

# Housing Strategy Refresh 2018-2020

## Delivery and Priorities



## Contents

<b>Foreword &amp; Introduction</b>	
<b>Purpose &amp; Ambition</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Refreshed Priorities</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>How we developed the Strategy refresh</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
	<b>Page 3 - 4</b>
<b>Review of drivers impacting on Housing</b>	
• <b>Local Government Budget Pressures</b>	<b>Page 4 -7</b>
• <b>Shared Services</b>	
• <b>Increasing Housing Supply for all</b>	
• <b>Affordable Housing</b>	
• <b>Welfare Reform</b>	
• <b>Homelessness</b>	
• <b>Health &amp; Social Care</b>	
• <b>Private Rented Sector</b>	
• <b>Planning Policy</b>	
• <b>Devolution</b>	
• <b>Brexit</b>	
<b>Poole Housing Profile &amp; Progress since 2013</b>	
<b>Priority 1 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 8-9</b>
<b>Priority 2 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Priority 3 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Priority 4 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Priority 5 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>Priority 6 Delivery Plan</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Final Summary</b>	

## Page 13

### Foreword

For many people, Poole is a great place to live, grow up, do business and retire. It has a high quality environment, accessible countryside and beaches, good schools, low crime rates and many of the other attributes which make areas popular places for people to live.

Housing is a crucial component of wellbeing. Good quality housing, which meets an individual's or family's needs, provides a sound platform to build a good quality of life.

Poole current Housing Strategy was published in 2013 and during that time there has been many significant changes that affect housing. By reviewing the current strategy and providing a refreshed version it enables us to reevaluate our priorities in light of the many changes. It also allows us to reflect on what has been achieved so far and set out a new delivery plan to tackle the many issues that still need to be met around housing.

This refreshed strategy sets out how we will aim to meet the housing needs of our communities.

### Cllr Karen Rampton

#### Portfolio Holder for Housing

### Introduction & Purpose

The Borough of Poole, in common with much of the UK, is growing and changing. Meeting the housing needs of Poole, now and in the future, is important to residents, the Council, Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership and its other partners.

The purpose of the housing strategy is to inform local residents and partners about Poole's housing needs and issues and set out key challenges where action will be required to help meet both current and future housing need. It also underpins the Council's main vision to improve the quality of life for the people of Poole.

The strategy contributes towards the Council's wider strategic aims and priorities and links into many key policies such as the corporate strategy and local plan. It is therefore important to refresh the strategy to capture the many changes and re-align our priorities accordingly.

The ambition for housing in Poole is to enable households to live in decent, warm, homes that they can afford within safe neighbourhoods and strong, empowered communities. There is a need to provide services which help address health and socio economic inequalities and support people who are likely to have fewer chances in life and be vulnerable to poverty.

### Refreshed Priorities

- 1. Increasing the supply of homes to best meet local needs including affordable housing**
- 2. Ensuring the Council's housing stock is managed efficiently, safely and effectively**
- 3. Continue to Influence improvements in the private rented sector including enforcement action**
- 4. Supporting area specific regeneration plans across the Borough of Poole**
- 5. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping**
- 6. Improving health and wellbeing through housing**

## How we developed this strategy refresh and updated priorities

It is important to note that this refreshed document does not replace the existing housing strategy but provides an update and realigns the priorities in accordance with many changes to housing policies. The priorities set out in the current housing strategy are still relevant however upon reviewing them it was clear that there are more emerging housing related issues.

### 1. Increasing the supply of homes to best meet local needs including affordable housing

To achieve the objectively assessed housing need we will need to proactively enable the delivery of new homes across all tenures. This priority will align with our refreshed local plan whereas previously, affordable housing delivery had been the key focus. The delivery of affordable housing is still important but the Council recognises that the delivery of all types of housing will support the wider economic growth and community benefits.

### 2. Ensuring the Council's housing stock is managed efficiently, safely and effectively

Poole has retained its housing stock and we need to ensure the management model supports the priorities of the Council. This should be with regard to service delivery to its tenants and in supporting development of new homes.

### 3. Continue to influence improvements in the private rented sector including enforcement action

There is still significant local need for private rented accommodation and therefore growth of this sector remains a high priority to address.

New powers have been introduced by Government to help tackle standards and conditions and we need to continue to work with local private sector landlords to ensure this area of housing improves.

