

# Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plans – Review of year to end March 2017



## 1. Introduction

This paper sets out a review for the year to the end of March 2017 of the Action Plans attached to the council's Housing and Homelessness Strategies. The current Housing Strategy covers the period 2015-2020 whilst the current Homelessness Strategy covers the period 2013-18. Previous reviews are available from Housing Services.

Some key themes are set out below which include how we have responded to the changing and challenging environment we work in and an update of the actions set out in 2015/16.

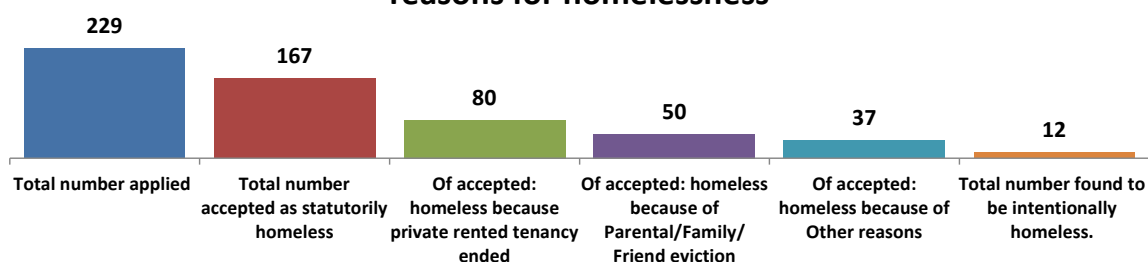
We regularly review the main drivers of homelessness in Watford and how we can respond to them. In the rest of this review we cover:

- [Key reasons for homelessness](#)
- [Affordability](#)
- [The supply of affordable housing](#)
- [Temporary accommodation](#)
- [NPSS Gold Standard Challenge](#)
- [Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum](#)
- [Rough sleeping and single homelessness](#)
- [Impact of welfare reform](#)
- [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#)
- [Key Actions for 2017-18](#)

## 2. Key reasons for homelessness

The dominant reason for homelessness over 2016-17 remains evictions from the private rented sector and secondly evictions from the parental or family or friend homes as borne out in the chart below.

**2016/2017 Homeless applications and acceptances with main reasons for homelessness**



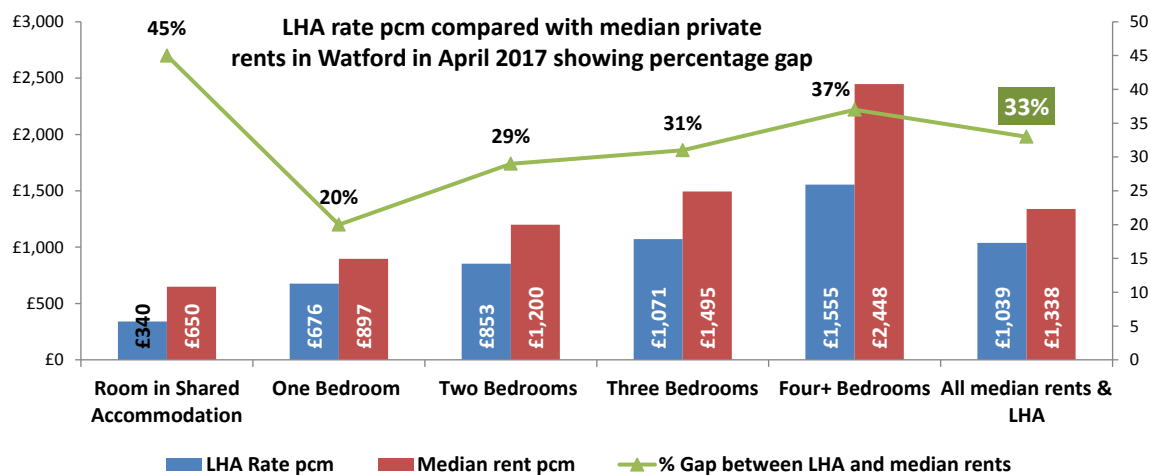
### 3. Affordability

The issue of affordability of homes in Watford continues to be a major issue of concern. The following sections explore what is happening about affordability of the private rented sector and home ownership.

#### 3.1 The private rented sector

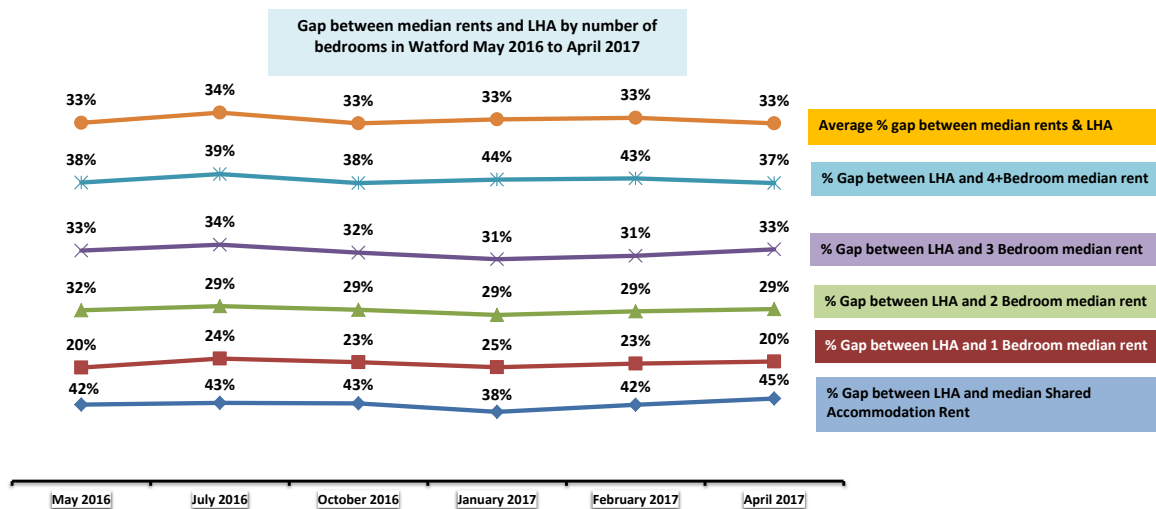
Affordability of the private rented sector for those on low incomes and/or benefit dependent continues to be a key issue in Watford. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have been frozen for four years from April 2016 although unexpectedly LHA rates were increased for 3 bedroom homes by 7.20 pw from April 2017. This small increase has had a marginal effect on the affordability of 3 bedroom homes for those who need to claim LHA.

