

HOUSING STRATEGY

2019-24

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Councillor Foreword

Welcome to our new housing strategy. The purpose of this document is to show how we intend to meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable people in our community and how we intend to support those who need assistance in either finding a home or maintaining their home in the next five years.

With an increased focus on climate change and the need to respond to the climate emergency declared by the Council in July 2019 the role of domestic energy consumption is likely to widen the Council's approach beyond affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty.

National housing policy has shifted since 2015 with a succession of different approaches and priorities though the direction of travel to prioritise affordable housing, homelessness, rough sleeping, the need for adaptations and the impact of the private rented sector will continue to attract focus and a need for local action.

We believe that good quality affordable housing plays a vital role in addressing poverty and reducing poor health. It is also a factor in improving social inclusion and mobility as well as enhancing equality of opportunity and reducing health inequalities. Amber Valley is a popular place to live but there are many vulnerable people within the borough whose home does not meet their needs, whether through design, suitability, disrepair or because they face housing costs they cannot afford. It should also be recognised that some people cannot manage the maintenance of their homes and will need levels of support that will enable them to have an improved quality of life and in some instances the opportunity to integrate within their wider community.

Whilst many landlords provide good accommodation there are still landlords that put the health and wellbeing of their tenants at risk and the Council will continue to improve the use of enforcement powers.

We recognise that the borough continues to have a need for many new affordable homes and that affordable rented accommodation is the tenure of most demand. We are also aware that people aspire to own their homes and, for many this can only be achieved if assistance is available. We will aim to support good quality, efficient new affordable accommodation of different tenures providing that it can be delivered on sustainable sites and can show real benefits for local people and local communities. We recognise that home ownership is an aspiration but is also a liability if homeowners lack the skills or finances to maintain that home.

In April 2018 the Council took back 'in house' the delivery of the homelessness service and the management of the housing register. We are pleased how the services have been integrated with other Council departments and external housing support providers which, has already benefitted many people. We have embraced the new approach required by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and although it has presented tough challenges, our aim is to continue the development of the service.

The Council continues to balance enforcement and advice to bring empty properties back into use as well as the timing consuming task of securing the future of strategically important historic buildings.

The Council has worked closely with Derbyshire County Council to deliver an increased number of adaptations, responding to the financial commitment that the Government has given to ensuring that more residents with reduced mobility are able to remain independent.

Finally, I would like to thank all our housing partners for the fantastic support they have provided us with. Without the support of our many partners we would not be able to achieve any of our housing strategy objectives.

Councillor Tony Holmes
Cabinet Portfolio Holder Housing and Public Health

1. Introduction

1.1. Profile of Amber Valley

1.1.1 Amber Valley is in the heart of Derbyshire and is the biggest district in the County in terms of population (approximately 122,000). The western area of Amber Valley is mainly agricultural; the eastern area is more developed with a historical reliance on manufacturing and traditional industries. Although the 4 main towns: Alfreton, Belper, Heanor and Ripley each have a strong individual identity they also have things in common with one another in terms of housing need:

1.2 Housing Priorities

1.2.1 Amber Valley Borough Council is a 'housing' authority and therefore has a responsibility towards helping meet the housing needs of people within the Borough. This work encompasses all tenure, from enforcing standards in the private rented sector to supporting registered providers deliver new affordable homes, from helping young people get on the 'housing ladder' to ensuring an older person's home is accessible and warm.

1.2.2 This housing strategy sets out the Councils housing objectives over the next 5 years (2019-24). The strategy provides detail of why certain areas are being focussed on, what the challenges are in these areas and what the Council can realistically expect to achieve.

1.2.3 The housing priorities are:

1. Incorporating Health into the Housing Agenda
2. Maximise the delivery of Affordable Housing
3. Prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping
4. Improving standards within the Private Rented Sector
5. Reducing the number of empty properties

1.2.4 It is recognised that whilst local government has been dealing with the impacts of austerity, reflecting the rising significance of housing there has been substantial additional financial investment in new housing delivery, homelessness services and adaptations as well as additional in year allocations for private rented sector enforcement

1.2.5 Although many of the housing issues the Council face are not new there is still a need to be prepared for different challenges and take advantage of new opportunities that are presented. The Council accepts that in order to meet its housing objectives it will need to be fully engaged with partners and show a willingness to adapt to change where necessary. The Council's housing team will review action plans with strategic partners and produce a new housing business plan each year to ensure that housing policies remain relevant and up to date.

1.2.6 Residents that need the support of the Council and its partners include;

- Roofless – those sleeping rough or having to use night shelters
- Houseless – those with a place to sleep temporarily but in institutions
- Insecure - those living in insecure housing; those threatened with insecure tenancies, eviction and domestic violence
- Those in inadequate housing, poor standard housing, overcrowded housing; housing that does not meet the needs of the occupiers
- Those living with or at risk of having long term conditions which will made worse by their home environment

1.3 **Developing the Strategy**

- 1.3.1 The Council has developed this housing strategy in line with national, regional, County and other local strategies.

National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework Annex2 (2019)
A New Deal for Social Housing (2018)
2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy
Fixing our Broken Housing Market (White Paper)

Regional Policies

Derbyshire Sustainable Transformation Plan
Derbyshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Older people's housing, accommodation and support: A commissioning strategy for Derbyshire

Local policies

Homelessness Strategy
The most up to date Local Plan
Empty Property Strategy
[Tenancy Strategy](#)
[Affordable Warmth Plan](#)
Private Rented Plan

1.3.2 **Liaising with partners**

The Council has supported the development of the housing and health priorities through the Health and Housing Systems group with close liaison with Public Health, NHS, Social Care and the other Districts/Boroughs. Through the Amber Valley 'Place Alliance' the Council has developed partnership working with the NHS including primary care and the voluntary and community sectors ensuring that there is a strategic link between different sectors. The Council works directly with professionals from a range of health and social care partners to improve service delivery and the targeting of help on those that need it most by improving connections between services.

- 1.3.3 The Council is a non-stock holding authority and therefore is reliant on registered provider partners to deliver new affordable housing within the borough. There is dialogue with housing association partners on all new affordable housing development to ensure that it is both deliverable and sustainable.
- 1.3.4 The Council's Housing Solutions Service (homelessness and housing advice) work closely with housing and housing support providers as well as the statutory support agencies to agree priorities and develop joint services. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has driven a need for far greater collaboration locally to find housing solutions to address challenging circumstances. As part of the delivery of the housing solutions service flexible housing support grant, given by Central Government is used to directly fund a number of services including Citizens Advice and Derbyshire Law Centre.
- 1.3.5 The Council is an active member of the Home Options Partnership providing access to social housing through an online housing register and the operation of a shared allocations policy.
- 1.3.6 The Council is increasingly dependent on the Home Improvement Agency and Derbyshire Healthy Homes Service to provide advice and support to those facing issues with their heating and basic repairs. The services are funded and commissioned by Derbyshire County Council.

- 1.3.7 The Council has been a long standing and active member of the nationally recognised Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Local Authority Energy partnership that coordinates collective responses to both addressing fuel poverty and climate change.
- 1.3.8 The Council works closely with its neighbouring authorities to agree priorities and where appropriate fund joint services. The Council is an active participant in County wide housing groups including, The Derbyshire Homelessness Officer Group, The Derbyshire Housing Strategy Group and the Built Environment Group.
- 1.3.8 The Council has very positive working relationships with Derbyshire County Council Adult Care within the commissioning and personalisation and prevention teams that means that positive joint approaches to resolve housing issues for Adult Care clients.

