



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Delivering our Housing Strategy - Review of Progress 2018/19

Report by the Director for Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Adur and Worthing Councils Housing Strategy 2017-2020 'Housing Matters' outlined a vision for our communities where everyone can have a place they can call home. We recognise that having a secure and safe home, not just a place to sleep, is one of the most important factors in enabling our communities to be ambitious, prosperous and resilient.
- 1.2. This report updates members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the activities and outcomes that have been achieved to date in delivering this strategy, as well as highlighting challenges and opportunities for the future.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That members of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of this report

3.0 Context

- 3.1. In December 2016 Adur & Worthing Councils adopted 'Platforms for our Places' in which we committed to a number of key actions around housing and supporting our communities. These are also contained in the Adur & Worthing Housing Strategy 2017-2020 'Housing Matters' which was agreed at JSC in March 2017 and adopted by both Councils thereafter.

3.2 The strategy is arranged with three broad areas of focus and this report will update on each area. These are:

- Preventing Homelessness
- Developing the Supply of New Homes
- Improving Adur Council's role as Landlord (Adur District only)

4.0 Preventing Homelessness

Making Homelessness Everybody's Business

4.1 From April 2018 the Housing Solutions team, in collaboration with a number of external partners, has delivered the second phase of the Preventing Homelessness Project. This project has the overarching aim of 'Making Homelessness Everyone's Business' and has been developed from research with both service users and professionals. The aims of phase two have been to get more professionals involved in identifying those at risk of homelessness *early* in order to intervene quickly to prevent them from becoming homeless.

The project piloted three new approaches between July and December 2018 these were:

- Basing housing officers officers at the Worthing Jobcentre Plus
- Basing housing officers in West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) early help for families service (Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH)) and
- Setting up monthly homeless prevention meetings with Worthing Homes to identify those at risk of losing their tenancies.

The initial outcomes of these approaches have been impressive and a team has used a range of methods to evaluate the benefits of these approaches, not least in financial terms of potential savings achieved when homelessness is prevented, such as:

- IPEH and the Housing Solutions Service have jointly worked with 55 families, preventing nine families from becoming homeless. We continue to work jointly with 34 households. The cost of *prevention* to housing and IPEH for 9 families is £34,773.00 but has generated savings of £66,273.53 to housing and £243,000 to the wider system against the predicted costs of homelessness.
- The Jobcentre and the Housing Solutions Service have worked with 121 single adults. We have prevented 59 people from becoming homeless and continue to work with 55 people. The minimum cost of prevention for 59 households is £30,308, the savings to the wider system are £210,602 to the NHS, £102,851 to mental health services and £587,559 to the criminal justice system.
- Worthing Homes and the Housing Solutions Service collectively identified 53 households at risk of eviction. We prevented 27 households from becoming homeless and continue to jointly work with 15. The minimum cost of prevention to the housing team is £13,870 but savings to the wider system are estimated at £729,000 (*this does not include savings to Worthing Homes for court action/void loss and repairs).

4.2 The Housing Solutions Service is currently undertaking a service redesign to embed the learning and success from this project and also meet the Councils statutory duties under the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The new service design will create separate

teams for single homeless people and families, as well as creating a team that focuses on working with landlords in the private rented sector to improve the supply of accommodation in this sector.

4.3 Going Local is the social prescribing project currently available in six local GP practices and now includes a housing advice pilot delivered by Citizens Advice and Turning Tides. The aims are to:

- identify those attending doctors appointments who may be at risk of homelessness early and
- to reduce the impact of poor housing and homelessness on people's health and wellbeing - for example, the risk of homelessness causing depression and poor sleep, or unsuitable living conditions contributing to conditions such as asthma.

Since May 2018, the service has supported over 100 clients referred directly from Going Local or the West Sussex IPEH team. The cases typically are falling into 6 areas; already homeless, help with housing register, on the housing register but unhappy with banding, landlord has issued s.21 notice, unhappy with current accommodation (size etc.) or there is a risk of homelessness due to rent arrears, job loss, domestic violence etc.

One of the advantages of working with Citizens Advice is wide ranging advice offer which means they can support budgeting, access to benefits or grants and give employment or relationship advice - amongst many other expert advice areas. Feedback and outputs to date include:

- The housing situations are often complex, with 90% being taken on as case-work
- The majority concern social or private rented housing.
- To date at least 25 families/individuals have been prevented from becoming homeless as a result of this service, which represents a significant saving to the Councils as well as the wider system, but critically to those families it means stability and the opportunity of better long term outcomes for them and their health and wellbeing.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

4.4 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 came into force on 3 April 2018. The Housing Solutions Service has seen an increase in the number of homelessness applications since the commencement of the act, particularly from single people.

