



**Kent Housing Group**  
*The Voice of Housing in Kent*

## **Kent and Medway Housing Strategy**

**'A Place People want to call home'**



**2020-2025**

# Introduction

On behalf of the Kent Housing Group and as the current Chair I am delighted to introduce the latest edition of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy (KMHS). This strategy has been prepared by the Kent Housing Group (KHG) and is a unique document looking across a whole county area; bringing District, Borough, City, Unitary and County Council and housing association ambitions together in a bottom-up approach. The overarching aim of this new strategy is to set out the strategic direction for housing across Kent and Medway, based on the collective ambitions and aims of local authorities and our housing association partners.

Amidst the continually challenging and evolving housing landscape there has been no better time to develop and publish this strategy, a document that clearly defines a collective and distinctive vision for the future of homes in the county and to outline the steps that the Kent Housing Group are determined to take to achieve this vision. This joint approach and strategic vision for Kent and Medway is especially relevant when the whole country, and indeed world continues to face an unprecedented time of uncertainty and a threat to our 'normal' home and working lives due to the impact of the global pandemic Covid-19. This strategy does not set out a specific set of aims or objectives that are a direct recovery response to mitigate the impact of this pandemic, however, it is a 'live and evolving'

strategy that will adapt and remain flexible to ensure that collectively and through commitment housing is a key factor in ensuring that communities and individuals, where possible, are not adversely impacted by Covid-19. KHG, through this strategy and the action plans that support the five key themes will continue to monitor and revise the housing role and responsibilities within the overall recovery planning for Kent and Medway, but also where appropriate at a national level.

The Kent Housing Group is an inclusive social housing forum and as such is well respected by peers at both a national Government level and locally. The Kent Housing Group brings together a strong partnership of the 12 local housing authorities, Medway unitary authority, Kent County Council and 14 housing associations who have stock in the county; along with Homes England, the National Residential Landlord Association, Kent Developers Group, Kent Planning Officers Group, Kent Public Health, KSS CRC and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. Together, as 'the voice of housing in Kent' and through the vision of this strategy our purpose to collaborate on housing issues for the benefit of Kent and its residents remains at the forefront of approach.

The scale and diversity across the county of Kent and Medway is unique with significant disparity not just in housing need, quality and condition but also

affordability and the imbalance of the housing markets across Kent and Medway. Each of the identified factors are contributing to the housing crisis that we face locally as well as nationally. The impact of the scale and diversity of our county upon the ability to meet the challenging objectives laid out within this strategy should not be underestimated.

Our strategy uniquely has been shaped and will be owned by our membership. It does not set out to find a 'one size fits all' solution to the challenges identified. It will however provide the platform and opportunity where we can build upon our strong reputation and proven track record of delivery to ensure a collective approach where appropriate; recognising the fundamental relationship between good housing and quality of life, identifying collaborative solutions to common challenges, enabling sharing of best practice and expertise, whilst fully recognising individual conditions, policy and decision-making may vary.

Over the lifetime of our strategy the continued collaboration and a coordinated approach across a broad range of organisations, will assist in meeting the growing demand for quality housing, secure investment into the county and manage the ambition for growth across this sizeable and diverse county. This strategy will also enable all providers of housing to understand, challenge and find solutions to the barriers that prevent

the delivery of homes across a range of tenures that meet a range of identified housing needs. The strategy also provides the opportunity to strengthen partnerships through the development of strategies and a collective response to other key challenges that housing have a role within, for example the Kent and Medway response to climate change, through the Kent Environment and Low Emissions Strategies, both of which Kent Housing Group are well sighted and engaged with on behalf of the housing sector.

Kent Housing Group is regarded as 'the voice of housing in Kent' and through commitment to this strategy vision and objectives strongly believe that housing is fundamentally about people and communities, not just bricks and mortar, and that housing is about homes and creating 'a place people feel proud to call home'.



**Jo Ellis, Chair of KHG**

## Purpose of our strategy

The first edition of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy was published in May 2011 and then refreshed in 2012. This latest edition of the strategy has been developed to enable organisations across the county to respond strategically to the frequently emerging housing challenges, including changes to the funding of new affordable homes and ongoing welfare reforms. Our pro-active approach to engaging and having dialogue with policy makers has and will continue to ensure that the key asks of our strategy are recognised, and through the commitments outlined within this strategy the Kent Housing Group will continue to engage in significant consultations that arise at both a national and regional level.

This edition of the strategy, along with previous editions, has not been developed in isolation and is aligned to and recognises the individual positions of our membership and external factors that impact on the housing sector, both in terms of delivery of homes and the sustainment of well-balanced successful communities. Developed in a time of significant change and challenging policy decisions at a national level this strategy does not replace or detract from local strategies and business plans that are developed by local authorities and housing associations who are members of Kent Housing Group, its role is to

compliment and support all our members to meet their local and the countywide objectives, through a collective voice and ambition. However, Kent Housing Group recognise, acknowledge and support the statutory and regulatory responsibilities that our local authority and housing association members have, and how inevitably due to the delivery complexities and afore mentioned diversity of Kent and Medway, this does and will continue to lead to differing approaches in some circumstances.

Also important to highlight is the fact that despite the clear success of previous Kent and Medway Housing Strategies, coupled with the relative affluence and general economic prosperity of the county, Kent and Medway as a whole, across both rural and urban communities, still faces very real housing challenges. The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy establishes and provides clarity about the major strategic challenges facing our county, identifying common areas of concern, offering pragmatic and smart solutions to manage the challenges and achieve positive outcomes. This document, through clear and consistent messages and intentions will be the appropriate reference point for all professionals who need to visualise and understand the key strategic priorities for the housing sector across Kent and Medway. It will be the platform from

which individuals or collectively colleagues can draw information and evidence to support a single and more effective conversation with Government representatives and departments. This strategy also encourages innovation and the sharing of good practice across all the objectives that have been collectively agreed; more importantly it will always align, reflect, support and have connectivity with other county wide documents or

work streams, and this is where Kent Housing Group will ensure the added value of this high level strategic document.

To ensure that the strategy remains fit for purpose, that it reflects and responds to change both locally and nationally the document will remain 'live' and under constant review.