1.4 **Assessing Housing Need**

- 1.4.1 Amber Valley is part of the Derby housing market area. A 'Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment was completed in 2013 which identified an overall figure for the amount of housing that was required in the area including numbers of affordable housing. An Amber Valley addendum to the assessment was completed in 2016. The Council will continue to work with other partners to ensure that housing needs data is kept up to date and relevant.
- 1.4.2 Derbyshire County Council has published many documents that provide data on health issues relating specifically to Amber Valley including: 'Towards a Healthy Amber Valley' Locality Health Plan 2017-18, Amber Valley Health Profile 2019
- 1.4.3 The Council collects homelessness data for the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The data is used to help identify areas of service need relating to homelessness as well as providing local context to a national picture. It is predicted that this data will be used to inform national performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of homelessness prevention services.
- 1.4.4 The Private Sector House Condition Survey helps identify areas of need within the private sector. A new survey is currently being produced by Derby City that will cover all areas within Derbyshire.
- 1.4.5 The Council collects data from internal processes which is used to identify areas of housing need (housing register, housing allocations, housing benefit data).

1.5 **Housing and housing related factors in Amber Valley**

- Average House Price of a 2-bedroom property in the last 12 months (July 2019)
 Alfreton = £118,000
 Belper = £175,444
 Heanor = £134,768
 Ripley = £125,850
 Source: Home.co.uk
- Average cost of private renting a 2-bedroom property (July 2019)
 Alfreton = £474 pcm
 Belper = £661 pcm
 Heanor = £495 pcm
 Ripley = £482 pcm
 Source: Home.co.uk
- Local Housing Allowance rates in Amber Valley (July 2019) = £103.56 pw (equivalent to £448.76 pcm)
- Total number of Housing Register applications = 1913 (July 2019). Source: Amber Valley data

- In 2018 there were 12,300 people in Amber Valley aged over 65 years of age, this is estimated to increase to 16,900 by 2020 and to 21,000 by 2035. *Source: Older people's housing, accommodation and support: A commissioning strategy for Derbyshire*
- Rates of violent crime and long-term unemployment are below the national average. *Source: 'Towards a Healthy Amber Valley' Locality Public Health Plan 2017-18*
- 6,371 households or 12.4% of private sector households live in fuel poverty. *Derbyshire Observatory*
- Approximately 17% (3,500) of children live in low income families: *Source 'Towards a Healthy Amber Valley' Locality Public Health Plan 2017-18*
- 9.4 years life expectancy gap for men in the most and least deprived wards. *Source: Amber Valley Health Profile 2017*
- 82.6 years life expectancy at birth for females in Amber Valley. *Amber Valley: Health Profile 2017*
- The Council dealt with 825 approaches from households approaching the Council in 2018/19. *Source: Amber Valley internal data*
- The Council paid for 177 completed adaptations in 2018/19. *Source: Amber Valley internal data*
- 9,094 people over 65 will have a fall each year. *Source: Derbyshire Falls HNA 2017*
- 1 in 5 people in Amber Valley live with a long-term health problem or disability. *Source: PHE Fingertips: Mental Health and Wellbeing JSNA*
- 14,607 people are classified as carers: *Source: Derbyshire Falls HNA*

2 **Priority 1: Incorporating Health into the Housing Agenda**

2.1 **Background**

- 2.1.1 There has always been a recognised connection between good health and good housing or poor health and poor housing, however it is often a synergy lacking when housing and health strategies are produced and subsequent policies relating to the strategies developed. The Council considers it important to incorporate health issues into its housing priorities and considers it to be equally important that health professionals recognise the fundamental importance that housing has on health and wellbeing.
- 2.1.2 With this aim, the Council will continue to seek strong partnerships with health and social care colleagues in order to share understanding, improve systems and pathways and most importantly recognize the dependence organizations have with one another.

A safe home free of potentially harmful hazards, that can be maintained at a comfortably warm temperature, is affordable and suitable in terms of meeting the needs of the household is a fundamental building block for good physical and mental health.

- 2.1.3 As the NHS and Social Care seek to minimise admissions and prolonged care in hospitals and other institutions, they will need to develop an understanding of housing related issues and know where and when to seek advice and support if required. Similarly, the Council deal with an increasing number of

people who have complex mental and physical health needs and in certain instances will require the intervention of health professionals to avoid potential housing and health crisis.

2.2 The Role of the Council

2.2.1 The Council has a range of duties, and obligations to tackle housing issues which, at its source contributes to the physical and mental health wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our community. They include:

- Ensuring that as much affordable housing is built in the Borough
- Increasing the availability of adapted homes
- Providing the most effective homelessness prevention and relief service
- Supporting residents to access affordable and safe housing that meets their needs
- Reducing the number of poor quality private rented homes
- Using powers to tackle hazards that can cause acute and chronic health conditions
- Reducing the number of residents living in fuel poverty or a cold home that they cannot afford to heat
- Working with others to reduce the number of hoarded or filthy homes
- Optimising the use of Government funding to provide adaptations
- Supporting the delivery of simple solutions to reduce falls and make the home as safe as possible
- Contribution towards reductions in carbon emissions from domestic household emissions contributes to climate change

2.2.2 The Council will continue to optimise the impact of the duties and powers it has available to ensure that those that need housing support or services the most receive assistance. This means continuing to work with partners to identify the residents that most need help.

2.2.3 The Council has a number of different roles in improving health outcomes

2.2.4 *Strategic*

The Council will seek to influence other public services in order that they 'think housing' from a prevention perspective and ensure that housing needs and conditions are factored into decision making both strategically but also on an individual basis. There are emerging challenges around policy, especially how issues like disrepair in owner occupied properties should be addressed.

2.2.5 *Commissioning*

The Council will work with partners to design and commission services and build upon a strong track record of working with the County Council and other organisations that are best placed to deliver housing related services.

2.2.6 *Financial*

The Council has developed a variety of funding streams and has been given increased financial scope to think differently and work more creatively to ensure that financial decisions are informed by optimising the use of the £Derbyshire¹. Housing functions have been given a substantial increase in external funding, but this is set against an overall reduction in funding for revenue budgets which, puts the additional funding at risk if it cannot be used effectively.

¹£Derbyshire is term to describe the concept of public money invested in a service in the County with the idea that better outcomes might be achieved by looking at different more effective ways of spending money in Derbyshire. E.g. £500 spent on a boiler repair might save money elsewhere by enabling an elderly person to remain at home that might otherwise cost £1,000s in care home or nursing home costs

2.2.7 *Operational*

Where appropriate the Council provides in-house service provision for a range of reactive services.

2.2.8 Although the Council is a service provider it is also a collaborative and positive partner who will work with a wide breadth of partners that deliver services in the Borough.

