



HOUSING

Improving Housing & Affordability



Our Aim

We want Brighton & Hove to be an inclusive city with affordable, high quality, housing that supports a thriving economy by offering security, promoting health and wellbeing and reduces its impact on the environment. We want to help bring about integrated communities in a society that values everyone to recognise and tackle the inequality faced by families, the poor and the vulnerable.

The Housing Strategy 2015¹ seeks to deliver our aim by:

- Improving Housing Supply
- Improving Housing Quality
- Improving Housing Support

Improving Housing Supply

Issues of Concern

An overall increase in prices over the last few years has contributed to the city's housing still being largely unaffordable for the majority of residents.

Many households have to forgo a combination of housing space, quality and other forms of expenditure to ensure they can meet their housing costs. The city has one of the largest private rented sectors in the country comprised of 34,000 homes (28%), with 2 in 7 of the city's households now renting privately. However, high rental costs, poorer than average housing quality and pockets of overcrowding (the highest outside London) result in additional housing challenges for the city.

The city is an expensive place to live. The Council's Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012² identified that almost 88,000 Brighton & Hove households (72%) can not afford market housing without spending a disproportionate level of their income on housing or some form of subsidy.

Prices continue to rise, with a one bed flat on the open market costing 7.5 times median household income³ and three bed houses more than 14.5 times median income. The average monthly rent on a one bed flat in the city at the end of June 2015 was £874 with a three bed house costing £1,500 per month. When comparing these payments to mortgage affordability we find that the rent payment on a one bed flat is similar to the payment of a mortgage of around £149,500 requiring an income of £46,000 to finance and for a three bed home, the rent is equivalent to a mortgage of around £257,000 requiring a household income of £79,000 to finance⁴. Half of all Brighton & Hove households earn less than £28,240 per annum.

¹ Housing Strategy 2015: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-2015>

² Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012: http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Assessment_of_Affordable_Housing_Need.pdf

³ Median household income is £28,340 per annum. Brighton & Hove Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012: www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/ldf/Assessment_of_Affordable_Housing_Need.pdf

⁴ Housing Market Report, 2015 Q2: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-market-reports>

The Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012 estimates that 22,132 households are likely to be in housing need and unable to afford buying or renting in the residential housing market by 2017.⁵ In addition, 59% of those in need (10,642 households) are only able to afford social rented housing rather than affordable rented.

After factoring in the expected supply of new affordable housing it leaves an unmet housing need of 17,403 affordable homes by 2017.⁶ However, the City Plan⁷ demonstrates that the city has the capacity to develop around 13,200 homes in the period 2010 to 2030 (660 per annum). This is less than the 'objectively assessed' housing requirements for the city which have been assessed at 30,120 new homes based on demographic, economic forecasts and affordable housing needs evidence.

What has happened over the last three years

Access to private rented housing for those on benefits is getting harder, with fewer properties available within housing benefit limits. Monitoring of the Rightmove website has identified that during the 3 month period from April to June 2015 only 1 3-bedroom home advertised in Brighton & Hove was within benefit limits. Many households are having to move out of the city along the coast to less expensive areas.⁸

High housing costs in the private sector ensure that social housing remains in high demand with more than 22,000 households on the housing register, with nearly 1,500 households in the highest categories of need. The most common reasons for being on the housing register were a medical priority and overcrowding.

An analysis of households on the housing register highlights that over the last three years there has been 57% increase in the number of households needing to move into three bed homes and 107% increase of households needing to move into four bed or larger homes.

Current position

We work with Planners, the Homes & Communities Agency and our Registered Provider partners in Brighton & Hove Affordable Housing Partnership to make sure that new affordable housing meets high standards. The 2011-2015 Affordable Housing Programme saw 522 new affordable homes developed. This includes completion of the first new Council homes in a generation at Balchin Court under the "New Homes for Neighbourhoods" programme that aims to delivery more than 200 new council homes over the next few years.