*Langley Park, Maidstone. MHS Homes*

# Strategic Objectives 2020 - 2025

## Health & Wellbeing

**Our Ambition:** *Proactively support ALL communities of Kent and Medway to achieve a higher level of health and wellbeing across all aspects of their lives*

**Our Objective:** *To promote and ensure integration of services and collaboration across Housing, Health and Social Care resulting in healthy places, communities and individuals, making the shift from reactive to proactive practice and services for the benefit of all Kent and Medway residents.*

Access to decent, safe, secure, warm, healthy and affordable homes across all tenures should be possible for all members of the communities that live in Kent and Medway, this should be regardless of employment status, income level, local connection or the state of their physical or mental wellbeing.

Over recent years and in recognition of the evolving remit of Government departments in response to the unprecedented demand for health and social care services, across Kent and Medway there has been a substantial amount of successful partnership working arrangements between the housing health and social care sectors moving towards the objective of integration. The exploration and investment into minor interventions, including housing interventions through integration of services, can result in positive outcomes for vulnerable members of our communities and will also contribute to the reduction in demand upon services and associated costs of the NHS.

Future decision making about the planning and regeneration of housing across Kent and Medway must have consideration and proactive engagement across relevant sectors about the design, type and location of homes and infrastructure. This will ensure the sustainment of healthy communities, and that through a place making approach households and whole communities are encouraged and supported to undertake life choices or behaviours that impact positively on health and wellbeing.

There is commitment to deliver against a number of aligned objectives that will continue to improve the broad health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities. Recognition that access to high quality housing impacts positively upon health and wellbeing is welcomed, and that moving forward with financial investment, resource and commitment to appropriate interventions there will be a reduction in health inequalities and contribution to the ambition to transform and provide timely proactive services across housing, health and social care.

This Kent and Medway Housing Strategy reinforces this, ensuring a continued commitment to positive health and wellbeing outcomes, therefore responding to the challenge for sectors to work more closely together, planning for our communities now and in the future by building and regenerating communities that support social cohesion and positive physical and mental wellbeing.

### Key Action Points / Objectives

- Support the work plan and objectives of the new Housing Health and Social Care sub group of KHG, including implementation of identified Kent Public Health priorities that are linked to housing and increasing the understanding within the health sector of the importance of quality housing to better outcomes
- Where appropriate, work at a local level with planning and developer colleagues to ensure the right type of high quality housing within sustainable communities is developed across Kent and Medway to meet identified local housing need
- Support and promote the ambition and objectives of the Kent and Medway NHS Sustainability and Transformation Partnership, ensuring the links between health and housing are well represented

- Share, enhance and promote the successful Hospital Discharge Schemes to enable all residents of Kent and Medway to benefit from this service
- Promote and support the objectives of the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy and the Kent Environment Strategy
- Explore the opportunity and potential for Kent wide housing health and social care co-commissioning, reducing repetitive commissioning and ensuring more effective outcomes
- Inform and influence countywide strategies that impact upon housing support and care provision for all vulnerable clients groups, children, young people, adults and the ageing population
- Continue established countywide approach and partnership working to reduce and prevent homelessness
- Ensure housing is resilient to the future changes in climate to give the best possible health outcomes and prevent overheating

## Working Together for Safer Homes

**Our Ambition:** *Facilitate and strengthen partnership arrangements, collective expertise and continuous shared learning to ensure residents can access safe homes across all tenures in Kent & Medway.*

**Our Objective:** *Work across the sector and with wider stakeholders to support our membership's collective efforts and create shared capacity, ensuring existing and new build housing stock is of a good quality where residents can remain safe and well at home.*

A key message identifiable throughout this strategy is that access to decent, safe, secure, warm, healthy and affordable homes across all tenures should be possible for all members of the communities that live in Kent and Medway. This is an ambition that unequivocally unites our entire membership, the wider housing sector, Government, and most importantly our residents.

The housing sector and housing market continues to evolve rapidly, with delivery of new or additional homes accelerating. In addition to using traditional housebuilding methods the market is seeing increased utilisation of new approaches to housing delivery, including 'modern methods of construction' and conversions of commercial premises to residential accommodation under permitted development. The Future Homes Standard will place an increased focus on fabric standards and renewable energy as the country works to reduce emissions to net-zero.

These changes bring opportunities but also risks, and all of Kent & Medway's housing stakeholders alongside key partners such as Kent Fire & Rescue Service

are committed to understanding the implications. Our membership works hard individually and through capacity created by Kent Housing Group's officer sub-groups to ensure policies and services evolve and remain fit for purpose, all vital for safeguarding our residents' safety. This is something that, through this Strategy, Kent Housing Group will persist in prioritising with our membership.

In the lead up to the publication of our new Kent & Medway Housing Strategy, a number of consultation events were held. These events brought together representatives of all of our member organisations from front line officers, housing professionals, technical experts, executives and Councillors.

One of the key messages from these events was the importance members place on Kent Housing Group's ability to facilitate sharing of expertise and best practice. Kent & Medway have some of the best housing professionals in the Country, in terms of knowledge, capability and influence at a national level. They are however spread across 13 local authorities,

housing associations and our other members.

Our membership highlighted the importance of the collaboration facilitated by Kent Housing Group where a collective approach is appropriate on areas of common interest or concern, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. This then has a direct benefit for our residents, ensuring economies of scale, and most importantly, the best possible outcomes. Examples of this include the Kent HomeChoice choice-based lettings system, successfully lobbying Government to remove the Housing Revenue Account Debt Cap, and necessary policy and service redesign to meet requirements of the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

Most of all, the membership valued the ability of Kent Housing Group to attract the best external expertise and levying the most value, by facilitating joint training and information events, networking and engagement. This ensures housing officers are fully briefed or refreshed on statutory responsibilities, technical information, emerging new regulation or legislation, and opportunities for wider collaboration with key partners, ultimately keeping our residents safe. This too is something Kent Housing Group has identified as a key priority to continue and strengthen through this strategy.

The Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017 shocked the whole Country and rocked the entire housing sector.

In the aftermath, the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety was announced by Government, led by Dame Judith Hackitt. The purpose of this review is to make recommendations that will ensure a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future and to provide residents with the confidence to feel that the buildings they live in are safe and will remain so.

