6%
Very dissatisfied	1	6%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	3	17%

**Sexual Orientation**

Very satisfied	0	0%
Satisfied	8	44%
Dissatisfied	0	0%
Very dissatisfied	2	11%
Don't know	5	28%
No response	3	17%

**Graphical Breakdown:**



**Respondents were asked to explain their feedback, qualitative feedback received includes:**

Areas of protected characteristic are not addressed in depth within the strategy however respondents appear to be satisfied with how the Strategy has addressed each area.

**3.6 Q10 Please use this space to provide any other comments:**

A summary of themes from respondents is provided below:

- Introduction of a Homelessness Forum, to include more input from homelessness service users
- Support should be preventative and cost effective
- Family groups should receive priority support

*There is a commitment in the Homelessness Strategy to partnership working, including the development of a homelessness forum. The need to include service user input is recognised and we will ensure that the Homelessness Forum considers how this is best achieved.*

*Support, advice and assistance will be provided to all homeless households regardless of their household make-up*

- 3.7 Additional consultation feedback following the Consultation Event held on 26<sup>th</sup> January is documents in appendix 2.
- 3.8 A full account of the formal consultation qualitative feedback is presented in appendix 3; this includes additional comments from Barton le Clay Parish Council.

#### 4. SUMMARY

- 4.1 In summary, the majority of the 18 respondents (83% / 15) were in support of the Council's vision to support and prevent homelessness within Central Bedfordshire and 77% / 14 or more of those respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the objectives within the Strategy support the identified priorities. However confidence in how the Strategy will actually support specific groups is low.
- 4.2 Feedback from the Consultation event was successful in prompting discussion and highlighting areas for further consideration within the Strategy including:
- Detailed mapping of current support provision, both commissioned and other
  - Suitable accommodation for mothers i.e. mother and baby units
  - More partnership working between services both within health and social care and external partners.

*There was a significant amount of work done during 2014, mapping existing support provision in the area. This work informed the development of the draft Housing Support Services Market Position Statement, which is available on the councils website.*

*The need for increased partnership working is recognised and included as Priority Five.*

**Appendix 1:**

**Results of Consultation: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

**Q11. Please tell us which type of respondent you are:**

	No.	Percentage
Homelessness Service User	1	5.6%
Central Bedfordshire Resident	9	50.0%
Homelessness Support Provider	3	16.7%
Registered Social Landlord	0	0.0%
Private Sector Landlord	0	0.0%
Partner Organisation	1	5.6%
CBC Employee	0	0.0%
Other:	4	22.22%
- NOAH		
- SSAFA		
- Parish Council		

**Q12. Please tell us your gender**

Male	8	44.4%
Female	7	38.9%
Prefer not to say	2	11.1%
No response	1	5.6%

**Q13. Please tell us your age**

Under 16 years	0	0.0%
16 – 19 years	0	0.0%
20 – 29 years	0	0.0%
30 – 44 years	2	11.1%
45 – 59 years	6	33.3%
60 – 64 years	2	11.1%
65 – 74 years	5	27.8%
75+	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	3	16.7%

**Q14. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?**

Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Yes	1	5.6%
No	14	77.8%
Prefer not to say	3	16.7%

**Q15. Please tell us your ethnicity**

White: British	13	72.2%
White: Irish	1	5.6%
White: Gypsy or traveller	0	0.0
White: other	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0.0%
Mixed: White and Asian	0	0.0%
Mixed: other	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: Chinese	0	0.0%
Asian or Asian British: other	0	0.0%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	0	0.0%
Black or Black British: African	0	0.0%
Black or Black British: other	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%
Prefer not to say	3	16.7%
No response	1	5.6%

## **Appendix 2: Consultation Event Feedback:**

A Consultation Event was held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at The Forest Centre, Marston Mortaine

Aim of the Event:

- Provide an overview of new Homelessness Strategy
- Understand the priorities and objectives
- Seek delegate views on the draft Strategy
- Understand the contribution organisations can make to delivering the strategy and preventing homelessness.

A presentation was given providing an overview of the findings of the Homelessness Review and the Strategy. This was followed by a short exercise where delegates were asked to look at the priorities identified in the Strategy and comment on if they agreed or disagreed with these priorities and their supporting objectives, and also identify any gaps. Delegates were also asked to highlight any areas where they felt they or their organisations could contribute to implementing the Strategy and maintain the Council's vision.

### **Feedback:**

#### **Do you agree or disagree with the identified priorities?**

- Priority One – No 4:  
No Second Night Out – Standard 5 – who is going to do the reconnection work inside CBC? NOAH can provide this service
- Priority One – No 4:  
The public do not know how to alert the service without the publicity of Streetlink
- Priority Five – No 5  
Social Enterprise needed. Strongly agree, people need a purpose and a use of time. Also a change to “help themselves”. NOAH Enterprise can help set this up
- Priority One – No 1.3  
Mapping the journey  
Starting at the earliest point of contact i.e. how does a rough sleeper find out about help before they get to Housing Options i.e. publicity of Streetlink

**Any other objectives? / Any other actions?**

- How will you support individuals in shared tenancy?
- Facebook page – Hear to Listen Biggleswade – includes photos of homeless individuals grouped in accommodation without support
- Develop a Mother & Baby Unit in Central Bedfordshire
- More accommodation for young mothers
- How do you measure prevention – monthly reviews/quarterly adjustments
- More accommodations for single homeless individuals with enhanced support
- More accommodation for 16/17 year olds
- Actually make use of partnerships that are already in use
- More Domestic Violence Units within Central Bedfordshire (North & South)
- Homelessness Forum should generate allocated tasks to the best suited service which supports that individual. Integrated support plans for people with shared responsibility (Priority 5, No 3)
- Homelessness Forum needs to also be a way for individual carer and their barriers to be highlighted to evidence where the problems for resolution lay. (Priority 5, No 3)
- Standardise training for all (agency) for child protection. Bromford trains own staff but good to ensure it is inline with CBC (P.1, 1.11)
- Need easy access to health services for physical and mental health e.g. drop in services and local hubs. Access via voluntary sector and not just local GP, travelling nurses (Priority 2, No 5)
- 'No Second Night' Out will not be met without creation of emergency accommodation. We cannot get a rough sleeper off the street the next night. NOAH can set this up (Priority 1, No 4)
- Review all mediation services, address care reasons and place support to assist customers (P 2, 1.9)
- Yes on contract to floating support (P3, 3.2), 3.4 Support in place (independent living)
- Action needed: study examples of successful UK social enterprises and how they can link into rough sleeping services (Priority 4, objective5)
- Need work with voluntary sector to sub let PRS properties to generate shared homes which can be paid for by HB? NOAH can help (Priority 2, objective3)
- Need information and support services are not known to or accessible by homeless migrant workers with no recourse to public funds (Priority 5, objective4).
- Cross board gaining (agency) – p1 (1.6)

- Priority 4 – 2. What is the Housing Landlords Tenants Incentive Scheme?, 4.2 Who are “registered providers”, 4.6 ALL services to provide advice and identify needs,
- Priority 4 – 4.8 Is there suitable manpower to provide this – contracted out may be? 4.13 – through apprenticeship schemes? What levels?
- Priority 2 – 2.11 Clear objectives and monitored outcomes, 2.13 £ contracted vs CBC, 2.19 – Bromford currently work with Penrose to pick up potentially homeless leaving psychiatric ward.

### **Feedback from NOAH Enterprise:**

#### **NOAH Proposal:**

Constructive potential option to address street homelessness in Central Bedfordshire wider geographic area through introduction of services to enable sustainable living.

- Create 3 hubs across County, not including Luton or Bedford
- Staff with flexible multi-skilled outreach team
- Services from hub:
  - o Immediate - drop in to include:
    - Accommodation search
    - Benefits advice
    - Signposting to specialists
  - o Introduce Training:
    - Life skills
    - English
    - Digital learning
    - Pre-employment preparation
  - o Introduce social enterprise

*The council will be keen to explore this idea further with NOAH through the proposed Homelessness forum, which can also explore the other feedback received (above).*

**Feedback from Children in Care Council:**

**Priority 1:**

**Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness**

**Comments on Objectives:**

Objective 1:

Feedback should be taken into account – who's going through the system

Objective 2:

Shouldn't be all the same for different background / age appropriate / language used

Objective 3:

As corporate parents all services need to work together to ensure they meet this objective

Objective 4:

Maybe more information on what this service is.

Are people aware that they are entitled to this service?

**Comments on identified actions:**

Staff have good knowledge of charter for care leavers and legislations.

Develop independent living skills training for young people as part of tenancy agreement

**What contribution do you feel your organisation can make to delivering any of the actions?**

Link with adult services engagement team and the CICC

**Priority 2:**

**Increase housing supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people**

**What contribution do you feel your organisation can make to delivering any of the actions?**

Having more options such as shared housing/mother and baby units in Central Bedfordshire. Supporting housing for all YP/Care Leavers within different areas such as Sandy, Flitwick, Biggleswade town, Leighton Buzzard

**Priority 3:**

**Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast**

**Comments on identified actions:**

Use service users more effectively to gain feedback

As council we have stated we will not put any young people – care leavers in B&Bs

How will you ensure there is enough accommodation provision (at the moment there isn't many options)

**What contribution do you feel your organisation can make to delivering any of the actions?**

Speak more and involve young people, especially care leavers in consultations.

DRAFT

### Appendix 3: Results of Consultation: Qualitative Feedback

**The Strategy strives to raise the aspirations of our customers, supporting them to access sustainable and affordable housing whilst also assisting them to access education, training and employment. The Strategy's vision is *"Homelessness: your opportunity for a new start with our help - helping you to help yourself"***

#### **Q1. Do you agree with the vision, and do you believe that the priorities support the Strategy's aim?**

- It is a good strategy providing that an adequate level of support is provided, not merely aspired to!
- By the reduction of temporary accommodation i.e. B&B which is not a cost effective way to aid the homeless, an increase in supported accommodation would provide value for money and a significant saving as supported accommodation incorporates support to enable individuals to work towards independence and ability to sustain a tenancy. This is a proposed action highlighted within the initiative in the strategic priorities (4).
- I think if teenagers come homeless at 17 should be entitled to be on housing register for at least a one bed flat and not rushed into a hostel it is not fair there are teenagers and adults growing independent they should be able to have a life at 17 and be able to have a peppery...I think the council are WRONG parents with children should have a really high band to be placed in a home they should not have to wait the council should be there for families what ever the circumstances are if they are homeless or intentionally homeless it is wrong for the council to chuck families with children on to streets and social services should help get housed NOT by taking there children away it would make them commit suicide it is.
- what's very upsetting is when people have been given notice the council should step in straight away and not say its policy you need to be evicted first this would then reduce the need for temporary and homeless accommodation as the council can act then and not put a stressful situation on the family
- No 4 is not that easy as to obtain work you often need an address and the jobs to go to. Very lofty wording that could easily puts peoples backs up. Makes it sound as though you will only help those who work.
- I agree that this is important. There needs to be more ways for people to work themselves out of homelessness and attend training, education and employment. NOAH can help by developing its successful social enterprise model to provide vital work experience and a supportive environment for those who have experienced homelessness to excel in.
- Homelessness is a blight on our society. A society should be judged on how it looks after the less fortunate. People may be made homeless through no fault of their own. i.e. Government benefit reforms

- The Council should be providing support to help people if their circumstances have made them homeless so they can get back on their feet.
- Much more needs to be in place for rough sleepers, single homeless and those at risk of being so. This should include day care provision complemented by accommodation search, advisory support and signposting. To this can be added training provision as part of the pathway to independent living and employment.

*There are a number of personal views expressed here, which are noted. In terms of specific actions, it would be helpful to share the detailed action plan which sets out the specific steps we will take in meeting the objectives set out in the strategy. This will be made available on the councils website, along with this response to consultation.*

### **Thinking about the identified priorities within the draft Homelessness Strategy:**

**Priority One:** Improve the provision of a range of housing options and services to effectively prevent and reduce homelessness

### **Q2. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

- Services are currently fragmented and need to have more working partnerships. Partners need to be aware of services that are available.
- Homeless people should be entitled to have a property if they are intentionally homeless or just homeless it is wrong they're deserve a another chance your telling me that you should see families' with children on streets or social services taking those children away from there parents and you wounded why parents commit suicide because they have no home IT IS WRONG.
- Yes this is crucial. Pushing everyone to the PRS is risky because housing benefit is declined by most landlords. Generating further affordable HMO's and shared living would seem one was to achieve this.
- Prevention is better than cure. If potential problems are identified before they happen it is usually more cost effective and less stressful to the homeless person.
- Objectives need to properly funded otherwise they will not succeed.
- Single room availability is very limited so the consequence of statutory change to single room housing benefit is homelessness. Organisations are prepared to provide that service providing some help can be given to provide the infrastructure.

*The council clearly has to deliver its housing solutions service within the constraints of the relevant homelessness legislation and economic reality. Focussing on prevention solutions delivers better outcomes for clients and is much more cost effective. The Homelessness Strategy is underpinned by these concepts.*

**Priority Two:** Increase Housing Supply to meet the accommodation and support needs of homeless people

**Q3. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

- Again a good objective but there is a need to ensure that the planning department and developers stick to the rules
- More 'Move On' accommodation is needed, one and two bedroom.
- People who are 17 working or non working on benefits should be able to join housing register and get a chance to get a flat they are independent not all teenagers are the same there are people out their who pay there RENT, families' with children should be able to become bigger priority if they are intentionally homeless or just homeless the Council should help them and not bring social services involved it is dirty how the council treat people they Jude people just like that.IT IS WRONG FOR Families' WITH CHILDREN TO NOT BE HOMELESS.
- The housing opportunities are concentrated in areas and not spread across the district. They do not reflect needs and do not reflect the type needed by size or affordability.
- Emergency housing is not widespread available and has not been identified as a need. Without this is will not be possible to tackle some of the fundamentals of NSNO and help people off the streets quickly. The health needs of homeless people are not met without support to prevent them from dropping out of services and without barriers to accessing health services removed. Some of these barriers are the distance to visit services, the waiting times and the lack of co-ordination. Travelling homelessness nurses or mental health workers could make a difference to this. Particularly if based inside accessible 'hubs'
- There needs to be more 1 & 2 bedroom social accommodation available for the increasing demand by younger & single people.
- Accommodation that facilitates the transition from homelessness to independent living is vital. The infrastructure is missing. Identifying houses of multiple occupancy and facilitating purchase/lease by voluntary agencies would be a strategic step in the right direction.

*The council is aware that it requires a portfolio of accommodation that suits the needs of a range of different clients. A comprehensive review of what we have and how it is used is the first objective within this priority. Providing support for people within this accommodation is also key.*

*People under the age of 18 cannot legally hold a tenancy and require a different type of accommodation. There is a requirement for the housing service to work closely with social services where under 18s become homeless.*

DRAFT

**Priority Three:** Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfasts.

**Q4. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

- B & B's only help mask the problem and allow suppliers to exploit the council.
- The use of temporary accommodation only addresses roof over head and not underlying causes of homelessness.
- Everyone deserves a house what ever the circumstances are why the hell would council pay loads of money for temporary accommodation when they could just be paying rent for their house but like I said council judge to quickly on people who are in urgent need and not being funny here but if people coming from abroad or something they will be straight to the council. Asking for accommodation and they will get it THIS Council needs TO HAVE A CONSIDERATION for families' with children with no home I disagree
- If you reduce the use of temporary homeless accommodation you are helping that family or person in question well before this is needed this will then save the taxpayer a lot of money on unnecessary repairs to homeless accommodation and bed and breakfast bills
- What is in its place nothing? Therefore we are not helping. Although I do see that there has to be a proper budget set for B&B and this can easily get out of control. Explain properly and in writing the implications of taking such accommodation and do not pitch it too high as there are hidden added costs to being in this type of property. This needs far more work than the council has done at the moment particularly on the impact of this strategy on mental health.
- A night shelter service could reduce this if it had capacity to respond quickly as a need arose.
- The reduction of temporary accommodation is a must. The cost of temporary accommodation is effectively "Dead Money". This cost is usually lining the pockets of Private landlords and the council has no tangible asset, this cost should be used to provide more social housing.
- Temporary accommodation can have a negative impact on the mental health of people having to use the accommodation.
- It does appear to be a matter of providing more housing stock and of preventing people arriving at a situation where the only remedy is B&B

*Living in bed and breakfast is a wholly unsatisfactory experience and the council is committed to eliminating its use, except in absolute emergency. We intend to make better use of tenancies in the private rented sector, where people have better quality accommodation.*

**Priority Four:** Minimise the impact of welfare reform, while assisting homeless people to access opportunities for employment, education and training, and support them to raise and meet their expectations.

**Q5. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

- But the requirement to attend courses must be monitored as some just sign in to get their benefits but do not stay all day/term.
- Support is all important
- Teenagers who are aged 17 who are working or in education should be able to at least get a council flat who's in urgent need the council systems are just not fair, teenagers at 17 are independent and able to have accommodation also families' with children have the higher priority and should get a property before anyone.
- Good objective but everyone is doing it - finite number of jobs, need to make sure no penalisation for using time volunteering according to ability if work is not an option etc. Again mental health is never seen as a main player. Everyone is a number - a stat - and not an individual.
- Welfare reform has most effect on migrant workers. Their needs are perhaps not as obvious in CBC but it is likely that this effect is not being fully mitigated against
- Welfare reform is ideological and should be scraped. Anyone involved with these Draconian measures need help. Employment, education and training are all necessary for someone to get on in society so investing in all three can only help society.
- The welfare reforms imposed by central government have had a greater impact on the less well-off members of our community. It will save money in the longer term if the council help people get back into employment or training.
- Have a process that begins with engagement of people on the streets, finds them accommodation, links them into day care and specialist services, encourages them into training and volunteering opportunities and prepares them for employment.

*The action plan will be shared which sets out how we intend to link in with existing employment and training agencies.*

**Priority Five:** Develop an integrated partnership approach to tackling homelessness

**Q6. How strongly do you agree that the identified objectives and related actions sufficiently support this priority?**

- Councils have been a soft touch for landlords to charge more than the going rate for rent. Private landlords have a guaranteed income so should be paid the lower rate but to compensate be paid direct.
- As long as it is activated and not just a paper exercise
- Join up working - Forum/s
- There needs to be more social housing because it is not fair on families or teenagers you need to understand circumstance it is unreal HOW the council can put families' with children on the STREETS.
- Partnerships properly do not keep pushing the same things as others. i.e... Volunteering, job search, moving away from support network. There is enough to do with the housing opportunities without spreading the department too thinly on partnership opportunities.
- A homeless forum is a good idea as long as it doesn't replicate existing groups or cross over too much. It must have teeth and representatives from CBC housing services attending. I am not sure if quarterly is a sufficient timescale unless it is purely information sharing/networking. Entrenched rough sleepers and individual cases will need to be discussed far more regularly.
- Joined up approach is necessary both for cost and helping the client. Integrated approach would stop any duplication of work
- A rounded whole society approach is likely to be more successful but will need to be properly funded.
- Create 3 hubs throughout the Central Beds area. Introduce drop-in to provide accommodation search and signposting services. Once established complement with training provision.

*There appears to be overall support for this approach. The action plan will be shared which sets out how we intend to link in with existing employment and training agencies.*

**Q7. How confident do you feel that the delivery of the draft Homelessness Strategy will lead to the prevention of the following groups becoming homeless?**

- **Families with children**
  - **Single homeless**
  - **Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-24 year old care leavers)**
  - **People with mental health difficulties**
  - **People with alcohol and substance misuse problems**
  - **Offenders and ex-offenders**
  - **People suffering from domestic violence**
- 
- More work needs to be done for 16-21yr old homeless people across the board not only care leavers. There is a growing problem of young people finding themselves homeless with no support or specialist housing provision for this age group, they are put in adult hostels and can be affected by drugs/alcohol in this shared type of facility.
  - Only reason confident is that the current strategy witnessed recently of one council telling tenants to stay put when council could not find new accommodation and let the landlord evict you covers problem! However, not very clever as Tenant gets poor reference for the future.
  - Strategy is good but could be limited by budget restrictions
  - By the introduction of further supported accommodations and ensuring that the strategy is implemented. Savings can be made on temporary accommodation which will enable you to provide more supported accommodation to prevent the homelessness cycle.
  - Lack of funding to provide suitable accommodation without recourse to taking money from other budgets
  - Everyone should be able to get rehouse if you are intentionally homeless or just homeless families' with children get the properties first
  - you have to stop the problem that makes the individual becoming homeless, you need support there and deal with the issues before their arise
  - As usual it is a question of wait and see. The strategy appears a good step in the right direction. As usual there many calls on the Councils finances and unless there is enough in the budget these laudable ideas will not come to fruition
  - I don't really know. The Homeless Strategy seems to be going in the right direction but substantial amounts of money will be needed to implement it. With the Council Tax freeze over the last few years and the cut of money from Central Government I think it would be difficult to implement.

