Tendring
District Council

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION POLICY

January 2024

Tendring District Council is committed to delivering an effective, efficient and empathetic service for households who are or who are threatened with homelessness, with the aim of preventing homelessness and the recurrence of homelessness.

This policy sets out the actions that the Council will take to prevent and alleviate homelessness and outlines the assistance offered to those who are threatened with or who are actually homeless.

Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is:

- To provide clear information about the services and assistance provided to prevent homelessness
- To ensure a service that treats people with respect, dignity and compassion at all times
- To comply with the statutory requirements, legislation and good practice relating to homelessness prevention.
- To improve customer understanding and satisfaction with the homelessness prevention services provided
- To set out how the Council will work in partnership with a range of stakeholders to prevent and alleviate homelessness
- To ensure staff training is provided and that staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them.

Legal and regulatory context

There are legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the homelessness services provided by the Council. These include (but are not limited to):

- Housing Act 1996

Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 is the primary homelessness legislation and this sets out the local authority's duties to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people homeless or threatened with homelessness

- Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation (England) Order 2002

These amended existing legislation to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness, in particular by requiring every housing authority to have a homelessness strategy. They also strengthened the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories.

- Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Orders 2003 and 2012

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Orders outlines the factors that should be considered when deciding whether accommodation is suitable

- Children's Act 2004

Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 provides that, in carrying out its functions, a local authority must have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

This provides guidance on how housing authorities should exercise their functions relating to homelessness and threatened homelessness and apply the statutory duties in practice.

- Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection from unlawful discrimination in the provision of goods, services and public functions, housing, transport and education in relation to the protected characteristics set out in the legislation.,

The public sector equality duty set out in this legislation requires public authorities, including housing authorities, to integrate equality considerations into the decision-making process from the outset, including in the development, implementation and review of their policies and services. This includes policies and services relating to homelessness and threatened homelessness.

- Localism Act 2011

This legislation enabled local authorities in England or Wales fully to discharge the main homelessness duty to secure accommodation with an offer of suitable accommodation from a private landlord, without requiring the applicant's agreement. Tenancies must be for a minimum fixed term of 12 months.

- .Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

This legislation significantly reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

This amended the 1996 Act to strengthen the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.

Definition of homelessness

The legal definition of homelessness is that a household has no home in the UK or anywhere else in the world available and reasonable to occupy.

The following housing circumstances are examples of homelessness:

- street homeless
- hidden homeless
- have been illegally evicted
- are living in accommodation that is unaffordable, unfit, overcrowded, are experiencing domestic abuse or threats of domestic abuse, and other exceptional circumstances
- are at risk of becoming homeless due to parents/family/other no longer willing or able to accommodate, leaving care, prison, the armed forces or escaping domestic abuse)
  - have been served a valid notice to quit their tenancy by their landlord

All local authorities have a duty to ensure advice and information is available, free of charge, to any household about preventing homelessness, finding a home, rights when homeless and the help that is available locally.

Any adult, or child aged 16-17, who believes they are homeless or threatened with homelessness, is entitled to make an application for assistance to any local authority

A household who usually lives in the UK and has a right to enter and remain in the country without any restrictions, is normally eligible for assistance

Preventing homelessness

Housing authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to help prevent any eligible person (regardless of priority need status, intentionality and whether they have a local connection) who is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This means either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live before they become actually homeless. The prevention duty continues for 56 days unless it is brought to an end by an event such as accommodation being secured for the person, or by their becoming homeless

There are various reasons why people lose their home or face the threat of homelessness. Examples include landlords wanting to sell their properties, loss of employment, reduction in income, relationship or family breakdowns, domestic abuse, violence from outside the home or the onset of mental health and other life changing medical conditions.

Preventing homelessness is the most effective, appropriate and sustainable housing outcomes for the person or persons concerned and this follows a competent and personcentred assessment of the risks.