2.3 The Role of Health

- 2.3.1 The Derbyshire Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) published in 2016 made limited reference to housing <https://joinedupcarederbyshire.co.uk/about/our-plans>. The STP Plan is being refreshed and the Derbyshire Joined Up Care Board (JUCB) have made it clear that the refresh will incorporate wider determinants like housing and employment. The JUCB brings together senior health and social care system leaders charged with delivering the NHS Forward View in Derbyshire.
- 2.3.2 Having recognised that the JUCB have acknowledged housing as a wider determinant of health-related issues, it is important that housing authorities are able to clarify what they and their partners are able to offer.
- 2.3.3 The Joined-up Care Board Prevention Strategy has been produced by the JUCB with the following priorities which it is inviting all partners to integrate within business processes.
- Enabling people in Derbyshire to live healthy lives
 - Building mental health, wellbeing and resilience across the life course
 - Empowering the Derbyshire population to make healthy lifestyle choices
 - Building strong and resilient communities with people supported to maintain and improve their own wellbeing
- 2.3.4 This housing strategy supports this prevention strategy.
- 2.3.5 Housing is one of the wider determinants that will affect health and wellbeing but is not always well understood. Too often the role or significance of housing and the various supporting services are only apparent at a crisis stage.
- 2.3.6 The JUCB 'Place' involves commissioners, community services providers, local authorities, primary care, the voluntary and community sector, and the public working together to meet the needs of local people. There are eight Place Alliances across Derbyshire with Amber Valley being one of them.
- 2.3.7 The Council has enjoyed close relationships with GPs and Commissioners since 2011 and as a result has been able to provide support to vulnerable residents that GPs and other health professionals have identified, especially those living in cold damp homes. In the last 12 months with the development of Place this has accelerated with good prospects for further enhancement of service coordination resulting in more vulnerable households being identified and referred for housing interventions. The Council is working more and more closely with partners within one of the JUCB priorities of Place.
- 2.3.8 All Place Alliances are being asked to focus on a consistent set of work areas which include frailty, falls, continence, delirium and supporting people to die well. Not all these areas will have a housing focus but this offers an opportunity to try to develop services that support the aims of Place. In addition, each Place Alliance will focus on what local people need in that area as regards their health and wellbeing. Developing 'Place' involves promoting healthy choices, healthy environments and resilient communities
- 2.3.9 Place has already improved communications between professionals across organisations but needs to maintain momentum. Place has provided an important stimulus to ensure that vulnerable groups with housing needs are better supported but it does require Health professionals to understand housing services. To achieve sustained success work needs to take place to develop mature systems with improved local coordination of services.

One client identified through discussions about High Impact Users was calling out EMAS on a regular basis. Through a multi-agency meeting it was determined that part of the problem was that the resident lived in a first floor flat and was in a wheelchair, therefore housebound. The client was on the housing register and had a higher banding but was not actively bidding for properties. As a result of the meeting support was put in place to support bidding to enable the resident to move to ground floor accommodation.

2.3.10 Whilst Place remains a priority as a concept the basic principles of joining up public services will continue in some form and that there will be in future years a strategic and operation imperative for services to work together. The NHS and its structures are likely to undergo further change within the life of this strategy and it will be important that the Council adapts to and supports those changes.

2.3.11 [Derbyshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) sets out 5 priorities for improving health and wellbeing across Derbyshire, focusing on action to address the wider determinants of health with action 4 being to '**Support our vulnerable populations to live in well-planned and healthy homes**'.

2.3.12 Specific actions are being determined but 5 areas of focus that this strategy will support;

- Prevention of homelessness
- Tackling fuel poverty
- Improving the standards of existing housing stock
- Use of Better Care Fund to support adaptations
- Supporting the delivery of the Derbyshire wide Older people's housing, accommodation and support strategy

2.3.13 The priorities have been developed with Boroughs and Districts through the Public Health led Health and Housing Systems Group which has been in existence for over two years. The Group is being expanded to ensure wider participation and greater levels of collaboration between various organisations across Derbyshire. Action to support the priorities will be supported through existing groups by the Council. The priorities chosen by the Health and Wellbeing Board are consistent with this Council's priorities as set out within this strategy.

2.3.14 Hoarding cases are complex and are an increasing concern in terms of the resources used to resolve issues. Hoarding frequently is associated with disrepair but needs to be dealt with sensitively and frequently require a multi-agency approach to understand the cause and then the best way of resolving issues that put the occupant(s) and others at risk. There is anecdotal evidence that bereavement is a significant trigger leading to hoarding behaviour but does require a multi-agency response. The Council will continue to work with partners to improve outcomes for those whose lives are impacted by hoarding.

2.3.15 Working with the County Council and other Districts and Boroughs, Derby City Council have been commissioned to produce a stock condition survey as a jointly funded collaboration. The Council last completed a survey in 2010 and it is hoped that the report will help inform future action to improve standards.

2.3.16 The Council will work with Derbyshire County Council Public Health and other commissioners to develop an action plan that will support the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy but will be based upon the priorities set out in this strategy.

2.4 **The Council's priorities in addressing improved health outcomes**

2.4.1 **Affordable Warmth**

2.4.2 According to the most recently available Government figures (2016) 6,371 (12.4%) households in Amber Valley are in fuel poverty, an increase from 10.1% in 2014. This is of concern and Amber Valley has the highest proportions of the population in fuel poverty of the Derbyshire Districts.
<https://observatory.derbyshire.gov.uk/poverty-and-deprivation-fuel-poverty/>

2.4.3 The Council's [Affordable Warmth Plan 2019](#) was approved in March 2019 and has the following priorities;

- Identify the residents that need most support
- Supporting private tenants to improve standards in private rented homes
- Resources are secured to help those most in need

- Demonstrate outcomes from the delivery of the plan

2.4.4 The Council made a resolution to declare a climate emergency on 24th July 2019. Domestic household emissions and associated reduction in carbon emissions are likely to be an emerging national priority. The Council has substantially scaled back its offer around affordable warmth and to support the delivery of the action associated with the Climate Emergency will need a substantial adjustment. In some instances, there is a conflict in that providing first time heating to a household is likely to increase carbon emissions. In most instances better insulated homes will provide better protection against excess heat as well as making homes warmer in colder weather.

2.4.5 There is an expectation that Councils will have a role to support households to reduce their carbon emissions through reduced energy consumption. The Council will set out how it will support the reduction of carbon emissions from domestic household energy consumption once plans are suitably developed. Given the rise of the climate emergency agenda it is likely that the Government will make policy announcements designed to increase access to measures for residents to reduce their carbon footprint from domestic energy consumption. It will be important for the Council to work with partners to optimise resources to be used locally, especially to support retrofitting of energy efficiency measures.

2.5.1 Delivery of Adaptations

2.5.2 The Council's approach to delivering adaptations is based on a long-standing working relationship with both Derbyshire County Council and the Home Improvement Agency.

2.5.3 The Council's Housing Renewal Policy sets out how funding will be used and is periodically reviewed to ensure that the policy framework reflects Council priorities. The Policy was reviewed in 2019 and will be reviewed bi-annually, unless there is a reason to review the Policy more urgently. Increased funding in recent years has enabled the Council to move away from just delivering adaptations in traditional form e.g. paying for stairlifts, level access showers and extensions amongst other works and look at more innovative approaches using powers under the Regulatory Reform Order. Decisions about funding are made in collaboration with the County Council and to an increasing extent informed by the identification of needs through Place and other activity with the NHS.

