

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOUSING
STRATEGY
2018-23**

DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

Housing Strategy 2018-23

This Housing Strategy is a framework for how we will address the challenges that face us, and is designed to be used to inform officers and members about the strategy for Housing Services, and to give our partners a clear sense of our approach, our priorities and our ways of working.

The Council Plan 2018-21: policy priorities

This Strategy sets out a single strategy for Housing Services and has been prepared with regard to the Council's policy principles and overall visions. The Council has to take decisions about the basis on which services will be delivered within the resources available, taking account of a number of factors such as reduced budget allocation, changing demographics, increasing demand, new national legislation and policy direction.

The following four policy principles support our decision making:

Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention

- People who are subject to or at risk of harm
- People who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- People who are financially excluded
- People whose circumstances make them vulnerable

Creating economic prosperity

Promoting equality of opportunity through targeted intervention

- Tackling health inequalities
- Meeting the skills gap
- Improving access to job opportunities
- Tackling fuel poverty
- Improving education and training opportunities
- Improving access to affordable housing
- Financial and digital inclusion

Developing strong and healthy communities

- Providing mainstream services that are available where needed
- Providing preventive services that are available where needed

OUR VISION

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT

...is of an economically prosperous borough that is dynamic, exciting and inviting with infrastructure to support the development of business start-ups, business growth, new jobs and skills.

BIG PLANS FOR AN OUTSTANDING BOROUGH

ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING

...is to make the borough a better place to live and a more attractive place to do business with clean streets, carefully tended parks and open spaces, affordable and desirable housing.

BIG PLANS FOR OUR PLACES AND OPEN SPACES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

...is to make the borough a place where levels of crime and fear of crime are low and people feel safe and secure.

BIG PLANS FOR KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

.....is of a great place to grow up, where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to be the best they can be in life.

BIG PLANS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF OUR BOROUGH

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

...is for a place where people are supported to be healthy.

BIG PLANS FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR PEOPLE

STRONG COMMUNITIES

...is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant.

BIG PLANS FOR HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES PROSPER

ADULTS

...is that people can get the right level and type of support at the right time to help, prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.

BIG PLANS FOR THE CARE WE PROVIDE

ARTS, CULTURE AND LEISURE

...is of a borough where our heritage, festivals, cultural activities and leisure facilities help us attract visitors and investment, and where sport and active leisure opportunities help people sustain healthier lifestyles.

BIG PLANS FOR GREAT EXPERIENCES

OUR COUNCIL

...is of a Council that prides itself on being open, honest and fair. On leading by example. On having big plans and the determination to see them through. We're facing difficult financial challenges and we can't do all we used to do so we're facing some tough decisions. Throughout this we'll stay focused on delivering genuine value for money, on setting the highest standards of public service, on communicating clearly and regularly with the community we serve and on being challenging, innovative and well organized.

AMBITIOUS, EFFECTIVE AND PROUD TO SERVE

ECONOMIC GROWTH PLAN 2017-23: PRIORITIES

Business	Place	People
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enterprise• Productivity• Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Employment Locations• Housing• Town Centres• Transport and Infrastructure• Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills• Employment• Inequality, Deprivation, and Poverty

OUR OBJECTIVES

We have developed three strategic objectives for our Housing Strategy based the priority issues we need to focus on which are outlined in this strategy. We will organise our activity and our work programmes around these priorities, which form the basis of our discussions with partners on priorities and directly support the Council Plan policy principles and Economic Growth Plan priorities.

Objective 1: Supporting Housing Growth and Increasing Choice

Objective 2: Stronger Communities

Objective 3: Meeting Housing Needs and Supporting Vulnerable People

NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

At a national level the Government is introducing a raft of new legislation to positively intervene in the delivery of housing and to reform the welfare system. The most significant legislative changes that influence our policies and plans to meet the needs of our local housing market include the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Welfare reform and Work Act 2016 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The NPPF was first introduced in 2012 and brought together a range of planning policy and guidance into one single document. The NPPF sets out national planning policies for England and how these should be applied locally and is a material consideration when the Council determines planning applications. A fundamental element of the NPPF is to boost the supply of housing and ensure that housing delivery meets local housing needs and demands. The Government recently consulted on a number of revisions to the NPPF which include some policies relating to housing. The Council will consider the implication of the finalised revised NPPF to ensure that our key plans and strategies align with national policy.

At a regional level this strategy has been developed in the context of the role of the Tees Valley Combined Authority, Local Enterprise Partnership and Northern Powerhouse which aim to boost the regional economy. It is essential that Stockton-On-Tees continues to contribute towards economic growth ambitions in the Tees Valley by working closely with other Local Authorities, Homes England and other regional partners.

Locally, the Housing Strategy operates alongside the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-23, Economic Growth Plan 2017-20 and supports planning policies and priorities in the Council's emerging Local Plan.

The objectives, priorities and actions identified within this strategy have been developed giving due regard to other key national, regional and local policies and evidence from supporting documents as outlined in the table below:

National	Regional	Local	Other Supporting Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Housing Act 2004 •Homelessness Reduction Act 2016 •Housing and Planning Act 2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011 •Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 •National Planning Policy Framework 2012 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Care Act 2014 •English Housing Survey 2015-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 •Industrial Strategy 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tees Valley Combined Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Council Plan 2017 – 2020 •The Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) •Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012 – 2018 •Adult Market Position Statement •Homeless Reduction Strategy 2018-23 •Community Safety Plan 2017- 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Children’s Strategy 2017 •Joint Strategic Needs Assessment •Stockton-on-Tees Draft Local Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Economic Strategy 2017 – 2032 & Economic Growth Plan 2017 – 2020 •Stockton Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017-22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demographics •Local Economic Assessment •Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment •Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) 2016 •Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016 •Environmental and Infrastructure Capacity

HOUSING IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES

Stockton-On-Tees is a Borough of wide contrasts made up of a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. The Borough covers approximately 20,000 Hectares (equal to 200 square kilometres or 49.4 thousand football pitches). Larger, detached properties are more desirable and the pattern of house prices reflects the pattern of property types in the Borough; with the more rural areas to the West and South of the Borough and Ingleby Barwick having the most detached properties and the highest house prices.

