

<b>1 Identify the aims of the policy/service/function and how it is implemented.</b>			
	<b>Key questions</b>	<b>Answers / Notes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>
1.1	Is this an existing or a new policy / function?	New Policy	
1.2	Who defines or defined the policy/function?	Housing Options Service Manager	
1.3	Who is the policy/function being aimed at?	<p>The council has statutory duties to prevent homelessness through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and to provide temporary accommodation for people presenting as homeless under the Housing Act 1996. In discharging these duties the Council has the power under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Localism Act 2011 to carry out activities directly ancillary to the discharge of duties, such as establishing a social lettings agency.</p> <p>The policy would be applied on a case-by-case basis. However it considers a series of groups that will ordinarily be prioritized for private rented sector offers, such as households who have settled outside Gravesham or those who have settled in Temporary Accommodation and can now be offered an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.</p> <p>It also includes groups that would not be prioritised, such as those whose needs cannot be met in the private rented sector, cannot afford to live in this sector and would be unable to manage a private tenancy.</p>	
1.4	Who implements the	Housing Needs Service	

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	policy/function?		
1.5	What is the objective or purpose of the policy/service/function?	The objective of this policy is to set out how the Council will use its powers to offer private rented accommodation to homeless households to end its housing duty.	
1.6	What outcomes do you want to achieve with this policy / function and for whom?	<p>Adopting the Private Rented Sector Offer policy will increase the Council's abilities to best meet its statutory duties outlined Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, through providing an additional option to help people access settled accommodation and support the Council to reduce costs.</p> <p>It will also bring the Council in line with many other Local Authorities who actively make Private Rented Sector Offers to homeless households.</p> <p>The Policy takes into account the need to make offers on a case-by-case basis and ensure that all offers of accommodation are suitable and affordable for households.</p> <p>It helps improve people's life chances and move more quickly into settled accommodation, ending their homelessness.</p> <p>The policy provides a safety net for people who are made an offer of accommodation, including a statutory right to review, a reapplication duty and support if moving out of area.</p>	
1.7	Do these outcomes complement or hinder other policies, values or objectives of the	<p><b>Complement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary Accommodation Policy</li> </ul>	

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	organisation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Plan</li> <li>• Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</li> <li>• Safeguarding</li> </ul> <p><b>Hinder</b> <b>Complaints</b> - There is a risk of legal challenges when the council offers private rented sector offer to bring its housing duty to an end.</p>	
1.8	What factors or forces are at play that could contribute or detract from the outcomes identified earlier?	<p><b>Contribute</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A detailed suitability assessment, which includes an assessment of a households income and expenditure to determine what would be affordable, completed prior to any offer of accommodation.</li> <li>• The Council sourcing accommodation to offer households under this policy.</li> <li>• All relevant checks have been undertaken prior to making an offer of accommodation.</li> <li>• Accuracy of information recorded/captured for all households.</li> </ul> <p><b>Detract</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff failure to follow the Policy.</li> </ul>	Ensure key decision makers receive training and fully understand the policy and how it should be implemented. In addition, ensure consistency of decision making.
1.9	How does the organisation interface with other bodies in relation to the implementation of	The Housing Options Team will work alongside Housing Benefit, DWP , Private Sector Housing and Landlords to ensure accommodation identified meets the households	

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	this policy / function?	needs.  The policy will be reviewed and approved by Cabinet before becoming a live document.	
1.10	Taking the nine protected characteristics is there anything in the policy or how the service is delivered that could discriminate or disadvantage any of these groups?	<p><b>Age - Children</b></p> <p>Children would potentially be negatively impacted if they and their family need to move out of the borough and potentially start at a new school. This can be disruptive, especially if a child is due to sit key exams. Children with special educational needs or those that are working with Family Services may be particularly affected by changing school.</p> <p><b>Age – Older people</b></p> <p>Generally, there is sufficient supply of independent living housing in Gravesham to meet demand. It is therefore much less likely that older people will be made PRS Offers, and it is likely that suitable accommodation can be found for them in the borough. If in the future demand for sheltered housing outstrips supply, then this impact assessment would need to be reviewed.</p> <p><b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b></p> <p>The impact on marriage or civil partnership specifically is likely to be minor as the Council’s policies apply to the household as a whole. There may be an impact on children within a household, but these are identified within the other categories listed here.</p>	The policies will ensure that as consistent an approach as possible is followed throughout the council.