The approaches and activities that are undertaken aim to:

- To minimise personal trauma associated with homelessness
- To prevent personal and social problems caused by homelessness
- To create individual and community resilience

Whilst prevention activities incur a financial cost, it will almost always be more cost effective for the Council and their partners to proactively intervene before homelessness occurs.

The Council will ensure that the homelessness prevention work it undertakes is carried out effectively and efficiently through the following methods:

- By providing all who make a homeless application with a targeted personal housing plan regarding their housing options
-
- By securing long term accommodation for qualifying homeless people as quickly as possible

Homeless prevention can be achieved through:

- Early intervention work – where a household is identified as being at risk of homelessness and services are provided to support them before problems or disputes escalate
- Pre-crisis intervention work –which can involve advice, mediation, negotiation with landlords and targeting services at the risk points that have been identified. For example: risks after leaving the armed forces, the care system or prison
- Preventing repeat homelessness – this is through tenancy sustainment work whereby problems and risks identified - cannot be resolved through housing alone and other support is needed

Homelessness prevention is not an alternative to addressing a housing need and will not be viewed as an opportunity to deny people their rights under the homelessness legislation.

Homelessness vulnerabilities and risk factors

There are many factors that increase vulnerability to those facing homelessness and the Council adopts a partnership and multi-disciplinary approach to tackling prevention work.

Below are some examples of indicative risk and vulnerability factors that the Council's Housing Solutions team have come across, although it is not a definitive list:

- Relationship breakdowns which can be with partners or between parents and young adults
- Lack of social networks
- Lack of self-care, coping, hoarding or employability skills
- History of institutional care which can include periods in prison, service in the Armed Forces, looked after children and care leavers
- Insecurity of tenure for example: Armed Forces accommodation, being in care, accommodation tied with employment
- History of anti-social behaviour or offending behaviour
- Domestic abuse or other forms of abuse or assault as an adult or child

- Learning disabilities or literacy and numeracy difficulties
- Physical disabilities or mental health problems
- Substance misuse issues
- Bereavement
- Debt
- Reductions in income
- No rights to public assistance
- Previous homelessness as part of a homeless family or as a child
- Rent or mortgage arrears
- Impending eviction or repossession action
- History of, or current, neighbour complaints
- Experiencing harassment or feeling unsafe in the area a household lives in

There are also resilience and protective factors which can mitigate against the risks. Those factors can include:

- Supportive friends or family
- Strong social networks
- Appropriate support services
- A property being owned outright or with positive equity
- Savings or access to financial help
- Competent advice and advocacy
- Stable employment or having employability skills
- Personal empowerment
- Self-esteem and confidence
- Positive attitude and good mental health

The term 'multiple and complex needs' has various definitions. For the purposes of this policy it applies to people who are vulnerable to homelessness for a range of reasons, including, but not limited to:

- Mental ill health
- Substance misuse
- Challenging behaviours
- High risk and hard to reach
- Other combinations such as age and transitions – young and older people, or living in poverty, poor housing or poor environments

Homelessness Prevention Activities

Early Intervention work

This work involves identifying those at risk of homelessness and making sustained and effective interventions at the early stages. The Council and its partners aim to prevent homelessness from occurring or recurring whenever possible.

The Council stresses the importance of early intervention work in managing rent arrears, and the Council's aim is to resolve debt issues at an early stage for all tenancies. This includes the Council's own tenants, and the Council will offer signposting to partner agencies and support to those tenants who need it to manage their tenancy.

The key principles to early intervention work are:

- To reduce inequalities
- To identify those at risk of not achieving their potential and taking action to prevent that risk materialising

- To make sustained and effective interventions in cases where these risks have materialised
- To build the capacity of all individuals, families and communities to maximise their life chances, making use of quality, accessible public services as required.

Partnership Working and Signposting

The Council recognises that homelessness prevention activity is important and can make a difference across many factors in relation to health, education, child protection, community safety, employability and community engagement. This information is replicated in the tailored personal housing plans that are issued as part of a homeless application.