The council has appointed a dedicated Under-Occupation Officer to provide practical help and support and financial rewards to tenants wanting to downsize. In 2014/15 the Under-Occupation Officer work has supported households wanting to downsize to release more than 100 family sized homes

⁵ 7,890 is the backlog of households in need and 14,243 is the figure for newly arising households in need

⁶ Calculation: 22,132 affordable need to 2012-17 less 4,729 met from current and new affordable housing stock 2012-17 leaves 17,403 unmet need

⁷ City Plan: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/local-development-framework/submission-city-plan-part-1>

⁸ Brighton & Hove Local Housing Allowance Comparison Report: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-market-reports>

and have helped overcrowded tenants move to larger homes, provided new homes for homeless families and helped house families with disabled members. We have seen increased interest from tenants wishing to downsize and it is anticipated that this trend will continue as the welfare reforms take hold.

Our Homemove scheme advertises council and housing association homes for rent and shared ownership. Homemove incorporates a mobility rating accommodation that indicates whether an available property is suitable for a wheelchair user or someone with limited mobility. All new affordable housing that meets the wheelchair standard is advertised for rent before it is built in order to ensure that the features installed are designed around the specific needs of the future occupants.

To help tackle homelessness we have leased over 1,000 good quality houses and flats to help us minimise our use of B&B type accommodation which is detrimental to children's welfare and linked to many poor health outcomes. We also provide quality housing solutions for Adult Social Care and Children's Services which reduces the impact on those services. We have also leased accommodation to provide young people's supported housing projects.

What we plan to do

We need to make sure that the city has the right type of housing to meet the needs of current and future residents, whether it be owner occupation, private renting, or social rented housing. To do this, our Housing Strategy 2015 priority to Improve Housing Supply focusses on 4 strategic themes:

- Increasing the supply of **New Affordable Housing**
253 new affordable homes are estimated to be completed between 2015 and 2018 across the city with 66 of these expected to compete in 2015/16. These 66 homes are being built to Lifetime Homes Standard and 9 will be new wheelchair adapted homes. In addition there are a further 11 sites that will deliver an additional 212 new affordable homes in the future.

With limited housing development opportunities within the city, we are continuing to work with adjacent local authorities in the Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex to not only address unmet housing needs across a sub-regional area but to identify economic opportunities to increase more jobs and businesses

- Increasing the supply of **Family Housing**
We recognise the need to develop more family housing and in 2014/15 we delivered 29 new 3-bed affordable homes and in 2015/16 we expect 10 new 3-bed homes will be delivered. We are working to ensure the City Plan supports the need for more family homes and have a target for the mix of new affordable homes in terms of size recognised in the draft City Plan of 30% one beds, 45% two beds and 25% three beds.
- Supporting the **Community Housing Sector** to develop new affordable housing
We have a longstanding working relationship with the Community Housing Sector, supporting their successful bid for Government

funding. We are committed to promote the concept of community housing and to this end we will be exploring the viability for development options on available sites with a focus on maximising the social value of new developments and sharing information with the Community Housing Network

- Improving **Student Housing** options to benefit students, communities and take pressure of the existing housing stock

Over 2,000 units of new purpose built student housing have been approved in the city for development over the next few years and we will continue to support the development of further student accommodation in accordance with the City Plan policies. To ensure that the right balance of student accommodation is developed, the council's Planning team has commissioned a report to establish the demand for student housing for the next few years.

Improving Housing Quality

Issues of Concern

Housing condition is known to have a major impact on health particularly around issues such as damp, disrepair & poor energy efficiency. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 shows that on the indoor living environment sub domain (housing quality) almost half (48%) of the city's Lower Super Output Areas⁹ are in the bottom 20% nationally with a quarter in the bottom 10%.

3 of every 10 of the city's homes (around 37,000 properties) are considered to be non-decent with 99.9% of this being in the private sector. 42.5% of all vulnerable households in the private sector living in non-decent homes. Additionally, empty homes in the city are a waste of valuable resources, and a blight in local communities, attracting crime and anti-social behaviour.

