

# Housing Strategy 2013-2018

## Delivery and Priorities



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## Introduction

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. Poor quality or inadequate housing tends to be associated with poorer outcomes for people, whether that relates to the health impacts of living in damp or overcrowded conditions or the impact poor housing can have on children's attainment at school.

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 Council has identified a number of significant regeneration sites for future development and housing is at the heart of many of these sites.

## Purpose and Ambition

The purpose of this 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 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

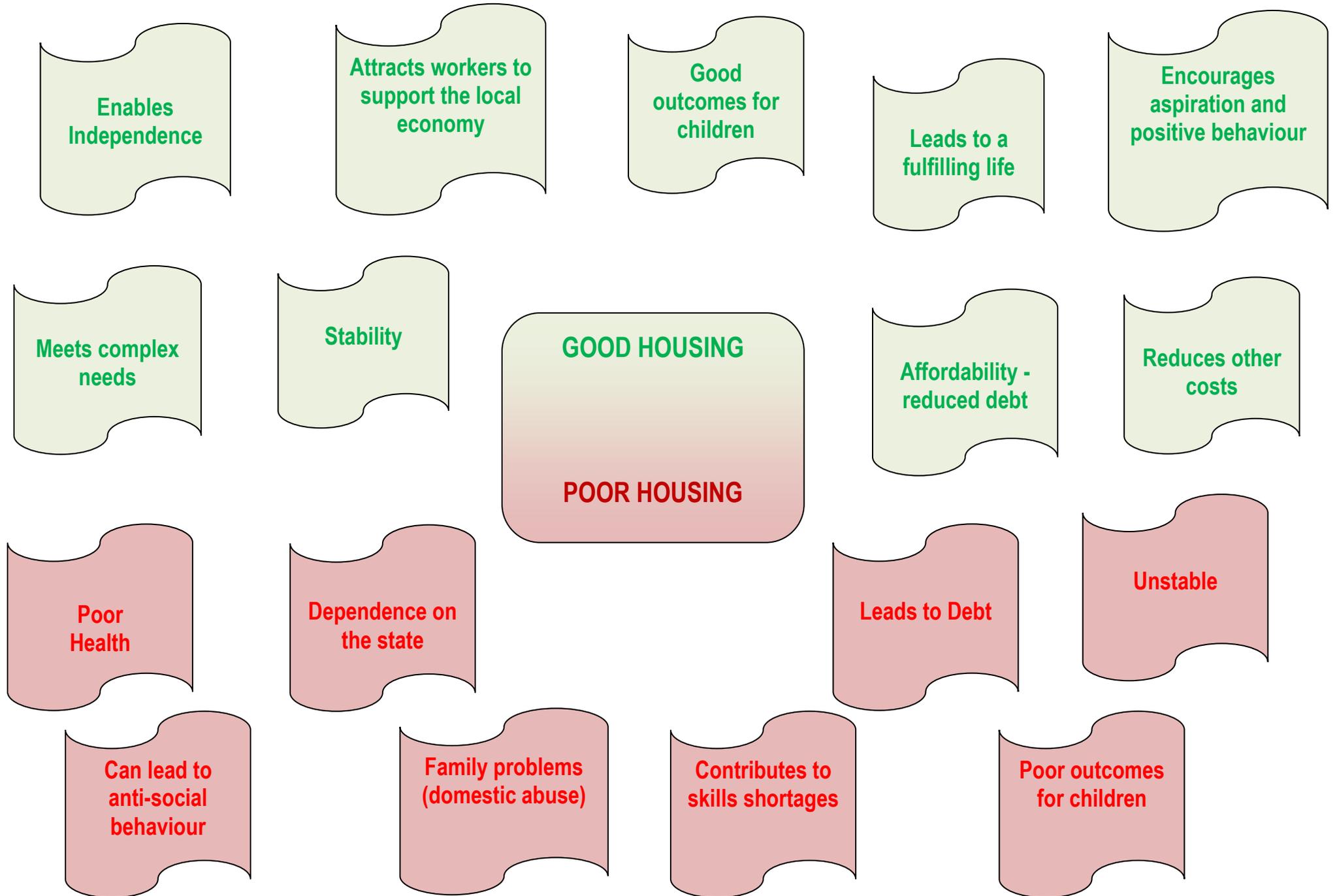
services which help address health and socio economic inequalities and support people who are likely to have fewer chances in life and be vulnerable to poverty.

