



# **Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030**

April 2025

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## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce you to Spelthorne Borough Council's new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025-2030. It outlines in detail how we propose to address housing need and prevent and tackle homelessness in Spelthorne using 3 key strategic priorities.



Housing and homelessness are key parts of the Government's domestic agenda, pledging to build 1.5m homes in 5 years and having a cross-government taskforce to tackle homelessness. We are committed partners in this effort and are committed to ensuring residents of Spelthorne have somewhere to call home that is both suitable and affordable. It is vital that our residents have access to effective, specialist support at the earliest opportunity to prevent them from becoming homeless.

This strategy offers exciting opportunities for collaborative working across the statutory and voluntary sector, to maximise the delivery of homelessness prevention and support services in Spelthorne. Its primary aims include:

- Partnership working: A multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness.
- Identifying opportunities to address housing need.
- Proactive homelessness prevention and an effective service response.

We also plan to continue monitoring our service delivery through Strategic Housing Group, a group made up of Officers and Councillors. We plan to continue delivering a regular multi-agency network via our Homelessness Prevention Forum which consists of community partners and other statutory agencies, this will help to highlight areas for continued improvement.

I would like to extend my thanks to our residents, service users, partners and staff members who fed into this ambitious Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which sets the foundations for housing options, homelessness, and rough sleeping prevention services over the next five years.

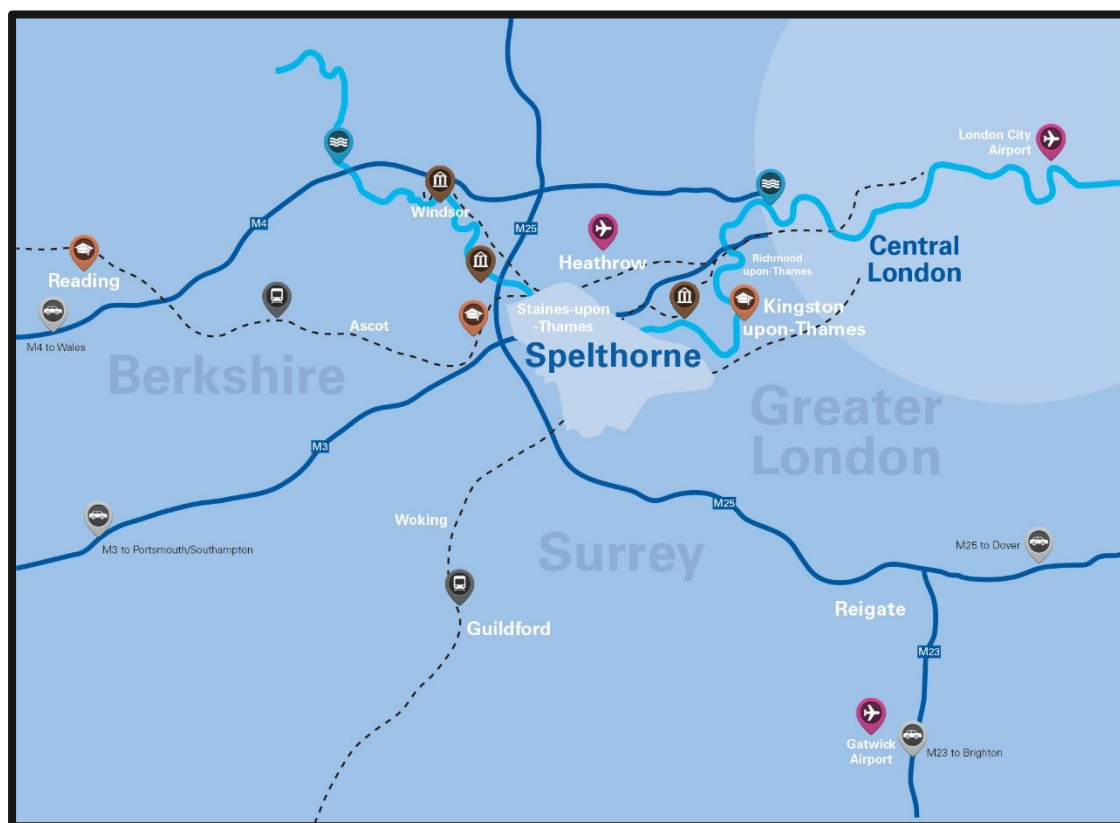
**Councillor Susan Doran**

**Chair for Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee**

## Introduction and overview of Spelthorne

Spelthorne is located on the south-west edge of London and in the north-west of Surrey, neighbouring the boroughs of Slough, Windsor & Maidenhead, Runnymede, Elmbridge, and the London Boroughs of Richmond upon Thames, Hounslow and Hillingdon. The north of the borough borders London Heathrow airport. Spelthorne is densely populated and has five main urban areas: Ashford, Shepperton, Staines-upon-Thames, Stanwell and Sunbury. Outside these urban areas:

- 65% is green belt,
- 30% of the total area is either flood plain or reservoir, and
- We have 12 miles of River Thames frontage.