4.5 Since 3 April 2018, 443 households have made a homeless application. The Councils have accepted 104 Prevention Duties and 36 Relief duties in line with the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

Homeless Applications received between April and December



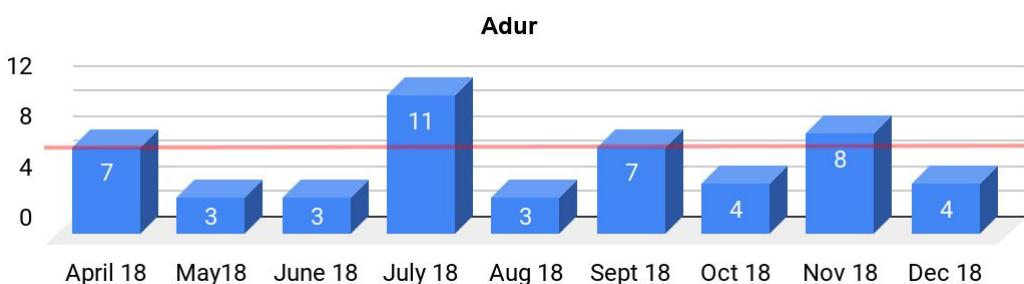
- 4.6 The Councils have successfully prevented 146 households from becoming homeless. Of those prevented from becoming homeless, 23 were assisted to keep their existing private rented accommodation and 43 assisted to secure alternative private rented accommodation.

Households prevented from homelessness between April and December



- 4.7 The Councils placed 188 new households into temporary accommodation (TA) (Adur 50, Worthing 138) between April 2018 and December 2018. During the same period 151 households moved on from TA, meaning we have a net increase each month of those accommodated. While the average placements for Adur remained steady between these period, there has been an average drop in placements for Worthing. Further information regarding the delivery of the strategy to provide more affordable emergency accommodation is included in Section 5.

Placements into Emergency Accommodation between Apr 2018 and Dec 2018





4.8 Our 2018/19 Street Count figures for rough sleepers are:

- Worthing - 11, down from 19 counted last year. The estimated actual number, therefore, is about 23 rough sleepers compared to an estimate of 34 last year.
- Adur - 0, which is the same as last year. The estimated actual number is 1 rough sleeper compared to an estimate of 2 last year.

4.9 The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) have awarded £270,000 for 2018/19 and £340,000 for 2019/20 to WBC (acknowledging ADC rough sleepers can and will benefit from the interventions) as well as access to an additional £35,000 Cold Weather Fund as part of their commitment to half rough sleeping by 2020 and end it by 2027. Some of this money has been used to fund a Rough Sleeper Coordinator and provided additional outreach with access to Personalisation Budgets. This has enabled increased, sustained and creative solutions to provide diversionary activities and housing solutions for rough sleepers. Two temporary accommodation units are being funded and used as Housing First led accommodation units. A rough sleeper who was homeless for over 10 years is successfully maintaining his temporary accommodation placement, has not re-offended, therefore, avoided being recalled to prison. Another rough sleeper has maintained abstinence and has now been accepted by substance misuse rehabilitation placement, which she moves into next week.

We have also appointed

- an Employment and Skills worker, to help those in supported accommodation into work and move on,
- a Community Inclusion Worker, who has a caseload of former rough sleepers and
- a Mental Health Support Worker, who works with the other specialist workers to support rough sleepers to maintain their accommodation

The money from MHCLG has also been used to fund spaces in accommodation for mental health discharges. Between September and December 2018, 7 people have been reconnected, there have been more than 150 contacts with former rough sleepers to help them maintain tenancies and not return to rough sleeping and 43 people supported into accommodation.

4.10 In 2017/18, the MHCLG provided funding for work with women affected by domestic abuse. This enabled Adur & Worthing to provide grants to Safe in Sussex and Brighton Women's Centre to deliver gender sensitive services to women in the street

community and within local refuges who present with complex needs. This has created alternative pathways to support and housing for homeless women including access to a local medium risk refuge.

Further short term funding under this programme has meant that we have commissioned Brighton Women's Centre to continue specialist group and individual work with homeless women until March 2019.

