



Arun Housing Services
Homelessness Strategy
2012 - 2016

Approved by Cabinet on 12 March 2012
Decision Notice C/085/120312
Due for Review in 2016

A R U N
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONTENTS

			Page
Section 1		Introduction	3
Section 2		Summary	4
Part 1:-		Strategic Context	
Section 3		Why Have a Homelessness Strategy?	6
Section 4		Housing & the Arun District	7
Section 5		National and Local Context of Homelessness Services	8
		National Housing Policy	8
		Local Housing Policy - Arun	10
Section 6		Housing Need & Housing Allocations – the Data	12
Part 2:-		Homelessness in Arun	15
Section 7		Current Services – Preventing Homelessness	15
Section 8		Homelessness Review Consultation	21
Part 3:-		Where We Are and Where We Want to Be – The Strategy	23
Section 9		Conclusion and Service Objectives	23
Section 10		How We Will Get There – Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	26

Arun Homelessness Strategy

Section 1 - Introduction

Welcome to the Homelessness Strategy 2012 - 2016.

This document sets out our plans to deliver services to households who are homeless or threatened with homeless over the coming years. It sets out the priority areas for action for the next 5 years and includes an action plan for implementation during the next 12 months to March 2013.

This strategy has been developed at a time of unprecedented change. With the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 there have been significant changes to the way that homelessness services can be delivered.

It is undoubtedly a challenging time to be developing a homelessness strategy, but we remain confident that the broad strategic priorities that the strategy is based on will provide a sound framework for the next five years. Progress against these priorities will be closely monitored, and an earlier review will be undertaken if it is considered necessary. The detailed Action Plan, which sets out individual objectives for delivering the strategy, has been developed to cover the first year of the strategy only, and it will be reviewed from 2013 when more details of the resources that will be available for the following 12 months will be known.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with stakeholders, including our customers and reflects the local and national priorities.

I hope you enjoy reading this document. If you have any questions or comments please e-mail housing@arun.gov.uk

Roger Elkins
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Arun District Council.

Section 2 - Summary

Summary

A key theme in achieving Council's Community Strategy ambitions of having a 'properly housed community' and that everyone should have 'a home which meets their needs and is of a decent standard', is preventing people from becoming homeless and dealing with homelessness when it does occur.

The Housing Act 1996, Part VII (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) requires that Local Housing Authorities publish a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. The Act requires that a Local Housing Authority conducts a review of homelessness in its area prior to developing a homelessness strategy. The review is designed to paint a picture on homelessness locally, and the strategy should set out how the problem is to be addressed. A Review of homelessness was carried out during 2011 which has been used to inform this strategy. The review can be found at www.arun.gov.uk.

This Homelessness Strategy contains an overview of the situation regarding homelessness and summarises the information gathered through the review process. It also sets out the vision for which services should be delivered to homeless households and an Action Plan, including the planned use of resources, as to how this vision will be achieved. This Action Plan covers 2012 and 2013, and will be reviewed after this period to set new targets going forward.

Homelessness Strategy 2012 - 2016

The Council carried out a review of homelessness in 2011 to inform this Strategy. The main drivers for reviewing the homelessness strategy early were:-

- the use of and cost of providing bed and breakfast accommodation
- the number of people sleeping rough in the District
- Changes to the Law and Government policies (including the Localism Act and proposed changes to Welfare Benefits)
- the review of the Housing Allocations Scheme in 2011
- the need to be better at directing funding to prevent homelessness.

The Homelessness Strategy sets out 5 key objectives which are:-

- Early intervention to prevent homelessness
- Delivering quality, consistent and accurate customer services
- Improving access to accommodation across all tenures to meet identified housing needs
- Ensuring that people with housing related support needs have these fully assessed and have access to the support services required to sustain independent living and prevent homelessness

- Strong partnership working across all sectors whose activities contribute to preventing homelessness and/or meeting the accommodation and support needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Action Plan set out in the Strategy covers financial year 2012/13 and 2013/14. Central Government has provided £99,500 in 2012/13 for the delivery of services which help prevent homelessness (Homelessness Prevention Fund, HPF). There is an indication that this level of funding will continue for a further 2 years, but this has not yet been confirmed.

Part 1 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Section 3 - Why have a Homelessness Strategy

3.1 'A properly housed community' a place where 'everyone has a home which meets their needs and is of a decent standard' is one of Arun's ambitions for all its residents.¹ A key part to achieving this ambition is preventing people from becoming homeless, and homeless prevention is the main purpose of the Council's homelessness service.

3.2 Arun also has a legal responsibility to provide free housing advice and support to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and accommodation is provided, if necessary, for people with children or who are vulnerable including the elderly.

3.3 This Homelessness Strategy for Arun sets out the vision for tackling homelessness over the period 2012-2016. The strategy has been developed within the context of national and local priorities and identifies five strategic objectives that will drive forward the homelessness agenda in the coming years. It has been developed as a supporting strategy to Arun's Housing Strategy 'Raise the Roof' which sets out the broader strategic direction for meeting housing need in Arun.

3.4 Arun carried out a review of homelessness in 2011 to inform this strategy. The main reasons for carrying out the review were as follows:-

- The Council continues to rely, in part, on Bed and Breakfast accommodation as emergency temporary accommodation which is both unsuitable for people and expensive
- High numbers of people sleeping rough in the district, particularly in Bognor Regis
- Changes in the law and Government policies, including the Localism Act and changes to Welfare Benefits
- Review of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme (housing waiting list) in 2011 particularly as it affects those who are homeless or have an acute housing need
- The need to be better at preventing homelessness including youth homelessness

3.5 The review included consultation with people who have used Arun's homelessness services and local organisations that also provide services to help homeless people.

3.6 The strategy is intended to be a short document to provide the reader with an overview of homelessness in Arun and explain what the Council are doing about the problem. Further information can be found in the Homelessness Review 2011 on the Council's website at:-

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=POLICIESANDSTRATEG>

A full Equalities Impact Assessment in respect of this strategy has also been carried out and can also be found at:-

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=POLICIESANDSTRATEG>

¹ Arun DC Community Strategy 'Our Kind of Place' 2008-2026

Part 1 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Section 4 - Housing and the Arun District

4.1 Arun District is on the South Coast of West Sussex and is located between Chichester (to the west) and Worthing (to the east) and includes the seaside towns of Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and 31 parishes as detailed below. The Arun District covers an area of approximately 221 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 149,901. By 2028 the population of the District is projected to increase by 19% (28,500 people).