The chart below shows the gap between LHA and median private rents in the borough by size of home (number of bedrooms) as at the end of April 2017.



As can be seen, there is a 45% difference between the LHA rate and the median private rent for a room in shared accommodation in Watford and gaps of between 20% and 31% for private rented homes with one, two or three bedrooms. Two and three bedroom homes are most frequently needed by households requesting help from the council because they are homeless.

The gap between median private rents and LHA has remained reasonably constant over the year between May 2016 and April 2017 varying just 1% over the year. The gap between the LHA rate and median private rents for a room in shared accommodation is showing an upward trend however.



### 3.2 Owner occupation – house price affordability

Last year, the government focused available housing funding on home ownership, in particular to support its Starter Homes initiative. Starter Homes were to be sold at £250,000 or less to enable people on lower incomes to access this tenure. In addition to funding, local authorities were required to support the development of starter homes through planning rules at the expense of other types of affordable housing. In its own research on housing affordability in Watford over the period 2014 to 2016, the council found the following:

- Volumes of house sales had dropped over the period with 1,859 in 2014 to 1697 in 2015. Sales of homes in 2016 (1,490 sales) showed a continuing drop in the number of sales of homes.
- The proportion of completed home sales where £250,000 or less was paid had dropped steadily from 50% of all homes in 2014, to 33% of all homes sold in 2015 and 24% of all homes sold in 2016. This indicates that the Starter Homes initiative will have difficulty in achieving its objective of providing an avenue of affordable home ownership locally.
- Lower quartile and median sale prices had increased steadily over the period
- In terms of affordability, people with lower incomes were quickly being priced out of the cheaper end of the housing market.

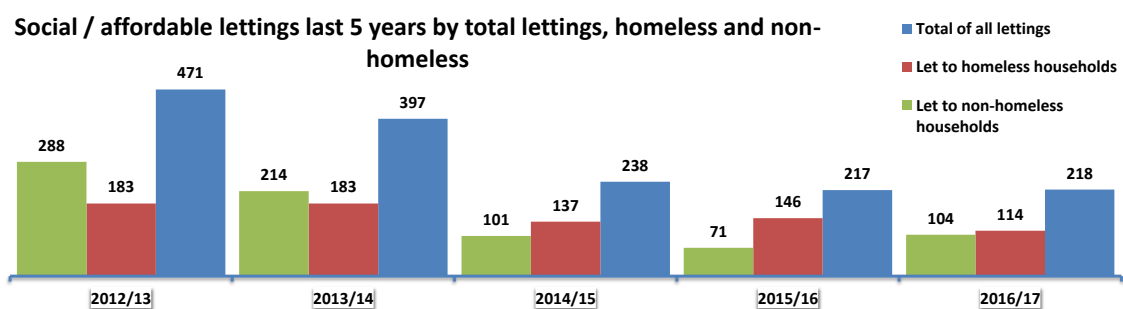
## 4. Supply of affordable housing

Watford Borough Council does not have its own housing stock so relies on two main sources of housing for households who are homeless: homes owned by housing association partners and homes owned by private landlords. The latter source is used for both temporary accommodation and for settled housing.

#### 4.1 Settled housing through Housing Associations

The council maintains a Housing Register of applicants. Housing associations offer homes to the council to nominate suitable people from the Housing Register. The qualification criteria for housing association homes in Watford are set out in the council's [Nominations Policy](#). Housing Register applicants bid for homes they wish to be considered for via the council's choice based lettings system, HertsChoiceHomes.

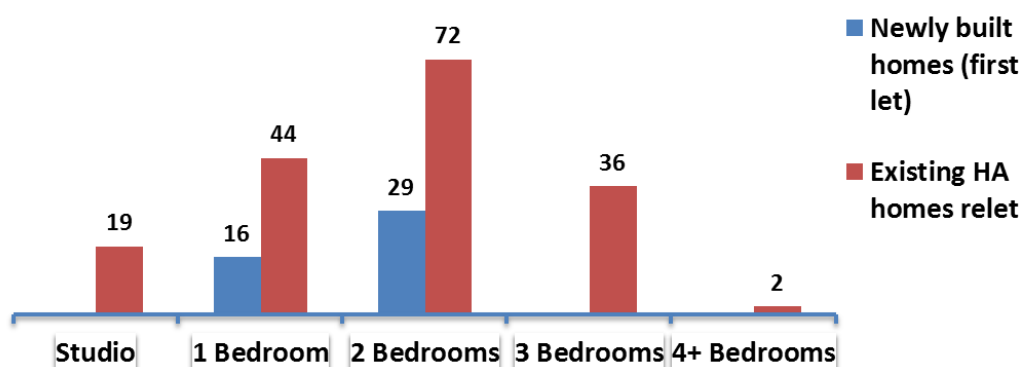
The chart below shows the number of homes owned by housing association partners made available for the council to nominate to over the last 5 years and how many of these have been let to homeless households:



The overall number of lettings has reduced by more than half since 2012/13 (when there were 471 housing association lettings) with lettings levelling out in 2015/16 and 2016/17 (at 217 and 218 respectively). Over the last 3 years the number of available lettings going to homeless households has outnumbered other housing needs groups.