Many households in the city have difficulty in paying for fuel to keep warm during the winter months. Fuel poverty has been shown to have significant adverse impacts. In particular, inadequately heated homes can lead to or worsen cardio-respiratory conditions resulting in increased winter deaths among older people. Cold homes have also been implicated in under-achievement by children. According to the latest official figures, fuel poverty (based on the new low income, high cost definition) is estimated to affect more than 14,000 households (11.9% against a South East average of 8.1%).

What has happened over the last three years

More than 4,500 private sector homes have been improved since 2009 through our private sector renewal work. However, Government funding for private sector renewal ceased in 2011 so we developed a Community Finance Initiative with a private sector partner and other authorities to focus on equity release and low cost loans to unlock the capital in people's homes.

Although there have been significant improvements in home energy efficiency, domestic energy prices almost doubled in the three years to 2012/13. Whilst

⁹ Lower Super Output Areas: small areas of around 1,500 residents / 650 households

they have remained constant since then, lack of wage increases has meant there has been a large increase in the numbers of households in fuel poverty.

Current Position

To improve the quality of the city's council housing, an Asset Management Plan saw the creation of a Local Delivery Vehicle (Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes Limited). Up to 499 council homes are being leased to this organisation which has used them as an asset to borrow funding which has helped 99.5% of our council housing stock meet the Decent Homes standard.

By working in partnership with landlords and local letting agencies we are improving management and conditions in HMOs and reducing the impact on the community. Brighton & Hove City Council introduced an additional HMO Licensing scheme in five 'Lewes Road wards' of Hanover & Elm Grove; Moulsecoomb & Bevendean; St Peters & North Laine; Hollingdean & Stanmer and Queen's Park in November 2012.

The Council is working with owners of empty homes and has helped bring more than 900 back into use since 2009. During 2014/15, 158 long term empty private sector homes were brought back into use in the city.

We are working with West Sussex County Council developing a model for delivery of Green Deal / Energy Company Obligation funding for local residents, businesses and the community through becoming an Affiliate Member of Your Energy Sussex partnership (for private sector housing) and building upon our joint work with Public Health. We continue to work with Your Energy Sussex on an ECO funded boiler replacement and heating scheme for vulnerable householders, however the funding does not cover the full cost of installations in most cases and we continue to explore other funding streams to top up the difference. In the council housing sector, the council is implementing a programme to install cavity wall insulation and loft insulation to all relevant properties. In addition there are ongoing programmes for installing energy efficiency boilers and for roof and window replacements.

What we plan to do

We want to make sure that residents are able to live in decent quality homes suitable for their needs. To do this, our Housing Strategy 2015 priority to Improve Housing Quality focusses on 4 strategic themes:

- Make sure the city has **Decent Warm & Healthy Homes**
We will continue to work with West Sussex County Council in developing a model for delivery of Green Deal / Energy Company Obligation funding and with Your Energy Sussex on an ECO funded boiler replacement and heating scheme for vulnerable householders, and continue to explore other funding streams. We are developing the HRA Asset Management Strategy and HRA 30 Business Plan which are key documents to support the Council's Local Housing Investment Plan. The strategy and business plan are due to be consulted on this autumn with the aim that they are approved by February 2016.
- Make sure long term **Empty Homes** are back into use
We will continue to bring long-term private sector empty homes back into use through our successful system of identifying, and making and

maintaining contact with all owners of empty homes. The revised Empty Property Strategy is in development and is expected to be launched during the latter part of this financial year. The Empty Property Enforcement Protocol is in development which will further clarify and strengthen the use of enforcement action in bringing private sector empty homes back into use. In addition we will continue to explore additional funding opportunities and consider empty commercial properties as a potential source of new housing

- **Improve standards in the Private Rented Sector**

With Government funding for private sector renewal having ceased we will continue to explore other funding initiatives and be innovative in how we can improve the quality of housing in the city. For leaseholders in the city we will promote commonhold ownership which will support the improvement of leasehold properties. We will improve the standards for people living in privately rented homes by developing an ethical standard for letting agents including a commitment to equalities and diversity, a 'living rent' scheme where rents are linked to wage inflation, and longer tenancies to support family stability. In addition we will support a register of landlords in the city and help landlords to better manage their properties including up skilling small and accidental landlords to improve tenancy management.

