

Social Care, Health and Housing

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

2010 - 2015



Homelessness Key Objectives

- Work with partners to increase the number of units in supported housing and move-on accommodation, in particular for young people
- Implement the choice based lettings approach within our wider housing options environment
- Promote equality through making available a range of services that reflect and respect the diversity of individuals and their communities
- Assess and interpret housing need to develop a strategic perspective which supports the Council's enabling approach to deliver new affordable homes
- Expand and enhance the current range of housing options to support a comprehensive Lets Rent scheme for private landlords
- Develop a Service Improvement Strategy through a combination of peer review and external inspection
- Maximise the potential of the government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme to prevent homelessness as part of an over-arching Council approach to promote financial inclusion
- Determine a long term coherent approach for the provision of housing options and homelessness services across Central Bedfordshire
- Implement the Council's Homelessness Strategy
- Deliver two domestic violence refuges in Central Bedfordshire
- Support the development of the Council's Older Persons Strategy
- Financial inclusion, money management and preventing people from losing their homes, whether through eviction or repossession
- Devise and implement a rolling programme of monthly CBL awareness sessions to frontline workers, community groups and council staff
- Improve the level of customer care and customer satisfaction ratings within the housing needs service

Strategic Priorities

- Harmonise the housing option services across Central Bedfordshire, following Local Government Reorganisation
- Respond effectively to the recession, focusing on financial inclusion
- Work with young people aged 16-24 to meet their housing needs more effectively
- Embed the Think Family approach within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent and settled accommodation
- Strengthen safeguarding practice for vulnerable adults and children across all aspects of housing options and homelessness prevention
- Investigate the particular problems and pathway journeys that are experienced by people with complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse

Cross Cutting Priorities

- Strengthen equalities practice across all aspects of the service
- Make best use of private sector accommodation in meeting all other homelessness strategic priorities
- Sharing awareness and working in partnership with the community and between partner agencies

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year One

April 2010 to March 2011

Lead Officer	Area of work	Action	Delivery and Outcomes	Key Partners
Head of Housing Needs	Supported Accommodation and Young People	Review current provision of stock to identify suitable units for move-on accommodation and access Lets Rent Consult with partners Implement protocol for 16/17 year olds Develop comprehensive commissioning plan for meeting the range of needs for young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify xx one bedroom units for use as move-on accommodation Implement floating support package per unit Joint assessments Create positive housing pathways 	Supporting People team Probation Service Bromford Children's Services Youth Offending Service
AD Housing	Sheltered Accommodation	Undertake a full review of sheltered accommodation, ensuring all schemes are fully utilised, fit for purpose and provides effective support to residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schemes reviewed by 2011 Consultation exercise with residents, stakeholders and wardens Produce a project management plan to implement changes 	Estates team Residents Wardens Social Care Health
Head of Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Develop and strengthen the performance framework for CBL through introduction of a balanced score card (BSC) Develop accessible housing register with Sub Regional partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a 12 month review of scheme and policy in June 2010 Attend monthly monitoring meetings with Estates team Monitor and analyse lettings and trends on a monthly basis, especially sensitive and vulnerable lets Meet the needs of vulnerable households 	CBL Sub-Regional group Service Users Stakeholders RSLs Social Care
Head of Housing Needs	Strategy	Improve Business intelligence and assess and interpret housing need to develop a strategic perspective which supports the Council's enabling approach to tackle homelessness and assist in the delivery new affordable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant data on homelessness demand and trends to Strategy team Provide feedback on all draft and consultation stages of the Housing Strategy Target specific intelligence around those with complex needs Continue rough sleepers hot spot count Set up winter shelter for rough sleepers. 	Housing Strategy team Housing Developments team Social Care NHS/PCT BDAT Mental Health Services Salvation Army

Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Renting Privately	Expand and enhance the current range of housing options to support a comprehensive Let's Rent scheme for private landlords across Central Bedfordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate the scheme with Aragon Housing Association, ensuring seamless service across Central Bedfordshire • Launch Let's Rent scheme • Undertake a 6 month review of the scheme and policy • Hold a six monthly Landlord Forum 	Aragon HA Private Landlords Estate Agencies Bromford Support
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Financial Inclusion	Maximise the potential of the government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme to prevent homelessness as part of an over-arching Council approach to promote financial inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a comprehensive project plan to tackle financial inclusion and mortgage rescue cases • Assist xx cases through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme per year • Agree and implement a new SLA with the CAB • Develop an income maximisation policy with other departments such as HB, Estates teams • Continue funding of independent money adviser • Provide money advice training for all tenant liaison officers 	Aragon HA CAB Bromford Support Housing Benefit team Estates team CLG DWP/Job Centre Plus
Head of Housing Needs	Child Poverty and Social Exclusion	Work in partnership to tackle child poverty and social inclusion. Provide early intervention to support families and safeguard children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend joint meetings with Youth Offending and Child Poverty groups • Provide relevant homelessness and housing need data to inform Family Intervention Project (FIP) • Dedicated safeguarding training for all staff • Enhance protocols with Children's services to share intelligence 	Youth Offending team Child Poverty groups Children and Families team Social Care teams
Head of Housing Needs	Anti-Social Behaviour	Introduce an ASB Family Intervention Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a comprehensive project plan to prevent homelessness, tackle youth crime, school absenteeism, drug and alcohol addiction, domestic violence, poor mental health and inter-generational disadvantage • Specific targets to be added once post is 	Youth Offending team Children and Families team Education team Schools Drug and Alcohol team ASB teams

			confirmed	
Head of Housing Needs	Domestic Violence	Support the Sustainable Communities Directorate to deliver two operational domestic violence refuges in Central Bedfordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure timescales for building completion are adhered to (Feb 10 and Sep 10) Implement a service level agreement with Aragon HA who will own and manage the sites Implement referral procedures between agencies Ensure a minimum of xx referrals per quarter 	Aragon HA Domestic violence groups Sustainable Communities Stonham
AD Housing	Strategy	Contribute fully and support the lead and direction of the AD Commissioning to develop the Older Person's Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide relevant homelessness and housing need data to inform the strategy Ensure that the strategy links into the sheltered housing review and LSP 	Estates team Housing Strategy team LSP colleagues Social Care
Head of Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Devise and implement a rolling programme of monthly CBL awareness sessions to frontline workers, community groups and council staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver 12 awareness sessions per year, ensuring a wide range of workers and groups are invited Use a mini feedback sheet to collect views and ways to improve the presentation Identify common issues and feed back to the Sub-Regional policy group 	Estates team Adult Social Care teams NHS Community groups RSLs CBL Sub-Regional group
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Allocation	With partners review CBL Commom Allocations Policy. Review and report to Council in June 2010. Develop a fair and flexible policy to promote sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with stakeholders and service users on draft policy Implement policy once approved 	Stakeholders Service Users
Head of Housing Needs	Learning Disability	Comprehensively review the housing needs of households with learning disabilities and their access to housing. Further promote the safeguarding of adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a list of households with learning disabilities currently engaged with the Council's social services department Consult with social workers to identify their own views on access barriers to housing Consult with service users who have learning disabilities to understand their housing needs and access to housing Prepare and implement a plan to tackle 	Service Users Social Care teams Children and Families team

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and resolve issues Dedicated training for all staff 	
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Needs Service Structure	Harmonise the housing needs services across Central Bedfordshire following recommendations from the review of Strategic Housing Services. Develop a robust understanding of accountability between the two organisations in implementing the Homelessness Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific targets to be set once review is completed and Executive report submitted Monthly harmonisation meetings. Achieve a consistent service delivery 	Aragon HA
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Allocation	Devise and implement an Accessible Housing Register to enable disabled applicants to be matched more effectively with adapted properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that IT systems record additional disability and adaptation fields Identify relevant disabled applicants Produce publicity and literature Monitor lettings outcomes for accuracy 	CBL Sub-Regional group Aragon HA DFG team Adaptations team Occupational Health team Disability groups Stakeholders Service Users
All Housing Managers	Equality and Diversity	Promote equality through making available a range of services that reflect and respect the diversity of individuals and their communities Develop and capture business intelligence and all information monitoring the impact of the service on marginalized and groups affected by discrimination Formation of a People's Panel Review all services to ensure the diverse needs of all community are capture and that services are accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver equalities training to all frontline housing staff Undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on individual housing service areas Consult with race and disability community groups on ways to improve the service Ensuring legal compliance Meeting the needs of vulnerable households 	Community groups
All Housing Managers	Customer Service	Improve the level of customer care and customer satisfaction ratings within the housing service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the proportion of housing related contacts which are resolved at first point of contact/ Deliver a set of specific customer service 	Service Users