The following chart shows housing association lettings in Watford by newly built homes let for the first time and existing homes being relet (eg, for a second time or more) as well as the number of bedrooms. There were 45 newly built homes and 173 relets during the year. Newly built homes had either one or two bedrooms. Relets spanned all bed sizes, with the majority being two bedrooms (72).

**2016/17 Lettings by newly built homes (45) (first let) and existing homes relet (173)**



New homes continue to be delivered by housing associations and we expect some 94 new homes in the borough during 2017/18, see the table below:

No. of bedrooms	Social Rented	Affordable Rented	Low Cost Home Ownership
1 bed	2	16	2
2 bed	10	46	4
3 bed	0	2	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>18</b>

#### 4.2 Settled homes from the private rented sector

One requirement for accessing housing association homes in Watford is that the applicant must have lived in the borough for 5 of the last 6 years (see the Nominations Policy). Establishing a local connection (including residence in the borough) under the homelessness law is much shorter at 6 out of the last 12 months. At any one time, the council has a significant number of homeless households for whom it has accepted a full legal duty to house but cannot offer them a housing association home until they meet the Nominations Policy residence requirement. For these households the private rented sector is the only timely option out of temporary accommodation and into a settled home. The council also has a Private Sector Discharge Policy, in use since January 2015, which prioritises applicants owed a full housing duty for discharge to the private rented sector in the following way, they

- Do not have 5 years residence in Watford
- Occupy temporary accommodation that is a cost to the council
- Occupy temporary accommodation that is a cost to the applicant
- Are threatened with homelessness and a private rented offer will avoid the household going into temporary accommodation
- Have been waiting the longest since being accepted as homeless
- Have a clear rent/service charge account

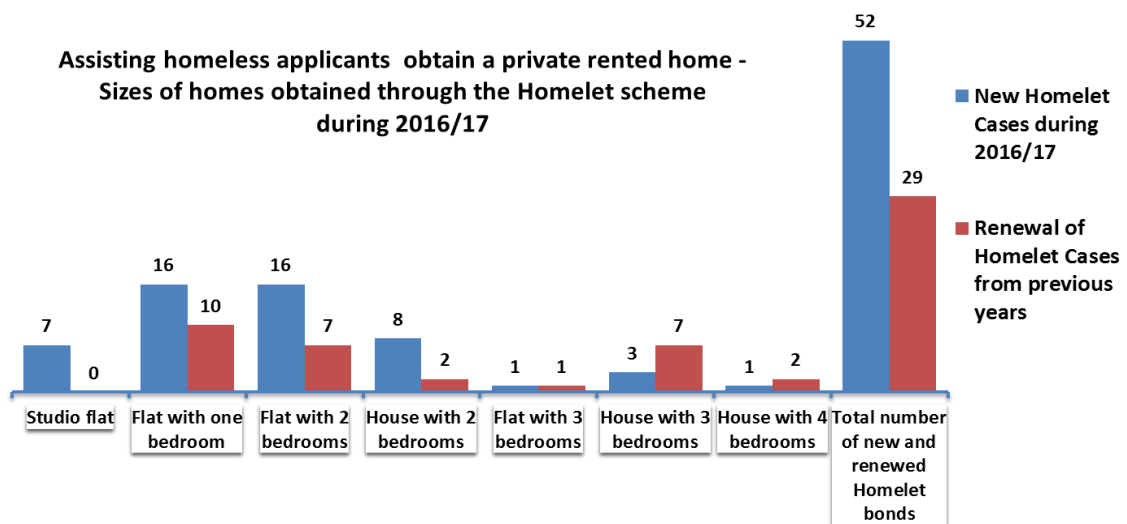
During 2016/17, a great deal of work was done on promoting the council's rent deposit scheme, Homelet, with both applicants and private landlords.

For potential tenants, the Homelet scheme offers support with rent deposits, the first month's rent and managing/lettings agents fees; for landlords, the council can offer a rent bond (to cover damage to the property by the tenant placed under the Homelet scheme), and/or a financial incentive which, for example, covers the gap between the rent and the LHA rate. In return the landlord guarantees an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) for a minimum of 12 months and often up to 2 years. The council's preference is that once a financial commitment has been made to the landlord and the tenant there is no further involvement by the council. In many cases the council has no further contact with the landlord or the Homelet applicant, but in others the landlord will return to the council at the end of the AST for a repeat incentive to

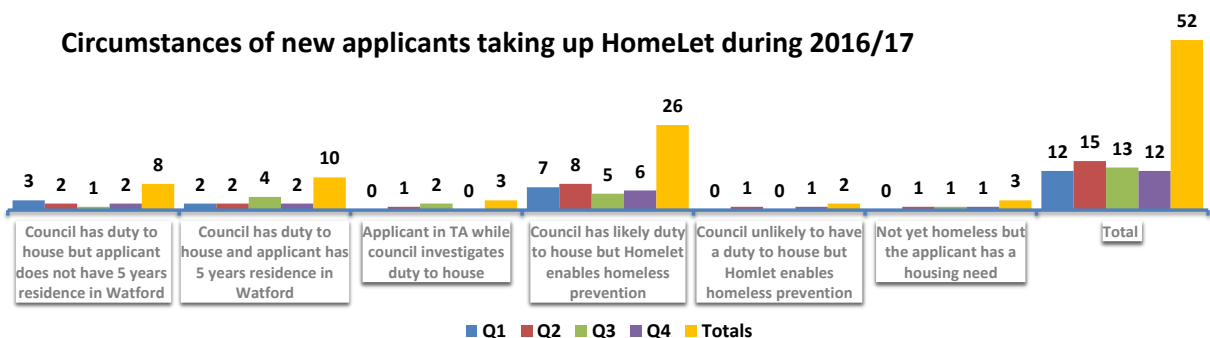
maintain an existing tenancy. If the tenant is still living in Watford and/or the tenancy is still within 2 years of first grant, then the council will usually provide a further incentive to the landlord. Taking such an approach is far cheaper for the council and involves less upheaval for the tenant than taking a homelessness application and providing temporary accommodation.