According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2015), the Borough is ranked 88th most deprived out of the 326 Local Authorities in England. Whilst 28% of the population live within the top 20% of most deprived areas of England, 28% live in the 20% least deprived areas.

THE FACTS AND FIGURES

(to be displayed graphically)

- 194,000 people living in 84,000 dwellings (SBC data)
- Borough's population is projected to increase by 7% in 2030, then by a further 3% in 2039.
- Average House Price: £140,995 (ONS)
- Average income £26,445 (ONS)
- Average distance a Stockton commuter travels to work: 9.9 miles (*1)
- The Council Tax Bands with the largest growth in housing stock are Bands B and C and there has been a 12.4% rise in band F properties; with the stock growing by 260 between 2012 and 2017. (*1)
- 600 new homes required annually between 2017 and 2032 (*2)
- 240 new affordable homes required annually between 2017 and 2032 (*3)
- Ratio of House Price to Earnings: 5.33 (ONS)
- Projected Household Growth: 8,775 households (9,130 dwellings) over the period 2017-32 (*3)

*1. *Economic Growth Plan*

*2. *Objectively Assessed Need 2016*

*3. *Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016*

- 69% owner occupied, 14% private rented and 17% social rented.
- 7% dwellings in the private rented sector have Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazard.
- 3.1% of private rented dwellings in Stockton-On-Tees are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E.
- 591 empty properties were brought back into use of which 547 were long term empties, resulting in a net increase of 682 units of accommodation between 2012 – 18.
- 377 Houses in Multiple Occupation of which 46 are currently licensed

*(*BRE Stock Modelling Client Report July 2017*)

- The number of people across Stockton-On-Tees aged 65 or over is projected to increase by 42% between 2014 and 2030 (*1)
- In April 2018 4849 people from the Borough were on the Compass Choice Based Lettings housing register
- 64% people accessing homelessness services have drug and alcohol dependency issues (*3)
- 70% people accessing homelessness services have a mental health problem (*3)
- Over the last 5 years 10% of people presenting as homeless cited domestic abuse as the reason (*2)

*1. *Office for National Statistics*

*2. *SBC Data*

*3. *Health Needs Audit 2016*

CHALLENGES FOR OUR HOUSING MARKET

The Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA) undertaken in 2016 identifies that there is a need for 9,130 new dwellings over a 15 year period. The Council's emerging Local Plan will identify sites to meet this need. Whilst there is a requirement for new homes to meet our community needs and contribute to economic prosperity there is an equal need to address challenges within existing housing stock. In addition to providing new homes in the right locations the Council is also committed to improving the private rented sector; tackling empty homes and regenerating neighbourhoods that are suffering from housing market imbalances.

The Housing Strategy for Stockton-On-Tees comes at a time of significant change and reforms; we have had to think innovatively about how we continue to deliver quality services with fewer resources. A key impact of welfare reforms has seen some of our residents having less income to spend on housing, which has increased the need for affordable housing, especially for families who can no longer afford to buy or rent a home at market values. This problem is further exacerbated by a reduction in the number of new affordable homes being built and the mis-match of available housing stock to meet our residents' needs.

The Office for National Statistics (House Price Affordability in England and Wales) identifies the Median House price in the borough was £140,995 for the year ending September 2017 and the Median gross annual residence-based earnings are £26,445 for the year 2017. This gives an affordability ratio of 5.33 which is the highest since 2008 (least affordable) and higher than the other Tees Valley Authorities. However, this is lower (more affordable) than 87% of other Local Authorities in England and Wales.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

The Council recognises that while having statutory duties, we cannot deliver the housing quantity and quality we need in order to meet residents' needs and aspirations in isolation. We use a number of mechanisms to engage across all sectors and work in partnership with stakeholders both internally and externally as outlined below:

Internal Partnership Working	External Partnership Working
<p>Other Council Services and Teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Services• Adults and Public Health Services• Community Services• Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homes England• Tees Valley Combined Authority• Other Local Authorities• Registered Providers• Private Developers

- The NHS
- Prison and Probation Services
- Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Support Services
- VCSE groups and organisations

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OBJECTIVE 1: SUPPORTING HOUSING GROWTH & INCREASING CHOICE

Residents and those wanting to live in Stockton-On-Tees should have the opportunity to live in a decent home at a price they can afford in a place that they want to live and work. In order to support this it is critical that housing growth is balanced with good local services, infrastructure and high quality green and open spaces.

Good quality housing plays a fundamental role in supporting the delivery of care and support to older people, young people and vulnerable people (including but not limited to adults with learning disabilities, Gypsies and Travellers and those experiencing Homelessness), it is imperative that we ensure appropriate housing is provided to meet the needs of these groups. This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3.

We will work to deliver high-quality homes for our growing local population by influencing decisions affecting the location and quality of new build housing development and work in partnership with our housing provider partners. By taking this approach we aim to ensure a wider choice of each type, location and price of homes to meet residents' needs and aspirations, in particular the projected growth in the number of people who are beyond retirement age.

Where possible, we will intervene and work in partnership where there are locations that suffer from low demand housing and imbalance to re-model neighbourhoods through demolition, rebuild and refurbishment options to create sustainable communities where there is choice from a high quality housing offer.