As of the 2021 Census, Spelthorne has a population of approximately 103,000 and is the 14<sup>th</sup> most densely populated of the South East's 64 local authority areas.

Spelthorne has a slightly lower population of under-30s (33%) compared to the rest of the country (36%), and a slightly higher population of 30-69 year olds (53%) compared with the national average of (51%), The number of residents 70+ is 14%, which is broadly in line with the rest of the nation.

According to the indices of deprivation 2019, the most deprived borough in Surrey is Spelthorne. Spelthorne has the highest number of lone parent

families and the highest level of child poverty in Surrey; it also has the highest under-18 conception rate in the county. The Indices of Deprivation have not been updated since 2019. However, the recent 2021 Census highlights that Spelthorne has the highest level of hardship in Surrey; 33.6% of households experienced at least one category of deprivation in either employment, education, health or housing. That said, residents are largely healthy, with life expectancy for both males and females slightly above the national average.

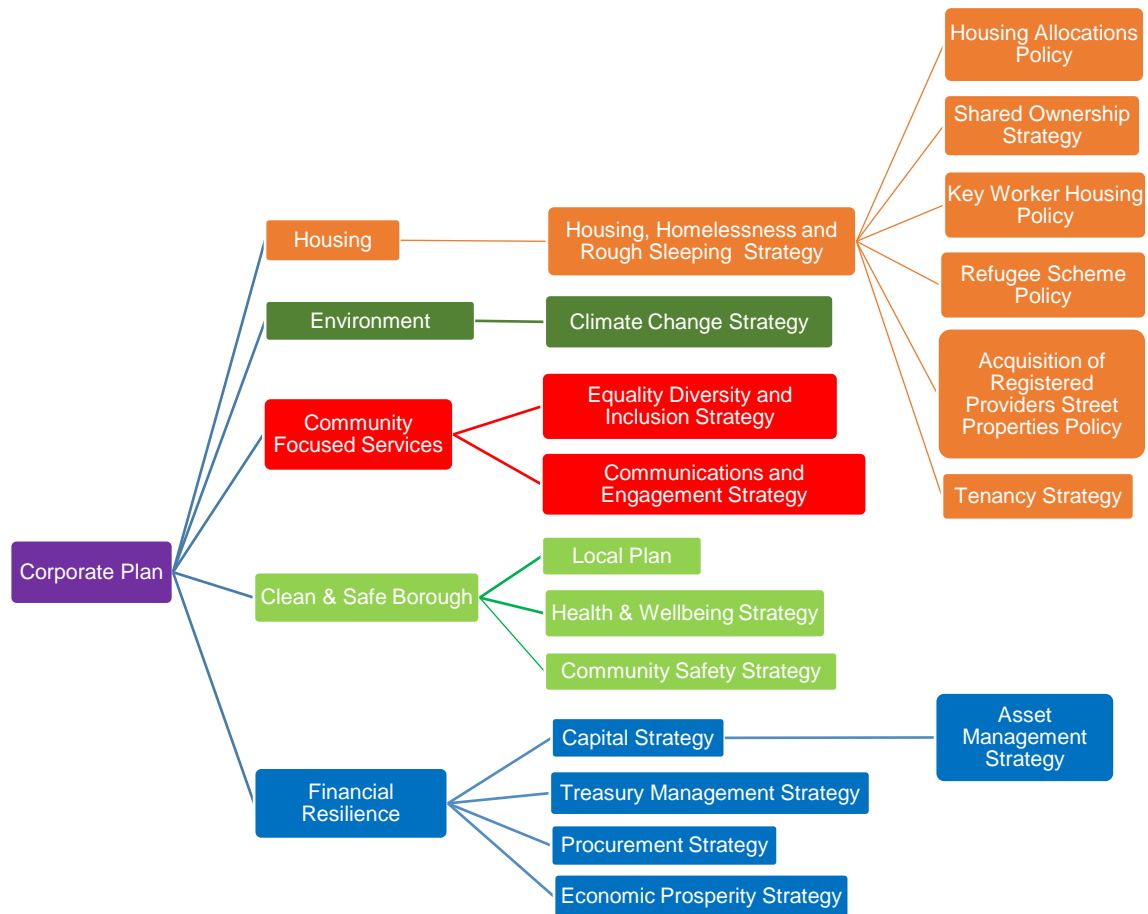
Spelthorne has a relatively low rate of unemployment: 3.3% of those economically active aged 16 to 64, compared to the South East (3.7%). Average wages are £709 per week for full-time employees, slightly above the South East regional average of £685.