The Council also recognises that effective and sustainable homelessness prevention is a corporate responsibility rather than for housing services alone. The Council is committed to ensuring knowledge is embedded across the whole organisation, along with effective activity with other organisations and services working in tandem.

The Council has established close links with other organisations and agencies to prevent homelessness. Examples of this are through establishing joint working groups, and links with housing providers to maximise the supply of properties allocated through our housing register.

Housing Solutions Team

The Housing Solutions Team is part of the Housing and Environmental directorate within Tendring District Council and can make a valuable contribution to the prevention of homelessness.

It is a statutory service that complies with the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to provide housing support services to households who are homeless or at risk of being made homeless.

People accessing the service are encouraged to have a full housing assessment and this will include consideration of all options open to them. The team work to prevent homelessness through early intervention work, pre-crisis support and tenancy sustainment. The team is essential in assisting the Council to meet its statutory housing duties and prevent homelessness.

The support that the team offers can include:

- Help to find and keep accommodation
- Help to keep accommodation safe and secure
- Mediation between tenants/landlords, family and partners
- Help with arranging adaptations to enable a person to remain or return to their home
- Advice and assistance with personal budgeting and dealing with debts
- Signposting to agencies for support with employment, drug and alcohol use, assistance to engage with individuals, advice or settlement into future accommodation, advice or assistance in helping individuals to move.

It is recognised that, whilst some people may need short-term support until they feel able to cope independently, there will be some people who require long-term support.

The Housing Solutions Team is focussed on building skills, confidence and empowering people so that they can manage themselves and their accommodation as much as possible. This might mean making short term plans with people whereas others will benefit from focused longer term work.

People accessing the service will be asked to complete a homelessness application and provide documentation to show the risk of homelessness, along with a form of identification for each member of the household. They will then receive an appointment for a full housing assessment with a Housing Solutions Officer and will be asked at that point to provide a wider range of documentation to not only show the risk of homelessness, but also any other factors associated with that person or household. As the team provides a generic service, this officer will be allocated to the person from the start of their homeless approach through to the end.

When people have an assessment with the Housing Solutions Team, the outcome they wish to have is to not just have advice, but a home or a resolution to their current housing situation. It is important to be able to manage these expectations and to be clear about the broader outcomes from receiving advice, an understanding of the housing market along with the rights, responsibilities and actions associated with resolving a problem.

The allocated Housing Solutions Officer will assist the person to understand the range of potential options available to them based on their personal circumstances. Following this assessment each applicant will be issued with a personal housing plan which offers tailored advice based on their particular situation.

The Housing Solutions Team will provide:

- Person centred and tailored advice
- Privacy and confidentiality
- A genuine and accurate attempt to diagnose the situation
- Options
- Referrals to partner agencies and follow-up action
- Redress to users of the service

Personal Housing Plans

Housing authorities have a duty to carry out an assessment in all cases where an eligible applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will identify what has caused the homelessness or threat of homelessness, the housing needs of the applicant and any support they need in order to be able to secure and retain accommodation.

Following this assessment, the housing authority must work with the person to develop a personalised housing plan which will include actions (or 'reasonable steps') to be taken by the authority and the applicant to try and prevent or relieve homelessness.

The Housing Solutions Team will help people to understand the full range of options available to them by offering them tailored advice which will be written into their personal housing plan. The personal housing plan is based on their personal circumstances and will include appropriate advice and assistance on a realistic assessment of their particular needs.

Other care and support needs that are identified as part of the full housing assessment will also be included in this document.

Allocation of Social Housing

Homelessness and a housing crisis can be avoided when people can easily apply for, and obtain, social housing. There does however have to be an understanding of waiting times and the lack of social housing, and depending on the size of property and area there may be significant demand for each property which becomes available.

The Council operates a Housing Register in line with our revised Allocations Policy – December 2019 and a copy of this is available on the Council's website www.tendringdc.gov.uk .