What we need to focus on and why

Housing Delivery

Following the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008 there was a reduction in housebuilding both locally and nationally. In recent years the rate of house building has improved significantly within the borough. The Council continues to support delivery of new housing and the range of housing options available to our residents including bringing empty properties back into use.

Over the last 2 years more than 1600 new homes have been completed including more than 230 new affordable homes, many of them funded by Homes England (formerly the Homes and Communities Agency).

The emerging Stockton on Tees Local Plan contains the overarching spatial strategy for the borough. It is anticipated that the Local Plan will be adopted by the end of 2018. The Local Plan identifies the location type and number of new homes that need to be built across the borough to meet the needs of the current and future populations over the next 15 years (until 2032), and is supported by the SHMA 2016 which has identified a need for 9,130 (600 annually) between 2017 and 2032, including 3,600 new affordable homes (240 annually).

It will also give us the ability to guide planning decisions by establishing the framework for the sustainable economic growth of the Borough up to 2032. A fundamental part of the Local Plan is supporting the aspiration of delivering housing in the Regenerated River Tees Corridor, creating Sustainable Urban Extension at West Stockton and delivering Wynyard Sustainable Settlement.

The delivery of new housing play a key role in contributing to the economic growth of the borough, allowing local businesses and supply chains to benefit from development activity as well as bringing training and employment opportunities for local residents. The Council is committed to working with developers to maximise local targeted recruitment and training opportunities that are available to local people, especially on development schemes that area a direct result of the work that we do.

Investment

The Council takes a primary role in stimulating investment in housing and infrastructure to develop and diversify the housing offer in Stockton and to provide access to good quality schools, open spaces and local facilities.

Over recent years the Council has secured substantial inward investment via Homes England and we continue to have a positive relationship with them and the Tees Valley Combined Authority and work collaboratively with them to drive the delivery ambitions for new housing in the Borough.

The Tees Valley Combined Authority, Local Authorities and Homes England are working collectively to prepare a Tees Valley Housing Investment and Delivery Plan that will seek to identify and secure the necessary funding and investment to unlock and deliver housing sites across the Tees Valley.

At a national level the Council has been successful in securing £10million from the Governments Housing Infrastructure Fund which will be used to develop infrastructure like roads to help us continue to support the delivery of new housing.

Affordable Housing

Stockton needs more affordable housing in order to meet the housing needs of those who are priced out of the housing market. Affordable housing provides opportunities for people to access housing for both rent and home ownership where they are unable to do so in the open market. The delivery of new build affordable housing has generally been positive in the Borough over recent years with over 784 delivered in the 5-year period 2011/12 – 2016/17. However this scale of delivery has relied on our ability to work with Registered Housing Providers (RP's) on our large scale major housing regeneration schemes (specifically Hardwick and Mandale) and the Council's ability to identify and release suitable land.

The impacts of reduced Council land and asset availability are likely to have a significant impact on our ability to directly deliver new affordable units going forward. The delivery of new build affordable housing not only supports both our local community's needs, but also supports wider council agenda's such as adult social care. For example there have been a number of notable projects delivered which have provided housing for adults with Learning Disabilities, enabling these residents to live independently with support and alleviating pressures on Council budgets.

There continues to be an increasing demand for affordable housing across the borough. Current economic conditions coupled with welfare reforms have resulted in increased demand from young people, families, vulnerable people and older people. The SHMA 2016 identifies a need of 3635 affordable units for rent and affordable homeownership between 2017 and 2032. The SHMA also identifies that 70% of new affordable homes should be for rent and 30% should be for intermediate tenures (such as shared ownership or shared equity). Over recent years this split has been achievable and delivered on new housing sites.

The affordable housing sector is experiencing a period of significant change due to changes in national government policy and the financial viability of schemes. Despite this the Council and its local RP partners are committed to identifying creative ways to continue to deliver the level of affordable

housing in the right sizes and tenures and in the right locations to meet the needs of our residents. This includes exploring broader options for affordable homeownership products and bringing empty properties back into use to let at affordable rents.

Securing Affordable Housing on Private Sector Housing Sites

The Council currently relies on provisions set out in affordable housing policy in the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents to secure delivery and meet the borough's affordable housing need via Section 106 obligations. The Council's current requirement for affordable housing is 15% to be provided on all residential developments over 15 units or more or where sites are 0.5 hectares or more. This is under review through the emerging Local Plan which is proposing 20% on sites of 11 or more units. The Council's preference via this policy is the delivery of affordable housing on site. However on occasions, due to the nature of development or type of development and with robust evidence, the Council will negotiate a commuted sum in lieu of on-site delivery.

Section 106 Obligations

Implementation of the above policy has resulted in the delivery of a range of affordable units on private sector sites across the Borough, often in areas with high demand or limited (if any) existing affordable housing stock (in areas such as Yarm and Eaglescliffe).

In addition, a number of agreements have been signed to secure a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision. Whilst the Council actively continues to negotiate a number of further S106 agreements, site viability issues, timing and low scheme density numbers are making it increasingly difficult for the Council to meet its identified affordable housing need. Looking ahead this position is unlikely to improve.

Direct Commissioning of Affordable Housing

The Council has worked with a number of Registered Providers to bring forward a range of new build affordable housing on Council owned sites. A number of these schemes have been specifically targeted at meeting specific housing needs (which are key priorities for the Council) for example, older persons accommodation at Winford House in Billingham, independent living accommodation for adults with learning disabilities at Churchland Gardens in Norton and Willow Court in Hardwick and the recently completed Acorn House in Thornaby.

Funding of these schemes has been linked to the availability of Homes England grant funding, the Council's ability to secure other funding such as the Department of Health Care and Support Specialised Housing fund and the availability of council owned land (all of the above examples were developed on land previously owned by the Council).