### 4. Supporting area specific regeneration plans across the borough

The current Local Plan for Poole already identifies a number of regeneration areas and specific sites across the Borough. The Local Plan refresh also identifies additional areas and sites in order to meet our housing needs. We need to work in partnership with other services and external agencies to support these plans through to the delivery of new homes and, in some cases wider community benefits.

### 5. Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

The Homelessness Reduction Act requires councils to act at a much earlier point to help people to prevent their homelessness. The new duties will see a cultural change across homelessness services which support residents to find the best solutions to prevent or resolve their homelessness. The council must ensure services are delivered with a renewed strategic focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, through the development of a specific strategy which identifies the resources, prevention activity and supply of settled and temporary accommodation to meet local needs.

### 6. Improving health and wellbeing through housing

This remains a priority for the Council and needs to continue to work in partnership with health and social care, the better together programme, Care Act requirements and the Integrated Health and Social Care funds.

The consultation process for the development of this refresh has been more limited than that undertaken when the Housing Strategy was first adopted. The following steps have been taken in order to inform the final documents:-

- Portfolio Holder for Housing Consultation
- Council Corporate Management Team
- Health & Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel
- All Councillors
- Cabinet
- Full Council
- All Heads of Service
- Poole Housing Partnership
- All other Dorset Authorities
- Place and People Strategy Groups
- Registered Providers

A full review, including more significant stake-holder consultation, will take place leading up to 2020, after which a new housing strategy will be published.

## Review of drivers that are impacting on housing

Since adoption of the current strategy in 2013, the national housing policy and funding agenda has changed significantly, as has the wider economic context. A number of election manifestos, government statements, new legislation and policy documents have occurred over the last 4 years. These include the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, the Housing White Paper 2017 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

An analysis of these issues, opportunities and threats is summarised below as a backdrop which has helped to inform our strategy refresh and revised priorities :-

### Local Government Budget Pressures

Financial austerity continues to be a key feature with widespread implications across all areas of activity. The ability to deliver services to residents in this context is difficult. This is the case for Councils, other public bodies and the many voluntary sector agencies who provide valuable additional services locally. The agenda of continued savings necessitates innovative responses and efficiencies.

The availability of government funding for public bodies has reduced significantly over recent years. For Councils, this has meant reducing central government grant funding, with the expectation of no central government grant for Councils by 2020/21.

Despite these financial pressures, housing activity remains a high priority for the Council because of its importance across a significant number of domains that impact on the daily lives of our residents (e.g. health & wellbeing, employment, poverty).

### Shared services & Local Government Reorganisation

Due to increasing financial pressures, as well as the ambition to define Poole as part of a growing economy on the south coast, the Council proceeded with a programme of shared services with its immediate neighbours.

A 'Case for Change' was submitted to central government earlier in 2017 requesting approval for Local Government Reorganisation. This involves the creation of two new unitary authorities to cover Dorset. Poole is proposed to form part of the 'urban' Unitary together with Bournemouth and Christchurch. The Secretary of State has now agreed with the proposal for two new unitary authorities to be created and they will go live in April 2019

### Increasing Housing Supply for all

There has been growing focus on the need for more homes across all tenures. The national Elphicke-House report published in 2015 was instrumental in highlighting the key role that Councils could and should take to enable the delivery of homes across all tenures.

The Housing White Paper – ‘Fixing our Broken Housing Market’ - published in February 2017 sets out the macro principle of supply and demand, where the additional supply of new homes would meet housing demands and help dampen increasing house prices. The link between housing growth and wider economic growth is becoming increasingly clear.

The Housing White Paper proposes a range of different measures including a proposed new national standardised methodology for calculating housing requirements to inform Local Plans, a new Housing Delivery Test, greater encouragement of higher density housing in urban areas, use of modern methods of construction, supporting the growth of self and custom-build homes, and more freedom for developers if housing targets are not being met. The role set out for Councils includes making full use of their land and borrowing.

### Affordable Housing

In 2016 it was suggested that the Homes and Communities Agency would only fund low cost home ownership housing rather than affordable or social rented units. However, the current programme includes scope for grants for affordable rented units to help meet housing needs. The profile of future affordable housing has changed to include the Starter Homes product although the Housing White Paper proposed a softening of this policy in terms of the proportion of such homes required through the planning system.

The government has stated their intention to extend the Right to Buy to Housing Associations, which will be funded by a High Value Homes Levy collected from Councils as defined in the Housing and Planning Act 2016. The guidance to date is that Councils can choose how they generate these funds but it is suggested that they do so by selling their higher value Council homes which is an added burden both financially and on our affordable housing resources. .

