



SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2007 – 2010



*“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive
borough with strong communities”*

Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

HOUSING ADVICE AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2007 – 2010

*“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive
borough with strong communities”*

CONTENTS		<u>PAGE</u>
	Foreword	<u>3</u>
	What This Strategy Will Achieve	<u>5</u>
Section 1	How to use this Strategy	<u>7</u>
Section 2	Corporate Context and Wider Priorities	<u>8</u>
Section 3	Partnership Working	<u>19</u>
Section 4	Needs Analysis	<u>21</u>
Section 5	Current Position Our Priorities	<u>23</u>
Section 6	Delivering the Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy	<u>30</u>

Foreword

Sedgefield Borough Council's ambitions set out in the Community Strategy **Vision for Sedgefield Borough in 2014** is to ensure that the Borough is a place where...

- People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities.
- High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer.
- The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced.
- People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods.

In summary, we want Sedgefield to be a Borough that is prosperous, attractive and healthy, with strong safe communities. We have adopted these ambitions for the Council and this Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy will have a significant role in helping deliver our vision for the Borough.

Homelessness is recognised by Sedgefield Borough Council as a serious issue that has a profound impact on lives and communities. Homelessness is a widespread problem and often has a number of complex causes.

Sedgefield Borough Council adopted its first homelessness strategy in July 2003 as a result of the requirement placed upon local authorities set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, and after undertaking a comprehensive review of homelessness within the Borough.

The Authority has undergone a re-structure across all service areas resulting in a separation of the strategic and landlord functions. This has provided the opportunity to reconfigure the Homelessness service to focus on prevention, and to revisit the original strategy in order to update information and produce a further strategy. The document compliments Sedgefield Borough's Housing Strategy 2006/7 to 2008/9 and our Corporate Plan. There are also clear links to the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy.

Sedgefield Borough has sought to address the priorities highlighted by Central Government with regard to preventing homelessness, ensuring accommodation is available to meet the needs of homeless people and ensuring support is available to prevent homelessness re-occurring. The Borough Council has made significant progress in these areas since 2003, by implementing a Service Improvement Plan early in 2004.

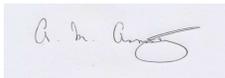
Statutory Homelessness presentations have reduced by 35% from 822 in 2004/05 to 531 in 2005/06, and again by 55% to 238 for 2006/07. Progress has been made with regard to joint working with the Housing Department, Registered Social Landlords and private landlords. This is to ensure that accommodation is available to meet the needs of homeless people. Close working links with support agencies have been established to prevent repeat homelessness.

This strategy will identify how the Authority proposes to continue to address these issues over the next three years and how it will aim to:

- Continue to work to prevent homelessness within the Borough.
- Address the personal and social causes of homelessness – examining initiatives that will support tenancy maintenance. We recognise this approach can help to develop sustainable communities and reduce the cost of failed tenancies to the Council.
- Encourage inter-agency working to provide support for vulnerable people – development of effective and robust links between agencies.
- Continue to maintain the low level of rough sleepers.
- Tackle the wider causes of homelessness.
- Provide more settled homes.

Sedgefield Borough realises that services must be co-ordinated, focused on need and informed by service users in order to provide the best outcomes for homeless people. The needs of our clients are changing and our services will continue to change in order to meet their needs, by a process of ongoing, continual review.

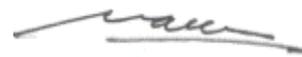
By working together with our partners, we can improve the lives of our citizens and ensure we have strong safe communities where people can access housing they require in an attractive environment.



Councillor A. Armstrong
Leader of the Council



Councillor W. Waters
Portfolio Holder for Housing



Brian Allen
Chief Executive

Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

What This Strategy Will Achieve

During the course of our first Homelessness Strategy significant improvements have been made within the Housing Advice and Homelessness Service, by reconfiguring and refocusing the service towards the prevention of homelessness. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of statutory homelessness applications submitted, from 822 in 2004/05 to 238 in 2006/07.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007 – 2010 aims to build upon this success and during the life of the Strategy the service will:

- Formalise a Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes.
- Establish prevention protocols with Housing Management and Tenancy Enforcement services to reduce the number of evictions through rent arrears and anti social behaviour.
- Develop a Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to allow greater access to the private rented sector.
- Produce a comprehensive housing advice and information pack including a directory of services.
- Establish a working protocol with supported accommodation providers to allow increased access to this service.
- Establish a Homelessness Prevention Network within the Borough with all agencies involved with potentially homeless clients.
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.
- Assess all temporary accommodation against specified minimum standards.
- Establish a Homelessness Forum.
- Produce a homelessness prevention education pack for young people aged 14 – 16.
- Establish a protocol with Registered Social Landlords to increase the number of allocations made to homeless clients, by linking in to the Housing Corporation Homelessness Strategy's key elements.
- Further reduce the number of statutory homelessness applications by 25%.

-
- Reduce the number of failed private tenancies by working with landlords and increasing tenancy support services.

The delivery of these outcomes will require effective joint working across a range of agencies, including statutory, private and voluntary sectors.

The strategy and its outcomes will link into the development of a sub regional homelessness strategy that is proposed for County Durham.

Section**1**

How to use this Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a number of changes to the duties placed on a local housing authority in relation to homelessness and housing advice. One of the most significant being the requirement to review homelessness in the Borough and produce a strategy to address the issues identified. We have taken the opportunity to update our Strategy and look forward over the period 2007 – 2010.

What Is A Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

The Government has highlighted the need for the prevention of homelessness wherever possible. This Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy (“the strategy”) will provide an insight into the levels of homelessness across the Borough, the strategic context in which the strategy was produced, an analysis of need, the priorities for the future and how the Authority proposes to address these priorities over the next 3 years.

What Is In The Strategy

This Strategy is made up of six sections:

Section One – provides an overview of what is incorporated within the strategy.

Section Two - tells you about the importance homelessness prevention plays in the operation of the Council, the strategic context in which the strategy was produced, and how we are addressing changes in policy and legislation.

Section Three - tells you how we work with our partners and consult with our residents to deliver our plans.

Section Four – tells you how we developed our priorities for intervention through analysis of need in the Borough.

Section Five – explains the current position and tells you future priorities for action for the Borough and how we are seeking to address key Government policy issues.