Regeneration

Stockton-On-Tees has brought about an exciting transformation in facilities and opportunities for local people and has ambitions to continue this. Significant housing-led regeneration has taken place at Hardwick and Mandale, is on-going at West End Gardens and Norton Park and is proposed for the Victoria Estate. These areas were suffering from a spiral of socio-economic decline and the housing was classified as 'non sustainable' and therefore demolition was identified as the only viable regeneration option. Given the lack of national funding for large scale regeneration projects coupled with viability issues linked to brownfield redevelopment sites in the North East it is unlikely that there will be any further major demolition schemes in Stockton on Tees Borough over the life-time of this strategy.

To date on our key regeneration sites 2143 properties have been demolished and 1,375 new homes for private sale and rent and 539 for affordable rent have been built. Once all the schemes are

complete, 2,200 new homes will have been provided, which will have seen over £250m of public and private sector investment within the Borough.

In addition to regeneration on Council owned land a further focus of the Council’s regeneration aspirations is associated with the Regenerated River Tees Corridor (between A66 and Newport Bridge) in close proximity to Stockton Town Centre and the largely developed is the Vivo development at North Shore. Alongside this are sites which will contribute to the regeneration of the borough which include sites with planning consents (Navigation Way and Jubilee Gardens) and allocated sites within the Local Plan (Tees Marshalling Yard, Victoria Estate and Land off Grangefield Road).

What we are going to do and how we are going to do it

Our priorities and actions directly respond to the challenges outlined in this chapter and support the key priorities identified in the Council Plan 2018-21 and Economic Growth Plan 2017-20, and therefore provide a consistent thread through all our activity.

Priorities	Actions
Delivering the homes required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise use of council land via the Council’s Asset Review Group • Work with partners to deliver the sites identified in the Local Plan • Work with the TVCA and Homes England to unlock stalled sites and to speed up delivery of new homes to meet demand • Explore ways for the Council to influence and enable new homes for sale and rent • Explore the use of modern methods of construction and new technologies (including modular build) • Continue to support the regeneration of the Victoria Estate and appoint a Joint Venture partner and commence delivery of the Victoria regeneration site • Investigate the use of delivery vehicles that might allow the Council to finance the delivery of new homes • Develop masterplans and strategies to facilitate delivery and ensure the provision of appropriate community and transport infrastructure • New open market and affordable housing delivered at previously stalled housing sites (examples sites include Jubilee Gardens, formerly known as Queens Park North and West End Gardens). • Completion of an option appraisal to explore the potential and viability of a delivery vehicle/s to accelerate growth/housing opportunities on Council owned land.
Ensure the housing offer meets housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of new affordable delivered in the Borough through effective engagement with our Registered Provider partners and by maximising inward investment via the Homes England Affordable Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP). • Support the delivery of a broad range of affordable housing through the use of S106 contributions and other funding opportunities • Deliver accommodation for older people, young people and those with specialist housing needs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explore opportunities to use council owned assets to support the delivery of affordable homes • Encourage a broader range of housing in the private rented sector
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OBJECTIVE 2: STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Council’s vision is for communities that are diverse, cohesive, caring and vibrant. Good housing conditions play an important role in supporting the health, well-being and prosperity of our residents and helping this vision become a reality. Over recent years significant progress has been made in improving the life opportunities of Stockton’s residents, however pockets of poor quality housing, social exclusion and deprivation still exist. The Council and its partners are committed to tackling these issues and working with communities to improve housing standards and tackle social and economic exclusion, poor health and poverty.

What we need to focus on and why

Growth of the Private Rented Sector

The private rented housing sector has grown significantly in recent years at both a national and local level. At a borough wide level between the 2001 and 2011 census the percentage of households renting their home from a private landlord increased from 5.2% to 13.1%. However this increase was particularly stark in those wards where private rental properties were already a significant tenure:

Town Centre: increased from 15.1% to 25.5%

Parkfield and Oxbridge: increased from 18.6% to 31.1%

Mandale and Victoria: increased 12.3% to 24.8%

Nationally the private rental sector (using figures from the 2016/17 English House Conditions Survey) accounts for 20% of the total housing stock in England. With the DCLG highlighting areas are considered as having a “high proportion” of privately rented properties if they are above this national level.

Government Policy

The Government is keen to ensure that Local Authorities have the necessary tools to ensure a quality private rented sector in their locality (in terms of both housing condition and management) and can effectively tackle rogue landlords.

As a Council we aim to support good landlords who provide decent well maintained homes, whilst taking a proactive approach to tackling rogue and irresponsible landlords who knowingly rent out accommodation that is unlicensed, substandard or unsafe. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 (which received Royal Assent on 12th May 2016 and was enacted in October 2016) introduces a range of new powers which have been given to Local Authorities including a range of new measures aimed at tackling rogue landlords and improving standards in the private rented sector, which is welcomed by the Council. Local Authorities have been given powers to impose a Civil Penalty, to apply for Rent Repayment Orders, ban convicted landlords and property agents from operating as well as add their names to a national database of rogue landlords and agents.

Stockton Rental Standard

The Council recognises the importance of good quality private rented accommodation and we know that the majority of landlords (and letting agents) operating in the Borough are good landlords. Unfortunately a minority of landlords are either not aware of their obligations or have no intention of raising their property and management standards. To ensure that all private rented properties are of a high quality and are consistently well managed the Council has recently implemented the '**Stockton Rental Standard**', a quick and easy guide aimed at helping and supporting private rented landlords. Our intention is to build on the positive relationships we have with the majority of landlords, whilst at the same time making it very clear that the Council will not tolerate unsatisfactory property conditions and poor standards of management.

