

27 February 2014

Homelessness Strategy Update

Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the Homelessness Strategy prior to an update presentation by Andrew Burnip, Team Manager, Regeneration and Economic Development.

Background

2. Members will recall that at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 June 2013 the work programme of the Committee was agreed which identified as a future item for consideration by the Committee an update in relation to the Homelessness Strategy.
3. The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 6 July 2012 received an overview of the Homelessness Strategy and it was thought appropriate that an update be provided to the Committee as part of the work programme 2013 – 18 on the progress of the strategy to date. The presentation on the 27 February will focus on the following:
 - Provide an update on achievements following the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13.
 - Provide an update on the development of the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18.
 - To provide an update on trends in housing need across the County.

Homelessness Strategy - background

4. The Homelessness Act 2002 determines that local authorities must formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of an area wide review. The life of the strategy should be no more than five years, and when the strategy expires or is due for expiry; the authority must publish a new homelessness strategy.
5. The Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 has expired and a new strategy was adopted by Cabinet in July 2013. The 2013 – 18 County Durham Homelessness Strategy has been developed through the County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership (HAP), the vehicle for strategic joint working on homelessness across the County.

In line with government guidance, the strategy includes plans for:

- The prevention of homelessness;
 - Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless;
 - Ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
 - The strategy to be an effective and relevant document by developing it in partnership with all stakeholders and service users.
6. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) continues to recognise the importance of preventing homelessness and set out 10 “Local Authority Challenges” in the recently published “*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*” report. The Government’s ‘Gold Standard’, based around these 10 challenges, sets the bar for local homelessness services. A sector led peer review scheme underpinned by support and training, is designed to help local authorities deliver more efficient and cost effective homelessness prevention services.
7. Developing effective local strategies in partnership, to prevent & tackle homelessness *proactively* is a positive step towards achieving the “Gold Standard” represented by the 10 challenges. The challenges emphasise the importance of robust local preventing homelessness strategies, and a comprehensive housing options offer to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The **ten local challenges** the government has posed to the sector are to:

- Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services.
- Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
- Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
- Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
- Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
- Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
- Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

8. The Council will seek to secure the “Gold Standard” over the life time of the strategy. To ensure services and partnerships develop to reflect best practice the strategy action plan has been aligned to incorporate actions identified to assist in this goal. (see Appendix 2 Action Plan)

Legal context

9. The Statutory Homelessness Duty:

Section 184 of the Housing Act 1996 states that where a local authority considers a person may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, they shall make such investigations as are necessary to establish whether the person is eligible for assistance and if so what duty is owed to them (if any).

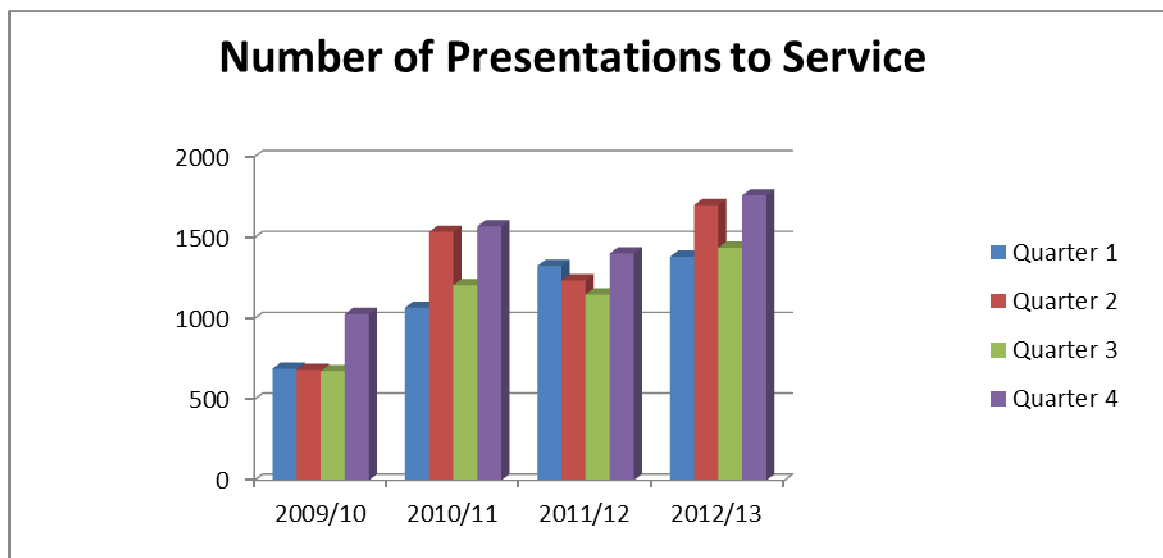
10. The principal duty is an obligation to secure that suitable accommodation is available for a person who is:
 - Homeless or threatened with homelessness in 28 days. (S.175 HA 1996)
 - Is eligible for assistance. (S.185 HA 1996)
 - Is in priority need. (S.189 HA 1996)
 - Is not intentionally homeless. (S.191 HA 1996)
 - Has a local connection. (S.199 HA 1996)

Homelessness Strategy 2008-13:

