

# A Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022

Growth, choice, quality





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# Foreword

## Our vision for Sunderland

Our vision is for a greater choice of good quality homes which meet the needs and the aspirations of our residents, so individually and as a city we can grow and prosper. These homes will be based in thriving neighbourhoods where everyone feels part of their community.

Having a good home is vitally important. It is important for our health, education, feeling of security and of course our economic well-being. It can give the best start in life to our children and the best care and support required in our later years. Housing encompasses every aspect and all stages of our life. It is the foundation of achieving a great quality of life.

New housing and a greater choice of housing is also a key part of our economic transformation strategy. The right mix of good quality housing of all types, sizes and tenures will underpin our skills offer to new business investment by meeting the needs of our current and future residents. It is important that we support housing growth to meet a growing population and to support economic growth but this cannot be achieved solely by developing new homes but also by focusing on our existing stock and making better use of it for everyone, including our vulnerable households.

We know that achieving our vision will not be easy in these times of constant change and with fewer resources but it is important that we are ambitious and innovative in realising our vision and continue to improve the excellent housing services we have in Sunderland. Partnership working will be key to this. The economy will continue to change and new housing policy will emerge through the life of this strategy. We need to make sure we are prepared for these changes and can adapt to meet local housing need.

With our partners we will work hard to bring to reality our vision and the priorities within this strategy.



**Cllr. Graeme Miller**

Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing and Adult Services

# Introduction

## Strategic Context

The Housing Strategy for Sunderland does not stand alone and most of the priorities and actions within it operate alongside existing strategies, delivery plans and policies. In particular it will help guide and deliver planning policies and priorities outlined in Sunderland’s emerging Core Strategy and Development Plan, the Housing Investment Prospectus (2017) and Housing Delivery Plan (September 2016). The Housing Strategy will form part of the evidence base for the preparation of the Local Plan.

This strategy has also been developed in the context of the role of the North East Combined Authority, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and the Northern Power House which aim to boost the regional economy. It is important that Sunderland continues to contribute towards regional ambitions for growth by continuing to work with other Local Authorities, the Homes and Communities Agency and regional partners.

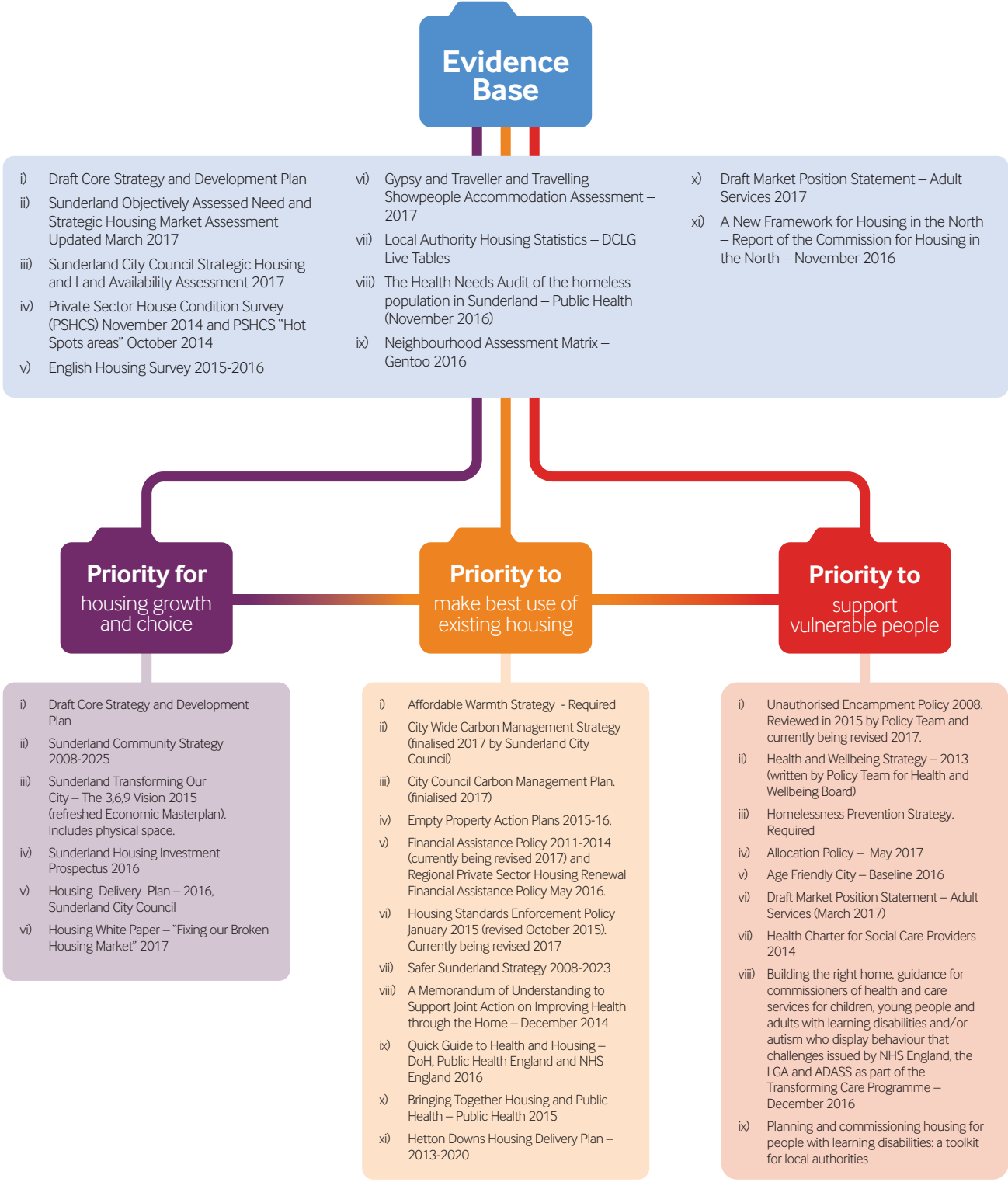
From a national perspective, the Government is currently introducing a raft of new legislation to stimulate and speed up housing supply and to reform the welfare system. Whilst it has been possible to determine some of the implications of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 much of the detail has yet to be established. It is, therefore, important that we are responsive to legislative changes as they emerge and shape these policies to meet the needs of our local housing market.

The table below sets out the national, regional and local context.

National context	Regional context	Local context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Act 2004</li> <li>• Localism Act 2011</li> <li>• Laying The Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011</li> <li>• Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016</li> <li>• Housing and Planning Act 2016</li> <li>• Homelessness Reduction Act 2017</li> <li>• National Planning Policy Framework 2012</li> <li>• Care Act 2014</li> <li>• Local Growth: Realising Every Place’s Potential 2010</li> <li>• English Housing Survey 2015-2016</li> <li>• Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North East Combined Authority</li> <li>• North East Local Enterprise Partnership</li> <li>• North East Strategic Economic Plan 2017</li> <li>• A Housing Strategy for Northumberland 2013-2018</li> <li>• Newcastle Housing Strategy 2017-2022</li> <li>• Gateshead Housing Strategy 2013-2018</li> <li>• North Tyneside Housing Strategy 2016-2021</li> <li>• Invest in North England</li> <li>• Report of the Housing Commission for Housing in the North 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Strategy and Development Management Plan (Local Plan)</li> <li>• Sunderland Objectively Assessed Need and Strategic Housing Market Assessment Revised 2017</li> <li>• Sunderland Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment 2017</li> <li>• Private Sector House Condition Survey (PSHCS) 2014</li> <li>• Housing Investment Prospectus 2016</li> <li>• Sunderland Transforming Our City - The 3,6,9 Vision 2015</li> <li>• Sunderland Community Strategy 2008-2025</li> <li>• Sunderland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2017</li> <li>• Adult Services Draft Market Position Statement 2017</li> <li>• Housing Standards Enforcement Policy January 2015</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013</li> <li>• The Health Needs Audit of the homeless population in Sunderland - Public Health (November 2016)</li> </ul>

The strategy and priorities have been developed in the context of national, regional and local policies and also take into account supporting evidence and documents, these are shown below. All priorities have equal status and are interdependent. One cannot be delivered without the other.