The review has examined building and fire safety regulations and related compliance and enforcement with the focus on multi-occupancy high-rise residential buildings. The final report was published in May 2018, with over 50 recommendations made for Government to consider, the sector expecting a raft of new legislation to be published soon.

Once published, Kent Housing Group will work to quickly and comprehensively understand the findings and what the new legislation means for our membership. Although this strategy recognises that meeting housing need and creating sustainable and thriving communities through planned delivery of new affordable housing is necessary, Kent Housing Group and our membership do recognise that there is a significant challenge to ensure that existing homes are also improved or maintained to an agreed standard to keep all residents of Kent and Medway safe. Across Kent and Medway there are only a

small number of high rise multi-occupancy residential buildings, however the Hackitt Report's recommendations and anticipated legislative changes will influence and challenge responsible organisations to improve and update the understanding of all housing stock condition performance and safety in both the public and private sectors.

Kent Housing Group will ensure all of the possible learning is garnered and shared, training and advice given, external expertise brought in where appropriate whilst engaging strategically and operationally with key stakeholders such as Kent Fire & Rescue Service and learning from neighbouring regions. This is not about replacing individual members' ability or responsibility, but adding capacity, reducing duplication and leveraging the value of a collective approach where our Membership have an appetite to do so.

## Key Action Points / Objectives

- Anticipate, influence and shape implementation of new legislation and regulatory regime to improve the quality and safety of homes across the public and private sectors
- Develop an even closer relationship with Kent Fire & Rescue around prioritising fire safety in all tenures, housing new and old, planning and infrastructure, prioritising any emerging legislation and regulation as a result of Grenfell

- Share and learn from best practice locally, regionally and nationally to implement positive change to how homes are maintained
- Strengthen the partnership working to include how Kent Housing Group respond collectively to local or national consultations that will impact upon the safety and well-being of Kent and Medway residents
- Explore and learn about how new technology or approach can positively impact upon the delivery of new homes and enhance the condition of existing stock
- Promote and facilitate the sharing of information about services that can be offered to residents to support the countywide and individual health and wellbeing agendas
- Support and provide the opportunity for residents to share more effectively their voice on how their homes are managed and maintained, to provide them with confidence about their overall safety and well being



Priory Way, Tenterden. Ashford Borough Council

# Infrastructure First

**Our Ambition:** *Support and influence the delivery of key infrastructure investment into Kent and Medway that will support and compliment planned housing delivery across the county*

**Our Objective:** *To ensure that housing is not delivered in isolation, that investment into appropriate infrastructure (education, health and transport) is aligned to housing delivery that will enable communities to thrive.*

Housing is not about numbers. New developments must not be developed in isolation. Our members are clear that any new housing must prioritise developing sustainable communities that thrive, attract investment and employment opportunities, underpinned by high quality hard and soft infrastructure.

Despite high rates of housing delivery across Kent and Medway over recent years this has not been matched by the investment of key infrastructure. This strategy clearly identifies the importance of infrastructure and investment in the overall 'place making' agenda. The link between achieving sustainable growth ambitions and provision of strategic and more local infrastructure will result in the creation of sustainable communities, which will all be dependent upon commitment and joint working to ensure that all communities have access to vital infrastructure investment, such as schools, health care, roads and community facilities.

The Kent and Medway Housing Strategy compliments and is aligned to Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF) , a document that

provides the framework and policy context within which infrastructure can support new housing development to take place. It provides the evidence base and therefore the platform to help attract future and sustained investment into the county and most importantly recognises that infrastructure is key to unlocking the growth potential and ambition across the county, not just with regards to meeting housing need but also for the overall economy.

Although this strategy is strongly focused on the strategic direction for housing across Kent and Medway it is widely recognised and accepted that housing delivery is more than investment into bricks and mortar, aligned to delivery of new homes or regeneration of existing stock is economic growth and the commitment to ensure that communities in our county are attractive places to live and work. Kent and Medway is one of the four federated economic areas within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) , with this LEP being the largest outside of London with regards to population and economic output. The SELEP published their Economic Strategy Statement 'Smarter, Faster,

Together' in spring 2019 , setting out their ambitions for the south east economy which includes 'tackling housing shortages, relieving pressure on infrastructure and improving work skills across our workforce'. This Economic Strategy Statement coupled with the strong evidence base and objectives identified within the GIF has set a pathway to ensure that investment and infrastructure in the county is timely and will support the ambition within this county wide strategy to create and support sustainable communities.

The infrastructure challenge that we face across this county requires a collective response from across the housing sector, development industry, our communities and national Government.

## Key Action Points / Objectives

- Support, promote and align with the Kent and Medway GIF through marketing, research and partnership working
- Explore the benefit of developing an Investment Protocol to collectively overcome the challenging practical issues of delivering new housing developments
- Consider, respond and implement recommendations from Government reviews that promote a positive change in approach and outcome, e.g. Letwin Review

- Consider and understand all implications of permitted development, across all partnership organisations involved in this process of enabling deliver of new homes
- Influence, inform and lobby at a local and national level to ensure access to and award of funding to delivery infrastructure and housing e.g. Housing Infrastructure Fund and Garden Communities Fund
- Support and work collectively across the KHG membership, partner agencies and professional groups including Kent Planning Officers Group to enable a single conversation with Government, to enable timely and appropriate access to funding to realise housing and infrastructure delivery ambitions



Sevenoaks District Council

## Accelerating Housing Delivery

**Our Ambition:** *To Support planned housing delivery across Kent and Medway*

**Our Objective:** *To deliver the right type, tenure and location of good quality, affordable housing that will meet the identified housing need of Kent and Medway residents, through maximising the opportunities presented through partnership working across all sectors and organisations*

The South East, including the county area of Kent remains an area of high housing demand, coupled with a genuine ambition to build to meet this identified need. Whilst the housing crisis facing our county as well as nationally is arguably as serious as it has ever been, there is now a shared will across tiers of Government to act, with housing is as prominent on the national political agenda as it has been for decades. This provides us with a timely opportunity to explore what opportunities this may bring forward.