In addition to this, Councils and Registered Providers were required from 1 April 2016 to reduce their rents by 1% each year for four years. This reduced income stream presents significant risks to the overall financial viability of the social housing sector. It will reduce funds available to build additional affordable housing and reduce the ability to manage and maintain existing stock.

National planning policy has changed so that affordable housing contributions can only be applied to schemes involving 11 or more homes. This policy replaced any local policy seeking affordable housing contributions where viable on smaller sites.

### Welfare reform

A series of welfare reforms have been implemented over the last five years which mean that benefit claimants have seen a gradual reduction in their income levels. Measures have included the following:-

- rolling out the lower ‘shared accommodation rate’ to those under 35 years of age instead of just those under 25 years of age
- Housing Benefit paid directly to the tenant rather than the landlord
- ‘under-occupancy charge’ for Council and Housing Association rents where Housing Benefit is reduced if there are spare bedrooms

- 'Universal Credit' has been piloted and is being gradually rolled-out, effectively consolidate some means tested benefits effectively into one monthly payment
- Housing Benefit Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level frozen for four years (whilst private rents continue to rise)
- Housing Benefit for working age claimants now only backdated for one month rather than previous 6 months rule
- 'Benefit Cap' levels reduced twice for families and singles, currently at £384 per week for families/couples and £257 a week for singles
- no longer automatic entitlement to Housing costs within Universal Credit for under 22 year olds
- Housing Benefit personal allowances limited to 2 dependent children
- the length of time Housing Benefit can be paid for someone temporarily being away from their home reduced from 13 weeks to 4 weeks for many claimants
- no longer including a Family Premium within the Housing Benefit claim for those with a child/children
- the cessation of the Work-Related component within Employment Support Allowance has seen a reduction in income of £29.05 per week
- review of Disability Living Allowance has seen many claimant's entitlement end and those who have moved on to the new Personal Independence Payments (PIP) may have experienced a reduction in income
- Benefits are cut ('sanctions') for periods of up to 156 weeks where claimants have not complied with required activities such as job seeking

The policy of welfare reforms continues with several more reforms to be implemented. The impact will need to be closely monitored and mitigated where appropriate:-

- 'full service' Universal Credit roll-out in Poole started in October 2017, with the whole borough in full service by the end of January 2018.
- effectively top slicing additional Housing Benefit for supported housing from 2019 and devolving the budget to Councils to directly commission these services

Whilst designed to encourage people into training and employment, these changes have also increased levels of homelessness due to people's reduced ability to afford housing costs. The changes have also influenced the housing market by increasing the reluctance of many landlords to let their properties to households who are benefit reliant and/or have support needs.

### Homelessness

Many factors have led to gradually increasing homelessness levels, both nationally and locally. Rough sleeping considered the most severe form of homelessness increased nationally by 16% from 2015 to 2016, and 134% since 2010. This is compounded by austerity measures in care and support services whereby access is more difficult, leading to a notable increase to both the scale and the complexity/severity of homeless cases.

The Homelessness Reduction Act, given Royal Assent in April 2017, will place greater prevention duties on Councils for a higher number of people in a wider range of situations, and will require much earlier interventions 'up-stream'. Whilst the principles of the legislation are widely supported, there is significant concern that funding will be insufficient for Councils to deliver the new and extended statutory homeless duties. Nationally 'New burdens' funding of £61M for the first two years has been proposed. The Council does receive Flexible Homelessness Support Grant from central government and it is ring-fenced.

### Health and social care

The changes to health and social care funding arrangements and policy continue at pace and have transformed the landscape for social care provision. The Care Act 2014 brought about some significant changes that are still being rolled out. A newly proposed arrangement for joint commissioning across sectors and geographical boundaries provide opportunities and challenges that impact on housing. The health, care and support needs of individuals are key factors to consider in terms of the local housing provision and policies.

### Private Rented Sector

The Housing White Paper emphasises the important role that the private rented sector has to play in the housing market. There is greater focus nationally on enabling more private rented sector accommodation to help meet housing demands.

In addition to this, several elements of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 involve measures to help raise standards amongst landlords and agents. This includes measures such as banning orders for rogue landlords. There is a proposal for banning lettings fees charged by lettings agents and the possible extension of mandatory licensing which may be introduced during 2017.