Section Six - tells you how we will monitor and report on the progress we make in delivering our Strategy.

Where To Find Out More Information

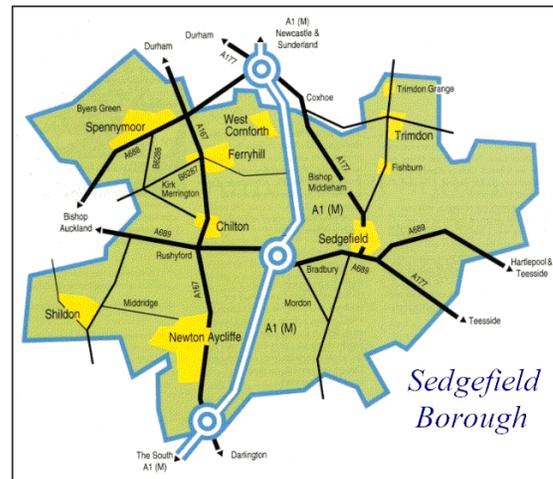
Please contact S Hewitt, Senior Homeless Persons Officer, at the Council’s offices in Green Lane Spennymoor (01388 816166) or email shewitt@sedgefield.gov.uk for further information or visit our website www.sedgefield.gov.uk

Section

2

Corporate Context and Wider Priorities

Sedgefield Borough is situated in the South of County Durham in the North East of England, between Durham City and Darlington. Covering some 217 sq. km, almost 80% of the 87,206 residents (2001 Census) live within the four towns of Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor, Shildon and Ferryhill, which provide the main focus for employment, shopping and leisure. Newton Aycliffe is a former 'New Town' and the others have developed around iron, coal and railway industries. In contrast to these urban centres, the Borough also contains small historic villages (some of Saxon origin) and coalfield communities in the more rural eastern part of the Borough. The population within Sedgefield



has fallen by 4.3% since the 1991 Census compared to the North East average of 2.8%, due largely to economic migration. The departure of young families and longer lives has resulted in an increasingly ageing population within the Borough, with more than twice the number of people aged over 65 than aged under 5. At the 2001 Census the population was 99.3% white, compared to the regional average of 97.6%.

Strategic framework

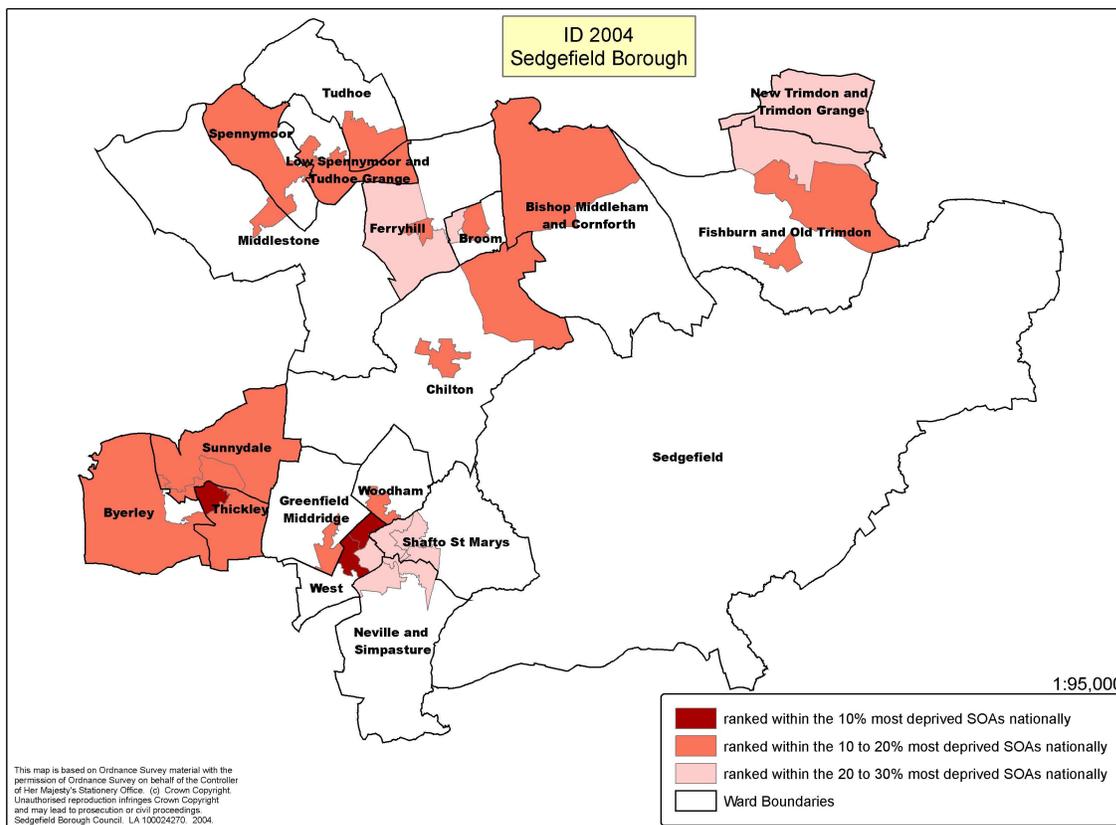
Many issues drive the Council's strategy development including this housing strategy e.g. the socio-economic circumstances of local people, community aspirations identified through consultations, the policy directives of national government and regional governance structures and the Council's capacity and resources.

The key socio-economic factors influencing the quality of life of local people across the Borough are set out below...

- ❑ **Health deprivation** –high levels of ill health, long-term illness and a lower than average life expectancy, with 18 of the Borough's 19 wards containing areas amongst the worst 10% in the country for health-related issues.
- ❑ **An ageing population** – more residents over 60 years of age than children aged under 14, placing significant demands on services for the elderly.
- ❑ **Low educational and skills attainment** – with less young people achieving 5 A*-C GCSE passes than the national average and a significant proportion of adults lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- ❑ **Employability** –low unemployment masking economic inactivity rates much higher than the national average, with means-tested benefits providing a major source of income for a significant proportion of the population.