Arun includes 31 parishes illustrated by the map below



- 4.2 Housing in Arun is dominated by private sector ownership (approximately 80%), social housing (including Council Housing) provided and managed by Arun, and Registered Providers (Housing Associations) is approximately 9% of all homes, below the average for West Sussex Coastal area (12.5%), and the national average (18%). Levels of private renting in Arun are below average but significantly higher in the main towns.
- 4.3 There are over 4500 households waiting for housing on the Councils housing register with over a third of these (more than 1700) considered to have significant housing need. There are an average of x households seeking help with their housing options each year and this is rising.
- 4.4 In the last 5 years there have been an average of over 300 households per year who have applied as homeless, with an average of 75 households accepted per year. For the first three quarters of 2011/12 there have been 167 applications, and 77 acceptances.
- 4.5 There are currently on average 18 properties that become available each month (including mutual exchanges, within the Council's stock, with a similar number becoming available through Housing Associations). This means there is a long wait for affordable housing, which contributes to the number of households becoming homeless.

Part 1 – STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Section 5 – National and Local Context of Homelessness Services

National Housing Policy

Housing Policy – Government

5.1 The strategy has been written to take account of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII (As amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and current government policy. Preventing homelessness as far as practically possible remains the government's key objective with particular emphasis on keeping people safe and off the streets. The government has also stated its commitment to working with mortgage lenders to ensure that repossession of homes is a last resort. Some new government legislation will also have a particular effect on homelessness services as summarised below.

5.2 Localism Act 2011

- As well as providing social housing, local authorities will be able to meet their homelessness responsibilities by arranging good quality private rented homes which must be available for a minimum of 12 months
- Introduction of flexible 'shorter term' tenancies will allow social landlords like Arun to reduce levels of under occupation, particularly of family accommodation
- Greater freedom for local authorities to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area whilst still requiring them to give 'reasonable preference' to those with the greatest housing need including the most vulnerable, the homeless and people living in very unsatisfactory housing conditions etc . Authorities will be able to consider rewarding applicants who improve their housing circumstances rather than penalising by reducing their priority which is what generally happens, this is expected to be a useful tool in preventing homelessness.

5.3 Changes to Housing Related Benefits

- Changes to housing benefits are being introduced. Some of these will mean that claimants' benefits will be reduced.
- For example a single person under the age of 35 and living in a 1 bedroom flat will have their benefit reduced to an allowance linked to the rent level for a room in a shared house. This will mean that the applicants will either need to make up the shortfall in Housing Benefit themselves or move on to accommodation where the rent will be covered in full.
- Supporting residents and people looking for private rented accommodation who are affected by these changes is very important and Arun is currently working with residents and landlords to ensure as far as practically possible that people do not find themselves without accommodation as a result

5.4 Welfare Reform Bill – Changes to income related benefits.

The main elements of the bill (expected to become law mid 2012) as stated by government are:

- the introduction of Universal Credit which will replace all income related welfare benefits
- an emphasis on reducing fraud and error, with tougher penalties for the most serious offences
- reforms to Disability Living Allowance
- changes to Housing Benefit
- reforming Employment and Support Allowance
- Changes to Child Benefits

Arun will need to understand and react positively to the impact of the legislation, offering advice and support to residents particularly as it affects their ability to rent and retain housing from a private landlord.

5.5 New Affordable Housing - Changes to the type of housing that will be available.

- The Government's Affordable Homes Programme 2011-15 (AHP) aims to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England by 150,000. This is to be achieved mainly through a new form of affordable housing at rent levels that are up to 80% of a full market rent (affordable housing has previously been let at approximately 50% of a full market rent referred to as social rent) and with some for affordable home ownership. At the same time, landlords providing the new homes will be able to relet a proportion of social rent properties at the new affordable rent, this will generate the additional money needed to build the new homes.
- Whilst Arun welcomes new affordable homes for the district there are concerns that the higher level of rent may mean that those with greatest housing need are 'put off' applying for one of the new homes. Arun will be developing a new Tenancy Strategy in 2012 with partners which will seek to address this issue.

5.6 National Strategies and Guidance

National Strategies and Guidance that have helped to shape this Homelessness Strategy include:-

Laying the Foundations – a Housing Strategy for England (November 2011)– this sets out the Government's plans regarding the wider housing market.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf>

Vision to end Rough Sleeping - No second night out nationwide (July 2011) – this sets out the Government's plans to end rough sleeping

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1939099.pdf>

Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (Consultation Draft, January 2012.) – sets out the draft framework which deals with how the new Localism Act should be implemented. There are also additional documents dealing with special measures for the Armed Forces personnel.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2060702.pdf>

Local Housing Policy - Arun

5.7 There are a number of locally agreed strategies that support and link with the Homelessness Strategy. These are summarised below:-

Our Kind of Place – Arun’s Sustainable Community Strategy

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=OURKINDOFPLACE1>

Arun’s Community Strategy - Our Kind of Place 2008-2026 states that a ‘Properly Housed Community’ is a principal objective with the aim that in 20 years time Arun will be a ‘place where everyone has a home which meets their needs and is of a decent standard, with community facilities available locally’.

Raise the Roof 2010-2015 –Arun’s Housing Strategy

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=HOUSINGSTRATEGY>

The Arun vision for housing includes:

- Ensuring through a range of housing options that everyone has somewhere to live, including helping prevent people from becoming homeless and quicker re-housing of those in greatest need
- Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable people

Rough Sleeping Strategy

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=POLICIESANDSTRATEG>

Arun has adopted its first Rough Sleepers Strategy for the period 2011-12 with the aim being to work with statutory and voluntary sector partners to develop a strategic response to reduce rough sleeping in the district. The main aims of the Arun Rough Sleepers Strategy are to:

- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough in Arun to as close to zero as possible;
- Increase the options and life chances of rough sleepers through access to advice and support services;
- Enhance community safety by reducing incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with rough sleeping

Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2009-2014

The private sector renewal strategy has been incorporated into the Raise the Roof document, which can be found on our web site as stated above.

Additionally, there is a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2011/12 which is updated each year and relates to the grants and loans that are available. This can be found on our web site at:-

<http://www.arun.gov.uk/main.cfm?type=HOUSINGGRANTSANDLO>

The strategy is informed by the 2010 Private House Survey which estimated that 23,270 dwellings in Arun do not meet the Decent Homes Standard². The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy Action Plan includes action to:-

- Improve homes to Decent Homes Standard through current public sector programmes and through equity release schemes to allow continued investment in the private housing stock;
- Invest in improving energy efficiency in existing homes as part of the overall improvement in housing sustainability;

² Category 1 HHSRS Hazard – Government Housing Health and Safety Rating System < insert >

Section 6 - Housing need and housing allocations – the data

6.1 Affordable Housing Need

Arun is an area of high housing need with demand for affordable homes far greater than supply and with a private rented sector that is unable to meet demand for short term housing. This position inevitably means many residents find themselves in very difficult housing circumstances (including being homeless) which they cannot improve without support. Evidence of housing need in Arun is found in the West Sussex Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), and from the Council's housing register

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

- 6.2 Arun District Council, together with the other West Sussex local authorities, commissioned consultants, GVA Grimley, to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which was published in May 2009.
- 6.3 The SHMA housing needs analysis provides a snapshot of the requirements for affordable housing in accordance with Government's guidance. The assessment estimated that annual housing need in Arun is for housing for between 447 and 658 households. The lower estimate is based on acute need for social rented housing; the higher estimate is based on meeting the need of all those on the Council's waiting list.