- **Improve the quality and management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

From October 2015 we will be extending Additional HMO Licensing to 7 further wards in the city - Brunswick & Adelaide, Central Hove, East Brighton, Goldsmid, Preston Park, Regency and Westbourne. Smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation in these wards of two or more storeys and three or more occupiers, will need to be licensed from October 2015.

Improving Housing Support

Issues of Concern

Working to help residents remain independent in their own homes and preventing homelessness are a fundamental part of the Council's approach to helping local people and is a key indicator on the Public Health Outcomes Framework. In addition, helping people remain independent helps to mitigate pressures on the more intensive and costly services provided by Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health.

The Housing Related Support services provided or commissioned by the council support 3,500 households and each month hundreds of households at risk of homelessness seek advice and assistance from our Housing Options Team or agencies working in partnership with us. It has been calculated that every £1 spent on support services saves an additional £4.10 across the public sector.

Although homelessness has decreased over the last three years by 15%, it is still 14% above the figure in 2009/10 when homelessness was at its lowest

level. The most common reasons for homelessness are eviction by parents, family or friends (14%) and loss of private rented accommodation (22%¹⁰). Whilst a smaller proportion of our homelessness relates to people with children and young people than the national average, we have a much higher proportion of our homelessness comprised of those with mental health problems, physical disabilities and who are pregnant.

The city has a large proportion of people aged 85 and over (2.6% of the city's population compared to 2.1% in the UK) and projections to 2035 suggest this population will increase more than two thirds to 3.6%.¹¹ This will increase the need for housing, support and care and we are actively looking to increase the supply of extra care housing and other accommodation to maintain resident's quality of life and reduce the need for institutional care.

What has happened over the last three years

The roll-out of welfare reforms has impacted many local people with a knock-on affect on housing services. For example, around 1,150 households are being affected by the reduction in benefits due to under-occupying their home, 360 households have been capped and 17,000 households have been affected by council tax benefit changes.

The Council's Housing Options Team and partnership agencies provide a whole range of services from advice to households who find themselves in a housing crisis and intervening to prevent homelessness, to managing homeless applications. The last 3 years has seen the Council's Housing Options service and partner organisations prevent more than 8,500 households from becoming homeless. Each month hundreds of households seek advice and assistance from our Housing Options team and other agencies across the city and many households need more intensive intervention that requires more detailed casework.

Despite our efforts to prevent homelessness, the number of households in Temporary Accommodation has nearly doubled between March 2012 and March 2015 increasing from 752 to 1,456, although we have continued to reduce the long term use of B&B for families with children and 16/17 year olds except in emergencies.

Housing-related Support has been instrumental in enabling people to live independently and reduce requirements for institutional type care through the introduction of a tiered service for people with mental health issues, reablement for people with learning disabilities, and initiatives for homeless adults needing support with alcohol or drug issues.

We support around 3,500 vulnerable people in the city to maintain, or (re)gain, their independence, avoiding the need for more institutionalised and costly accommodation. These services include support for:

- Young people who are homeless or young parents
- People with mental health problems
- People with substance misuse problems
- Older people with support needs

¹⁰ Percentage excludes rent arrears. Including rent arrears percentage increases to 25%

¹¹ Office of National Statistics 2010 Subnational Population Projections

- Women and children fleeing domestic violence
- Single homeless people
- People with learning disabilities
- Ex-offenders re-integrating into the community

A new Sustainable Tenancy Strategy has been developed that will help minimise tenancy breakdown amongst council tenants and support households to maximise and manage their incomes. New initiatives include contracting the Money Advice Community Support to support tenants to successfully manage their money, staff and resident training, the establishment of a learning centre at the Housing Centre and the appointment of learning and participation workers to carry out targeted intervention to improve access to and engagement in learning, skills, employment, and personal development opportunities for our tenants.