## Priorities

- 1. Increasing the supply of affordable homes in Poole to better meet local needs**
- 2. Preventing homelessness for vulnerable households**
- 3. Improving health and wellbeing through housing**

## Principles

- We will commit to making best use of our land, assets and sites.
- We will demonstrate creativity and innovation in the delivery of schemes.
- We will ensure that housing is key and integral to service delivery and other relevant strategies.
- We will focus our services to vulnerable households that are homeless or have a housing need.
- We will work towards homelessness being everyone's business just as safeguarding is everyone's business.
- We will ensure there is a partnership approach to intervention when vulnerable households are at risk of homelessness.
- We will promote paid work as a route to meeting housing need.
- We will adopt a strong partnership approach to increasing the supply of housing including private and social landlords, business and health partners.
- We will consider the needs of black and ethnic minority people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and gypsy and travellers in our work.



## How we developed this strategy

To develop a robust evidence base which would help us identify the priorities, we produced a document which set out all of the current issues and needs relating to housing. The issues and needs paper was produced in consultation with a number of relevant stakeholders. The key challenges focused on the following headings;

- Lack of new housing supply
- Best use of social housing stock
- Conditions of private sector housing
- Preventing and alleviating homelessness
- Welfare benefit reform
- Meeting specialist housing needs

Using the issues and needs paper we carried out consultation from the 7<sup>th</sup> January to the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Responses were received from residents and key stakeholders on the content of the issues and needs paper via the following methods:

- On-line and written feedback responses
- Housing Applicant Focus group
- Registered Provider and other stakeholder Focus Groups

General feedback suggested that the issues identified in the needs and issues document were in line with residents and partners' concerns. It was also noted that there were several important challenges to meet, and these may be difficult to achieve in the context of public sector financial restraint. The consultation has given us a focus for the actions required and helped us to identify principles and priorities.

## Main Drivers that impact on Housing

The current economic climate is having, and will continue to have, major effects on the housing market. Coupled with these significant economic changes are profound demographic changes to the age structure of the population which, in turn, will impact on housing needs.

### Demographic Change

Poole has a relatively large proportion (compared to the rest of England) of older people, most of whom live in owner-occupied properties. Their numbers are projected to significantly increase in the future. This is likely to be accompanied by increased demand for specialist housing for older people. Much of this demand is likely to arise in the private sector.

Many of Poole's elderly population are relatively affluent and occupy homes that are larger than they probably "need". They might be encouraged to "downsize" if high quality suitable alternative accommodation were available. The Council needs to coordinate strategies across all services to consider how best to meet the changing needs of the population including the funding of care and support costs across private and social housing.

### Local Economy

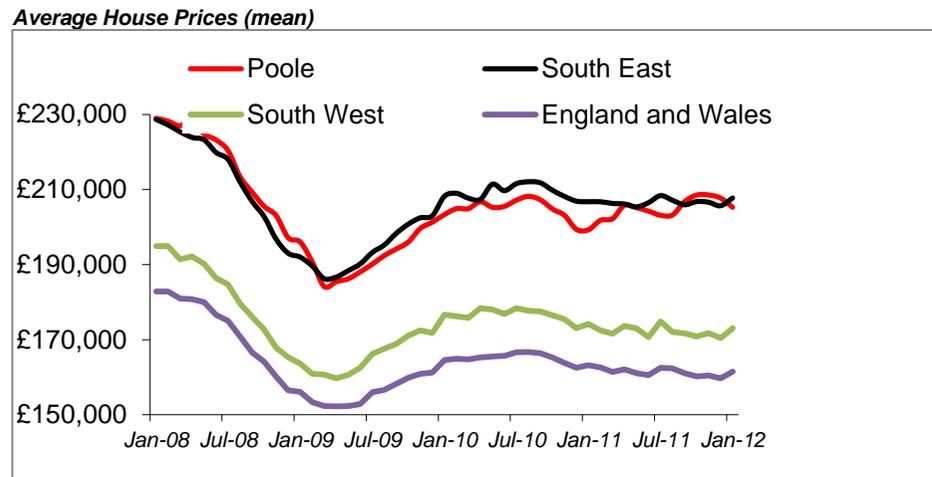
Good local housing provision can have a pivotal impact on the development of the local economy, both in terms of the availability and affordability of suitable homes for employees and the direct benefit of house building and improvements. High quality homes across a range of tenures can help attract highly skilled people to locate in the area as well as accommodating the key workers essential to the prosperity of

the town. The Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership has a housing subgroup which is working together to identify housing opportunities that will improve the local economy. There are a number of ‘stalled sites’ where planning permission has been granted which, were they to be unlocked, could generate significant economic benefit.