- 4.11 Prevention Case Studies - five prevention studies are included in Appendix 1 to this report which show the work required and the outcomes involved with preventing homelessness.

Enabling our residents to remain and thrive in their own homes:

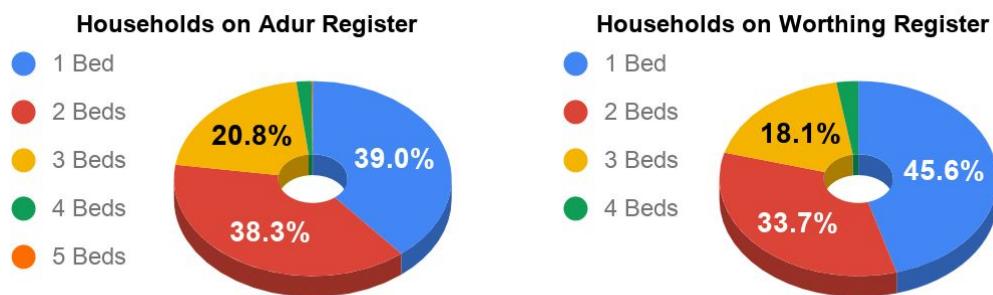
- 4.12 Our Private Sector Housing (PSH) team oversees and processes the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) scheme across Adur and Worthing. They accept referrals and enable improvements via our Home Improvement Agency, distributing funds passported to us via West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The sustained funding in the DFG process has resulted in an increased spend on adaptations across Adur & Worthing with a predicted commitment and spend of £2.17m during 2018/19. Despite the increased numbers of people being helped, we are also maintaining or improving response times with the median number of days from receipt of a DFG enquiry (by WSCC) to approval by PSH down by 30% to 145 days.
- 4.13 We are working closely with all Districts and Boroughs across West Sussex to streamline these processes and improve access to statutory and discretionary funds. A new shared post, which is being hosted by Chichester District Council, has been appointed to take this work forward.
- 4.14 The legal definition of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that require an mandatory licence has changed and came into force on 1 October 2018. Prior to this and subsequently, the Private Sector Housing (PSH) team has received 62 additional applications for licensing, which has generated over £89,000 in fee income. However this has required a significant resource commitment of over 450 hours of officer time since 1 April 2018 and a cost of over £55,000 to carry out the necessary inspections to ensure tenant safety. The remaining income will pay for monitoring and enforcement costs over the period of the licence scheme.
- 4.15 Despite many landlords being contacted and provided with information on the new licensing regime, the PSH team has also identified significant numbers of HMOs that are still likely to require licensing, hence this will be a priority for enforcement in the new financial year.
- 4.16 In addition to the HMO licensing activity, the team has responded to over 190 complaints about housing conditions, completed 39 formal inspections and served 39 enforcement notices. The team also prosecuted three landlords for unsafe conditions in their properties and have issued two civil penalty notices for a total of over £30,000.
- 4.17 *Policy reviews and updates* - We are planning a major review of the Council's Choice Based Lettings Policies, starting in January 2019.

5.0 Developing the Supply of New Homes

- 5.1 Our Housing Strategy included a number of key ambitions to support the supply of new homes across all tenures. Officers from planning and housing services continue to work with developers and registered providers, to enable as many new homes as practicable, and to create opportunities for affordable homes across our places. Adur's first new council houses in nearly 30 years are set to be built after plans to create 50 new flats on land at Albion Street in Southwick were approved. 15 of these will be affordable social rent properties for people on the Council's housing waiting list. The existing buildings on the site are currently being demolished in readiness for the development of the new buildings.
- 5.3 The redevelopment of the Cecil Norris site is set to go to the planning application stage. The new development will potentially provide up to 15 one and two bedroom units at affordable rent.
- 5.4 A review of the Council's assets has identified land that could potentially be used to deliver new housing. These include land at Fulbeck Avenue in Worthing and a number of infill sites in Adur.
- 5.5 *Emergency and Temporary Accommodation* - Progress has been made on a number of fronts to increase the range of suitable, affordable emergency and temporary accommodation, this includes:
- Increasing the number of leased units units and
 - Purchasing properties for development as EA
- In 2018 WBC completed on the purchase of the property formerly known as the Downview, the contract for development of the site will be finalised imminently. Negotiations are also progressing on a number of other opportunities to acquire suitable properties. This work must be seen alongside the work to reduce the need for EA by focussing on the wide ranging prevention agenda highlighted above.
- 5.6 *Private Sector Supply* - In response to feedback from private sector landlords, a new scheme is being piloted to increase the number of affordable and suitable private sector rented accommodation available to households in temporary accommodation or those at risk of homelessness. Working with local landlords, 11 properties (Adur - 4, Worthing - 7) have been let directly to households either in temporary accommodation or households at risk of homelessness. These agreements allow families to have a permanent local home, with support being provided to both the landlord and the tenants. The scheme is currently being evaluated and if deemed a success will be rolled out further in 2019.
- 5.7 Following a systematic review of both housing registers undertaken by the Housing Solutions and Audit teams, the number of households with a live application on both Adur and Worthing housing registers has fallen. Please see the table below. The aim of the review was to ensure that all applicants on the registers still satisfied the social housing allocation criteria for the register they were on.