# A Housing Strategy for Sunderland 2017-2022



## We are Sunderland

Sunderland has a lot to be proud of. Lying at the heart of the North East; Sunderland is well placed for local jobs and amenities. It could be said that Sunderland has it all: coast, country and city life. One of only three UK cities on the coast, Sunderland has six miles of stunning coastline, recently enhanced by major regeneration. We are proud to be one of the top five greenest cities in the country; a massive 57% of our area is green space.

With over 275,000 residents, the city is a great place for people to live and work. Over the last two years, over £1.2bn of public and private investment has been announced that will strengthen the economic base and contribute to the ambition to create 20,000 new jobs in the city by 2025. With the region's high tech automotive industry centred on Sunderland, combined with significant elements of the advanced manufacturing, transport and off-shore sectors, the city is central to the North East's £12.1bn export trade. Housing development and construction are also part of this economic base; creating work and apprenticeships for local people.

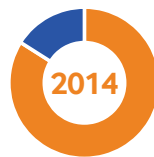
As part of the Sunderland City Deal, in partnership with South Tyneside, we are seeking to deliver an International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) on land to the north of the existing Nissan complex. The IAMP is expected to create approximately 5,200 new jobs within the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors, unlocking £300m of private sector investment.

## Key achievements

This strategy is built on the strong foundation of many achievements; most through close working with housing partners and our residents.



The city is ranked in the **top 5%** of local authorities for the quality of the living environment



The city's private housing stock has improved with **84% of houses** meeting the decent homes standard in 2014 compared to 77% in 2009<sup>\*1</sup>



**91% of residents** are satisfied with their current accommodation<sup>\*1</sup>



Between 2015-2017, **1,599 net additional homes were completed**<sup>\*2</sup>



The city has a nationally recognised extra care housing programme with **776 units** of mixed tenure accommodation<sup>\*3</sup>



Between 2014-2017, **2,322 new houses** were built, compared to 1,201 in the previous three years<sup>\*3</sup>

\*1 Private Housing Stock Condition Survey 2014

\*2 SHLAA 2017

\*3 Sunderland City Council Completion Data 2017

## Challenges for the city's housing market

As a city we have achieved a lot with regard to housing. However, there are also many challenges we have to face and overcome. Some challenges emerge from national policy and legislation and some from our unique local housing market. We will make it a priority to tackle these issues; working closely with our partners and residents to overcome or lessen any negative implications.

One of our real challenges is that we know that we are losing families to neighbouring areas because of a lack of larger family homes and executive homes and also as families state they wish to live in “better neighbourhoods”. This has led to a net outmigration of the city's working age population. There is an urgent need to increase the number of quality, family homes available within the city in order to meet the needs of existing families and those moving into Sunderland to take up employment opportunities.

Sunderland has a need for more homes. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2017 identifies that there is a need for 13,824 new homes over a 18 year period (2015-2033). The council's emerging Core Strategy and Development Plan (which forms part of the Local Plan) will identify strategic sites to meet this need. The remainder of the sites will be identified through Part 2 of the Local Plan, which will be the Site Allocations and Designations Plan.

While there is a need for new homes to boost the economy, there is also an equal need to address challenges within the existing stock.

The condition of Sunderland's existing stock improves each year but there is also still much to be done particularly in: improving the private rented sector; tackling empty homes; and regenerating some of our neighbourhoods showing symptoms of housing decline.

This Housing Strategy for Sunderland comes at a time of great change and reform. Recent changes in legislation and national policy have created challenges for the city. We have had to think more innovatively about how we deliver quality housing services with fewer resources, particularly for vulnerable and homeless residents. Welfare reform and austerity measures have resulted in our residents and social landlords having less income to spend on housing. A key impact of this has been the increased need for affordable housing for families who can no longer afford to buy a house at market value at the same time fewer affordable houses are being built. These changes have particularly affected our vulnerable families who are turning more and more to the private rented sector to find homes.

This strategy will explore all of these challenges in more detail and provide potential solutions and actions to tackle them.

## Purpose of the strategy

Our Housing Strategy sets out a clear direction, for the next five years, to offer more choice in housing by developing new homes and improving existing homes and neighbourhoods. This will help communities be sustainable in the longer term and contribute to the city's prosperity and wellbeing. It strongly commits to supporting our most vulnerable residents to access and maintain good quality housing which meets their needs.

The strategy is divided into three chapters which recognise our three greatest housing priorities. All priorities have equal weighting; each impacts on the other and much of the work around these priorities will necessarily be overlapping and interdependent.

The council cannot achieve this alone. This can only be achieved by working closely with partners, residents and communities as shared resources and innovative partnerships and solutions are the best way forward to meet future challenges.



This strategy is a framework; setting direction for each of our partners and stakeholders involved in housing- residents, ward members, housing associations, developers, government bodies, regulators, investors, private landlords, charities, voluntary groups and the council – to provide the right type of homes that are needed. This in turn provides the foundation for our residents to reach their potential and contribute to the prosperity of the city.

## Strategic Housing Priorities

The previous section has described our vision and the context in which our housing market is operating. However, vision and direction are not sufficient. Using the comprehensive evidence bases available to us, taking into account current and future legislation and by consulting with a range of partners, ward members and local people we have developed three key strategic outcomes and priorities to take forward over the next five years.

# Our priorities



### Maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing

- Increasing the supply of available housing land
- Increasing the speed and delivery of new homes
- Diversifying the housing offer to meet identified housing needs



### Making the best use of existing homes and improving our neighbourhoods

- Reducing the number of homes that have been empty for over two years or create problems within communities
- Intervening into priority areas of housing decline
- Raising standards in the private sector to improve health and wellbeing



### Supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing

- Limiting the negative effect of welfare reform on vulnerable residents
- Reducing the numbers of people presenting as homeless
- Supporting vulnerable people, older people and young people to stay in their homes or find suitable housing
- Improving the health of vulnerable and homeless people
- Improving accommodation for residents with disabilities



# CHAPTER ONE

## Maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing

### More housing – stronger city

We are continually seeking to improve the quality and quantity of housing within the city and provide greater choice of each type, location and price of homes to meet residents' aspirations and needs. This in turn will support economic growth.

Everyone in the city, and those wanting to come to Sunderland, should have the opportunity of a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work. They should also be able to be part of a safe, diverse, healthy and strong community. In addition, getting the housing offer right in terms of numbers, type, size, tenure and affordability is critical in underpinning the economic success of the city. It is, however, also important to balance housing growth with good local services, the correct infrastructure and the need for good quality green and open spaces.

Transforming Our City - The 3,6,9 Vision (search for 3,6,9 on [sunderland.gov.uk](http://sunderland.gov.uk)) is an ambitious blueprint that will stimulate local demand and economic impact and aspires to: support the creation of 20,000 new jobs in the city between 2015 and 2024; secure £1bn of economic investment; and achieve a total additional Gross Value Added (GVA) of £1.8bn generated over the period to 2024.

To support the economic growth and prosperity the city aspires to, there is a need to build more housing that is able to support a variety of incomes and circumstances.

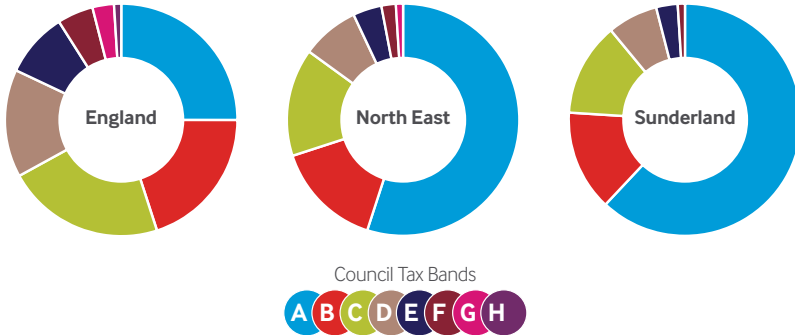
Appropriate housing is fundamental to any holistic care and support provision for older people, young people, vulnerable people and those who are disadvantaged. It will be necessary to ensure the housing needed to support these groups is also provided and this will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Three.