- ❑ **Narrow employment base** –manufacturing sector twice that of North East and National average and therefore more vulnerable to global economic pressures.
- ❑ **Sustainability of the Borough’s towns and villages** – some settlements and main town centres are struggling to maintain their competitiveness in the light of changing shopping patterns.
- ❑ **Access to key services** – is often difficult, particularly for residents in the outlying areas of the Borough.
- ❑ **Community development** – development and support are required to increase the aspirations and participation of residents in their communities
- ❑ **Reassurance** – real successes in addressing issues such as community safety need to be better communicated to local communities.

The types of deprivation outlined above can affect anyone across the Borough but tend to cluster in certain neighbourhoods. The Indices of Deprivation 2004 identifies three of the Borough’s 56 Super Output Areas (areas of around 1,000 residents constructed to allow statistical comparison) as within the 10% most deprived nationally across a range of factors and 18 of the Boroughs 19 wards containing SOAs within the 30% most deprived. The Borough was one of the original 88 areas allocated Government Neighbourhood Renewal Funding on the basis of the extent of multiple deprivation in the area and is scheduled to receive a further allocation of £2m over the 2006-2008 period.



Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

How we have developed our Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

This strategy has been developed taking account of the Council's legal duties set out in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII and the Homelessness Act 2002. The national and regional policy context has assisted in developing an approach to tackling homelessness that is broad based and focuses on local issues. A thematic group on youth homelessness has been established through the Local Strategic Partnership and through this, the views of our partners and stakeholders have been taken into account in developing this strategy.

The National Context

The national policy context is set out in the Government's, '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*' strategy, which was published in 2005.

This document highlighted five key objectives:

1. Preventing Homelessness

Authorities should aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible and ensure accommodation and support is available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The personal and social causes of homelessness need to be addressed, with emphasis placed on initiatives which offer a range of options at an early stage, thus enabling households to stay in their existing accommodation or move to more suitable accommodation on a planned basis. These options could include:

- Family mediation
- Debt counselling
- Housing benefit uptake
- Sanctuary schemes for the victims of domestic violence
- Rent deposit schemes
- Tenancy support schemes
- Housing advice services

2. Support for people when they are vulnerable

The causes of homelessness for some people are more than just a housing problem and can be very complex often including mental health and/or substance misuse. Multi agency services need to be co-ordinated to meet the needs of vulnerable households with complex problems.

The Supporting People programme aims to support housing based options and sustain suitable tenancies by encouraging inter-agency planning. A robust framework is required to provide housing based support services to vulnerable people to reduce the risk of failing tenancies.

3. Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness

Addressing homelessness is an integral part of neighbourhood regeneration. Uptake of employment, state benefits, health, financial and advice services are found to be lower among homeless households.

Housing organisations will be central to facilitating access to these services by vulnerable households.

4. Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping

Successes are being achieved in reducing the number of ‘roofless’ people and improving hostel provision remains a key public service priority. The need for suitable follow on accommodation and support is becoming greater as the availability of council owned stock is reducing.

5. Providing more settled homes

For those households accepted under the legislation, the range of housing options are increasingly limited. Accessing suitable accommodation for homeless families can cause problems due to the physical lack of appropriate council properties and lack of affordable housing in the privately rented sector and owner occupation.

Issues of crime and anti social behaviour, poor employment and education opportunities, and lack of local services need to be addressed holistically by ensuring that our Local Strategic Partnership is active in the delivery of our homelessness strategy.

Tackling the anti social behaviour of individual households remains key to improving the quality of neighbourhoods and preventing repeat homelessness.

The Government has published guidance on making nomination arrangements work better, and Sedgefield Borough Council and our partner RSL’s have jointly reviewed how effective nomination agreements, exclusion criteria and tenancy sustainment measures currently are at a local level.

The expectation of tackling homelessness issues also extends to the private rented sector, with recognition for the need to work more closely with private landlords to prevent homelessness. Some initiatives may include:

- Rent deposit schemes
- Accredited landlord schemes
- Goodwill payments to private landlords – can be used to minimise the number of homeless presentations by making a ‘goodwill’ payment to the landlord in exchange

for allowing the tenant to remain in the accommodation until a suitable alternative can be found.

In addition to the objectives identified in '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*', the Government has also set a target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, and has set local authorities other challenging performance targets and indicators to continue to drive improvements in the homelessness service these are set out below.

Performance Indicators

- **BV183(a)** – average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households including dependant children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need.
- **BV183(b)** – average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households including dependent children or a pregnant woman that are unintentionally homeless or in priority need.
- **BV202** – number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority.
- **BV203** – percentage change in the average number of families which include dependent children or a pregnant woman placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year.
- **BV213** – number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service, and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation.
- **BV214** – proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years.
- **BV225** – score against checklist for actions against domestic violence.

The Regional Perspective - The North East

The regional perspective plays a key role in informing local homelessness strategies.

The publication of the North East Regional Housing Strategy (NERHS) in July 2005 is a key document that sets out four main objectives:

- To **rejuvenate the housing stock** to meet 21st Century aspirations, replacing market failure with high quality housing in the right locations to help create successful, cohesive and sustainable communities.

-
- To ensure the **type and mix of new housing provides choice**, supports economic growth and meets housing needs and demand. This will reflect the diversity of urban and rural communities and the needs for affordable, family and prestige housing.
 - To secure the **improvement and maintenance of existing housing** so that it meets required standards, investing in sustainable neighbourhoods.
 - To promote good management and targeted housing investment to address **specific community and social needs**, including an ageing population and the needs of minority communities; this will be integrated with the Supporting People programme and promote greater community involvement.

Our Strategy has been developed in this context and we have aligned our aims to these objectives.

Homelessness has emerged as a key issue in the North East with homelessness acceptances in County Durham rising from 614 in 2000/01 to 1430 in 2003/04 representing a rise of 132.9%. The reduction of social housing in the North East has reduced the availability of accommodation in the social rented sector and put pressure on other housing providers.

In some cases, the needs of those presenting as homeless, are complicated by drug and alcohol problems, mental health issues or a combination of both. Consequently, these people may have particular problems accessing services and obtaining suitable accommodation.

In addition, research has identified that there is a provision gap in accommodation and support for other groups, specifically, women and families experiencing domestic violence, vulnerable young people, ex-offenders and pregnant teenagers.