During 2016/17, 52 new Homelet cases were successfully negotiated during 2016/17 and 29 renewals of existing Homelet cases.

All were for a wide range of types and sizes of homes. As well as moving to homes in Watford, Homelet applicants also moved, at their request, to other areas including London, St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Walsall, Nottingham and Milton Keynes. Flats with one and two bedrooms were the most common size of homes obtained under the Homelet scheme. The following chart outlines the outcomes.



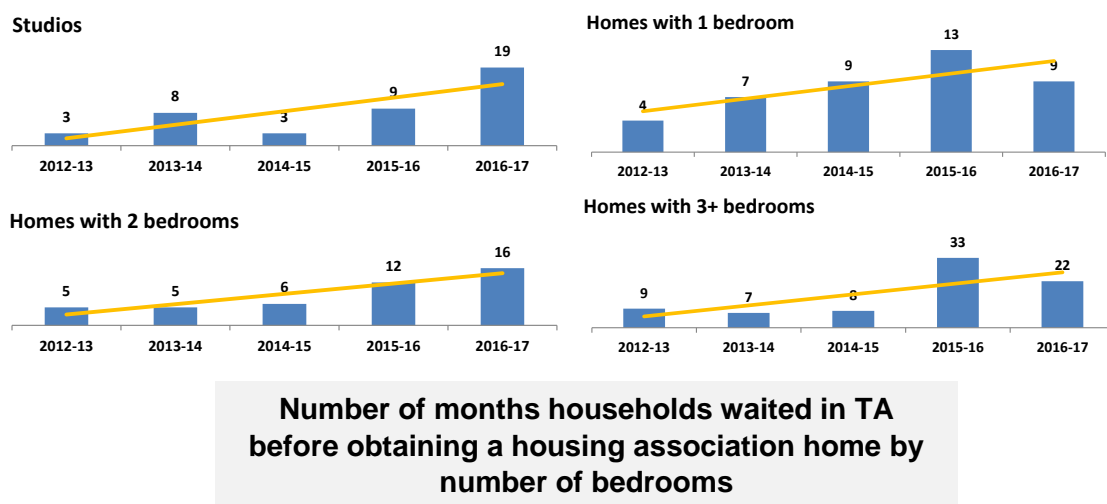
The circumstances of new applicants taking up the Homelet option during 2016/17 is set out in the chart below. The largest group assisted into the private sector, a total of 20 households, were those where the council would likely have had a duty to house but the Homelet option prevented them from having to go into TA. Homelet meant these families could carry on with their lives rather than having them put on hold whilst in TA.



### 4.3 Impact of the lack of supply of affordable housing

The lack of supply of affordable housing via housing associations and the private rented sector means that some households stay longer in temporary accommodation than the council would like.

The charts below show the average number of months homeless households wait in TA before achieving a move into a housing association letting. Homeless households are only allowed one offer under the council's current Housing Nominations Policy. The orange trend lines show that for all sizes of homes needed the average number of months waited has increased since 2012/13. In 2016/17 there was a surplus of housing association-owned 1 bedroom homes which reduced waiting times by some 4 months.



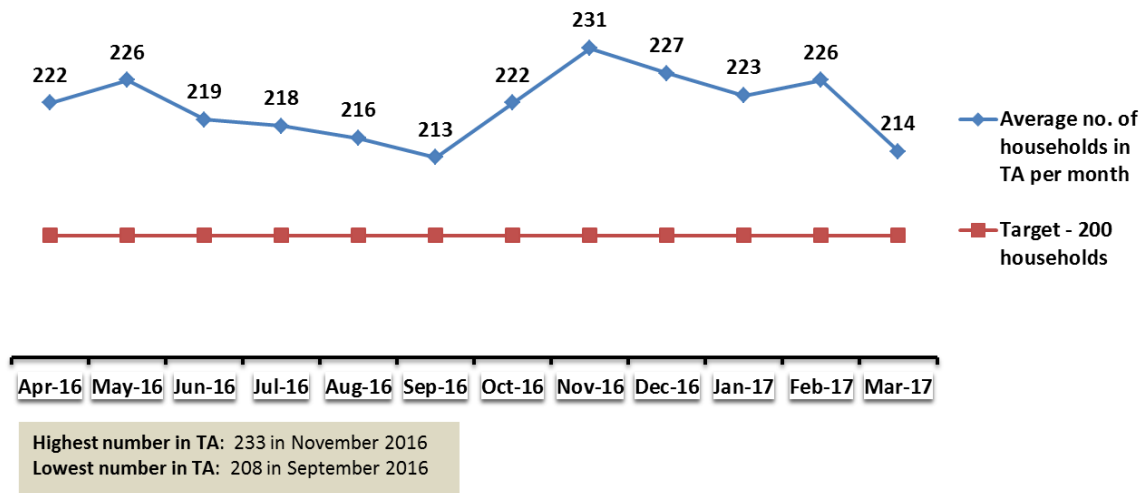
The longer households wait in TA, the more expensive it can be for the council, especially where it has to bear costs that are above LHA rates. For homeless households taking up a private rented offer is achieved much more quickly than waiting for a suitable housing association home to become available.