This chapter will cover how the council and its partners, both in the public and private sectors, will increase housing quantity, quality and choice to support economic growth and meet the needs and aspirations of the city's existing population and those moving to the city.

**Our partners include: housing developers, land agents, Siglion, SME contractors and builders, self builders, the Homes and Communities Agency, Registered Providers (Including Gentoo) and the Department of Communities and Local Government.**

## Facts and figures

**Council tax band percentages**  
for each area, national, regional and local



Imbalance of **542** net affordable units per annum over the next five years<sup>\*2</sup>



**28%** of all new housing completions within the last five years were 4-5 bed roomed houses<sup>\*3</sup>



**3.45%** of people with specialist housing needs<sup>\*3</sup>



There are **1,538 homes** with planning permission which have not started or are currently under construction<sup>\*3</sup>



**81%** of households that intend to move in the next five years wish to remain in the city<sup>\*2</sup>



**84%** of households who have moved over the last five years chose to stay in the city<sup>\*2</sup>



Approximately **40,000** people commute into the city on a daily basis for work<sup>\*2</sup>



It is estimated that less than **5% of completions** over the last five years were developed by Small and Medium sized Enterprises<sup>\*3</sup>



Of households moving in the open market, **71.8%** would like to move to a house, **23.4%** to a bungalow (including Sunderland Cottages) and **4.7%** to a flat<sup>\*2</sup>

\*1 Council Tax Stock of Properties Table CTSOPI 2015

\*3 Sunderland City Council

\*2 SHMA 2017

## Key challenges for investment and growth



### Land Supply

There are currently not enough new homes to meet the housing needs and aspirations of the city and as such there is a programme to increase housing supply. However, having assessed the availability of land through several reviews, Sunderland does not have sufficient available land, in the right places, to build the homes the city needs. This is partially down to its success in delivering a significant amount of housing on brownfield sites and in the inner urban area. It will now be necessary to explore different opportunities to increase the city's housing land supply including: bringing vacant properties back into use; utilising surplus to requirement industrial land, considering some open space that no longer performs its original function and in exceptional circumstances exploring the potential use of a small amount of Green Belt land.

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) assesses potential sites for future housing development and identifies land for 10,791 housing units over the next 15 years of which 3,235 are in the Coalfields, 4,795 in South Sunderland, 717 in Central Sunderland, 1,160 in North Sunderland and 884 in Washington.

A Local Plan is currently being prepared for Sunderland which is set to replace the city's current Unitary Development Plan. The Core Strategy and Development Plan will form the first part of the Local Plan and will contain the overarching spatial strategy for the city. It will include strategic housing allocations, such as the South Sunderland Growth Area and any Green Belt Housing Release sites as well as development management policies. The remainder of the housing allocations will be made through the Allocations and Designations Plan which will form Part 2 of the Local Plan. The Local Plan will ensure that the supply of housing meets the needs of the current and future population of the city until 2033. It will also give us the ability to guide and direct where new housing goes and what it looks like.

### Housing Delivery

The SHMA assesses the future requirement for homes in Sunderland. The assessment identifies that Sunderland's housing stock is dominated by terraces and semi-detached properties and there is a shortage of detached dwellings. Three quarters of all homes fall into the lowest Council Tax bracket (A and B). There is also evidence that residents are leaving the city to find larger family and executive houses. This indicates a need to diversify the existing housing stock to ensure that sufficient homes are provided across the Council Tax bracket and are of the right type, in the right place and in the right tenure.

With the country accelerating its housing growth, there is a known lack of capacity within the larger and mainstream housing developers and as such there is an increasing role for exploring modern methods of construction and for working with Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). It is estimated that currently less than 5% per cent of dwellings developed in Sunderland are developed by SMEs. SMEs often have problems identifying and purchasing appropriate development sites, due to an inability to commit funding at risk on speculative developments and tendered sites, as well as the costs involved to create a fundable scheme. These costs typically include securing an interest in the land and costs associated with obtaining planning and survey work. In addition to this, SMEs are unlikely to have the direct access to the necessary professionals such as surveyors, planners and solicitors and require support and advice in these areas.

Self-build in Sunderland and in the UK overall is very low compared to rates in Europe<sup>1</sup>.

The council and its partners need to take positive action to support and advise SMEs and self-builders by bringing forward small sites, making them available to smaller builders and “de-risking” sites by making the planning process as straight forward as possible or by making sites with outline planning permission or planning in principle available to SMEs. This will be facilitated by the council’s self-build register, brownfield site register and the completion of a small sites register.

Whilst the speed of delivery is important, this must not be at the expense of design or quality.



## Outward Migration

Sunderland supports mixed communities and providing the right type of housing to meet different incomes. The limited choice in the city’s housing stock and the importance of neighbourhoods, infrastructure and services remains an important factor affecting why people, particularly those within working age groups, leave the city for neighbouring areas. This is particularly prevalent when neighbouring authorities are developing new housing. This creates problems for the city, as schools, shops and services come under increasing pressure to

<sup>1</sup> <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06784/SN06784.pdf>

remain viable. There is a need to stem outward migration by providing new housing and creating great neighbourhoods which meet the diverse needs of all existing and future residents. Currently, approximately 40,000 people commute into the city on a daily basis for employment purposes. We want to provide housing that meets their needs. This will help us to support opportunities for residents to live, work and socialise without the need to travel long distances. It will also help support the local economy with more money being spent within the city.

There is a particular need to provide executive homes for higher income groups who aspire to move to larger properties. There are less than 0.5% of houses within Council Tax band G-H within the city. The SHMA indicates that of the 6,280 households in the city earning a minimum of £950 per week, 43.8% would like to move to a larger house, with 90.8% identifying Sunderland as their first preference for a home. However, their aspirations differ from their expectations, because the type of housing the city's higher income groups aspire to are not being delivered, with a notable lack of executive homes being developed.

There is also a need for graduate focused accommodation with 3,000 students graduating each year from the University of Sunderland; particularly for those wishing to start small businesses from home.

## Affordable housing

There continues to be an increasing demand for affordable housing units across the city. Particularly with the current economic situation and the impact of welfare reform there is an increased demand from young people, families, vulnerable people and older people. The SHMA identifies an imbalance of 542 affordable units (both for affordable rent and affordable home ownership) per annum. The council's current requirement for affordable housing is for 10% to be provided on all

residential developments of 15 units or more. This is under review through the emerging Local Plan which is proposing 15% on sites of 10 or more units. Based on annual housing requirements this is likely to secure approximately 70-80 affordable units per annum. Through policies within the emerging Core Strategy and Development Plan, the council will seek to ensure that the maximum level of affordable housing achievable is secured.

Additionally, the affordable housing sector is currently experiencing a period of rapid change as a consequence of the recession, the financial viability of schemes and a number of recent changes in government policy. This has created a climate of uncertainty and heightened risk and consequently less affordable housing is being delivered by Registered Providers and/or through S106s. However, the council and its local RP and other partners are positive and committed to providing affordable housing. We will have to be creative and flexible in securing the levels of affordable housing that the city needs and consider many forms and types of affordable housing within the context of emerging Government policy, including affordable home ownership, and empty properties being refurbished and let at affordable rents.



## Ageing population

Housing plays a fundamental role in ensuring the health and wellbeing of its residents, particularly older persons and vulnerable groups. The number of older persons aged 65+ years in Sunderland is projected to increase by 42% from 2015 to 2039. This presents a strategic challenge for the city. It is important that plans are put in place, based on sound evidence of need. Working with partners, providers and older residents, it is vital to ensure more housing choices are available to support the increasing group of older persons with a variety of housing needs. Currently there is a real shortage of bungalows. A further option could be to work with older people who wish to downsize to release larger houses to families currently in need.



## Regeneration sites and housing renewal

There are some areas of the city where the priorities are not about a shortage of supply or affordability. They are around low value, obsolete, empty or unfit stock in need of renewal. In some cases these lie adjacent to strongly performing neighbourhoods or the city centre and physically highlight economic divisions that need to be resolved. Housing developers have advised that location is all important, with some reluctant to build close to these areas, even where brownfield sites are available.