Because of the relatively low numbers of rough sleepers in the region, the issue is not regarded as a high priority. However, close liaison will be maintained with the voluntary sector to ensure continuing improvements.

The need to minimize homelessness through preventative action, as well as responding to problems as they arise, has to be a priority for all local authorities.

Sub Regional Context – County Durham

Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

This strategy has been developed by the Durham Housing and Neighbourhoods Group and sets out priorities for the Durham sub-region over the period 2008 to 2011.

The aim of the strategy is to have a strong and supportive housing market that:

- Supports economic growth and provides new opportunities.
- Offers a wide choice of affordable, quality housing.
- Promotes repair and improvement across all tenures.

-
- Supports all sections of the community, especially older people and the vulnerable.

The strategy has identified developments that need to be explored in order to address the needs of vulnerable people who may have physical disabilities, mental health issues, learning disabilities, or who may be teenage parents, ex-offenders, substance misusers and careleavers.

The prevention of homelessness and securing good quality, stable housing for these groups is of paramount importance, and the crucial element identified in the strategy is the need for effective partnership working between all agencies, authorities and integrated teams, joint commissioning of work and the sharing of good practice across the sub-region.

Supporting People

The five-year Supporting People Strategy has been developed by the Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership in order to establish the key developments and changes which need to take place in relation to housing related support services across County Durham.

The strategy has identified gaps in current service, which include lack of support for sufferers of domestic violence, high-risk offenders, people with complex mental health issues and people with drug and alcohol problems.

It has also set out the priority areas for development which include the increased provision of floating support schemes for specific vulnerable groups, consolidation of homelessness monitoring across all agencies, support for a mediation service for young people and the Countywide Joint Protocol scheme for 16/17 year olds.

In addition, there has emerged a clear issue with the lack of supported move on accommodation across the County including Sedgefield Borough.

Durham Housing Neighbourhood Group

The Durham Housing Neighbourhood Group was established in 2002 to take a strategic lead on the delivery of housing issues within the County (further details are available at www.countydurhampartnership.co.uk). The Group comprises the Directors of Housing/Strategic Housing from the District Councils within the County, and representatives from Adult and Community Services, Probation, Housing Providers and Primary Care Trusts. This group recently refocused its activities into two groups, one dealing with Supporting People Commissioning and the other dealing with Housing issues. This will facilitate a more focused role in the development of a Local Area Agreement, which includes preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness among vulnerable young people.

Local Area Agreement

The homelessness targets are located within the Children and Young People's Block, and the Safer, Stronger Communities Block of the Local Area Agreement.

Children and Young People's Block

Children and young people are protected from homelessness and failing tenancies.

There are three targets identified in order to achieve this outcome:

- A 30% reduction in the number of homelessness presentations amongst 16/17 year olds.
- Reduced number of repeat homelessness cases involving children and young people.
- A reduction of 550 cases of homelessness through housing advice casework by 2009.

Safer, Stronger Communities Block

There are three targets identified in order to achieve this outcome:

- A reduction in the proportion of vulnerable households living in non-decent accommodation in the private sector.
- A reduction in the number of households facing homelessness.
- A reduction in the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Sedgefield Borough Council is committed to achieving these targets.

Homelessness Action Partnership

County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership has been working alongside the Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group in the development of the Local Area Agreement bid. In addition, it has developed a Countywide Joint Protocol for 16/17 year olds, and has been successful in obtaining £100,000 for mediation services to homeless young people aged between 16 and 25 years old. NCH* has been commissioned to carry out this service.

The partnership is committed to the development of new initiatives to prevent homelessness across County Durham.

Joint Protocol

A Joint Protocol has been developed between Homelessness Departments, Adult and Community Services and the voluntary sector to ensure the best service possible for 16/17 year olds who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The agencies will work together to prevent homelessness and to ensure the most appropriate housing solution is obtained for the young person. This protocol is now operating across the County.

* NCH -National Children's Homes

Corporate Context

The Local Strategic Partnership's ambitions for the Borough is set out in the Community Strategy a **Vision for Sedgfield Borough in 2014**.



Sedgefield Borough
Local Strategic Partnership

To ensure that Sedgfield Borough is a place where...

- People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities
- High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that they offer
- The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced
- People can access the housing they want in attractive and safe neighbourhoods

We have adopted the ambitions of the Community Strategy as our Corporate Ambitions, and have identified the 12 Community Outcomes to which we, as a Council, can have maximum influence. Both the Housing Strategy and this Strategy's aims can influence the delivery of many of the Council's Corporate Ambitions through the cross cutting nature of housing.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY VISION	Sedgfield Borough Council Corporate Ambition	Community Outcome
People can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives as part of vibrant and strong communities	A HEALTHY BOROUGH	Safeguarding public health Promoting independent living Creating leisure opportunities Promoting cultural activities
High quality businesses can prosper and local people have the confidence and skills to access the jobs that	A PROSPEROUS BOROUGH	Promoting business and employment opportunities Maximising learning opportunities

Quality Services For Local People

"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"

COMMUNITY STRATEGY VISION	Sedgefield Borough Council Corporate Ambition	Community Outcome
they offer		Tackling disadvantage and promote social regeneration
The natural and built environment is valued, conserved and enhanced	AN ATTRACTIVE BOROUGH	Ensuring a cleaner, greener environment Improving towns, villages and the countryside Reducing waste and managing natural resources
People can access the housing they want, in attractive and safe neighbourhoods	A BOROUGH WITH STRONG COMMUNITIES	Securing quality sustainable housing Promoting safer neighbourhoods

Previous Sedgefield Borough Homelessness Strategy 2003

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2007-2010 builds upon Sedgefield Borough's Homelessness Strategy 2003, in which, four key aims were identified.

- To improve preventative work
- To increase appropriate temporary accommodation
- To increase the range of options for permanent housing
- To increase the support for people after rehousing

Significant progress has been made in achieving these aims over the past 3 years as highlighted in Section 5.

By working with stakeholders and partners, and by taking account of national and regional policy, we have refined the aims of the Homelessness Service and have agreed the following 5 service aims as our priorities for the next 3 years, 2007/10.