### 5. Temporary accommodation - achieving efficiencies

In the last action plan update, the numbers of households in temporary accommodation (TA) and its cost to the council was noted as a major concern.

During 2016/17, there was some variation in the numbers of households in TA but the number remained above the council's target of 200. In November 2016, the council had a record number of households in TA at 233. The lowest number during the year was 208 households which occurred in September 2016. The chart below, showing the average number of households in TA on a monthly basis during 2016/17, demonstrates the variation in the number over the year:

**Average number of households in TA per month 2016-17**



With record numbers in TA, the council monitors costs in this area of activity on a weekly basis. Efficiencies have been achieved through various proactive measures. The council undertook a successful framework agreement tender exercise for providers of TA and homes for duty discharge. This helped the council come out of several expensive spot purchase contracts, negotiate further savings with existing providers and put in place new cheaper TA providers. Households were also moved around within the TA portfolio where savings could be achieved for both them and the council.

Over the year, the council explored the possibility of more in-borough TA to further the council’s objectives of having greater control over the costs of TA and providing good quality TA which enhances the well-being of households who occupy it. As at the end of March 2017, two TA schemes were being developed: a flexible 40-bed hostel in Croxley View and nine homes with two bedrooms on a council-owned garage site in Balmoral Road. The Croxley View hostel is being developed by the new housing company jointly owned by the council and Watford Community Housing Trust as part of a wider housing development containing 36 new one and two bedroom affordable homes, including several wheelchair-accessible units. Handover of the Croxley View hostel and Balmoral Road TA homes is expected around Spring 2018.

## 6. NPSS Gold Standard Challenge

During 2016/17 the council undertook the NPSS Gold Standard Challenge, which is the national standard in which local authorities pledge to strive for the continuous improvement of the homelessness prevention and housing options services they deliver.



Watford is working in a consortium with four other local authorities also working towards the Gold Challenge Standard. Our partner authorities are Stevenage, Luton, Three Rivers, and North Herts. The consortium authorities support each other in undertaking the work required to achieve the Gold Standard Challenge.

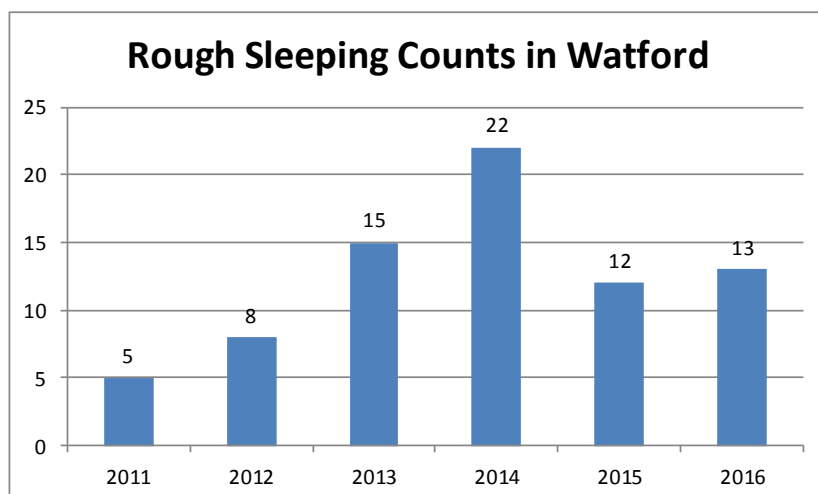
The Gold Standard process begins with a Diagnostic Peer Review in which local authorities must achieve a score of 60% to enable them to go forward and undertake the 10 challenges in the Gold Standard. A local authority achieving all 10 challenges is known as a Gold Standard authority. Watford was the first authority in its consortium to be peer reviewed using the national standards. The review took place during the last week of September 2016. Watford gained 55% and was provided with a detailed improvement plan, containing 107 actions, which it has worked on through the rest of the financial year with a view to being reviewed in November 2017 and scoring higher than 60%.

## 7. Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum

WSHF began meeting in July 2016. Its membership comprises a wide range of voluntary, statutory and business partners who contribute regularly to its 6 weekly meetings. The Forum's agreed purpose is "To reduce homelessness and improve services and provision for people and households at risk of or actually homeless within the Watford Borough Council area." As discussed in section 8 below, its first area of concern has been addressing the needs of single homeless people in Watford but the Forum's activities are also about improving the offer for homeless families with children.

## 8. Rough Sleeping and single homelessness

The 2016 Rough Sleeper Count took place in November 2016 during which 13 rough sleepers were identified. The chart below shows rough sleeper counts over the period 2011 to 2016.



The council has an Outreach Services contract with local voluntary single homeless agency, New Hope, which works with rough sleepers to assist them in getting off the street. The Outreach Services contract is part of several services New Hope provides, the most important of which is their Rough Sleeper Prevention Service. In December 2016, the council, working together with New Hope, Citizens Advice Watford, CGL Spectrum and Herts Young Homeless, were successful in obtaining £338,042 over two and a quarter years from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)'s Rough Sleeper Grant Fund. The main aim of the project funded is to intervene with people who are at risk of becoming rough sleepers. Workers and a team leader for the Rough Sleeper Intervention Team were appointed during the period January to March 2017 and began work.

Although the rough sleeper count showed 13 people sleeping rough, New Hope's records show work with 246 individuals over 2016-17 who were either rough sleeping or in danger of becoming so. The demographic information on these individuals show the vast majority were men, 75% were in the age range of 26 to 52 years, 55% were White British, with some 16% from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Reasons for being homeless included being evicted from rented accommodation, asked to leave by friends and family, relationship breakdown, and leaving prison.