The council has previously undertaken programmes of area renewal in partnership with Gentoo and the Homes and Communities Agency, which resulted in housing clearance in parts of Castletown and Hetton Downs. Gentoo has also undertaken large scale area renewal in Southwick, Doxford Park, Ford and Houghton-le-Spring and has future renewal planned for Glebe, Hetton Downs, Pennywell and further phases at Doxford Park.

A series of Masterplans and Area Action Plans were implemented to guide delivery of new housing on the renewal area sites, ensuring the right type, mix and tenure of housing was delivered. Through this programme, the council and its partners successfully reversed housing decline, regenerated neighbourhoods and improved the quality of life for its residents. Two key housing renewal areas remain outstanding at Hetton Downs and Pennywell where there are cleared sites which need to be developed with the council and its partners addressing any hurdles or viability issues.



## **Viability of sites and infrastructure**

New housing alone does not create sustainable communities and it is important developments do not adversely impact on the city's existing infrastructure. As such there is often a requirement for developments to provide or fund supporting infrastructure including utilities, transport, highway improvements, schools, health, social and leisure services.

However, it is recognised that current market conditions can be a key challenge to viable development on some sites and in some areas of Sunderland, thus hampering development coming forward. The council takes guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) regarding viability.

The council already has a good track record of adopting a proactive flexible approach to providing solutions to make development work and will continue to explore further opportunities to assist on difficult sites. This may include de-risking sites by addressing environmental and infrastructure issues or by securing outline planning permission. The council will also continue working with developers of privately owned sites and secure financing or grants to support vital infrastructure.

## **Sustainable development**

Developers will also be encouraged to provide higher levels of energy efficiency and sustainability in housing development. Housing can play a significant role in reducing energy demands through incorporating the principles behind low carbon development. The layout and orientation of buildings and green space play an important role in mitigating the effects of climate change and improving energy efficiency. Passive solar gain is the siting and design of buildings to harness the sun's energy for heating and cooling and should be incorporated into designs for new housing. The prudent and efficient use of natural resources and materials should also be incorporated into the construction of new properties.

The design of housing should be informed by a commitment to sustainability and energy conservation issues to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Sustainability in its widest sense should be fundamental to any housing development proposals through the successful integration of the development into existing communities, providing appropriate infrastructure, services and good quality connections.

## **Our key priorities**

Based on the challenges described and our robust evidence base, it is clear what our priorities are. The table below sets out what these priorities are and what headline actions will be taken by all partners to meet them.

Headline outcomes	Key priorities	Headline actions
<p><b>Maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing</b></p>	<p>Increasing the supply of housing land</p>	<p>Deliver a greater choice of housing through best use of council land. All partners to proactively look for opportunities to create additional housing land. Consider the potential for surplus to requirement employment land for housing through future reviews of the city’s employment land portfolio.</p>
	<p>Increasing the speed and delivery of new homes.</p>	<p>Deliver an increased number of new homes (affordable for rent and to buy and market housing) in order to meet demand. The council to explore ways to directly influence and invest in new homes for sale and rent. Facilitate stalled and unviable sites so that they can come forward. Continuing practical support and dialogue with all developers, including SMEs and self/custom builders. Explore financial support to accelerate delivery on these sites. Work with the construction industry to explore the use of new technologies and modular construction. Continue to support the regeneration sites of Groves, Pennywell, Vaux, Sunnyside, Hetton Downs and any future regeneration sites. Investigate the use of partnership vehicles which may allow the council to draw in private finance to accelerate the delivery of new homes. Prepare Masterplans and strategies as required to facilitate delivery. Explore and secure different sources of funding e.g. Homes and Communities Agency</p>
	<p>Diversifying the housing offer to meet identified housing needs</p>	<p>Maximise the delivery of affordable housing, including flexible use of affordable housing contributions and a diverse range of affordable housing for rent and ownership. Promote information about grant funding opportunities to support the delivery of affordable housing. Ensure information on a range of financial options is available to allow first-time and second-time buyers to purchase and maintain new homes. Ensure more higher-value, executive housing is built to attract high income earners to live and spend their money within the city. Deliver with partners accommodation solutions for older people, young people and those with specialist housing needs. Specifically identify council assets to be used to deliver housing that meets particular housing needs and aspirations e.g. executive housing, affordable housing, bungalows and specialist housing. Encourage a wider range of housing in the privately rented sector; especially new housing at the higher end of the market.</p>

Our approach will be founded on building strong relationships with partners to improve the quality, quantity and choice of housing within the city to meet the aspirations and needs of all our residents both now and in the future. At the same time we will be sensitive to any environmental, infrastructure or social issues from new developments and work to mitigate these in consultation with the existing local communities.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Making better use of our existing housing and improving our neighbourhoods



### **Better housing – stronger communities**

Strong and safe communities, where people can live healthy and happy lives, cannot simply be an aspiration but must be a vital requirement for a thriving and growing city like Sunderland.

The condition of our housing has a direct impact on our communities – on their health, well-being, education, prosperity and safety. Good housing standards are key to making being “healthy, wealthy and wise” a reality.

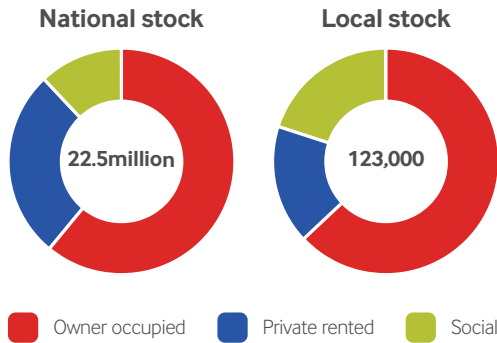
This chapter deals with how the council and its partners will improve our housing, our neighbourhoods and the quality of life for all of our residents, including those who are the most vulnerable, living in neighbourhoods in need of renewal.

Partnership working and sharing our resources is key to improving our housing and neighbourhoods. This means working closely with and listening to communities and voluntary sector organisations working within communities, residents, ward members, landlords, housing developers and housing and health professionals.

**Our partners include: residents, private landlords, agents, Registered Providers, developers and investors, the HCA, health professionals, tenants, community and voluntary organisations and the police.**

## Facts and figures

### Housing stock - national and local\*1



### Housing stock build dates\*2



Gentoo owns **29,148 properties** which are let at affordable rents or shared ownership (155 units)\*3



Private rented sector is the fastest growing sector and has **doubled** within the last 10 years\*2

Sunderland City Council



gentoo

Sunderland City Council transferred its council stock to Sunderland Housing Group in 2001



**5,792 students** living in Sunderland with 3,136 living in the private rented sector\*4



Houses in Multiple Occupation with 5 or more people in England **234,000**\*5



HMOs of which **169 are licensed** (0.1% of the total housing stock) and estimate of **1,640 HMOs in total** (1.3%) of the total housing stock\*7



**23%** of private households are affected by long term illness or disability\*6



**9.9%** of private sector homes are estimated to be in fuel poverty compared to **11% in England**\*6



**15.7%** of private homes fail to meet the decent homes standard compared to **20% in England**\*6



**2,756 (2.2%) Sunderland properties** (private and social) empty for over six months\*7



**16,030 (1.33%) empty properties in the North East.** Total stock 1,205,096\*8



**200,640 (0.88%) empty properties in England.** Total stock 22.8m\*9

\*1 English Housing Survey 2015-2016

\*2 VOA data 2010

\*3 Gentoo

\*4 University of Sunderland Term time address data

\*5 DCLG

\*6 Private Housing Stock Condition Survey\*

\*7 Sunderland City Council council tax data

\*8 Empty Homes England

\*9 Government Live Tables

## Key challenges for Sunderland’s existing stock

### Providing more choice

We will seek to increase housing choice and quality through improving existing housing in the city, no matter what the tenure. Increased new housing is extremely important, however; 19% of our existing housing was built before 1919 and 92% was built before 2000 and so it is equally important in times of great housing pressure that this stock is used to maximum effect. To this end we must make sure there is a good standard across all housing types and tenures for all of our residents.