Our Approach to working with Private Sector Landlords

When the Council's Private Sector Housing Team receive a request for service from a tenant about poor housing conditions they try to work with landlords and seek to resolve issues informally in the first instance. The Council believes that this approach facilitates a swifter resolution to repairs/improvement issues when compared to the formal route.

This process gives landlords the opportunity to resolve matters and helps reduce the burden that can arise from having to take formal enforcement action. The formal route will be pursued if little or no progress has been made using the informal route.

If there is a history of non-compliance by a landlord or an owner or if the condition of the property presents a serious risk of harm or an imminent risk of serious harm to the health and safety to occupiers or visitors or matters are deemed to be an emergency then the Private Sector Housing Team may take formal enforcement action.

Targeted Action Areas

In order to support our local communities the Council is strengthening its approach to dealing with poor housing conditions and poor landlords in the Private Rented Sector. The Council is proposing to implement an area based, targeted intervention approach providing a visible, neighbourhood management presence. There are areas of our borough with high concentrations of low value, terraced housing (specifically the central Stockton and the Victoria area within the Mandale and Victoria ward in Thornaby) which due to falling housing demand are seeing an increasing number of properties being purchased for the private rental market. Unfortunately as rental values are lower in these areas, a number of these properties are occupied by either vulnerable households or those with limited housing choices who are often transient residents with chaotic lifestyles. As a result these local communities are often hotspots for crime, anti-social behaviour and experience high numbers of empty properties and high property turnovers.

Local Authorities have powers under the Housing Act 2004 to introduce selective licensing of privately rented homes in their area on the grounds of low housing demand and/or significant anti-social behaviour. Against the backdrop highlighted above it is proposed to implement Selective Licensing schemes within central Stockton and the Victoria area within the Mandale and Victoria ward in Thornaby. This approach provides the Council with the ability to identify designated areas were a locally based team, working with partner agencies and the local community can implement a targeted approach to improving standards.

Empty Homes

The effects on communities of empty properties can be negative and wide ranging and can be symptomatic of housing decline in areas where demand is low or market dynamics have changed. Homes can be empty for a variety of reasons such as someone moving into a care home, property inheritance, inability to sell, relationship breakdowns or the property being held in probate. However

the longer a property is empty the more of a problem it can become. Empty Homes often attract anti-social behaviour, vandalism and can be a cause of blight and unsightliness for neighbours.

The Council has a dedicated Empty Homes Team who work proactively with our partners and owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use. Our Empty Homes team provide informal advice, information and financial assistance to encourage reoccupation of empty properties. The added benefit of this is that it provides additional housing for homeless families and those on the housing register.

Where owners fail to engage with us we will look to take targeted enforcement action against them and the problematic empty property. The Council have been successful in securing Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) to return two long term problematic empty homes back in to use.

With support from our Registered Provider partners and with Homes England funding the Council has been successful in returning a number of empty homes back into use that have gone into the social sector. We will look to continue to support this trend, along with returning empty properties back into use in the private sector.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 will extend the scope of Mandatory House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing, due to come in to force in April 2018, will result in closer regulation of higher risk HMO properties in the borough. The council intends to facilitate this by offering advice, guidance and education to landlords and agents to enable them to effectively manage their properties and tenants and to become more professional.

Landlord Accreditation

The Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme recognises the positive contribution of the Private Rented Sector and extends the support we provide to accredited landlords in the provision of professionally managed high quality rental accommodation. Assisting landlords to achieve accreditation status by offering advice on statutory requirements, property maintenance and repairs.

This is part of the Council's ongoing commitment to working in close partnership with landlords, tenants, local landlord associations, the Police, Fire Brigade and other key private rented sector stakeholders to achieve a vibrant private rented sector that is professionally managed and offers decent homes.

Student Accommodation

Durham University recently moved their academic campus in Stockton back to Durham City and replace the facility with an international college. The impact of this change has been to reduce the student population of Stockton-On-Tees in the short term, however we are starting to see a growth in numbers of students under 18 years old moving into purpose built accommodation on campus. Whilst purpose built accommodation has driven up standards and provided greater choice for students, the impact on traditional student neighbourhoods and HMOs needs to be monitored as some areas may start to show signs of market decline.

Affordable Warmth

Fuel poverty is a persistent challenge that affects 12.3% of households (or 9907 households) in Stockton-On-Tees. Within the Tees Valley sub region, Stockton-On-Tees has had the lowest estimated level of fuel poverty consistently over recent years and is currently the second lowest figure in the North East Region, but it remains a persistent challenge to address against rising national fuel poverty levels.

The inability to keep a home warm is more than just a comfort issue – it has real and severe impacts on peoples’ health and well-being. In addition, trying to adequately heat an energy inefficient home results in considerable and unnecessary emissions, and can drain a family of money, often leading to fuel poverty.

It is our ambition that no-one in the borough suffer the blight of fuel poverty and be unable to keep warm in their homes, which is why through our multi agency Housing, Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership, we adopted a revised and strengthened Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan in January 2017.

Our intensive programme of improvement and work on affordable warmth has made good progress. In 2016 Newcastle University independently evaluated the health and economic benefits of our area based energy efficiency measures such as External Wall Insulation scheme to over 3500 properties, which demonstrated that significant reduction in energy consumption and cost for householders, by up to 32%, and have realised energy cost savings to Stockton-On-Tees householders of up to £6.2m since 2012. The report estimated health related quality of life savings of £2.6m since 2012.

Further evidence of our work to prioritise the poorest housing conditions and tackle fuel poverty is our work with 6 other North East Local Authorities to deliver a £1.2m programme of first time gas connections and central heating systems under the new Warm Homes Fund in 2018, with installations being delivered to properties with the lowest energy efficiency levels and lowest incomes.