			<p>training sessions to all staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a panel of service users to consult and review policy and procedural changes to the service • Conduct a review of the past year's Member Enquiries and Complaints; analyse trends and identify actions to reduce common issues • Ensure that customer care is a standard item for discussion and review at team meetings and 1-1s. 	
All Housing Managers	Safeguarding Adults and Children	Develop safeguarding protocols for children and vulnerable adults that are bespoke to the Housing service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an appropriate assessment methodology that can be applied to casework as well as core services, similar to EIAs 	Adult Social Care teams Children and Families team
All Housing Managers	Performance Management Culture	Support the development of a one approach management culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All existing and new team managers to complete the corporate management training programme • Team managers to attend all Directorate and Corporate briefing events • Performance development reviews to include challenging but clear objectives for all managers in line with service improvement 	All Housing teams
Head of Housing Management	Major Adaptations	Increase the number and timeliness of major adaptations by reviewing A&A and DFGs completed across the Directorate, aligning where possible with Aragon HA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Stages 1 and 2 of the review • Consult with stakeholders and Overview and Scrutiny Committee • Prepare a comprehensive project plan to deliver changes 	DFG team Aragon HA Stakeholders O&S Committee
Head of Housing Management	Gypsy and Travelers	Improve the living environment of Gypsy and Travelers sites and commission a floating support service to strengthen community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Options paper on management, lettings and service charges • Produce implementation plan for adoption of local standards • Develop a business plan and model for future site management, leading to procurement of a suitable contractor 	Gypsy and Traveller contacts Floating Support agencies
Head of Housing	Mental Health	Improve assertive outreach support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a single assessment process 	PCT

Management/Needs		services for people with mental health needs focusing on those who are not engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a joint training programme 	Adult Social Care teams
Head of Asset Management	Decent Homes	Achieve 100% of Council properties meeting the Decent Homes Standard by December 31 2010, with the exception of properties exempted due to refusal by tenant to have works carried out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Government's Decent Homes target by December 31 2010 	Tenants Decent Homes contractors
Head of Asset Management	Repairs and Voids	Strengthen our approach to management information, taking account of day to day repairs and voids information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review monthly information requirements and benchmark with partners and other organisations • Establish new requirements and embed into contract management approach 	Neighbouring or similar local authorities RSLs

Year Two

April 2011 to March 2012

Lead Officer	Area of work	Action	Delivery and Outcomes	Key Partners
Head of Housing Needs	Supported Accommodation and Young People	Investigate the feasibility of a supported lodgings and crash-pad scheme with Children's Probation Service and Supporting People team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific targets to be set following feasibility study 	Supporting People team Probation Service Bromford Support
Head of Housing Needs	Sheltered Accommodation	Implement changes to existing sheltered schemes following review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific targets to be set following completion of review 	Estates team Residents Wardens
Head of Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Develop and strengthen the performance framework for CBL through the balanced score card (BSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor performance of CBL scheme under the new BSC framework Undertake annual review of policy and procedure manual with service user panel 	CBL Sub-Regional group Service Users Stakeholders RSLs
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Renting Privately	Continue to improve and enhance the Let's Rent scheme Develop a Landlord Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a full review of the Let's Rent scheme for private landlords across Central Bedfordshire Undertake a postal survey of customer satisfaction for all customers receiving assistance from the scheme since launch date Undertake a postal survey of business satisfaction for all landlords participating in the scheme since launch date 	Aragon HA Private Landlords Estate Agencies Bromford Support
Head of Housing Needs	Domestic Violence	Review the service provided to residents of the refuges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake customer consultation of the service provided through a satisfaction survey and focus group Undertake an annual review of the SLA with Aragon HA 	Aragon HA Domestic violence groups Residents of the refuges
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Allocation	Undertake monthly monitoring of all CORE returns from RSL partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update all nominations agreements with RSL partners, ensuring they are agreed and signed by both parties Ensure that ongoing monthly monitoring takes place of all RSL nominations to the 	RSL partners