Working within this changing environment has placed profound pressure upon the organisations responsible for delivering high quality affordable homes, local authorities and housing associations, with both local authorities and housing associations sharing a common purpose to ensure that the communities they serve can access high quality affordable housing. This strategy responds to the challenge to accelerate housing delivery and managed growth, through realising the priority of building homes and sustainable new communities across the County in order to meet the growing demand, coupled with ensuring that the local economy is allowed to reach its full potential in the future.

The Housing White Paper signified a positive signal from Government that local authorities had a role in the delivery of new homes to meet the challenging target of 300,000 new homes by 2020, committing to support those ambitious local authorities who want to explore the opportunity to improve their capacity and capability to delivery high quality homes for those in housing need. This strategy clearly recognises the changing role of local authorities with a commitment to facilitate and enable the sharing of good practice so that all local authorities in our county are exploiting the opportunities this shift change in Government policy offers, in Kent this could provide opportunity for eight local authorities who have retained all or part of their Housing Revenue Account to realise development opportunities.

For a significant period of time housing associations have been key to the delivery of homes, across all tenures. More recently, in response to changes to Government policy and funding, there has been a step change in how Kent's housing associations have structured and developed their business plans and financial models, with a focus on being more commercial to ultimately sustain their existence and

make an impact within the housing sector. Housing associations are now developing more homes for sale on the open market, this is to enable them to cross subsidise the cost of delivering affordable homes, due to the limited or less substantial grant available from Government. The introduction of Strategic Partnerships signifies a new way of working between Homes England and its partners, which includes the adoption of a mission-based approach to delivery and plans to explore how to adopt this approach across Homes England's land, funding and powers can further generate additional supply. There are members of KHG that are now Strategic Partners, this strategy recognises the importance in this shift change and approach to working with Government to meet

demanding housing delivery targets, and therefore will support and learn from those organisations about the opportunities and impact that this new way of working could offer Kent and Medway.

Each of the new approaches to investment and support for organisations to accelerate delivery of new affordable homes is welcomed and supported by this strategy. There is continued commitment to work with Government through Homes England to continue to explore any future approaches of investment for all organisations with a commitment to deliver housing, with the outcome being to meet the demand to deliver against ambitious housing targets.



*Warehorne, near Ashford. English Rural Housing Association*

## Key Action Points / Objectives

- Use the strength and commitment of the membership to engage, and where appropriate lobby Government to ensure that both national and local policy are linked to the agreed strategic objectives outlined within this strategy and individually across the membership are met, using the 'voice of housing in Kent' to maximum effect
- Facilitate partnership working across Kent housing planning and development groups to explore how partnership working and approach can accelerate delivery of housing
- Ensure that protocol documents that reduce barriers to delivery are fit for purpose and relevant
- Explore how countywide approaches to across housing planning and development can support delivery against local plans and meet identified housing need
- Share and learn from best practice, providing a platform and networking opportunities across housing planning and development sectors in Kent, Medway and neighbouring county areas, including peer support opportunities

- Explore, learn and share knowledge and experience of Modern Methods of Construction and to realise ambition regarding opportunities for off-site construction within Kent and Medway
- Facilitate the review and influence existing procurement practice and frameworks across the county to ensure value for money and acceleration in delivery, to include the role and use of SME contractors
- Support, promote and influence the delivery of housing in rural communities, exploring all funding resource and by sharing best practice and learning

*Fleet Road. MHS Homes*



## Affordability

**Our Ambition:** *Support the provision of good quality affordable housing across all tenures in Kent and Medway, meeting local housing need and aspiration.*

**Our Objective:** *To deliver the right type, tenure and location of affordable housing that will meet the identified housing need of Kent and Medway residents, supporting everyone to realise independence and choice with regards to housing.*

To deliver affordable housing across a range of tenures to meet the diverse housing need requires commitment at a local and national level and will also require a pragmatic response to ensure the provision of an inclusive housing offer that is affordable and attractive.

In April 2019 a total of 33,097 people were on the housing registers across Kent and Medway with 15,353 of this total in housing need. Kent Homechoice is the partnership of all 12 local authorities, Medway Council and housing associations that provide social and affordable housing in Kent and Medway, allowing those who are registered with the partnership to bid against properties that they are eligible for and interested in

The Housing Market Review undertaken in February 2018 identified that historically high levels of housing need were linked to the limited supply of social rented accommodation but that over time and more recently there has been significant delivery of new affordable homes, with 1,392 affordable homes delivered between the period April 2017 to March 2018.

A household's income level coupled with the overall supply of housing will impact upon a person's choice about where they live, and the accommodation type available to them. National and local data indicates that household income has not kept at the pace of the increase in house prices and this has a significant impact upon the choice and affordability for those who are in housing need. The housing market and economic climate of recent years has impacted negatively on the ability of many people to access homeownership. For a significant time, mortgage lenders have tightened the criteria for approvals and this has resulted in the requirement of large deposits to secure mortgages, coupled with more expensive mortgage products, despite the low interest rates that have been in place for a number of years.

Over the lifetime of the last Kent and Medway Housing Strategy the role of the private rented sector has continued to evolve, and it has seen substantial growth. The importance of this sector is not only limited to offering choice for those who are unable or choose not to access home ownership opportunities but is now

a necessary and vital resource for local authorities to achieve their homelessness prevention objectives, as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

Through the previous strategy and the work of Kent Housing Group, there has been recognition that the growth in both size and importance of this sector must be supported through investment and partnership through a range of partners to develop and maintain a high standard of housing. This strong record of partnership working and communications with good quality private sector landlords and their respective representative bodies, particularly the National Residential Landlords Association and this therefore remains an important priority moving forward. Collectively we will keep a watching brief on the impact of the local private sector housing markets as a result of the Buy to Let tax system, which will be fully in place by 2020.

Homelessness is a huge cost to society, and especially for local authorities who have the statutory duty for homelessness, including the cost to provide support and advice along with finding and funding accommodation. Meeting the support and accommodation needs of all vulnerable people from children to adults is as priority across Kent and Medway. All vulnerable people should have access to a range of housing and support options in their local area, which enables them to realise and exercise their choice and influence their outcomes.