Warm Homes Healthy People

Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) is a partnership project funded by Public Health to provide help, support and emergency interventions to some of the Borough’s most vulnerable residents at a time when it is most needed. One call to the Council’s Customer Contact Centre can provide help with:

- emergency heating
- Boiler servicing and repairs
- energy efficiency advice/support and practical help to switch tariff
- welfare benefits advice
- home handyperson service

Since its inception in 2012, 4,954 referrals have been processed and 7,253 specific interventions have been delivered to ensure that vulnerable people are kept warm in winter. A key element of the WHHP offer is income maximisation and since 2012 this service has identified and secured over £1,051,000 of previously unclaimed benefit entitlement being brought into the Borough.

Impact of welfare reforms

Benefit reforms pose a considerable risk to existing households renting in Stockton on Tees in both the private and social housing sectors. The combination of the Benefit ‘cap’, changes regarding under-occupation and changes in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) are likely to mean adjustment in the rental sectors. The longer term implications of Reform are as yet unknown, as available data is short term and incomplete; however, the longer term impact will be monitored by the council.

What we are going to do and how

Our priorities and actions directly respond to the challenges outlined in this chapter and support the key priorities identified in the Council Plan 2018-21 and Economic Growth Plan 2017-20, and therefore provide a consistent thread through all our activity.

Priority	Actions
Reduce the number of long term empty homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually bring 70 long-term empty residential properties brought back into use. • Support partner and property owners to bring empty homes back into use • Use target enforcement action where required • Offer advice and assistance to landlords and property owners as set out in the council's Stockton Rental Standard • Monitor the impact of purpose built student accommodation on empty homes in targeted areas
Implement an area based, targeted intervention approach in areas of housing decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully implement a targeted action approach to address the issues associated with older terraced housing in central Stockton and the Victoria area in Thornaby. • Use enforcement powers to ensure private rented properties are free from Category 1 hazards • Build on the positive relationships we have with the majority of landlords, whilst at the same time making it very clear that the Council will not tolerate unsatisfactory property conditions and poor standards of management • Introduce Selective Licensing Areas • Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
Improve health and well-being through continuing to raise housing standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to educate and advise landlords, owners and tenants • Establish the Rogue Landlord's database and implement Banning Orders and Civil Penalties • Implement the new definition of mandatory HMOs • Continue to work closely with health colleagues to improve residents' health • Support the aims and objectives of the Affordable Warmth Strategy • Monitor energy efficiency standards in the PRS

OBJECTIVE 3: MEETING HOUSING NEEDS AND SUPPORTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

People can be vulnerable for a variety of reasons including age or disability and poor housing conditions can detrimentally affect a person's ability to maintain their independence in their own home.

Who are our Vulnerable People?

- Older people
- Learning Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities
- Homeless
- Ex-offenders
- Young People
- Low income
- Migrants/refugees
- People with multiple needs
- Care Leavers
- Gypsy/traveller show people
- Domestic violence
- Unemployed
- Mental health
- Substance misuse

In considering our approach in supporting vulnerable people to access suitable accommodation, national and local policy drivers need to be taken into account including:

The Care Act 2014 - helps to improve people's independence and wellbeing. It makes clear that Local Authorities must provide or arrange services that help prevent people developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need ongoing care and support.

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Well-being Strategy 2012-2018 - the overarching plan to improve the health and wellbeing of children and adults in our borough and to reduce health inequalities.

Adult Social Care Strategy 2017-20 - acts as a single focus for improvement and change within Adult Social Care.

[Stockton-on-Tees Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#) - identifies and defines the wider health and wellbeing needs of the people of Stockton Borough. It brings together - in one place - information, statistics, data and analysis. It enables the widest spectrum of partners and organisations (whether public, private or VCSE) to have the intelligence they need to ensure health and social care strategies, commissioning and service delivery work together for better provision of services for areas of greatest need.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 - places new legal duties on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days will have access to meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.

Following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the Council has produced a separate **Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018-23** which sets out our approach to supporting vulnerable people and preventing homelessness, as well as detailing how we will work with partners to implement the new duties arising from the legislation.

More information about our approach and what actions we will take to prevent homelessness and support our vulnerable residents can be found in our Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018 -23.

What we need to focus on and why

Aging Population

An aging population presents a strategic challenge for the Council, it is important that we work with our partners and Registered Providers to ensure more housing choices are available to support the increasing needs of older people with a variety of housing needs. Demand for bungalows and extra care far outstrips supply so we need to work creatively to identify other options to meet the needs and aspirations of our aging population and to balance this with the need to provide larger family homes.

Housing for People with Disabilities

The Council recognises the importance of helping our residents to maintain their independence and quality of life in their own homes and communities. Along with our partners we deliver services to enable some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the borough to live independently in their own home.

The Council is committed to supporting people with learning disabilities, autism or complex needs to live as independently as possible and to enable them to have the same rights as everyone else. As people with learning disabilities are living longer it's vital that a range of accommodation options are available to provide places where their care and support can be delivered.

There are a range of accommodation options for people with learning disabilities and autism throughout the borough, some directly commissioned by the Council. Options range from care homes, adapted general needs housing to bespoke schemes that provide supported living with care, such as Acorn House in Thornaby.

It is important that the design of new build housing considers the principles of 'lifetime homes' to provide appropriate housing options for people who have physical disabilities and those who may develop a physical disability so that they are able to remain in their homes where possible. This is vital in helping the Council manage social care responsibilities and costs.