Arun's Housing Register.

- 6.4 As at 30.11.11 there were 4876 applicants registered on the Arun Housing Register, a significant increase of over 1300 applicants or 39% on the number of applicants registered for the previous year, 3500. The housing register applicants figure includes existing tenants waiting to transfer to alternative accommodation. The number of transfer applicants on the waiting list as at 30.11.2011 was 340 (7% of the total).

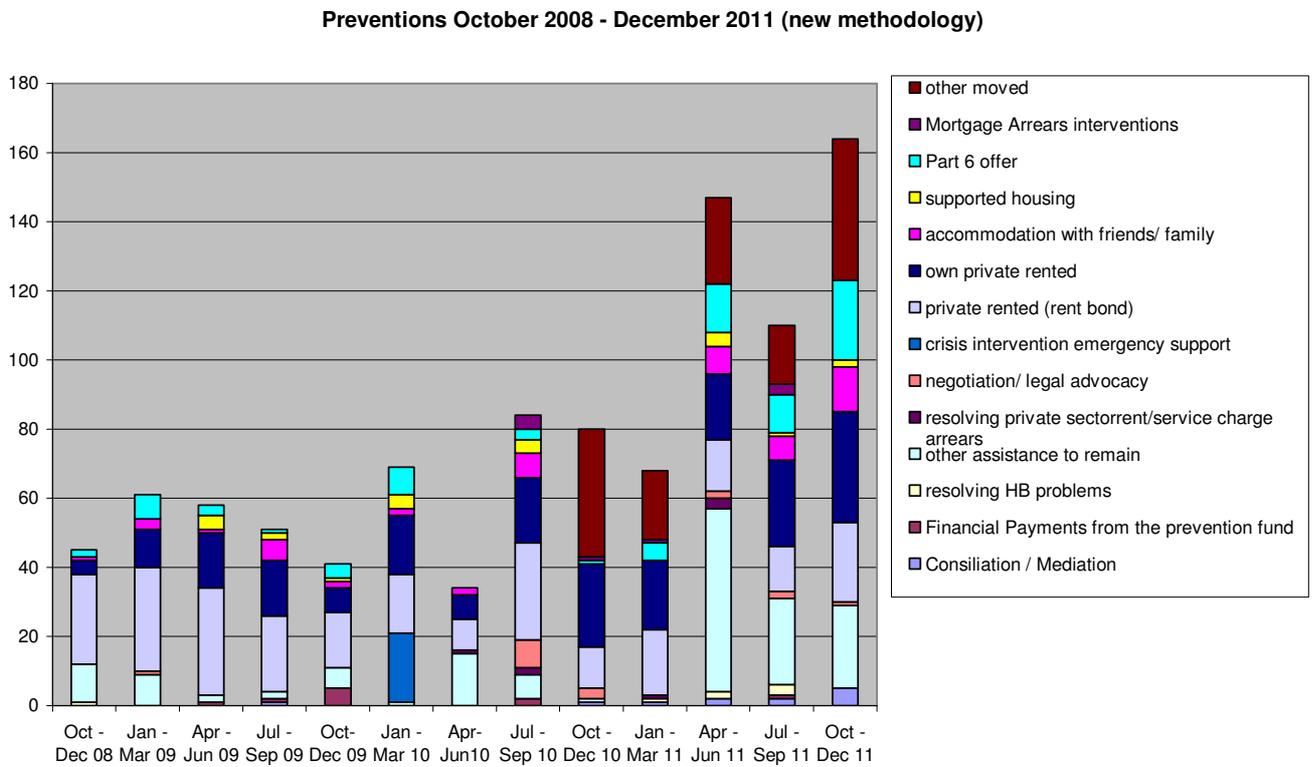
6.5 Affordable Housing Allocations

In 2010/11, 338 new affordable housing tenancies were signed up, 197(58%) [Registered Providers] 141(42%) [Council]. Close to a third of homes were allocated to existing tenants transferring to alternative accommodation, a further third of applicants were living in the private rented sector before signing up for a home with a RP or LA. The number of homes allocated to applicants accepted as homeless was much smaller than perhaps would have been anticipated, 53 or 16% of all those housed compared to 79 or 67% of the homeless applications accepted in the same period. This maybe in part as a result of prevention work enabling households to bid successfully for a permanent offer of accommodation. Registered providers rehoused 19 homeless households (36%) and Arun rehoused 33 (64%), an approximate one third/two thirds split, RPs combined and Arun have a similar number of affordable homes approximately 3,400 homes each.