2.5.4 Funding for DFG comes from Central Government through the Better Care Fund with budgets allocated to each District/Borough that is passed down by the County Council. Funding has increased substantially as demonstrated in Table 1 which shows the funding since 2015/16. Prior to this date the Council had to provide substantial capital funding support to ensure that mandatory duties could be met. The Council has also received substantial in year allocations in the last two years reflecting this important area of policy.

2.5.5 Funding tends to be announced in year giving limited scope to work with partners to plan ahead. The Council needs to continue to work closely with the County Council and other partners to embrace the opportunities presented.

TABLE 1 Financial Allocations from the Better Care Fund

Financial Year	Amber Valley Initial Allocation	Additional In year Allocation	Total Derbyshire Allocation (excluding in year)
2015/16	£562,000		£3,199,000
2016/17	£1,001,304		£5,840,741
2017/18	£1,094,633	£105,941	£5,965,724
2018/19	£1,187,963	£138,000	£6,450,727
2019/20	£1,281,883		£6,960,719

- 2.5.6 Table 1 shows the substantial increase in funding that has been provided, recognising the value that the Government has placed on providing adaptations. Delivering adaptations with partners in an effective and efficient way continues to be an important function.
- 2.5.7 Amber Valley receives the highest allocation amongst the Derbyshire Districts and Boroughs, but unlike the stock holding authorities has to use the funding for both private and social housing stock and as table 2 illustrates that a disproportionate level of this funding is spent in social housing. There is concern that owner occupiers are not accessing the support and action needs to be taken to increase awareness and assess why this might be the case. It is anticipated that health colleagues will be particularly important in identifying owner occupiers that can be supported to remain independent for longer by adapting their home.

TABLE 2 Summary of adaptations delivered in the last two years

Number of Grants Approved	2017/18	2018/19
Number of grants approved by tenure of applicant		
Owner Occupiers	48	58
Private Tenants	13	3
Social Tenants	83	113
Other	1	0
Number of grants approved by age of the disabled person		
17 and under	6	8
18 to 64	53	66
65 and over	86	100
By total value of grant approved		
Under £5,000	105	123
£5,000 to £15,000	35	47
£15,000 to £30,000	4	4
Over £30,000	1	0

- 2.5.8 Table 3 provides a summary of adaptations delivered by tenure which shows that a relatively high proportion of properties being adapted continue to be social homes despite the work that has taken place to encourage residents to move to already adapted housing.

TABLE 3 Adaptations funded by Tenure in 2017/18.

2017/18	Futures	Housing Association	Owner Occupier	Supported Living	Private Rented	Total
Hoists	0	1	1	0	1	3
Over Bath Showers	2	3	1	0	0	6
Stairlifts	10	1	14	0	2	27
Level Access Showers	40	6	24	0	6	76
Complex	8	0	6	0	3	17
Total	60	11	46	0	12	129

TABLE 4 Adaptations funded by Tenure in 2018/19

2018/19	Futures	Housing Association	Owner Occupier	Supported Living	Private Rented	Total
Hoists	2	0	3	0	0	5
Over Bath Showers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stairlifts	28	0	15	0	4	47
Level Access Showers	67	9	28	0	1	105
Complex	11	1	8	0	0	20
Total	108	10	54	0	5	177

2.5.9 The tables show that most adaptations are for stairlifts and level access showers.

2.5.10 Funding for adaptations is through the Better Care Fund and the Government logic behind the fund is to support integration of services that help residents to remain at home and independent for longer, as well as supporting hospital discharge and avoiding admittance. The use of discretionary powers has to be balanced with meeting mandatory grants. More certainty about funding levels from Central Government is needed otherwise some caution will have to be mixed with innovative practice.

2.5.11 Working with the County Council and Home Improvement Agency the Council has continued to improve the experience for applicants and reduce waiting times whilst retaining the quality of the work and this will continue through the life of the strategy whilst the Council retains the mandatory duty for DFGs.

2.5.12 Within the framework of Place and building on the strong positive working relationship with Adult Care several initiatives have either been introduced or are being trialled, all with the intention of improving outcomes for residents making use of the additional funding and powers within the Regulatory Reform Order;

- New build adapted properties for specific individual and household circumstances
- Use of funding to help residents move rather than adapt a property
- Use of funding to facilitate discharge where support is not otherwise available
- Delivery of stairlifts as recyclable equipment rather than DFG
- Use of funding to provide residents with early diagnosis dementia

2.5.13 The Council has also worked closely with Childrens Services and a developer to deliver a new build adapted bungalow for a family to meet their housing needs. This is something that the Council will seek to replicate where it is most effective to do so using Better Care Fund allocation as an alternative to adapting a home that might be far more expensive and not fully meet the needs of the applicant.

2.5.14 Whilst the Council continues to work with the County Council and the Home Improvement Agency to improve the speed of adaptations there is scope to look at other models of service that might bring together several housing related support services or for the Council to take on more control over the delivery of DFGs. This would make it easier for health and other services to refer into and might create efficiency savings as well as providing greater resilience.

TABLE 5: Summary for Priority 1: Incorporating Health into the Housing Agenda

Objective	Challenge	Action	Partners	Progress
Work with partners to address health inequalities and improve outcomes for individuals	Ensuring effective engagement so that housing issues are appropriately prioritised Achieving Sustained Change Complexity of the 'Housing Offer'	The Council will continue to seek strong partnerships with health and social care in order to share understanding, improve systems and pathways with a view to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for residents	Multiple NHS partners, Derbyshire County Council	Continue to develop relationships to improve identification of residents in housing need especially through Place
Delivery of the Affordable Warmth Plan	Reliance on external resources and impact of Government policy	Ensure delivery of actions within the plan	Derbyshire County Council, Marches Energy Agency, Local Authority Energy Partnership	
Housing contribution to the Climate Emergency declaration		Develop a plan to ensure the Council can support action to reduce carbon emissions from domestic energy consumption		
Deliver with the County Council a service that supports improved access to adapted homes	Certainty over funding Resources for assessment, design and delivery of adaptations	Working with the County Council and other partners the Council will continue to innovate and seek to optimise the use of the Better Care Funding with reference to optimising the use of the £Derbyshire	Derbyshire County Council, Home Improvement Agency, NHS	
Use the stock condition survey report to prioritise plans to improve standards	Action will be largely dependent upon resources available to the Council	The Council will assess the findings of the stock condition survey and will work with partners to develop an action plan to address priorities identified by the survey	Derbyshire County Council, Home Improvement Agency, NHS	
Deliver with partners the Derbyshire Older Persons Housing Strategy	The need and ability to balance priorities.	Develop and coordinate an action plan with partners	Derbyshire County Council; NHS and partners	

3 **Priority 2: Maximise the delivery of New Affordable Homes**

3.1 Good quality affordable housing is an important part of the health agenda. The stresses of living in accommodation that a household cannot afford puts pressure on relationships, reduces the ability to adequately heat properties, forces families to cut back on essential items such as food and clothing, can prevent opportunities to move to give or obtain support and, ultimately can lead to the loss of a home if rent or mortgage repayments are not met. People also aspire to own their home but for many this can only be achieved if assistance is given. This again results in people relying on expensive private rented accommodation or, staying with relatives when in the past they would have been able to buy their first home

3.2 **What is Affordable Accommodation?**

3.2.1 Affordable housing in England is a general term to describe a variety of housing tenures judged to be affordable. The Council's own definition, whereby affordable housing is defined as accommodation for those on incomes below the median income of the Borough, whilst understandable does not necessarily take account of all tenures that are referred to nationally as affordable housing. The Council recognises that there are significant households whose income may be above the median income for the borough, who wish to become owner occupiers yet would struggle if assistance is not provided.