- I suspect that the availability of funding will limit both the extent and responsiveness of the Strategy's response to the above groups' needs
- The objectives if achieved would realise this. The approach needs to adopt the proactive approach explained variously in the responses to this survey.

**Q8. How confident do you feel that the delivery of the draft Homelessness Strategy will provide sufficient support to homeless people from the following groups?**

- **Families with children**
  - **Single homeless**
  - **Rough Sleepers**
  - **Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-24 year old care leavers)**
  - **People with mental health difficulties**
  - **People with alcohol and substance misuse problems**
  - **Offenders and ex-offenders**
  - **People suffering from domestic violence**
- 
- Confident key groups will get support but agree priorities are needed.
  - A good strategy but actions speak louder than words
  - Confident if an integrated partnership approach can be implemented.
  - As before, availability of funding
  - They need housing which you do not have.
  - I don't really know. The Homeless Strategy seems to be going in the right direction but substantial amounts of money will be needed to implement it. With the Council Tax freeze over the last few years and the cut of money from Central Government I think it would be difficult to implement
  - I think the council as a whole has good intentions towards the disadvantaged members of our community.
  - Adoption of the proposals put forward in various responses here would make me more confident particularly re single homeless people

*The above views will be captured for exploring within the proposed homelessness forum.*

**Q9. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that the draft Homelessness Strategy has addressed the needs of the nine protected characteristics, set out below, in relation to homelessness?**

- **Age**
  - **Disability**
  - **Gender Re-assignment**
  - **Marriage/Civil Partnership**
  - **Pregnancy/New Parent(s)**
  - **Race**
  - **Religion / Belief**
  - **Gender**
  - **Sexual Orientation**
- 
- Satisfied but not difficult listing all categories.
  - As previous
  - Gender Re-assignment - not mention! In addition no clear guidelines on gender re-assignment, i.e. is it pre-op or post-op?
  - Plenty of words written. But proof is in the building finding suitable accommodation
  - We would have expected that no-one would be discriminated against and therefore can only hope that your own house is in order.
  - These areas are not addressed in particular depth in the strategy nor would I expect them to be.
  - I believe the council does its best to ensure that it helps people regardless of their situation.

### **Feedback from Barton le Clay Parish Council**

Barton-le-Clay Parish Council would like to express its view that the length of the supporting documents made it somewhat difficult for the information to be fully digested, and thus commented on. In terms of future consultations, Barton-le-Clay would welcome an Executive Summary to enable the key issues to be more easily understood.

*This is noted and we will endeavour to provide a summary document in future consultations.*

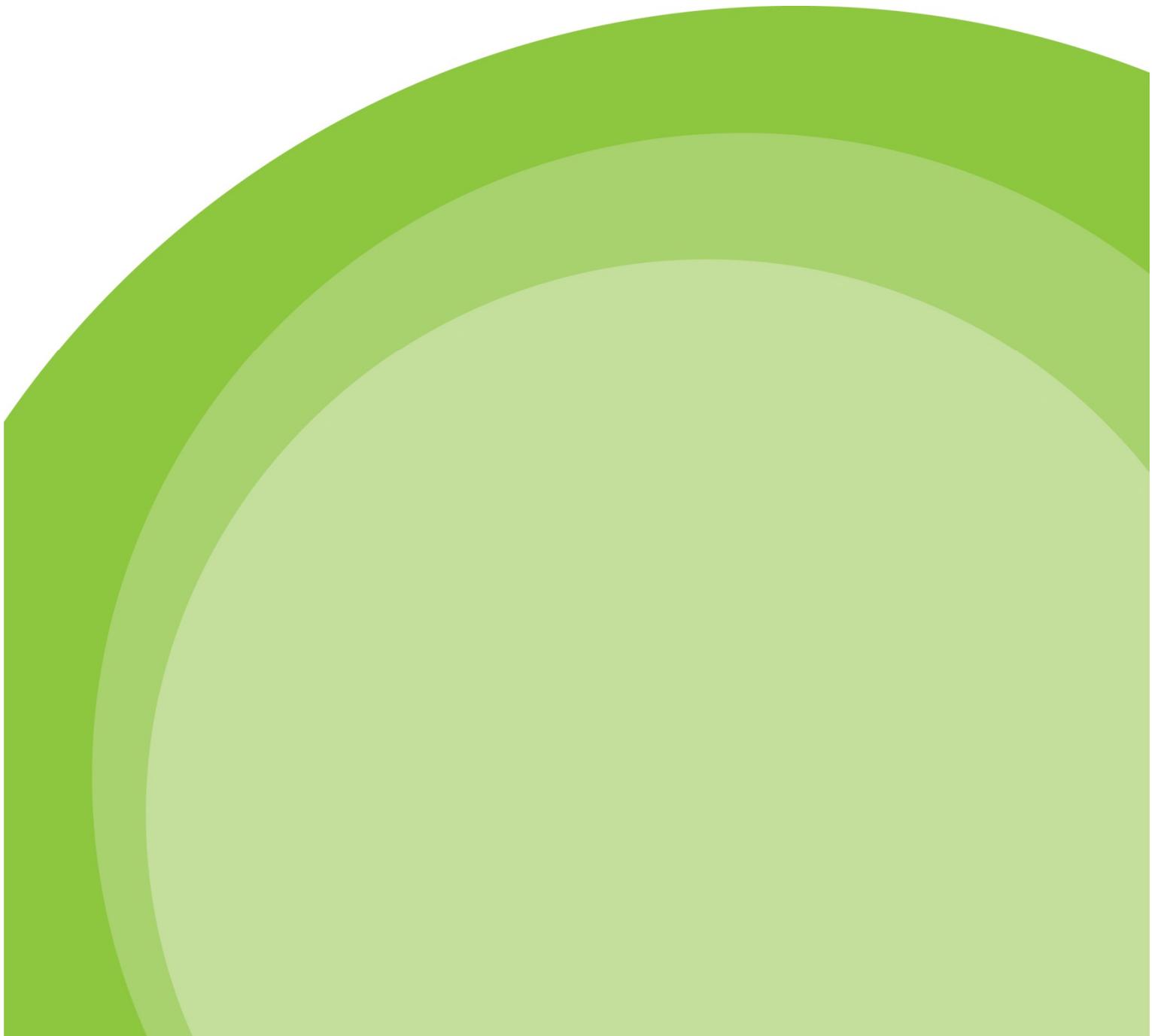
DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank



**Appendix C**

# **Homelessness Review 2014**



# Homelessness Review 2014

## Document control sheet

<b>Directorate</b>	Social Care Health and Housing		
<b>Service</b>	Housing Solutions		
<b>Author</b>	Joanne Bellamy, Policy and Performance Officer, Partnerships and Performance.		
<b>Version number and status</b>	v1.2. Final		
<b>Frequency of review</b>	Every five years		
<b>Approved by</b>	Head of Housing Solutions		
<b>Approval date</b>	November 2014	<b>Review date</b>	November 2019

## Contents

1. Executive summary .....	5
2. Introduction.....	7
3. Scope .....	7
4. National legislative and policy context.....	8
4.1. Homelessness Duty.....	8
4.2. National Social Policy Change.....	9
5. National Homelessness Statistics.....	10
6. National good practice .....	12
7. Local policy context .....	14
7.1. Housing Strategy 2011-16 .....	14
7.2. Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015.....	14
7.3 Housing Options Service .....	15
7.4 Allocations and Choice Based Lettings.....	16
7.5 Discharge of homelessness duty into a suitable home policy .....	17
7.6 Tenancy Strategy 2013-18.....	18
7.7 Tenancy Sustainment Approach.....	18
7.8 Housing Support Services Market Position Statement .....	19
7.9 Care Act 2014.....	19
7.10 Welfare Reform Implications.....	19
8 Local housing picture - snapshot .....	21
9 Homelessness in Central Bedfordshire.....	23
9.1 Headlines.....	23
9.2 Analysis of the Local Picture.....	23
9.3 Benchmarking.....	31
9.4 Homelessness and Health .....	33
10. Priority Groups and Support .....	35
10.1 Summary .....	35
10.2 Families with children.....	37
10.3 Single homeless .....	39
10.4 Young people.....	41
10.5 People with mental health difficulties .....	44
10.6 People with alcohol and substance misuse problems.....	46
10.7 Offenders and ex-offenders .....	48
10.8 People suffering from domestic violence .....	50

11. Homelessness prevention.....	52
11.1 Summary .....	52
11.2 Homelessness Prevention Grant .....	52
11.3 Let's Rent Scheme .....	53
11.4 Temporary Accommodation.....	54
11.5 Emergency provision .....	54
11.6 Floating support.....	54
11.7 Homelessness Supported Housing.....	55
11.8 Other services.....	56
12. Engagement activity .....	56
13 Conclusion.....	58

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The Homelessness Review 2014 has set out a picture of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire. The review has considered the national legislative and policy context as well as national homelessness trends. A snapshot of the local housing picture and analysis of the policy context has been included as has an examination of demand for Central Bedfordshire Council's housing options and homelessness services. Priority groups have been identified and some of the services identified through desktop research to support these groups and prevent and relieve homelessness have been set out in this review.
- 1.2. The review has identified that since the current Homelessness Strategy was developed in 2010 there have been new opportunities to develop and improve services and challenges that have had an impact on demand and provision of services.
- 1.3. The changes to demand since the development of the current Homelessness Strategy include:
  - a) Demand for housing options advice and assistance has fluctuated greatly with a peak in 2012/13 of 2,373.
  - b) An 8% increase in housing register applications over three years to 2013-14.
  - c) A 42% increase in homeless declarations between 2011-12 and 2013-14.
  - d) The total number of homelessness decisions has decreased by 16% since 2010-11.
  - e) There has been a steady decrease in those not accepted because they were not homeless. This indicates that pro-active advice on eligibility has led to more realistic expectations of the homelessness application process since 2010.
  - f) The number of households accepted as homeless has reduced slightly in the four years to 124 households in 2013-14.
  - g) There has been a 55% increase in the use of temporary accommodation since 2010-11.
- 1.4. The profile of those accepted as homeless in 2013-14 was as follows:
  - The largest priority group for homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were lone females with dependent children at 40%. Other significant groups include couples with dependents at 12% and single women at 10%.
  - More than half (57%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were from people aged 18-34.
  - Nearly a third (31%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 resulted because family or friends were not willing to accommodate them.
- 1.5. New opportunities have arisen or been created since the development of the last Strategy; this includes:
  - Introduction of the Localism Act 2011 power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector without the applicant's consent.
  - Bringing housing options services in the north in-house and merging with services in the south of Central Bedfordshire. In the past the different ways of

processing housing applications between the north and south have caused difficulties, particularly for women's refuge services.

- Improved working relationships between Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC's) Housing Service, Children's Services and Adult Social Care as the new local authority established in 2009 has developed.

1.6. Challenges which have had an impact on housing options and homelessness services include:

- a) the impact of the economic downturn on residents
- b) the impact of welfare reform on residents
- c) impact of the Government Spending Review on local authorities and the organisations they fund
- d) Lack of security in the private sector and rising private rents
- e) The 16-64 year old Central Bedfordshire population continues to grow and is expected to increase 6.5% to 176,200 in 2021.

1.7. The review was circulated to a wide range of stakeholders with a survey to obtain feedback on the review. Engagement events were also held with external stakeholders and Central Bedfordshire Council colleagues in October 2014 to gather views on the effectiveness of homelessness service provision within Central Bedfordshire and to identify priorities for the future.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Homelessness Act 2002 places a legal duty on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness prevention and support in their area and produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years based on the findings of the review. Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) carried out a review of homelessness in 2009 following its formation as a new unitary authority and published its first Homelessness Strategy covering the period 2010-15.
- 2.2. This first strategy provided a clear picture of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire both in terms of client group needs and the delivery of local preventative action aimed at supporting people to maintain or find secure accommodation. A number of strategic priorities were formed particularly around the ongoing demand for housing support services, greater need for financial inclusion and delivery of more preventative interventions for families and young people at risk of becoming homeless.
- 2.3. Since this time, significant socio-economic change has continued to take place both nationally and regionally as a result of the economic downturn and Government Spending Review decisions, particularly in relation to welfare reform. The combined effect of this change has in turn placed greater pressure on vulnerable households to maintain secure accommodation whilst also dealing with an increased cost of living, lack of security of tenure in the private sector, rising private rents and ongoing growth in house prices.
- 2.4. The Council's Housing Service is responding to the changes in demand and pressures felt by resident and colleagues. The Housing Service has recently been transformed to better organise the delivery of housing options for local residents and tenancy sustainment services for existing CBC tenants. This has corresponded with the refresh of strategic priorities across the Housing Service through a review of the accommodation needs of vulnerable people, new arrangements for managing housing allocations, development of the draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, and proposals to increase the options available to discharge our homelessness duty to a suitable home.

## 3. Scope

- 3.1. Within this broad context and activity, a review of homelessness within Central Bedfordshire seeks to update the existing understanding of local needs. In particular the review addresses how the Council is meeting its statutory duty to prevent homelessness, and establish whether the current homelessness relief provision is adequately supporting homeless people and those at risk of becoming homeless. In this context, exploring the delivery of housing options and homelessness services is a key focus for the review.
- 3.2. The review includes the following components:

- a) Overview of government policy and priorities for tackling homelessness,
- b) High-level research using national sources into local performance on homelessness with comparison against statistically similar and neighbouring authorities,
- c) An understanding of homeless priority and non-priority needs using housing data and information from CBC's Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Vulnerable People (MANVP) report,
- d) An overview of preventative initiatives and action to tackle homelessness in CBC through housing advice and assistance, and
- e) Mapping current local initiatives and services to prevent or relieve homelessness and rough sleeping, and support people being accepted as statutory homeless.
- f) An examination of circumstances and needs of the priority homeless groups and those with characteristics that are often repeated in homelessness cases.

## 4. National legislative and policy context

### 4.1. Homelessness Duty

- 4.1.1. Legal provisions covering statutory homelessness prevention and relief are set by the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002. The legislation places a general duty on housing authorities to deliver advice and information on preventing homelessness along with providing assistance to priority need households that are threatened with or become homeless.
- 4.1.2. A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'.
- 4.1.3. Where a main duty is owed, the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household. The duty continues until a settled housing solution becomes available for them, or some other circumstance brings the duty to an end. Where households are found to be intentionally homeless, or not in priority need, the authority must make an assessment of their housing needs and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.
- 4.1.4. The Housing Act sets priority need in relation to homelessness, which are households containing:
  - a) Pregnant women,
  - b) Dependent children,
  - c) Someone that is vulnerable in relation to age, mental illness or disability, and
  - d) Someone that is homeless as a result of an emergency or disaster.
  - e) Homeless young people aged 16 and 17,
  - f) Care leavers aged 18-21 and vulnerable people that have spent time in care,
  - g) Armed forces personnel and ex-personnel,

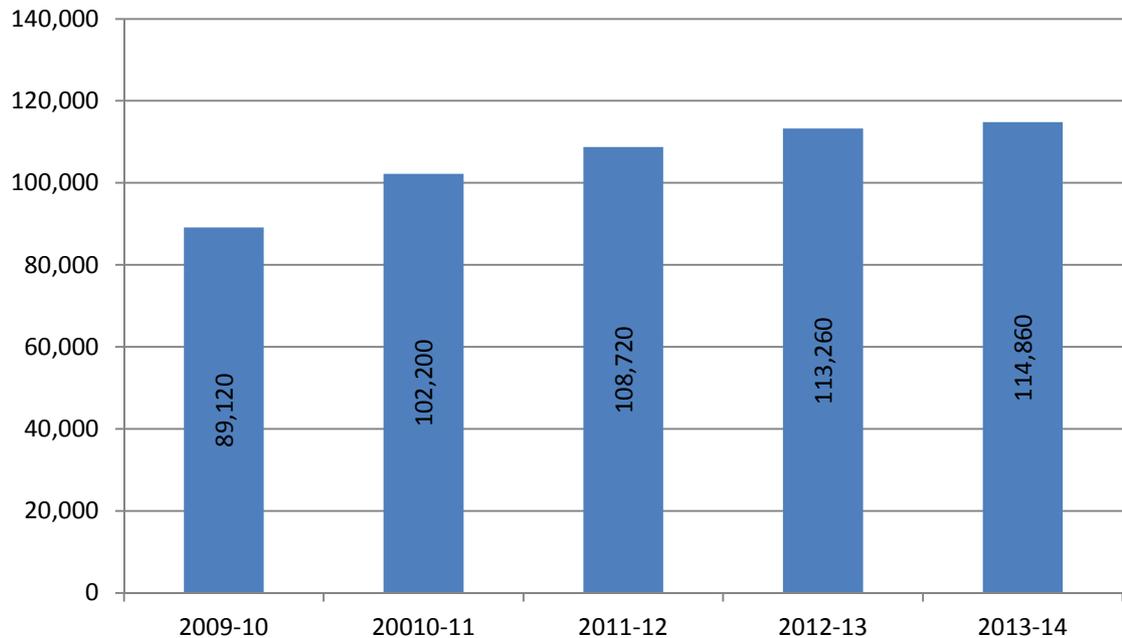
- h) Offenders and ex-offenders, and
- i) Vulnerable people fleeing violence and abuse at home.

## **4.2. National Social Policy Change**

- 4.2.1. Since the last Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there has been a period of rapid social policy change, including significant reductions in local government funding and major welfare and social housing reform. In turn, this is affecting the most vulnerable households and individuals and is gradually bringing additional pressures on services for people who are facing homelessness.
- 4.2.2. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 is a key part of the Government's approach to social and economic reform and includes the following headline changes:
- a) Universal Credit to provide a single stream-lined benefit
  - b) Benefit cap on the total amount any one household can receive
  - c) Replacement of Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
  - d) Introduction of the underoccupancy penalty for Housing Benefit claimants in social housing.
- 4.2.3. In addition to this, in 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in the private sector were decreased from the median of local market rates to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile and national caps were introduced. Further changes were made to LHA in 2012 where there was an increase in the proportion of single people with no dependents restricted to the same rate as those renting a single room in a shared house due to a change in the age limit to 35.
- 4.2.4. The reductions in public spending has also seen the end of ring-fenced Supporting People funding to enable vulnerable people maintain secure accommodation and independence.
- 4.2.5. The Localism Act 2011 introduced a raft of local government reforms across finance, planning, governance and housing. The changes with direct relevance to homelessness include:
- a) The right for housing authorities to grant fixed-term tenancies,
  - b) A requirement for local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy,
  - c) Greater flexibility in the allocation of social housing,
  - d) Discharging homelessness duties using private rented accommodation.

## 5. National Homelessness Statistics

5.1. The broad national picture is of steadily increasing homelessness decisions and, importantly, statutory homeless acceptances since 2009. Figure 1 shows that for 2013-14 a total of 114,860 homelessness decisions were taken by local authorities across England, which represents an increase of 25,140 (22%) since 2009-10<sup>1</sup>.