### The private rented sector (PRS)

If we are to increase housing choice, Sunderland should have a well-managed and flexible PRS that provides a range of good quality housing for our residents. The PRS is the fastest growing sector in the city and has doubled over the last 10 years to 12% of the total housing stock<sup>2</sup>. This is relatively small compared to the picture nationally where 20%<sup>3</sup> of the housing stock is for private rent. However, this is the least regulated part of the rental market.



The PRS should not be seen as a last resort but as a good option for residents wanting flexibility and wishing to access a range of housing types in all areas of the city. It is nevertheless recognized that there are pockets of below standard private rented accommodation and a minority of landlords who fail to look after their properties and manage their tenants. We therefore intend to collect more evidence in order to determine whether we should seek to regulate the market further through the use of one or more selective licensing areas.

The private rented properties within Sunderland are presently at the lower priced end of the market or aimed at students. Moreover, rents are reducing due to welfare reform and increased competition in the student sector. There is a gap in the market for good quality privately rented accommodation for professionals and working families and those attracted to Sunderland by employment opportunities. There is an opportunity for private renting to play a major role in underpinning the growth of employment, for example the jobs to be created by the International Advanced Manufacturing Park.

The solution to a well-managed PRS is a balance between landlord engagement and partnership on the one hand and targeted enforcement action by the council on poor landlords on the other.

The proposed wider definition of a licensed House in Multiple Occupation<sup>4</sup> will result in closer regulation of some of the higher risk HMO properties in the sector. However, the most important relationship in the PRS is that between a landlord and a tenant with council intervention only when necessary as a last resort. The council and its partners can facilitate this relationship by providing advice, education and guidance to landlords, agents and tenants. This will enable landlords to manage their properties and tenants more effectively, self-regulate and become more professional and provide tenants with the knowledge required to maintain their tenancy.

<sup>2</sup> Private Housing Stock Condition Survey 2014

<sup>3</sup> English Housing Survey Headline Report 2015-2016

<sup>4</sup> DCLG Houses in Multiple Occupation and Residential Property Licensing Reforms - A Consultation Paper October 2016

## Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal

There are some neighbourhoods that are not as prosperous as others, have a lack of good housing and poor physical environments and have higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Intervention is vital to make them sustainable to provide equality for all residents. It is important that alongside developing new homes and communities we align our strategies for housing and economic development to invest in and regenerate our existing communities.

Poor housing conditions are found more in privately rented houses with economically and socially disadvantaged households and over representation of the PRS can cause areas to go into decline. This can be exacerbated by poor management of both the property and tenants and require proactive intervention. There are some places in the city already showing symptoms of housing decline and anti-social behaviour: these are most prevalent in parts of Hendon, Hetton Downs, Sulgrave, Millfield, Pallion, Eden Vale, New Silksworth Cottages and pockets of the Coalfield area. (Search: Private Housing Condition Survey on [sunderland.gov.uk](http://sunderland.gov.uk))

If left unaddressed, while the wider housing stock continues to improve, this will result in some of Sunderland's most vulnerable residents becoming less healthy, less prosperous and more isolated and their communities becoming less sustainable. In the longer term it could potentially lead to costly demolition programmes of non-decent housing. It also lowers land values and acts as a disincentive for developers to provide housing in or adjacent to these areas especially when some low demand areas are connected to places of relative economic prosperity.

### Student accommodation

Exacerbating the symptoms of decline in some of our neighbourhoods, is the recent trend of students moving to purpose built student accommodation in the city centre. This is having an impact on some traditionally private rented areas some already showing symptoms of housing decline (parts of Millfield, Pallion, Roker and Barnes),



with increased numbers of empty HMOs and privately rented properties. This is being intensified by an overall decrease in the number of students coming to study at the University of Sunderland.

While the purpose built accommodation has driven up standards and provided greater choice for students, the impact on traditional student neighbourhoods and HMOs must be monitored and addressed.

The city's Planning Policy with regard to student accommodation can be found at: [www.sunderland.gov.uk/student-accommodation](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/student-accommodation)

### Empty homes

Over 2000 houses are currently empty in Sunderland. Most empty homes are only empty for a short time with problems arising when a house is empty for a longer period. A home can be empty for a number of reasons such as a person moving to a care home or while it is being refurbished. However, high numbers of empty homes in an area can also be a symptom of housing decline where demand for housing is low and this is reflected in low house prices. Empty homes can also be symptomatic of the changes in the housing market such as the growth of purpose built student accommodation and the impact this has on HMOs.

In addition to being a waste of a vital housing resource, longer term empty homes often attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour and have a negative impact on communities. It is these empty homes which require more intervention.

The council and its partners work closely with the owners of longer term empty homes, in targeted renewal areas, to offer advice, support and financial assistance to encourage reoccupation of their empty property. This also provides additional housing for homeless people and those families on the council's Housing Register.



Where required, the council carries out targeted enforcement action against particularly problematic empty properties and their owners who otherwise fail to engage with the council.

Properties, that have been brought back into use to date, have largely gone back into the private sector and not the social sector. It is important that we look now at increasing the affordable housing provision and other options for returning empty homes back into use to be well-managed by competent, professional landlords.

Due to welfare reform and a growing PRS at the lower end of the housing market, we need to examine the possibility of the council or its partners becoming a provider and manager of private rented sector properties. This would provide greater choice to families and young people, improve the quality of the sector and help return to use empty homes, as well as potentially helping the council's wider plans around meeting homelessness needs.

## Healthy Homes - Healthy People

Our home is not just a dwelling place. It should be a place of comfort, shelter, safety and warmth, it is the main setting for our health throughout our lives.<sup>5</sup>

It is said that poor housing costs the NHS at least £1.4bn<sup>6</sup> per year. In Sunderland this is estimated to be £0.117m. We cannot ignore the role that housing plays in keeping people in good health and out of hospital.<sup>7</sup>

The major health issue within Sunderland's private housing (rented and owner occupied) is damp and excess cold which has been assessed as a major hazard in 1,957 houses.



<sup>5</sup> Public Health Matters blog – Public Health England 2015

<sup>6</sup> Private Housing Stock Condition Survey 2014

<sup>7</sup> The Cost of Poor Housing to the NHS Nicol, Roys, Garrett 2014 Briefing paper

Falls are also an issue with 537 homes having falling and tripping hazards. Removing these hazards would save the NHS £99,162 each year. These issues are being addressed by the council's Falls Co-ordinator.

Bringing together health and housing is fundamental if we are to rise to the challenge to improve the city's health

In December 2014, "A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to Support Joint Action on Improving Health through the Homes" was agreed between Government bodies, Local Government Association, NHS England and other health and housing professionals.

The MoU details areas of improvement and an action plan to ensure organizations work together to:

- establish and support national and local dialogue; coordinate health, social care, and housing policy
- enable improved collaboration and integration of healthcare and housing in the planning, commissioning and delivery of homes and services
- promote the housing sector contribution to addressing the wider determinants of health
- develop the workforce across sectors so that they are confident and skilled in understanding the relationship between where people live and their health and wellbeing and are able to identify suitable solutions to improve outcomes.

In the last four years approximately £11million<sup>8</sup> has been spent in the city providing aids and adaptations for sick and disabled people to allow them to remain in their own homes across all tenures. However, those homes with permanent adaptations can then be difficult to sell or rent to other people. A range of solutions, such as relocation, support and incentives to do this, must also be considered in consultation with those people with disabilities requiring the aids and adaptations.

## Affordable warmth

Affordable warmth is a key priority for the city and driving local domestic energy efficiency improvements will bring significant benefits for Sunderland residents including:

- helping reduce residents' fuel bills
- helping make homes warmer and healthier
- making a vital contribution to reducing local and national carbon emissions
- supporting wider local strategic priorities on issues such as health and poverty.