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		<p><b>Race</b></p> <p>There is a risk that for tenants where English is not their first language may struggle to understand and interpret the policies correctly.</p> <p><b>Pregnancy and maternity</b></p> <p>People with children are disproportionately represented amongst the homeless, in particular single mothers. Someone who is pregnant will have links to local services and these links could be disrupted if they need to move out of the borough. Someone on maternity leave may be less easily able to return to work if they have to move out of the borough whilst they are on maternity leave.</p> <p><b>Religion and belief</b></p> <p>Households with different faiths and beliefs could potentially be negatively impacted if they are made an offer of accommodation outside Gravesham. For example, it may be more difficult to access places of worship and other religious or cultural institutions. This would depend however on the area where the offer was made.</p> <p><b>Sexual Orientation</b></p> <p>The data currently held on the sexual orientation of applicants is inconsistent and incomplete, however there is an opportunity for applicants to tell officers their sexual orientation throughout the process. If an LGBT</p>	<p>Information about the policies can be made available, on request, in different languages. Interpreters can also be made available, on request.</p>

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		<p>person is made an offer of accommodation outside of the borough, this may impact on their support networks, however this would depend on the exact location of where the offer was made.</p> <p><b>Gender</b></p> <p>Lone parent's households headed by a female are over-represented among current users. In the long term, they may find it harder to find alternative long-term settled accommodation because they may not have family network and/or a lower income.</p> <p><b>Gender Reassignment</b></p> <p>An offer of accommodation outside of the borough could negatively impact someone who is undergoing gender reassignment as it may disrupt existing support networks, however this would depend on the exact location of where the offer was made.</p> <p><b>Disability</b></p> <p>The proposed policy contains an exemption for households who require significant adaptations to their property to meet health and disability related needs which it is not reasonably practicable to achieve in private rented sector accommodation. For example, this may include households who require wheelchair accessible accommodation.</p> <p>The proposed policy also contains an exemption where a household is unable to manage a tenancy in the private rented sector without a substantial level of support (due to a mental health condition for example).</p>	<p>Details of the household needs would be key in these cases and the Housing Options Team, Allocations, Private Sector Housing would need to consider additional contact / and ensuring home visits are utilised. This would ensure households are supported and reassured until they are rehoused.</p>

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		Some households with members who are disabled and do not meet the above criteria may be made a private rented sector offer. If the Location Priority Policy, when applied, means that this could be out of the borough then this could have negative impacts in terms of the possible need to transfer care and support, and the disruption to informal support networks.	
1.11	From your perspective, how is the policy actually working in practice for each equalities group?	<p>The Private Rented Sector Policy will provide a framework for the way in which the Council will discharge its main housing duty under s.193 Housing Act 1996 by making a suitable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.</p> <p>The aim of the Private Rented Sector Policy is to facilitate the speedy transition from temporary accommodation to suitable, more stable private rented sector accommodation and to make the Council's position consistent and transparent.</p> <p>The impact of the Private Rented Sector Offers Policy, if approved, is that households to whom the Council owes a duty under s.193 Housing Act 1996 may receive an offer of suitable accommodation in the Private Rented Sector rather than an offer of social housing as a means of the Council discharging this duty.</p> <p>This Policy is considered to be necessary due to the high demand for, and the limited supply of, social housing. The result of this lack of supply is that more homeless households are being placed into temporary</p>	

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		<p>accommodation for longer periods of time.</p> <p>By its nature, temporary accommodation is unsettled, and many households in temporary accommodation have to move to different types of accommodation depending on what is available, causing disruption and uncertainty. Where this temporary accommodation takes the form of nightly paid accommodation, it is also unsustainably expensive.</p>	

2 Consideration of available data, research and information			
	Key questions	Answers / Notes	Actions required
2.1	What do you already know about who uses and delivers this service?	<p>It is acknowledged that the proposed policy may have an adverse effect on homeless people.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing the prospects of them being able to obtain social housing.</li> <li>• It may increase the likelihood that they are housed outside of the borough because of the scarcity of affordable PRS accommodation in the borough</li> </ul> <p>Currently, homeless applicants are usually housed in temporary accommodation until an offer of social housing can be made. This will continue to be the case, and the Council will continue to allocate homes which become available to let in the manner set out in the Housing Allocations Scheme and taking into account</p>	