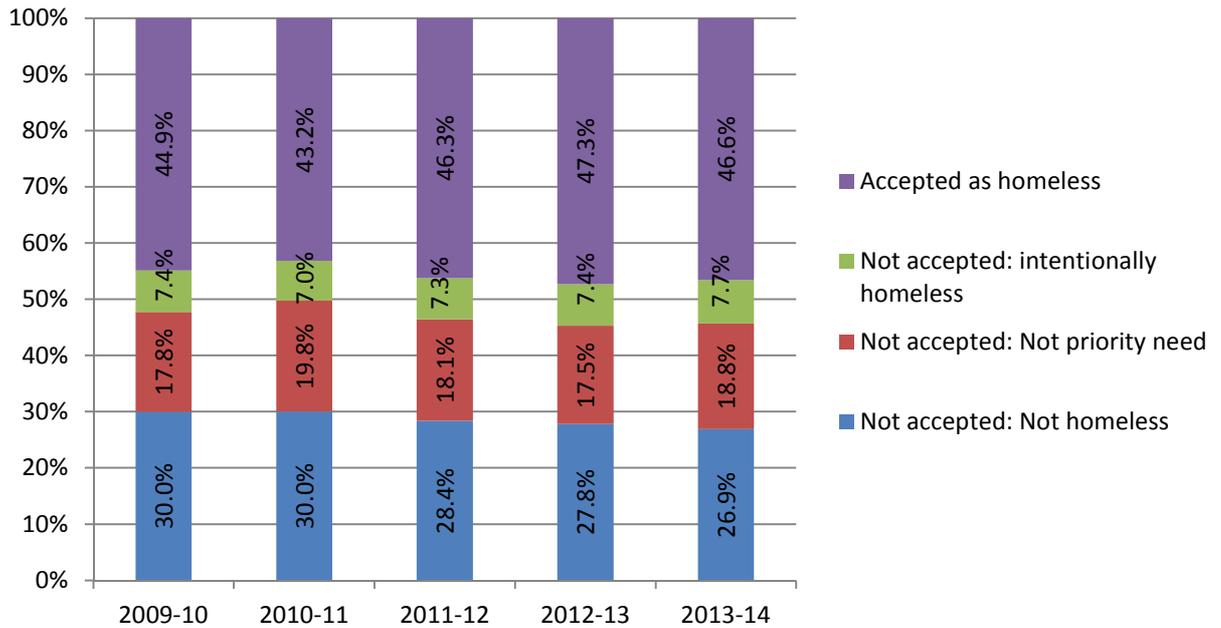


**Figure 1: Statutory homelessness decisions for England 2013-14<sup>2</sup>**

5.2. This overall increase in homelessness decisions also corresponds closely with a growth in the number of statutory homelessness acceptances. Figure 2 below shows that the proportion of acceptances has increased from 44.9% (40,020) in 2009-10 to 45.5% (52,260) in 2013-14, which represents an increase of 12,240 more households being recognised as homeless and owed a main duty to access secure accommodation. The increase in acceptances can be mapped alongside the reduction of both non-acceptances because of non-priority need or not being homeless.

<sup>1</sup> Detailed local authority level homelessness figures. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#detailed-local-authority-level-responses>

<sup>2</sup> Live data tables on homelessness; Table 770: decisions taken by local authorities under the Housing Act on applications from eligible households



**Figure 2: Breakdown of statutory homelessness decisions for eligible applicants for England 2013-14<sup>3</sup>**

5.3. Of the 52,260 homelessness acceptances in 2013-14, female single parents with dependent children make up the largest client group at 46%. Couples with dependent children account for 20% of all acceptances followed by single males at 13%.

5.4. An examination of homelessness acceptances in 2013-14 by the reason for the loss of the last settled home (figure 3) shows that the ending of an assured short hold tenancy accounts for more than a quarter of all statutory homelessness in England. This cause of homelessness has increased by 31.7% (4,330 cases) since 2011-12. This indicates that greater pressure in the private rental sector could be making it more difficult for households to maintain a secure home. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recognised in early 2014 that *'loss of assured short hold tenancy has been the most frequently occurring reason for the loss of last settled home for the last seven consecutive quarters.'*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> DCLG, Housing Statistical Release, 6 March 2014; Statutory Homelessness: October to December Quarter 2013 England

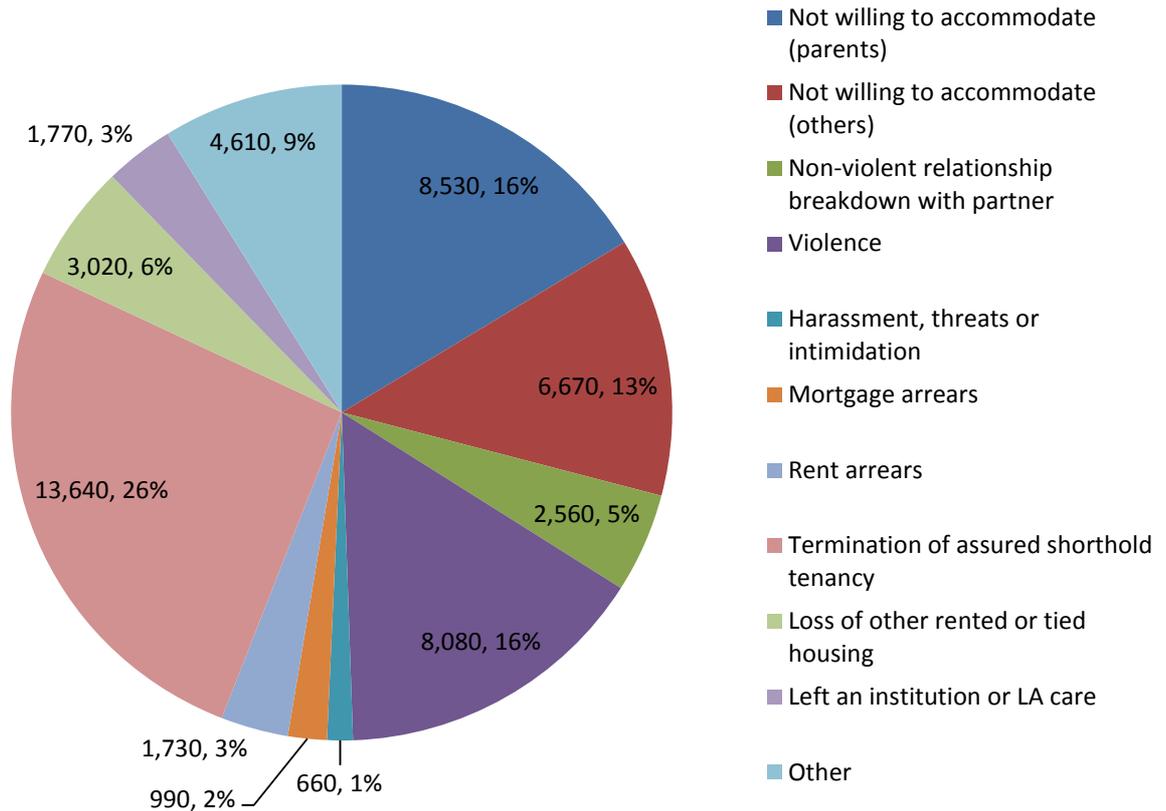


Figure 3: Homelessness acceptances by loss of last settled home for England, 2013-14 <sup>5</sup>

## 6. National good practice

6.1. This review has undertaken a short examination of good practice in relation to homelessness prevention and relief across comparator authorities, national organisations and Government guidance. This identified the following:

- a) Local authorities clearly place an emphasis on prevention work.
- b) Most local authorities do not provide high levels of hostel accommodation.
- c) The majority of local authorities and partners have adopted the 'No Second Night Out' principles which are a commitment to ending rough sleeping.
- d) Many areas have a clear threshold for homelessness acceptances and a clear pathway showing how homeless people can access services.
- e) Some local authorities are using the private sector to discharge their statutory homeless duty, a power given in the Localism Act 2011.
- f) Prevention is delivered through strong partnership working between the local authority and voluntary sector.
- g) Multi-agency case panels are in place to discuss the most complex cases.
- h) Additional hostel beds are made available for rough sleepers, who would not normally qualify, during extreme cold weather.
- i) Shared databases are used by the local authority and other providers to monitor the location, progress and outcomes of homeless cases.

<sup>5</sup> Live data tables on homelessness; Table 774: homeless households accepted by local authorities, by reason for loss of last settled home

- j) There is clear and effective management of EU rough sleepers, who ordinarily have no recourse to public funds.
- k) There is often a local homelessness champion who drives forward the homelessness agenda.
- l) Good governance is in place to monitor and drive forward homelessness strategies.

6.2. In August 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published *Making Every Contact Count: a joint approach towards homelessness prevention*. The report, which was produced by the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness, states clearly that 'there is no place for homelessness in the 21st century'.

6.3. The report sets out the Government's approach to homelessness prevention by focusing on the contribution that a commitment around troubled families, health, crime prevention and employment and skills can make. The report calls for central Government, local authorities, government agencies and the voluntary sector to work together to support those at risk of homelessness.

6.4. It also gives an indication of the Government's direction and expectations for homelessness prevention. This emphasises a number of important factors, including; greater integration of local authority services (Housing, Adult Social Care and Children's Services, etc.); increased focus on a payment by results approach to funding; increased reliance on the private rented sector; and a focus on wrap-around services to tackle youth homelessness (such as those provided by Youth Hubs).

6.5. The report also set ten local 'Gold Standard' challenges, which the Government has recommended local authorities should take forward. To reach Gold Standard status councils need to meet key commitments including:

- a) offering a comprehensive prevention service, with advice and support for single people as well as families in need,
- b) working with local agencies to provide employment, education and training opportunities,
- c) helping householders facing the threat of repossession by providing access to mortgage debt advice and support such as the Mortgage Rescue scheme, and
- d) adopting a local No Second Night Out scheme to help prevent new rough sleepers from becoming entrenched into a street lifestyle.

## 7. Local policy context

### 7.1. Housing Strategy 2011-16

7.1.1. The existing Housing Strategy 2011-16 set out the Council's priorities for providing a comprehensive housing service, which aims to improve quality of life for all residents through effective housing need solutions and the development of stable communities across Central Bedfordshire. A large policy framework at national, regional, sub-regional and local government level directs the Council's strategic function in both housing and planning.

7.1.2. The Council has established four key priorities in order to meet its strategic housing responsibilities. This includes:

- a) Economic development and sustainable communities,
- b) Using council assets to aid the delivery of growth and housing,
- c) Meeting the accommodation and support needs of older persons and vulnerable people,
- d) Providing housing options for the whole community.

### 7.2. Homelessness Strategy 2010-2015

7.2.1. CBC's first Homelessness Strategy was developed in the context of a recession and an unpredictable socio-economic future. The strategy acknowledged that tackling homelessness could not be done in isolation and was dependent on effective joint working between the local authority and all organisations working to prevent and respond to homelessness.

7.2.2. The strategy introduced six strategic priorities:

1. Harmonise housing options services across Central Bedfordshire, following Local Government Reorganisation
2. Respond effectively to the recession, focussing on financial inclusion
3. Work with young people aged 16-24 to meet their needs more effectively
4. Embed the Think Family approach within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation
5. Strengthen safeguarding practice for vulnerable adults and children cross all aspects of housing options and homelessness prevention
6. Investigate the particular problems and pathway journeys that are experienced by people with complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse.

7.2.3. A further four cross-cutting priorities were also identified:

- a) Strengthen equalities practice across all aspects of the service
- b) Make best use of private sector accommodation in meeting all other homelessness strategic priorities

- c) Sharing awareness and working in partnership with the community and between partner agencies
- d) Tenancy sustainment.

7.2.4. Key achievements of the Homelessness Strategy include:

1. Successful harmonisation of the north and south housing needs services to provide a consistent approach across Central Bedfordshire,
2. Development of the Let's Rent scheme to increase the housing supply available
3. Implementation of the Supporting Families programme for troubled families
4. Introduction of the Homelessness and Mediation Service for young people
5. Development of debt and budgeting information and advice provision
6. Development of a policy to enable the use of the power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector.
7. Establishment of emergency night shelter facilities provided through the No Second Night Out Initiative.

### **7.3 Housing Options Service**

7.3.1 The Council's Housing Options Service is central to the provision of targeted housing advice and assistance to support local people in finding or maintaining secure accommodation and preventing the risk of becoming homeless.

7.3.2 The Housing Needs service, which includes the Housing Options team, prior to 2012 was split with services in the south run by the Council and services in the north which were contracted out. The service in the north was brought in house in April 2012 and merged with the south team. The consolidated Housing Needs Service now offers a standardised service irrespective of post code, greater operational efficiency and flexibility and an enhanced customer experience due to harmonisation.

7.3.3 The Housing Options Team is typically the first point of call for advice when local people start the process of looking for accommodation following a change in circumstances or where people need support to address difficulties within their current living arrangements. The core function of the service is to provide personalised advice and guidance on suitable housing options, facilitate access to a range of support services, liaise with a range of third parties and signpost or make referrals to other local agencies and partners. The following describes some of the key activities undertaken by Housing Options, not necessarily in chronological order, when supporting people that approach the Council for housing advice and assistance:

- a) Understanding the client's circumstances or difficulties and exploring a range of options to maintain their home or find alternative accommodation.
- b) Providing advice and assistance to help people to find suitable accommodation in the private sector or apply to be placed on the Housing Register and bid for social housing.

- c) Liaising and negotiating with landlords over rent arrears, tenancy issues or eviction notices to support tenants in maintaining their home or exercising their rights.
- d) Assisting with claims for Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance along with advice on maximising benefit income.
- e) Offering advice and assistance to people affected by domestic violence, neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour, and unfit or unsafe properties.
- f) Providing financial advice with meeting mortgage payments or rent deposits including access to grants.
- g) Making referrals to other local agencies, voluntary sector organisations and legal advice.
- h) Referral to supported housing schemes.
- i) Managing homelessness applications and access to emergency temporary accommodation.

## **7.4 Allocations and Choice Based Lettings**

7.4.1 In accordance with part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities and housing agents must provide a housing allocations scheme to enable the nomination and selection of eligible person(s) for a secured tenancy to social and affordable housing.

7.4.2 In 2013 the Council revised its existing housing allocations scheme to maximise the supply of affordable housing stock in Central Bedfordshire and ensure that it is appropriately targeted at households who are in genuine housing need. The new allocations scheme has been developed on the principles of fairness and transparency when allocating social or affordable lets and has simplified the banding system to prioritise housing needs and make eligibility clearer for local people to understand. The new allocations scheme seeks to meet the following objectives:

- a) Encourage applicants who are out of work to seek employment,
- b) Balance reasonable preference with local priorities,
- c) Provide support for low paid workers in the private sector,
- d) Deliver practical help for those threatened with homelessness,
- e) Support households who work locally, and
- f) Offer choice.

7.4.3 The CBC allocations scheme describes how the Council prioritises housing applicants to ensure that those with a genuine housing need, defined in terms of 'Reasonable Preference', are given access to the majority of available social and affordable housing lets. This scheme also sets out in detail who is and who is not eligible to become a member of the Housing Register, how applicants can apply for housing, how assessments are made and the level of service an applicant can expect to receive.

7.4.4 The Council is a partner within Bedfordshire Homefinder, which operates a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme to provide local people placed on the housing

register with the ability to choose, bid and secure suitable social and affordable accommodation. The scheme openly advertises tenancy vacancies and invites applicants to express interest in properties they would like to be offered and for which they are eligible based on their needs.

## **7.5 Discharge of homelessness duty into a suitable home policy**

- 7.5.1 The Council's Housing Green Paper<sup>6</sup> outlined plans to maximise the use of accommodation in the private rented sector to provide households that are accepted as being statutory homeless with suitable accommodation to meet their needs. This approach has been adopted following new powers given to local authorities through the Localism Act 2011, which allows offers of suitable private accommodation to be made without consent in order for authorities to meet their main homelessness duty.
- 7.5.2 The Council has carefully considered how it should use this power and has developed a Policy to Discharge the Homelessness Duty in to a Suitable Home to set out the criteria for a suitable home in the private and social housing sector. It is anticipated that this approach will underpin and strengthen existing housing advice and homelessness prevention activities to ensure that Private Sector Offers (PSO) are used effectively to ensure homelessness households are able to access suitable and secure accommodation within improved timescales.
- 7.5.3 It is expected that PSOs will offer greater flexibility to prevent and relieve homelessness, either by offering suitable private accommodation before a statutory application or acceptance is made or by placing homeless households in accommodation sooner. In addition, this policy approach will help to reinforce the housing register as the main route into social housing by dispelling the perception of queue-jumping by those who approach the Council as homeless.
- 7.5.4 A range of safeguards for households accepting a PSO will ensure that the Council continues to offer support and meet any on-going homelessness duty. Firstly, in making a PSO to end a homelessness duty the Council must provide a tenancy that is affordable and suitable to meet the household's circumstances. Secondly, where homelessness reoccurs within two years of accepting the PSO the Council's homelessness duty will continue and the household will be eligible to apply for another PSO or social housing tenancy. Finally, the Council will seek to provide support to help sustain the PSO tenancy and where appropriate make referrals to locally commissioned support services.
- 7.5.5 The Council recognises that creating a good supply of suitable private sector rental accommodation is critical to using PSOs as an effective option for the prevention and relief of homelessness. Work is underway to develop and improve the

---

<sup>6</sup> Housing in Central Bedfordshire: what lies ahead? February 2013.

Council's offer to landlords and letting agents, which will involve, in part, greater use of the existing Let's Rent Scheme.

## **7.6 Tenancy Strategy 2013-18**

7.6.1 In response to new tenancy arrangements introduced by the Localism Act 2011 the Council developed the Tenancy Strategy 2013-18 to outline its approach to flexible tenancies and delivering a new housing offer for local people. The strategy focusses on using tenancy arrangements to maximise the use of social housing stock for those in most need and incentivise employment, social responsibility and social mobility, and introduced:

- Five year fixed term tenancies across the CBC social housing stock for all new tenants from 1 April 2013;
- Guidance for Registered Providers to use fixed term tenancies and provide options advice as tenancies finish; and
- Criteria for assessing the renewal of tenancies based on changing circumstances (priority need and financial) and conduct.

7.6.2 The strategy recognised the need to provide support to the most vulnerable tenants, including homeless households, through the delivery of ongoing tenancies for those in need, effective housing options advice, and tenancy arrangements that enable households to progress up the housing ladder; freeing up capacity to meet other households in social housing need.

7.6.3 To support this aim the Council introduced a Tenancy Training Programme to offer all new Council tenants the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills to maintain their tenancy and become independent so that they can secure alternative accommodation when their circumstances change.

7.6.4 To underpin the delivery of the strategy the Council produced a Tenancy Policy to set out the priorities and governance arrangements for managing fixed term tenancies.

## **7.7 Tenancy Sustainment Approach**

7.7.1 CBC is currently developing a Tenancy Sustainment Approach in response to changing priorities for social housing, and the need to prevent avoidable tenancy breakdowns. The new approach seeks to provide greater advice and support to help vulnerable tenants manage the underlying financial and social pressures associated with maintaining a secure home and tenancy.

7.7.2 The approach seeks to focus resources on prevention and proactive intervention in order to help tenants manage difficulties in their lives, take informed decisions and sustain access to safe and suitable housing that meets their needs. In addition, the approach recognises that vulnerable tenants are being directly affected by a number of welfare changes including the Benefit Cap, underoccupancy penalty and

introduction of the Council Tax Support Scheme. The planned roll-out of Universal Credit is also anticipated to have an impact on tenants. For those affected, the risk of rent arrears and indebtedness is likely to undermine their ability to maintain their tenancy in the long-term.

## **7.8 Housing Support Services Market Position Statement**

7.8.1 The Market Position Statement (MPS) is currently being developed and it identifies the level and type of housing-support services that Central Bedfordshire Council currently wishes to see being available to vulnerable residents. These services are required in order to promote access to suitable homes and help people to remain in them.

7.8.2 The draft MPS, once finalised, will be for:

- Current and prospective providers of support services, to learn about the council's intentions as a purchaser of services, and our vision for shaping the market.
- People interested in local business development and social enterprise can find out about new opportunities in the market and let the council know what help is needed to enter the market and to offer innovative services.
- And people in need of services can see the council's thinking on services for Vulnerable People, and feed-in their views as to what is needed.

7.8.3 The evidence available to the Council suggests that there is unmet need for housing support services across Central Bedfordshire.

7.8.4 Further details on possible shortfalls in provision for some of these groups are included in Section 10 - Priority groups and support.