In addition to supporting the development of suitable new build accommodation the Council also delivers disabled adaptations for households predominantly in the private sector to enable those residents to maintain their independence and continue to live in their own homes. The number and types of adaptations completed by the council over recent years reflects the growing numbers of older people and the need for adaptations that prevent trips and falls, such as stair lifts and ramps. During 2016/17 the Council implemented 210 adaptations for 183 people in the Borough. Of these 72% were for people aged over 55, 85% of all adaptations were for ramps, stair-lifts and level entry showers. 73% of adaptations were carried out in Owner Occupied homes, 19% in Registered Provider homes, and 8% in Privately Rented homes. The average DFG grant in this financial period was £5,493.70 and the average time from when the client first contacted adult social care until completion of the works was 22 weeks.

The Council is also making greater use of flexibilities and freedoms around Disabled Facilities Grant funding by the provision of an equipment loan scheme that allows the Council to loan stair lifts and ramps to residents who would otherwise not be eligible for a DFG or would have to wait in excess of 6 months. This approach ensures those residents who need help the most receive it in a timely manner and contributes towards the prevention of trips and falls and inevitable admissions to hospital, it can also be used to support early discharges from hospital. When equipment is no longer needed it is returned to the Council and can be reused to help other people. During 2016/2017 the Council processed 83 Equipment Loans - 66 Stair-lifts and 17 Ramps and the average time from when the client first contacted adult social care until completion of the works was 12 weeks.

The Council works closely with Housing Providers to provide a range of Supported Housing options to meet the needs of our vulnerable residents. Also known as extra care or housing with care this provision can take a number of forms including Extra Care Housing and Sheltered Housing. This type of accommodation allows people more independence than a care home along with additional care for extra piece of mind. This could include resident management staff, mobility facilities and community alarm services.

The Council will work closely with our partners to assist households and individuals to sustain an independent lifestyle by connecting good quality homes to services including health, education, training and employment with a particular focus on providing support to those facing barriers and are less able to help themselves, such as care leavers and members of the armed forces.

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the new duties it imposes has led to the Council undertaking a review of the way we deliver services to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We have introduced a new way of working that will be sustainable in the long term and will lead to improved outcomes for our residents. Our revised approach moves us away from crisis intervention and more towards developing stronger partnerships with customers to focus on early intervention and the prevention of homelessness.

The health and wellbeing of people who experience homelessness is poorer than that of the general population. The longer a person experiences homelessness, particularly from young adulthood, the more likely their health and wellbeing will be at risk. Whilst the causes of homelessness are complex, mental ill health is a major contributory factor. Becoming homeless can worsen existing mental health conditions or cause mental illness to occur. Drug and alcohol misuse can also be both a cause and consequence of homelessness and a proportion of our most vulnerable residents may experience both drug and alcohol and mental ill health at the same time. A health needs audit was undertaken in 2016 with the aim of increasing the evidence available about the health needs of people who are homeless and to help commissioners understand the effectiveness of the services we currently provide. The audit identified that around 70% of people accessing homelessness services have a mental health problem and 64% have drug and/or alcohol problems. We are committed to working closely with our colleagues within SBC Public Health and across the health system to further understand the impact of homelessness on health and wellbeing, to embed assessment of health needs within our approach to homelessness prevention and to strengthen early identification, intervention and support with those who are at risk of homelessness.

In 2017 the Council renewed its commitment to supporting our most vulnerable homeless residents by commissioning a number of service providers to deliver short term accommodation based housing related support to enable vulnerable adults, homeless families and young people to gain and maintain suitable, sustainable accommodation.

Stockton on Tees has successfully maintained an exceptionally low number of households accepted as statutory homeless due to excellent prevention work. The main reasons people access the service remained consistent from 2014 to 2018 with our top 4 reasons for presentation as follows:

- Affordability
- Households asked to leave by family and friends
- Termination of assured short hold tenancy
- Violent breakdown of relationships

Rough Sleeping

Nationally rough sleeping is a big issue and is taking an increasingly prominent position on the Government's housing agenda. Often there is a perception that homelessness is individuals sleeping on the streets, which in the case of large cities is a reality. Our most recent rough sleepers estimate took place in November 2017 and identified 2 individuals who were thought to be sleeping rough on the night the estimate took place. In our borough the vast majority of homeless people aren't rough sleepers, they are families or single people who are 'sofa surfing' (staying with friends or relatives) or living in temporary accommodation such as bed and breakfast hotels, hostels or refuges. For many this is as a result of them being unable to access available accommodation because it is unaffordable for them.

The Council has access to ample accommodation to ensure no one has to sleep rough and in line with national guidance we adhere to the No Second Night Out approach and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.

Young People and Care Leavers

Young people who are also care leavers and young people under 18 years old are supported by the Council's Resources Team and the Leaving Care Team to help make the transition from care to independent living. The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2016-18 sets out the Council's approach to ensuring every child and young person with a safe, happy, healthy, secure and loving childhood, nurturing their aspirations and enabling them to meet their full potential.

There is an agreed protocol between the Council's Homelessness Prevention Service and the Resources team to ensure that wherever young people present as homeless that they are directed to the right service and can access dedicated support as soon as they need it. The support provided ensures appropriate guidance and advice is in place through dedicated Personal Adviser support, all children and young people have an up to date and comprehensive Pathway Plan, there are a range of accommodation options, including Staying Put and Supported Lodgings and support for access into employment, education and training.

The Council has commissioned supported accommodation that provides support to care leavers who are ready and willing to move towards living independently, this includes a dedicated crash pad that provides an emergency bed for a night for young people who may be in crisis. Further information about our approach to housing for homeless young people and care leavers can be found in our **Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018-23**.