	Adur	Worthing
1 Bed	266	535
2 Beds	261	396
3 Beds	142	213
4 Beds	12	30
5 Beds	1	0
TOTAL	682	1174
Pre- review	906	1637

- 5.8 Over 75% of households on each housing register have a 1-bed or 2-bed need. One household in Adur has a 5 bed need.



- 5.9 In Adur, 125 properties were advertised for let on the housing register, while 183 properties were advertised for let on the Worthing housing register. A comparison of housing need vs property supply, shows that demand for social housing continues to significantly exceed supply.





6.0 Improving and Enhancing Adur Council's Role as a Landlord

- 6.1 Adur Council has a specific role as Landlord, delivering housing management and tenancy services, tenant and leaseholder engagement, repairs and maintenance services as well as asset management and capital projects.
- 6.2 A new Adur Homes Operations Manager, Anthony Alexander, has been appointed, with effect from 17 December 2018. His brief will include the improvement of services and three key areas have already been identified:
- Reducing the length of time properties are void
 - Improving efficiency, quality and communications around repairs
 - Maximising income collection and reducing arrears
- 6.3 Each of these areas will be analysed using a LEAN approach that focuses on the customer experience and aims to improve the end to end process and efficient use of resources. Separate reports on progress with these reviews and impacts of improvements will be brought to the Adur Homes Management Board.
- 6.4 In 2018, a leaseholder audit identified a range of opportunities to improve the way we work with leaseholders and the associated action plan is well underway. A new leaseholder liaison officer has been appointed to assist with capital works, and a new and updated Leaseholder handbook was published in September 2018.
- 6.5 *Asset Management and Capital Programme:* Information from the Stock Condition Survey and other safety inspections in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy have informed a three year Capital Programme that was approved at JSC in 2017 and was updated in the autumn of 2018. A Capital Programme working group is overseeing a number of active projects such as
- Works to replace the front entrance doors and screens and internal redecorations have recently been completed at 74-84 Bushby Close, Lancing.
 - Our estate wide front entrance fire door replacement programme is ongoing
 - We are coming to end of this years Kitchen & Bathroom programme, having replaced approx. 54 of each.

- New gas fired central heating installations are currently ongoing at Seaview Court and these should be complete by the end of January.
 - Energy efficient motion activated LED Emergency Lighting has been installed throughout the communal ways of all 13 Sheltered Housing schemes.
- 6.6 A number of our major external repair work projects are progressing and are either in the design stage, or have recently been tendered. Further work is underway to develop future priorities and the time frames for delivery. It is recognised that there are long term issues given the under investment in our stock and that there continues to be significant financial challenges for the HRA with year on year rent reductions and sustained levels of arrears.
- 6.7 The new digital repairs system was launched to Adur Homes tenants in September 2018. 10% of contact is already self-service and feedback from tenants has shown a 3% increase in satisfaction with repairs, which now stands at 86%. Housing teams, together with the Digital team and Communications service are looking to ensure that an increasing number of tenants are able to use the digital tool to report issues as we seek to reduce the number of calls to the Contact Centre and improve outcomes for tenants.
- 6.8 *Financial Sustainability* - The annual HRA revenue account budget in 2018/19 is more than £13.1 million, funded by housing rents and service charges. Capital expenditure on major repairs in 2018/19 is expected to be approximately £3 million rising to £5.5 million by 2021/22.

However, the financial landscape for the HRA is challenging with continued year on year rent reductions and buildings that require extensive investment to bring them up to a quality standard.