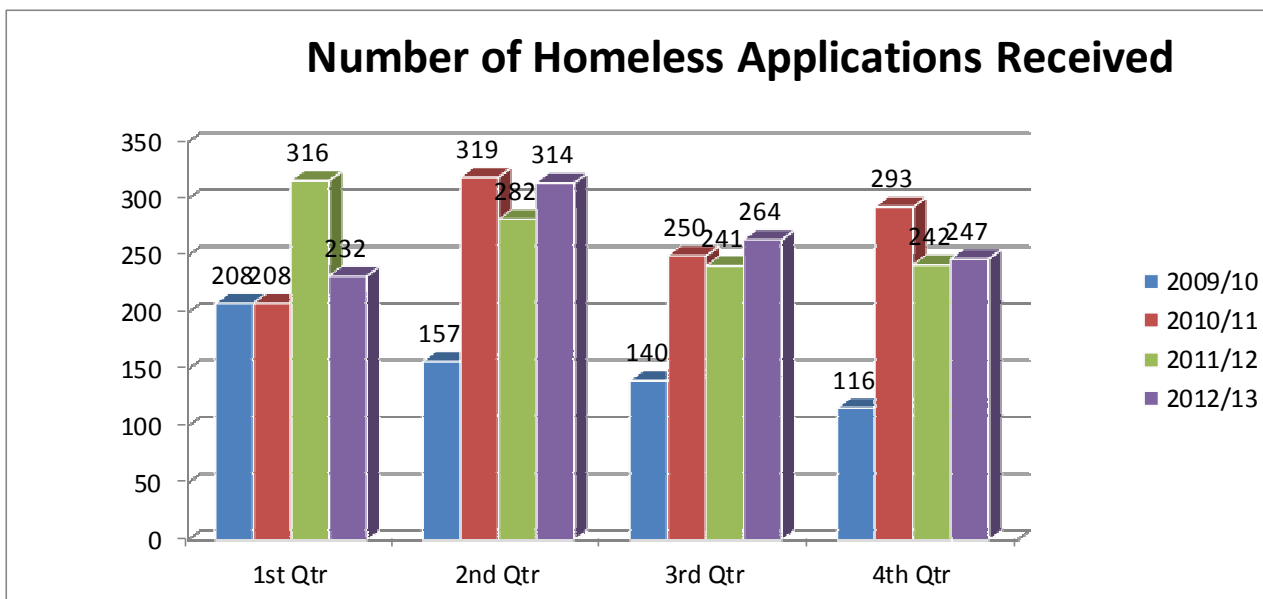
11. The Homelessness Strategy for County Durham, 2008-13 was developed prior to Local Government Reorganisation with the former District and County Council(s) working together within the Homelessness Action Partnership (the strategic group for homelessness in the County). The strategy for 2008-13 set out how the Housing Solutions Service would develop post vesting day, to incorporate best practice from the former District Services and build on this, with our partners to meet the housing and support needs of the residents of County Durham.
12. The Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 had three strategic objectives:
 - To prevent homelessness by delivering prevention and housing options focused service across County Durham that delivers advice and assistance to all in housing need.
 - To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk.
 - To support people who are homeless or who are at risk of repeat homelessness.
13. Over the past 5 years the Council has been working with various partners to develop and improve services to prevent homelessness. Appendix 3 lists the service developments over this period.

Trends and Progress 2008-13

14. The Housing Solutions Service monitors presentations to the service and reports trends and outcomes on a quarterly and annual basis. Recording of outcomes generally sit within either statutory homelessness duties or homelessness prevention.
15. Preventing homelessness means providing people with the ways and means to meet their housing and any housing-related support needs in order to avoid experiencing homelessness. Effective prevention will enable a person to:
 - remain in their current home, where appropriate; or
 - to delay a need to move out of current accommodation so that a move into alternative accommodation can be planned in a timely way;
 - Or to sustain independent living.
16. Prior to Local Government Reorganisation (April 2009) many of the former District Councils did not have computerised systems to record presentations or homelessness applications so we are unable to provide accurate data for this period. From April 2009 a new integrated system was available; as a consequence the review of trends will cover 2009/10 to 2012/13.



17. Over the period presentations to the service had increased from 3075 in 2009/10 to 6281 in 2012/13 representing a 104.2% increase.
18. Over the period presentations to the service have been mainly concentrated in the East (Seaham and Peterlee) and to the North (Derwentside and Chester-Le-Street).



19. The number of homelessness applications relates to the number of households who have approached the Council where we have had reason to believe that the statutory threshold for enquiries to commence under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, (as amended Homelessness Act 2002), have been met. That is where Housing Solutions have reason to believe the applicant is eligible for assistance and homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days.
20. Homelessness applications to the authority have increased by 70% from 2009/10 to 2012/13. However, over the year 11/12 – 12/13 applications have reduced by 2.2%. Over the period significant work has been undertaken to ensure a consistent approach to homelessness applications, investigations and decisions leading to a more consistent trend in applications from 2010/11 to 12/13.
21. The total numbers of decisions represent statutory decisions made by the Council following applications under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended Homelessness Act 202). The decisions made by the council as a percentage increase or decrease from 2009/10 – 2012/13 is:
- Ineligible households -90%.
 - Eligible, but not homeless +85%
 - Eligible, homeless but not in priority need +29.3%.
 - Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally homeless +10.8%.
 - Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need +28.4%

The three main reasons for homelessness over the period have been:

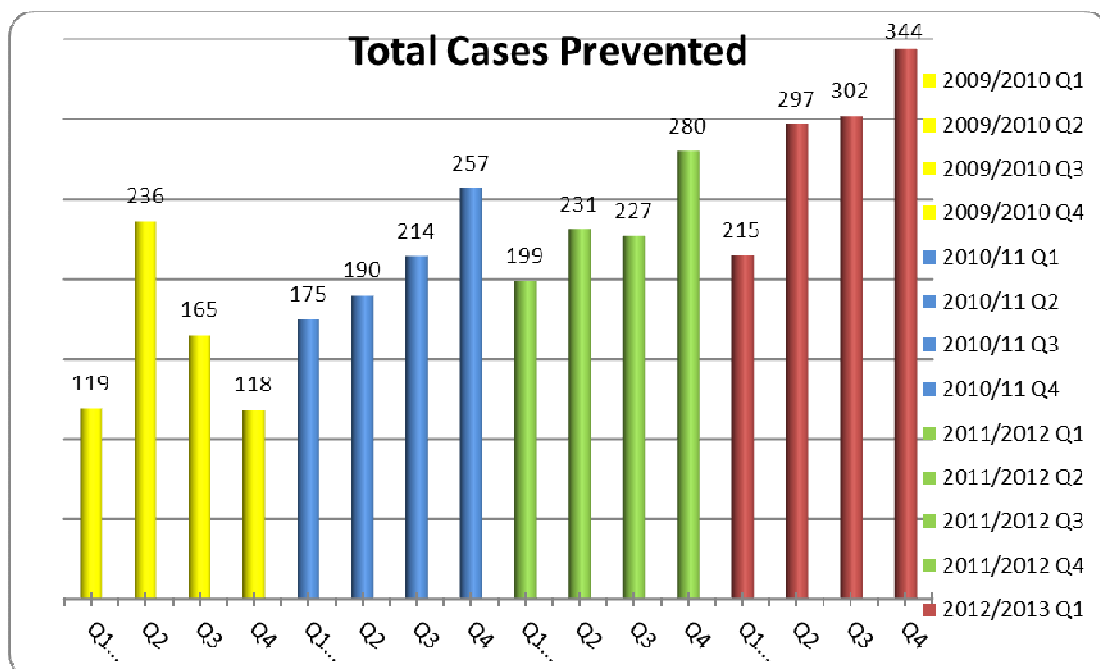
- Domestic Violence
- Loss of Rented accommodation
- Non-violent relationship breakdown.

22. Whilst domestic abuse remains the main reason for homelessness across the county, there has been a 28.3% decrease in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12. This is a consequence of the on-going partnership work on reducing the prevalence of domestic abuse in County Durham and specialist training within the Housing Solutions Service in supporting victims of domestic abuse and a corresponding increase in supporting victims to remain in their own home if safe to do so through the Remain Safe project.

The top three reasons for priority need over the period have been:

- Households with dependent children
- Violence / threat of violence
- Mental illness

23. The main priority need groups broadly mirror the main reasons for homelessness with many households fleeing domestic abuse containing dependent children.



24. Over the period (2008-13) the Council and its partners prevented 3566 households from becoming homeless, an increase over the period of 281%. In 2012 Housing Solutions Service completed a diagnostic assessment with the assistance of the DCLG Specialist Advisor. This work concluded that the cost to the authority of processing a homelessness application is £924.20p, compared to the average prevention costing £741.36p – making prevention not only better for the family and individual, but also 28% cheaper. Over the period prevention of homelessness has therefore avoided approximately £652,000 of Durham County Council costs.

25. The costs avoided by the Authority do not include the wider social and economic savings of homelessness prevention. In August 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government report: Evidence review of the cost of homelessness: attempted to establish the cost of homelessness to wider government departments, including the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Ministry of Justice and to Local Authorities. Combining these wider social and economic costs, each homelessness case is estimated to cost the wider economy between £24,000 and £30,000. Taking this lower estimate, homelessness prevention has saved County Durham £85.5 million over the past 5 years.
26. Over the 12 months (March 12 – April 13) the service has seen a 22.8% increase in presentations with over 6,200 people seeking advice and support. Cases resulting in the prevention of homelessness have increased by 24.2% to 1159, exceeding the local performance indicator. At the same time there has been a 2.2% decrease in statutory homelessness applications.
27. It is also noted that there has been an increase in households presenting due to inability to afford their housing costs. Rent arrears cases increased by 103%, possession cases increased by 249%. Over the same period homelessness due to domestic abuse has decreased by 28.3%, whilst at the same time prevention of homelessness following the provision of additional security measures to enable victims of violence to remain in their home, if safe to do so, increased by 92%. A significant milestone has also been reached with no 16/17 year olds being accepted as homeless over the period, indicating the success of the new Holistic Temporary Accommodation Support Service (HTASS) tasked with providing emergency supported housing and support to assist young people to return home.
28. The emerging trend in households presenting due to financial hardship reflect the implications of welfare reform for housing which are far reaching and will impact hard on lower income households. Taken together with the changes to personal benefits, over the short term (next 12 – 24 months), there is a significant risk that households affected will be at risk of homelessness due to their inability to afford their housing costs whilst trying to manage reductions in household income alongside managing other debts.

County Durham Homelessness Strategy 2013-18:

29. The following objectives have been developed to meet current and future trends.
 - To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.
 - To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping.
 - To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
 - To provide housing advice and housing options to those in housing need in County Durham.

- To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.
- To achieve Gold Standard in meeting the 10 local authority challenge (*Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness*)

The Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 can be found using the following link.
<http://content.durham.gov.uk/PDFRepository/HomelessnessStrategy2013-18.pdf>

Progress to date

30. Since the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 the Housing Solutions Service, together with our partners, continue to monitor and respond to trends by developing new and more efficient service delivery options for those in housing need.
31. It has been noted over the past 9 months that the needs of clients have changed. This change has been driven by the impact of Welfare Reform and pressures on households to manage debt and living costs.
32. From April 13 to December 13 the following 6 reasons are the most common for contacting the service:
 - Financial Hardship
 - Violent relationship breakdown
 - Rent Arrears Housing Association.
 - Non-violent relationship breakdown
 - Evicted by parents
33. Looking at enquiry types from the year to date compared to the same period last year offers us a picture of the changing nature of housing need across the county.