-
- **Prevent homelessness within the Borough.**
 - **Encourage inter-agency working to provide support for vulnerable people.**
 - **Seek to address the personal and social causes of homelessness and the wider causes.**
 - **Maintain the low level of rough sleepers.**
 - **Provide more settled homes.**

Through the process of needs analysis these aims have been broken down into a number of objectives, underpinned by actions, for which targets for delivery have been developed.

Resources

Sedgefield Borough employs 5 Housing Support Officers, one based in each of the 5 geographically based Integrated Teams for Vulnerable Adults. A Senior Homeless Persons Officer, is based at Sedgefield Borough's main Council Offices as part of its Housing Advice and Homelessness Service. This new way of working places the Housing Advice and Homelessness function at the heart of teams with direct access to social care and health support providing a more holistic outcome for our clients.

There are 7 homeless temporary accommodation units dispersed across the Borough, and 3 domestic violence temporary accommodation units. These are furnished tenancies and are typically 2 or 3 bedroomed houses.

The Department of Communities and Local Government's Homelessness grant for 2006/7 was £27,000 which has been used to refocus the service towards the prevention of homelessness.

Partnership Working

The Council has a track record of developing effective partnerships across all service areas. We recognise we cannot deliver this Strategy and our ambitions for the Borough without effective partnership working. Set out below are the key Partnerships in which we are currently involved, along with a number of examples of successful projects.

- **County Durham Supporting People Partnership** - we are part of the Partnership and contributed directly to the development of the 5-year Supporting People Strategy for County Durham.
- **County Durham Monitoring Initiative** - the Authority contributes to the funding of a Countywide Monitoring Officer post. Through this initiative levels of homelessness are monitored and needs can be assessed across the County and within specific areas/boroughs.
- **Partnership Board for Services to Vulnerable Adults** - we are represented by the Director of Neighbourhood Services on the Board and have been key to the development of the integrated teams bringing together health, social services and housing staff in order to provide a single point of contact for the needs of vulnerable adults.
We have successfully implemented an innovative approach to joint work with Housing, Health and Social Care staff in area based teams to cover the whole of the Borough.
- **Sedgefield Residents and Tenants Federation** - is a partnership between the resident and tenant organisation across the Borough and the Council, to ensure effective service delivery to address the priorities of our communities.
- **County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership** - the Council is a member of this County wide group with the aim of delivering effective interventions to tackle homelessness.
 - *We have adopted a Joint Protocol for Young Homeless based on a model of good practice developed by Sedgefield Borough.*
 - *Implemented a County wide mediation service for young people and their families to prevent homelessness.*
 - *Worked jointly with the Housing and Neighbourhood Group to define LAA targets on the prevention of homelessness.*
 - *Secured funding to use on preventative measures across the County.*

-
- **Durham Housing and Neighbourhood Group** - whilst not strictly a partnership, the group consist of the Directors of Housing in the County and leads on cross cutting issues.
 - *We have agreed to implement a single Travellers Housing Needs Assessment for County Durham.*

 - **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership** – the authority is part of this partnership which seeks to reduce anti-social behaviour within the Borough and so enable more settled homes to be provided. The Homelessness service is represented as part of a multi agency approach alongside the Police, Probation, Tenancy Enforcement, Education, and Young People’s support services.
 - *We have established a Domestic Violence Action Group as part of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which meets on a quarterly basis to address issues of domestic violence and abuse within the Borough.*

 - **County Durham Youth Homeless Partnership** – the Council is a member of this County wide group which seeks to disseminate good practice in the field of youth homelessness and homelessness prevention.
 - *We have worked together to raise awareness of the complex issue of youth homelessness and co-ordinate efforts across the County.*

 - **Supported Lodgings Scheme** – the Homelessness service works jointly with Social Care and Health via the Supported Lodgings Scheme.
 - *We have enabled young people to be placed within a host family in order to develop their life skills in preparation for independent living.*

 - **Homelessness Prevention Liaison Unit** – although not now in operation, this service was developed from the Homelessness Innovation Fund and sought to advise authorities on prevention methods to reduce homelessness throughout the North East Region. The unit has left a legacy of useful initiatives and has produced a final report.
 - *We will work together with other authorities to establish forums and share good practice.*

 - **Joint Protocol** – the Authority is a key partner in the Joint Protocol process for vulnerable young people, working in partnership with other agencies including Adult and Community Services and the Voluntary Community Sector.
 - *We will work together to reduce and prevent homelessness and provide support for the 16/17 year old group.*

 - **Sedgefield Children and Young People’s Partnership** – the Authority is a partner in the Children and Young People’s Partnership which aims to ensure that children are protected from homelessness and failing tenancies.

Section

4

Needs Analysis

We have identified our broad priorities for intervention through consultation with stakeholders, taking account of national and regional policy, and on analysis of demographic and homelessness data. Sedgefield Borough is committed to promoting equality and welcomes and values the diversity of communities. We will work with other agencies to address the needs of particular sections of the community who are often disadvantaged. In this section of the strategy we have identified the key evidence that has been used to confirm our priorities as issues that we should seek to address. This evidence has been used to develop the action plan to take forward the Strategy.

Homelessness presentations steadily increased nationally from 1997 to 2003. Since this time they have been reducing. In 2003/04 the main causes of homelessness nationally were:

- 38% evicted by family or friends
- 20% relationship breakdown
- 13% end of assured shorthold tenancy
- 29% other categories

62% of accepted households included dependant children or an expectant mother.

In the North East region, the homelessness figures continued to rise, going against the national trend. In 2000/01 there were 5151 homeless acceptances, these continued to rise to 8284 in 2003/04 across the North East. This trend was consistent within County Durham with 614 acceptances in 2000/01 rising to 1430 in 2003/04, and Sedgefield Borough with 215 acceptances in 2000/01 rising to 342 in 2003/04, and again to 441 in 2004/05.

The rise in homeless presentations within the North East could be due to a combination of factors including:

- The changes made by Central Government in the Homelessness Act 2002 which extended the priority need categories.
- The significant rise in house prices:- people are no longer able to access affordable housing in the private housing market. In addition private landlords have taken advantage off these rising prices to sell their properties and make a profit, which left many private tenants without a home.
- The shrinking social housing sector:- demand outweighed supply, therefore, long waiting times for those attempting to access Council accommodation through the normal housing waiting list, with people presenting as homeless to gain priority on the list.
- An increase in the number of new households.