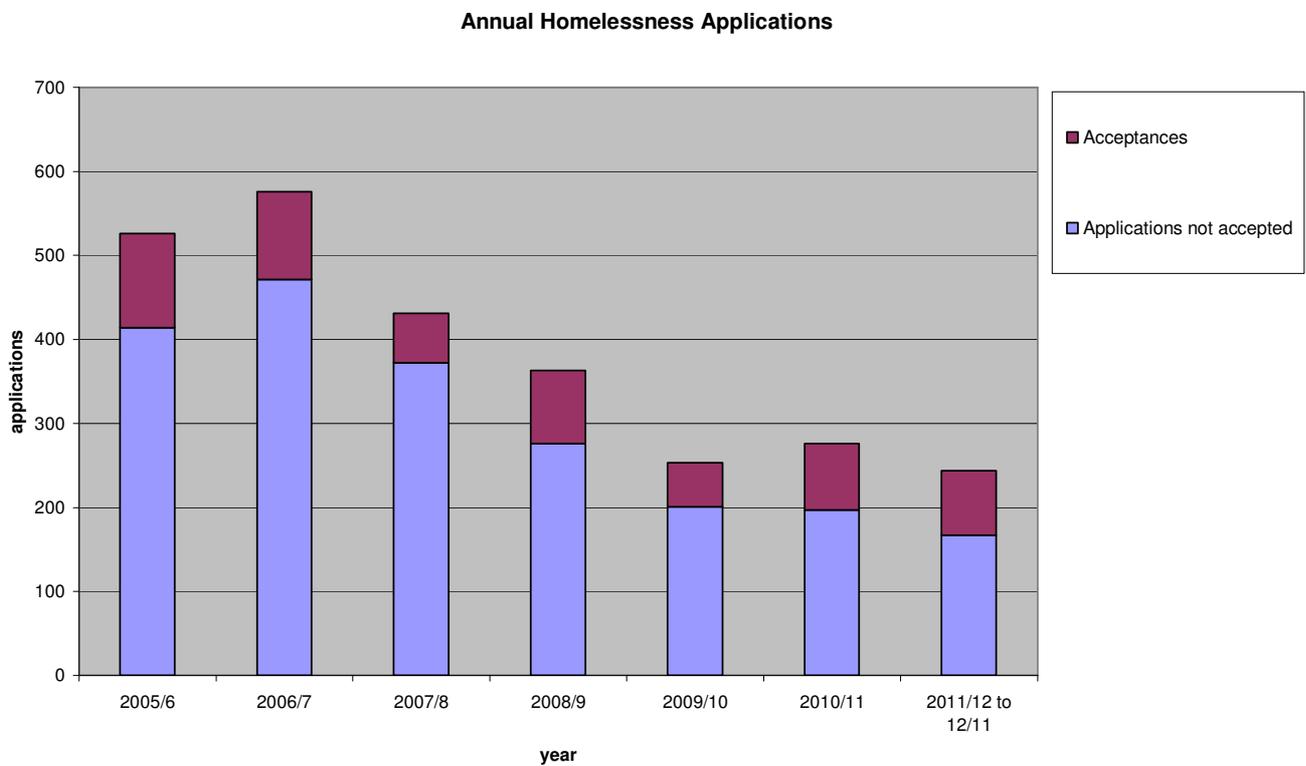
6.6 Patterns of Homelessness in Arun

Local authorities are required to collate statistics every quarter on approaches made to them by homeless applicants. These returns cover all aspects of homelessness and provide a useful insight to the levels and nature of homelessness in the area. A large amount of statistical information is provided in the Homelessness Review which can be found at (insert link). Provided below are the key indicators of the position in Arun:-

Graph 1



Graph 2.



These graphs demonstrate the change of emphasis in dealing with homelessness within Arun. Whilst homeless applications have reduced since 2006/7 the number of households who have their homelessness prevented, or have been enabled for find alternative accommodation in the private sector has increased.

Information is also provided in these graphs to demonstrate how homelessness has been prevented.

Other notable facts drawn from the Homelessness Review 2011 are:-

- Approximately three quarters of all applicants accepted between January 2008 and January 2011 were designated to be in priority need because they have dependent children (85%) or a member of the household is pregnant. (15%).
- Consistently at least 10% of all applicants have mental health issues.
- Loss of private rented accommodation primarily due to an Assured Shorthold Tenancy coming to an end consistently accounts for approximately a third of all applicants.
- A further 20% of applicants become homeless because relatives or friends are unable to accommodate them.
- Approximately 10% of applicants make an application due a violent relationship breakdown and a further 10% have 'other reasons' for making a homeless application.
- Five households were accepted as homeless due to mortgage arrears in 2010/11 a small increase compared to previous years.

PART 2 – HOMELESSNESS IN ARUN

Section 7- Current Services – Preventing Homelessness

- 7.1 Preventing homelessness is Arun's principal objective and can include providing advice on tenancy rights, benefits entitlement, mediating with friends and family, advice and support to prevent mortgage repossession and support to access accommodation in the private rented sector. The case studies below are illustrative of the typical action taken by staff:-

Case Study 1

A couple with two children under five approached with a notice to vacate from their private landlord. On contacting the letting agent, the housing options officer established that the condition of the property was the reason they had been asked to leave. The housing options officer visited the property and negotiated with the tenants and the letting agent. Arun District Council paid for and arranged for the property to be professionally cleaned and the tenants agreed to then maintain the standard. A new tenancy was issued and their homelessness was prevented.

Case Study 2

A single parent with one child contacted us after being asked to leave by his landlord. The housing options officer contacted the landlord and established that there were rent arrears of over £2000. By contacting the revenues and benefits section the housing options officer established that the benefit was not in payment as specific documents had not been provided. The housing options officer facilitated the provision of the documents and successfully gained a backdated housing benefit payment, clearing the arrears in full. The benefit payments were also transferred to pay the landlord directly, all of which prevented the eviction.

Case Study 3

A private landlord had served notice to his tenants as he was required to sell his property due to his financial circumstances. The family visited us for advice as they had to move and could not remain in their current tenancy. They were given advice and assistance regarding their housing options and with our assistance identified an alternative rented property. Arun District Council liaised with the new landlord and as the property was suitable and affordable a deposit bond was provided in order to secure the house for the family.

7.2 Providing Advice

Providing high quality, up to date internet, e mail and telephone advice is a priority. However, face to face contact remains the preferred method of communication for many customers, particularly those with complex housing issues and/or personal support needs. Housing Option packs are supplied to customers.

Since the adoption of the previous strategy, the Housing department has relocated from the Church Street offices to the Civic Centre in Littlehampton. The move coincided with the opening of brand new 'customer focused' reception and interview facilities. A queuing system operates with visible customer services staff available to meet with residents in a large open plan reception area; private interview facilities are also available. Housing staff are now based with other work colleagues

including Housing Benefit, making joint working more practical. Similar facilities are also available at Bognor Regis Town Hall.

Arun's website has recently been re-launched and the housing pages include those relating to Housing Options and Homelessness services will shortly be updated and expanded upon.

7.3 Housing Options Team

Arun provides its homelessness service through a Housing Options team where there is a clear emphasis on preventing homelessness, the team has seen a significant reduction in the numbers of households needing to be found temporary accommodation, because they have been helped to secure alternative housing or retain their current home. However the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is still high with £100,000 being spent in the first 9 months of the current financial year (11/12)

Developing the expertise and roles of Housing Options staff to enable them to both effectively prevent homelessness and investigate homelessness applications is therefore important and a priority.

7.4 Working with the Private Rented Sector

Enabling access to the private rented sector prevents homelessness in many cases. Arun is therefore strongly committed to developing a range of options to achieve this objective. Current initiatives include:-

1. The Bond Scheme

The Bond Scheme replaced the landlords deposit scheme in July 2009 and has proved to be both effective and economical. Arun provides a bond (or guarantee) to landlords as security instead of a deposit. Participants must pay regular, agreed installments to save the value of the guaranteed bond by the end of the tenancy. In excess of 200 bonds have been issued to date with a relatively small number of claims made against a bond by individual landlords, around 12%. During this time 279 bonds have been agreed, with 85 having been paid back in full, and 33 having a claim against them. Within the new Allocations Scheme there is provision for rewarding those who repay the Bond within the agreed timescale and meet all the tenancy conditions, as these households now get additional priority on the housing register for a permanent offer.