Whilst house prices remain well above the national average, most residents are owner-occupiers (68%), followed by private rent tenants (18%) and social rent tenants (13%).

## How the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy links in with the Council's wider work

Addressing housing need is one of the Council's five corporate priorities within its Corporate Plan 2024-2028. Our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is the foundation for our approach to meeting our corporate aim:

*"To support the delivery of high-quality housing and solutions to allow residents to live independently which meets the need of all sections of the community at every stage of life, addressing the challenges around availability, affordability and homelessness."*



*\*Note that links above between priorities / strategies do not accurately represent the relationships between the different documents as many strategies interlink with multiple areas of the Council's work.*

## How the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy was developed

The Housing Options Strategy and Policy team at the Council carried out a Homelessness Review which looked extensively at data from the period 2019 to 2024, specifically:

- The levels, and likely future levels, of homelessness within Spelthorne.
- How Spelthorne works to:
  - Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.
  - Secure appropriate accommodation for those who are or may become homeless.
  - Provide support for those who are homeless or who may become at risk of homelessness, including those who experience repeat homelessness.
- The resources available to Officers for providing homelessness and rough sleeping prevention services.

A summary of the findings from the Homelessness Review were presented to stakeholders at a joint event between Spelthorne Healthy Community Partners and Spelthorne Homelessness Prevention Forum. The event saw over 80 attendees from various statutory and voluntary organisations. The second half of the joint forum was held as a workshop, in order to provide an opportunity for other agencies to offer feedback on our services and suggestions on how we can work together in the future to address housing need and homelessness.

A working group of key Officers and Councillors representing the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee was formed. The working group considered the initial homelessness review findings, stakeholder feedback and the results of a client feedback survey. Using available data, the working group formed some suggested strategic priorities recommended to the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee for a decision.

Following Committee, these initial strategic priorities were formed into a draft strategy framework which was made available for public consultation. This ran for 6 weeks through December 2024 to January 2025. The public consultation went live online and hard copies were made available at the Council offices.

The Working Group considered the public consultation responses before formulating a draft action plan, drawing together proposals from across the Council as well as from partner agencies and other statutory bodies. Final recommendations were made to the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee for approval.

Our Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy has also been cross referenced against:

- Local Government Association's 'Making Homelessness Strategies Happen' guidance;

- Crisis' 'Local Housing Authority Checklist: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies';
- "Bleak Houses: Tackling the crisis of family homelessness in England" report from the Children's Commissioner, August 2019; and
- Royal British Legion's "Supporting the Armed Forces Community with Housing in England: a Best Practice Guide".
- Homeless Link's No Homeless Veterans Toolkit 2022.
- Surrey Joint Housing Protocol for Care Leavers 2023.

We have used these resources to ensure that we have covered key areas of homelessness prevention and relief in our new strategy and considered any new and innovative ways of working.

In formulating this strategy, we have considered our obligations under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, case law, best practice and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (updated 10 June 2024).



## Our current housing, homelessness and rough sleeping challenges

We need a long-term plan for housing, as decent homes that people can afford provide a firm foundation for families living in Spelthorne. Many people face huge challenges accessing and maintaining an affordable, decent home that meets their needs. For example, many people are being forced to pay a massive portion of their income on rent due to increased housing costs.

Access to a range of good quality affordable housing options is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of residents. If our homes are poorly maintained, with problems like damp and mould, it's putting residents' physical health at risk. The Government needs to properly resource the enforcement of housing standards in the private rented sector to provide residents with the decent homes they need for good health.

Whilst homelessness is linked to one of our main corporate priorities (addressing housing need), a number of factors influence our ability to deliver our housing and homelessness advice service. Many of these are as a result, both directly and indirectly, of national government policy and legislation.