Within the private housing stock, 9.9% of households are estimated to be in fuel poverty. Although this is lower than the national average of 11%, rates of fuel poverty are above average for households living in the PRS (44.8%) and in pre 1919 housing (22.4%) and this needs to be addressed.<sup>9</sup>

In January 2017, the Government updated guidance to the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 on local authorities' duty to submit reports regarding their priorities and targets to improve energy efficiency in all residential accommodation in their areas. Sunderland's report for 2017 is being developed and will detail

<sup>8</sup> Sunderland Care and Support

<sup>9</sup> Sunderland Private Housing Stock Condition Survey



opportunities across the city for energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation. The 2017 report will also highlight recent successes in the city, including:

- Warm-up North partnership between several north-east local authorities and British Gas to address fuel poverty by providing energy efficiency measures to eligible households.(<https://warmupnorth.com>)
- Sustainable Sunderland Project to promote energy efficiency behaviour change ([www.sustainablesunderland.org.uk](http://www.sustainablesunderland.org.uk))
- Low Carbon Energy Demonstration project providing heat to 100 Gentoo properties in Glebe, Washington
- The launch of the Sunderland Housing Investment Prospectus ([www.sunderland.gov.uk/housing-investment](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/housing-investment))
- DECC Local Authority Funding to reduce the extent of fuel poverty primarily through the provision of improvements to the thermal efficiency of dwellings amongst low income and vulnerable households.

From April 2018, private domestic and non-domestic landlords will need to ensure that their properties reach at least an E Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating, or have installed those improvements through subsidies available to pay for them, before granting a tenancy to new or existing tenants. Currently, 5.9% of properties in the PRS do not reach an E EPC rating<sup>10</sup>.

### Owner occupied stock

Over 16% of owner occupiers live in properties that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (Search: A decent home on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). Over half of these have no mortgage and an estimated equity potential of £7.655billion<sup>11</sup> but they are reluctant to borrow money to improve their homes. Solutions to advise owner occupiers on the importance to health of a decent home must be further explored.

### Social stock

Sunderland’s social housing stock is owned and managed by Registered Providers and Housing Associations.

The physical condition of social stock in the city is good, and the majority of the stock meets the Decent Homes Standard and it is generally well-managed. However, neighbourhood assessments based on socio economic data, health and housing management undertaken by Gentoo, the largest provider of social housing in the city, show that a number of neighbourhoods need monitoring and possible intervention. These include central Hendon, Sulgrave and Marley Potts which reflect some of the areas of housing decline in the private sector.



<sup>10</sup> Sunderland Private Housing Stock Condition Survey 2014

## Our key priorities

Based on the challenges described and our robust evidence base, it is clear what our priorities are. The table below sets out what these priorities are and what key actions will be taken to meet them.

Headline outcomes	Key priorities	Headline actions
<p><b>Making the best use of existing homes and improving our neighbourhoods</b></p>	<p>Reduce the number of homes that have been empty for over two years or create problems within neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Bring empty homes back to use through council or partners' schemes; especially to increase affordable housing provision.</p> <p>Council to directly invest in empty homes with the aim of bringing these back into use.</p> <p>Targeted enforcement action to bring problematic empty homes back into use.</p> <p>Offer financial assistance (as set out in the council's Financial Assistance Policy) for acquiring, refurbishing and bringing empty homes back into use.</p> <p>Continue to monitor the impact of purpose built student accommodation on empty homes numbers, in targeted wards.</p>
	<p>Intervening into priority areas of housing decline</p>	<p>Agree and resource renewal areas where intervention is required.</p> <p>Use enforcement powers where necessary to ensure private rented stock is free from Category 1 hazards.</p> <p>Acquire empty homes to be offered at affordable rents</p> <p>Explore block improvement and environmental schemes to attract families and developers to areas in decline.</p> <p>Tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Explore the need for the introduction of one or more Selective Licensing Areas.</p>
	<p>Raise housing standards to improve health and well-being</p>	<p>The council and its partners to continue to educate and advise landlords, owner occupiers and tenants.</p> <p>The council to establish the proposed Rogue Landlords' Database and implement Banning Orders and civil penalties as needed.</p> <p>The council to implement the proposed new definition of mandatory HMOs and "fit and proper".</p> <p>The council to support and facilitate landlords and investors to provide privately rented housing at the higher end of the market to provide greater choice.</p> <p>Health and housing professionals to work together to improve residents' health by improving housing standards across all tenures.</p> <p>The council to operate as a PRS provider as an alternative to the market.</p> <p>Develop an affordable warmth strategy and work with partners to develop innovative models to promote affordable warmth.</p> <p>Monitor minimum standards for energy efficiency in the PRS.</p>

Our existing stock is made up of the homes where we all currently live. It is vital that it is of a good standard, no matter what the tenure. All of our residents deserve a decent home where they can live healthy and prosperous lives and live in a neighbourhood which is safe. This chapter shows what actions we will take to do this.



# CHAPTER THREE

## Supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing

### Better support – stronger people

Everyone has the right to access a good quality home to allow them to lead a fulfilling and independent life.

We believe that communities must respond to the needs of all its members, including those who are vulnerable, in order to be strong, inclusive and sustainable. We recognise that vulnerability is not necessarily permanent and therefore provision for a range of general needs and specialist support services to ensure people lead healthy and happy lives is important. Our residents can be vulnerable for a range of reasons including those shown below.



In considering our strategic approach in supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing, national and local context need to be taken in to account; inclusive of: the Care Act 2014, the Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Search: Health and Wellbeing Strategy on [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk)), the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Homelessness Duty (Search: Homelessness Duty on [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk)).

Our Draft Market Position Statement Analysis on Care and Support Services in Sunderland highlights that Sunderland’s total population in 2015 was 276,000 and is projected to rise to around 280,000 by 2030. Within the overall population there will be people who will have particular accommodation needs that will need to be provided for within our Housing Strategy and other related policy documents. These accommodation needs will provide a range of challenges which will be addressed through this strategy including the housing needs of older people, young people, disabled people, victims of domestic abuse, gypsies and travellers and homeless people.

The council and its partners will enable all people to access and maintain a good quality home by connecting them to services across health, education, training and employment, and provide the support they need to live happy, independent lives; especially those facing barriers and who are less able to help themselves.

**The council works in partnership with various providers advice services and other council services to ensure people receive early advice and support with their housing needs. Partners include: Age UK, Sunderland Carers' Centre, Armed Forces Network, Autism in Mind, Bernicia, Centre Point, Changing Lives, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Gentoo, other council departments (including Together for Children), Salvation Army, Sunderland People First, Sunderland Care and Support, Wearside Women in Need and Wear Recovery to offer early advice and support to work with individuals.**

## Key Facts



**68%** of Gentoo's tenants are in receipt of benefits\*<sup>1</sup>



As at 25/01/17 there were **2,084 people** on the Housing Registration database. This has increased since last year\*<sup>2</sup>  
Gentoo has 23,000 people on its housing registration list\*<sup>1</sup>



There are **55 expressions of interest** under Choice Based Lettings for each nomination to Gentoo property advertised; most of these are in the 22-34 years age group\*<sup>1</sup>



**375** Gentoo households are struggling to pay their rent\*<sup>1</sup>



During 2015-2016, **262 people** presented with as homeless citing domestic abuse from partner as the reason\*<sup>2</sup>



There are **15,191 vulnerable households** in the private sector\*<sup>3</sup>



**3.45%** of people with specialist housing needs



**46% of homeless people** had accessed A and E in the last twelve months\*<sup>4</sup>



**4 rough sleepers** in 2016\*<sup>5</sup>



**42 people** left hospital with either no accommodation or unsuitable accommodation\*<sup>2</sup>

Between 1.4.15 to 13.12.16 there were **119 cases accepted as homeless** of those, 13 (11%) were vulnerable\*<sup>2</sup>



**48 people** with alcohol and drug dependency presented as homeless\*<sup>2</sup>



Gypsy & Traveller and Travelling Show people needs – there is a need for **33 additional plots** for Travelling Show People by 2033\*<sup>6</sup>



The number of people across the Sunderland area aged 65 or over is projected to increase by **42.2% from 51,600 in 2015 to 73,400 by 2039**\*<sup>7</sup>

\*1 Gentoo

\*2 Sunderland City Council data

\*3 Sunderland Private Housing Stock Condition Survey

\*4 Health Need Audit 2016 – Sunderland City Council

\*5 DCLG Rough sleep data

\*6 Sunderland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling

Showperson Accommodation Assessment 2017

\*7 SHMA 2017

## Key challenges in supporting vulnerable people and preventing homelessness

While we have an excellent track record in supporting vulnerable people and preventing homelessness there are some key challenges that may affect our approach going forward and necessitate both a change in strategy and in approach.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, expected to come into force in 2018, places a new duty on local authorities to help prevent

homelessness for all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and are threatened with homelessness. The council will work with all partners to implement this new duty which gives more focus to early intervention and prevention of homelessness.