2. Weekly Property Bulletin

Arun produces a weekly list of local properties available to rent to assist people looking for a home with supporting benefits and housing advice

3. Landlords Forum

Arun's landlords' forum has been running successfully for a number of years. The aim of the forum is to enable landlords to raise issues of concern, exchange views and opinions, and support each other. The Council in return updates landlords on changes in legislation and provides important developments within the Council. Three meetings are currently held per year.

4. Landlords Accreditation Scheme

Arun is working in partnership with Chichester District Council, the University of Chichester and Chichester College to introduce a district wide Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Both the University and College fully support the Scheme and will in the future only manage or promote properties which have been accredited. Whilst this scheme is open to landlords of accommodation which is not specifically for students it is not actively promoted to them currently

5. Harassment and Illegal Eviction

Arun's Environmental Health Department will try to liaise with a landlord to help the tenant return to their rental accommodation or will undertake an investigation into the matter if a tenant is found to have been illegally evicted and sufficient evidence can be collected for enforcement action. Where there is considered to be sufficient evidence, Arun will prosecute landlords breaching the Protection from Eviction Act.

6. Private Market Leasing Scheme

Proposals to provide private sector leased properties to assist in the prevention of homelessness through a partnership arrangement with Hyde Martlet Housing Association were approved in May 2011. Hyde Martlet leases the properties direct from the owners and grants sub-leases to tenants nominated by the Council (the Housing Options team will nominate households who are homeless or who are likely to become homeless) in accordance with the terms of a nominations agreement. Management of the properties is also the responsibility of Hyde, which significantly reduces the financial and operating risk to Arun.

7.5 Mortgage Rescue Scheme

Arun provides advice and assistance to people who are finding it difficult to make and sustain their mortgage payments and promotes the Governments Mortgage Rescue scheme as a way of preventing home owners losing their homes. Funding for the rescue scheme is however very limited with just two households benefiting to date.

7.6 Supporting 16/17 year olds

12 homeless applicants aged 16-17 were accepted as homeless between April 2008 and March 2011 - on average, 3/4 applicants per annum. However, significantly, approximately 4 applicants a month seek assistance with just around 8% securing direct assistance.

A protocol agreed in March 2011 sets out the agreed working relationships between the seven Districts and Boroughs in West Sussex and the County Council. The purpose is to provide effective joined up services to young people to prevent them being passed from one service to another and ensure that legal responsibilities are fulfilled.

If it is established that a young person cannot return to the family home or to the home of a responsible adult, and has no other accommodation available to them, alternative accommodation will be arranged by the Young Person's Co-ordinator, funded by West Sussex County Council (Supporting People). The protocol will be launched shortly and its effectiveness will be carefully monitored.

Prior to this protocol becoming operational many young people were housed in temporary accommodation for extended period with no support being available.

7.7 Housing Allocations Scheme

A new scheme to determine how affordable housing is allocated in Arun, known as the Housing Allocations Scheme, will be launched in January 2012. The scheme has been altered to reflect the outcome of consultation and government policy. The main changes are:-

1. To reflect local priorities – the criteria for identifying applicants as ‘local’ has been strengthened, with greater emphasis placed on meeting the housing needs of those with a local connection.
2. To reflect rural housing need – a policy position giving greater priority to applicants with a connection to one of the rural parishes in the area that they wish to live has been introduced.
3. To incentivise good behaviour and penalise bad behaviour – the policy position regarding anti-social behaviour has been clarified and strengthened and additional priority awarded to those who have conducted their tenancy satisfactorily, worked with Housing Options to prevent their homelessness, or those who are making an economic contribution to the community.
4. To promote mobility for existing tenants – a quota of 25% of all vacancies of affordable homes has been set. This was based on the tenure breakdown of households on the existing housing register

The scheme includes provisions concerning applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The provisions are intended to reward applicants who help themselves particularly by arranging their own short term accommodation and to require homeless households placed in temporary accommodation by the Council, not to delay ‘bidding’ to the Council for a permanent home in order to minimise the time they spend in temporary accommodation.

7.8 Current Services – Non-priority Homeless

Government good practice guidance encourages local authorities to develop a clear “offer” to rough sleepers which sets out what assistance the authority can provide for people who are sleeping rough. This offer needs to be consistently communicated to rough sleepers and to local communities, faith groups and the statutory and voluntary agencies who are working with them. The proposed offer to rough sleepers in Arun District is therefore a key component of the Homelessness Strategy delivery plan. The offer focuses on the following key issues

- Outreach services (i.e not office based)
- Advice and support
- Severe weather provision
- Reconnection services to enable individuals to return home
- Enforcement action and removal

The offer will be funded by a one off grant of £55,000 from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), as well as partnership working with other agencies.

7.9 Partnership Working

Housing Options staff work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies providing funding in some cases. Specialist agencies provide a mixture of advice and accommodation services particularly for people who would be unlikely to be considered to be a priority by the Council; some may also have complex support needs. The Homelessness Review 2011 provides an overview of Arun’s partners, examples of some current joint working initiatives are given below.

1. Sands Project /Partners Stonepillow Homelessness Charity – (supports individuals with drug and alcohol problems)

A members of the Housing Options team attends once a month to provide housing advice

2. Connexions Baby for Life project/ Local Schools – (aims to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies)

A member of the Housing Options team advises pupils on housing issues, dispelling myths that having a baby is a quick route to housing

3. Homelink – Charity set up to enable homeless people within Arun become private tenants with a deposit guarantee

Housing Options team make referrals according to eligibility criteria.

4. Stonepillow – Charity providing crisis accommodations and support for single homeless people

Housing Options team and Stonepillow work in partnership to support shared clients, Arun has made a contribution to a new Stonepillow support worker in 2011/12 via a Government grant

7.10 Current Services – Priority Homelessness

If homelessness cannot be prevented, a homelessness application is made and - providing Arun has a legal duty to provide accommodation to a 'priority'³ applicant - temporary or permanent housing is provided.

7.11 Temporary Accommodation

Arun continues to rely on a combination of bed and breakfast accommodation (26 establishments are used but primarily 15 located in Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing) and two hostels Howard House, Bognor Regis (26 bedsits and 1 bed flats plus 1, 2 bed flat) and Lantern House, Bognor Regis (6 rooms with shared facilities) and a small number of Arun homes in various locations let on licence agreements. Temporary accommodation for families with 2 or more children is in particularly short supply.