		<p>the proposed PRSO Policy, if and when it is approved by Cabinet.</p> <p>However, as set out in this report, the number of homes which become available to let has been decreasing, whilst the demand in terms of homeless applications continues to increase. This means that many homeless applicants have to stay in temporary accommodation for a long period of time.</p> <p>The proposed PRSO Policy, therefore, is intended to improve the outcomes for those homeless applicants who would otherwise have to stay in temporary accommodation for an unsustainable length of time. Homeless applicants that receive private rented sector offers will be offered tenancies that enable them to move out of temporary accommodation and into homes that are suitable and affordable.</p> <p>The suitability requirements for a PRSO mean that the property is likely to be of a higher standard than the temporary accommodation we are able to procure, especially compared to nightly paid accommodation.</p> <p>A private rented sector offer might also result in an offer of settled accommodation being made more quickly and reduce the amount of time a household has to spend in temporary accommodation waiting for social housing.</p> <p>The policy is intended to give households greater certainty and stability, though it is acknowledged that social housing overall offers a higher level of long-term</p>	
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		<p>security of tenure compared with private rented tenancies. However, the majority of Housing Associations now offer fixed term tenancies, and pending regulations will also make it mandatory for the Council to offer fixed term tenancies to new tenants. Most homeless households had previously been living in the private rented sector before they present themselves to the council.</p> <p>Whilst rents are generally much higher in the private rented sector, a PRSO must be affordable for the specific applicant before it can be made. Rents are also likely to be less than the rents charged in nightly paid accommodation.</p>	
2.2	What additional information is needed to ensure that all equality groups' needs are taken into account?	None identified.	
2.3	How are you going to go about getting the extra information that is required?	N/A	

<b>3</b>	<b>Formal consultation</b>		
	<b>Key questions</b>	<b>Answers / Notes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>
3.1	Who do we need to consult with?	No formal consultation is required. The Policy can be accessible via our website for the public to view.	

<b>4</b>	<b>Assessment of impact</b>		
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	Key questions	Answers / Notes	Actions required
4.1	Have you identified any differential impact and does this adversely affect any equalities groups?	<p>Several impacts of the proposed policy have been identified. To summarise, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households will be less likely to be made an offer of social housing.</li> <li>• Households are more likely to be housed out of the borough, due to the scarcity of affordable housing in the borough.</li> <li>• Households' support networks could be disrupted if they are made an offer of accommodation out of the borough.</li> <li>• The potential adverse impacts also need to be considered against the disadvantages to homeless applicants of remaining in temporary accommodation for longer periods of time.</li> </ul>	
4.2	If there is an adverse impact can it be avoided, can we make changes, can we lessen it etc?	<p>Council has put in place several mitigations.</p> <p>These are:</p> <p>Including the following exemptions in the PRSO Policy, so that the following households will be prioritised for social housing :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where a household requires significant adaptations to their property to meet health and disability related needs which it is not reasonably practicable to achieve in private rented sector accommodation.</li> <li>• Where a household is unable to manage a tenancy in the private rented sector without a substantial level of support.</li> </ul> <p>Applying the PRSO Policy suitability of accommodation factors to any decisions of location. The Policy identifies the following additional criteria for prioritising households for accommodation in the borough:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are receiving treatment for a physical or mental health condition from a specialist hospital unit which cannot be transferred to another NHS service, or they are at a critical point in their treatment.</li> <li>• Children subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a Statement of Special Educational Needs in Gravesham which cannot be</li> </ul>	

		<p>transferred to another local authority without causing serious detriment to the child's welfare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have a longstanding arrangement to provide essential care to another family member in Gravesham who is not part of the household.</li> <li>• Carers must be in receipt of Carer's Allowance.</li> <li>• Other circumstances which demonstrate an exceptional need which cannot be met outside of Gravesham.</li> </ul> <p>The PRSO Policy also contains the following criteria for prioritising households for accommodation close to the borough:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They have been continuously employed within Gravesham for 16 hours or more per week in a role which cannot be transferred to another area. Applicants must have been employed in this role for six months prior to the date of application and remain so employed. Wherever practicable, the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance, by public transport, from the place of employment at the time of application.</li> <li>• Women who are on maternity leave from employment and meet the above criteria will also be prioritised for placements close to Gravesham. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 90 minutes travelling distance by public transport from their place of employment.</li> <li>• Children who are enrolled in GCSE, AS, or A level courses in Gravesham, with public exams to be taken within the current or next academic year. Wherever practicable the Local Authority will seek to place such households within 45 minutes travelling distance by public transport of their primary school or 75 minutes for secondary school or college.</li> <li>• Other exceptional circumstances, where applicants demonstrate an exceptional need to be housed close to Gravesham.</li> <li>• When a PRSO is arranged, it will need to be suitable for the individual</li> </ul>	
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		<p>household, including in terms of its location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A PRSO will need to be affordable for an individual household.</li> <li>• The Council will provide resettlement support for any resident who is made an offer of accommodation out of the borough.</li> <li>• The “re-application duty” will apply where a household has been made a PRSO which then ends within two years.</li> <li>• Where possible, properties will be procured within Gravesham and the wider areas across Kent. These mitigations have been designed to manage the impact of the PRSO Policy.</li> </ul>	
4.3	If there is nothing you can do, can the reasons be fairly justified?	N/A	

<b>5 Assessment of impact</b>			
	<b>Key questions</b>	<b>Answers / Notes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>
5.1	Do any of the changes in relation to the adverse impact have a further adverse affect on any other group?	No	