## **7.9 Care Act 2014**

7.9.1 The Care Act 2014 introduced a statutory duty for local authorities to plan for the availability of preventative services that act to support health and wellbeing. The Care Act and its guidance clearly recognises the deep influence that the physical aspects of housing and the socio-cultural sense of home and community can have on the health and wellbeing of the population.

7.9.2 Central Bedfordshire Council is implementing the requirements of the Care Act through a project management approach and the Housing Service are involved in planning to meet the new duties. The Market Position Statement will also play a part in the Council's approach to discharging the 'wellbeing' duty and focusses on helping people, who for a variety of reasons, may require support in order to be able to find and maintain a stable and optimally independent life in a suitable home.

## **7.10 Welfare Reform Implications**

- 7.10.1 The Coalition Government's Welfare Reforms programme is likely to impact most of Central Bedfordshire Council's social housing tenants at some point.
- 7.10.2 In April 2014 12,948 households were in receipt of Housing Benefit (approximately 12.3% of the Central Bedfordshire population<sup>7</sup>). 26.7% of Housing Benefit recipients were private tenants, 46.1% Housing Association tenants and 27.2% Council tenants.
- 7.10.3 Universal Credits will introduce direct payments to the tenant rather than the landlord. Some tenants do not feel that they engage in the rent paying process if they are on full Housing Benefit (HB) and not in arrears. This gives some the impression that they do not pay rent and so when these tenants start to receive direct payments to their own bank account to pay for their rent, some tenants will for the first time have to take an active part in ensuring their rent is paid. 1,035 (17.5%) of CBC tenants were on full HB in July 2014.
- 7.10.4 In April 2013, 494 CBC tenants had their Housing Benefit reduced as they were under occupying their property as a result of the introduction of the underoccupancy penalty. Those under occupying by one bedroom had their benefit reduced by 14% of the rent and those underoccupying by two or more bedrooms had their benefit reduced by 25% of the rent. It is estimated that this could have led to a shortfall of £9,323 per week from these tenants paying their rent.
- 7.10.5 The other major change that came in on 1 April 2013 was the local Council Tax Support Scheme. Many working age tenants who previously received full Council Tax Benefit now have to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax, unless they are in a protected group.
- 7.10.6 The impact of Council Tax Support is smaller than that felt by many affected by the underoccupancy penalty. In April 2013, the 319 CBC tenants that were affected by the underoccupancy penalty and the introduction of Council Tax Support on average had to pay an additional £4.45 each per week. In July 2014, 547 households were impacted by both the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme and the underoccupancy penalty. This represented 6.1% of the 8,960 claimants in Central Bedfordshire living in social housing.
- 7.10.7 The Benefit Cap was introduced in August 2013 and as of July 2014 affected 44 households in Central Bedfordshire; 13 Council tenants, 19 Housing Association tenants and 12 private rented sector tenants. 13 tenants in Central Bedfordshire were affected by the Council Tax Support changes and the Benefit Cap in July 2014. An analysis of the initial impact of the Benefit Cap in August 2013 found that one CBC tenant was expected to receive 34p less per week, whilst another tenant would see a reduction of £296 in benefits per week, eclipsing their rent. The weekly cap is £350 for single people and £500 for couples or those with children. Although the number of tenants affected is relatively low, the cumulative effect of other changes will mean further financial pressures on some households and families.

---

<sup>7</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government, Household projections, 2011.

## 8 Local housing picture - snapshot

- 8.1 Housing data and information from national and local sources show that as of 2011 there were approximately 104,400 occupied households across Central Bedfordshire<sup>8</sup>. An estimate of housing growth indicates that the local area will have a further 28,700 households by 2031.
- 8.2 Private home ownership accounts for 73% of all household tenure in Central Bedfordshire, and is made up of 42,704 (41%) privately owned through mortgage borrowing and 33,039 (32%) owned outright. As figure 4 below shows, approximately 13% of household tenure is social rent with private rents accounting for 12%.

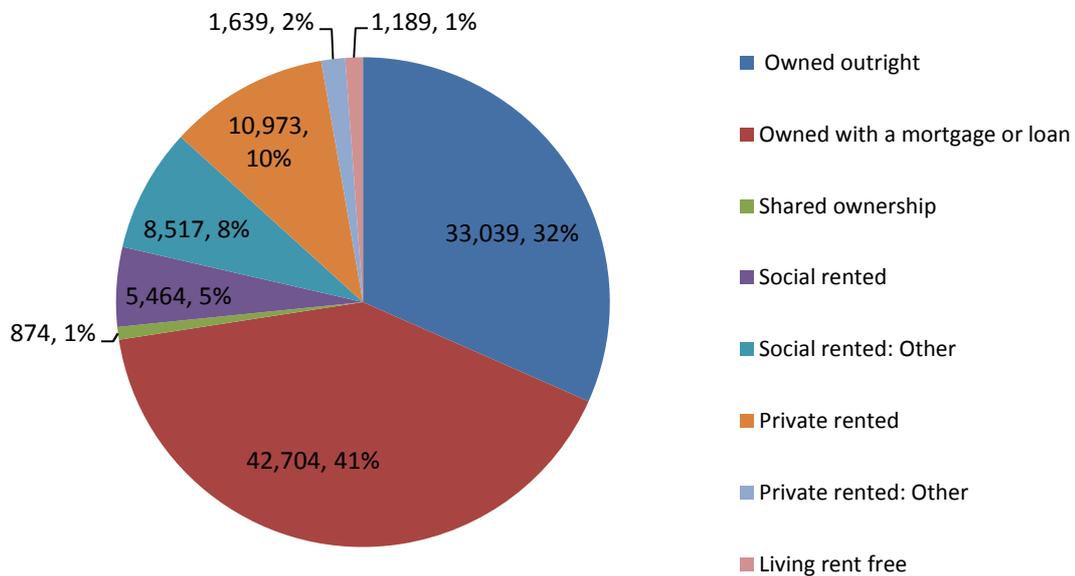


Figure 4: Central Bedfordshire households by tenure<sup>9</sup>

- 8.3 Census data in relation to household type in table 1 below shows that within Central Bedfordshire households are more likely to live in detached or semi-detached houses when compared to England as a whole. While 22% of households live in a flat or similar, approximately 3,500 (29%) of the extra household spaces developed between 2001 and 2011 were flats.

<sup>8</sup> 2011 Census: Tenure, local authorities in England and Wales.

<sup>9</sup> 2011 Census: Tenure, local authorities in England and Wales.

	Central Bedfordshire		England
Detached	30,700	28.2%	22.3%
Semi-detached	36,800	33.8%	30.7%
Terraced House	27,500	25.3%	24.5%
Flat/apartment/maisonette	12,800	11.7%	22.1%
Caravan/mobile/temp structure	1,000	1.0%	0.4%
All household spaces	108,700	100%	100%
Occupied households	104,400	96.0%	95.7%

**Table 1: Central Bedfordshire accommodation type compared with England<sup>10</sup>**

8.4 In December 2013 the average house price in Central Bedfordshire was £175,800. This was higher than the England and Wales average of £166,600. House prices in Central Bedfordshire have generally followed the national trend over the past few years<sup>11</sup>.

8.5 CORE (The Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England) enables examination of social lettings by the type of property and number of bedrooms. This shows that the majority of lettings are to flats and houses rather than shared accommodation, and that the number of lets to two bedroom homes is consistently higher than that for one and three bed properties (shown by Table 2). This emphasises the demand for two-bed social housing for both households that need more space and those looking to downsize.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
1 Bedroom	157	216	239	163	775
2 Bedrooms	319	386	279	251	1235
3+ Bedrooms	235	249	215	185	884
Total	711	851	733	599	2894

**Table 2: Central Bedfordshire lettings by number of bedrooms<sup>12</sup>**

8.6 Table 3 below also shows that the majority of social tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) at 65.3% (1,889). While perhaps expected, this indicates that many households in need of low cost housing are still being assessed as not having the income to afford it.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Housing Benefit	419	580	536	354	1889
Not in receipt of HB	125	131	95	98	449
Universal Credit	-	-	-	26	26
Unknown	167	140	102	121	530
Total	711	851	733	599	2894

**Table 3: Central Bedfordshire lettings by Housing Benefit<sup>13</sup>**

<sup>10</sup> 2011 Census: Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type, local authorities in England and Wales

<sup>11</sup> Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures, April 2014.

<sup>12</sup> CORE

<sup>13</sup> CORE

## 9 Homelessness in Central Bedfordshire

### 9.1 Headlines

1. Demand for housing options advice and assistance has. has fluctuated greatly with a peak in 2012/13 of 2,373.
2. A total of 1,337 housing register applications were made in 2013-14; representing an increase of 8% over the three year period.
3. Between 2011-12 and 2013-14 there was a 42% increase in homeless declarations.
4. The total number of homelessness decisions decreased by 16% between 2010-11 and 2013-14.
5. 124 households were accepted at homeless in 2013-14; a 22% reduction on the previous year.
6. The largest priority group for homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were lone females with dependent children at 40%. Other significant groups include couples with dependents at 12% and single women at 10%.
7. More than half (57%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 were from people aged 18-34.
8. Nearly a third (31%) of homeless acceptances in 2013-14 resulted because family or friends were not willing to accommodate.
9. There was estimated to be 13 rough sleepers in Central Bedfordshire in Autumn 2013, compared to the regional average of six<sup>14</sup>.

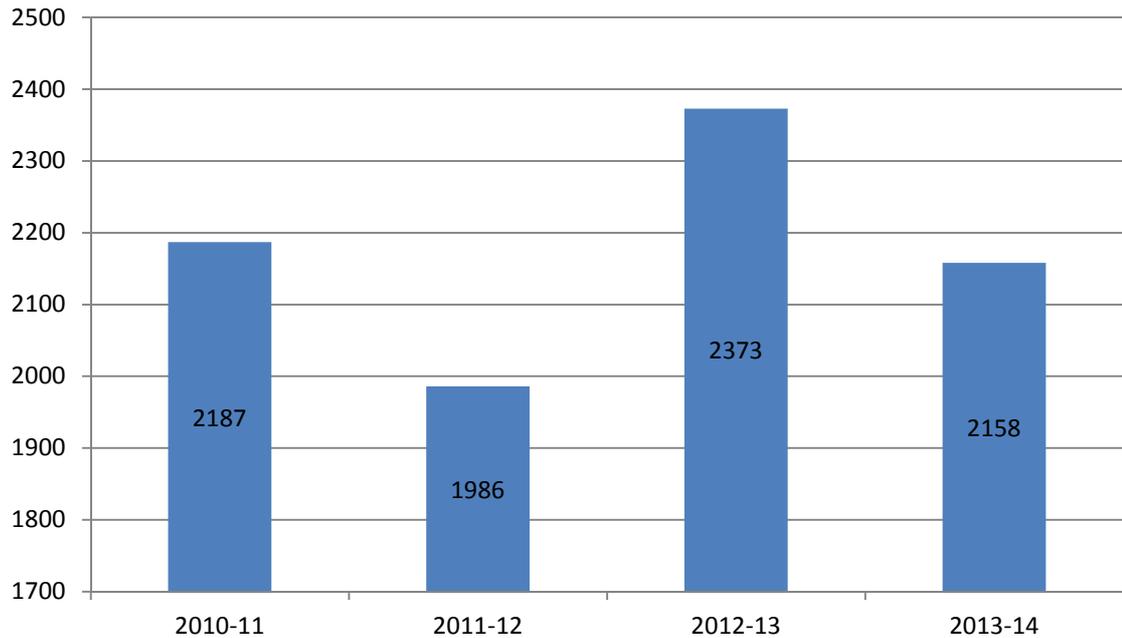
### 9.2 Analysis of the Local Picture

9.2.1 Since the last review of homelessness in 2009 Central Bedfordshire has seen increasing demand for housing options support to assist local people to maintain their existing accommodation and overcome difficulties and prevent people becoming homeless.

9.2.2 Figure 5 below shows the total number of housing options cases dealt with for each of the last four years. This highlights a demand peak in 2012-13 at 2,373 cases, which represents an increase of 387 (16.3%) cases from the previous year. Demand dropped slightly by 9% in 2013-14, which suggests some degree of fluctuation as also shown by preceding years.

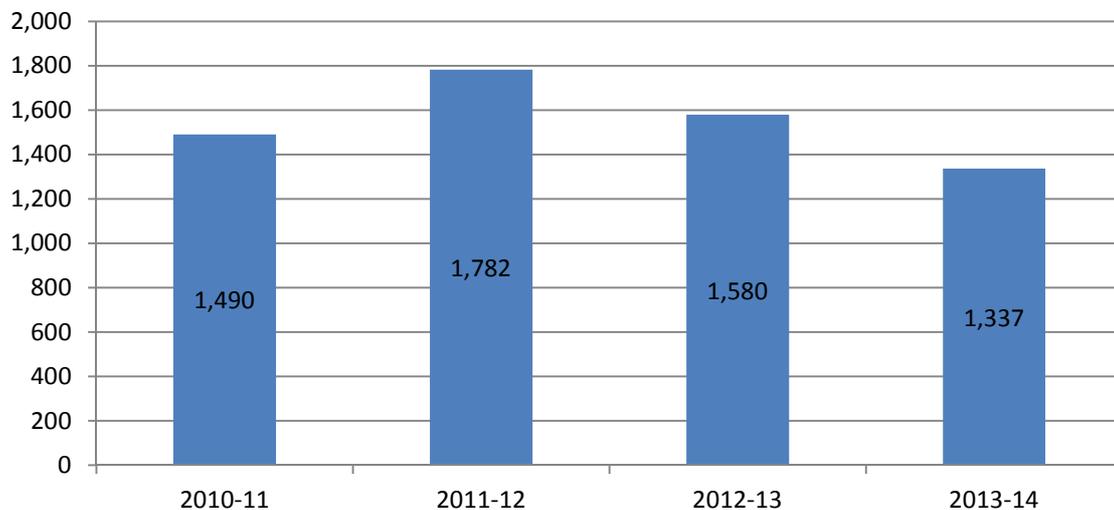
---

<sup>14</sup> Rough Sleeping Statistics, England 2013: table 1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2013>



**Figure 5: Central Bedfordshire Council's total number of housing options cases by year<sup>15</sup>**

9.2.3 The number of housing register applications shows decreasing demand since 2011-12 as shown in figure 6 below. Since 2011-12 there has been a 25% reduction in applications.



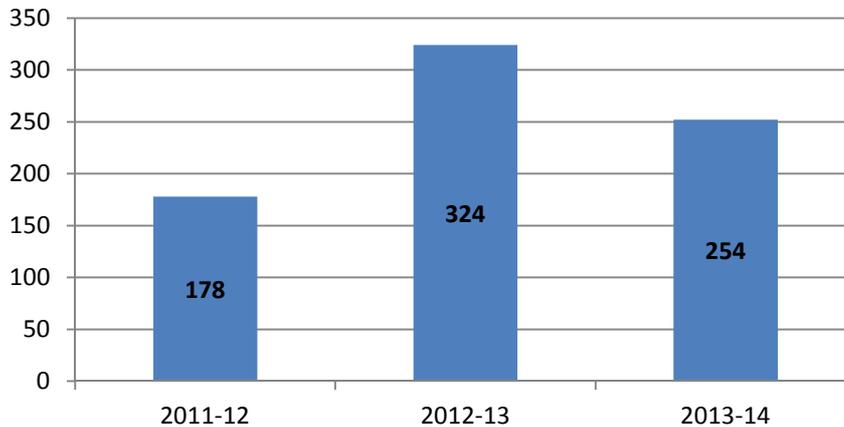
**Figure 6: Central Bedfordshire Council's total number of housing applications by year<sup>16</sup>**

9.2.4 Examining the demographic make-up of households applying to the housing register shows that the largest group making applications are lone women with dependent children. Couples with dependent children are the next largest group, with applications from both single men and women also featuring quite prominently. Lone men with dependent children account for the smallest number of applications. Further analysis of the make up of households accepted as homeless is detailed later in this section.

<sup>15</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

<sup>16</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

9.2.5 Housing options data capturing the number of people declaring themselves to be homeless also mirrors this increased demand trend. Figure 7 shows that over the last three years there has been an overall increase in homeless declarations of 74 (42%) with a significant rise in 2012-13 of 146 (82%); a demand picture that correlates with the housing options caseload peak in the same year. Data is unavailable for 2010-11.

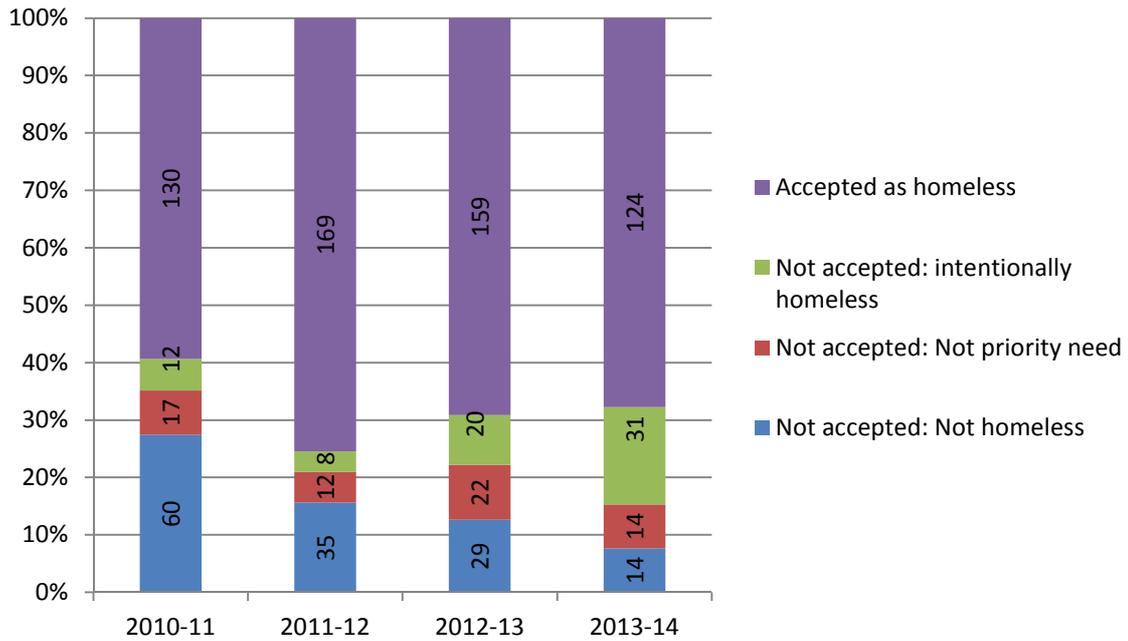


**Figure 7: Central Bedfordshire homelessness declarations by year<sup>17</sup>**

9.2.6 Analysis of the Council's homelessness prevention and relief statistical return to Central Government data (P1E) shows that the total number of decisions taken under the statutory homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996 had been steadily rising until 2013/14. During the four year period 2010-11 to 2013-14 Housing Services had seen a 5% increase in demand from local people requiring a statutory homeless decision up to 2012-13 but due a significant reduction in 2013-14, there was a 16% reduction for the whole period. A total of 183 decisions were made in 2013-14; the lowest over the period. This is thought to be partly due to increased and better prevention activity including an increase in Let's Rent-facilitated tenancies. Figure 8 illustrates this step change in demand broken-down by the type of decision made.