7.12 Bed and Breakfast is used as a last resort and every effort is made to place families in self contained accommodation for no more than 6 weeks, placements in accommodation outside the Arun District and Worthing are avoided as they are generally unpopular. An added pressure in securing Bed and Breakfast accommodation is that many of the establishments the Council use are also used by neighbouring local authorities so there can be competition for the available spaces.

³ Priority Applicant - Priority applicants include households with children and people who are vulnerable eg a as a result of age, disability, violence or leaving institutionalised care

7.13 Expenditure on Bed and Breakfast accommodation

Money spent on Bed and Breakfast accommodation rose by over 100% in 2010/11 to nearly £300,000 compared with £123,000 in the previous year (2009/10). The net cost of bed and breakfast in 2011/12 is predicted to be within the budget of £140,000. The cost of Bed and Breakfast is met by Arun and the resident (primarily via benefit payments); in 2009/10 the split was 60/40, in 2010/11 the split had become 75/35, due to changes in benefit entitlement this contribution pattern continues to be reflected in the current financial year.

7.14 The review of Homelessness included consultation with residents occupying temporary accommodation provided by Arun, residents were asked to comment on its suitability and quality. Feedback was as follows;-

- Where Arun had been unable to prevent homelessness, applicants had expected to be placed in temporary accommodation and accepted that it was the only option the Council had.
- Many applicants were initially placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and the quality and standard of the accommodation generally exceeded expectations.
- Those respondents who did not agree that their temporary accommodation was suitable for their needs (7 in total) listed cleanliness and lack of space as being the main reasons for this.
- Overall, Bed and Breakfast accommodation was highly rated as were self contained hostel accommodation. Respondents in Arun hostels with single rooms and sharing facilities were least satisfied.

PART 2 – HOMELESSNESS IN ARUN

Section 8 - Homelessness Review Consultation with service users – Key Findings

8.1 A substantial part of the Homelessness Review 2011 concerned consultation with service users. This section of the strategy focuses on the views expressed by service users and the implications for the delivery and development of the homelessness service in the future.

1. Partner Agency Service Users – Key Findings

29 responses were received from service users, these were people approaching the support agencies for housing assistance during the consultation period. The questionnaires were completed by the service user, with assistance from the support agency. Five support agencies contributed to this element of the consultation – CRI Clockwalk Project; Bognor Housing Trust; CAB Arun & Chichester; Stonham Signpost, and SANDS Project. Key findings were:-

- Of the responses received, 17 (58.6%) described themselves as ‘white British’; 1 as ‘white Irish’ (3.4%); and 11 (37.9%) as ‘any other white’
- Of those who had registered a housing application with Arun, all commented that they thought their chances of being rehoused were “poor”, “none”, “very little” or “pretty remote”. One added that they were actively bidding “...*which may take a long time...*”
- 55.2% indicated that they had sought housing advice from ADC; 13 (44.8%) indicated that they had not.
- Of those who had sought advice, their opinions of whether the advice was helpful or not was generally unfavourable mainly because they had been advised that they were not a priority
- Respondents were asked what problems they had faced whilst seeking accommodation in Arun. The most common problem was affordability.
- Respondents were asked to comment on what they thought would help them to find accommodation. The most popular comment was to have help with funding or having employment. The second most popular comment was ‘having a passport’.
- 68.9% of the respondents indicated that they would be prepared to complete a simple course to demonstrate that they understand the responsibilities of holding a tenancy if, in doing so, would provide a ‘reference’ for potential landlords
- “Where, realistically, would you like to be living in 12 months’ time?”- 22 replied that they would like to be living in a flat or room.

2. Arun Service users – Key Findings

27(17%) questionnaires (including the 7 interviews) were completed and returned, a disappointing response. This may be due to the fact that many service users had 'moved on' and as homelessness was no longer an issue did not seem the point in commenting. Alternatively some of those who did complete questionnaires commented that they doubted their views would be taken seriously and felt this was primarily why many people would not bother to take part. Key findings were:-

- The majority of respondents gave their reason for homelessness as being “parents no longer willing/able to accommodate”
- The majority of respondents (96.3%) approached Arun DC first for help
- When asked what their expectations were when they approached ADC, the majority of respondents (18 = 66.6%) replied that they expected the Council to either give them somewhere to live, or to find (or help find) them somewhere to live. 4 (14.81%) only expected help and/or advice.
- The majority of respondents (70.1%) indicated that they found the Council staff and offices welcoming.
- Only 9 respondents (33.3%) had attended a 'drop-in' session and waiting times ranged from 'not long' to 'longest wait half an hour but often seen immediately'.
- 13 respondents (48%) said that the Council stayed in regular contact with them regarding their housing circumstances.
- Applicants who made a homeless application were asked why they weren't able to secure their own accommodation. The majority stated that it was due to affordability.
- Respondents were asked “What 3 things could have been done by any organisation that would have made a big difference to you/your housing situation?” The top 3 responses were:-
 1. Better communication/keep up to date/regular contact
 2. Make clear all steps needed (Maybe a leaflet)
 3. Provide/help to provide accommodation

PART 3 – WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WANT TO BE – THE STRATEGY

Section 9 - Conclusions and service objectives

Where We Are

Arun has performed well in preventing homelessness in recent years seeing a substantial drop year on year in the number of homelessness applications until the more challenging climate during 2011. This is largely attributable to the development and work of the Housing Options team and housing market conditions. This section provides an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that we face in the immediate future.

9.1 Service Pressures

- (i) The number of homeless applications has risen in recent months and current local economic and housing conditions would suggest that the numbers of applications could increase further. This is often the result of failure in the housing market for supply to meet demand, which puts housing out of the reach of lower income households.
- (ii) The number of applicants in temporary accommodation is already relatively high and, with a finite resource of short term accommodation, Arun continues to rely on expensive Bed and Breakfast accommodation, albeit the quality of Bed and Breakfast is generally good
- (iii) Rough Sleeping in Arun, particularly Bognor Regis, is a significant problem and may continue to be so unless the proposed offer for rough sleepers is not soundly implemented with partners
- (iv) The proportion of affordable homes available in Arun is 9% is significantly less than the national average of 18% and the south east average of 14% making waiting times potentially longer particularly for those in greatest need.
- (v) Changes to Housing Benefit entitlements and welfare benefits are likely to make accessing the private rented sector even more difficult than it is currently. Arun has been proactive in identifying those households who are likely to see their benefit levels fall and could lose their home as a result
- (vi) Reduction in personal income and unemployment may see a rise in mortgage repossessions
- (vii) Mortgage funds have become more difficult to secure resulting in greater reliance on the private rented sector and upward pressure on rents
- (viii) Homelessness services are funded by the Council Tax payer and with other in the current economic climate and in common with other authorities Arun must be prudent in order to balance a reducing budget