## Introduction of a Housing First approach to prevent homelessness

The council's financial position and the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act means that we cannot continue delivering services for vulnerable people in the way that we do currently. A "whole system" change in approach is required to ensure that we continue to meet our statutory duties whilst introducing new ways of working that will be more sustainable in the long-term and ultimately lead to improved outcomes for residents. There will need to be even greater emphasis on partnership work, prevention and early intervention and a move away from a reliance on crisis intervention.

With the above in mind, we are introducing a Housing First approach. It is an approach based on homelessness assistance that prioritises providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, particularly those who may have multiple and complex needs. It is different from other approaches in that it does not require people experiencing homelessness to address all of their problems or to graduate through a series of service programmes before they can access housing. Supportive services will be offered to help people maintain their homes and promote their well-being but this is reliant on the person choosing to engage as this is seen as more effective in the long-term.

There are some key principles that underpin the Housing First approach; namely:

1. people have a right to a home;
2. flexible support is provided for as long as it is needed;
3. housing and support are separated;
4. individuals have choice and control;
5. an active engagement approach is used;
6. the service is based on people's strengths, goals and aspirations; and
7. a harm reduction approach is used.

These principles will be the bedrock of our new approach.

Whilst our focus will be on prevention and early intervention, there is an acknowledgement that we will need to consider options for crisis accommodation, inclusive of homeless young people and those who are victims of domestic abuse. For the former there will be joint work undertaken with Together for Children to consider needs and how services are commissioned.



## Challenges arising from Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) brought in numerous changes that affected the income of people living in Sunderland. Firstly, the 'spare room subsidy' (commonly known as the 'bedroom tax') meant that social housing tenants could no longer claim benefit for bedrooms that were not required. It has also capped housing benefits to 4 bedroomed properties only, meaning any large families occupying 5+ bedroom private sector houses have to pay the

extra rent not covered by housing benefit. For some people welfare benefits have been capped and for people under 21 years old it is proposed to stop automatic entitlement to housing benefits, if it was currently in place.

The Welfare Reform Act (2012) and further government announcements relating to the welfare and benefits system have affected finance and other entitlements to households in Sunderland, including Local Housing Allowance caps for the under 35s and those in supported housing (from 2019). The announcement in the Queen's Speech 2015 and the Summer Budget 2015 of the Full Employment and Welfare Benefits Bill, is likely to increase the challenge further by decreasing benefits at a time when housing costs are rising. This is likely to continue to be a significant challenge

Over the next three years Sunderland will also see the roll out of the Government's flagship welfare reform policy - Universal Credit. This will see a major change in the way that people can claim benefits and what they will receive. Payment levels have been frozen until 2020 and when taking into account inflation and rising prices elsewhere, claimants may see their support cut in real terms. It will be important that we help people understand what these changes will mean to them and support them in finding the right advice and in managing their finances to ensure they do not present as homeless due to the change. It will also be important to use digital technology effectively in managing benefits and to offer advice on training and employment opportunities as a way to increase individual's income.

## Preventing rough sleeping

People can end up living on the streets for a number of reasons which can be often complex including mental health issues, substance misuse, and relationship breakdowns. Welfare reform could have an adverse impact by increasing the number of homelessness people, some of whom may go on to sleep rough. We will continue to work to understand the causes of rough sleeping and how these can be addressed.

The council has excellent partnership working arrangements to ensure rough sleeping is minimised. The focus is on assertive outreach but one of the major challenges is the availability of funding for these services in the future.

In response to this, and working with South Tyneside Council, we have bid successfully to the Government's Rough Sleeping Fund, which allows us to have a coordinated approach to rough sleeping across both areas and



break the cycle of rough sleepers migrating between both areas.

## Challenges for housing support

The Government has consulted on how supported housing could be funded in the future and this may involve some funding for local authorities to use to meet locally identified support needs. Whilst the detail on how the new funding is yet to be defined, there are opportunities to bring together various partners – both internal and external to the council – to develop a holistic approach to the future commissioning of services taking in to account housing, health and social care needs. Affordable move on accommodation from supported housing should also be explored as should supported housing for care leavers.



## Domestic abuse

Sunderland has long been a trailblazer in regards to domestic abuse services and continues to be so with the commissioning of crisis refugee accommodation and specialist domestic abuse outreach support that includes domestic violence provision. We are one of three national pilots for 'Change that Lasts', which has been developed by Women's Aid. The pilot supports domestic abuse survivors and their children to build resilience and foster independence. It aims to reduce the

number of women and children living with abuse and the long-term costs associated with abuse. A key element of the pilot is around safety and well-being with the focus being on a victim's own resources and minimum reliance on external and public resources. This chimes with our Housing First approach and will be more sustainable in the long-term as it will provide for a range of accommodation options within the community along with specialist advice and support for victims.

Another approach is the Big project which is a multi-agency partnership between Barnados, Impact Family Services and Gentoo. It is designed to address the behaviour of male perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Our new approaches to domestic abuse is again founded on collaboration with partners, ensuring that the support needed is provided by the specialists in their respective fields, particularly where there may be mental health or substance misuse issues. This collaborative approach also extends to working with other local authorities in the region, illustrated by a collaborative bid that has been submitted by six authorities to the Government's Domestic Abuse Fund, with a focus on providing crisis accommodation for those with complex needs, who are often turned away from services.

## Improving the health of those in temporary and hostel accommodation

A Health Needs Audit (HNA) was undertaken through engagement with 182 homeless clients in the city in 2016. The aim of the audit was to increase the evidence available about the health needs of people who are homeless and to help commissioners understand the effectiveness of their services. The main conclusions from the report are:-

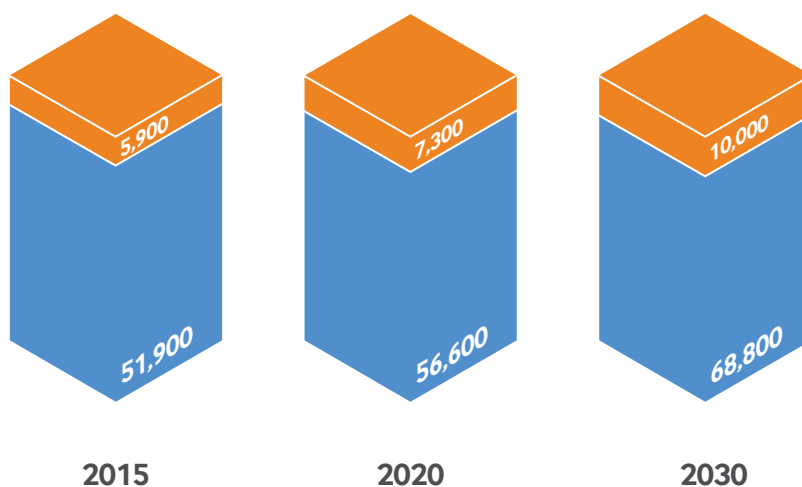
- differences in the make-up of the homeless population and the general population (homeless people are younger and more ethnically diverse with a higher proportion of males)
- the homeless population has high levels of health needs, with high levels of both mental and physical health conditions
- results from the local audit shows homeless people are heavy users of health services, with the number of A&E visits and hospital admissions per homeless person four times higher than the general public.