3.2.2 The Derby Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013) and subsequent Amber Valley addendum (2017) refers to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 definition of affordable housing:

3.2.3 “Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should:

- **Meet the needs of eligible households including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices;**
- **Include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or, if these restrictions are lifted, for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision”.** (CLG (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.3 **Types of affordable housing**

3.3.1 The NPPF was amended in February 2019 and provides the following guidance:

3.3.2 **Affordable Housing:** housing for sale or rent, for people whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- a) **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provision to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent)
- b) **Starter Homes:** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan preparation or decision making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household 's eligibility to purchase a

starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

- c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the home to remain at an affordable price for future households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

Types of affordable housing needed in Amber Valley

- 3.3.3 The Council has a responsibility to determine the types of affordable housing that are required in Amber Valley. Whilst consideration may be given to various types of tenure it will be based on identified need that would not be met by normal market conditions.
- 3.3.4 The Council will consider various house types for new affordable accommodation for each individual site based on factors that include:
- Evidence from the 2016 Derby HMA Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) addendum update for Amber Valley.
 - The geographic area of the development
 - The capacity of housing associations to acquire properties on certain sites
 - The need to meet a specific housing need for someone with a disability
 - The long-term sustainability of the development
 - Local incomes
- 3.3.5 The 2016 Derby HMA Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Addendum suggests a new affordable house type mix that includes the following:
- 1-bedroom properties 30-35%
 - 2-bedroom properties 35-40%
 - 3-bedroom properties 20-25%
 - 4-bedroom properties 5-10%
- 3.3.6 Although the mix suggested in the SHMA is based on evidence of need, if strictly adhered to it would not necessarily deliver balanced communities that have long term sustainability. New developments also provide opportunities to meet the needs of specific vulnerable groups that may otherwise go unmet. The Council will continue to look at each new development to maximise delivery that will best meet housing need, taking in to account what can be delivered by housing association partners and whether specific vulnerable groups can also be supported

Areas of need for affordable housing in Amber Valley

- 3.3.7 The SHMA estimated that between 2012-2017 there was a need for 1,936 new affordable properties. The total number delivered during the period was 293. During the previous housing strategy period from April 2015 to November 2019 a total of 405 affordable properties have been delivered. Although the Amber Valley SHMA addendum (2017) estimated slightly reduced numbers of affordable homes required it also suggested the estimates should be treated with an element of caution and concluded that both assessments clearly identify a need and that the delivery of such accommodation should be maximised where the opportunities arise.

3.3.8 Applicants who apply for accommodation on the Council’s housing register can indicate a preference where they want to live. The table below indicates the numbers of applicants who have indicated they want affordable accommodation in one of the 4 main towns within the borough.

TABLE 6 Numbers of applications expressing a preference on Home Options

	Alfreton	Belper	Heanor	Ripley
Number of current applicants on the housing register who have expressed a preference for accommodation in one of the 4 main towns of the borough.	287 first choice 163 second choice 110 third choice Total: 560	256 first choice 94 second choice 73 third choice Total 423	207 first choice 128 second choice 94 third choice Total: 429	292 first choice 206 second choice 135 third choice Total:633

*It is not a mandatory requirement to indicate an area preference and therefore the figures should not be treated as an accurate assessment of need for the area.

3.3.9 In 2018/19 there were 7 developments that included affordable homes. Table 7 below indicates the number of applicants who registered an interest (bids) for an individual property on each scheme.

TABLE 7 Bids per affordable scheme in 2018/19

Development	Registered Provider	Total number of units let within 2018/19	Average Number of bids for individual properties.
Damm Close, Alfreton	Futures	9	59
Bonnie Close, Radbourne Lane	Derwent Living	8	11
Bingham Close, Alfreton	Futures	6	26
Joseph Roe Drive, Crich	Nottingham Community Housing Association	10	47
Hibbett Close, Leabrooks	Futures	9	60
Dalby Close Waingroves	Futures	18	84
Shroggs Wood Belper	Derwent Living	9	42

*Although each property receives bids from applicants who are deemed ineligible in accordance with the housing allocations policy, the number of bids is a good indicator of demand for affordable rented accommodation in all areas of the borough.

Affordable Housing in Amber Valley and the National Planning Policy Framework

3.3.10 The Council will seek to deliver a mixture of social/affordable rented and shared ownership units on developments that include affordable housing. Whilst the NPPF 2019 guidance annex 2 includes starter homes and discounted market sales as affordable housing products it is difficult to see at the current time

how these products will meet a housing need that could not be met elsewhere within the borough under normal market conditions. Government guidance on starter homes states that properties up to the value of £250,000 (including discount) could be made available as starter homes to first time buyers who are under 40 years of age providing they have a household income below £80,000 per annum. Most large new developments in the borough will offer a significant number of properties well below the £250,000 threshold and households with an income in the region of £80,000 per annum should not require assistance in buying a home. The SHMA addendum recognised there were households who could benefit from starter homes but also made the point that there should be a clear distinction between meeting a demand and meeting a need. If the Council considers starter homes and discounted market sales housing as affordable housing options in the foreseeable future it will be based on homes with a value that households on lower incomes are able to afford.

3.4 Delivering new affordable housing in Amber Valley

3.4.1 New affordable housing in the borough is generally delivered in one of two ways either as part of a planning condition through a section 106 (s106) planning agreement or, through a housing association led development.

3.4.2 Affordable Housing as a planning condition (Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning act 1990 as amended)

3.4.3 Section 106 (s106) Agreements are legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers; these are linked to planning permissions and are known as planning obligations. Affordable housing contributions are contained within s106 agreements and in Amber Valley new developments with 15 or more dwellings or larger than 0.5 hectares must contain 30 percent affordable housing. The affordable housing should include 90 percent social rented housing and 10 per cent intermediate housing. When the 30 percent is not an exact figure, we will seek a commuted sum reflecting the cost of affordable housing for the remaining percentage. Commuted sums are invested in new affordable housing schemes throughout the borough.

Housing Association Led Development

3.4.4 A housing association led development is when a development is specifically or predominantly for affordable housing. This could include developments under the s106 threshold of 15 units, or larger developments whereby the numbers of affordable units exceed the 30% s106 requirement. A housing association led development usually involves the housing association owning the development site or working with a developer who will transfer the whole development to the housing association upon completion. From April 2015, most new affordable homes delivered in the Borough (273 out of a total of 405) have been delivered on housing association led developments.

S106 Affordable Housing v HA Led developments

3.4.5 Amber Valley is a non-stock holding authority and therefore relies on housing associations to meet the affordable housing needs of the borough. Nearly 58% of all new affordable homes have been delivered on housing association led developments. At the current time this statistic is not a cause for concern, it does however raise questions on whether housing associations prefer to deliver affordable homes on sites they have control of and whether they are likely to decline s106 affordable units if they are faced with a capacity issue.