9.2 Service Achievements

- (i) Continued expansion of the 'tools' in place to prevent homelessness and the role of the Housing Options team e.g. development of the Bond scheme and improved advice and information for residents
- (ii) Review and adoption of a new Allocations Policy, rewarding homeless and potentially homeless applicants who help themselves and rehousing homeless households in temporary accommodation more quickly.
- (iii) Adoption of the first Rough Sleepers Strategy and opening a cold weather shelter winter 2010/11.
- (iv) Adoption of a Joint Protocol with a range of agencies including social services to help and support homeless young people
- (v) Continuing to work more closely with partner agencies particularly homelessness charities
- (vi) Residents report that it is consistently easy to meet with Arun staff and so gain access to the service

9.3 Service Weaknesses

- (i) The management of temporary accommodation requires improvement particularly to ensure appropriate standards are met and that there is ongoing liaison with residents
- (ii) Service users would like to be much better informed about their housing situation and kept up to date
- (iii) Customer care can be varied and clear standards should be adopted
- (iv) Insufficient investment in the appointment and development of Housing Options staff
- (v) Homeless prevention services need to be identified and delivered and existing projects given higher priority in terms of investment and delivery

9.4 Service Opportunities

- (i) Development of the Housing Options team's scope of expertise in preventing homelessness and supporting staff responsible for receiving homeless applications.
- (ii) Development of advice and information services particularly using the Council's new website
- (iii) The Localism Bill will enable local authorities to meet their homelessness duty by arranging good quality private rented homes which must be available for a minimum of 12 months.
- (iv) Linked to this there is further scope for Arun to develop how it works with the Private Rented Sector including expansion of the Bond Scheme, Landlords Forum, and Landlords Accreditation Scheme.
- (v) Development of a reference system for first time tenants to provide reassurance to landlords and improve the sustainability of tenancies for applicants, with Partnership working to make the best of resources.
- (vi) Introduction of flexible tenancies to allow social landlords like Arun to manage their homes more effectively and fairly, and deliver better results for local communities, for example by reducing levels of under occupation and thereby freeing up larger affordable homes.
- (vii) The Localism Bill provides greater freedom for local authorities to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area – Arun has made a significant start here with adoption of a new Allocations scheme.
- (viii) Development of a Private Sector Leasing initiative to assist with provision of short term accommodation.

9.5 Service Objectives – Where we want to be.

The overarching aim contained within 'Arun's Priorities 2009-13' is that:-

"Our intention is to make Arun a good place to live, to work and to visit; to foster a fair, equal and locally democratic society; and to provide excellent value for money. We recognise that we can only do this by working in partnership with other agencies and we intend to be a constructive and committed partner to deliver the community's priorities."

Our vision regarding those who are in housing need is to :- Continue to help prevent people from becoming homeless and quicker re-housing of those in greatest need.

In order to deliver these strategic aims the following five key objectives have been agreed to form the basis of the following Homelessness Service Delivery Plan;

Objective 1 - Early intervention to prevent homelessness.

We aim to develop the prevention service further to ensure that we communicate well with the public to encourage them to talk to us about their housing problems early and to offer a personalised service to help and support individuals to meet their housing needs.

Objective 2 - Delivering quality, consistent and accurate customer services

We aim to develop our customer services well, to ensure that our customers feel well informed about what we are doing to help them resolve their housing needs, and to develop our understanding of what our customers think of our services.

Objective 3 - Improving access to accommodation across all tenures to meet identified housing needs

We aim to work closely with the Private Sector to maximise the number of housing options that are available for those who are in housing need.

Objective 4 - Ensure people with housing related support needs have these needs fully assessed and have access to the support services required to sustain independent living and prevent homelessness

We aim to work closely with our customers to help them to access support services that will help them to resolve their housing needs, and sustain settled housing.

Objective 5 - Strong partnership working across all sectors, whose activities contribute to preventing homelessness and/or meeting the accommodation and support needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

We aim to work closely with our partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors who deliver services to priority and non-priority homeless households to ensure a well co-ordinated housing and support services in Arun

In order to progress these key objectives a detailed action plan has been developed. Details are included at Section 9. We are confident that these 5 strategic priorities will provide a sound framework for the next five years. However, given the current uncertainty and pace of change nationally and locally the detailed action plan sets out what we plan to do in the next 12 months and will be reviewed and updated in early 2013 when more details of the resources that are available for 2013/14 will be known and details of the new Arun Priorities will be decided.

Progress against this action plan will be monitored regularly and details of how we have done will be provided on our website in February 2013.

PART 3 - WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WANT TO BE – THE STRATEGY

Section 10 - How we will get there - Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

The previous section has detailed the opportunities that we wish to develop to continue to improve the homelessness service that is provided for the residents of Arun. In this section details of the actions that will be taken are provided. The action plan details what we will do to progress each key objective. It also sets targets and timescales and resources available to progress the actions which will move us towards meeting our key objectives in the delivery of the service.

Objective One – Early Intervention to Prevent Homelessness					
Action	Detail	Targets	By When	Who	Resources Identified
Ensure advice is available when ever households seek it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drop in / telephone advice on demand during office hours Out of Hours Service for emergencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Options Advisers available to deliver personalised advice during office hours. Cover Out of Hours service whenever office closed. 	April – March each year	Housing Options team	Within current staffing budgets
Deliver a comprehensive range of prevention initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer financial assistance to households to prevent homelessness for example court fees, rent payments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent 90% of homelessness in Arun 	April – March each year	Housing Options Team Leader	Within current staffing budgets £21100, HPF
Income Maximisation / Debt Counseling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission income maximisation and debt advice services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 hours financial advice per week 	June 2012	Senior Housing Options Officer	£5000 from HPF
'Good Tenant' courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with supported housing providers to develop courses for potential tenants from their schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open dialogue with all supported housing providers by September 2012 Make 'Good Tenant' courses available to all in supported housing by March 2013 	March 2013	Housing Services Manager	Within existing partner budgets
Raise profile and public awareness of Options Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver outreach sessions to organisations on request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a minimum of 3 outreach sessions per year Support 'Good Tenant' Courses where requested 	April – March each year	Housing Options Team	Within current staffing budgets
Mortgage rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominate suitable households to Moat Housing Association to make full use of resources available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve full spend of resources available within Arun for Mortgage Rescue 	April – March each year	Senior Housing Options Officer	Within current budgets and identified central government funding
Sanctuary Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer households at risk of violence enhanced security where appropriate to enable them to remain in their homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer Sanctuary Scheme to 100% of households fleeing violence where it is safe to do so. 	April 2012 – March 2013 ongoing if resources allow	Senior Housing Options Officer	£3k from HPF