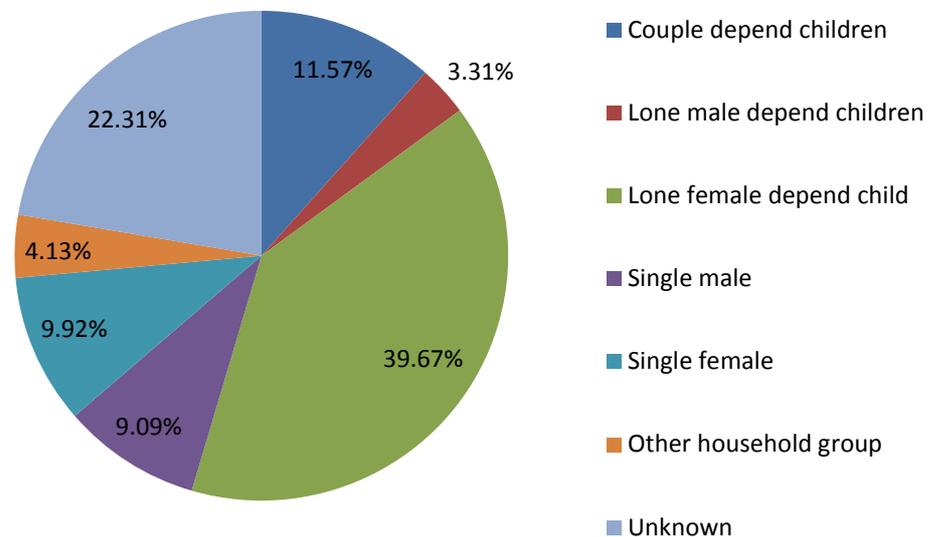
9.2.7 While there was a clear rise in acceptances between 2010-11 and 2011-12 of 39 (23%) the number of people accepted as homeless has declined since this peak, although the proportion of applications accepted has increased.

<sup>17</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services



**Figure 8 – Decisions under statutory provisions of the Homelessness Act 2010-14<sup>18</sup>**

9.2.8 A closer examination of statutory homeless acceptances in 2013-14 (figure 9) shows that 48 (40%) of all acceptances were from lone females with dependent children, making them the largest priority group. Couples with dependent children accounted for 14 (12%) of cases with single females making up 12 (10%) of acceptances.

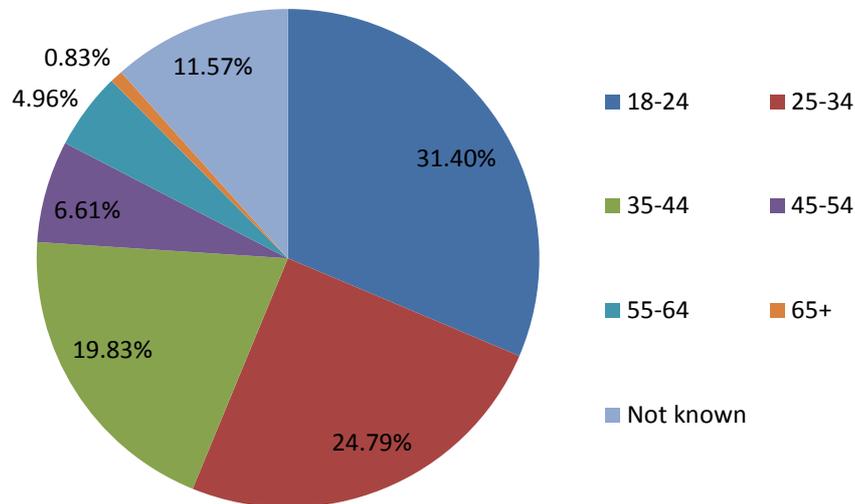


**Figure 9: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by household type<sup>19</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> PIE return

<sup>19</sup> PIE return

9.2.9 Figure 10 also shows statutory homeless acceptances by age. Significantly, young people aged 18-24 represent 32% (38) of all statutory acceptances in 2013-14 with those aged 25-34 accounting for 30 cases (25%). These groups combined make up more than half of all acceptances (56%), indicating that people from young or relatively young age groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness.



**Figure 10: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by age<sup>20</sup>**

9.2.10 The reasons for statutory homeless acceptances in 2013-14 show that the majority (26 cases, 21%) were caused because parents were no longer willing to accommodate their child. Together with the 11 cases of relatives or friends not willing to accommodate, nearly a third of all homeless acceptances were caused because the individual could not be accommodated by their family or friends.

9.2.11 18% (22 cases) were made homeless because their assured shorthold tenancy (AST) was terminated by their landlord. The data indicates that all forms of relationship breakdown accounted for 7% (9 cases) of acceptances. It is important to recognise that there is a fairly low instance of people becoming homeless as a result of mortgage arrears at 6% or 7 cases (see figure 11).

<sup>20</sup> PIE return

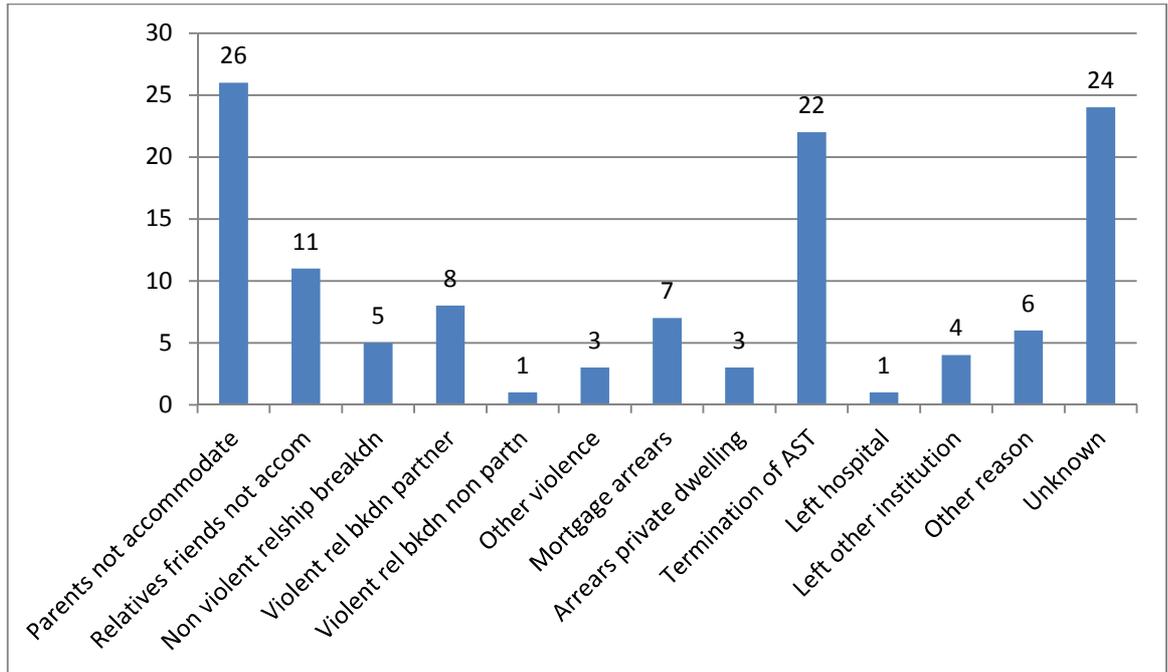
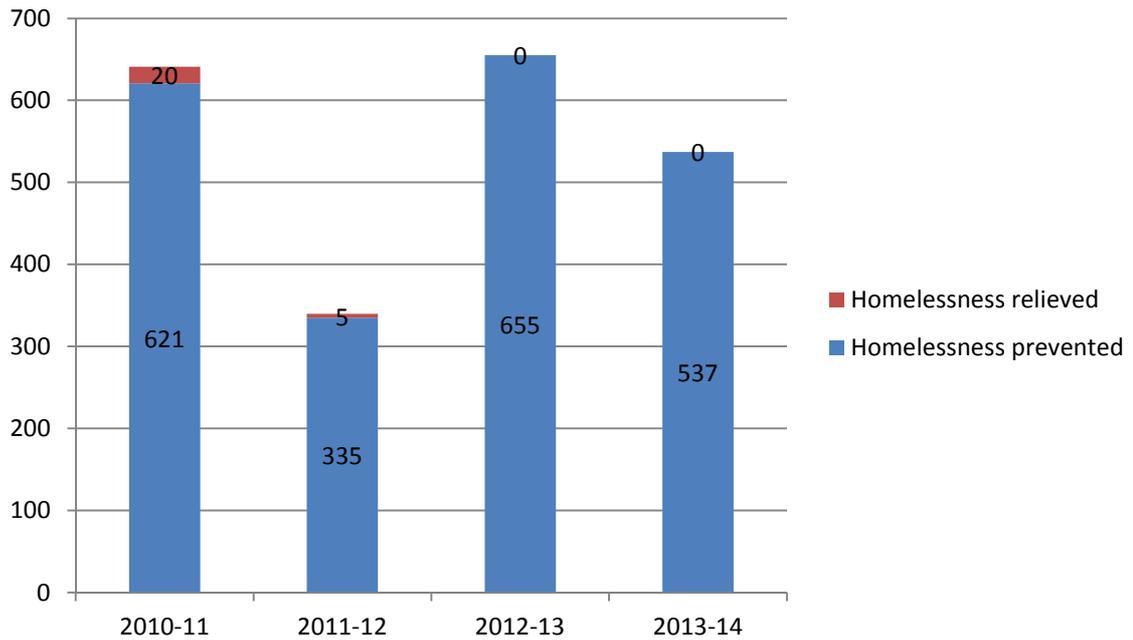


Figure 11: 2013-14 homeless acceptances by reason for homelessness<sup>21</sup>

- 9.2.12 There continues to be a steady proportion of people that the Council does not accept as homeless following a full investigation of individual circumstances. A total of 62 cases were not accepted as homeless in 2013-14, with 71 in 2012-13, 55 in 2011-12 and 89 in 2010-11; averaging approximately 69.3 cases per year over the period.
- 9.2.13 In the majority of these cases people are determined not to be homeless because of a range of factors that mean they are able to stay in their current home and overcome difficulties by accessing advice and other support services.
- 9.2.14 Importantly, P1E data shows that the majority of homelessness cases are determined within the required 33 working days but that a small number of very complex cases have impacted on this target. In 2011-12 95% of cases met this standard along with 86% in 2012-13. The performance for 2013-14 was 88%.
- 9.2.15 The DCLG also collects data from local authorities on homelessness prevention work. Prevention captures ‘positive action’ by a local authority or a partner agency that has provided a solution for at least six months for a household, whilst “relief” records action to assist non-priority and intentionally homeless households to secure accommodation – for example, through the use of a rent bond to gain a private rented sector tenancy.
- 9.2.16 Taking action to prevent homelessness forms the majority of the Council’s activity. In 2013-14 Housing Services prevented 537 households from becoming homeless either by providing support to remain in the existing home (275) or assistance to find alternative secure accommodation (262). Figure 12 shows that there was a dip in preventative cases in 2011-12, which is primarily due to the lack of availability of information due to circumstances beyond the Council’s control. Taking this into

<sup>21</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

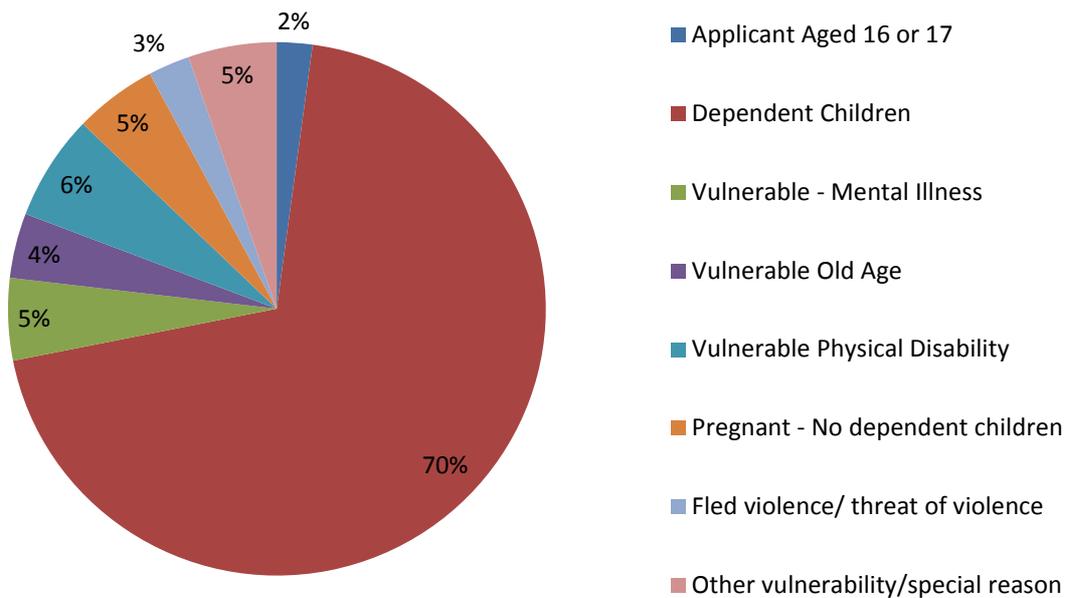
account, the total number of homelessness cases prevented has stayed broadly flat during the period but with a reduction in 2013-14.



**Figure 12 - Total reported cases of homelessness prevention and relief<sup>22</sup>**

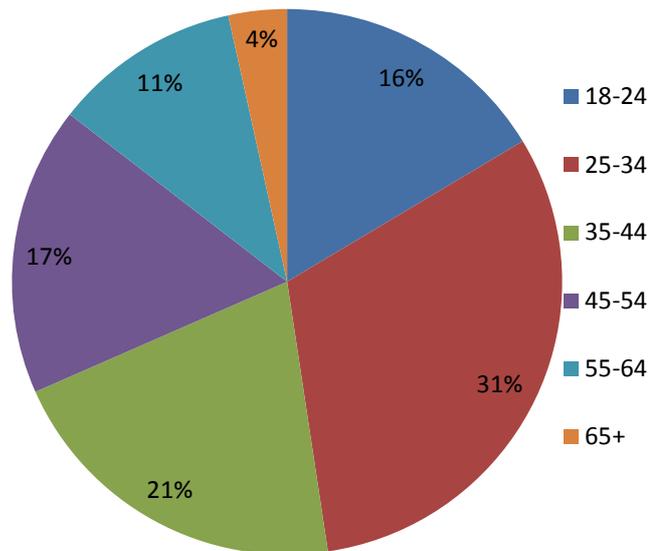
9.2.17 The number of homelessness relief cases dealt with in Central Bedfordshire are low or zero because cases are typically recorded as prevention.

9.2.18 Housing Services' prevention data, shown in figure 13 below, reflects both the priority need (where a category has been recorded) and age breakdown of prevention cases in 2013-14. In total 281 prevention cases were given a priority need category.



**Figure 13: Priority need of homelessness prevention cases (base: 281)<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>22</sup> PIE return



**Figure 14 – Homelessness prevention by age 2013-14 (base 525)<sup>24</sup>**

9.2.19 Compared with statutory acceptances the proportion of prevention and relief cases by age is broadly the same. The proportion by household type slightly differs with a larger number of single males being affected by homelessness but not meeting the criteria to be owed a statutory duty. This could suggest two things; that the provision of prevention support for single men is sufficient to meet demand in the local area or that while many single men do not have access to a secure home and are considered homeless their actions or situation contribute to them not being accepted as statutory homeless.

9.2.20 Housing authorities have an interim duty to secure that accommodation is available for an applicant if they have reason to believe that the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and has a priority need. The interim duty is in place while the decision as to what duty, if any, is owed to the applicant is determined.

9.2.21 Figure 15 shows that the number of TA placements increased from 2010-11 to 2012-13 with a slight reduction in 2013-14. Hostel accommodation makes up the largest proportion of placements at 56% for 2013-14. Bed and Breakfast accommodation increased significantly over the three year period to 2012-13 with a reduction in 2013-14. The cost of placing homelessness households in temporary B&B accommodation was £31,000 in 2011-12, £67,000 in 2012-13 and £71,000 in 2013-14.

<sup>23</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

<sup>24</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

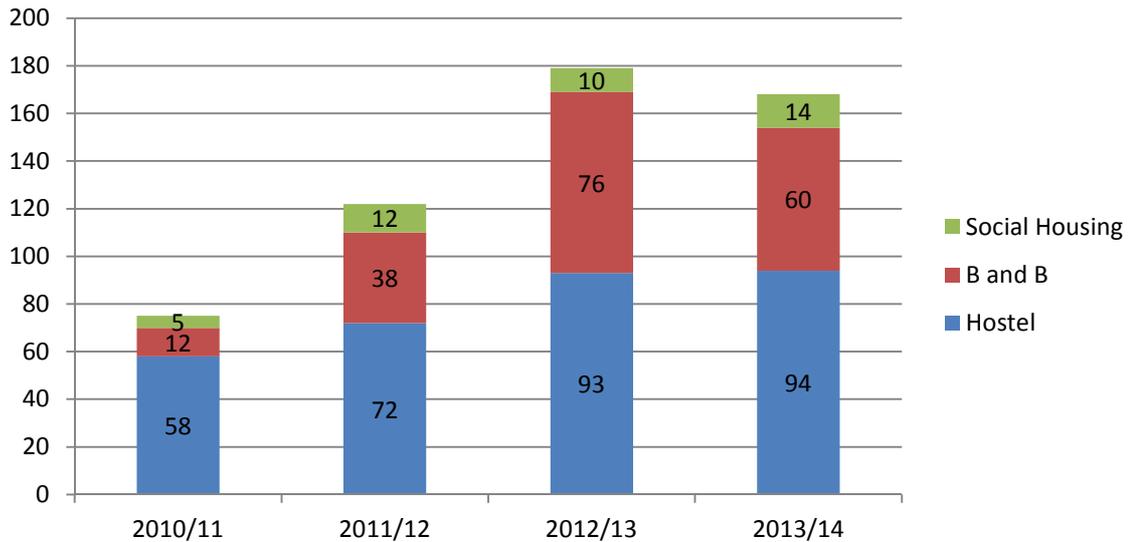


Figure 15 - Total in Temporary Accommodation 2010-11 to 2013-14<sup>25</sup>

9.2.22 During 2013-14 there were an average of four households in B&Bs at the end of each month was 13.93 days.

### 9.3 Benchmarking

9.3.1 The following figures show the picture of both homeless demand and performance in Central Bedfordshire compared with that of statistical neighbours<sup>26</sup>.

9.3.2 Central Bedfordshire is in line with many of its statistical neighbours for homelessness decisions (figure 16); however three of its neighbouring authorities Bedford, Milton Keynes and Luton have a higher decision rate, especially Luton.

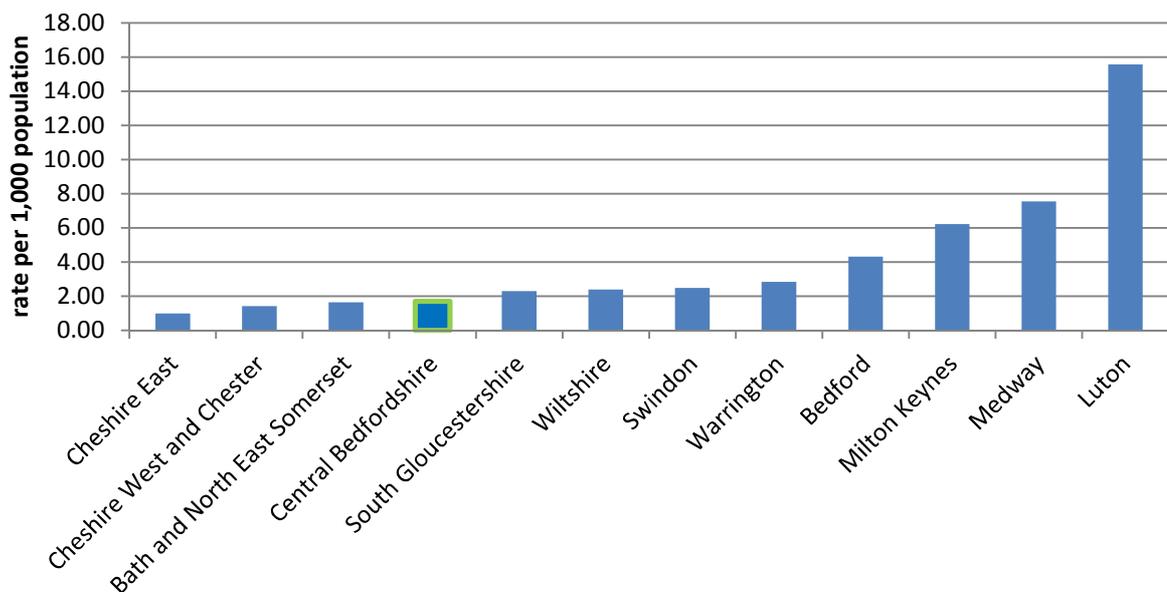


Figure 16 – Statutory homelessness decisions 2013-14<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> QL, CBC Housing Services

<sup>26</sup> Taken from Live data tables on homelessness; <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

9.3.3 Figure 17 shows that Central Bedfordshire has neither a high nor low homelessness prevention/relief rate compared to its statistical neighbours. Cheshire West and Chester have the highest rate but also one of the lowest rates for statutory homelessness decisions indicating that they have an effective housing options service that pro-actively encourages customers to resolve their housing issues without taking the homelessness application route.