Within Sedgefield Borough homelessness presentations continued to rise in line with the North East regional trend.

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Decisions	472	373	312	608	822
Acceptances	215	210	217	342	441

The main causes of homelessness for those who were accepted as being owed a main homelessness duty are:

	2003/04	2004/05
Family/friend eviction	115	143
Relationship breakdown	98	127
End of Assured tenancy	13	52
Mortgage arrears	9	24

Analysis of data from P1E statistics and Centrepoint Monitoring information, suggests that there has been an increase in the number of homeless presentations from 16/17 year olds, people with drugs and alcohol problems, women suffering domestic abuse and teenage parents over the past four years within Sedgefield Borough.

This overall increase is compounded by a lack of supported accommodation for vulnerable client groups, including those stated above, and there is limited access into permanent accommodation for those ready to move on to independent living. There is also a need for a more pro-active approach in assisting those homeless people who are considered to be 'non priority need'. In addition, it has been found that there is a gap in the provision of suitable temporary accommodation for young people and ongoing support for those people when they are placed in temporary accommodation.

We have used this information to inform our priorities and actions for 2007 - 2010.

Section**5****Our Priorities**

Our key actions over the life of this strategy are linked to the Council's ambitions and the national and regional policy requirements. We have set out below under each priority heading the current position on each objective, our next key action and a timescale for completing the action. This "action plan" will be used to monitor and review the strategy annually in accordance with the approach set out in Section 5 of the Strategy.

Our Achievements and Priorities

Sedgefield Borough's Housing Advice and Homelessness Service has made significant improvements over the past three years by reviewing the service, refocusing it and implementing a robust and challenging action plan.

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/07
Total decisions	822	531	238
Acceptances	441	271	119

Preventing Homelessness

The Borough Council has experienced rapidly increasing numbers of homeless applications and acceptances over the last 3 years in line with most Councils in the North East. We implemented an action plan in May 2005 to re focus our services on prevention and housing advice. We have seen a 40% reduction in applications and acceptances in 2005/6 compared to 2004/5, and a further 46% reduction in applications and 56% reduction in acceptances in 2006/07. We wish to sustain this improvement and meet the Government targets in relation to the reduction in use of temporary accommodation. We have introduced a Domestic Violence Accommodation service to provide additional housing options to the victims of domestic abuse.

The Homelessness and Housing Advice service has been pro active in using the mediation service which is in place across County Durham for young people experiencing problems within their home, in order to prevent homelessness wherever possible.

Sedgefield Borough is a partner in the Countywide Joint Protocol for 16/17 year olds. This is a protocol between Housing, Social Care and Health, Voluntary Sector Service Providers, Connexions and the Youth Engagement Service. The aim of the protocol is to prevent a young person being passed between different agencies and to prevent them from becoming homeless, by assessing their housing circumstances and needs and providing alternative options.

Through the Homelessness Innovation Fund, a Homeless Prevention Liaison Unit was established to work with Local Authorities throughout the North East of England in order to

share good practice and enhance prevention measures. Sedgefield Borough has worked with this project to further develop prevention of homelessness within the Borough.

A Homelessness Prevention Guide has recently been issued from the Department for Communities and Local Government to Local Authorities which will be adhered to, therefore ensuring Homelessness Prevention is at the forefront of any forthcoming initiatives.

Sedgefield Borough is committed to establishing a prevention network within the area to encompass and bring together all agencies involved in seeking to help clients remain in their own settled accommodation. Partners would include CAB, Floating Support Providers, Housing Services, RSL's, private landlords, Social Care and Health and specialist workers if necessary (substance misuse services etc.).

Key Actions	Target Date
Increase joint working with other agencies and expand the housing advice and options service to prevent homelessness.	ongoing
Identify schools which generate homeless presentations and develop work within these and other education providers to prevent homeless 16/17 year olds.	September 2008
Link into mediation and tenancy support services.	ongoing
Facilitate access to other services for clients including discretionary housing benefit payments.	ongoing
Develop and formalise Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme.	July 2008
Continue the Joint Protocol for Young Homeless	Ongoing
Initiate training for Housing Support Officers on specific debt management issues. Link with CAB.	June 2008
Develop protocols with the Housing Management Department and Tenancy Enforcement Team to prevent homelessness due to rent arrears or anti social behaviour.	March 2008
Work together with RSL's and support providers to prevent homelessness and promote tenancy sustainment.	Ongoing
Explore options on rent deposit schemes for the Borough and link into County wide scheme.	March 2008
Establish working relationships with private sector landlords by linking into selective licensing and private sector renewal team.	March 2008
Work together with private sector landlords on tenancy management issues (arrears /ASB) to prevent homelessness.	October 2008
Assist in the development of a Countywide Prevention Network and develop locally based scheme.	June 2008
Develop comprehensive advice and information pack for single homeless and develop initiatives to assist those not in priority need.	January 2009
Develop a directory of services.	June 2008
Implement Prevention Good Practice Guide.	ongoing

Support for people when they are vulnerable

Sedgefield Borough has established 3 domestic violence temporary accommodation units to be used for vulnerable families/people who have suffered domestic violence and have left abusive relationships. The accommodation offers respite for approximately 6-9 months to enable the client to build confidence, self esteem and practical living skills before they move on to more permanent accommodation. The accommodation units are supported by SODA (Survivors of Domestic Abuse) who offer emotional support and by the Borough Council's Domestic Violence Accommodation and Support Officer, who offers practical support and can facilitate access to other services such as health and benefits. The Accommodation and Support Officer also helps the client with moving on to permanent accommodation.

The Housing and Returning Prisoners (HARP) Protocol has been fully incorporated into Sedgefield Borough's working practices in order to prepare and support offenders leaving prison. The HARP has recently undergone a regional review in order to establish a consistent approach across the County.

Comprehensive training has been undertaken by Housing Advice staff regarding people who may have alcohol or substance misuse problems and good working relationships have been developed with voluntary agencies to ensure appropriate support is available for this group.

A County wide care leavers protocol is currently being developed with Children and Young People's Services to enable care leavers to obtain a planned move into independent living and to ensure that an appropriate support package is in place in order to help the young person sustain the tenancy.