The Housing Register is a single online application form for anyone aged 18 years or over, though support can be given by the Allocations Team to anyone who is unable to access the online application. The Council operates a priority allocation system based on an assessment of housing need, and properties are allocated through a shortlisting process.

We encourage current social housing tenants to resolve their housing need through mutual exchanges managed via the Homeswapper website. This website can be accessed by visiting www.homeswapper.co.uk. Alternatively existing social housing tenants can apply for a transfer where their home no longer meets their needs, for example~~:~~ if they wish to downsize to a smaller property.

House Share & Lodging

Lodging in someone else's home is recognised as being a positive and affordable housing option for some people, and friends sharing a private rented property can be a good way of securing affordable housing. Both situations are particularly positive for people under the age of 35 who struggle to find affordable accommodation.

For home owners and tenants, taking in a lodger can help to maximise income and reduce housing related outgoings for them.

The Council will, in certain circumstances and after making thorough investigations into the suitability, accept house shares as a resolution to preventing homelessness. Mediation will be offered at the start of the tenancy or at any change in the household, as a means of reducing the risk of disputes or problems during the tenancy.

Private Rented Sector

Good quality, affordable private rented housing can be vital in preventing homelessness. The Council continues to work with private landlords to raise standards by providing advice and information on their rights and responsibilities, including the mandatory licensing of housing in multiple occupancy and requiring the property to be in a good state of repair.

The Housing Solutions Team offer landlords a dedicated email address where they can ~~to~~ send details of properties that they want help to find tenants for, or request support. The email address for this service is landlordenquiries@tendringdc.gov.uk

It is stressed that the advice provided does not constitute legal advice and landlords would be encouraged to seek independent legal advice ahead of taking recovery or other action..

The Council also arranges an annual Private Sector Landlords Forum

Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Policy

The Council has a Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Policy. This uses a written and legally binding agreement between the Council, the tenant and a landlord to replace the upfront cash deposit that is normally required by landlords to cover the cost of any damage to their property or any rent owed when a tenant moves out.

Further information is included in our Tenancy Deposit Guarantee Policy.

Pre-crisis Intervention

If the Council become aware of potential homelessness at a relatively late stage, pre-crisis intervention can still have an impact and prevent homelessness, and in particular prevent rough sleeping from occurring.

Pre-crisis intervention can take the form of advice services, mediation/relationship/family support and signposting, negotiation with landlords to avoid imminent loss of home and more targeted signposting to services with known risk points such as armed forces, prison or leaving the care system.

Landlord Action and Eviction Orders

Tenants may occupy a property to which they hold a tenancy until such time as a Possession Order is obtained to bring that tenancy to an end and the Council will support this right.

Where a person has applied for homelessness assistance because they are being evicted from their current accommodation, the Housing Solutions Team will make every effort to negotiate with the landlord to try and prevent the eviction taking place.

If the landlord has the right to end the tenancy, and has followed the correct procedure, the Housing Solutions Team will advise the tenant of this. We will also advise them of their rights in relation to the homeless legislation and that we intend to contact the landlord to determine if there are any options to negotiate the continuation of the tenancy. As an example, if there are rent arrears, would the reduction of the arrears and the provision of support to ensure ongoing regular payments, mean that the landlord would consider allowing the tenant to remain.

If the landlord has the right to end the tenancy but has not followed the correct procedure, the Housing Solutions Team will advise the tenant of their rights to remain in the property until such time as the correct procedure has been followed. We will also contact the landlord to advise them of their responsibilities, and advise them to seek their own legal advice.

Tenants can occupy a property to which they hold a tenancy until such time as an eviction order is obtained to bring that arrangement to an end. Where a tenant holds an assured short hold tenancy the Housing Solutions Team will support this right.

Domestic Abuse Services

In these circumstances, it is not always possible to prevent homelessness, although safety measures and additional security put in place at the property will be discussed with the person.