Domestic Abuse

In recognition of the impact Domestic Abuse has on families and children the Council has produced the Stockton-on-Tees Domestic Abuse Strategy 2017 - 2022 that sets out how a multi-agency approach is being taken to prevent people from becoming victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, and

provide support and protection for those who need it. More than £100,000 in additional funding has been allocated to support domestic violence and abuse services available to residents of the borough and the Council continues to commission crisis refuge accommodation to support domestic abuse victims and their families. The Housing Service works closely with specialist partner agencies to provide advice and access to accommodation to meet the needs of complex individuals and families who are often turned away from services. Further information about our approach to providing support to domestic abuse victims facing homelessness can be found in our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018.

Gypsy & Travellers

The Council provides 27 permanent plots for the borough's Gypsy's and Travellers at its Mount Pleasant Grange site. Recent inspections of the utility blocks have highlighted areas where repairs are required. The Council has committed resources to carry out the repair works and will be working with occupants over the coming months to complete repairs. This investment in the Mount Pleasant Site at Bowesfield will ensure we continue to meet need and our statutory duties.

Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) introduced a number of changes that affected the income of people living in Stockton-On-Tees. The most notable is the 'spare room subsidy' (more commonly known as the bedroom tax) which means that social housing tenants can no longer claim for bedrooms that they have been assessed as not requiring. It also capped housing benefits to 4 bedroom properties meaning large families who require 5 or more bedrooms (largely in the private sector) have to pay any rent not covered by housing benefit. For some people welfare benefits have been capped and for people under 21 years old it is proposed to stop automatic entitlement to housing benefits.

Welfare reforms have affected other entitlements for residents of the borough, including the Local Housing Allowance caps for under 35s and those in supported housing (due to come into force in 2019). The announcement by the Government to drop their plans to introduce the Local Housing Allowance cap for both general needs social housing and supported housing are welcomed by the Council and is good news for our residents who rely on Housing Benefit to help cover their housing costs, particularly those who live in supported accommodation.

Over the coming years the Council will see the roll out of the Government's flagship welfare reform policy – Universal Credit. This will significantly change the way that people claim benefits and how much they will receive. Payment levels have been frozen until 2020 which will see claimants see their incomes cut in real terms taking into account inflation and rising prices within the economy. The Council's Welfare Rights team are working hard to ensure our residents understand what these changes will mean for them and are providing a range of support options to help them manage their finances and where required support them to find affordable accommodation to prevent them becoming homeless due to the changes.

Supported Housing Funding

The Government has recently consulted on how supported housing might be funded in the future, which may involve providing funding directly to council's for them to spend on locally identified support needs. Details on how the new funding regime will work are still to be confirmed however it will present opportunities for the Council to work with key partners to develop a more joined up approach to commissioning services, meeting key objectives for housing, health and social care.

What we are going to do and how

Our priorities and actions directly respond to the challenges outlined in this chapter and support the key priorities identified in the Council Plan 2018-21 and Economic Growth Plan 2017-20, and therefore provide a consistent thread through all our activity.

Priorities	Actions
Develop the range of accommodation options available for older people and those with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with other council services and partners to understand need and future accommodation requirements for older people and people with disabilities • Continue to support people with disabilities and mental health needs to stay in their own homes • Provide a range of housing options for older people to meet their housing needs
Preventing and relieving homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake the statutory homelessness prevention and relief duty. • Monitor trends in homelessness and evaluate customer profile. • Provide timely and accessible information and advice focused on homeless prevention. • Develop sustainable housing options in the Social Housing and Private Rented sector. • Support households to remain in their home. • Establish robust and effective pathways with partners (Duty to Refer).
Preventing Rough Sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the suitability of an additional priority status for rough sleepers and people in temporary accommodation (including B&B) on the Compass CBL Allocations Policy for accessing social housing waiting lists. • Work with housing providers (across all tenures) to explore alternative accommodation options and maximise access to long-term sustainable accommodation. • Ensure that any family placed in B&B is moved to alternative, suitable temporary accommodation as quickly as possible. • Work to ensure a sufficient supply of appropriate temporary accommodation (other than B&B). • Reduce the use and time spent in B&B. • Ensure that any B&B used complies with the suitability requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.
Reduce the use of B&B and Temporary Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the suitability of an additional priority status for rough sleepers and people in temporary accommodation (including B&B) on the Compass CBL Allocations Policy for accessing social housing waiting lists.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with housing providers (across all tenures) to explore alternative accommodation options and maximise access to long-term sustainable accommodation. • Ensure that any family placed in B&B is moved to alternative, suitable temporary accommodation as quickly as possible. • Work to ensure a sufficient supply of appropriate temporary accommodation (other than B&B). • Reduce the use and time spent in B&B.
Maximise the effectiveness of commissioned housing related support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clear pathways for all households placed into commissioned housing related support. • Identify and address the support needs of homeless people in commissioned housing related support services to enable them to live independently. • Ensure timely move on to sustainable accommodation • Ensure effective engagement by all stakeholders in the delivery of the service.

DELIVERING THE HOUSING STRATEGY

All actions contained in this strategy are embedded in a range of Council Plans including Economic Growth and Development Services Plan and the Housing Services Business Unit plan which outline:

- All the actions that will be taken in order to deliver the strategic objectives and service priorities detailed within the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy;
- Timescales for completion;
- Identification of lead officers and partners who need to be involved to deliver the actions;
- Resource implications;
- Targets and anticipated outcomes

Progress against the actions and outcomes contained within these plans will be used to measure the effectiveness of this strategy.

REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

The Housing Strategy will be reviewed annually or in response to policy and legislative change, and we will work with all our stakeholders through mechanisms such as the Housing Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership (formed of key stakeholders and representatives of statutory, private, voluntary and community sectors) and through broader general partner engagement to ensure that it is delivering against our agreed priorities, actions and targets.