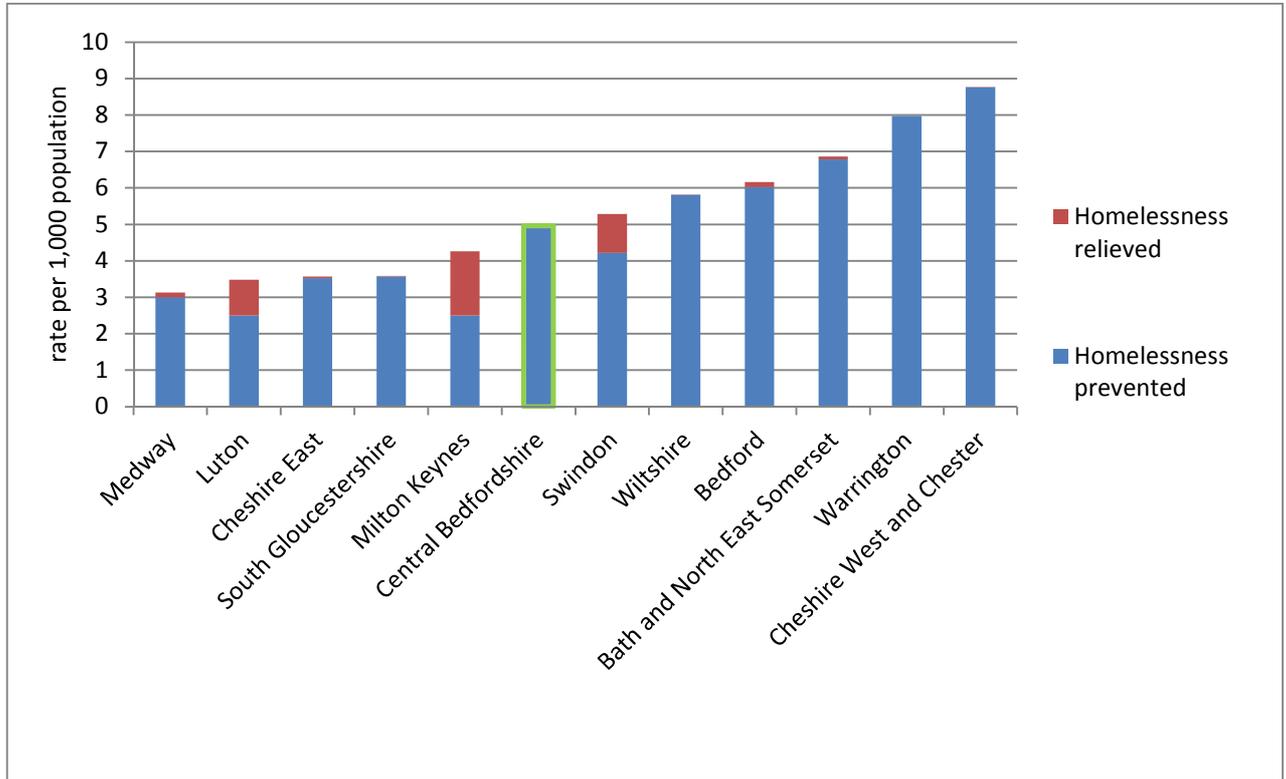
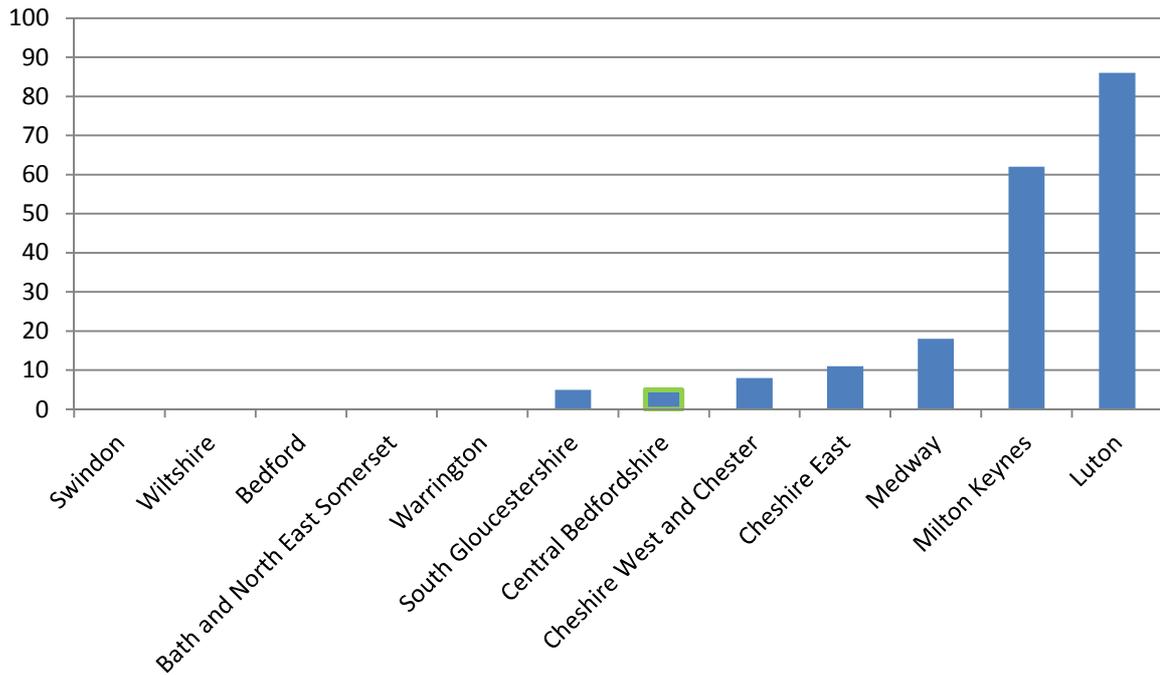


Figure 17 – Homeless prevention and relief 2013-14<sup>28</sup>

9.3.4 Five of CBC’s statistical neighbours did not accommodate homelessness applicants in bed and breakfast in 2013-14. CBC was one of the authorities that did but was second lowest for the number of placements. Luton and Milton Keynes were the highest which is reflected in the number of homelessness decisions made in the year.

<sup>27</sup> PIE return

<sup>28</sup> PIE return



**Figure 18: Applicant households accommodated in bed and breakfast by authority as at 31 December 2013<sup>29</sup>**

## 9.4 Homelessness and Health

9.4.1 A national Homeless Health Audit in 2014 found that 73% of homeless people reported physical health problems, 39% said they take drugs or are recovering from a drug problem and 80% reported some form of mental health issue. 35% had been to Accident and Emergency (A&E) in the past six months. A&E visits per homeless person are four times higher than for the general public.

9.4.2 The last Health Needs Assessment Report of homelessness and health in Central Bedfordshire<sup>30</sup> was published in 2009. This report on health and homelessness in Central Bedfordshire sought to provide an accurate representation of information from key agencies to create a joint vision for the ongoing development of health services which meets the complex needs of homeless people in the area.

9.4.3 In 2012 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire included an update on unmet health needs and service gaps with recommendations for improvement. These recommendation involved Public Health, Commissioning, Acute Trust Providers, Primary Care and providers of health improvement, mental health and substance misuse services.

9.4.4 Findings in the 2012 report in relation to health were as follows:

1. Homeless people can experience difficulty in accessing GP services because they do not have a fixed address and so cannot prove their identity. A Local Enhanced GP Service (LES) at Bassett Road, Leighton

<sup>29</sup> PIE return

<sup>30</sup> A Health Needs Assessment Report of homelessness and health in Central Bedfordshire, 2009.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203\\_tcm6-32217.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203_tcm6-32217.pdf#False)

Buzzard and a GP practice in Dunstable register homeless patients but there are no GP practices with specific responsibility for homelessness in the north of Central Bedfordshire.

2. There are no enhanced or specialist health visiting services for homeless families.
3. Mechanisms between agencies are to be implemented to highlight families that move in to temporary accommodation.
4. A Health Improvement Specialist (sexual health/mental well-being) exists for people up to the age of 25 years living in hostels.
5. A Health Improvement Team exists with expertise in smoking cessation and Chlamydia screening.
6. A Health Improvement Specialist (sexual health) exists for people up to the age of 25 years living in hostels.
7. A Health Improvement Team exists (Stop smoking, Chlamydia screening).

9.4.5 Unmet needs and service gaps were identified. In Public Health / Commissioning the report recognised that there was a lack of a family, mental health, substance misuse and single homelessness Health Needs Assessment refresh to identify local gaps in services. There was also a lack of training on homelessness and health for provider health staff, health and homeless standards were yet to be adopted and a local health and homeless leaflet was not available.

9.4.6 For Acute Trust Providers gaps included training in homelessness and health for nurses and doctors. The report also found that the local homelessness discharge protocol had not been incorporated in to local hospital discharge policies and hidden homeless people who access Accident and Emergency could not be identified.

9.4.7 In Primary Care a more integrated model of service provision was recommended to strategically join up primary and secondary care health services around the needs of a homeless person and case management which guides and supports homeless people through the organisational systems. The report also suggested that there should be clinical guidance and mentoring of staff working in homeless provision dealing with traumatic health crisis's which cause a homeless service crisis and may lead to eviction/rough sleeping. Addressing health need/health services in the homeless recovery period when re-housed to prevent relapse in to homelessness and funding the pharmacy enhanced services package to hostels were recommended.

9.4.8 Health improvement recommendations included the introduction of homeless services and homeless people health training programmes and sexual health and mental health support to over 25s in hostels.

9.4.9 Unmet needs and service gaps in mental health and substance misuse services are explained under these groups in section 10.

## 10. Priority Groups and Support

### 10.1 Summary

- 10.1.1 Homelessness has a deep impact on health, employment opportunities, educational achievement, and is linked to offending and substance misuse. For most people who become homeless their lack of accommodation is a symptom rather than a cause of their social exclusion.
- 10.1.2 Shelter<sup>31</sup> identified that homelessness is likely to result from the complex interplay between structural and personal factors. Structural factors may include unemployment, poverty, housing market shortages and lack of affordable housing and social trends, such as the increasing incidence of relationship breakdown, and rising numbers of people living alone.
- 10.1.3 Personal and social factors relate to the individual, family or community and play a key role in people's vulnerability to becoming homeless. These may include one or more of the following:
- individual factors – including drug and alcohol misuse; difficulties at school; lack of qualifications; lack of social support; debts, especially mortgage or rent arrears; poor physical and mental health; and getting involved in crime at an early age,
  - family background – including family breakdown and disputes; sexual and physical abuse in childhood or adolescence; having parents with drug or alcohol problems; and previous experience of family homelessness,
  - an institutional background – including having been in care; the armed forces; or in prison.
- 10.1.4 The impact of homelessness is also wide. Firstly those that are homeless may have suffered distressing experiences such as domestic abuse, relationship breakdown, loss of their home or mental health problems. Homelessness can lead to feelings of disempowerment, isolation and poverty as many households need to move to temporary accommodation away from family and friends support networks, education services, childcare services and employment.
- 10.1.5 Access to health and education services may also be disrupted. Local and national health audits have found that homeless people are more likely to use Accident and Emergency services for health problems because they need a fixed address to register for primary care services such as the GP and dentist. The lack of access to health care at an early or preventative stage and the increased health risks that homelessness can pose also leads to an increase in health problems. A national health audit in 2014<sup>32</sup> found that 41% of the homeless population had a long term physical health problem compared to 28% of the general population. 45% of the homeless population had been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared to 25% of the general population.

---

<sup>31</sup> Homelessness factsheet, Shelter, 2007.

[http://england.shelter.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/66379/Homelessness\\_factsheet.pdf](http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/66379/Homelessness_factsheet.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/The%20unhealthy%20state%20of%20homelessness%20FINAL.pdf>

- 10.1.6 The impact of education is detailed below within the families with children analysis.
- 10.1.7 The Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment splits homeless people in to three domains<sup>33</sup>:
- a) **Single homelessness** - This group include rough sleepers and those living in hostels, shelters and temporary supported accommodation.
  - b) **Statutory homelessness** - This group includes households that meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation such as the acutely ill; those fleeing violence or harassment; pregnant mothers; dependent children; 16-17 year olds not owed a duty under the Children's Act 1989; those aged 18-20 who, as children, were looked after, accommodated or fostered; those with certain types of disability and others who may be vulnerable for reasons set out in the Homelessness Code of Guidance. Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation.
  - c) **Hidden homelessness/ at risk of homelessness** - In Central Bedfordshire, as well as nationally, this group is difficult to quantify. Many hidden homeless are 'sofa-surfers', residing temporarily with family or friends. Some may have no recourse to public funds.
- 10.1.8 Those at most risk of homelessness or who are disproportionately affected are:
- Families with children
  - Single homeless
  - Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)
- 10.1.9 There are also characteristics that increase the likelihood of homelessness which are:
- a) People with mental health difficulties
  - b) People with alcohol and substance misuse problems
  - c) Offenders and ex-offenders
  - d) People suffering from domestic violence
- 10.1.10 In addition to this are clients that due to their vulnerability may be disproportionately affected by homelessness and may struggle to access the support they are eligible for. This includes people with learning disabilities, people with physical and sensory disabilities, those with poor literacy skills, older people and Gypsies and Travellers.
- 10.1.11 These categories are mostly captured in the P1E homelessness statutory return where there are 17 categories of priority need. Applicants with multiple needs will only be recorded under one category and so secondary needs are not captured. For example a pregnant care leaver may be recorded as 'household with pregnant member and no other dependent children' and therefore information on the applicant being a care leaver will not recorded.

---

<sup>33</sup> Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire, JSNA.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-32213.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32213.pdf#False)

## 10.2 Families with children

10.2.1 The majority of households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 in Central Bedfordshire were families with dependent children (77%, 96). As shown in Table 3 this was made up of 76% lone female parent families, 17% couples with children and 7% lone male parent families.

Couple with dependent children*	Lone parent household with dependent children		One person household		All other household groups	Total
	Male Applicant	Female Applicant	Male Applicant	Female Applicant		
6	1	16	3	0	0	26
3	3	22	4	1	0	33
2	2	15	4	5	3	31
5	1	20	2	3	3	34
16	7	73	13	9	6	124

**Table 3: Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need 2013-14**

- 10.2.2 Applicants that were assigned the priority need of 'households with dependent children' were mostly made up of one child families (41, 53%), followed by two children families (30) and seven households had three or more children. 18 households were assigned the priority need of 'households with pregnant member and no other dependent children'.
- 10.2.3 At the end of 2013-14 there were 39 households in Temporary Accommodation of which 27 (69%) were households with dependent children or with a pregnancy. The average length of stay in bed and breakfast in 2013-14 was 14.4 weeks for pregnant/dependent households and 11.2 weeks for all other households.
- 10.2.4 Homelessness can have a negative impact on children that can have long-lasting effects. Children's educational attainment can suffer as can their emotional well-being leading to behavioural problems. Shelter carried out a survey involving 417 households living in temporary accommodation in 2004<sup>34</sup>. The impact of living in TA was summarised as follows:
- 10.2.5 *Frequent moving and disruption associated with living in temporary accommodation makes it difficult for children to keep school places, maintain their attendance and do well at school. Two fifths of parents (43 per cent) reported that their children had missed school due to their housing situation. On average, children had missed 55 days of school equivalent to quarter of the school year. One in ten parents (11 per cent) said that at least one of their children did not have a school place at all for the term. Parents also said their children had long journeys to school and had problems with transport.*
- 10.2.6 *The trauma of becoming homeless and stresses associated with living in temporary accommodation affect children's mental and emotional well being. Over two fifths (42 per cent) of parents said that their child was 'often unhappy or depressed'. Children also experienced a lot of problems at school*

<sup>34</sup> Living in limbo: Survey of homeless households living in temporary accommodation, Shelter 2004.

*including bullying and behavioural problems. One in ten parents (11 per cent) said that their child had been given a statement of Special Educational Needs and one in ten said their child had been suspended, excluded or expelled from school.*

- 10.2.7 Access to child care was also cited as a problem that hindered parents from accessing employment or training to improve their circumstances.
- 10.2.8 Single parent families are one of the groups most vulnerable to poverty. Research has shown that single parents were well over twice as likely as all households to live in poverty, with two out of three single parents living in poverty<sup>35</sup>. Single parents with few qualifications and skills, and often with limited hours available for work, can often find the type of work they can get is poorly paid, leading to them being caught in a poverty trap<sup>36</sup>.
- 10.2.9 Recent welfare reforms have also had an impact on families with the three-year freezing of child benefit rates from April 2011, a reduction in the childcare element of working tax credit from April 2011 and replacement of Council Tax Benefit with Council Tax Support from 2013. 44 households have also been affected by the benefit cap in Central Bedfordshire (as of July 2014) and households with more than three children were most affected by this. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimated that lone mothers would expect to lose 8.5 per cent of their annual income between 2011 and 2015 as a result of the reforms which was estimated to be three times the percentage amount the average childless couple would lose<sup>37</sup>.
- 10.2.10 A health needs assessment of health and homelessness found that families were at particular risk from the following health issues:
- a) Homeless parents had higher risk of depression and substance misuse with correlating higher need for mental health treatment
  - b) Many families living in TA are not registered with a GP
  - c) Associated factors of children living in TA were higher Accident and Emergency attendance for infections, chronic illness and accident rates. Other factors are behavioural/mental health problems, physical health problems such as chest infections and malnourishment, development delay, immunisation delay and Children in Need/ of protection.<sup>38</sup>
- 10.2.11 Table 4 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Health homelessness notification system	A notification system exists between Central Bedfordshire Housing Service, Child Health and 0-19 year Locality Teams for all families moving in and out of temporary accommodation in Central Bedfordshire.

<sup>35</sup> Poverty and Social Exclusion in Britain, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> A Single Parent, Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2011. <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/living-poverty/personal-experiences/jennie-single-parent>

<sup>37</sup> The impact of tax and benefit reforms by sex: some simple analysis, Institute of Fiscal Studies, 2011. <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn118.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Homelessness and Health in the Central Bedfordshire Council Area: A health needs assessment report, NHS Bedfordshire 2009. [http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203\\_tcm6-32217.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Homelessness%20and%20health%203_tcm6-32217.pdf#False)

The 'think family' approach	The 'think family' approach has been embedded within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions in Central Bedfordshire Council services to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation.
Supporting Families Programme	<p>Supporting Families is the Central Bedfordshire programme for Troubled Families and provides a gateway to a range of additional support tailored to the needs of the family, such as keeping children in school, preventing youth crime or anti-social behaviour; getting back into work or overcoming substance misuse and domestic violence.</p> <p>Participation in the Supporting Families programme means a family will be allocated a dedicated worker who will work with the family offering practical and hands on support to enable the family to bring about lasting changes themselves.</p>

**Table 4: Services and support available for homeless families with children**

### 10.3 Single homeless

- 10.3.1 Many single homeless people are not eligible for housing support simply because they do not meet the 'priority need' criteria in order to be accepted as statutory homeless. Under the 1996 Housing Act, local authorities have a duty to find accommodation for households deemed to be homeless, eligible and in 'priority need'. Most commonly, 'priority need' applies to adults with dependent children and/or households with a vulnerable member.
- 10.3.2 Vulnerable single people may meet the 'priority need' criteria and this can include elderly or frail older people who are vulnerable, 16-17 year olds, care leavers, physically disabled people, people suffering from a mental illness, those dependent or misusing drugs or alcohol, former asylum seekers, or people facing threats of violence or domestic violence.
- 10.3.3 18% (22) of households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were one person households. 13 (59%) of applicants were male and 9 applicants were female.
- 10.3.4 Analysis undertaken to inform the Market Position Statement for meeting the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable people estimates that there is a need for approximately 62 units of supported accommodation for single homeless people in Central Bedfordshire, and 75 units of floating support, to help re-settle back into mainstream accommodation.
- 10.3.5 Single homeless as a priority group is likely to be made up of single men with an underlying vulnerability, such as mental health, or drug and alcohol problem. People may spend extended periods 'sofa surfing' or seek crisis accommodation in a night shelter. The majority of people in this situation within Central Bedfordshire will not, however, meet the level of vulnerability which would lead to them being assessed as having a priority need.