Publicity campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of information available on the website • Provide a comprehensive guide to housing options • Deliver an awareness raising publicity campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a review of the website. • Develop an booklet and e-booklet giving details of finding and keeping accommodation • Work with PR to agree a communication strategy for the next 12 months to encourage households to seek advice at an early stage. 	<p>May 2012</p> <p>August 2012</p> <p>June 2012</p>	Senior Housing Options Officer with assistance from Public Relations	£20,000 from HPF
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Objective Two – Delivering quality, consistent and accurate customer service					
Action	Detail	Target	By When	Who	Resources Identified
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all staff are appropriately trained on changes to legislation and case law. • Ensure all staff are fully up to date on case law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to all staff regarding the Localism Act. • Ensure staff attend training updates and share information with colleagues • Make use of NHAS 	Ongoing	Senior Housing Options Officer	Within current training budgets
Performance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce workflow within Housing Options, Allocations and Homelessness to ensure consistency • Use workflow to manage and monitor performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement changes arising from Lean Review. • Map new procedures on to Workflow • Ensure improved case management through the monitoring workflow 	September 2012 and ongoing	Housing Services Manager	Within current budgets £15,000 (already approved)
Increase resources for home visits and intensive rehousing advice for those in TA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all resident exclusions are visited • Give regular face to face help and advice to enable households to resolve their housing needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance Temporary Accommodation Officer role and increase to full time post • Include visits in new job description 	March 2012	Housing Services Manager	Within current staffing budgets
Review service delivery to meet changing needs of service in light of the Localism Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement changes necessary in the light of the Localism Act and Lean Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review policies and procedures <p>Review staff and service delivery structure where appropriate.</p>	July 2012	Housing Services Manager	To be developed
Deliver excellent services	Introduce Customer Feedback process	Carry out review of most effective way to obtain customer feedback and implement accordingly.	October 2012	Housing Services Manager	To be considered as part of the review

Objective Three – Improving access to and retention of accommodation across all tenures to meet identified housing needs					
Action	Detail	Target	By When	Who	Resources Identified
Ensure continuation of leasing scheme as an alternative to bed and breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Hyde HA to improve the PSL offer to Landlords to attract more properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider additional financial support for the PSL scheme 	May 2012	Housing Services Manager	£5k from HPF
Support non priority homeless organisations in bidding for funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer support for bids to provide services to non-priority homeless where they meet a strategic need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all bidding opportunities are shared with homeless agencies Offer advice and support letters where appropriate 	April 2012 – March 2014	Housing Services Manager CVS	Within current staffing budgets
Continue to support rent bond scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop partnership working with Landlords to enable rent bond to meet changing needs of Localism Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 85 bonds per financial year between 2012 and 2014 Carry out a review of the business case for a Social Lettings Agency 	April 2012 – March 2014 Autumn 2012	Landlord Liaison Officer	£30k from existing budgets £20,400 from HPF (already approved)
Assist households to avoid homelessness as a result of changes to welfare benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with Housing Benefits to respond to changes in welfare benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer shared DHP budget to enable households to move to more affordable housing in a managed way Run publicity campaign on changes to welfare benefits Promote direct payments to landlords where appropriate and give assistance to enable households to apply 	Ongoing	Senior Housing Options Officer / Housing Benefits Manager	£10k shared budget from Housing Benefits DWP funding identified from 2011/12 HPF

Objective 4 – Ensure people with housing related support needs have these needs assessed and have access to the support services required to sustain independent living and prevent homelessness					
Action	Detail	Target	By When	Who	Resources Identified
Develop support service for young people who are new tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Southdown Housing to deliver SP funded support service 'My Place' in Arun. Participate in joint assessments for young people who are threatened with homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide accommodation with support for 7 young people Carry out joint assessments within 5 days of a 16 or 17 year old approaching as homeless 	December 2011 onwards	Senior Housing Options Officer Senior Homelessness Officer	Identified Supporting People funding and within existing budgets

Reduce Rough Sleeping in Arun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support schemes to reduce rough sleeping in Arun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with WSCC and homeless organisations to attract funding for the continuation of the Street Outreach project Consider viability of working in partnership to provide short term accommodation for rough sleepers in Bognor Work with Homelink to ensure rent deposit scheme contributes to the resettlement of rough sleepers 	April 2012 – March 2014	Housing Services Manager	Within existing budgets
Work in partnership with other agencies to reduce evictions as a result of tenancy failure	Support the work of the Family Intervention Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make referrals and provide advice on housing and homelessness to the FIP 	April 2012 (check)	Community Safety	Identified resources (check)
Continue to develop partnership working with partners delivering services to homeless households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with MIND to provide alternative arrangements for the administration of the Mental Health Panel Work with Supported Housing Providers to monitor the outcomes of the new Allocations Policy Participate in the review of the Supporting People funded Homelessness Prevention Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify alternative resources to ensure the mental health panel continues Discuss the impact of the new Allocations Policy with agencies after 3 months of operation Include feedback in review of Allocations Scheme Work with WSCC to ensure SP funding is most appropriately directed to the prevention of homelessness	September 2012	Housing Services Manager	Within existing resources

Objective Five – Strong partnership working across all organisations whose activities contribute to preventing homelessness and/or meeting the accommodation and support needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness					
Action	Detail	Target	By When	Who	Resources Identified
Improve partnership working with agencies working with non-priority homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend and support operation meetings for agencies delivering services to Rough Sleepers Discuss opportunities to deliver 'No Second Night Out' initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend 80% of operational case management group meetings for rough sleepers Work with other agencies to reduce street sleeping in Arun 	<p>April 2012 – March 2014</p> <p>March 2013</p>	Housing Services Manager	Within existing resources

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategic co-ordination of non-priority homeless services in partnership with CVS 	<p>to as close to zero as possible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a minimum of 2 strategic liaison meetings regarding rough sleepers work • Attend a minimum of 80% of multiagency meetings for MARAC and IOM 	April 2012 – March 2014		
Develop private sector to discharge homeless duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with landlords to respond to the new provisions in the Localism Act 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out individual liaison with landlords regarding changes under the Localism Act • Attend all Landlords Forums with updates • Develop a leaflet explaining the schemes that are available for landlords to consider 	<p>September 2012</p> <p>April 2012 – March 2014</p> <p>December 2012</p>	Landlord Liaison Officer	<p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Within publicity budget already identified</p>