Sedgefield Borough has established 5 Integrated Teams for Vulnerable Adults located across the Borough. These teams comprise housing, health and Social Services. This enables staff to work jointly in order to deal with any issues quickly. The housing needs of older people have always been a high priority within the Borough. The needs of this group can be more effectively addressed due to the integrated way of working which enables the care and support to be managed in such a way that many older clients can remain safely in their own homes for as long as possible.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service works closely alongside the Home Improvement Agency to ensure those with physical disabilities have the help they require to live independently.

Sedgefield Borough is developing links across the County with specialist services to help those clients who may have learning disabilities or mental health issues, to sustain their own accommodation by ensuring that the appropriate support is in place.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service is exploring the initiative of establishing a Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel, which would include representatives from Supporting People, floating support providers, Community Mental Health Services, substance misuse professionals, probation, leaving care team, RSL's and the private sector. This would be

linked into the prevention agenda and would aim to provide the correct support services to an individual who may be vulnerable.

Sedgefield Borough has established excellent working links with the Tees Valley Floating Support Scheme for teenage parents and all applicants within this client group are offered the service.

Supporting People are currently developing a holistic floating support service which is envisaged to fill in some of the support gaps across all tenures. This will provide an opportunity for Sedgefield Borough and Supporting People to work together to seek to address the housing support needs of the community.

Key Actions	Target Date
Initiate training for Housing Support staff on issues of specific vulnerabilities and support needs within certain groups.	June 2008
Work together with other agencies to develop support services for specific needs ie. Drug and alcohol misuse.	December 2008
Review the support available for clients placed in temporary accommodation.	June 2008
Link into Stonham floating support scheme for learning disabilities and raise awareness of this scheme.	ongoing
Implement a review of the support schemes available and access specialist floating support.	March 2009
Work together with Supporting People to link into the holistic floating support services available.	June 2008
Work closely with Adult and Community Services to ensure appropriate support packages are in place for clients with mental health problems.	Ongoing
Develop a Vulnerable Persons Housing Panel.	March 2010
Explore initiatives to improve access into fully supported accommodation for young people.	June 2008
Work together with other agencies and the Housing Department to seek to access appropriate move on accommodation from supported.	March 2008
Assist in the development of a care leaver's protocol with Children and Young People's Service.	Ongoing
Work with other partners to contribute to the development of a Countywide Protocol for Vulnerable Groups.	June 2008
Continue to provide support for the victims of domestic abuse.	Ongoing
Work effectively within the integrated teams to enable older people to remain safely in their own homes.	Ongoing
Work with Home Improvement Agency to ensure those with physical disabilities can sustain accommodation.	Ongoing
Implement protocol for PPO's and ex offenders.	Ongoing

Develop links with criminal justice services to enable more information to be shared and more informed decisions to be made regarding priority need of ex-offenders.	June 2008
--	-----------

Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness

Research has identified that uptake of employment initiatives, state benefits, health, financial and advice services is lower among homeless households.

It is important for Housing organisations to facilitate access to these services by vulnerable households and to raise awareness through advice.

Households who are forced to go into temporary accommodation become further disadvantaged and for many this has an extremely negative impact on their lives. Housing organisations must strive to reduce the use of temporary accommodation overall and ensure that when it is used it is of a certain quality standard and for the minimum time period possible. The government aims to halve the use of temporary accommodation by 2010.

Key Actions	Target Date
Implement a review of temporary accommodation usage and standards of quality.	July 2008
Increase the level of suitable temporary accommodation.	September 2009
Develop solutions to reduce the overall usage of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010.	March 2010
Implement quality standards and mechanisms for support within bed and breakfast accommodation.	September 2009
Implement a Homelessness Forum within the Borough.	June 2008
Expand housing advice to incorporate more comprehensive guidance on available services, produce information packs and publicise accordingly.	June 2008
Ensure continuing completion of Centrepoint Monitoring forms and put reports produced from this information to effective use in identifying and addressing the wider homelessness issues.	ongoing
Explore and link into debt counselling and budgeting skills schemes. Establish referral mechanisms.	March 2009

Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping

A regular rough sleeper count is carried out across the Borough in line with Government directives. Sedgefield Borough is committed to sustaining the low level of rough sleepers.

Key Actions	Target Date
Continue regular rough sleeper count.	June 2008
Establish regular cold weather provision for rough sleepers, produce guidance and advertise appropriately.	Ongoing

Providing more settled homes

The range of housing options for those accepted as statutorily homeless are increasingly limited. The reduction in social housing stock and lack of affordable accommodation in the private sector are major contributing factors.

Tackling anti social behaviour is a key element in improving the quality of neighbourhoods and reducing repeat homelessness.

Sedgefield Borough employs an Anti Social Behaviour Reduction Co-ordinator as part of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to reduce the level of anti social behaviour within the Borough. The Homelessness service has close links with this service and with the Borough's Tenancy Enforcement Team.

Relationships are being developed with RSL's and private landlords to try to prevent homelessness and provide a route into settled accommodation. New nomination agreements have been established and signed up to by the RSL's in the Borough.

A private sector renewals team and selective licensing team has recently been developed within Sedgefield Borough. The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service will work closely with these teams to develop links with private sector landlords.

Sedgefield Borough is committed to promoting equality and valuing the diversity of communities. It is important to ensure that the needs of particular sections of the community who are often disadvantaged or discriminated against are addressed. These groups could include people from ethnic minorities, people with an institutionalised background, former asylum seekers, people with debt, age related problems, poor mental or physical health or substance misusers.

Any communication needs of ethnic minority groups will be addressed, materials can be published in different languages and formats and language line is in operation within Sedgefield Borough. In addition, detailed training on the recent immigration guidelines has been undertaken by staff within the Housing Advice and Homelessness Service.

The travelling community forms County Durham's largest ethnic minority. A study of the accommodation and support needs of gypsies and travellers in County Durham has recently been completed. The poor living conditions endured by this group have a negative impact on their health and access to services, living under constant threat of eviction contributes to high levels of stress, mental illness and family disruption. Key findings included a strong indication of the need for appropriate stopping places, appropriate facilities and a desire for the children of the community to be able to receive a good education.

A significant minority believed that their nomadic way of life would not last beyond the next few years due to the social and economic pressures which they face. Housed travellers and their children had experienced harassment from other sectors within the wider general community.