### Housing Affordability and Tenure Patterns

Median house prices locally are nine times the salary of median incomes in Poole which puts home ownership out of the reach of many people. Housing affordability, as conventionally understood by the above ratio, has long been a problem in Poole and shows little sign of a solution.

The chart below shows average house prices in Poole over the last four years.

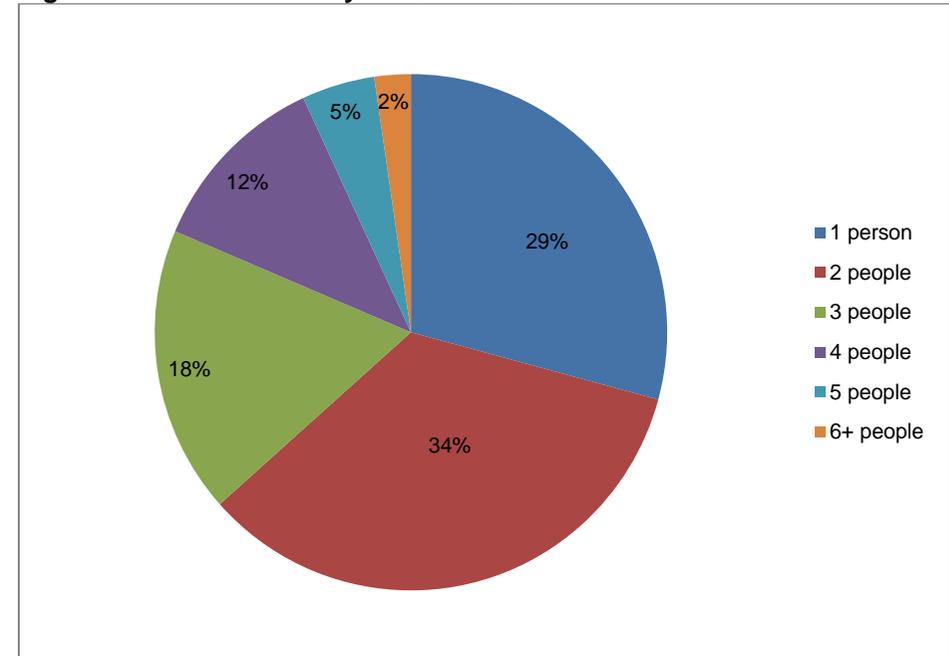


Source: Land Registry, House Price Index

These mainly economic factors are continuing to have an impact on housing tenure patterns. Credit is much harder to access and the average age of first time buyers is rising sharply.

The private rented sector is particularly buoyant. 25% of households within the borough are reliant on the rental market (both private and social). In Poole, the owner occupation rate in fell from 78% to 70% of all households between 2001 and 2011. This is mirrored in an increase in those renting from a private landlord or letting agency, which grew from 8% to 15% of households.

Figure 1. Private sector by household size



Source: Census 2011

Poole was recently identified in a national survey as one of the “least affordable places for rent” (The Independent, Oct 2011). The recent National Housing Federation South West report “Home Truths 2012” indicates that private sector rents are expected to rise by 62% in the next ten years as demand for the sector continues to grow. This is another area where strong strategic alignment with Planning Policies will be essential in meeting needs.

The latest data we have covers the twelve month period April 1, 2012 – March 31, 2013. This is summarised by property type. (Note that “room only” and “studio” are included as 1 bedroom households in our analysis above; in Table 1 below “1 bed” denotes a separate, dedicated bedroom.)

**Table 1. Private sector monthly rents (£), Poole**

Property Type	No. sampled	Average	Median
Studio	31	479	475
Room only	53	351	347
1 bed	231	573	570
2 bed	675	716	695
3 bed	355	885	850
4+ bed	99	1,203	1,100
<b>ALL</b>	<b>1,444</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>700</b>

Source: Valuation Agency

A couple, each member of which is on median full-time earnings for Poole’s residents, would have an estimated total *net* (after tax, national insurance, etc) monthly income of around £3,070. Assuming they rent a 2- bedroom house at medium rent level, they’d be spending 23% of their net income on rent. If they rent a 3- bedroom house, at median rent, they’d be spending 28% of their net income on rent.

For comparison, the corresponding national (England) figures are 19% and 22%, respectively. Thus Poole’s residents spend disproportionately more of their net income renting privately than the national average. This is due to higher rent levels (Table 3). The median rent on three-bedroom properties in Poole is 31% higher the national median.