There are many factors that impact and place additional burdens upon the homelessness services across the county, including national Government reforms such as Welfare Reform, the introduction and transition to Universal Credit, the economic crisis, low wage inflation, unemployment and increasing living costs. Since 2011 Government have introduced a range of welfare policy reforms with the intention to reduce benefit dependency of households and for those affected to respond positively to the reforms by increasing income through employment, reducing outgoings where appropriate and making informed choices about housing cost expenditure. The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) remains set at the 30th percentile of market rents rather than the 50th, through the strong membership commitment of the Kent Housing Group this strategy will provide the platform to continue to highlight the challenges related to elements of Universal Credit, the Local Housing Allowance Rates and Rent controls and use evidence to lobby and influence positive change in policy to benefit those who require financial support to sustain their homes. In addition to this Kent Housing Group will continue the dialogue at a senior level with regards to particular London Borough Councils placing households in temporary accommodation in Kent.

Due to the cost of renting across the social, affordable and private rented sectors in Kent and Medway and the limited number of properties priced at the LHA rate

or below, there is and will continue to be an impact upon affordability. Kent and Medway have a successful history of developing joint bidding and levering in much needed funding into the county, therefore it is vitally important that collectively and using the commitment of this strategy there is a continued dialogue with Government to influence and lobby regarding the future funding streams that will determine what innovative approaches being undertaken locally can continue.

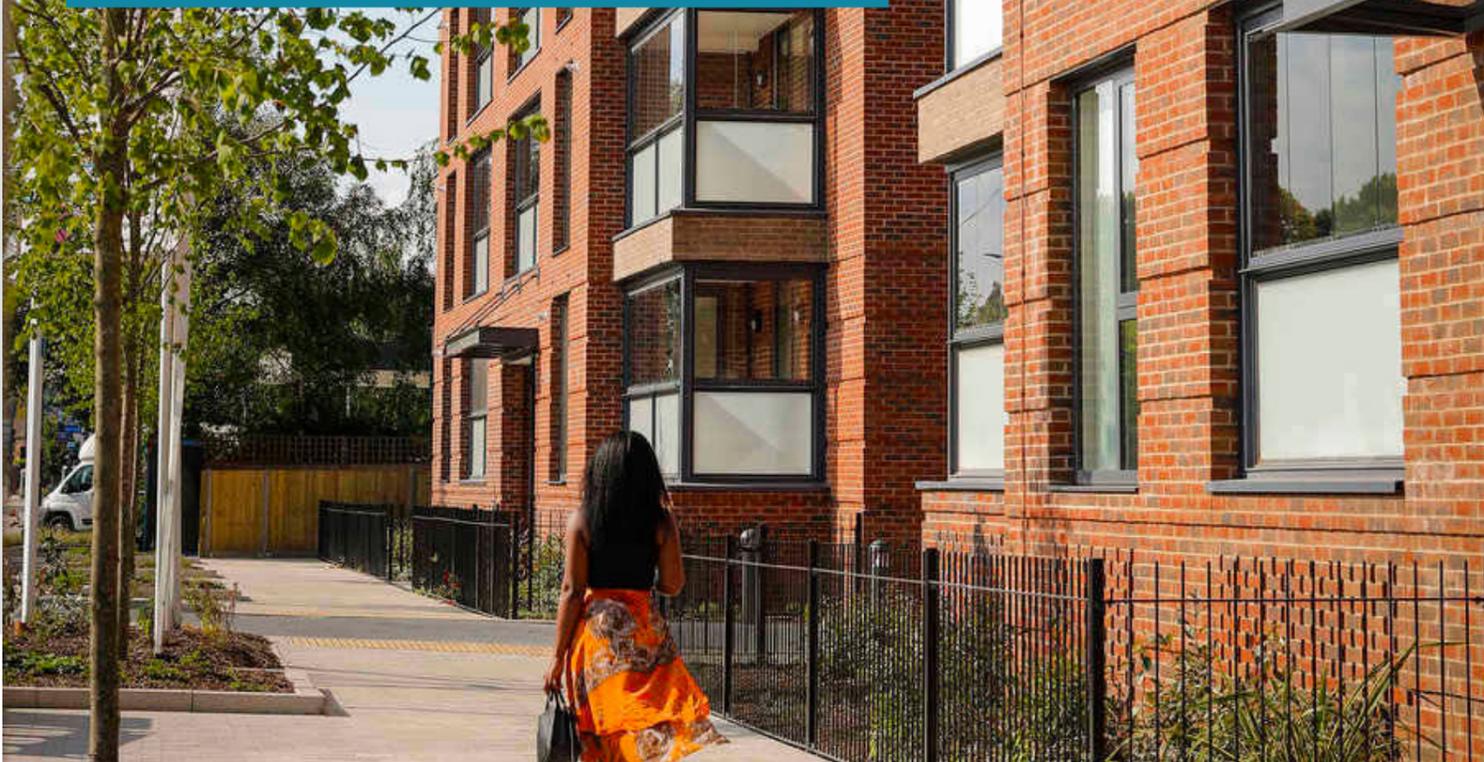
## Key Action Points / Objectives

- Support, lobby and influence national policy reform and decision making to ensure that affordable housing is delivered across a range of tenures, and reflects the local housing market and associated costs
- Explore what housing tenure and type/products are appropriate to meet diverse housing need, and how support can be provided to successfully sustain a tenancy
- Promote investment into the private rented sector, to raise the standard and profile of accommodation in this sector, ensuring it is an attractive for those in housing need
- Continually review homelessness prevention policy and procedure, including the review of countywide protocols

- Explore new models and pathways to support vulnerable members of the community, including sharing learning and best practice regarding Housing First pilots
- Support the County Council to determine and shape the market about future provision of accommodation care and support for social care client groups
- Understand and influence the development of affordable housing that is flexible to meet changing needs, including meeting the needs of those with physical disability
- Challenge the stigma associated with regards to social or affordable housing
- Continued commitment and support for Kent Homechoice, working to ensure choice and transparency with regards to access to affordable and social housing across Kent and Medway
- Strengthen partnership working and opportunities to promote external organisations that can assist with meeting agreed strategic objectives around affordability, for example the National Landlords Association
- Promote and work in partnership with the third and voluntary sector to support all communities across Kent an Medway, when the services should be required



**Shared ownership offered Cathy & Ian (both 53-years-old) the chance to downsize and prepare for the future. The couple viewed a show apartment at Corporation Street and immediately fell in love with the area. With the added benefit of being on the ground floor helping them prepare for their future together.**



**MHS Homes have provided 89 homes at Corporation Street; 53 one and two bedroom apartments for shared ownership and 36 one, two and three bedroom flats for private rent. It's their new flagship development close to historic Rochester's town centre.**

## Delivery and Implementation of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy

This strategy has been developed directly by the Kent Housing Group with engagement and input from across the range of membership organisations and those who work jointly with the group or have a vested interest in the future strategic direction of housing across Kent and Medway. Kent Housing Group recognise that our members, collectively and on an individual basis are all working to achieve the ambitions and objectives that are outlined within this strategy document, with the overarching common aim to ensure that all residents of Kent and Medway have access to a safe, warm and affordable home, a place where they can thrive.