Tendring District Council is committed to tackling both the cause and effect of domestic abuse, and to identify ways in which to prevent domestic abuse, and where this is not possible, to protect its victims. We aim to protect and support those who experience, or are affected, by domestic abuse and to support and develop a range of services for those who have experienced domestic abuse.

The Housing Solutions Team has a specialist domestic abuse officer within the team who specialises in all approaches from men or women fleeing any form of domestic abuse. The officer will work closely with all domestic abuse support agencies, GP’s and the Police and also support people whilst they obtain legal advice or court orders to secure their right to remain within the family home .

The Council will make every effort to prevent homelessness for people suffering domestic abuse, and when the person has made a decision to move home, we will seek to make offers of settled housing as quickly as possible.

Sanctuary Schemes are a multi-agency initiative that aims to enable households at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced secure measures and support. The Council offers this initiative to those people under any tenancy tenure or risk level, and will work closely with other social housing providers to ensure support for their own tenants.

The Council will offer support to minimise the impact of a relationship breakdown or family homelessness on any children in the household. The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures are detailed guidelines and instructions and will be referred to if there are any concerns about the welfare or safety of children in the household.

Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)

Tendring District Council is part of the MARAC. MARAC is a national approach where information is shared amongst agencies on the highest risk domestic abuse cases.

By bringing all agencies together at a MARAC, and ensuring that whenever possible the voice of the victim is represented, a co-ordinated safety plan can be drawn up to support the victim.

Mental Health

People with mental health problems ranging from and including people with mild to moderate mental health conditions, such as depressive illness to a diagnosis of a personality disorder, are at increased risk of homelessness.

The Council will aim to work with support agencies to identify people with mental health problems who are at risk of homelessness, as early as possible and undertake a shared assessment where required.

Adaptations

The Housing Solutions Team work closely with the Councils Disabled Facilities Team and external Occupational Therapist to establish whether alterations and adaptations can be installed to assist in preventing avoidable homelessness and also allowing people to remain in their current home.

Rough Sleepers

The Council currently has a three-year contract with Anglia Care Trust for the provision of Homeless Early Intervention and Support Services. This was entered into in September 2022, following a tender exercise, and using funding previously awarded from the Rough Sleeper Initiative as part of a collaborative bid by Essex County Council on behalf of Essex authorities

The purpose of this contract is:

- To provide intensive support to people sleeping rough along with people who are 'sofa surfing' because they could potentially be at risk of sleeping rough.

- To provide intensive support to people who are sleeping rough in order to find accommodation in the Tendring area if this is their home area, or locating back to their home area if it is outside of our District.

- To support and engage the people with the local community and employment opportunities, support them to access benefits and medical services along with any other services that they need.

- If appropriate, to attend any appointments with them and provide support around these.

- To be a positive influence and support for the person.

- To assist with deposits and rent in advance where there is a need to assist in securing suitable accommodation. Separate funds will be provided for this from a Discretionary Housing Payment or Homeless Prevention Fund, made available from the Housing Solutions Team.

- To continue to work with the person for a period sufficient enough to settle them into their new homes and ensure all services/utilities/furniture, etc. are in place.

Floating Support

A floating support service commissioned by Essex County Council is run by Peabody and accessed through direct referral or via the drop in service. This free service gives housing related support including:

- Maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness
- Liaise with landlords over issues such as rent arrears and repairs
- Budgeting
- Manage debt
- Maximise welfare benefits

Hospital Discharges

An Essex- wide Hospital Discharge Protocol has been developed and is in place for the involvement of all relevant agencies in pre-discharge assessments and the formulation of after-care plans.

The overall purpose of the Protocol is to:

- Reduce delayed transfers of care in Essex hospitals and to reduce the length of stay for patients where accommodation is a barrier to discharge
- Reduce the number of unplanned referrals to Essex Local Housing Authorities for patients recently discharged from hospital
- Reduce the health inequalities among homeless patients.

Pre-discharge discussions are vital, particularly where individuals may be reluctant to reveal any housing difficulties for fear these could delay their discharge.