Enquiry Type	Q3 13/14	Q2 13/14	To date 13/14	To date 12/13	% change +/-
Financial Hardship	277	161	614	30	+1,946%
Relationship breakdown - violent	146	141	350	368	-4.8%
Rent Arrears HA	114	100	326	645	-49.4%
Relationship breakdown: Non violent	97	112	339	412	-17.7%
Eviction by parents	96	127	355	615	-42.2%

34. A decrease is noted in eviction by parents, down by 42.2%. This may be a consequence of parents unwilling to evict young people resulting in under occupation and a financial penalty from the removal of the under occupancy charge. We are also seeing significant success in prevention of homelessness for young people evicted by parents via a number of services developed specifically to reduce this cause of homelessness. In the last 12 months the Joint Protocol for 16/17 years old, delivered by Stonham via the Holistic Accommodation & Support Service has assisted 121 young people (aged 16/17) with 67 supported to return to family or friends. Further within HTASS the crash pad services has accommodated 45 young people (aged 16/25) with 17 supported to return home. The Emergency Supported Lodgings Service funded by Housing Solutions and managed by CAS has placed 98 young people (aged 16/25) with 37 supported to return home. These initiatives have further contributed to an 89% reduction in B&B use for 16/17 years olds further contributing to our prevention focus to support young people and families.
35. Violent relationship breakdown has also reduced by 17%. This may be a result of service improvements to the Remain Safe Service, now delivered by Direct Services offering free home security to enable victims of violence to remain and feel safe in their home. As of 20th December 2013, 278 households have been assisted by Remain Safe since the 1st April 2013. This compares to 140 cases in 2011/12 the final year. To December 2013 the service assisted more people to remain in their home than for the whole of
36. Hardship has seen the largest increase in presentation with a 1,946% increase to 614 cases, (although this is from a low base in 12/13 of only 30 cases). Part of the increase is due to improved case recording by officers to ensure customer's main reason for presenting to the service is recorded. However, the increase is also representative of the impact of welfare reform and the wider economic downturn and pressures on household income due to increased cost of living. The impact of the withdrawal of the spare room subsidy in the social rented sector, capping payments in the private rented sector, in addition to increased utility costs and personal debts are squeezing the ability for households to afford their housing costs and remain in their home.
37. The Housing Solutions Service with a range of internal and external partners are responding to this trend via the introduction of the triage process for Discretionary Housing Payments and for those customers affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy. 3 additional Officers and 1 Assistant have also been recruited to assist households affected by the Benefit Cap and those in the private rented sector affected by the extension of the Shared Room Rate.
38. Over the past 6 months the Housing Solutions Service and our partners have been working to address actions within the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. In addition to progress made above to seek to support those households in financial hardship, the service has further developed the following.
39. Peer Education. In partnership with CAS – developing a peer education course to be delivered in Schools highlighting the causes of homelessness and the services available to young people in years 10 and 11.

40. Family Mediation. In partnership with Centrepoin, the national young homelessness charity, a service offering family mediation for young people aged 16-25 to help young people reconcile with family to facilitate a return home.
41. Development of Churchill Square: The only female only supported accommodation service in the North East assisting women with complex needs to access support and advice services to make positive life changes. The service receives funding from the Regional Homelessness Group and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Next Steps

42. Housing Solutions will continue to monitor trends and work with partners to develop new services to meet the housing and support needs of the residents of County Durham.

Recommendations

43. Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided during the presentation.
44. That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further progress report on the development of the Homelessness Strategy at a future meeting of the Committee.

Background Papers

Economy and Enterprise OSC – 6 July 2012 - Report and presentation on the Homelessness Strategy.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity– Impact assessment completed.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Discrimination Act –None

Legal Implications – Legal requirement under the Homelessness Act 2002 for Local Authorities to publish and review the Homelessness Strategy.

Appendix 2: Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 Action Plan:

Action 1:				
Objective: 1	To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.			
Gold Standard 1:	We have adopted a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	Adult & Children Service / RED / Resources.			
Resources	DCLG Grant -			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
All service groups are signed up to the homelessness strategy with a corporate commitment to deliver the aims and objectives	September 13	January 12	Identify relevant departments Draft report to seek commitment	
Lead member foreword within the local preventing homelessness strategy makes explicit commitment to early intervention and prevention	July13	August 13	Briefing note to Member and Head of Service	
Provide quarterly briefing sessions, including joint training across local authority services and VCOs, regarding the local response to homelessness and the importance of preventing homelessness, via prevention champions training.	September 13	On-going	Develop internal / external training plan for prevention champions.	
Provide briefings to elected members on the local strategic response to homelessness	September 13	On-going	Develop internal briefing programme & regular attendance at scrutiny committee.	
Provide quarterly updates to Housing Forum highlighting progress and blockages in delivery of strategic objectives to assess additional resource allocation	September 13	On-going	Agree reporting timeline	
Ensure Preventing Homelessness Grant allocation is fully utilised for the delivery of the Housing Options/Prevention Services	September 13	On-going	Seek Head of Service agreement	