### Planning policy

There are several new policy changes in terms of the planning system to help speed up the delivery of new homes. Whilst having the potential to increase housing supply, they may reduce the quality and sustainability of additional housing numbers.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 set out many of these measures and planning was a key focus in the Housing White Paper. The changes involve government intervention if Councils do not update their Local Plans in a timely way and if key targets are not being delivered. The paper proposes a less onerous planning system to

help speed up applications and therefore completions, a standardised revised methodology for calculating housing, a new Housing Delivery Test with penalties for Councils for under-delivery and a more robust duty to cooperate across boundaries. The Housing White Paper notes that the National Planning Policy Framework will be updated to reflect the proposed changes.

### Devolution

There are emerging devolution deals taking place between individual Councils and central government which are locally specific. In order to be able to deliver the government agenda, Councils are asking for greater local powers over decision-making and funding.

Alongside this, national funding sources are being devolved to Councils, notably around the area of welfare reform. For example, the Temporary Management Fee has been devolved to Councils from 1 April 2017 and named as the new Flexible Homelessness Grant. Whilst this gives local flexibilities, this particular grant is needed initially to fund existing benefit commitments and there is uncertainty because the allocation is only for two years. Central government consultation on the future of supported housing funding states that Housing Benefit for supported housing will similarly be devolved to Councils from 2019.

### Brexit

The Brexit decision to leave the European Union in June 2016 was triggered in March 2017 and will involve two years of talks. The full details and impact of the changes are not yet known but will no doubt have some impact on elements of housing. For example, it could impact on the financial viability of providers in the housing market or perhaps the movement of people and therefore housing demands in and out of the UK, and arguably also wider economic stability.

## Poole's Housing Profile

Poole has a population of 150,600 (Key economic statistics for Poole and Bournemouth) and household projections estimate that there are 64,500 households in Poole. There is a growing population and the demographics also indicate that our ageing population is higher than average with over 20% of Poole residents being over 65 compared with 5.9% in England.

It is a beautiful and desirable place to live and has a strong and diverse local economy which is continuing to grow. Our local plans and strategy seek to support the town's economic growth and support it with the necessary infrastructure which includes all types of housing supply. Whilst the geographic location provides many attributes for the town such as the port, the natural harbour, the beaches, expanses of natural heathland and the leisure and tourism they support. These attributes from a regeneration and development perspective presents enormous difficulties to balance in order to continue to grow as a town but ensure natural habitats are protected. It also reduces the amount of available land required to meet our growing housing needs and the local plan (currently under review) sets out the key areas of focus that will enable us to do this.

The current forecasts and supporting evidence as part of Poole's local plan review indicates that there is an objectively assessed housing need of 710 new homes up until 2033. This is a significant increase from the earlier local plan which indicates 500 new homes per year up to 2026.

Poole's housing affordability presents challenges in meeting its needs. House prices tripled in Poole between 1998 and 2007 and have continued to rise since. As a result affordability measured using the lower quartile house price to lower quartile income ratio is 9.8 compared to an average across England of 7.1, highlighting ongoing, acute affordability issues.

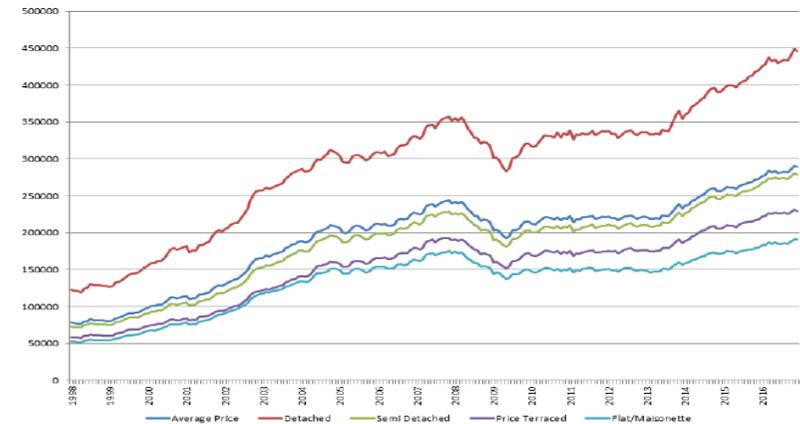


Figure 7: Average house prices in Poole between 1998 and 2016 (data from HM Land Registry 2017)

The affordability levels manifest themselves with a high volume of homelessness issues which are continuing to increase. Comparing performance records for the same period last year, our housing reception has seen a 24% increase in visits / approaches for assistance. The number of households seeking assistance is largely driven by some of the national housing and welfare reform changes set out earlier but also access to affordable private rented housing is a contributing factor.