In response to the changes in welfare benefits, all staff are receiving training to ensure they are fully conversant with the changes and the impact they will have on some of our local people. The training means that staff will be able to provide advice and assistance to households to help prevent them becoming homeless and to maximise their income.

Current position

The new reduction in the benefit cap to £20,000 is expected to affect around 850 households (early analysis). Changes to Tax Credits from April 2016 will impact on several thousand households and increases in benefits will no longer be paid for third or subsequent children born after 2017. The council is working through the implications of these changes with its partners to allow it to appropriately plan how to support those affected and to prepare. In addition to working with local people who are experiencing difficulties due to the changes in welfare benefits we also provide range of services that promote the Government's initiatives specifically aimed at helping local people such as increasing grant funding to debt advice agencies and operating our own local mortgage rescue scheme for households we believe we can help who fall outside of the governments criteria for assistance.

420 Households were accepted as homeless in 2014/15 and 1,456 Households were living in temporary accommodation on 31st March 2015, of those 1,246 were households with a homeless (Section 193) duty owed. In addition, our Housing Options service and external partners prevented¹² 2,538 households from becoming homeless.

Rough sleeping remains a visible presence, particularly in the city centre. Following the recession the number of rough sleepers has increased with an estimated 132 people sleeping on the streets. Agencies have seen a doubling in the numbers of rough sleepers worked with to more than 1,000 in a year.

Locally¹³ connected rough sleepers have access to the integrated support pathway which provides a route from rough sleeping into intensive 24 hour

¹² Includes homelessness prevented and relieved cases

¹³ Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act defines local connection as being either a) residence of 6 out of the last 12 months or b) residence of 3 out of the last 5 years or c) employment or d) some other special reason.

supported accommodation with the levels of support reducing as people's health, skills and confidence improve. Brighton & Hove has also adopted a no second night out approach to rough sleeping with all those new to rough sleeping being identified and supported off the streets straight away to prevent them becoming entrenched in a rough sleeping lifestyle. A new Housing First service has been commissioned to provide support to former rough sleepers with complex needs.

A new Integrated Health & Care Board has been established "to improve the health and wellbeing of homeless people by providing integrated and responsive services that place people at the centre of their own care, promote independence and support them to fulfil their potential". Membership of the Board includes representatives from adult social care, housing, public health, the CCG and NHS Trusts, a GP from Morley Street Homeless Healthcare, community and voluntary sector, Sussex Police and service user representation. The Board has strengthened care and support to homeless people in coordinating care and trialling service delivery through pilot projects, including the Sussex Community Trust Hostels Collaborative Project and Pathway Plus projects. The Board is developing an Integrated Health and Care Model for the homeless population of the city by April 2016.

To help residents maintain their independence at home, during 2014/15 we completed 179 Disabled Facilities Grant assisted major adaptations to private sector households (owner-occupiers, private tenants, housing association tenants) plus 238 major and 655 minor adaptations to council properties.

The Council invested over £2.6m on adaptations across the city last year, £1.4m through Disabled Facilities Grant and £1.2m in housing revenue account funding for council homes. We also work with developers and landlords to ensure that accessible and adapted affordable housing is advertised and let to Housing Register applicants with a matching need. In the face of significant budget pressures the Council's Housing Related Support Commissioning Plan for 2015 identifies a funding reduction of £2m across the housing related support budgets in 2015/16. To manage this services are being reviewed, remodelled, retendered or decommissioned.