To ensure continued commitment and to achieve the objectives laid out within the strategy Kent Housing Group have sought endorsement of this strategy from our member's most senior representation, including Kent Council Leaders, Housing Association Board Members, and Kent Chief Executives.

The monitoring of progress and the updating of this strategy will be undertaken by the Kent Housing Group, and reported to the afore mentioned senior representatives at regular intervals. Kent Housing Group have committed to work collaboratively across its membership to promote the priorities and deliver the objectives and will also therefore work in partnership with the Kent Planning Officers Group, the Kent

Developers Group, Kent County Council, the South-East Local Enterprise Partnership and other relevant groups or bodies that will support the aims of this strategy.

To assist with monitoring progress against the objectives and to track the impact of this strategy the Kent Housing Group will develop a dashboard of key indicators, as has been the case with the last edition of the strategy. The proposed indicators will include data on number of dwelling completions; number and type of tenancies allocated; housing need data; house price and sales data; number of homelessness applications; placements in temporary accommodation; empty homes brought back into use and category one hazards.

Kent Housing Group will develop an implementation plan that will set out how the strategy objectives and key action points will be delivered. The implementation plan will be used to support feedback on progress across the Kent Housing Group membership and partnership organisations.

## Partnership working – Key Partnerships and Organisations

The context of this strategy has been developed from a broad range of colleagues, groups and organisations and Kent Housing Group are very proud and committed to continue joint-working and collaborative engagement to deliver against the identified strategic objectives for housing across Kent and Medway.

Thanks noted to all Kent Housing Group members who have contributed to the development of this strategy, ranging from the provision of images to the drafting of context to support the five key themes.

## Links to other Strategies and Frameworks

A number of strategies and frameworks across Kent and Medway that this housing strategy links with, form the evidence base for and support, these include the following:

<a href="#">A Guide to Developing Affordable Homes in Rural Communities</a>	<a href="#">Kent Accommodation Strategy for Adult Social Care</a>
<a href="#">Better Homes: Accessible Housing Protocol</a>	<a href="#">Kent Active Travel Strategy</a>
<a href="#">Better Homes: Housing for the Third Age</a>	<a href="#">Kent Community Led Planning Guide</a>
<a href="#">Better Housing for Better Health</a>	<a href="#">Kent Design Guide</a>
<a href="#">Case for Change</a>	<a href="#">Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy</a>
<a href="#">Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy</a>	<a href="#">Kent Integration Pioneer</a>
<a href="#">Delivering Growth, The Kent Planning Protocol</a>	<a href="#">Kent Viability Protocol</a>
<a href="#">Development and Infrastructure, Creating Quality Places</a>	<a href="#">Live it Well</a>
<a href="#">Domestic Abuse Strategy</a>	<a href="#">Medway Development Strategy</a>
<a href="#">English Housing Strategy</a>	<a href="#">Medway Strategic Plan for Older People</a>
<a href="#">Foundations DFG Review</a>	<a href="#">SELEP Economic Strategy Statement</a>
<a href="#">Homes England Strategic Plan</a>	<a href="#">Temporary Accommodation Placing Protocol</a>
<a href="#">Housing LIN</a>	<a href="#">The Kent Environment Strategy</a>
<a href="#">Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy</a>	<a href="#">The Kent Housing Group Affordability Protocol</a>
<a href="#">Joint Protocol for Homeless 16 and 17 Year Olds</a>	<a href="#">Think Housing First</a>
<a href="#">K &amp; M STP</a>	<a href="#">Valuing People Now</a>
<a href="#">K&amp;M Energy &amp; Low Emissions Strategy</a>	<a href="#">Your Life Your Wellbeing</a>
<a href="#">K&amp;M Growth &amp; Infrastructure Framework</a>	

# The Kent Housing Group Structure

The Kent Housing Group (KHG) is a forum for social housing organisations in Kent. KHG has representation from all twelve Kent local authorities, Medway Council, housing associations and Kent County Council. KHG also has representation from a number of organisations who work in partnership with social housing landlords, including Homes England, the National Housing Federation, the National Residential Landlords Association, KSS CRC and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP). KHG has an Executive Board, the purpose of this board is to oversee and provide guidance for the wider membership and sub groups, to ensure that our aims and objectives are met.



KHG has a number of sub groups that sit beneath the umbrella of the main membership and Executive Board, these sub groups are both strategic and operational, each have varying roles and functions, but ultimately they all support the vision and objectives of KHG.