We are committed to working with our health partners to ensure that the health needs and inequalities presented in the audit are addressed and that a more preventative approach is adopted, so homeless people can access health services such as GPs more easily. In addition, there is more that can be done via the discharge process from hospitals whereby the accommodation needs of individuals can be fully considered and appropriate accommodation can be provided.

## Ageing population

By 2020 the number of older people with dementia is expected to increase from 1,075 in 2015 to 5,165 by 2030<sup>12</sup>. Moreover, the city's population in the 65 years+ age range is predicted to increase and those of working age decrease. The number of people across Sunderland aged 65 or over is projected to increase by 42.2% from 51,600 in 2015 to 73,400 by 2039, with those aged 15-64 years being projected to decrease from 181,000 to 169,300 (-6.4%)<sup>13</sup>. In short, there is likely to be a greater demand for supported housing and less income to pay for it.

The projected number of people aged over 65 and over 85 years in Sunderland



Over the past few years we have been very progressive in providing accommodation with care options for older people through our Extra Care housing programme. Nearly 800 units have been developed with partners with another 75 units in development.

In addition, there are over 1,200 units of sheltered housing in the city; so in accommodation terms we are currently well served in meeting the accommodation needs of older people. We have established an Older Person's Accommodation Forum, where we engage with our housing provider partners to consider how we make best use of the accommodation on offer.

To meet the growing population of older people, a key challenge for the council and its partners is to ensure a greater diversity of support services is made available to older people wanting to stay in their own home and to

<sup>12</sup> Draft Sunderland Market Position Statement 2017

<sup>13</sup> SHMA

develop funding mechanisms to achieve this. Particularly noted is the need for help with gardening, repair and maintenance and cleaning.

Additionally, the range of housing options available to older people needs to be diversified, for instance through the development of open market housing designed for older people who wish to own their own home and the development of sheltered accommodation and co-housing for rent or sale.

## Young People and Care Leavers

Young people who are also care leavers are supported by Together for Children to make the transition from care to living independently. The support available for children and young people in care is intended to bridge the gap between leaving care and living in the adult world.

The focus is to support the young person throughout their transition to independence. In doing so, our services offer a range of support including: access to suitable accommodation; intensive and safeguarding support to particularly vulnerable children and young people; personal advisers for young people and regular individual support, advice, advocacy and training to prepare for adulthood; maximising education, training, employment, health and leisure opportunities. We also work with partners such as the Youth Offending Service, Police, health, drug and alcohol services.

Homeless young people who are not already receiving a service can gain support from either the council's Housing First Team and or Together for Children, depending on their circumstances. An assessment of need will be completed to ensure young people receive the right level of support to access and maintain their tenancies.

There is currently a range of semi-supported accommodation options that young people can access that meet the multiple needs of vulnerable homeless young people and care leavers.



## Providing suitable housing for people with disabilities

Within the city there is a range of accommodation options for people with learning disabilities and autism, some of which are directly commissioned by the council. Accommodation options range from registered homes and core and cluster properties to properties providing supported living with care.

A deregistration programme is currently being undertaken which is in line with the council's vision to support people with learning

disabilities, autism or complex needs to live in their own home and to enable them to have the same rights as everyone else.

People with learning disabilities are living longer and it is important that there is a range of high-quality accommodation options available to support people who have a care and support need.

In terms of new housing built in the city it is important that "lifetime homes" is considered in the design of new properties so that people who do have physical disabilities can be appropriately accommodated and those who may develop a physical disability can remain in their property where possible. This is vitally important if we are to manage social care requirements and associated costs.

We will continue to update our Market Position Statement on care and support services in Sunderland and consult with people with disabilities to help inform the planning and decision making of the council, provide certainty to providers in respect of needs and to ensure that people of all ages, including young disabled people, who require care and support services have choice of provision that is both of good quality and meets their needs.

## **Gypsy and Travellers' accommodation**

Sunderland is home to three Travelling Show person yards, accommodating 100 permanent plots for the city's Travelling Show people families. The South Tyneside and Sunderland Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2017) identifies a need for a further 33 plots in the city by 2033 with a particular demand for further plots in Houghton-le-Spring, Hetton-le-Hole and Washington. The council is currently updating this assessment.

The assessment also identifies that there are no Gypsy and Travellers residing permanently in caravans in the city and there are no future requirements for pitches. However there is a history of unauthorised camping by Gypsy and Traveller communities; and the assessment identifies a need for a 5 pitch stop-over site for Gypsies and Travellers who are passing through the City.

A stopover site is an authorised area of land with limited facilities and the site is accessed on a temporary basis. Local Planning Authorities are required through National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to identify appropriate sites for the needs of Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Show People. As such the council is consulting on appropriate specific sites in the draft Core Strategy and Development Management Plan to meet the needs of these communities through the provision of well managed sites.

## Our key priorities for supporting vulnerable people

Based on the challenges described and our robust evidence base, it is clear what our priorities are. The table below sets out what these priorities are and what key actions will be taken to meet them.

Headline outcomes	Key priorities	Headline actions
<b>Supporting Vulnerable People to Access and Maintain Housing</b>	Limiting the negative effect of welfare reform on vulnerable people.	Work with customers, including the under 35s, who have experienced significant negative changes to their finances to: stay in their own homes; find alternative suitable or supported accommodation; or increase their income and employment opportunities.
	Reduction in people presenting as homeless. Supporting vulnerable people to stay in their homes or find suitable housing.	Work with partners to address the underlying causes of homelessness. Work with South Tyneside partners to prevent and reduce rough sleeping. Use the Housing First approach to support people in their homes and ensure that vulnerable residents, including elderly and people with disabilities, have the support they need to live independently. Develop a joint protocol between Together for Children and Housing First to ensure that homeless young people and those leaving care are supported to find suitable accommodation. Provide a range of housing options to older people to meet their housing needs. Explore relocation to suitable homes for people with disabilities as an alternative to providing aids and adaptations.
	Improving the health of vulnerable and homeless people	Inspect the city's private hostels on a regular basis to continue to improve standards. Work with health and social care commissioners and partners to reduce attendance at health and social care services, especially A & E. Explore making health services more accessible to homeless and vulnerable people.
	Improving accommodation for residents with disabilities	Enable people with disabilities and mental health needs to stay in their own homes. Lifetime homes to be promoted in new housing developments across the city. Work with partners and people with disabilities and mental health needs to understand current and future accommodation requirements to define need.



# CONCLUSION

These three chapters do not sit in isolation – they are interlinked and reinforce the vision of the council for a greater choice of good quality homes which meets not just the needs but also the aspirations of all of our residents and the city so we can all grow and prosper.

This is just the start of the journey, providing the direction and some of the initial steps. So what happens next and how will we ensure that the vision is turned into actions?

## Delivering the Housing Strategy

The delivery of the Housing Strategy for Sunderland will be overseen by its Housing Champion (Cllr Graeme Miller) and the council's Strategic Housing Board chaired by the Chief Operating Officer for the Place Directorate. Below this will be working groups for each chapter of the Housing Strategy.

- Maximising housing growth and increasing the choice of housing
- Making best use of existing homes and improving our neighbourhoods
- Supporting vulnerable people to access and maintain housing.

These working groups will be made up of housing professionals and specialist partners from both inside and external to the council.

The purpose of the groups is to develop more detailed action plans and targets around the priorities outlined in this strategy and to oversee their delivery over the next five years. Where resources are not available, it will be the role of these groups to seek and secure additional resources where possible.

The chairs of each group will report progress made against the action plans and targets back to the Housing Board, the Housing Champion and to our partners and residents.

## Reviewing the strategy

In this fast paced world of frequent policy and legislative changes, the Housing Strategy will be reviewed annually and revised if required. The views of stakeholders and partners will be considered and used to influence the housing strategy and its direction of travel.

## Closing statement

We recognise the vital role housing plays both to the city and to its residents and that is why we are committed to growing and improving the quality of our housing and strengthening our neighbourhoods. This strategy brings together the issues, future challenges and opportunities for us to deliver our ambitions. It will be a long and challenging journey, and must include and involve a wide range of partners and our communities to make it a success, but the rewards that stronger housing offers will make a significant difference to lives of our residents, their health, happiness and prosperity.