**Table 3. Private sector monthly rents (£), Poole and England**

Property Type	Median (Poole)	Median (England)
Studio	475	477
Room only	347	325
1 bed	570	500
2 bed	695	575
3 bed	850	650
4+ bed	1,100	1,100

Source: Valuation Agency

The levels of owner occupation are decreasing and this trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future. The recent 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SMHA) indicates that 27% of all households in Poole cannot afford housing at current market prices or rents without the need for some form of subsidy (e.g. local housing allowance).

## Welfare Reform

The Government has introduced a complete overhaul of the benefits system. Both private and social sector claimants will be affected, some to a larger degree than others. The change in rules, together with the methods of up-rating benefits could in time have an effect on the real income of claimants. The impact of this will need to be monitored particularly with regard to peoples housing circumstances.

Welfare reform will impact on people in Poole and changes in arrangements both within the borough, and particularly in neighbouring areas, may influence the decisions people make about where to live.

## Current Activities

The Borough of Poole has already recognised that in order to meet its local housing needs it has to actively contribute rather than rely solely on contributions through the planning process. In April 2012 the council made a commitment to use Borough of Poole property assets and land to deliver at least 100 affordable housing units over 4 years.

Four sites have initially been identified as phase one and further work is underway to identify other development opportunities on Council land or assets. A project group has been formed and two registered housing providers have made commitments in their development programmes with the Homes & Communities Agency to provide Poole with a development partner. The development sites already identified are expected to deliver approximately 60 units by March 2015 as well as identifying more development sites.

The Borough is committed to working with its partners at the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership on housing issues as it makes a critical contribution to a prosperous and sustainable economic growth across the County.

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness in its local area and publish a strategy outlining how it will tackle and prevent homelessness. The Borough is developing a 10 point homelessness action plan to meet this need.

Poole has continued to see a rise in the number of homelessness approaches in each of the past 3 years. 2011/12 saw a 32% increase (176 to 232), with 2012/13 not showing any sign of change in demand. The footfall of households presenting with homelessness issues remains high. A range of homelessness prevention tools is employed to enable people to stay in their homes, through negotiation or mediation techniques, or help them find a new home. 388 households were assisted into alternative private sector housing in 2012/13.

Poole operates a number of initiatives to help deal with its homelessness approaches. These include the rough sleeper outreach programme, support through a domestic abuse service and an early intervention action plan to reduce the number of placements into emergency bed and breakfast accommodation.

In the private housing sector Poole has seen a significant increase in the number of complaints made about the condition of private rented stock. Between 2011/12 to 2012/13 there was an increase of 33% (182 to 241) in the number of complaints made.

The Borough has a good partnership links with many local landlords in Poole who are respectable landlords managing quality housing. There has however been a recent increase in some landlords acting unlawfully. These landlords tend to operate multi occupancy households and target migrant workers who don't know their rights. They ignore basic safety requirements for the property such as fire regulations, use unlawful tenancies and are suspected of many illegal evictions. Gathering evidence on this group of landlords is extremely difficult as tenants often do not report the landlord and once the Council has become aware of a property being used in such a way the landlords move their tenants on and cease using the property before we can take formal action.

The diagram over the page gives an indication of levels of needs for housing against the available resources with regard to the Housing Register. This demonstrates significant unmet demand within general needs housing and annual turnover of around 3%. This means only those assessed as being in the most extreme need of housing are likely to obtain a property in any year. The picture in sheltered housing is better with a 7% turnover enabling people with high and moderate assessed levels of need to access a property in any year. Any review of the current allocation arrangements may lead to an excess of affordable sheltered accommodation in Poole.

## Housing Needs in Poole

### RESOURCES

#### General Needs Housing

Opening Stock Balance (March 2011) = 5661  
 Stock Lost = 34  
 New Stock = 82  
 Current Stock Balance = 5675

#### Sheltered Housing

Opening Stock Balance (March 2011) = 1812  
 Stock Lost = 0  
 New Stock = 45  
 Current Stock Balance = 1857

### MOVEMENT

Housing Stock Allocated (12/13) = 183

Housing Stock Allocated (12/13) = 138

### DEMAND

Housing Register at September 2013 = 4444

- Emergency Band = 16
- Gold Band = 148
- Silver Band = 671
- Bronze Band = 3609
- Less 1942 Bronze/no local connection

**Net Demand = 2502**

Housing Register at September 2013 = 547

- Emergency Band = 10
- Gold Band = 44
- Silver Band = 67
- Bronze Band = 426
- Less 147 Bronze/no local connection