For the second year in a row, the HRA has set a deficit budget (£735k in 2018/19) and will continue to set a deficit budget whilst it grapples with falling rental income. In 2020/21, the Council will be allowed to increase rents for the first time in five years. However, the rent setting formula for the next five years will be prescribed by central Government and limited at CPI plus 1%. Nevertheless, the HRA will gradually become more financially sustainable as rent levels increase.

Clearly, this is unsustainable in the longer term. However, in the short term we are continuing to focus on rent collection, current and historic; understanding all of our costs in order to be able to make the right strategic decisions going forward as well as seeking external funding where possible.

7.0 Challenges and Opportunities - Looking forward

- 7.1 A key challenge facing the Councils over the next two years is the West Sussex County Council decision to reduce its current £6.3m budget for housing related support in mid 2019/20 to an annual sum of £2.3m. This funding currently supports services delivered by multiple providers in a variety of forms across the County, the remit of which are to support individuals and families through services connected with their housing needs and to support

the prevention of homelessness. The approach to homelessness prevention following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 relies on being able to work with these providers to identify and support vulnerable people at risk of homelessness. These reductions in funding are likely to impact significantly on the Council's ability to prevent homelessness. Work is ongoing to fully understand how the County will prioritise and allocate the remaining funds and with other districts and boroughs to collectively manage a process around these changes.

- 7.2 The increase in demand for Emergency and Temporary accommodation and rising costs per night continue to put significant pressure on budgets. However, as described above the teams continue to act in variety of ways to mitigate this impact and this work continues at a pace.
- 7.3 Adur Housing Stock is aging and some blocks need major works which, though scheduled, cannot all happen immediately. This puts extra pressure on the maintenance service which has to deal with more repairs requests until these works are completed.
- 7.4 Throughout 2019 we will be reviewing how the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act has worked, alongside developing our approaches to other government policy such as the Rough Sleepers Strategy, published last year. As part of this work we will be working with partners and the wider system to review and update the Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy in April 2020.

8.0 Engagement and Communication

- 8.1 *Tenant Engagement* - a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Officer has recently been appointed, Jade Marshall. She will be working jointly with Housing and Wellbeing to enable some of our most vulnerable communities to access information, resources and to build resilience.
- 8.2 A new Adur Homes Resident Engagement Strategy will be written in 2019. The aim of the strategy is to develop and promote positive engagement with Adur Home tenants in the design and delivery of services
- 8.3 The third *Star Survey* will be undertaken with all residents in 2019 - the last was in 2017. This will also be a valuable source of information to inform future service reviews and improvements.
- 8.4 Engagement with partners in the Housing and wider support system continues with forums such as the Homelessness Forum, Landlords Forum and operational meetings that focus on specific issues such as homelessness prevention and reducing rough sleeping. We will continue to do all we can to work in partnership to address the issues of homelessness and in 2019 will further develop relationships with a range of housing providers to develop innovative ways to increase the supply of affordable homes.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The cost of delivering the housing strategy is built into the Councils' revenue and capital budgets.

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 The Local Government Act 2003 previously provided for a local housing authority to have a strategy in respect of such matters relating to housing. Section 29 of the Deregulation Act 2015 removed this formal requirement, but does not remove the ability of Local Authorities to produce a strategy if they see fit to do so, and indeed it is best practice to do so.
- 10.2 Section 8 Housing Act 1985 continues to place a duty on every local Housing Authority to consider housing conditions in their District/Borough and the needs of the District/Borough with respect to the provision of further housing accommodation. Further, part 7 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) places an obligation on Local Authorities to promote the prevention of homelessness.
- 10.3 The Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy enables the Councils to discharge its obligations under s8 Housing Act 1985, and work towards the promotion of the prevention of homelessness. The changing landscape in relation to housing regulation and homelessness prevention, including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, places an ongoing legal burden on Local Authorities to consider carefully their housing strategies, which will should link with both tenancy strategies (as required under the Localism Act 2011) and homelessness strategies.

Background Papers

- 'Housing Matters' Adur and Worthing Housing Strategy
- Platforms for our Places

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Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- 1.1 Housing of all types and tenure, supports the economy of our places, enabling inward investment as well as providing safe and secure places for our communities to live and work from.

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

There is a growing understanding of the health and social impacts of poor housing and at its extreme, the impacts of homelessness can be significant for individuals and families. Adur and Worthing Councils seeks to minimise these impacts through our work to identify and support individuals and communities at risk of homelessness and prevent this wherever possible.