Spelthorne's overall level of homelessness and use of emergency accommodation is fuelled by:

- Affordability of the private rented sector for local residents.
- Demand on the limited supply of social housing.
- The limited number of active affordable housing providers actively developing in the borough, and lack of affordable housing supply through private developments.
- Impact of welfare reform policies.

In common with other areas across the country, homelessness has been a growing issue. Since 2019, the number of homeless households in Spelthorne has fluctuated slightly but has steadily started to increase back to pre-pandemic levels.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of households threatened with homelessness – prevention duty owed	305	219	242	272	287
Number of households already homeless – relief duty owed	152	175	174	135	151
<b>Grant Total:</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>438</b>

Over the same period, the average number of households in emergency and temporary accommodation has seen a correspondingly significant increase,

meaning that the authority's gross spend on emergency accommodation is now regularly over £1million per year and rising.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Gross spend on temporary accommodation	£1.21m	£1.14m	£0.91m	£1.17m	£2.3m

Source: In-house monitoring

There has been a lack of affordable housing delivery over the past five years, with only 65 affordable rented homes<sup>1</sup> being delivered.

Year	Affordable dwelling completions (Gross)	Affordable dwellings lost (Gross)	Affordable dwellings completed (Net)	Rented (Gross)	Shared Ownership (Gross)
2019-20	0	0	0	0	0%
2020-21	177	0	177	22	155
2021-22	104	0	104	0	104
2022-23	0	0	0	0	0
2023-24	43	0	43	43	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>259</b>

Source: In-house monitoring

This performance pales in comparison to the need. The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Update Report, prepared for the purposes of revising the Council's Local Plan, suggests an overall need of 459 additional homes per year to 2035 – the vast majority being affordable or social rented instead of affordable home ownership<sup>2</sup>.

The availability of existing social housing stock is severely limited. In 2022/23, there were 20 applicants for every social housing vacancy, on average, almost double the levels from three years prior.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Number on Housing Register as at 1 April</b>	2,098	2,823	3,378	3,798	2,048 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Number of lettings</b>	195	175	177	193	149
<b>Ratio applicants to vacancies</b>	11:1	16:1	19:1	20:1	14:1

Source: In-house monitoring

<sup>1</sup> Affordable rents are 80% of market rent.

<sup>2</sup> Spelthorne Borough Council SHMA Update May 2019

<sup>3</sup> In 2023/24, a new Housing Allocations Policy was introduced which resulted in a full re-registration process. This figure represents the number of applicants who had successfully re-registered by 1 April 2024.

An additional pressure is that Spelthorne has a lack of diversity amongst Registered Providers. Over 90% of the social housing stock is with one provider, A2Dominion<sup>4</sup>, which results in us being overly-reliant on that provider’s policies and activities. There is also a disproportionately high presence of large providers, with only one provider classified as ‘small’ (owning less than 1,000 units).

PRP name	Size of organisation	General needs, self-contained social stock	% of overall stock in area
A2Dominion	Large	4456	90%
Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing	Large	249	5%
L&Q	Large	94	2%
PA Housing	Large	86	2%
Catalyst	Large	34	<1%
Ability	Small	1	<1%
Notting Hill Genesis	Large	1	<1%
Mount Green	Large	1	<1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>4,922</b>	

It’s important to note that A2Dominion’s stock in Spelthorne accounts for roughly 25% of its low cost rented accommodation stock across its entire portfolio, with more than twice as many properties in Spelthorne as the next highest stock holding area in the London Borough of Ealing<sup>5</sup>.

Local Authority	No. of low rented homes
Spelthorne	4,922
Ealing	2,085
Hounslow	830
Hillingdon	668
Bromley	906

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2024-28 sets out how the Council plans to engage with Registered Providers in a more proactive way on joint ventures in Spelthorne.

<sup>4</sup> Regulator for Social Housing Statistical Data Release 2023. Retrieved from: [Registered provider social housing stock and rents in England 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/registered-provider-social-housing-stock-and-rents-in-england-2022-to-2023)

<sup>5</sup> Regulator for Social Housing Statistical Data Release 2023. Retrieved from: [Registered provider social housing stock and rents in England 2022 to 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/registered-provider-social-housing-stock-and-rents-in-england-2022-to-2023)

## Our strategic priorities for the next five years

Our strategic housing, homelessness and rough sleeping prevention priorities over the next five years will focus on 3 key areas:

- Partnership working: A multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness.
- Identifying opportunities to address housing need.
- Proactive homelessness prevention and an effective service response.