Continue Corporate agreement to carry forward any under-spend in preventing homelessness grant funding	September 13	On-going	Seek Head of Service Agreement	
Ensure Government contribution to DHP is being used in a targeted way to prevent homelessness via incorporating assessment and triage into Housing Solutions Service.	September 13	On-going	Review triage service to ensure target group access DHP	
Continued support to Homeless Action Partnership and Third Sector Forum.	September 13	On-going	Ensure programme of HAP & Third Sector meeting developed	

Action 2				
Objective: 5	To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.			
Gold Standard 2:	We actively work in partnership with your Voluntary Sector stakeholders and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs.			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	HAP – RED -			
Resources	Within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Via homelessness strategy - service map all VCO and other key partners (specifically statutory services & registered providers) in the area.	September 13	Annual review	Review current directories to assess suitability.	
Ensure all partners are consulted with regarding any changes to policies or practice and in the review of the homelessness strategy action plan.	September 14	Annual Review.	Develop review programme via HAP and Third Sector Forum	
Develop and agreed homelessness contacts within each VCO & within all Registered Providers following delivery of Prevention Champions Training.	September 13	Annual review.	Seek SPOC in each organisation and include in prevention champions training.	
Develop and agree Named homelessness contacts within LA services (specifically), Housing Benefit, Children's Services, Adult Services, Environmental Health, Supporting People)	September 13	Annual Review	Seek SPOC in each Department and include in Prevention Champions Training programme.	
Develop and agree Named homelessness contacts within other statutory services (Police, Probation, JCP, CMHT,)	September 13	Annual Review	Seek SPOC in each Department and include in Prevention Champions Training programme.	
Ensure Housing Solutions represented on local Health & Wellbeing Board	TBC	TBC	TBC	
Ensure via DKO that Housing Solutions is engaged with Registered	September	Annual	Ensure action included in	

Provider Community Investment programmes and services to tenants and residents of social landlords, including job clubs, training and skills opportunities for tenants and support providers in the delivery of housing options as required, for example via Enhanced Housing Options Wizard.	13	Review	DKO action plan to be monitored via Steering group	
Ensure Housing Solutions continue to develop and support Partnerships include enabling access to Furniture/white goods and food banks	April 14	April 15	Review current provision and assess gaps / possible funding routes.	
Develop Joint working or SLAs with credit unions in regard to referrals of clients and possible allocation of repossession loan fund.	October 13	April 14	Review current providers and seek agreement.	
Map and review delivery of LSC contracts across the County to identify provision and areas lacking access to social welfare advice and develop appropriate partnership response.	October 13	April 14	Review current provider's gaps and seek appropriate referral routes.	

Action 3					
Objective: 1	To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.				
Gold Standard 3:	We offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients				
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council				
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip				
Key Partners	RED				
Resources	Within current resources.				
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status	
Review service standards for housing solutions service delivery in partnership with key partner agencies (including VCOs) and service users	October 13	April 14	Review current standards. Consider wider regional minimum standards. Include in HAP & Third Sector action plans.		
Provide regular training updates to customer service staff on housing solutions services, including effective referrals.	November 13	Annually	Review current training materials and agreed delivery programme.		
Seek to establish regional common service standards with all Local Authorities setting minimum service standards for all clients approaching housing solutions / options services.	October 13	April 14	Review via regional homelessness group.		
Review internal procedures to ensure offer effective guidance to delivery of consistent service.	September 13	Annually	Review all current procedures to ensure effective and up to date.		
Ensure individual and team training plans include housing law and skills based training	September 13	Annually.	Include in HSS service plan		
Ensure effective delivery of procedures in regard to case allocation, quality of advice, corrective actions, and customer feedback reviews.	September 13	Annually	Review current training and quality assurance systems.		
Develop process of quality checks including Team Leaders / Managers sitting in on customer interviews to ensure consistent,	September 13	Annually	Agree regular programme of quality		

quality service is delivered.			checks to be included in HSS service plan.	
Promote the use of NHAS, training, mortgage debt advice and information resources	September 13	Annually	Review current resources and promote to front line.	
Ensure Baseline offer continues to include access to the private rented sector and all prevention tools for people who do not fulfil the statutory homelessness criteria.	September 13	Annually	Ensure cost effectiveness of prevention services are monitored and highlighted to ensure continued investment.	
Review access arrangements (including home visits, outreach surgeries, comprehensive online advice and information via web and EHO Wizard)	Septmeber13	April 14 Annually	Implement recommendations form service & diagnostic review.	
Update Equalities impact assessment.	September 13	April 14. Annually.		
Review options for development of triage service promoting self help, access to private rented sector via Durham Key Options and enabling resources to be targeted to those in greatest need.	Nov 13	April 14		

Action 4					
Objective: 3	To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.				
Gold Standard 4:	We have adopted a <i>No Second Night Out</i> model or an effective local alternative				
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council				
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip				
Key Partners	HAP - RED				
Resources	Regional Grant Within current resources.				
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status	
Complete annual street counts / estimates in accordance with DCLG guidance and with reference to Homeless Link toolkit	October 13	Annually	Agree rough sleeper count / estimate process via HAP		
Continue to support the development of Adults facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) in response to rough sleepers.	September 13	On-going	Continue to support steering group / review / implement findings of prompt report.		
Ensure reporting of new rough sleepers feeds into regional monitoring process.	September 13	On-going	Update HS Staff / ACE Project staff on reporting of rough sleepers via No Second Night Out (NSNO) provisions.		
Complete annual health needs audit and ensuring finding informs service developments.	May 13	Annually.	Review guidance and implement audit. Upload action plan with findings.		
Develop a regional single service offer that is consistent across local partners, including an effective and robust reconnections policy.	April 14	September14	Agree and develop SSO with regional Las. Implement and monitor		
Ensure ACE pilot and NSNO response in County Durham is communicated to key partners and public via promotional activity and Prevention Champions Training.	September 13	Annually	Regular updated on ACE to HAP and incorporate response into Prevention Champions programme.		
Ensure ACE continues to provide direct access accommodation to rough sleepers.	September 13	On-going	Continue to support development of ACE / The Fells to promote		