The study has highlighted educational, health and social issues which need to be addressed within the travelling community. New pitches or refurbished sites are required across the County with appropriate facilities.

The Housing Advice and Homelessness Service will aim to work with this group to provide information on housing options and access to facilities, and will develop links in order to work alongside the County Durham Traveller's Liaison Service.

Key Actions	Target Date
Establish regular forums with private landlords.	September 2008
Increase working relationships with RSL's	Ongoing
Explore options for rent deposit schemes.	March 2008
Work together with selective licensing and private sector renewal team to establish robust links with private landlords.	March 2008
Develop private sector advice and information pack.	December 2008
Develop a working protocol with private sector landlords to enable qualifying offers to be made for homeless households.	December 2008
Provide assistance to the victims of domestic violence in order to move on into settled accommodation.	Ongoing
Formalise Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme	July 2008
Implement protocol for PPO's and ex offenders.	Ongoing
Develop protocol for ex service personnel.	January 2009
Explore intervention options for families facing action that may result in eviction for anti social behaviour, and develop options for families who may be intentionally homeless.	December 2008
Develop protocol with Tenancy Enforcement Team to prevent homelessness through anti social behaviour and to seek to address the underlying issues.	March 2008
Work jointly with Supporting People and develop links with Traveller Liaison Service to assess needs of gypsies and travellers and assist with those needs.	June 2009
Develop Housing Options packs and information on local services catered towards the travelling community.	June 2009
Staff training on the use of language line.	July 2008
Review all publicity materials to incorporate equality and diversity guidance.	March 2008

Section**6**

Delivering the Housing Advice and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

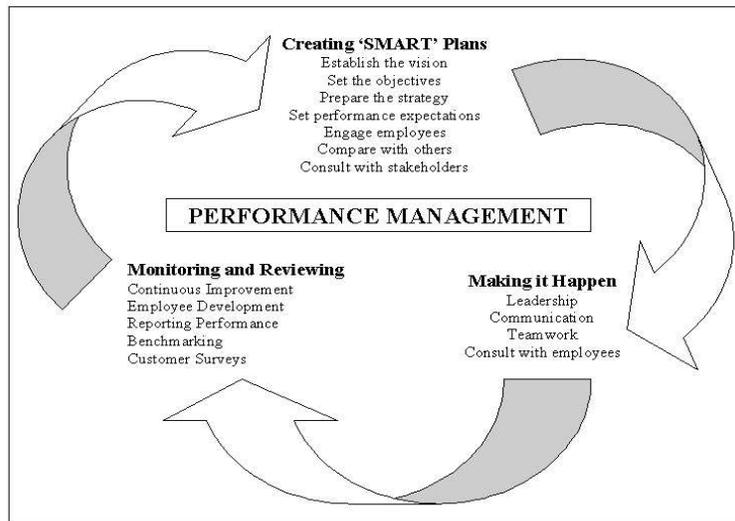
We monitor progress around our targets quarterly and will review our Strategy annually. The Strategy update will be reported through our performance management framework and to our key stakeholders and partners via our Homelessness Forum. Our approach to performance management and review is set out below:-

Monitoring And Review Mechanisms

Performance Management

Performance Management is at the heart of Corporate Planning and is crucial in the drive for continuous improvement.

Sedgefield Borough Council is a progressive local authority committed to delivering on its Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes. The Council has developed its performance management arrangements significantly in recent years and now has in place robust Performance Management systems to ensure the delivery of our Corporate Plan. The Performance Management Framework operated by the Council is displayed within the diagram below:



In order to modernise our approach to service delivery and complement our Performance Management arrangements the Council has introduced a number of changes: -

Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

Cabinet level ownership of performance management

Performance Management is “owned” and directed at Cabinet level through a Portfolio Holder for Performance Management.

Strategic Working Groups. Corporate strategic working arrangements are anchored around the Council’s corporate policy arrangements and performance management framework and are designed to assist in the delivery of stated priorities. They are aligned to the Corporate Ambitions and Community Outcomes and provide clear policy advice and output/outcome performance management information.

Monitoring of performance measures at Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees play an important role in performance management in that they receive regular update reports on the achievement of the Council’s ambitions through bi-annual reviews of the performance information submitted and monitored by Strategic Working Groups.

Driving performance management throughout the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Ambitions and Values is a key activity of all services.

Making the Council’s Performance Management framework operate in our Division means the Division’s performance will be monitored throughout the year to assess what targets are being achieved and reviewed in accordance with current performance to decide what changes/actions need to be taken to address identified problems.

Performance monitoring is undertaken through Employee Development Programme interviews; Section Team meetings; Section Head Meetings and the Departmental Senior Managers Meetings.

Contact Officers

Shirley Hewitt Senior Homeless Persons Officer

shewitt@sedgefield.gov.uk

Dianne Hedley Housing Strategy Manager

dhedley@sedgefield.gov.uk

Kim Wanless Housing Support Officer – Spennymoor Integrated Team

kwanless@sedgefield.gov.uk

Sarah Waters Housing Support Officer – Spennymoor Integrated Team

swaters@sedgefield.gov.uk

Gaynor Robinson Housing Support Officer – Ferryhill Integrated Team

gaynorrobinson@sedgefield.gov.uk

Angela Riley Housing Support Officer – Trimdon Integrated Team

angela.riley@durham.gov.uk

Linda Booth Housing Support Officer – Shildon Integrated Team

lbooth@sedgefield.gov.uk

Sharon Wild Housing Support Officer – Newton Aycliffe Integrated Team

swild@sedgefield.gov.uk

Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”

Please ask us if you would like this document in other languages, in large print or on audio tape.



العربية (Arabic)

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

বাংলা (Bengali)

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

(中文(繁體字)) (Cantonese)

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

हिन्दी (Hindi)

यदि आपको सूचना किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये तो कृपया हमसे कहे

polski (Polish)

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi)

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੇ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ।

Español (Spanish)

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.

اردو (Urdu)

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔



Sedgefield
BOROUGH COUNCIL

01388 81 61 66



Quality Services For Local People

"Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities"



Quality Services For Local People

“Working towards a more healthy, prosperous and attractive Borough with strong communities”