### Partnership working: A multi-agency approach to tackling homelessness.

The challenge of homelessness is undoubtedly complex. We can only advance our efforts by working across all sectors (housing, health, social care, voluntary and other statutory services) to prevent and relieve homelessness.

Collaborative working is critical to this strategy so that we can improve services and introduce interventions to deliver better outcomes for people who are most in need. With a number of local organisations having different priorities and funding constraints, it's important that integrated approaches have shared objectives and clear accountability measures.

Partnership working is fundamental for providing specialist services and delivering focused projects to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Spelthorne. A large amount of progress has already been achieved, such as a multi-partnership agreement for managing hospital discharge patients who don't have a suitable home to return to via a Step Down project, supporting clients with multiple and complex needs at 2 homeless hostels – White House and Harper House, partnership work with Rentstart who are based in our Council building and are able to take referrals to support single homeless people directly on site.

### How we will achieve this

- Engage with social care teams (adults and children's services and mental health support teams) to improve communication and referrals to achieve better outcomes for clients with health and welfare support needs.
- Work with the North Surrey Domestic Abuse Service to ensure support is offered to victims at risk of, or who are fleeing, domestic abuse. We will continue to utilise the 'Sanctuary Scheme' where suitable to create safe havens in existing homes of domestic abuse survivors.
- We will liaise with offender management services (probation, prisons and youth offending services) to identify people leaving custody who may be at risk of homelessness in order to provide targeted support at the earliest opportunity.
- Continue to lead on our local hospital discharge protocol via our 'Step-Down Scheme' to prevent homelessness and minimise discharge delays. This scheme is commissioned by the North West Surrey

Alliance and is delivered by Spelthorne Borough Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, A2Dominion, The Whitely Homes Trust, and Housing 21.

- Work with the Home Office and Surrey County Council to prevent and relieve refugee and asylum seeker homelessness.
- Liaise with the DWP on improving access to employment opportunities for our clients and make best use of the Staines Employment and Skills Hub.
- Develop further links with armed forces charities to ensure serving members and Veterans are offered suitable assistance to access and sustain settled accommodation.
- Work with registered providers (including A2Dominion) to address the quality of temporary accommodation, maximise local lettings and tackle under occupation of social housing.
- Continue to work effectively with Spelthorne Rentstart who support single homeless people with accessing the private rented sector.

### Identifying opportunities to address housing need

Homes are fundamental to our residents' health and wellbeing. When homes are of decent quality, the comfort and security they provide helps to support residents' mental and physical health. That's why it's essential for residents in Spelthorne to be able to access and afford a decent home.

Right now, we're facing a national housing crisis due to runaway housing costs. One of the symptoms of this crisis is people being forced to pay unaffordable rents for poor quality homes that put their health at risk.

Decent, affordable homes are the foundations for people's lives. We will identify opportunities to address housing need locally and maximise our efforts in promoting affordable housing delivery that focuses on both affordability and quality.

#### How we will achieve this

- Improve the quality and safety of housing stock. Work proactively with landlords and private housing providers of emergency accommodation to tackle poor conditions and anti-social behaviour.
- Work in partnership to deliver new homes for local need. Drive opportunities through a Development and Delivery Strategy for the Borough to bring publicly owned sites forward for affordable homes.
- Maximise the provision of affordable homes through the planning process through viability and s106 agreements.
- Work in partnership with key Registered Providers to bring forward regeneration opportunities which will secure housing for local needs.
- Proceed to Examination and adopt the Local Plan to guide how developments benefit the Spelthorne community over the next 15 years.

- Ensure our offer to private sector landlords is competitive, robust, affordable and suitable. We will encourage new landlords to work with us and ensure that we have a sustainable pipeline of properties to use.

### Proactive homelessness prevention and an effective service response

Everybody deserves a decent, safe and secure place to call home. Too many households still face the damaging consequences of becoming homeless. We must ensure we deliver change for some of our most vulnerable residents and ensure they get the help and support that they need.

We are committed to reducing all forms of homelessness through proactive homelessness prevention efforts. In instances where homelessness is unavoidable, we will deliver an effective service that assists residents with finding suitable alternative accommodation.