**Net Demand = 400**

## Housing Strategy - Priority 1 Delivery Plan

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

We will do this by:

1. Using Council owned land, assets and existing housing portfolio to build more affordable homes
2. Implementing a revised pan Dorset housing register and allocation policy which will better manage people's expectations and reinforce positive behaviours
3. Funding transfer incentives for households in social housing to downsize
4. Delivering a new extra care village scheme and continue to monitor the future needs of this type of accommodation
5. Working with private sector providers to respond to opportunities to deliver homes of a high standard and that meet local needs
6. Promoting Government home ownership initiatives
7. Enabling Poole Housing Partnership to deliver new homes with a range of tenure options and rent models
8. Working in partnership to explore options for the development and management of market housing for rent
9. Increasing the engagement of registered housing providers with local communities
10. Exploring options for estate regeneration
11. Continuing to consider the housing needs of key groups including, foster carers, adoptive parents and armed force personnel
12. Supporting the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership through the housing sub group to identify housing opportunities that will improve the local economy
13. Considering renewable energy technologies that are suitable for the location in new build affordable housing schemes.

### Performance and Monitoring

- Deliver 100 new affordable homes utilising Council own land for and assets for phase 1 and continue to identify and enable the provision of further new affordable homes by 2018
- Deliver 54 new extra care units by 2016
- Assist 60 households to move to smaller Council homes by March 2015
- Monitor private rented housing complaints and enforcement action
- Monitor medium to long term housing register trends to assess the impact of supply and policy changes

## Housing Strategy - Priority 2 Delivery Plan

### Preventing homelessness particularly for vulnerable households

We will do this by:

1. Enabling people to find their route to suitable housing, employment and support
2. Delivering front line housing advice to both clients and landlords to prevent homelessness by providing debt advice, deposit loans, floating support, employment support, effective multi-agency casework practices and other services
3. Working with partners and providers to prevent homelessness and the use of B&B accommodation for 16/17 year olds, care leavers and families.
4. Supporting rough sleepers into accommodation through the outreach programme which incorporates the “No Second Night Out” model
5. Commissioning and reviewing outcomes of the accommodation finder, floating support and combined housing and support services
6. Working with victims and survivors of domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour services to ensure they are able to have a safer home
7. Working with specialist young person housing services to ensure young people are equipped with the necessary life skills to sustain a suitable home
8. Working with housing and support services to ensure there are more robust providers who can deal with difficult clients with complex needs
9. Developing and reviewing joint working protocols for specific groups such as people with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, young people in transitions, care leavers, people leaving hospital or prison and 16 and 17 year olds in order to reduce unplanned moves and emergency homelessness
10. Working with partners to develop effective move-on solutions from supported housing
11. Implementing a 10 point Homelessness Action Plan in line with DCLG recommendations

### Performance and Monitoring

- No young person aged 16 or 17 is placed in bed & breakfast accommodation
- No families are placed in bed & breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks
- Monitor housing advice approaches, homelessness applications and homelessness preventions
- Monitor the rough sleepers outreach programme in terms of its success in achieving ‘no second night out’ objectives
- Publish the 10 point homelessness action plan once adopted

## Housing Strategy - Priority 3 Delivery Plan

### Improving health and wellbeing through housing

We will do this by:

1. Identifying highly complex needs and enabling bespoke solutions
2. Ensure there are suitable future housing options available through a review of current sheltered homes in the social sector
3. Developing clear approaches which improve the quality of private rented housing
4. Developing more detailed housing plans for specific groups, such as people with mental illness, physical and learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder, ex-offenders, young people, older people, young parents and victims of domestic abuse
5. Delivering an adaptation grants service, supporting assistive technology and home improvement services to enable people to live safely in their own homes as their needs change
6. Helping residents to benefit from national schemes to make their homes warmer and more energy efficient.
7. Combating fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions in accordance with HECA legislation.

8. Working with health and social care on the Better Together programme and the Integrated Health and Social Care funds

### Performance and Monitoring

- Monitor private rented housing complaints and enforcement action and review trends to see the impact of any policy changes
- Record bespoke housing completions
- Record and monitor approved adaptation grants and monitor trends to assess future resource needs

## Next Steps and Reviews

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 priorities set out in this strategy will indeed help us to reach those aims.

The three 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 have developed a more detailed delivery plan setting out work programmes and timescales for each of the three priorities.

The delivery plan will be monitored and updated during the life of the strategy 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** [k.ruff@poole.gov.uk](mailto:k.ruff@poole.gov.uk)  
**01202 633495**