Providing suitable accommodation for our communities, enabling our disabled and older residents to remain safely in their homes for longer has significant and far reaching economic and social benefits for the Councils and our places.

2.2 Equality Issues

As with Social Value, equality of opportunity and indeed of access to services may be impacted by an individual's or group's access to suitable housing. The Councils seek to provide a service to all residents to enable them to access advice and support in preventing the issues that may lead to homelessness from escalating.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

As a landlord in Adur, we work closely with our partners to monitor and address Anti-social behaviour issues amongst our tenants and across Adur and Worthing as a key statutory members of the community safety partnership work with all housing provider to address and reduce the likelihood of crime and victimisation.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

Considered, no issues to address

3. Environmental

- 3.1 Ongoing development and environmental issues are assessed as part of each planning application.

4. Governance

- 4.1 Considered, no issues to report

Appendix A

Delivering our Housing Strategy - JOSC January 2019

Prevention Case Studies

Case A

Mr A, is a man in his 20s, with mental health needs. He attended Jobcentre Plus with support from his grandmother as he did not have any income. The Work Coach identified the housing issue and a Housing Support Advisor joined the appointment.

Together they was established that Mr A was sofa surfing, as well as sleeping in garages and sheds, his grandmother advised that he was unable stay with friends any more as his mental health was deteriorating and they were unable to cope with him. It was later established that Mr A had become homeless as a result of a relationship breakdown and had also lost contact with his child.

Mr A had been to see his GP who had referred him to the Going Local, Social Prescribing Project, however, as yet he had not had a full assessment with the mental health team, was unmedicated and unsupported, although he advised that he was previously diagnosed with a personality disorder and was presenting with suicidal ideation. His grandmother could not accommodate Mr A as she was sole carer for elderly/ill husband and her mother.

An application for benefits was made as well as a number of referrals to supported accommodation. Mr A was housed within a month in supported accommodation, receiving support to enable him to engage with mental health services, with his benefits in place.

Case B

Ms B is in her 20s and attended Jobcentre Plus to make enquiries about benefits. The Work Coach established that she had support needs and circumstances that could lead to a housing/homelessness risk in the future. Ms B is also the sole carer for her two younger siblings following the imprisonment of her mother. She had been struggling to maintain studies and work and was in need of financial advice and support. Ms B was assisted with her income entitlements by the Work Coach and the Housing Support Advisor made referrals to and liaised with Social Services to connect her with appropriate support for her younger siblings.

Case C

Ms C is a lone parent with disabilities. Her teenage child also has health problems and they live in a two bed flat which is adapted to her needs. A Section 21 Notice was served by the private landlord who was selling the property. Ms C was not able to secure suitable alternative private sector accommodation as she did not have a guarantor and more critically, the type of property needed is not readily available. The Housing Solutions Officer negotiated with landlord for tenant to remain in occupation for an extended period to allow

time for the team to work with Ms C, to find alternative accommodation. Given her impending homelessness and the needs of both she and her child, her housing register banding was re-assessed and she was rehoused with a Registered Provider into two bed adapted ground floor flat.

Case D

Ms D is single and in her 80s. Ms D had lived in same private rented property for over 40 years. Following the death of her landlord, Ms D was served a Section 21 Notice by the new owner of the property, which was extremely distressing for her. The Housing Support Officer negotiated with landlord who agreed to work with the Council to source alternative accommodation, taking action himself to contact agents for suitable alternatives. Unfortunately these were not sustainable due to the rents being above Local housing allowance and Ms D's financial means. The Housing Solutions officer assisted Ms D to make a Housing Register application, and Ms D was awarded Band B. She was rehoused into sheltered housing near to where she has always lived. The new landlord also paid for the removals to get in her into her new home.

Case E

Ms E, is a lone parent with four children, she was living in a three bed private rented sector property and was served a Section 21 Notice served as the landlord wished to sell the property. Ms E is self employed and found a private rental property, however the cost was nearly £600 pcm above the local housing allowance. The Housing Solutions Officer worked with Ms E to examine her income and expenditure in order to assist in ensuring the long term sustainability of the property. With Ms E's permission, the adult children within the family were involved in this process and the adult sons signed agreements to make payments to top up rent. The Housing Solutions Officer also assisted Ms E to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment of £1500 and Council provided interest free loan of £1500 in order to secure the property.