#### How we will achieve this

- Monitor demand for emergency accommodation. Ensure that there are sufficient resources identified and processes in place for assisting clients with move-on to suitable alternative accommodation.
- Identify opportunities for effective homelessness prevention ensuring that we are maximising the use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- Review team capacity to respond to the increased number of approaches from refugees and asylum seekers, and potential impact of the Renters Rights Bill and Awaab's Law.
- Sustain our rough sleeper outreach service to offer support and advice at the earliest opportunity.
- Implement opportunities to collect customer feedback to monitor customer satisfaction and improve service delivery. Subsequently, provide opportunities for staff training and growth development.
- Improve housing software and systems to improve the efficiency of service delivery and improve the customer journey.
- Help residents stay in their own homes independently with the right tools and technology.
- Continue to have safeguarding at the centre of all Housing processes.

## Delivery and monitoring of the Strategy

### Monitoring of the strategy

#### Operational monitoring

The delivery of this strategy is a 'living' document which will adapt and develop over time. Officer leads will be responsible for implementing and monitoring progress. The Housing Options Strategy team will regularly monitor and publish an annual update on the progress made to achieve the strategic priorities.

#### Strategic monitoring

The strategic responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this strategy, in particular the resources available to deliver the strategy, is delegated to the Council's Strategic Housing Group (SHG).

SHG exists to ensure that Spelthorne Borough Council has a focussed strategic approach on housing matters, and to ensure that Spelthorne's housing needs are identified and met.

SHG meets monthly, and will commit to reviewing the strategy delivery at least every annum, making recommendations and decisions as necessary to ensure the delivery of the strategy.

## Glossary

**Affordable Rent** (also called intermediate rent) – rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent or is at least 20% below local market rents.

**Bed and Breakfast (B&B)** – Accommodation which the Council sources for homeless households to live in whilst longer term solutions are found. The Council usually pays for these placements on a nightly basis, and it cannot reclaim all of the cost of the placement from either the homeless household or the Government. As a result, it costs the Council a significant amount of money per year to pay for these placements.

**Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)** – Monetary grants for property adaptations to meet the needs of a person with a disability which prevents them from otherwise living comfortably day-to-day.

**Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)** – A payment that may be made at the discretion of the Council to help assist a resident with their housing costs.

**Duty to Refer** – Was introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Certain organisations are imposed to refer persons who are threatened with homelessness or who may already be homeless to local authorities. (Note: 'Commitment to Refer' has been adopted by other bodies that are not imposed to refer persons at threat of homelessness but do so voluntarily).

**Extra Care** - Specialist housing that offers care and support services on-site, generally for those aged 55+. Care levels are usually higher than sheltered accommodation.

**Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** – Legislation introduced to amend the legal duties placed on local authorities with an emphasis on earlier targeted homelessness prevention.

**Housing First** - Is a housing and support approach that offers settled accommodation to homeless persons with complex needs and a history of repeat homelessness in which they then subsequently address other support needs.

**Keyworker Accommodation** - Accommodation let to essential service public sector employees, usually at a discount of 10-20% off market rates.

**Knowle Green Estates** - A company wholly owned by Spelthorne Borough Council, set up to manage residential accommodation within the borough.

**Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** – These rates are used to calculate a tenant's entitlement for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element. These levels are set by the Government and should be based upon the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile rents in the local area.



**Pathway Plans** – A detailed support plan developed for persons deemed vulnerable.

**Registered Provider (RP)** – Provider of social housing. For example, A2Dominion is a Registered Provider and owns the majority of social housing stock in Spelthorne.

**Sanctuary Scheme** – Where suitable, the scheme aims to create a 'secure sanctuary' for victims of domestic abuse by enabling property adaptations to existing accommodation.

**Sheltered** - Accommodation which usually comprises of self-contained units with some shared communal spaces. Schemes are generally designed for those aged 55+.

**Spelthorne Rent Assure Scheme** – A two year rent guarantee scheme for private sector landlords.

**Supported Housing** – Accommodation that offers additional support. This type of accommodation is not usually age restricted, but specific schemes may be designed for residents with specific needs (i.e. alcohol, mental health).

**SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol)** – Aims to prevent rough sleeping during extreme cold weather.

**Temporary Accommodation** – Accommodation offered to homeless households who are subject to some form of duty under homelessness legislation. In Spelthorne, this is likely to be a 6 month tenancy of one of A2Dominion's properties.

**Universal Credit** – Assists with living costs and replaces six benefits by merging them in to one monthly payment. Universal Credit replaces Child and Working Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, and Employment Support Allowance.