3.4.6 Housing Associations who operate within the area were asked what they considered were the advantages and disadvantages of both housing association led developments and s106 developments. There responses included:

3.4.7 Affordable homes delivered on private developments with S106 obligations

TABLE 8 Benefits and Restraints of affordable housing provision through S106

Benefits	Restraints
The opportunity to have an affordable property on large new developments may prove an attractive proposition for some housing association customers.	Housing Associations may have little or no influence over s106 house types regarding design and size. This can restrict the opportunity to deliver a 'bespoke' affordable house type that may be required for a household with specialist needs.
Affordable housing as part of a mixed tenure development can reduce stigma that is often attributed to developments solely built as affordable housing	Tenure is agreed between the local housing authority and developer and any changes to the agreement are normally agreed before a housing association has entered into contract with a developer.
If the overall development is popular, affordable shared ownership can benefit from being marketed with outright sale developments.	Developers will generally have their own sales team on site who will determine how they market the development. There is no urgency for a developer to sell the housing association shared ownership units
If affordable housing is 'pepper potted' throughout larger developments, it becomes 'tenure blind' and therefore potentially more integrated within the wider community.	Housing Associations rarely get to choose the site location of the affordable units. Pepper potting is only practical on the very large sites and even then affordable properties are grouped together albeit in small clusters.
Housing Associations can negotiate good deals with private developers and can obtain affordable dwellings between 50 – 70% of market value.	It is only on very rare occasions that housing associations can seek additional Homes England funding for affordable units on s106 developments.
Housing Associations do not have to deal in areas such as land acquisition planning etc	Housing Associations have little influence on the build programme and are often faced with delays in hand overs
Good for cash flow and diversification of investments	S106 units may include expensive service charges particularly when private management companies have been employed to deliver communal area maintenance

3.4.8 Housing Association Led Development

TABLE 9 Benefits and restraints associated with HA led Development

Benefits	Restraints
Housing associations have full control of the development design including layout, house types and any bespoke house types that can be designed for a household with a specialist housing need	Unless fixed price packet deals have been agreed, housing associations can face additional costs throughout the build process.
Housing associations can determine the tenure of developments they control.	Housing associations are still required to agree tenure with local housing authorities although non s106 requirements means there are fewer restrictions.
Target required growth area's	Delays on start on sites and securing build contracts within price.
Housing associations can obtain grant funding from a range of sources particularly Homes England.	Homes England will monitor housing association activity when they have provided funding support, setting potentially difficult timescales etc. Homes England do not however require specific building standards. Housing associations may concentrate their resources on achieving targets agreed with Homes England at the expense of s106 opportunities
Housing associations have control of the whole process from procurement to final handover.	Housing associations could potentially lose funding if they do not deliver within agreed time scale.

3.4.9 Although both s106 developments and housing association led developments have advantages and disadvantages when delivering affordable accommodation, most housing associations have indicated a preference for the latter because they are in control of the whole process and can deliver accommodation to their own specifications despite the costs generally being higher. In the event housing association partners do not have the capacity to deliver all the affordable units on s106 sites the Council will consider a commuted sum that is equivalent to the affordable housing contribution. Commuted sums will be invested in new affordable housing elsewhere in the borough usually on housing association led developments.

3.5 Council Support for new affordable accommodation

3.5.1 Most funding support for new affordable housing is raised by housing associations themselves through loans or the use of their own capital reserves. Homes England provides grant funding mainly through their 'affordable housing programme' for affordable housing that is not part of a s106 planning obligation. The Council provides support to Housing Associations to help them deliver affordable accommodation in several ways. The Council has a specific role as an affordable housing enabler working with the developing housing association to ensure obstacles can be addressed and solutions to problems found. A data base of housing need for the Borough is maintained and support is given to housing associations bidding for external funding. The Council will liaise with private developers to ensure that affordable housing negotiated as part of s106 agreements is the type and tenure that housing associations can support.

New Homes Bonus

3.5.2 The Council agreed (November 2014) that 'New Homes Bonus' (a sum currently paid by central government to local councils based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenues raised for new build homes) could be used to provide grant payments to housing associations to deliver affordable homes on the condition that:

- The scheme proposed is unviable without the input from the Council
- The grant paid will be no more than the New Homes Bonus generated by the affordable housing development and:-
- That the grant will be paid in 2 tranches, fifty per cent at the beginning of the development and fifty per cent when the development is complete

(Council Report entitled New Homes Bonus November 2014)

*2019-20 represents the final year of funding agreed through the Spending Review 2015. New Homes Bonus could be replaced by another method to incentivise housing growth.

3.5.3 Commuted Sums

The Council agreed (September 2017) that where affordable housing is not a viable option (for reasons other than financial) the developer will be required to pay a commuted sum (for each affordable property) based on a 40 percent market value of a 2-bedroom house within the post code area of the development. Because the Council seeks a percentage of developments over a certain size to be affordable, developers will also be required to provide a commuted sum where the provision of affordable housing is not calculated to be an exact number. Where commuted sums have been acquired they will be used to support affordable accommodation within the local housing market area of the development or on sites in other local housing market areas within the Borough that the Council has deemed to be a strategic priority.

3.6 Accessing Affordable Accommodation

3.6.1 Amber Valley Borough Council is part of the 'Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands Home Options' partnership. The partnership includes 5 local authorities (Amber Valley, Derbyshire Dales, Erewash, High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands) and their associated stock transfer housing companies. The partnership allocates all their rented properties through a 'choice-based lettings scheme'. People wanting to apply for rented affordable housing must complete a housing application. People who qualify to go on the housing register will be placed within a band based on their housing priority depending on their housing need. Full details of the housing allocations policy and process for applying social housing can be found at <https://www.home-options.org/choice/default.aspx>. From the 3rd April 2018 the Council has managed the housing register which includes the assessment of each application to determine the priority that will be given. Housing Association partners manage their own housing allocations through a shortlist of applications taken from the housing register. The housing associations are expected to do most pre-tenancy searches to ensure the successful applicant is entitled to an offer of an affordable property.

TABLE 10: Summary for Priority 2: Maximise the delivery of New Affordable Homes

Objective	Challenge	Action	Partners	Progress
<p>Maximise the delivery of new affordable housing that can meet the needs of people in Amber Valley</p>	<p>Ensuring local policies reflect The National Planning Policy Framework which has identified details of what can be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.</p>	<p>The Council will need to develop policies that make it clear to developers that new affordable housing must meet the housing needs of Amber Valley residents where normal market housing is unable to do so.</p>	<p>Private developers</p>	<p>New s106 agreements reflect the affordable housing requirements of people in the borough</p>
	<p>Registered Provider partners have insufficient capacity to deliver all new affordable housing on s106 developments</p>	<p>The Council will need to work closely with existing RP partners and ensure that necessary support is given</p> <p>The Council will need to encourage new RP partners to invest in Amber Valley if existing partners exceed their capacity and are unable to develop.</p> <p>The Council will need to maintain a strong partnership with Homes England to ensure that RPs can obtain maximum grant funding.</p>	<p>Futures, Nottingham Community Housing Association, Derwent Living, East Midlands Housing Association, Waterloo Housing, Homes England</p>	<p>Quarterly report through business plan on new affordable housing delivery</p>
	<p>There is a lack of available affordable accommodation that meets the needs for</p>	<p>The Council needs to develop partnerships between RPs, and Childrens Services to</p>	<p>RP partners, Childrens Services,</p>	

	specific groups that includes: large families or large families that with a disabled family member.	ensure that families can be identified whose needs cannot be met within the current housing stock and/or cannot have their current accommodation adapted in order to meet their housing needs. Where such families are identified plans will be agreed to provide a bespoke solution.		
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4 **Priority 3: The Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

4.1 **Background**

4.1.1 In April 2018 the homelessness and housing advice service was brought back in house (after being contracted out for the previous 15 years) along with the management of the housing register. The inhouse service coincided with the implementation of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act which, involved Local Authorities having to fundamentally change the way they delivered homelessness and housing advice services. The new legislation requires:

- Providing meaningful advice and information that can help prevent homelessness
- Identify people who are at risk of homelessness and work with them to prevent a homelessness situation arising
- Working with clients to help prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible people regardless of priority need and intentionality
- Agreeing individual plans with clients that provide a pathway that can lead to secure accommodation.
- Ensuring partners recognise homelessness situations within their own client group and have a referral route to appropriate homelessness prevention services.

