



# Decent homes that people can afford to live in

## Ambition

We want high-quality homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live so that everyone has a home that is right for their needs and where they can thrive.

We want to increase the rate of house building and provide a range of accommodation, from affordable homes to the higher-value housing that can attract and retain skilled workers.

It is critical to ensure that new homes are fit for the future. We want high-quality design and build standards to create homes that are energy efficient, adaptable and sensitive to future environmental and technological change.

Tackling under-occupation and empty homes will make a big contribution to meeting housing demand.

## Progress on our success measures for 2020

District Plan 2020 target	Short name	Latest value	Trajectory to 2020 target
6a) Create 8,000 more homes	Net number of additional homes provided	1,570	
6b) Bring down the proportion of long-term empty homes in line with the Yorkshire & Humber average	Proportion of long term empty homes in the District	1.97%	
6c) Bring down statutory homelessness to less than one household in every 1,000	Statutory homelessness - rate of homelessness acceptances per 1,000 households	1.5	
6d) Reduce the percentage of households in fuel poverty	Percentage of households in fuel poverty	14.1%	

On track to meet target by 2020

Some concerns/possible delays

Not expected to be achieved

The number of additional homes provided is steadily picking up from a low point in 2010/11. This indicator is clearly influenced by the state of the economy and developer confidence and because of the time that construction projects take tends to lag behind changes in the economic environment. The reported figure is provisional and may be revised later in the year when final figures are submitted to the Government.

The number of long term empty homes has reduced by around 3,400 since 2008/09 which was the baseline year for the Empty Homes Strategy. Despite this improvement, it is unlikely that the District will be able to reduce the proportion of empty homes in line with the Yorkshire and Humber average because on current numbers this would require around a further 1,600 empty properties to be bought back in to use by 2020 which is a significant increase on the current rate. This also does not take in to account the increasing complexity of the empty homes cases that are still being dealt with or the overall increase in the number of properties in the District.

The rate of homelessness acceptances is steadily growing. There is no sign of the rate coming down in the foreseeable future and this may also be impacted on by factors like the roll-out of Universal Credit and other benefit changes. The expected continued growth in homelessness acceptances means that the target is probably unachievable and should be revised. This target would mean a reduction to below 200 statutory acceptances a year which is the rate that last applied in 2010/11 (the acceptance figure for 2015/6 was 405). An alternative measure would be to target a reduction on the average length of stay in temporary accommodation because this would measure how quickly homeless households can be settled into more suitable permanent accommodation. The latest value for 2015/16 was 19 days.

The rate of households in fuel poverty is caused by a number of factors, not all of which are within the control of the Council and partners. These include factors like domestic fuel prices, changes in income levels and the availability of funding for improving the dwelling stock in deprived areas.

## **Good things are happening here**

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The Council's empty homes team has worked with Bradford Youthbuild Trust who bought a cluster of four long term empty properties in a deteriorating street of 10 properties. The Council had acquired these properties through a mix of Compulsory Purchase and Voluntary Acquisition and Youthbuild are now using their renovation as a training facility for young people learning construction trades. This will transform the street and also provide four additional properties for affordable rent.

The Council is working with DISC and Hope Housing to deliver the No Second Night Out holistic service for rough sleepers. The partnership provides a street outreach and emergency accommodation service for anyone sleeping rough, and also provides Cold Weather Provision over the winter months. There is also a Street Med housing options worker who works with Bevan Health to reach vulnerable people, for instance at food banks, and targeted provision for people with autism, people with mental health issues and young people.

## **Our achievements over the last 12 months**

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- The Council and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have started delivering the 2015/18 Affordable Homes Programme with the support of the HCA. This will deliver around 750 affordable homes, of which the Council is delivering 176.
- Brought 44 units of specialist housing on stream for people with learning difficulties with input from a wide range of partner organisations.
- 1,330 private sector homes were improved through the intervention of the Council's housing services.
- The Council also secured government funding for tackling rogue landlords and carried out a focused campaign to improve conditions in flats above shops - 180 additional inspections were carried out and 133 notices (formal and informal) were served requiring improvements to be made.
- Established new single gateway to housing-related support.
- Set up new No Second Night Out service.
- The number of Disabled Facilities Grants completions which support people with disabilities to continue living in their own homes, increased by 17% on the preceding year and is now 71% higher than in 2012/13.
- The Council, working with private sector partners, delivered 98 'hard to treat' solid wall insulation measures to households living in deprived areas within the District as part of the two-year Leeds City Region Green Deal Communities scheme (that delivered a total of 197 measures in Bradford).

## **The challenges facing us over the next 12 months**

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A key challenge over the next 12 months will be to sustain the continued growth in the number of additional homes provided in the District. The willingness of developers to build new homes is closely linked to their confidence in favourable market conditions and there are already some concerns due to increasing construction costs. It is likely that any significant adverse economic impacts following the vote for Brexit will be reflected in reduced house building activity.

In addition to the economic challenge, recent Government policy and legislation will increasingly impact on the affordable housing and supported housing sectors, leading to uncertainties in future delivery and availability of decent affordable homes, particularly for vulnerable people. This will be a particular challenge for the under 35s, larger families and those with support needs and may have a knock-on impact on rates of homelessness.

A key change in Government policy has been the shift in focus away from providing affordable homes for rent and towards encouraging private ownership, for instance through starter homes and discounted sales. The removal of HCA funding for homes to rent, will further reduce the incentives for registered social landlords to develop affordable homes and this will increasingly impact on people who cannot afford to buy their own home.

Reforms to the welfare benefits system are likely to exacerbate the issues around provision of affordable homes for rent. The decision to cap support for social rented sector rents at the Local Housing Allowance level from 2016 for new tenants and 2018 for existing tenants will potentially reduce rental income for Registered Social Landlords as will the proposed freeze of the Local Housing Allowance for 4 years. This will further undermine the viability of new housing developments intended for rent.

## **Our focus for the next 12 months**

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Re-focussing our efforts on the work of the Housing Partnership ensuring that the sector works together to meet the emerging challenges.

Sharing new intelligence about the state of the District's housing following the stock modelling exercise carried out in 2015 and using this to inform and shape future direction and initiatives.

Streamlining delivery of essential services for homeless people and others in housing need, driving greater value from existing resources and partnerships in recognition of difficult financial and economic landscape.

Consolidating the new single gateway to housing-related support, and embedding new contracts for provision of homelessness and specialist support services, including completion and delivery of the Council's new homeless accommodation at Clergy House and Jermyn Court.

Continuing to tackle long-term empty homes across the district which increases the supply of homes for people to live in and improves neighbourhoods by removing potential blights.

Tackling poor quality of housing through actively enforcing housing standards and also supporting vulnerable homeowners to carry out repairs on their properties, for instance through provision of Home Appreciation Loans.

Increasing the supply of affordable homes for sale and rent through delivery of the 2015/18 Affordable Homes Programme.

The Council will, continue to focus on improving hard to treat homes in the more deprived areas within the District. A successful bid to the Local Growth Fund will lead to a further 120 solid wall insulation measures being delivered to private sector homes in predominantly social housing estates.