- 10.3.6 Homelessness in this situation is tied in with the particular difficulties of accessing suitable accommodation for single people who are out of work and dependent on benefits. One bedroom council and housing association accommodation is in short supply.
- 10.3.7 Further, the restriction of Housing Benefit to the ‘single room rate’ for people aged below 35 has reduced the ability of the private rented sector to cater to this client group. Houses in Multiple Occupation, in which non-working clients can rent a room for which Housing Benefit can pay, are few and far between in Central Bedfordshire. Vulnerable single people may lack the social capital to find ‘house shares’ with friends, and be unwilling to consider accommodation out of the local area such as in Luton or Bedford.
- 10.3.8 Research to develop the draft housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) found that the ‘single homeless’ group was mostly single men with underlying vulnerabilities associated with mental health problems and substance misuse. Worklessness and lack of social capital are barriers to finding alternative housing.
- 10.3.9 Analysis suggests that the amount of supported accommodation for single homeless people is about right. However, case-study data and anecdotal feedback suggest that the available services are not able to accommodate some people with complex and intensive support needs. Floating support services, funded by the council, are available to single homeless people resettling into mainstream accommodation. However, needs analysis indicates that increased capacity would support earlier intervention.
- 10.3.10 The category of single homeless people also includes rough sleepers of which there were 13 in the last count in Autumn 2013. Although this number is low compared to neighbouring authorities such as Bedford and Luton, 13 is high compared to many of our statistically similar authorities and the East of England average. Progress has been made on the provision of shelters for rough sleepers in the last five years but feedback gathered at the stakeholder engagement event highlighted that there remained a lack of emergency accommodation that provided adequate coverage across Central Bedfordshire.
- 10.3.11 Table 5 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Accommodation Based Services (ABS)	ABS currently available are based in the Signposts’ service in Dunstable and Houghton Regis; the Bedfordshire Housing Link service in Sandy and the Mayday Trust service in Leighton Buzzard. Additionally, the Leighton Linslade Homelessness Service operates a night shelter in Leighton Buzzard.
Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP)	<p>CBC has developed and implemented a Severe Weather Emergency Plan (SWEP) to provide temporary shelter accommodation and aid to homeless rough sleepers during both extreme cold and hot weather conditions.</p> <p>The SWEP is delivered jointly with a number of local partners that support homeless rough sleepers and</p>

vulnerable people into safe and secure accommodation. The plan outlines the action taken by specific areas across Central Bedfordshire to provide support following a severe weather alert.

Local partners provide a range of support in response to alerts including emergency accommodation from Leighton Linlade Homeless Service, Bedfordshire Housing Link and Bedford Salvation Army facilities.

**Table 5: Services and support available for single homeless people**

## 10.4 Young people

- 10.4.1 Young people are often forced to leave the family home during a crisis and have few life skills to effectively deal with this. They are typically unaware of the support that is available to them and as a result they need to be signposted to appropriate services that have a specialist understanding of their needs.
- 10.4.2 Young people are more likely to move between hostels and are more likely to accrue rent arrears, increasing the probability of becoming institutionalised as they face barriers to achieving independent living. There is also an increasing financial cost of youth homelessness the longer they remain homeless, which can include extra policing and increased demand for health and social care services.
- 10.4.3 Like all hostel residents, young people require a range of good quality accommodation with appropriate support that will enable them to access education, training, employment and also drug and alcohol support.
- 10.4.4 124 households were found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 of which two were given the need category of 'aged 16 or 17 years of age'. 48 (39%) were aged 16-24.
- 10.4.5 The Homeless Watch Report from Homeless Link (2011)<sup>39</sup> makes a number of recommendations to help prevent youth homelessness and reduce the impact that it has in local areas, which includes:
- a) Ensure changes to the welfare system do not cause higher youth homelessness,
  - b) Maintain cost effective advice and prevention services,
  - c) Maintain housing related support,
  - d) Ensure there is effective partnership working between Housing and Children's and Young People's Services to meet their legal duties to 16 and 17 year olds,
  - e) Improve access for young people to the private rented sector and provide support to enable them to maintain these tenancies,
  - f) Provide better access to education, training and employment for young people.

<sup>39</sup> [http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/111202.Young\\_and\\_homeless.pdf](http://homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/111202.Young_and_homeless.pdf)

- 10.4.6 Looked After Children (LAC) are among the most vulnerable groups in society and are at an increased risk of poor outcomes. Evidence from studies shows that young people leaving care have to cope with the challenges and responsibilities of major changes in their lives – in leaving foster and residential care and setting up home, in leaving school and entering the world of work or, more likely, being unemployed and surviving on benefits, and in being parents – at a far younger age than other young people. In short, many have compressed and accelerated transitions to adulthood. During this journey to adulthood they are more likely than other young people to become young householders, be homeless, have poorer qualifications, lower levels of participation in post-16 education and higher levels of unemployment.
- 10.4.7 There is also evidence that looked-after young people, those leaving care and adults who had been in care were likely to experience mental health problems. Care leavers also have higher levels of drug use than other young people.<sup>40</sup>
- 10.4.8 Three of the 124 households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'in care and aged 18-20'. None were categorised as 'been in care'. However these low numbers can be misleading as not every young person that has 'been in care' is give this priority need group as this may be see as secondary to another of the 17 categories.
- 10.4.9 44 (21%) of Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in 2012 were aged 15-17.<sup>41</sup> There were twice as many male LAC as female in this age group. Young people are supported to remain in foster care or in residential homes where this is consistent with their needs and wishes. A 'staying-put' policy is in place for young people who need to remain in a fostering household beyond 18. However for those young people who wish to move towards independence or for those who become looked after at age 16 or 17 a range of semi-independent and independent living provision is required.<sup>42</sup>
- 10.4.10 Research to develop the draft housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) found that there are significant gaps in the availability of Accommodation Based Support and floating support for young people. Accommodation Based Support is available for homeless and other vulnerable young people in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area. However, there are waiting lists to access these services, and applicants have to be prioritised according to their degree of vulnerability. There are no Accommodation Based Services that are particularly aimed at Young People in 'north' Central Bedfordshire. The needs analysis found that there is no accommodation that is particularly suitable for Teenage Parents anywhere in Central Bedfordshire.

---

<sup>40</sup> What works for young people leaving care?, Barnardo's, 2004.

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_works\\_for\\_young\\_people\\_leaving\\_care\\_2004\\_publications\\_tracked.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_works_for_young_people_leaving_care_2004_publications_tracked.pdf)

<sup>41</sup>CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy\\_tcm6-40130.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy_tcm6-40130.pdf#False)

<sup>42</sup>CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy\\_tcm6-40130.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/LACplacementstrategy_tcm6-40130.pdf#False)

- 10.4.11 Floating support services are available across localities but the MPS research found that they are not particularly aimed at young people and they do not have capacity to meet all of the estimated needs.
- 10.4.12 The case for specialist accommodation based support for young people was strongly made at the stakeholder engagement event. There was a preference for smaller schemes to house 4 or 5 young people with intensive support and eviction policies that accept that young people are more likely to make mistakes as they develop their life skills. There was also concern about housing vulnerable young people in schemes with ex-offenders and adults with substance misuse issues. The increased risk of sexual exploitation of young homeless people was also highlighted but the evidence base to support this is limited, an issue that the Community Safety Partnership is seeking to address.
- 10.4.13 Table 6 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Accommodation Based Services (ABS)	<p>Eighteen units of ABS are available in Central Bedfordshire for young people, which are currently shared between care leavers and other vulnerable or homeless young people on an ad-hoc basis. In practice support tends to be prioritised towards prospective residents according to their age, taking the youngest applicants first, which partly explains why a larger proportion of the supply, approximately 13 units, has been apportioned to 16 and 17 year olds.</p> <p>ABS support is provided in three stages and in three separate residential buildings with gradually reducing levels of support. There is follow-on support to residents that have moved into mainstream accommodation. It is situated in the south of Central Bedfordshire, and in practice unavailable to young people from the 'north' of Central Bedfordshire. Currently Non-Accommodation Based Services (NABS) for Young People is provided as a dedicated service to teenage parents. The remaining supply is provided on an ad-hoc basis by generic floating support services, which is not specifically aimed at young people.</p>
CBC leaving care services	<p>For Looked After Children, CBC Children's Services give consideration to how young people aged 15 and above leaving care services can be prepared for independence and leaving care. This includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Completing a pathway plan which outlines the support and goals towards independence</li> <li>b) Considering housing and accommodation options</li> <li>c) Providing support in accessing university, further</li> </ol>

	education, employment or training d) Developing independence skills. <sup>43</sup>
Supported Lodgings scheme	Central Bedfordshire Council operates a Supported Lodgings scheme offering eight places spread geographically across the council area. The supported lodgings scheme also operates three crashpad beds for young people who are homeless and need 'emergency short term accommodation' while assessments are undertaken. This service also offers a mediation service for young people aged 14+ to help prevent relationship issues that may lead to homelessness. <sup>44</sup>
Luton Accommodation and Move on Project (LAMP)	The charity supports young vulnerable and disadvantaged people between the ages of 16 and 25 in a homeless situation. LAMP provides a safe living environment for people in Luton and the surrounding area and works with clients to develop support plans which includes advice on careers, life skills and financial management.
4YP – Young People Services	The company operates drop-in services which are funded through CBC's Early Intervention Project and an intensive support and mentoring service.

**Table 6: Services and support available for young homeless people**

## 10.5 People with mental health difficulties

- 10.5.1 Ten of the 124 households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'mental illness or handicap'.
- 10.5.2 As at December 2013 SEPT, the mental health services provider for Central Bedfordshire, had a client list of 1,975. The Meeting the Accommodation Needs of Vulnerable People research estimated that the total population with mental health needs could be up to 2,758 when including those not in contact with secondary services.
- 10.5.3 A Central Bedfordshire health needs assessment of health and homelessness found that single homeless people were at particular risk of mental health problems:
- a) Homelessness is a trigger to mental health problems and exacerbates those that already exist.
  - b) Mental health is the leading cause of homelessness - in a third of cases losing a home was associated with mental health problems and homeless people had more mental health problems than any other group in society.

<sup>43</sup> Looked After Children. JSNA.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Looked%20after%20children%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-32039.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Looked%20after%20children%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32039.pdf#False)

<sup>44</sup> CBC Looked After Children Placement Strategy, 2013.

- c) People who sleep rough are thirty five times more likely to commit suicide than the general population. In one study 43% of rough sleepers had attempted suicide and 25% had tried more than once.
  - d) The prevalence of serious mental illness (including major depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) is reported as being present in at least 25-30% of street homeless and those in direct access hostels.
  - e) In hostels and B&Bs the incidence of mental health problems is higher: eight times higher in hostels and 11 times higher in B&B accommodation compared to the general population.<sup>45</sup>
- 10.5.4 A national Homeless Health Audit in 2014 found that the proportion of homeless people with diagnosed mental health problems (45%) is nearly double that of the general population (around 25%). In addition, 12% of participants diagnosed with mental health issues also reported drug and alcohol issues. This 'dual diagnosis' often restricts homeless people from accessing support, as services are unable or unwilling to provide support around mental health while still using drugs or alcohol.<sup>46</sup>
- 10.5.5 In 2012 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire identified unmet health needs and service gaps and made recommendations for improvement. These recommendations included better links between Women's Refuges and mental health teams, a need to further explore the area of homelessness and those who have a dual diagnosis and complex mental health issues. The report recognised that there was no health input available to support hostel staff in complex health and homeless cases to reduce rough sleeping, prevent mental health crisis and reduce hospital admissions.
- 10.5.6 Young people aged under 25 years of age present a particular challenge as they report high levels of mental ill health and substance misuse. There is an acknowledged high overlap with care leaving services and youth offending teams. On their part, accommodation providers report difficulties in obtaining appropriate health services for this group as they fall into the transition between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult services. Additional difficulties can arise because of the difference in transition points with social care, education and health. The situation is further complicated by the co-existence of mental health and substance misuse issues which falls outside the remit of generic services.<sup>47</sup>
- 10.5.7 The MPS needs analysis suggests that there are gaps in provision of housing related support services for this group, in particular the availability of specialist Accommodation Based Support for this client group. Floating support services provided by Bromford Support and funded by the council, are available to people with mental health problems, and are felt to be doing a good job of supporting people. However, needs analysis suggests that increased capacity would support earlier intervention.

---

<sup>45</sup> Homelessness and Health in the Central Bedfordshire Council Area: A health needs assessment report, NHS Bedfordshire 2009.

<sup>46</sup> The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/The%20unhealthy%20state%20of%20homelessness%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Understanding Homelessness and Mental Health, Communities and Local Government and the CSIP Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

[http://www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Briefings/Briefing24\\_Homelssness.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Briefings/Briefing24_Homelssness.pdf)

10.5.8 Table 7 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
CHUMS	This is a short term early intervention emotional wellbeing service provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for 0-18 year olds.
Mental health service for Looked After Children	Specialist CAMHS for looked after children for earlier intervention.
SEPT mental health services	SEPT are contracted by Central Bedfordshire to provide mental health services in the area.
Bedfordshire and Luton Mind	Mind provides mental health, well being and social care services across Bedfordshire in partnership with other local service providers and mental health service users.
Rethink	Services are available to help everyone affected by severe mental illness recover a better quality of life.
Empowa	Provides specialist support for people with mental health problems.

**Table 7: Services and support available for homeless people with mental health issues**

## 10.6 People with alcohol and substance misuse problems

- 10.6.1 None of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need categories of either 'drug dependency' or alcohol dependency'. Nevertheless alcohol and substance misuse is relatively high amongst the homeless population.
- 10.6.2 In 2018, 10,106 18-64 year olds in Central Bedfordshire are predicted to have an alcohol problem, men significantly more so (72%) than women.<sup>48</sup> In Bedfordshire, the proportion of adults in structured drug treatment is 3.54 adults per 1,000 population aged 18-74<sup>49</sup>. The impact of alcohol misuse is widespread encompassing alcohol related harm and injuries as well as the social impacts of crime and violence, loss of work place activity and teenage pregnancy.

<sup>48</sup> Alcohol – (Adult, Older People and Young People), JSNA

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Alcohol%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-31890.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Alcohol%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-31890.pdf#False)

<sup>49</sup> Drug misuse, JSNA. [http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Drug%20misuse%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-31891.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Drug%20misuse%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-31891.pdf#False)

- 10.6.3 National research has shown:
- a) Two thirds of homeless people cite drug or alcohol use as a reason for first becoming homeless and those who use drugs are seven times more likely to be homeless than the general population<sup>50</sup>
  - b) Around a third of the homeless people who took part in a study reported high use of drugs and alcohol. While levels of substance use can vary widely depending on an individual's circumstances, this figure corresponds to findings from previous research which paints a similar picture of the prevalence of substance use among those using homelessness services.<sup>51</sup>
  - c) 39% of audit participants said they take drugs or are recovering from a drug problem, and 36% had taken drugs in the month before completing the audit. By comparison, only 5% of the general public took drugs in the past month. Cannabis appears to be the most commonly used drug by those experiencing homelessness. However, a quarter reported taking heroin and prescription drugs not prescribed for them.<sup>52</sup>
  - d) 27 per cent of homeless people surveyed reported having or recovering from an alcohol problem<sup>53</sup>.
- 10.6.4 The 2012 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment report on Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire identified the following as unmet health needs and service gaps:
- No protocols for the detox of homeless people.
  - The seven substance misuse recommendations in Homeless Standards of Care have not been adopted.
  - Support for homeless people with alcohol misuse problems is scarce. Alcohol services have poor uptake from females, elderly, those living in rural areas and black and minority ethnic groups.
- 10.6.5 Research to develop the housing support services Market Position Statement (MPS) considered the needs of a sub-group of people with Alcohol and Substance Misuse problems; those engaged with treatment services.
- 10.6.6 At present, the local drug treatment service provides floating housing support to help service users find and maintain suitable accommodation. However, there is no specialist Accommodation Based Support for people with Substance Misuse difficulties.
- 10.6.7 Table 8 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Plan B	Plan B is a service run by the CAN Partnership that offers a range of support, information and advice to young people aged between 5 and 18 who use drugs and/or alcohol and also supports young people affected by someone else's use.

<sup>50</sup> Homelessness amongst problem drug users: prevalence, risk factors and trigger events', Health and Social Care in the Community, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<sup>52</sup> The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

<sup>53</sup> The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health audit results 2014, Homeless Link 2014

Addaction – Leighton Buzzard	Offers drug and alcohol outreach services for adults, young people and families.
The CAN Partnership	The CAN Partnership provides an integrated drug and alcohol service for Bedfordshire. The service provides access to a full range of medical, psychological and social options. This supports service users throughout their treatment journey with an emphasis on the individuals' recovery from drug and alcohol misuse.
Community Alcohol Liaison Service (CALs)	The service offers advice and support to people experiencing problems with alcohol in the community.
Drug Intervention Programme	The Programme is run by Westminster Drug Project and provides support for people who come through the criminal justice system and are experiencing problems with drugs and/or alcohol.
Enhanced Care Service	The service is provided by SEPT and supports clients with complex needs which include problematic drug and alcohol use, with high social care needs. The team provides outreach support to clients across Bedfordshire and they carry out Community Care assessments for clients requiring dedicated drug and alcohol detoxification and residential rehabilitation.
Community Drug and Alcohol Service (CDAS)	SEPT provides substance dependency treatment services via their CDAS teams.

**Table 8: Services and support available for homeless people with drug and alcohol misuse issues**

## 10.7 Offenders and ex-offenders

- 10.7.1 Offenders are typically vulnerable adults with health, social care and educational needs, and face many challenges in order to take care of themselves. For example, upon release, the offender may have no accommodation and/or, employment and is expected to return to civilian life and re-settle. There may be issues of being accepted back into the community.<sup>54</sup>
- 10.7.2 Many offenders suffer from an excessive burden of health, and in particular this group have higher rates of mental health problems, suicide, drug and alcohol misuse and learning disabilities. Problems of social exclusion, family relationships, truancy, exclusion from school, unemployment, and poor or no housing are all facets of a complex picture of social determinants throughout the life course which contribute both to offender and offending behaviour<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Offenders in the Community, Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

[http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Offenders%20-%20community%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-32237.pdf](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Offenders%20-%20community%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32237.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> NHS Bedfordshire Health Needs Assessment 2008

- 10.7.3 Ex-offenders have difficulties finding housing once released from prison. 37% nationally have stated they needed help finding a place to live once released.<sup>56</sup>
- 10.7.4 The Bedfordshire Probation Trust monitors the proportion of offenders living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence. In 2013-14 the proportion was 88%, which exceeded the target of 80%.<sup>57</sup>
- 10.7.5 The Bedfordshire Probation Trust reported a caseload across Bedfordshire of 2,437 as of 31 March 2014. This was made up of 1,120 orders, 948 pre-release licences and 369 post-release licences. Compared to 31 March 2013, there was a 1% increase in all cases but with a 20% decrease in post-release licences<sup>58</sup>.
- 10.7.6 None of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'been in custody/on remand'.
- 10.7.7 Research to develop the housing support services Market Position Statement found that housing support elements of the Integrated Offender Management Programme (prolific offenders) seem well aligned with the needs of that group. However, the research did not take into account the needs of non-prolific offenders.
- 10.7.8 Table 9 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Langley House Trust	The charitable organisation supports offenders once released from prison providing resettlement accommodation and support around health and social care needs for offenders with mental health or personality disorders, substance misuse, learning disabilities, and behaviour problems. The projects are based in Bedford and Luton.
Bedfordshire Integrated Offender Management Team and Probation Services	Support offenders leaving Prison.
Community Resettlement Support Project	This project works with offenders from prison released into the community. The voluntary organisation runs a befriending service with offenders both in Prison and in the community.
Mayday Trust	Provision of ten units of supported accommodation as part of the Integrated Offender Management Project. The service aims to reduce and prevent offenders experiencing

<sup>56</sup> Offenders in the Community, Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

<sup>57</sup> 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts, Bedfordshire Probation Trust.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/331085/HC59\\_Bedfordshire\\_AR\\_A\\_2013-14\\_web\\_.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331085/HC59_Bedfordshire_AR_A_2013-14_web_.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> 2013-14 Annual Report and Accounts, Bedfordshire Probation Trust.

homelessness and provide a stable home at the crucial point of need as a first step towards wider outcomes-- including training, employment, drugs and alcohol control - using a combination of Integrated Management Partnership resources and resources from Mayday Trust.