			direct access for rough sleepers.	
Develop access to Crash pads and Emergency supported lodgings for rough sleepers.	September 14	April 15	Review current provision and assess possible access for rough sleepers.	
Develop options for female rough sleepers to ensure access to accommodation and support.	April 14	April 15	Review current provision. Map gaps. Identity possible funding sources.	
Develop MEAM pilot to address the accommodation and support needs of those clients excluded from services.	April 14	April 15	Identify partners and funding stream for application.	
Ensure ACE continues to provide a system for forming an assessment of rough sleepers within 72 hours of identification, including those with no local connection/entitlement.	September 13	On-going	Support future funding applications to continue response to rough sleeping	
Agree regional reconnections policy, including access to travel funds and plans to ensure accommodation and support is accessed.	September 13	November13	Develop and agree via regional Las group.	
Ensure NSNO offer in County is delivered in collaboration with key partners - Police and Community Safety, the local community, Outreach, faith groups, day services and others such as parks, parking and refuse collection as appropriate cooperating with local service offer and referring rough sleepers into local services	September 13	On-going	Continued to support NSNO Steering group across County Durham.	
Develop mediation services via FIP and / or relationship counselling services to reduce loss of accommodation due to relationship breakdown.	April 14	September 14	Map existing provision for mediation service. Review possible funding routes.	
Promote formal links between ACE other housing and support providers and Regional Through The Gate Service to promote early identification of those at risk of homelessness prior to release from custody.	September 13	April 14	Continue to attend Through the Gate Steering group to assist in integration and development.	
Ensure floating support is offered immediately following the securing of a tenancy by former rough sleeping to avoid breakdown of placement.	September 13	April 14	Review current support arrangements. Consider funding streams for additional floating support provision.	

Closure liaison between housing solutions / ACE and substance misuse teams to provide tailored advice and support.	September 13	April 14	Consider options / models of working to support client group.	
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Action 5				
Objective:2,3,4,5	<p>2. To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping.</p> <p>3. To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.</p> <p>4. To provide housing advice and housing options to everyone in County Durham</p> <p>5. To tackle the wider social and economic causes of homelessness by supporting people to access health, employment, training and associated services.</p>			
Gold Standard 5:	We have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	RED / Children & Adults / HAP			
Resources	Within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Review and extend Hospital Discharge protocol and evaluate effectiveness.	September 13	Annually	Monitor effectiveness / review / amend and extend to other hospitals / departments if required.	
Review Enhanced Housing Support Protocol and evaluate effectiveness.	April 14	Annually	Monitor effectiveness / review and amend if required.	
Continue to monitor effectiveness of Joint Protocol and Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol (CLASP) via Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service (HTASS) Steering group.	September 13	On-going	Complete annual review and quarterly monitoring to ensure service is meeting desired outcomes.	
Review referral pathways offered by regional through the gate service to support accommodation and support needs of returning prisoners and their families.	September 13	Annually	Continue to support development of service and involvement in service evaluation.	
Review Move-on arrangements with supported housing providers in	September 13	September 14	Review options, Developed shared tenant	

light of welfare reform.			scheme.	
Review supported housing commissioning arrangements and the impact of HTASS on referral pathways and move-on plans to maximise effective use of resources.	April 14	September 14	Establish project group, evaluate current model, and recommend future arrangements.	
Review impact of HTASS on floating support services and ensure continuity of support is offered where appropriate following move-on from HTASS	April 14	September 14	As above.	
Review Pathways model for young people via HTASS to ensure effective and reducing use of B&B	April 14	September 14	As above	
Review move-on arrangements and support from TA offered by HTASS and potential increase in use of PRS.	April 14	September 14	As above	
Evaluate personalisation pilot to assess impact and recommendations for service improvement.	September 13	December 13	Continue to monitor use and effectiveness of service. Recommend improvements where identified.	
Develop referral routes into employment, education and training options advice and support is available to all customers.	September 13	April 14	Review current referrals routes and recommend / develop improvements.	
Ensure links are maintain and developed to ensure the Think Family approach is adopted across Housing Solutions and services developed in support of trouble families services.	September 13	April 14	Review current practice and develop in line with good practice.	
Ensure Priority and Prolific Offender (PPO) role continues to provide support for offenders to ensure accommodation options are available for, including access to private rented sector.	January 14	March 14	Evaluate role and make recommendations.	
Consider jointly commissioned services to respond to housing need across the authority, for example, health, criminal justice, DWP et cetera taking advantage of GP commission arrangements based on evidence of need established via health needs audit.	April 14	July 14.	Completed Health Needs Audit. Report findings to appropriate groups. Present Homelessness Strategy priorities to relevant groups to seek corporate support to joint	

			working	
Review options to provide peer education to young people to prevent homelessness.	April 14	June 12	Map existing provision. Identify possible funding routes. Develop options report.	

