

The response to the Homelessness Reduction Act across Devon

1. Following a [presentation by North Devon District Council to the Health and Wellbeing Board on its response to the Homelessness Reduction Act](#) on the 14th June 2018, the Health and Wellbeing Board sent letters to all other districts and the city council requesting information on their responses to the Act, whether any related funding had been received and details on any local targets around the reduction of homelessness.
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board has a key role in ensuring a collective system focus on population health and ensuring that the priorities that it has set out in the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) and the [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) are being delivered across Devon.
3. As part of this role, the Health and Wellbeing Board requested this information to seek assurance that activity to implement the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#) is taking place across all areas of Devon.
4. The specific questions posed were:
 - How is your local authority responding to the HRA?
 - Has your local authority received any national funding to help implement the HRA? If so, how much?
 - Has your local authority been set a target for reducing numbers of homeless?
5. Summary of responses:
 - Collaboration is happening between services within local authorities and between authorities;
 - Relevant teams are or have been redesigned, reconfigured and in some instances grown in order to deliver the new duties and the national drive to support those at risk of homelessness;
 - Case management and IT systems have been procured to support the work and facilitate a better experience of statutory services;
 - On-going engagement with the voluntary and community sector;
 - Staff training has taken place to understand the legislation placed on authorities how the planned response;
 - New Burdens funding has been received and some authorities have managed to access other national funding streams from government departments;
 - Centrally mandated targets have not been set but where specific grants have been received to reduce homelessness, separate to funding the implementation of the new legislation, then targets have been set.