			Council	
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Needs Service Structure	Undertake a twelve month review of the housing needs services across Central Bedfordshire following any structural changes in Year One.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific targets to be set once new structure is operational 	Aragon HA
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Allocation	Review the processes and usability of the Accessible Housing Register to enable disabled applicants to be matched more effectively with adapted properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a consultation exercise with disabled applicants who have used, or are on, the Accessible Housing Register for customer satisfaction levels and suitability of new home Review the cost savings to the Council of improved property matching of adapted homes, including impact on DFGs, Adaptations team and Occupational Health work 	CBL Sub-Regional group Aragon HA DFG team Adaptations team Occupational Health team Disability groups Stakeholders Service Users
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Protocols	Ensure that there are adequate protocols in place with partner agencies such as health, probation service, drug and alcohol teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement protocols for 16/17 year olds, ex-offenders and people with drug/alcohol dependency Review existing protocols for care leavers and hospital discharges to ensure effectiveness of the agreement Ensure there are named contacts within each agency as part of the protocol mechanisms 	Adult Social Care teams Children and Families PCT Probation Service DAT
Head of Housing Needs	Performance Management	Ensure strict monthly monitoring of all areas of housing need activity through regular performance meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a monthly performance monitoring meeting for team managers Draw up a master spreadsheet of all aspects of housing need activity with specific targets assigned Identify any areas of concern or failure each meeting and produce actions to resolve them 	Team Managers
All Housing Managers	Equality and Diversity	Promote equality through making available a range of services that reflect and respect the diversity of individuals and their communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an audit of all housing receptions to identify any physical barriers for disabled customers and ensure provision of hearing loop, signer, text phone Ensure that all literature is available in a variety of languages and formats 	Community groups

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that customers have access to Language Line or a translator where needed • Consult with local community groups to identify any additional issues 	
All Housing Managers	Customer Service	Improve the level of customer care and customer satisfaction ratings within the housing service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an annual set of specific customer service training sessions to all staff • Maintain the Service Users Panel • Implement a yearly review of the past year's Member Enquiries and Complaints; analyse trends and identify actions to reduce common issues • Ensure that customer care training is included in all new starter induction programmes 	Service Users
Head of Housing Management	Gypsy and Travellers	Improve the living environment of Gypsy and Travellers sites and commission a floating support service to strengthen community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that site is fully financially self-funding • Ensure that all improvement work is completed 	Gypsy and Traveller contacts Floating Support agencies

Years Three and Four of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan contain some ongoing and agreed objectives, but specific actions and outcomes are largely dependent on changes in homelessness demand and housing supply, changes to local and central government, changes to homelessness legislation and economic and financial factors locally and nationally.

The Council will continue to produce an annual Housing Service Plan, which will address more specific actions nearer the time and can be adapted to meet the changing demand and requirements of the Housing Service.

Year Three

April 2012 to March 2013

Lead Officer	Area of work	Action	Delivery and Outcomes	Key Partners
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Training	Roll out a series of homelessness prevention training sessions for external agencies including health and social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise a training session on homelessness prevention Offer a mixture of in-house workshop sessions at the Council premises, and attendance at agency's own staff meetings 	PCT Adult Social Care teams Children and Families team Probation Service Police
Head of Housing Needs	Overcrowding	Devise an effective project to tackle overcrowding and under-occupation in Council and RSL homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold a focus group for Council and RSL tenants who are under-occupying their homes to identify improved incentives to move Identify any desirable 50+ accommodation that could be ring-fenced for priority to under-occupiers Review the Council's tenant incentive scheme Consult with RSL partners to review their own incentive schemes Consult with the CBL Policy Group regarding review of the overcrowding and under-occupation priorities on the Register 	Aragon HA Council and RSL tenants
Head of	Housing Benefit	Provide frontline housing staff and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all housing staff have received 	Housing Benefit teams