The main focus of Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum (WHSF) since its inception in July 2016 has been for its members to work together to create a single homeless pathway in the town in which:

- single homeless people needed only explain their story and be assessed once rather than multiple times to each agency operating locally and
- to try and find ways of using local resources for single people more efficiently.

The backdrop for taking this approach was the need to create greater efficiencies within local resources. The council put forward a vision for how single homeless people could be assisted in the town. In January 2017 a very productive Forum workshop created three work streams towards creating a single homeless pathway to make more efficient use of local resources:

- Develop a common assessment form
- Develop ways of working with and tapping into the resources of local private landlords as a source of homes for single homeless people
- Gain an understanding of misplaced service users in the homelessness schemes operating in Watford to enable service users to be better matched to services available.

The activities of these work streams are ongoing with active involvement of most WHSF members.

## 9. The impact of Welfare Reform

### 9.1 Introduction of the revised Benefit Cap

From November 2016, a revised national Benefit Cap was introduced which meant that for benefit dependent households living in Watford, welfare benefits were limited to £20,000 per year including housing costs. Of the over 200 households living in Watford-provided temporary accommodation, some 18 households were affected by the previous benefit cap<sup>1</sup> which capped benefits at £26,000 for all households nationally and were now facing a further reduction in benefits. For these households, moves into cheaper temporary accommodation were made or where possible, they were nominated to suitable housing association homes available.

### 9.2 Issues coming up

- From April 2017
  - o For families with more than two children, new applications for Tax Credits, Universal Credit and Housing Benefit payments will be limited to the first two children in the family.
  - o For new claimants who are single people aged 18-21, automatic eligibility for Universal Credit is removed. Claimants will be expected to carry on living at home unless they can prove they are covered by an exception and so should then be able to get housing costs within Universal Credit.
  
- From April 2019:
  - o For single people aged under-35 in self-contained or supported housing, housing benefit will be limited to the rate for a room in shared accommodation.
  - o For older people in sheltered accommodation Housing Benefit will also be limited to the relevant LHA rate.

The changes being implemented from April 2017 will impact households on the Housing Register who have three more children. At the end of March 2017, there were 40 such households in TA in this situation and likely to be affected if housed either in a housing association-owned home or, if they do not have 5 years residence connection with Watford, will be housed in the private rented sector. For either tenure, there will be issues of housing affordability for larger families.

## 10. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA17) will bring fundamental changes to the way homelessness services are delivered in the coming years. Royal Assent is awaited.

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<sup>1</sup> introduced in 2013

## 11. Key Actions for 2017-18

Looking forward, key activities for Housing Services during 2017-18 include the following:

- Deliver the TA hostel units at Croxley View
- Continue to ensure housing advice is taken on planning applications to ensure new housing developments comply with the council's affordable housing policy
- Work with Planning to finalise the SPD on Affordable Housing Commuted Sums
- Work with housing association partners to maximise the delivery of affordable housing on new developments: 94 new affordable homes expected during 2017/18
- Implement the housing services improvement plan: phase 1 – Successful NPSS re-review achieved; phase 2 – NPSS Bronze award achieved
- Reduce average spend on temporary accommodation use to consistently under £5,000 per week
- Pilot modular construction scheme for provision of temporary accommodation
- Continue to complete 4 Homeless cases per week
- Keep the backlog of Homeless cases not completed to under 50 cases at any one time
- Complete all S202 Reviews within 100 days
- Maintain the number of households in TA at 200 or less

**April 2017**

## Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016-2017

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016-2017	
Task 1: Understanding and improving methods of preventing illegal and retaliatory eviction in the private rented sector	Further training took place during the year as well as a guidelines issues for checking the validity of S21 notices issues as the first stage of eviction by private landlords.
Task 2: Reviewing our Housing Options Advice and Homelessness Service	During 2016/17, Watford worked in a consortium with four other local authorities all working towards achieving the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) Gold Challenge Standard, a national set of 10 detailed standards for local authorities for delivering excellent homelessness services. Our partner authorities are Stevenage, Luton, Three Rivers, and North Hertfordshire. Watford was the first authority in the consortium to start the process of engaging with the Standard with a Diagnostic Peer Review (DPR) that place during the last week of September 2016. To be able to work towards gaining achievement of the Gold Standard, local authorities must score 60% in their DPR. Watford gained 55% and was provided with a detailed improvement plan which it has worked on through the rest of the financial year with a view to being reviewed in November 2017 and scoring higher than 60%. The improvement plan contained 107 actions.
Task 3: Investigating options to expand the portfolio of temporary accommodation.	<p>A tendering exercise was undertaken to properly test the market and provide good quality affordable temporary accommodation as well as homes for duty discharge. Some 7 providers are now on the framework agreement created for the purpose and used as and when required.</p> <p>Plans for a new 40 bed flexible hostel in Croxley View and 2 bed units in Balmoral Road were developed during the year.</p>

## Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016-2017

<p>Task 4: Introducing a new Communications Strategy in conjunction with the Housing Strategy to tackle high expectations and high rates of refusals, and to manage demand.</p>	<p>In the NPSS DPR, the housing web pages scored poorly against the national standard. Lack of resources meant that it was not possible to undertake the actions set out in the NPSS improvement plan relating to the web pages during the period October 2016 to March 2017.</p> <p>As the council's number one corporate priority is Housing, Housing Services has worked together with the Communications Team to promote housing issues in the borough. The council's magazine, About Watford, which is delivered to all homes in the borough, covered Homelessness in its Winter 2016 edition and "Housing and support for those in need" in the Spring 2017 edition. Housing Services provided the facts, figures and case studies to support these think pieces. The two teams met regularly to discuss Housing Services' communication needs.</p>
<p>Task 5: Review the Council's initiatives available to offer financial assistance to homeless households.</p>	<p>A homeless prevention fund remains established. The information on the HomeLet scheme set out in <a href="#">Section 4.2</a> above and the homeless preventions demonstrated there are testament to the success of the scheme and the application of this funding.</p>
<p>Task 6: Review and revise approach to homelessness prevention with key partners.</p>	<p>See <a href="#">Section 7</a> above re the work of the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum and its work on the <a href="#">Single Homeless Pathway</a> and Task 2 above re the NPSS Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Task 7: Deliver a revised Private Rented Sector Discharge Scheme.</p>	<p>Some 18 households accepted an offer of a private rented home during 2016/17 which brought the council's duty to house to an end. Ten of these households had a local connection to Watford and would after a considerable wait have eventually been made an offer of a housing association home.</p>
<p>Task 8: Tender the outreach service for</p>	<p>The Outreach contract was tendered and awarded to New Hope from July 2016.</p>

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2016-2017

rough sleepers.	Regular, very productive meetings have taken place with New Hope since. Information in <a href="#">Section 8</a> above sets out the number of people worked with as a whole by New Hope throughout several of its projects. New Hope has gone through a period of major restructuring which has meant that further work is needed to extract more specific data on actual rough sleepers worked with under the Outreach project. Nonetheless, some extremely valuable work is being undertaken.
Task 9: Single Homelessness – develop a pathway model for homeless people.	See <a href="#">Section 8</a> above setting out the work undertaken on the single homeless pathway via the Watford Strategic Homelessness Forum.
Task 10: Manage the impact of Welfare Reform	See <a href="#">Section 9</a> above information on the Benefit Cap.
Task 11: Longer-term accommodation solutions.	Planning permission was obtained by the joint vehicle company (owned by the council and the Watford Community Housing Trust) for the delivery of 36 new one and two bedroom permanent homes in Croxley View.

## Housing Strategy Action Plan progress

<b>Theme One: Improving the supply of housing</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 1: Developing, testing and publicising annual dataset with conclusions to inform the housing mix.	Next dataset to be produced in May 2016 with updated information on housing need.	This 2016/17 Review contributes to this task.	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 2: Participate in the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in partnership with neighboring boroughs	SHMA has been produced.	n/a	Completed
Task 3: Work with registered providers to achieve a balance between traditional social rented properties and new business which enables them to develop other types of homes, such as Affordable Rent, Market Rent, homes for sale.	Monitoring of Government initiatives e.g. the Starter Home initiative, the Build to Rent scheme and significant changes made to the planning system.  New consultation with registered providers is now required because of the 1% year on year reduction in rent levels for the next four years. We need to know how this will affect development programmes.	The shift of Housing Department from Customer Services Directorate to Place Shaping and Corporate Performance Directorate in January 2017 has created significant opportunities for joint working with Planning and Property Services Departments. The Housing Department has undertaken in depth work with Planning on drafting the council's SPD Affordable Housing Commuted Sums Policy for	Housing / Planning



**Theme One: Improving the supply of housing**

Task	Action	Outcomes during 2016/17	Lead
	<p>Improved working with Planning in terms of variations from policy in light of viability assessments.</p> <p>Agreement for the establishment of the Housing Company for the Council to take a direct role in development.</p>	<p>consultation.</p> <p>Because of the focus on housing service delivery improvement, it has not been possible to work with housing association partners on the impact on affordable housing development as a result of the 1% per year rent reduction.</p> <p>The Housing Company, Hart Homes, was set up during the year.</p>	
<p>Task 4: Annual review of the Tenancy Strategy</p>	<p>Consultation complete. The full strategy has now been published and disseminated to stakeholder organizations and Elected Members. The strategy is now on the Watford Borough Council website.</p> <p>Review to be scheduled Q2 2016/17</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Officer</p>
<p>Task 5: To contribute to the implementation of the council's forthcoming Asset Management Strategy.</p>	<p>Reports going to Property Investment Board, covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposals for retention and replacement of Council properties;</li> </ul>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Head of Housing</p>

**Theme One: Improving the supply of housing**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for use of commuted sums; and</li> <li>New investment.</li> </ul>		

**Theme Two: Improving the condition and management of housing**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 1: To revise the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	To be delivered second half of 2016/17	A BRE integrated stock modelling exercise was undertaken during 2016/17 and completed in March 2017. Its findings will contribute to the refresh of the council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy	Energy & Renewal Officer, Environmental Health
Task 2: Initiatives to support residents promoted in revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	To be delivered second half of 2016/17	The Policy will be delivered in 2017/18.	Housing / Environmental Health
Task 3: Production of a suite of advice and information material which covers	An analysis has taken place of all the information on privately owned housing	Some work undertaken by March 2017	Housing Strategy

**Theme Two: Improving the condition and management of housing**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
the full range of services available.	which is available on the website. Gaps have been identified.  Addressed through revised communications strategy.	but not completed.	Officer
Task 4: Publication of the above through websites, leaflets, roadshows, social media, advertising through lettings agents.	Please see above.	As above. Draft leaflets now ready for publication as a result of additional resources made available through the NPSS process.	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 5: Introduce a framework to enforce the redress scheme and include compliance across council private sector access schemes.	To be led by Environmental Health.  Guidance from Government on publicity for the Redress scheme has been disseminated.	No further work done during the year	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 6: Review Care and Repair provision	Discussions have taken place with WCHT on reviewing the scheme and making it more effective. Revised protocol to be written.	No further work done during the year	Head of Housing
Task 7: Review the current scope and effectiveness of casework on	Incentive package to be reviewed with WCHT.	No further work done	Head of Housing