## Delivery and Implementation of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy 2012 - 2019

Themes	Achievement
Managed Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Neighbourhood Planning Guide produced and launched 2015</li> <li>» The Kent Viability Protocol developed and launched 2013</li> <li>» The Kent Planning Protocol developed and launched 2016</li> <li>» Joint-working and shared approaches between KCC and Local Authorities regarding Community Infrastructure Levy</li> <li>» Exploration and establishment of Local Housing Companies across Local Authorities</li> <li>» Joint-working and contribution to the Red Tap Challenge, with a priority to reduce regulatory burden to assist in housing delivery.</li> </ul>
Place-Making and Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Kent Tenancy Strategy Framework produced in 2012</li> <li>» Joint-working through the Joint Policy and Planning Board with Kent Fire and Rescue Service to protect vulnerable households</li> <li>» Establishment of the Kent Design Guide and website to promote consistent and innovation about design quality and resource efficiencies.</li> </ul>
Affordability and Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Introduction of the Kent Local Authority Mortgage Scheme across a number of Kent Local Authorities</li> <li>» Development and production of the Kent Housing Group Affordability Protocol 2018</li> <li>» Monitoring and review of the impact of Welfare Reform through Kent Housing Group sub groups</li> <li>» Continuous review and update of the Kent Housing Group Rural Affordable Housing Protocol 2018</li> <li>» Exploration into the opportunity of Institutional Investment in Affordable Rent and Specialised Housing provision</li> <li>» Promotion and sharing of good practice about successful Accreditation Schemes from across Kent and Medway</li> </ul>
Housing Renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Think Housing First published by the Joint Policy and Planning Board 2013, a strategic document to plan and focus on how good housing can reduce health inequalities</li> <li>» Kent Agency Assessment commissioned and agreed by all 12 Local Authorities, a mechanism for Health or Social Care Professional to refer clients to a Local Authority for assistance with appropriate housing solutions</li> <li>» Advice and support for tenants in the Private Rented Sector with regards to improving the efficiency of their home</li> <li>» Joint-working to explore the opportunities and outcomes from the Green Deal funding to benefit residents of Kent and Medway</li> <li>» Joint-working and engagement of priorities through the Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership and Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership</li> <li>» Development and publication of the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2016</li> <li>» Continued support for the No Use Empty campaign, bring further empty home back into use across the County</li> <li>» Countywide review of Disabled Facilities Grant to help maintain independence at home through prevention via Better Care Funding, undertaken in 2016</li> </ul>

Housing Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Monitoring and review about the use and cost of temporary accommodation across the County, with regular reporting to Kent Leaders and Chief Executives</li> <li>» The Temporary Accommodation Protocol was developed and published in 2018</li> <li>» Maintaining dialogue with London Boroughs with regards to placements into Kent and Medway, to mitigate the impact</li> <li>» Engagement with adult and youth offending services to reduce re-offending and reduce homelessness</li> <li>» Development and publication of the Care Leavers Protocol in 2018 and Youth Homelessness Protocol in 2018</li> <li>» Better Homes: Accessible Housing Framework developed and published in 2013</li> <li>» Development and production of the Move on Tool Kit with the Joint Policy and Planning Board to prepare residents to move on from supported to independent living</li> <li>» The Kent Accommodation Strategy was published in 2014, setting the strategic direction for and to enable delivery of suitable housing and care provision for all KCC Adult Social Care client groups</li> <li>» The Offender Protocol was developed by the Joint Policy and Planning Board in 2013</li> <li>» Joint-working across organisations to promote and provide housing advice and options for ex service personnel and the introduction of the Kent Civilian Military Covenant</li> <li>» Better Housing for Better Health, Annual Public Health Report 2016</li> </ul>
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In addition to the achievements listed Kent Housing Group through its events programme and in partnership with relevant organisations and sectors provides and facilitates access to training and information sessions which are linked to many of the key objectives outlined in both the last edition of the Kent and Medway Housing Strategy and this new strategy document. Key to delivery of all objectives is keep abreast of new and emerging national and local policy, sharing and exploring good practice through learning and striving to improve on current service delivery standard.



## Glossary

Affordable Housing	Housing which is either for sale or for rent, or a combination of the two, at below current market values provided to specific eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Typically it takes the form of low cost homeownership or below market rent.
Affordable Rent	A flexible form of tenure which enables social housing landlords to grant flexible tenancies, charged at up to 80% of market rent and on non-permanent tenancies.
Better Care Fund (BCF)	The Better Care Fund (BCF) provides financial support for councils and NHS organisations to jointly plan and deliver local services.
Better Homes: Housing for the Third Age	A Kent-wide framework developed by the Kent Housing Group and Joint Policy and Planning Board to help facilitate and enable the delivery of high-quality accommodation for older people.
Community Infrastructure Levy	A planning charge which allows Local Authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of a new development.
Community Right to Build	An initiative that enables communities to take forward local development without applying for planning permission if there is overwhelming community support and minimum criteria are met.
Department of Health (DOH)	The DoH supports Government Ministers in leading the nation's health and social care to help people live more independent, healthier lives for longer.
Disabled Facilities Grant	Grants issued by Local Authorities to disabled people to enable adaption of homes to support independent living.
FirstBuy	A shared equity loan initiative to enable first time buyers to purchase a new build property, using an equity loan for 20% of the property purchase price.
Garden Communities	The government's aim is to be delivering 300,000 new homes a year on average. Garden communities provide new housing, infrastructure, jobs and services in sustainable settlements.
Help to Buy	Help to Buy is the name of a government programme in the United Kingdom that aims to help first time buyers, and those looking to move home, purchase residential property. It was announced in Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne's 2013 budget speech.
Homes England	Homes England is an executive non-Departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, formerly the Homes and Communities Agency.
HomeBuy	The Governments range of shared ownership housing schemes, now replaced by Help to Buy.
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Legislation that sets out the statutory responsibility of Local Authorities for assisting homeless households.
Housing Needs Assessment	Studies carried out by local Housing Authorities to assess future local housing requirements, in particular in relation to affordable housing.
Housing Infrastructure Fund	The Housing Infrastructure Fund is a government capital grant programme of up to £2.3 billion, which will help to deliver up to 100,000 new homes in England. Funding will be awarded to local authorities on a highly competitive basis, providing grant funding for new infrastructure that will unlock new homes in the areas of greatest housing demand.

Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety	The review's final report which was commissioned by government following the Grenfell Tower fire to make recommendations on the future regulatory system. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report</a>
Infrastructure	The fundamental facilities and systems serving a Country, City, or other area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function. Infrastructure is composed of public and private physical improvements such as roads, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, and telecommunications.
Joint Policy and Planning Board for Housing	A former Kent-wide forum where strategic issues requiring joint-working between housing health and social care were raised and measures to address identified issues then developed in partnership.
Kent and Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board	The Kent & Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board actively oversees and implements the Kent Community Covenant and the Medway Community Covenant. The Board works hard to ensure serving and ex-armed forces personnel and their families can enjoy equal access to public services as the civilian community and are not disadvantaged as a result of being in the military.
Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework	A countywide document that provides a picture of emerging development and infrastructure requirements, to support growth across Kent and Medway, up to 2031.
Kent and Medway NHS Sustainability and Transformation Partnership	The Kent and Medway Sustainability and Transformation Partnership has been set up by local health and care leaders. The Partnership is a collaboration of all NHS organisations across Kent and Medway, Kent County Council and Medway Council, all of whom are involved in the planning, provision and delivery of health and social care services in this area. <a href="https://kentandmedway.nhs.uk/stp/">https://kentandmedway.nhs.uk/stp/</a>
Kent Choice Based Lettings Partnership	A Kent-wide partnership between Local Authorities and local Housing Associations enabling people on housing registers to bid for available social and affordable rented properties.
Kent Developers Group	A unique association that comprises land and property owners, developers of commercial spaces as well as residential and mixed use schemes across the County. Together they work alongside public sector partners including Kent County Council, Homes England and the Environment Agency.
Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP)	A group with representation from all Kent Local Authorities, which supports the development of programmes to reduce both energy use and fuel poverty.
Kent Homechoice	The choice-based lettings service for Local Authority and Housing Association homes in Kent.
Kent Housing Group (KHG)	A Kent-wide social housing forum which serves to represent the collective voice of housing across Kent and Medway. Representation is from all Local Authorities, Medway Unitary Authority, Kent County Council, over 13 Housing Associations amongst others.
Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG)	A Kent-wide subgroup of the Kent Housing Group with a specific focus on homelessness and housing options.
Kent Planning Officers Group (KPOG)	A strategic countywide forum bringing together planning officers from all Local Authorities, who consider Kent-wide planning issues and work in partnership with other Kent-wide groups.
Kent Private Sector Housing Group (KPSHG)	A Kent-wide subgroup of the Kent Housing Group with a specific focus on the private sector.

Letwin Review	The independent review of build out was announced by Government at Budget 2017 and was led by the Rt Hon Sir Oliver Letwin MP. In the review's final report Sir Oliver Letwin makes recommendations on how to close the significant gap between the number of housing completions and the amount of land allocated or permitted on large sites in areas of high housing demand.
Local Government Association (LGA)	The LGA are the national voice of local government, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government.
Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England	The Coalition Government housing strategy which sets out ambitions to intervene in the housing market to enable delivery of homes, supporting the focus for choice and quality and improving environmental standards and design quality.
South-East Local Enterprise Partnership	The South-East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is one of 38 LEPs, the biggest LEP outside London, established to provide the clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area.
Local Housing Allowance	Housing benefit usually paid to people who rent in the private rented sector.
Local Housing Authorities	Authorities with direct responsibility for delivery housing within their areas, in Kent this is the district and boroughs and Medway Unitary Authority.
Local Housing Strategy	A statutory document that is produced by Local Authorities and sets out their future local housing priorities, including key housing issues such as affordable housing.
Local Needs Housing	Housing that meets the housing needs of the local community and businesses.
Local Plan	Local plans are prepared by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and should provide a positive vision for the future of each area and a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities.
Local Planning Authorities	Authorities with direct responsibility for delivering planning within their areas, in Kent this is the district and boroughs and Medway Unitary Authority.
Localism Act 2011	Government (Coalition) legislation which provided greater power to Local Authorities and neighbourhoods, giving local communities control over housing and planning decisions and radically altered the housing regime.
Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	MHCLG is a Ministerial Department, supported by 13 agencies and public bodies.
Move-on Accommodation	Settled longer term housing that vulnerable people move into when they leave supported housing or temporary accommodation.
National Landlords Association	Independent national organisation for private residential landlords. <a href="https://landlords.org.uk/">https://landlords.org.uk/</a>
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Revised (2019) national framework for the planning system in England.
New Burdens Funding	The government will provide £72.7 million to Local Authorities to meet the new burdens costs associated with the additional duties contained within the Homelessness Reduction Act.
New Homes Bonus Scheme	The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government to local councils to reflect and incentivise housing growth in their areas. The New Homes Bonus is currently paid each year for 6 years.
National Health Service (NHS)	The National Health Service is the publicly funded national healthcare system for England and one of the four National Health Services for each constituent Country of the United Kingdom. It is the largest single-payer healthcare system in the world.

No Use Empty	A Kent-wide initiative which helps bring back empty properties across the County back into use.
Private Accredited Letting Scheme	An accreditation scheme that aims to encourage and support landlords in attaining and maintaining good standards of letting when renting homes privately.
Registered Providers	All providers of social and affordable housing.
Right to Buy	The Government scheme that enables social housing tenants to purchase their homes at below market value via a discount.
Rural Homes: A Guide to developing Rural Housing	A countywide protocol of fact sheets that provides advice about how to enable development of affordable homes in rural communities, revised in 2019.
Section 106 Agreement	A legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act between a planning authority and a developer, which ensures that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.
Shared Ownership	A form of low cost home ownership where a share of a home is purchased and rent is paid on the remaining balance.
Social Mobility	Social mobility is the movement of individuals, families, households, or other categories of people within or between social strata in a society.
South East Local Enterprise Partnership	The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is one of 38 LEPs, established to provide the clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area. LEPs were set up by the government to be the key body determining strategic economic priorities while making investments and delivering activities to drive growth and create jobs.
Starter Homes	Starter Homes is a government initiative that aims to provide up to 200,000 affordable new-build homes to first-time buyers in England by 2020. The properties will be built on brownfield land and sold at a 20% discount compared to the market price in the area.
Strategic Partnership (with Homes England)	Homes England is working with housing associations across England who are prepared to be more ambitious to significantly increase housing delivery and we welcome these seven new partnerships announced in the Budget 2018.
Successful Communities	Communities with a mix of tenure, income levels, and household types supported through appropriate infrastructure and community development initiatives and resources.
Supported Housing	Accommodation provided to vulnerable people assessed by the Local Authority as being in need of residential care.
Tax Increment Funding (TIF)	A method that enables Local Authorities to borrow against future gains in business rates to finance current development.
Tenancy Strategy	A strategy that Local Authorities once had to produce, setting out issues that Housing Associations had to have regard to when setting their own tenancy policies.
Universal Credit	Universal Credit is a payment to help with living costs, it is paid monthly and to be eligible you need to be on a low income or out of work.