Action 6				
Objective:3	To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.			
Gold Standard 6:	We have developed a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	Registered Providers / HAP			
Resources	Within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Ensure bond scheme / prevention fund continues to provide access to Private rented Sector (PRS) is not restricted to only those households in priority need	September 13	March 14	Review current policy and identify / implement improvements to increase sector take up	
Review PRS strategy to ensure it is linked to the homelessness strategy, wider housing strategy tenancy strategy and allocations strategies.	March 14	September 14	Evaluate PRS discharge policy to ensure effective.	
Review joint working arrangements with Housing Renewals Team to increase access to PRS.	January 14	March 14	Ensure protocol maximises outcomes for all clients.	
Ensure PRS tenants gain access to Discretionary Housing Payments via emerging triage service.	September 13	November 13	Review and evaluate triage process.	
Review Welfare Reform liaison officer role to maximise access to PRS.	September 13	March 14	Evaluate role and effectiveness in increasing access to PRS	
Develop referral routes into warm front type services to minimise fuel poverty.	September 13	March 14	Establish current offer and embed in service options	
Review involvement in Landlord hotline facilities operated by renewal team.	January 14	March 14	Ensure referrals to HSS to increase opportunity for prevention.	
Develop Ring before you serve notice service in partnership with	March 14	April 14	As above	

renewals team for private landlords seeking possession.				
Work with partners to develop availability of shared accommodation for under 35s at the LHA level	July 13	November 13	Research options and develop implementation plan	
Assess support available to landlords to convert or improve their properties for sharing and for managing shared tenancies.	July 13	On-going	As above	
Develop PRS offer via DKO to ensure PRS is accessible to those registered via Durham Key Options.	July 13	March 14	As above	
Consider availability of additional incentives to assist social tenants unable to afford their homes due to under occupancy charge to access to the private rented sector.	July 13	March 14	As above	

Action 7				
Objective:	1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.			
Gold Standard :7	We actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	HAP			
Resources	Within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Provide briefings for Housing Solutions and Customer Service to ensure basic knowledge of all options available to homeowners in debt via online Prevention Champions.	July 13	September13	Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan	
Provide briefing to partner agencies, stakeholders, and elected members on service to prevent repossessions.	September 13	Quarterly	As above	
Review website to ensure up to date - advice and information is accessible and available in a range of formats, including leaflets and posters that are available on reception and at partner agency receptions	November 13	March 14	Establish baseline / update and agree regular review.	
Ensure MRS and prevent repossessions in included in prevention champions training provided to reception staff / switchboard / call centre staff have a basic understanding of the local response to people who are in mortgage arrears	July 13	September 13	Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan	
Review media campaign promoting early intervention to assess effectiveness and Value for Money.	November 13	December 13	Review and evaluate current communications strategy and develop / implement improvements.	
Continue engagement in court users group to increase referrals from County Court Duty Scheme.	July 13	On-going	Review and update current training materials and develop delivery plan	
Continue regular meetings with zone agent to ensure access to	July 13	On-going	Confirm SPOC for HSS	

MRS completions for DCC.				
Review repossession loan fund and consider options for Credit union to deliver project further to include financial capability training.	July 13	September 13	Evaluate current scheme and consider options to ensure VFM	
Review any large scale closure of employers and ensure ability to offer onsite support to those facing redundancy	July 13	on-going	Work with Economic Development Team SPOC to monitor any employers.	

Action 8				
Objective:	1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham.			
Gold Standard 8:	We have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	HAP / RED / Regional Homelessness Group			
Resources	Within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Review homelessness strategy annually with partners.	June 13	Annual	Establish process via HAP	
Review homelessness policy.	June 13	September 13	Review current policy and update to reflect service developments	
The document is 'live' and regularly updated on progress and this is available on the Council's website and monitored via the HAP	June 13	TBC	Agree review process with HAP, Third Sector & Housing Forum	
Review all leaflets and literature promoting access to the Housing Solutions Service.	July 13	August 13	Evaluate current material and update / disseminate	
Achieve Gold Standard Status:	November 13	March 15	Agree peer review process with 2 regional Las. Evaluate evidence form review and adopt in continuous improvement plan prior to application of GS	

Action 9				
Objective:1,2,3	1. To prevent homelessness for all in housing need across County Durham. 2. To ensure that services work in partnership to meet the holistic needs of all clients, including those with complex needs and / or those at risk of rough sleeping. 3. To ensure that sufficient, appropriate and affordable accommodation is available for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.			
Gold Standard 9:	We do not place any 16 or 17 year olds in B&B accommodation			
Lead Agency/Agencies	Andrew Burnip: Durham County Council			
Project Manager	Andrew Burnip			
Key Partners	HAP / Children & Adults			
Resources	DCLG Grant / within current resources.			
Action	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Status
Continue to review effectiveness of JP via HTASS Steering group including provision of crash pads for 16/17 year olds.	January 14	March 14	Agree evaluation via HTASS commissioning group. Implement service improvements.	
Review Emergency Supported Lodgings Service to ensure no 16/17 year old is placed into B&B.	January 14	March 14	Agree evaluation via HTASS commissioning group. Implement service improvements	
Review Life Skills training, mediation and peer education services across the county to identify gaps and develop countywide service provision to localities with greatest need.	April 14	June 14	Review current provision. Agreed preferred delivery model. Locate funding and commission.	
Family Intervention Project continues to target families in need of holistic support and intervention.	July 13	September 13	Review referrals routes from HSS to FIP/ Family wise to increase training and employment outcomes.	
Review HTASS, Step Forward and Emergency Supported Lodgings Service to ensure effective in providing temporary accommodation options and move-on.	January 14	March 14	Agree evaluation via HTASS commissioning group. Implement service improvements	

Establish a pre eviction protocol panel for all supported housing providers.	September 13	October 13	Review current draft / establish consultation / implement improvements and monitor.	
Support the work of Youth Homelessness North East.	September 13	on-going	Review DCC pledges from Youth Homelessness Charter and agree actions.	
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Service Developments:

Over the past five years the Housing Solutions Service has developed the following services as part of an approach which emphasises early intervention and prevention of homelessness.

Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme: To assist clients to find and maintain accommodation in the private rented sector linked to tenancy support. The scheme guarantees a bond up to the equivalent of four weeks rent.

Homelessness Prevention Fund: Offering financial assistance to prevent homelessness, part of a wider “spend to save” policy.

Enhanced Housing Support Protocol: Bringing advice, support and accommodation services together to tackle the causes of homelessness and create sustainable tenancies for vulnerable adults.

County Court Duty Scheme Referral Protocol: Enabling clients at risk of homelessness to access free, specialist legal advice at court to defend claims for possession.

Joint Protocol for 16-17 year olds: Ensuring a joint assessment of young peoples’ housing, advice, support, training and emotional needs, by Housing Solutions, Children and Young Peoples Service, One Point and the Youth Offending Service, to enable young people to return home, if safe do so, or to plan for independence.

Mortgage Rescue: Part of a national scheme to offer shared equity or conversion to social rented tenure for home owners who are struggling with their mortgage payments.

Possession & Repossession Loan Fund: Interest free loans for homeowners at risk becoming homeless through repossession or eviction to enable them to recover their position and remain in their home.

CLASP: Care Leavers Accommodation & Support Protocol. Ensuring a partnership approach to planning for young people leaving care.

Welfare Rights Worker: Service Level Agreement with Welfare Rights Service to provide a dedicated officer within the Housing Solutions Service to support clients to access appropriate benefits to ensure accommodation is affordable and sustained.

Hospital Discharge Protocol: Protocol developed with Lanchester Road Hospital in Durham to ensure early intervention and referral for patients with undergoing assessment and treatment for mental health problems to ensure appropriate accommodation is secured prior to discharge.

Personalisation Budget: Agreed protocol with supported housing and floating support providers to assist clients with high support needs to access supported housing or their own home with additional support as required. The protocol ensures those who may be excluded from services are able to gain access with additional support to manage any identified risk.

Specialist Debt Worker: Contract with Greater Durham Citizens Advice Bureau for a specialist debt worker to be based within the Housing Solutions Service offering specialist debt advice to clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness due to debt related issues.

In House Remain Safe Service. From June 2012 the Remain Safe Service has been delivered by Direct Services following a review of the DISC service resulting in decommissioning to provide increase value for money and outcomes. The new service is jointly funded with the Safe Durham Partnership.

Step Forward: Accommodation & Support Service. Tender awarded in May 2012 to Stonham seeing 14 x two bed roomed properties leased and managed by the service provider offering floating support to young people moving on from supported housing and those in need of an intermediate supported housing offer.

Adults Facing Chronic Social Exclusion Pilot: Street outreach services across County Durham to rough sleepers to ensure those facing chronic social exclusion are supported to access a range of services and safe, supported accommodation. .

Regional through the Gate Service: Service jointly commissioned by the 12 regional Local Authorities and the Regional Offender Management Service. The service ensures support to maintain and secure accommodation for those who have a history of repeat offending and homelessness if delivered to clients leaving HMP Durham, Holme House and Low Newton. The service was awarded to Foundation and commenced in November 2012.

Emergency Supported Lodgings: Following a review of the Night Stop Service, it was decided to decommission and reinvest funding in an Emergency Supported Lodgings Service operated by Children and Young Peoples Service for 16-17 year olds. This resulted in an increase in providers and the potential to increase the ability for placements to increase from three nights to three weeks. The service has been further be extended to accommodate those 18-35 years old from 1st July 2013.

Service Review & Diagnostic: With assistance from Planning and Performance, the service participated in a service review and diagnostic assessment to determine overall performance, recommended improvements linking into the continuous service improvement plan. The resulting report and recommendation have been adopted in the service plan for 2013/14. Resulting from this work a new post of Service Development & Improvement Manager was created to ensure recommendations for continuous improvement are adopted by the service.

Mortgage Rescue Officer: A dedicated Officer to assist home owners at risk of repossession by way of referral to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme or allocation of Repossession Loan Fund.

Allocations Policy: A review of the allocations policy has been completed to reflect new statutory guidance and provisions within the Localism Act. The new allocations policy has now been adopted together with the power to discharge homeless duty into the private rented sector.

Housing Solutions Officer: Integrated Offender Management: We have a dedicated Housing Solutions Officer based with the Integrated Offender Management Service offering advice and support to secure accommodation for Priority and Prolific Offenders.

Housing Triage: Protocol with a range of partners, including Housing Providers and Customer Services to ensure households affected by Welfare Reform changes are referred to the most appropriate solution, including advice and support on training, employment, debt, welfare rights and Discretionary Housing Payments.

HTASS: Holistic Temporary Accommodation and Support Service is to provide a flexible person centred accommodation and support service that meets the authority's temporary accommodation duties under the homelessness legislation and provides added value which addresses the broader needs of the client to prevent future homelessness, maximise life opportunities, reduce social isolation and exclusion and promote improved health and wellbeing. HTASS includes:

- Temporary Accommodation & Support
- Joint Protocol for 16/17 years olds
- Crash Pads, including provision for care leavers
- Private Sector accommodation development