**Table 9: Services and support available for homeless people that are offenders or ex-offenders**

## 10.8 People suffering from domestic violence

- 10.8.1 Men, women and children who experience domestic violence often face becoming homeless in order to keep themselves safe from their abuser. Research indicates that in up to 40% of cases, domestic violence is the main cause or a contributing factor towards women becoming homeless. 90% of young people leave home because of family conflict, including witnessing domestic violence or being a victim of physical or sexual abuse<sup>59</sup>.
- 10.8.2 Women who have experienced domestic violence remain at risk of homelessness long after the relationship has ended, for example, due to having to move on if they are found or because the long-term impact of abuse on their emotional and psychological well-being means they find it difficult to maintain a tenancy<sup>60</sup>.
- 10.8.3 Three of the households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 in Central Bedfordshire were given the need category of 'domestic violence'. 14 (11%) households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need gave the violent breakdown of a relationship as the main reason for loss of their last settled home in 2013-14. 12 applicants sited the violent relationship breakdown involving a partner and two sited the violent relationship breakdown involving associated persons.
- 10.8.4 In 2013-14 there were 2,699 reported domestic abuse incidents in Central Bedfordshire which represented 23% of all recorded crime. Between April 2012 and August 2013, 81% of all Central Bedfordshire domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, the victim was female, with the most prevalent age group between 21-25 years (18% of all victims), followed by 26-30 years (16%) and 36-40 years (15%). This age pattern is also repeated for male victims with 14% of all male victims falling in the 21-25 years bracket.<sup>61</sup>
- 10.8.5 Two refuges are run by Stonham in Central Bedfordshire and between January 2011 and 2012, 61 female victims of domestic abuse were helped at the refuges. Six had mental health issues, four had substance misuse problems and five had alcohol related needs.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Domestic violence and housing, Against Violence and Abuse, 2011  
<http://www.avaproject.org.uk/media/62315/idva%20policy%20briefing%20march.pdf>

<sup>60</sup>Domestic violence and housing, Against Violence and Abuse, 2011

<sup>61</sup> Domestic Abuse, JSNA. [http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Domestic%20Abuse%20-%20JSNA\\_tcm6-32035.pdf#False](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/Images/Domestic%20Abuse%20-%20JSNA_tcm6-32035.pdf#False)

<sup>62</sup> Homeless People in Central Bedfordshire, JSNA

10.8.6 Table 10 sets out the services and support identified as available for this group locally.

Provider/ Service	Description
Stonham North and South Central Bedfordshire Refuge	The refuges reduce the impact of homelessness and social disadvantage by providing both specialist housing with care and support to women and children fleeing domestic violence. Both refuges consist of furnished self contained flats. Staff provide advice, support and information services to encourage clients to live independently.
Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	MARAC is a meeting where agencies talk about the risk of serious harm to people experiencing domestic abuse in their area, and make safety plans to support those most at risk. The aim is to increase the safety and well-being of the adults and their children involved, and to reduce the risk of them becoming repeat victims.
Sanctuary scheme	The scheme provides security measures to allow the survivor to remain in their home where they choose to do so, where safety can be guaranteed and the violent partner no longer lives within the home. The service is available across tenures and provides additional security to main entrance doors to the accommodation and locks to any vulnerable windows. Wherever possible safe rooms are provided.
Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA)	This IDVA service aims to deliver support that has not previously been available to victims of domestic violence who wish to press charges against their abuser. These workers provide specialist support throughout this process and will also be able to access other services depending on what the person wants or needs. They possess specialist knowledge of both criminal and civil courts and will be able to advise on a range of associated issues.

**Table 10: Services and support available for homeless people that are survivors of domestic abuse**

## 11. Homelessness prevention

### 11.1 Summary

- 11.1.1 Homelessness can have significant negative consequences on a person or family including health, education and employment. Enabling people to stay in their existing accommodation or find a suitably alternative home and avoiding the need for a formal homelessness assessment is beneficial both to those threatened with homelessness and agencies that could potentially support them.
- 11.1.2 Preventing someone from becoming homeless is not just about helping them to remain in their home or finding another but it is also about enabling access to family support, mediation, legal advice, education or training, benefits, debt advice and substance misuse support.
- 11.1.3 Central Bedfordshire places emphasis on early intervention and prevention initiatives to tackle homelessness in partnership with registered social landlords, the voluntary and community and private sector services.

### 11.2 Homelessness Prevention Grant

- 11.2.1 Local authorities are encouraged to use their Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation to support the development and enhancement of front line housing services to ensure the provision of high quality services for anyone homeless, threatened with homelessness, or rough sleeping in the local area.
- 11.2.2 Central Bedfordshire Housing Service has developed a draft expenditure plan for the Homelessness Prevention Grant, three of the key components included are detailed below.
- 11.2.3 A contribution to posts that directly contribute to the prevention of homelessness in Central Bedfordshire. It is planned that a proportion of the Senior Options Officer post will be focused on increasing prevention options, in addition to a dedicated Options Officer role. Also, some technical support assistance will be required to manage landlord accounts and help tenants sustain their tenancies. This approach will underpin the Council's strategy to promote sustainable tenancies, which is not only beneficial for the household but reduces the demand from repeat approaches.
- 11.2.4 Prevention funding to enable the establishment of an additional No Second Night Out (NSNO) facility in 2013-14. This use of funding has been approved by Homeless Link. The NSNO Action Group was re-established during the end of 2013 with a view to improving pathways for rough sleepers. Whilst this work is ongoing, it is likely that a proportion of homelessness prevention grant funding will be required for certain initiatives.
- 11.2.5 Client demand for the Let's Rent scheme is (see further details of the scheme below) growing with a current waiting list of around 60 cases across Central Bedfordshire. Expenditure on private rented sector incentives is anticipated to grow further in 2014/15. The average incentive per tenancy arranged is around £800 but this will vary between property types and market areas. Work is underway to develop relationships with letting agents in the north of

Central Bedfordshire and it is expected that incentives for properties in the north will be higher due primarily to higher rents.

### **11.3 Let's Rent Scheme**

- 11.3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Let's Rent scheme is aimed at people who are either threatened with homelessness or in need of housing. The service has been developed by the Council in partnership with local landlords, licensed letting agents, the Council's Housing Benefit Service and local floating support services. It allows families or individuals to have a choice of good quality, well managed, private sector accommodation in the local area, which enables local people to make important decisions in relation to employment, education, health services and family support networks.
- 11.3.2 There are three main scenarios where the Let's Rent scheme can provide a cost effective solution in relation to homelessness prevention:
- Where the Council has a statutory duty to re-house an applicant in priority need. This is where the Council can discharge its homelessness duty into to the private rented sector.
  - Where the Council have accepted that someone is homeless but either intentionally so or where the applicant is not in priority need. The Government encourages local authorities to take steps to relieve homelessness for these cases. These steps could include arrangement of a private sector letting.
  - Where the Council has prevented homelessness. This activity is strongly encouraged by Government as it both reduces statutory duty cases and cases where homelessness is relieved. Included in the options for homelessness prevention is the arrangement of a private sector tenancy for the applicants concerned.
- 11.3.3 The strategic vision is to use the Let's Rent scheme to maximise the use of private properties in the local area, including encouraging renovation and change of tenure, in order to provide more options for people in housing need to find suitable accommodation that meets their needs. In this context, the most cost effective use of Let's Rent would be to increase access to the private rented sector where it results in reducing the need for temporary accommodation.
- 11.3.4 Let's Rent will also be used to bring empty homes up to standard on the proviso that CBC holds first nomination rights and offers the resultant vacancies to our homeless applicants. The rents will remain at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates. This is considered as a way of influencing landlords to keep the rents low by providing grants and deposits.
- 11.3.5 With a rising trend in homelessness decisions and statutory acceptances there is likely to be an increased demand for temporary and permanent move-on accommodation. The costs per night per person for temporary accommodation is approximately £40. Therefore there is a greater need for the Let's Rent Scheme to facilitate the supply of good quality private rental properties as this will reduce the use of TA costs mainly through reducing the average time spent in TA.

## 11.4 Temporary Accommodation

- 11.4.1 The majority of the Council's Temporary Accommodation (TA) is provided through day time staffed hostels at Bedford Court, Houghton Regis and Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard and a range of self contained short term lettings through the Council and Aragon Housing Association.
- 11.4.2 The overall increase in homeless acceptances has resulted in a similar trend for temporary accommodation use (as illustrated earlier in this review). The Council currently has use of 39 TA units. Demand in excess of this supply leads to an overspill in to B&B accommodation.
- Hostels units
    - Bedford Court, Houghton Regis – up to 20 units
    - Hockliffe Street, Leighton Buzzard - six units
  - Scattered properties:
    - Five units owned by CBC in Houghton Regis within various properties ranging from a one bedroom flat to a three bedroom house.
    - Seven units in three and four bed houses owned by CBC in Dunstable.
    - Three two and three bed houses owned by Aragon Housing Association in Sandy, Shefford and Biggleswade.

## 11.5 Emergency provision

- 11.5.1 Leighton Linslade Homeless Service (LLHS) act as the main local provider of No Second Night Out homeless accommodation in Central Bedfordshire and have facilities for emergency accommodation during periods of cold weather. LLHS are primarily established to tackle homelessness issues in the Leighton Linslade area but in times of severe cold weather, may be able to help on a wider area basis.
- 11.5.2 Bedfordshire Housing Link (BHL) has a small level of emergency provision in the Sandy area available during severe cold weather.
- 11.5.3 NOAH Enterprise operates an outreach service under No Second Night Out. It is possible that under a severe weather emergency the Council will work with NOAH to identify rough sleepers that they are aware of and potentially mobilise those at risk to emergency accommodation.

## 11.6 Floating support

- 11.6.1 Within Central Bedfordshire, Bromford has been commissioned to provide a floating support service for local people to access advice and guidance in order to overcome difficulties and remain in their home. Support to maintain accommodation, manage tenancies and prevent eviction is available for anyone aged 16 and over, that:

- a) Are at risk of losing their home and becoming homeless
- b) Need advice and guidance when claiming welfare or housing benefits
- c) Need help to reduce debt, budget finances and manage bills
- d) Are looking to find employment, education or training
- e) Need support to tackle physical/mental health, drug and alcohol problems
- f) Need to move out of temporary accommodation and find a secure and affordable home
- g) Leave supported housing or custody to move into independent living

11.6.2 The Mayday Trust also provides resettlement and floating support for their Supported Housing clients who have moved on to independent accommodation.

## **11.7 Homelessness Supported Housing**

- 11.7.1 Signposts (Dunstable) provides residential and supportive services for 33 clients across three sites in Central Bedfordshire. Their client group is young single homeless people aged between 16 and 25 years old. Their aim is to ensure clients reach their own maximum potential in order to live and develop in the community.
- 11.7.2 Some clients that Signposts work with have complex needs which could include mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and offending. The service offers a 24 hour service to support young people in their steps towards independent living and gaining key life skills. This includes their Waking night team who offer that continuum of support and safety throughout the night, a night-time floating service across all Signposts projects and daytime programmes. These programme include activities that enable young people to access education/higher education, employment or volunteering.
- 11.7.3 Holland House in Houghton Regis provides accommodation and independent services to eight young people. These clients will have worked towards reintegration back into the community and Holland House is a bridging point between the end of their stay and securing their own accommodation or any other major life change they wish to make.
- 11.7.4 The Mayday Trust operates a 36-bedroom scheme in Leighton Buzzard catering for a mixed client group. Referrals include care leavers, ex-offenders, victims of alcohol/substance abuse and domestic violence, moderate mental health referrals and those with moderate learning difficulties.
- 11.7.5 The service provides long term (up to two years) housing and support services to clients including provision of individually tailored support, aimed at achieving positive outcomes for clients in terms of their independence, ability to maintain their own home or tenancy, confidence levels and skills to achieve education, training or employment.
- 11.7.6 Bedfordshire Housing Link, Sandy offers accommodation to up to 17 homeless people aged 16-65 and supports single homeless people to work towards independent living within various communities across Central Bedfordshire.

11.7.7 Aragon Women's Refuge South and North Central Bedfordshire are run by Stonham. The refuges take women, with or without children, fleeing domestic violence. Clients are supported to build the skills for independent living and are signposted to other agencies as appropriate to their needs. There are ten self-contained flats in South and North Central Bedfordshire.

## **11.8 Other services**

11.8.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Homelessness and Mediation Service (HAMS) is for young people aged 14-18 years old at risk of homelessness. The service offers housing advice and support, signposting to supporting organisations such as hostels and advice agencies and a mediation programme to help resolve problems at home.

11.8.2 Local Welfare Provision is an emergency funding service for eligible residents in crisis and provides larger payments or goods to help vulnerable people to live as independent a life as possible in the community. This includes resettlement following a period in care/prison or other institution or to ease exceptional pressures on families such as following the breakdown of a relationship or a disaster.

11.8.3 NOAH Enterprise runs 'The Furniture Store' as a social enterprise. The Luton-based store sells low cost new and donated second hand furniture and white goods.

11.8.4 Preen Furniture Services offers low cost household items including appliances, clothing, furniture, carpets, electrical, bedding, kitchen ware and curtains.

## **12. Engagement activity**

12.1 A draft of the review was circulated to more than 170 stakeholders in September 2014 to give partners and colleagues the opportunity to comment on the data presented.

12.2 A survey was also sent to stakeholders and two engagement events were held to gather views on the effectiveness of homelessness services in Central Bedfordshire. The engagement events involved external stakeholders such as accommodation based supported housing providers and advice services and Central Bedfordshire Council colleagues from a range of services including Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Housing Services.

12.3 The aim of the engagement events was to find out what colleagues and partners felt was working, not working or missing from the current homelessness service provision in Central Bedfordshire within the themes of homelessness prevention, intervention and sustainment. The 30 delegates that attended were also asked to identify their priorities for the development of homelessness services over the next five years. Commissioning

colleagues attended the events to gather views on current supported housing provision and to gain better insight in to future needs.

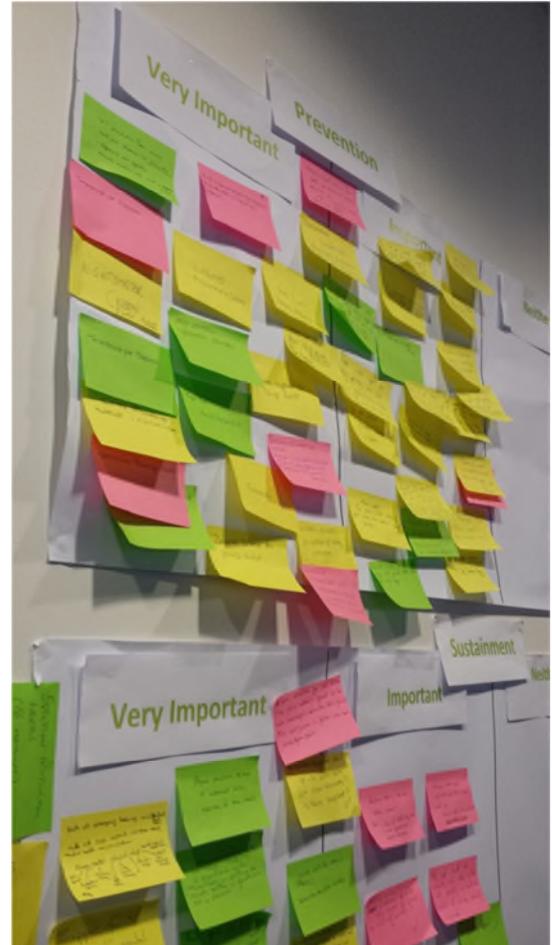
- 12.4 Feedback via table discussions and notes on the wall charts identified that the current support services provided via Personal Advisors, Bromford Support and Key Workers is a very important area that works well, however there is not enough of this support available to people. Cross service networking also works well when the opportunity is provided however there was consistent feedback that there is no formal process to enable this approach.

- 12.5 Communications between CBC services such as Housing and Children's Services and Housing and Adult Social Care were highlighted as improving. The mediation service within Children's Services was also praised, but there was concern over future funding for this service.

- 12.6 It was highlighted through discussions that information sharing within Central Bedfordshire Council could be improved to ensure that people were housed appropriately. Another consistent message was that the information provision within Central Bedfordshire Council with regard to service providers was out of date and could lead to people "falling out of the system". Stakeholders also identified the lack of communication between Central Bedfordshire Council and other Homelessness Support services as an issue.

- 12.7 A number of delegates raised concerns over hostels being available to a wide age range which could put young people at risk, especially when residing in the same hostel as ex-offenders. Housing vulnerable people in Bed and Breakfast accommodation was also raised as a concern.

- 12.8 The eviction protocol which ensures that housing providers adopt the same tolerance level to reduce eviction rates had mixed reviews. Many housing providers felt that this worked but many CBC colleagues felt that the number of breaches required for an eviction could be accumulated too quickly and could lead to eviction in one day. CBC colleagues felt that there should be



more emphasis on understanding why the client was behaving in a particular way rather than applying a series of sanctions.

- 12.9 A gap identified throughout the event by both CBC colleagues and external partners is the lack of emergency accommodation to assist homeless people. A number of people also suggested that practical educational support would be beneficial i.e. life skills including budgeting information and advice, cooking etc. across all age groups to support people to maintain a tenancy.
- 12.10 The need for services to be person-centred was raised. This ranged from case notes to be passed for better informed referrals and providing more personalised services that considered the individual and their personal needs rather than just their need to have a roof over their head.
- 12.11 The availability of suitable one and two bedroom properties was highlighted as an issue that impacted on homelessness.
- 12.12 A summary of the engagement event's findings was produced and made available as part of the consultation on the draft Homelessness Strategy.

## 13 Conclusion

- 13.1 Since Central Bedfordshire Council's first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2010 there have been many changes affecting local residents such as the welfare reforms and continuing economic challenges. This and other factors have led to an increase in demand for housing options and advice services, housing register applications, homelessness declarations and a substantial increase in the use of temporary accommodation. However service improvements and the early intervention and prevention agenda has led to a reduction in people approaching the Council as homeless and not being eligible under the homelessness duty. This indicates that people approaching the Council have a more realistic view of whether they can be rehoused through the homelessness route.
- 13.2 The data presented in the review has led to the identification of priority household types and priority groups. Those at most risk of homelessness or who are disproportionately affected are:
- Families with children
  - Single homeless
  - Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)
- 13.3 Characteristics that increase the likelihood of homelessness have been identified and analysed. These characteristics are:
- a) People with mental health difficulties
  - b) People with alcohol and substance misuse problems
  - c) Offenders and ex-offenders
  - d) People suffering from domestic violence
- 13.4 The review also identified opportunities that have arisen or been created since the development of the last Strategy. This includes the introduction of the power to discharge the homelessness duty to the private sector without

the applicant's consent, which the Council is anticipated to put in to use in 2014.

- 13.5 These opportunities and the identification of key challenges for those impacted by homelessness and their service providers will inform the development of the Council's second Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020. Views from colleagues and partners were sought to ensure that the review provided a robust evidence base to enable the development of an effective strategy.



**A great place to live and work**

**Contact us...**

Joanne Bellamy, Policy and Performance Officer:  
by telephone: 0300 300 5691  
by email: [joanne.bellamy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.bellamy@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
on the web: [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)  
Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Watling House,  
High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1LF