4.2 **Working with partners**

4.2.1 The reasons for homelessness are complex and often multi-faceted. Although people from any background can find themselves facing a homelessness situation it is the more vulnerable who are at the greatest risk. Homelessness prevention involves more than housing. Good homelessness prevention services are the result of strong partnership working whereby agencies work together in the interest of their client.

4.2.2 Where homelessness prevention cannot be achieved a multi-agency approach is still required to ensure that the wellbeing of the household is always at the forefront of everyone's efforts. A family placed in emergency accommodation even for a short time is a daunting prospect. Along with the stigma of being homeless, children can have their schooling disrupted, vital support networks can be strained and a lack of certainty for the future can cause anxiety and depression.

4.2.3 The homelessness service is often seen as a service to be called upon when a housing crisis is imminent. This may mean that the opportunity to prevent a homelessness situation arising has been reduced. Most homeless households whether single or families will be known to one or more of the statutory support services and sharing information early can lead to a crisis being averted.

- Agreeing individual plans with clients that provide a pathway that can lead to secure accommodation.
- Ensuring partners recognise homelessness situations within their own client group and have a referral route to appropriate homelessness prevention services.

4.3 **Implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

4.3.1 In December 2018 the Council produced The [Homelessness Review Strategy Addendum](#). The addendum identified what the immediate requirements were that would enable the Council to provide a homelessness service compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. A new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy will be presented to Cabinet reflecting Government expectation that all Councils will have reviewed their homelessness strategies by the end of 2019 and incorporating specific commitments to support the Government's ambitions around the ending of rough sleeping.

The Council aims to deliver a high-quality homelessness service whereby the requirements laid down in statute are provided as a minimum and whereby the onus will be on ensuring that there are enough housing options to prevent homelessness situations developing and that support is available for those who need it.

TABLE 11: Summary for Priority 3: The Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Objective	Challenge	Action	Partners	Progress
Provide a homelessness service that is based on homelessness prevention and is fit for purpose to meet and go beyond the requirements of the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act.	The Council is required to produce a new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. The new strategy will include a review of the current service and identify areas for improvement where resources should be directed.	To produce a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Housing Support Providers, Adult Services, Neighbouring housing authorities, Probation Services	Draft homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to be presented to Cabinet by the end of the 2019.

5 Priority 4: Improving Standards within the Private Rented Sector

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 In recent years much research has been undertaken on the private rented sector (PRS). In the last 20 years it is the one area of housing tenure that has seen significant growth. Both home ownership and social rented tenure have seen a decline over the same period. Most PRS landlords own a single property (78% of all landlords) and enter the sector with little or no experience of managing tenancies. The Council often find that PRS landlords do not know what their responsibilities are or the responsibilities of their tenants. The Council supports landlord accreditation and will continue to work with partners to improve the professionalism of landlords operating in the borough.
- 5.1.2 For some, the growth in the PRS has meant greater choice in housing options although others would argue that the growth in the PRS is purely down to the decline in home ownership and social renting and if there was real choice few would choose the PRS as their preferred option.
- 5.1.3 This strategy makes clear that housing need for those on low incomes or for those contained within many vulnerable groups is best met through the affordable/social rented sector. Demand for these tenures is however likely to outstrip supply for the foreseeable future. Where once the PRS was perceived as a short-term housing solution, or a tenure for single people it is now a tenure that covers all household types and for many will be their only long-term housing option. Tenancies remain precarious and whilst no fault evictions remain many residents will continue to seek the security of a social housing tenancy.
- 5.1.4 Although the PRS has grown significantly over the last two decades there is no obligation for the Council to register or maintain a record of private rented properties. This has led to a large gap in information relating to the whereabouts of PRS properties and some of the challenges that need to be addressed in the sector.
- 5.1.3 The Government has introduced powers to manage the impact of the sector including selective and additional licensing. Both powers have been used by Councils where there are parts of the Borough with concentrations of poor quality, poorly managed properties or high proportions of low demand properties. The scope for introducing selective licensing has been considered but cannot be justified in Amber Valley although this will be kept under review.
- 5.1.3 The Council's [Private Rented Plan 2015](#) will be reviewed in support of this refresh of the Housing Strategy.

5.2 Enforcing Standards

- 5.2.1 There is currently no regulation that defines a minimum standard for PRS properties to be deemed suitable for letting, although the Council can enforce compliance with the Housing Act 2004 using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) if a property is inspected. The HHSRS is currently being reviewed as there is concern the system is not up to date and is not sufficiently straight forward to be understood by tenants and landlords.
- 5.2.2 Whilst there is support for a mandatory inspection of all PRS properties, local authorities can normally only inspect a PRS property with the consent of the tenant and the landlord being notified that an inspection is being carried out. The necessity to inform a landlord that an inspection is being carried out on a property can cause concern for some tenants who feel there may be repercussions for the landlord that can ultimately mean they will lose their home.
- 5.2.3 Whilst the Government has introduced legislation to reduce retaliatory eviction this has been ineffectual as many tenants continue to feel that any kind of complaint will result in their eviction.

- 5.2.4 Enforcement powers can lead to prosecution, imposition of civil penalties and ultimately a ‘banning’ order preventing them from being a landlord. With the Government committed to carry out a review of the regulation of the sector it is anticipated that there will be further changes or consolidation of enforcement powers. The Council will seek to ensure that the poorest properties in the PRS sector are brought to its attention and appropriate action taken.
- 5.2.5 In response to complaints made by tenants to the Council relating to the condition of their property, the Council will in most cases give the landlord the opportunity to carry out necessary work within a certain timeframe before formal legal action is pursued. Most landlords in Amber Valley are compliant to requests made from the Council which has resulted in PRS properties having the necessary work completed without the need for prosecution. A serious concern is how many tenants are aware that they can complain.
- 5.2.6 The Council will continue to work with partners to try and identify the properties with the worst standards and where the health and wellbeing of tenants is put at risk. The Council works with Police and Community Safety to respond to cases where modern slavery is suspected but work is needed to try and understand how referrals can be increased.
- 5.2.7 Because the Council has to notify the landlord prior to inspecting a property many tenants elect not to proceed which is a source of frustration. It is hoped that the end of ‘no fault’ evictions which the Government has said it will look at will give tenants confidence to report issues.