6. Responses received

East Devon	
Response to the HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise current operational practices and arrange appropriate training for staff. We have reviewed the resources available and determined that additional staff are required to meet the additional requirements and responsibilities placed on the Council through the Act. • Consider how personalised housing plans will be delivered and resourced • Comprehensive training is being rolled out for staff who need to fully understand the new scheme and all its nuances. • Procurement of case management system • The Devon district homeless officers are meeting regularly to share good practice and support each other through the implementation.
Funding	New Burden Funding of £29,250 has been received in respect of 2018-19
Targets	There has been no target set
Teignbridge	
Response to the HRA	<p>Prior to the enacting of the HRA, Teignbridge Council worked closely with Exeter City Council, with whom it shares a joint homelessness strategy, to prepare an implementation action plan.</p> <p>This plan encompassed a number of key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT readiness; • Legislative compliance; • Staff training; • Enhancement of resources for homelessness prevention • Improving the customer experience. <p>Since the implementation of the HRA we have focused on supporting staff through the transition to the new legislation, and we are in the process of restructuring the Housing Options Team to ensure that we have the personnel in place to continue to meet the new burdens, reduce homelessness and meet housing need within the district.</p>
Funding	New Burdens Funding of £113,367 over three years.
Targets	<p>We have not been set a specific target to reduce homelessness.</p> <p>As a district with relatively low rough sleeper numbers, we did not qualify for a recent funding opportunity from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government specifically aimed at reducing rough sleeper numbers and which did have associated reduction targets.</p>
Mid Devon	
Response to the HRA	<p>The Council is involved in the Trailblazer pilot and is working in partnership with Exeter City, East Devon District and Teignbridge District Councils.</p> <p>The pilot was able to secure funding from MHCLG totalling £359,000 over two years to deliver the following initiatives:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless advice guides & e-learning platform • The Homeless Prevention Champion Service • Tenancy Rescue Officers, Tenancy Rescue Fund & Landlord Incentive Pot • St Petroc's – Tenancy Passport Coaching • Rough Sleeping Grant Funding (this provides an outreach service to those who are rough sleeping) <p>Other work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of new electronic management system to use as a case management tool • Restructuring our Housing Options team to build capacity • Continued staff training and continuous professional development • Working in partnership with many external agencies and also supporting the provision of local welfare assistance. The latest contract for this latter service was awarded to Wiser£money with effect from 1 May 2018. This service provides emergency assistance to those who are experiencing crisis. • The Council also supports other agencies with grant funding to the CAB, Age UK and CHAT, a housing advice charity based in Tiverton. We liaise closely with CHAT, in particular, to support homeless clients. • Working closely with our Neighbourhood teams in order to prevent our own tenants becoming homeless • Options appraisal of one of our empty properties to considering whether or not it would be suitable for conversion to provide temporary accommodation • We operate a shared house and have a number of self-contained properties which we use as temporary accommodation for those who are homeless • Reviewing our arrangements relating to winter provision for rough sleepers • We have a specialist worker whose role it is to prevent youth homelessness • A service level agreement with Devon Mediation Service and refer cases to prevent family breakdown • Participate in the Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership. The Partnership has agreed many protocols which deliver a consistent approach across the two counties.
Funding	<p>New Burdens Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 £22,501 • 2019/20 £25,155 <p>Flexible Homeless Support Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/19 £60,831 • 2019/20 £101,845
Targets	None set
Torrige	
Response to the HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two additional Housing Support Officers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented a new software solution that meets the requirements of the legislation and helps to manage demand more efficiently. Looking at alternative temporary accommodation solutions such as portable self-contained modular accommodation, additional PSL properties and the possible purchase of property, in addition to the two Hostels currently operated.
Funding	2018-19: £114,406 in the form of a Flexible Homeless Support Grant.
Targets	None set
Exeter	
Response to the HRA	<p>Exeter CC and Teignbridge DC began a joint implementation planning process in Sept 2017 to prepare for HRA implementation. Summary of the Exeter work to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fed back on the government consultation on the draft Code of Guidance (via a joint Council review group) Engagement with Members, senior officers and partner agencies including post-implementation update reporting. Assessed and remodelled resources available to address increased burden increasing frontline officer complement by 8 FTEs recruited April to July 2018. Developed a suite of new template letters, bespoke personal housing plans, advice guides and housing pathways for specific groups Trained all frontline and supporting management staff, plus partner agencies and Enhanced I.T. provision Further increased our preventative approach to homelessness with emphasis on pre-56 day notifications and communication of early indicators of a household being at risk of homelessness. Some of this work has been through building understanding and communications with other ECC departments e.g. environmental health around early assessment and intervention and also with partner agencies through training and operational workgroups around pre- eviction and tenancy rescue. Employed a tenancy rescue officer across both authorities to work on early interventions to a range of issues including debt management, income maximisation, discretionary assistance, ASB Updated strategies and policies in line with HRA legislation A number of Govt funded "Trailblazer" projects in delivery with 3rd Sector providers in Homelessness prevention A number of Rough Sleeper funded services in rapid response referral and access service to private rented housing for those not owed a full duty by the local authority, prison resettlement service from Exeter and Torbay (Channings Wood), extended rural outreach in Mid-Devon, Teignbridge and East Devon. Working with the Local Government Association on a pilot of 5 local authorities (Exeter is the only one outside of the home counties) for the development of early online access to advice and online pre-application for the housing register as well as developing and trialling an online triage tool for homelessness and an online housing and homelessness assessment tool.

Funding	£124,888 over 3 years to 2020 (£41,629 per annum)
Targets	<p>There is a target to reduce rough sleeper numbers in Exeter.</p> <p>This is supported under the one-off RSI funding to which Exeter has recently been successful in securing £482k to implement a range of intervention designed to reduce rough sleeper figures by at least 30% of the current estimate i.e. to reduce to 23 or below from the 2017 figure of 35.</p> <p>Exeter's bid is based on a range of interventions to encourage individuals off the street by deploying a 6 month winter period night shelter and provide a move-on pathway through frontline hostel accommodation into other supported housing. It is designed to be backed with specialist flexible support, based around a personalised and trauma-informed approach to planning, and additional capacity and resilience built into the system in terms of additional accommodation and specialist training for staff and clients to help build resilience for changing lives.</p>