**Theme Two: Improving the condition and management of housing**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
overcrowding.			
Task 8: Implement action plan to development our strategic and operational response to overcrowding.	As above	As above	Head of Housing
Task 9: Investigate the need for a service to respond to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment.	<p>Research has been carried out into the frequency and nature of retaliatory eviction.</p> <p>Monitoring of the Deregulation Bill has been undertaken and a summary of the sections related to retaliatory eviction has been produced. Protocol in place for managing this area.</p>	n/a	Complete
Task 10: Implement action to develop our strategic and operational response to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment in order to minimize housing need.	As above	n/a	Complete

**Theme Two: Improving the condition and management of housing**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 11: Commission a private sector stock condition survey/model.	To be delivered second half of 2016/17	See Task 1 above	Head of Housing
Task 12: Develop policy responses from the Stock Condition Survey to inform appropriate policies, strategies and procedures.	See above	See Task 1 above	Housing / Environmental Health
Task 13: To undertake Home Energy Efficiency publicity campaigns to raise awareness	Discussions to take place with Environmental Health colleagues on priorities.  Current energy efficiency projects are Boundary Way and Harebreaks.	No further energy efficiency projects undertaken during 2016/17	Housing / Environmental Health

<b>Theme 3: Support to Client Groups where intervention is needed</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 1: Review and publish annual update of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.	Action Plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis and amended as appropriate	n/a	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 2: Implementation of the revised Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.	As above	Actions set out in the NPSS Improvement Plan (see <a href="#">Section 6</a> above) have largely overtaken this action point	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 3: Implementation of the Housing Nominations Policy.	Policy has been implemented.		Complete
Task 4: Development and implementation of the Private Sector Discharge Policy	A revised policy has been agreed, alongside a revised landlord offer. Policy has been reviewed in the light of recent case law. Additional staff resources have been provided to support the delivery of the scheme.		Complete
Task 5: To increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation	Accessible properties have been brought into use as temporary accommodation.	2 x wheelchair units have been included at the Croxley View TA hostel being delivered in April 2018. 1 x wheelchair unit planned for Balmoral Road TA scheme for delivery in	Housing Supply Manager

**Theme 3: Support to Client Groups where intervention is needed**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
		April/May 2018	
Task 6: Older people: agree decant protocol and associated allocation policies and criteria.	Discussions with providers and Herts on proposed new flexi-care schemes.	No further action	Completed

**Theme 4: Key locations**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 1: Work with Local Asset Based Vehicle (LABV) to procure a registered provider for the Health Campus.	Ongoing liaison with planning and developer to ensure affordable housing is maximized.	No further action	Housing Supply Manager
Task 2: Implement a pilot street improvement project for a clearly defined neighbourhood in the borough.	<p><u>Cassio Road, Marlborough Road and Merton Road</u></p> <p>The following housing-related information has been produced to contribute to the project:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>House prices and rents in the neighbourhood</li> </ul>		Completed

Task	Action	Outcomes during 2016/17	Lead
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census and indices of multiple deprivation data on the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Action taken to improve privately owned homes in the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Housing register applications from the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Homelessness applications from the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• A general audit on the types of housing and commercial premises in the neighbourhood.</li> </ul>		

<b>Theme 5: Well-being, Economy and Health</b>			
Task	Action	Outcomes during 2016/17	Lead
Task 1: Undertake an assessment of Watford's housing stock to better understand the housing conditions in Watford, and to ensure that health related data is identified in the house condition survey.	To be taken forward as part of the stock condition survey in second half of 2016/17.	A BRE integrated stock modelling exercise was undertaken during 2016/17 and completed in March 2017. Its findings will contribute to the refresh of the council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy	Housing / Environmental Health
Task 2: Undertake housing-related activity in line with health priorities for the borough, such as achieving "safe and healthy" homes, as informed by	As above. Activity will also relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Indices of Multiple Deprivation.</li> <li>• The role of housing in</li> </ul>	No further work undertaken	Housing Strategy Officer



<b>Theme 5: Well-being, Economy and Health</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
the above survey results.	implementing the Care Act  The Green Deal was abolished in Summer 2015. Awaiting succession policies from the Government		
Task 3: To support emerging initiatives in the council's forthcoming economic development strategy by research housing-related situations and potential interventions.	Research has been carried out to identify the lower super output areas in Watford with the biggest concentrations of recipients of Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance (full and partial). This data will be supplemented by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation which contain domains on employment- and income-related deprivation.  Discussions to take place on how this information will be used	Monthly monitoring of private rents in Watford undertaken and matched against LHA levels. An average gap of 33-34% between LHA and median rents has been established over 2016/17 indicating the unaffordability of private rented homes in Watford. This information together with information on unaffordability of home ownership for those on median wages has been fed into several planning applications over the year.	Housing Strategy Officer

<b>Theme 6: Communication and Community Engagement</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Task 1: Develop the communications			Completed

<b>Theme 6: Communication and Community Engagement</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcomes during 2016/17</b>	<b>Lead</b>
strategy for housing.			
Task 2: Implement the communications strategy for housing		<p>Regular meetings with Communications Officer have taken place throughout the year.</p> <p>Housing-related articles appeared in the council magazine, About Watford, in its <a href="#">Summer 2016</a>, <a href="#">Winter 2016</a> and <a href="#">Spring 2017</a> editions raising awareness of homelessness and the difficulty accessing affordable housing in the borough.</p>	Housing Strategy Officer
Task 3: To devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues, in partnership with registered providers.		No further work undertaken	Housing Strategy Officer