5.3 **Accreditation and Landlord Support**

- 5.3.1 The Council has worked with DASH, hosted by Derby City Council for many years to offer landlord accreditation. Despite various promotional efforts there has been limited uptake with 19 landlords currently accredited. The Council will seek to relaunch accreditation as part of a concerted effort to improve standards of landlord knowledge within the Borough.
- 5.3.2 The Council has financially supported the CallB4UServe service which has been designed to provide landlords with a service to resolve issues with tenants that might have previously resulted in an eviction and is one of the homelessness development services that the Council has supported with other Councils. This service which aims to resolve issues between landlord and tenant is clear offer of support to landlords to prevent avoidable eviction especially around circumstances where the tenant faces some form of income shock.

5.4 **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)**

- 5.4.1 The Council continues to implement the revised licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation which now means that licensing applies to any HMO that has 5 or more occupants. The Council now has 17 licenced HMOs and is obliged to maintain a [HMO Licence Register](#). The properties which have all been inspected as part of the licensing process were of a good standard.
- 5.4.2 The Council will continue to look for properties that should be licenced and will seek to prosecute landlords that have wilfully avoided licensing.
- 5.4.3 The Council has not adopted additional or selective licensing. Although the PRS has grown significantly there are not emerging concentrations of rented accommodation that would meet the thresholds to justify this approach.

5.5 **Dealing with Harassment and Illegal Eviction**

- 5.5.1 The Council works closely with Derbyshire Law Centre to provide the best possible response to complaints of illegal eviction and harassment. It is strongly felt that this is under reported by tenants and ways need to be found to give tenants more confidence to report incidents.

5.6 Recognition of value of the sector to meet housing needs

5.6.1 For many households the PRS is their only housing option. The Council's housing solutions team often rely on the PRS to house clients who fail to qualify for social housing or who have been disqualified from the housing register. Many private rented properties are significantly cheaper to move in to, in that private lets are usually provided with carpets and white goods where social housing properties tend to be a bare of carpets, curtains and furnishings.

5.7 Regulation of Letting Agents

5.7.1 The regulating of the activities of letting agents is shared with Trading Standards and the Council has a positive working relationship with Derbyshire County Council and will continue to optimise the relationship.

5.7.2 The Council has led on a Rogue Landlord funding bid in 2018/19 and one of the outcomes was an agreement to delegate Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) enforcement from Derbyshire County Council. This has been completed and will allow the Council to take further action against landlords that let out inefficient properties without an EPC.

5.7.3 The Council has been systematically following up all EPCs that are known to be F&Gs to both enforce against landlords letting out the more inefficient properties but also to inform landlords about the greater restrictions being placed on the letting out of the most inefficient properties. With the likelihood of further raising of the minimum EPC likely it is important that the Council continues in its enforcement role to support private landlords. With 33% of the private rented stock built pre-1919 this will be a continuing and ongoing challenge.

5.8 Summary

5.8.1 There are fundamental issues with the balance of power between the tenant and landlord. Compared to the number of properties that are likely to have hazards very few complaints or referrals are received. There are many reasons why this might be the case. It is widely understood that there are many rented properties that are unlikely to be inspected and will avoid enforcement. Borough wide licensing could address this but cannot be currently justified given the resources that would be required and threshold that the Government place on licensing schemes.

5.8.2 Although the Council works with partners including Derbyshire Law Centre, Derbyshire Citizens Advice and Derbyshire County Council there a very few referrals made to the Council's enforcement service. It is therefore important to understand what the Council should be doing to ensure that tenants that need the enforcement intervention are able to access this support so that action can be taken against those landlords that seek to profit from letting out poor quality and dangerous accommodation.

TABLE 12: Summary for Priority 4: Improving Standards within the Private Rented Sector

Objective	Challenges	Actions	Partners	Progress
<p>Improve Standards in the Private Rented Sector</p>	<p>The increase in the PRS has meant that more people are entering this area both as tenants and as landlords. Although the PRS remains an area where regulation is limited the Council has a responsibility to ensure that standards are upheld.</p>	<p>A new Private Rented Plan is required that will review current provision and identify areas that can be improved</p>	<p>Adult Services, Childrens Services, Fire Services, The Police, Health Services</p>	<p>A draft new Private Sector Plan is being drafted and will be delivered</p>

6. Priority 5: Reducing the Number of Empty Properties

- 6.1 Reducing the number of private sector empty properties in Amber Valley is a corporate objective. The Council has a dedicated Empty Property Officer to tackle the issues that are associated with long term empty properties.
- 6.1.1 Each empty property, be it a private residential or historic listed building, has its own unique set of problems and history that has resulted in it becoming, and remaining, unoccupied. These include:
- Inheritance issues/delays with probate
 - Lack of finance to carry out essential repairs,
 - Problems with achieving a sale
 - Perceived problems with letting
 - The owner may be in residential care
 - The owner may lack the personal ability/skills to deal with the property
 - The ownership of the property may be unclear
 - Unwillingness to bring the property back into use.
- 6.1.2 The Council is developing a new empty property strategy to follow on from the existing strategy which runs from 2015-2019.
- 6.1.3 The new strategy will reflect the shift in focus in dealing with empty properties, from a “blanket approach” where all properties that have been empty for over six months were contacted, to a more targeted approach addressing those properties that;
- Have a negative impact on the immediate local community be it through the property being in poor condition or a magnet for anti-social behavior.
 - Have been empty for a considerable time, usually over 5 years, with no established plans to bring them back into use
 - Have been abandoned by their owners
 - Properties that are hoarded and potentially present risk to neighbouring properties
- 6.1.4 The new strategy will also incorporate empty historic buildings which present with many of the same issues as empty residential properties but require the use of different legislation to undertake enforcement work if required.

6.2 Working with partners

- 6.2.1 The new strategy will also reflect the Councils approach of partnership working to achieve positive results for empty and neglected buildings by returning them to a sustainable use in the long term.
- 6.2.2 The diverse nature of reasons that properties become and remain empty inevitably means that the Council will call on a range of partners to help resolve the issues preventing the property being brought back to use. These include:
- Social services and health care professionals to help develop an action plan for owners of hoarded properties
 - Estate agents and auctioneers to help with selling empty properties
 - Trustees of estates which have multiple empty properties
 - Developers to refurbish properties
 - Police and Fire services to advise on measures to secure property and safety.
 - Organisations to assist with funding of returning empty properties to use e.g. Homes England and Historic England.

TABLE 13: Summary for Priority 5: Reducing Empty Properties

Objective	Challenge	Action	Partners	Progress
Produce a revised and updated empty property strategy to reflect the shift in focus to problem properties and incorporating empty historic buildings	Ensure a strategy is in place and will include a review of the current priority areas taking into consideration the shift in focus to problem properties and incorporating historic buildings	To produce a new Empty Property Strategy	Adult Health Care, Homes England, Historic England, Police and Fire services, Estate agents and Auction Houses, Developers, Estate Trustees	Draft Empty Property Strategy to is being drafted and will be delivered

Appendix 1: List of Registered Providers operating in Amber Valley

Futures Housing Group
Derwent
Nottingham Community Housing Association
Waterloo
Longhurst
Guinness Northern
Metropolitan
Havelock
Anchor
Emh
English Churches Housing Group
Home
Raglan