Where accommodation is already available, checks by the health professionals and will be undertaken to make sure that it is still suitable (for example for a person who has become physically disabled) or that support services are in place.

The Housing Solutions Team comply with the protocol and in all instances, should be notified of a potential homelessness situation at the earliest possible point, preferably upon admission to hospital, so that early intervention work can start straightaway.

Leaving Prison

Many prisoners do not have secure accommodation available on their release making it less easy for them to integrate successfully into the community increasing the risk of both homelessness and re-offending.

An Essex Prison Release Housing Protocol is in place. This protocol is an agreement between The Probation Service, Essex County Council & HMP Chelmsford, and all Essex Local Housing Authorities, including Tendring District Council.

The intention of the protocol is to reduce the number of Essex adults on Probation who leave custody without suitable accommodation to move into, and especially to reduce the number of adults on Probation obliged to sleep rough or to move into accommodation which is unsafe for themselves or others.

Essex Prison Release Protocol.pdf (tendringdc.gov.uk)

Armed Forces

Armed Forces personnel can be vulnerable to homelessness at the point of discharge from the Services but also at later points in their housing as a consequence of poor health or disability. When leaving accommodation the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), who manage homes on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), will issue a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy.

In the case of all service personnel approaching their date of discharge from the Services, a certificate will be issued 93 days prior to discharge. Where official documentation is provided, the Housing Solutions Team will ensure that service personnel receive timely and comprehensive advice of the housing options available to them when they leave the Armed Forces.

Enquiries about loss of entitlement to service family accommodation resulting from retirement, redundancy, discharge or estrangement, can be made to the DIO Loss of Entitlement Team by telephoning 01904 418000 or 94510 8000. Alternatively, they can be contacted by email: diosdaccn-loeteam@mod.gov.uk

Housing Advice

The housing authority has a duty to provide advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness and the rights of homeless people or those at risk of homelessness, as well as the help that is available from the housing authority or others and how to access that help. The service is designed with certain listed vulnerable groups in mind and authorities can provide it themselves or arrange for other agencies to do it on their behalf.

Housing Advice is available on the Tendring District Council website https://www.tendringdc.uk/services/housing

A homelessness application and/or housing register application can be made online using this link https://tendring.housingjigsaw.co.uk/

Alternatively either application can be made in person at 88-90 Pier Avenue, Clacton on Sea, Essex, CO15 1TN and details of the office opening hours can be found on the Tendring District Council website www.tendringdc.gov.uk

Independent housing advice is also provided through Shelter England, and locally through specialist support agencies and the Council are able to signpost and refer people to these services on request.

The National Debtline provides free confidential and independent advice on how to deal with debt problems. They can be contacted on 0800 808 4000 or via their website www.nationaldebtline.org which provides information and advice on debt and about the service. Callers do not have to give their personal details and can remain anonymous if they wish.

https://www.summitservices.org.uk/ advocate for residents in our local area who may be living with a mental health illness or long-term health condition.

https://www.cvstendring.org.uk/ Community Voluntary Services Tendring

https://www.peabodygroup.org.uk/our-work/care-and-support/outreach-services/ provide one-to-one support, advice and information to help with a range of issues, including housing

and welfare, wellbeing, debt and isolation. They work closely with specialised agencies to connect people to services that work for them

https://healthwatchessex.org.uk/ can help people access, understand, and navigate health, social care and wellbeing services in Essex.

https://www.thenextchapter.org.uk/ offer free and confidential services to support people who are currently experiencing or have previously experienced domestic abuse.

https://www.phoenix-futures.org.uk/ Phoenix Futures is dedicated to helping individuals, families, and communities recover from drug and alcohol problems

https://www.tendringdc.uk/content/disrepair The Private Sector Housing Team provide a range of services for people living in privately owned or privately rented homes within the Tendring District. Some of the issues they deal with include disrepair, illegal eviction and houses in multiple occupation.