What we plan to do

Households have many different levels of need and there is no one solution that fits all housing need and so we seek to take advantage of every opportunity and provide a range of services to support households back to independence. To do this, our Housing Strategy 2015 priority to Improve Housing Support focusses on 5 strategic themes:

- **Homelessness Prevention**

Although in recent months there has been a reduction in the number of homelessness prevention casework this is expected to change in the future as welfare reform measures come into effect. We are looking to provide housing and support solutions for people that will not only tackle homelessness but also promote the health and wellbeing of households. This will be achieved through providing integrated housing, employment and support solutions which will be a platform for economic inclusion. We will be working jointly with partners in

children's services and adult social care and health to identify people who may potentially become homeless at a much earlier stage with a view to prevent their homelessness and also exploring the possibility of securing affordable settled accommodation in other locations around the country as an option for people who may prefer to move away from the city. At the beginning of October 2015 the Council's Housing Needs and Temporary Accommodation & Allocation services will be brought together under a three month pilot that will seek to provide a more streamline service to households in housing need. The pilot will be reviewed early next year and a decision made on how to progress any changes to services.

- **Provision of effective Housing Related Support** to help vulnerable households remain independent
We will be reviewing and remodelling the service commissioning across health, housing, care and other services to ensure there is a joined up approach to supporting the city's most vulnerable people. A comprehensive review will be completed across all the support services with the process identifying how people access support services, the level and type of support they receive, barriers to accessing services and outcomes. Services will be remodelled to ensure that the services are easily access to all vulnerable people, that the right level and type of support is provided to people and that they support the different client groups. We will review and remodel the Integrated Support Pathway for homelessness so that it can deliver a more personalised service with better outcomes for service users. To support balanced and sustainable supported accommodation, referral panels will be established to promote choice and mixed communities
- **Supporting Older People** to remain independent
Funding has been awarded from the Homes & Communities Agency to redevelop the former Brooke Mead sheltered housing scheme. The original scheme had 8 non self contained flats with shared facilities and was no longer fit for purpose. Brooke Mead will be a new 45 home Extra Care housing scheme for older people and those with dementia that meets HAPPI principles. Work will start in 2015 and be complete in 2017. We are seeking to continue the expansion of our Extra Care Housing and other supported housing where suitable opportunities arise.

In addition we will continue to remodel and renovate our sheltered schemes to ensure that they support the right people and improve social network and wellbeing. Provide better links between sheltered housing schemes and surrounding communities and to other communities to encourage socialisation and reduce isolation. We will continue to support people who want to 'downsize' to a more suitable home and for people who would like to remain in their home but need an adaptation, ensure this is completed in a timely fashion.
- **Supporting our Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities**
We will continue to work with the BME Need Assessment Steering Group to explore the findings of research and identify and resolve

housing issues specific to BME communities. We will continue improve the front facing customer services at Council housing offices to ensure that BME communities are appropriately supported and continue to work with community safety to resolve housing issues and harassment in a timely manner. In addition we will be reviewing the equalities impact of the allocations of social housing and consider the positive contribution made by single parent families and improve our equalities monitoring across all our services

- **Supporting our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans* (LGBT) Communities**

We will be carrying out more research in partnership with community groups to identify specific gaps and needs within the LGBT communities. We will investigate potential impacts of 'out of area' placements for LGBT people in relation to local services and support networks, and support local LGBT agencies who are working with LGBT agencies in other areas where LGBT people are looking to move to Brighton to ensure this is done in a planned way. In addition we will ensure that as services are reviewed that they are accessible and safe for all; examining the provision of LGBT specific housing support services in the city, working with sheltered housing providers to ensure that services are accessible for the LGBT communities and using the skills in LGBT community groups to deliver improvements to frontline housing services. We will also be working jointly with community safety to resolve housing issues and harassment in a timely manner and will continue to implement Trans* Scrutiny Panel Recommendations for housing and consider the recommendations of the forthcoming Trans* Needs Assessment