Housing Needs		landlords with greater housing benefit knowledge in order to maximise receipt of HB, and to identify any problems and intervene at an early stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic housing benefit training Undertake HB trial calculations at all Housing Options interviews where applicable Offer a series of HB workshop sessions for private landlords and estate agencies 	Private landlords Estate agencies
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Welfare Benefits	Maximise the take-up of welfare benefits for all customers receiving Housing Options advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide welfare benefit training to all Housing Options staff Ensure staff have access to, and understand the use of, welfare benefit calculation screens/websites 	
Head of Housing Needs	Rough Sleepers	Undertake a full rough sleeper count (regardless of whether perceived numbers are <10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify true numbers of rough sleepers across Central Bedfordshire 	Housing Needs staff Volunteers
Head of Housing Needs	Repeat Homelessness	Identify the causes of repeat homelessness in Central Bedfordshire, and prepare an action plan to reduce to and maintain a zero return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct 1-1 interviews with all repeat homelessness applicants since 2010 Consult with local homelessness agencies including refuges, Salvation Army, hostels to identify their views on common causes Prepare and implement an action plan 	Service Users Local homelessness agencies
All Housing Managers	Equality and Diversity	Undertake a project across all statutory agencies within Central Bedfordshire to agree consistent recording criteria for ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a working group with representatives from all statutory agencies Examine existing recording criteria available and refine good practice examples where necessary Examine individual IT systems within each agency and feedback on any restrictions Implement a consistent recording approach for all agencies 	PCT Police Fire Service

Year Four

April 2013 to March 2014

Lead Officer	Area of work	Action	Delivery and Outcomes	Key Partners
Head of Housing Needs	Strategy	Undertake a review of the existing Homelessness Strategy and homelessness demand, and prepare a draft document for the next Strategy in 2014 - 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a new Homelessness Strategy for 2014 - 2018 	All statutory and voluntary agencies involved in homelessness
Head of Housing Needs	Strategy	Improve homelessness prevention amongst RSL partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake the TSA Homelessness Toolkit exercise with all partner RSLs Identify good practice RSLs and encourage sharing and wider adoption of effective prevention models Encourage each RSL to produce their own Homelessness Strategy for their organisation 	RSL partners
Head of Housing Needs	Worklessness	Conduct a feasibility study for work experience placements for homeless applicants with local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact local businesses via a face to face meeting to identify whether they have the scope and willingness to take on work experience placements Identify the potential number of homeless applicants who would benefit from work experience Prepare an Options paper 	Service Users Local Businesses
All Housing Managers	Performance Management	Ensure that all housing teams have an up to date, accessible and user-friendly procedure manual for every area of their procedures and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all existing procedure manuals and update as applicable Draft new procedure manuals where necessary Ensure all procedure manuals are available via the intranet and hard copies Ensure that all housing staff sign receipt of copy, or are made aware of how to access the intranet for an online version 	All Housing Teams
Head of Housing Needs	Housing Options and Renting	Create and implement a Choice Based Lettings scheme for private lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore options of expanding the existing CBL Home Connections website versus 	Service Users Landlords and Estate

	Privately		<p>creating an independent website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a policy for the scheme • Produce literature and publicity about the scheme • Scheme approval and formal launch 	<p>Agencies Aragon HA CBL Sub-Regional Group</p>
Head of Housing Needs	Customer Access	Examine ways to improve and expand the access methods to the housing needs service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with the Service User Panel and new housing applicants via a series of questionnaires or surveys • Identify new technology that could enhance access for customers • Identify and resolve any specific barriers to access for vulnerable customers or those finding it difficult to engage • Review existing publications and literature • Ensure all literature is available and updated in a variety of formats and languages 	<p>Service Users IT team</p>