If homelessness cannot be prevented

Relief duty

If the applicant is already homeless, or becomes homeless despite activity during the prevention stage, then reasonable steps will be focused on helping the applicant to secure accommodation. This relief duty lasts for 56 days unless ended in another way. If the housing authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and have a priority need they must be provided with interim accommodation.

Main housing duty

If homelessness is not successfully prevented or relieved, a housing authority will owe the main housing duty to applicants who are eligible, have a priority need for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally. Certain categories of household have priority need if homeless, such as pregnant women, families with children, and those who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse or due to an emergency such as a fire or flood. Other groups may be assessed as having priority need because they are vulnerable as a result of old age, mental ill health, physical disability, having been in prison or care or as a result of becoming homeless due to violence.

Under the main housing duty, housing authorities must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and their household until the duty is brought to an end, usually through the offer of a settled home. The duty can also be brought to an end for other reasons, such as the applicant turning down a suitable offer of temporary accommodation or because they are no longer eligible for assistance. A suitable offer of a settled home (whether accepted or refused by the applicant) which would bring the main housing duty to an end includes an offer of a suitable secure or introductory tenancy with a local authority, an offer of accommodation through a private registered provider (also known as a housing association) or the offer of a suitable tenancy for at least 12 months from a private landlord made by arrangement with the local authority.

Reviews and appeals

Housing authorities must provide written notifications to applicants when they reach certain decisions about their case and the reasons behind any decisions that are against the applicant's interests. Applicants can ask the housing authority to review most aspects of their decisions, and, if still dissatisfied, can appeal to the county court on a point of law. Housing authorities have the power to accommodate applicants pending a review or appeal to the

county court. When an applicant who is being provided with interim accommodation requests a review of the suitability of accommodation offered to end the relief duty, the authority has a duty to continue to accommodate them pending a review.

Training

We will ensure that all relevant staff have training to raise their awareness of damp and mould issues, its impact on residents and its causes and control measures

This will include:

- Induction and refresher training will be provided for all Housing Solutions staff to raise awareness of and create a good understanding of homelessness issues

- Ensuring that all staff are aware of this policy and have the skills and knowledge to comply with it and its associated procedures

Equalities statement

The Council recognises that it delivers its homelessness services to communities within which there is a wide social diversity, and is committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.
Through the management of its homelessness service, the Council and its partners or agents will treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability and age is not acceptable.

The Council will tackle inequality, treat people with dignity and respect and continue to work to improve services for all service users

The legal framework for the Council's approach is provided by the Equality Act 2010 and specifically by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under which a public authority must work consciously to eliminates discrimination, harassment, victimization and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with differing characteristics

To enable customers to have clear information and equal access to our repairs and maintenance service information will be made available in a range of appropriate languages and formats, when requested.

Funding of the homelessness service

The costs of undertaking and managing the homelessness service provided by the Council is accounted for within the General Fund and this is subject to ongoing review and amendment to take into account any significant changes to legislation and/or operating environment.

Alongside the money committed from the Council's General Fund budget to fund homelessness services, funding has been awarded by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support prevention and reduction of homelessness and rough sleeping.

This funding can be used for initiatives carried out by the local authority or invested into projects operated by voluntary organisations.

Measuring Quality and Performance

The Council is committed to ensuring that its homelessness prevention activities are delivered to a high standard, providing high levels of customer satisfaction and value for money. We monitor all homelessness prevention practices though an effective record keeping system. Government indicators to measure performance will be published on the website https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness and reviewed on a regular basis.

Complaints

If for any reason an applicant is not satisfied with the service that has been provided, they can make a complaint in accordance with the Council's Housing Complaints Policy. This can be viewed vis the link below https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/how-make-complaint-about-council-landlord

Review of Policy

The Policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis or more frequently as changes in legislation or regulation dictate. Changes will be made to the document under the authority delegated to the Corporate Director (Operations and Delivery) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing.

.