The private rented sector in Poole accounts for 16% of the overall housing numbers, it now exceeds the level of social housing by 3%. There are a number of households within Poole that need to rely on the private rented sector due to the affordability issues around home ownership but currently the demand outstrips the supply. This in turn puts an increased pressure on the Council to meet its homelessness statutory duties. Going forward we need to explore new ways of intervention and prevention of all types of homelessness including rough sleeping.

The Council has also retained its housing stock and it is managed by Poole Housing Partnership which is an Arm Length Management Organisation (ALMO). The current number of Council Homes is 4587 and the Council continues to work closely with the ALMO to ensure it makes best use of its

resources and the quality of those homes are safe and effective for its residents.

By maintaining the ownership of its housing stock it does mean that the Council have opportunities to increase its stock and contribute to the overall Housing needs across the Borough.

## Progress since 2013

Whilst Poole still faces many challenges in meeting its ongoing housing needs it has made significant progress on the original priorities and actions defined when the strategy was first adopted. These are some of the achievement set out below.

### Priority 1 - Increasing the supply of homes in Poole to better meet local needs

- Using Council owned land and assets we have delivered 117 new affordable homes that are now occupied, including 54 unit new extra care scheme. There are a further 171 new homes currently under construction which will be available during 2018/19.
- Poole has worked in partnership with other Dorset authorities and now has a revised common housing register and allocations policy. This has helped to reduce numbers on the register and improve the management of people's expectations.
- Working in partnership with the ALMO / PHP using a targeted incentive scheme we have achieved the release of over 50 properties that were being under occupied therefore making better use of our resources
- Worked proactively with local landlord and agents to secure nomination agreements

### Priority 2 – Preventing Homelessness particularly for vulnerable households

- Established housing and homelessness prevention pathways and protocols for key vulnerable groups including young people, hospital discharge, victims of abuse, families, rough sleepers, those with learning disabilities and other housing providers.
- Achieved Silver Standards Accreditation for housing options services
- Successfully achieved Homelessness Trailblazer Grant Funding with Bournemouth Borough Council to test innovative approaches to preventing homelessness
- Revised housing protocols for homeless young people and intentionally homeless families and established a specialist housing family outreach workers for early help.
- Effectively mitigated the impact of the benefit cap and other welfare reforms for families and delivered a financial wellbeing service to support households to improve financial management
- Jointly recommissioned a rough sleeper outreach service in partnership with Bournemouth Borough Council

### Priority 3 – Improving health and wellbeing through housing

- Jointly re-modelled and recommissioned a range of housing related support services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups with housing needs including young people, multiple complex needs and mental health
- Delivered a adaptations grant service and supported the implementation of assistive technology to enable people to live safely in their own homes
- Improved the access to health services for rough sleepers

- Established a housing & community safeguard lead and contributed to the implementation of a self-neglect and hoarding referral process and panel meeting
- Delivered a number of bespoke housing solutions for complex cases
- Completed a review of sheltered housing stock identifying redevelopment and re-designation options to make best use of the stock for the future

## Refresh Housing Strategy Priorities

### Priority 1 - Delivery Plan Increasing the supply of homes to best meet local needs including affordable housing

We will do this by:

1. Continue to review and use where appropriate Council owned land, assets and existing housing portfolio stock to deliver a supply of all types of housing to meet local needs
2. Expand the development of the new extra care scheme creating an extra care village and explore options around the delivery of an additional new extra care scheme within the borough
3. Work with private sector providers to explore best value opportunities to deliver homes of a high standard that meets local needs and supports economic growth

4. Work with the Dorset Local Economic Partnership on wider strategic actions to encourage increased housing supply and infrastructure investment
5. Continue to work with the Government on funding initiatives that seek to increase housing supply including low cost home ownership initiatives.
6. Work with Poole Housing Partnership to review the Councils sheltered housing stock and identify re-development and re-designation opportunities
7. Work in partnership to explore options for the development and management of market housing for rent
8. Support the delivery of a community led housing project in line with the community housing fund criteria
9. Publish a new Local Plan which sets out housing target requirements along with policies that will enable development to support the supply
10. Continuing to consider the housing requirements of complex needs cases and where necessary consider bespoke housing supply
11. Explore options for implementing targeted work around empty properties.
12. Appraise the benefits of a housing company
13. Review the Housing Register, Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy

## **Priority 2 - Delivery Plan**

### **Ensuring the Council's housing stock is managed efficiently, safely and effectively**

1. Review the management arrangements for the Council's housing stock to ensure it still meets the Council's priorities and delivers a value for money service
2. Continue to monitor fire safety requirements through the newly formed executive fire safety group and adhere and where necessary enforce any legislative changes that may emerge
3. Continue to fund transfer incentives for Council tenants to downsize and explore incentive options with other local registered housing providers to reduce under-occupation and increase supply of family housing.
4. Continue to review the condition of council assets and scrutinise work programmes to ensure appropriate measures are taken in line with effective management and value for money
5. Review the Council's tenure options to ensure efficient use of its stock in line with current and emerging legislation.
6. Draft, consult and adopt a Housing Tenancy Fraud Policy
7. Continue to review sheltered housing stock and re-designate some schemes for general housing use where it is suitable and appropriate.

## **Priority 3 - Delivery Plan**

### **Continue to influence improvements in the private rented sector including enforcement action**

1. Continue to deliver a joint housing standards service with Bournemouth Borough Council that addresses housing conditions complaints and engages with landlords to improve conditions
2. Participate in further joint Bournemouth and Poole Landlord Exhibitions to promote good practice, share information and network with local landlords to improve working relations.
3. To review and update as necessary the Private Sector Enforcement Policy in line with current and emerging legislation

## Priority 4 - Delivery Plan

### Supporting area specific regeneration plans across the Borough of Poole

1. Work across the Council to assist the delivery of identified regeneration sites within the local plan including Town Centre North and the Housing Zone.
2. Continue to work in partnership with the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure that Poole's regeneration supports the local economy and drives economic growth.
3. Continue to review Council land and assets and identify further opportunities to contribute towards the delivery of housing on regeneration sites.

## Priority 5 - Delivery Plan

### Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping

1. Work with other local authority services and stakeholders to develop a "Preventing Homelessness Strategy" which focuses on the following elements:
  - Housing Advice and Information
  - Early Identification of points where homelessness can be prevented
  - Pre-crisis intervention and procurement of appropriate temporary accommodation
  - Preventing repeat homelessness
  - Delivery of effective Homelessness Partnerships

2. Review the allocation of resources in homelessness service delivery.
3. Set out a clear process for addressing private rented sector offers.
4. Implement a Temporary Accommodation Action Plan.
5. Identify the requirements of housing related support services to households effected by homelessness including;
  - Rough Sleepers
  - Victims of Domestic Abuse
  - Those with Disabilities
  - Mental Health
  - Substance Misuse
  - Offenders
  - Care Leavers
6. Develop better online facilities across housing services including a better website including self-help feature wherever possible and appropriate.
7. Ensure opportunities for external funding streams are considered and maximised where possible.
8. Ensure existing voluntary and community sector services are considered in Housing Strategy action plans.
9. Continue to support housing apprenticeship posts where possible.

## Priority 6 - Delivery Plan

### Improving health and wellbeing through housing

1. Consider a range of housing models to support specific needs such as move-on from care, supported housing, temporary accommodation, refuge, new sheltered or extra care, hospital discharge, institutions and rough sleepers.
2. Retain access to specialised financial wellbeing services.
3. Continue to work in partnership with social care and health colleagues.
4. Ensure safeguarding awareness remains embedded in all frontline housing practice.

## Final Summary

The Council are committed to achieve the Borough's vision to improve the quality of life for the people of Poole and it recognises that housing plays a significant part in ensuring it succeeds.

We hope you feel that the revised priorities set out in this strategy refresh will indeed help us to reach those aims.

The six priorities set out above are accompanied by some headline intentions about the performance and monitoring which will inform the borough and its partners as to whether we have reached our goals.

To be certain that all of the necessary work streams are in place we will develop a more detailed delivery plan setting out work programmes and timescales.

The delivery plan will be monitored and updated during the life of the strategy refresh and annual updates on the progress of the strategy work will be reviewed with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for housing.

**We welcome feedback and comments – these can be made via Kerry Ruff – Strategic Housing & Private Sector Manager**  
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**March 2018 KMR/PH**