

# Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2013-2016

Please disregard any mention of the 'First Contact Service', as this service has now ended.

# **PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY 2013-2016**

## **FOREWORD**

North Kesteven District Council is committed to ensuring that residents have access to an affordable home of a decent standard. Cold and poor condition homes, high health care costs, related illnesses and excess winter deaths are signs that some people need support to maintain this.

This Strategy is needed for the Council to establish a clear policy framework for working with residents living in the private housing sector, covering those in owner occupation or those renting privately. It links together national policies with local strategies to demonstrate how the Council will influence the condition of private sector housing. It also ensures that a holistic approach is taken to tackle all issues affecting vulnerable residents in such properties.

We recognise how important private homes are to accommodate the growing population in the District. Maintaining existing private sector housing in good condition ensures household growth is not undermined by a loss of housing that already exists. In particular, the significant issues of fuel poverty and the energy efficiency of housing continue to require attention both nationally and within North Kesteven.

This is why we help vulnerable home owners, and support landlords to understand their legal responsibilities, and ensure their homes meet minimum standards. If standards fall below what is expected and are not resolved we may use our powers to intervene. With the District Council offering a range of services it is not acceptable to put occupants at risk of poor health from living in substandard housing conditions.

I commend this document to you and wish the teams involved in implementing the Strategy every success.

Councillor Stewart Ogden  
Executive Board Member with special interest for Housing

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy aim**

This Strategy replaces the previous Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy adopted in 2003 following a period of significant change in national and local strategies, local policies and availability of funding. The Strategy looks at all the issues relevant to private sector housing and sets out how the Council intends to intervene.

The Strategy links with the Council's Our Homes priority and will focus on improving standards in private sector accommodation in the District. The overall aim is to help vulnerable home owners and tenants remain living independently in their homes, where it is appropriate to do so. This includes offering advice and assistance to achieve the best standards possible and ensure specific needs are met. The Council also wants to encourage landlords who provide good quality, affordable housing but take enforcement action using its legal powers to deal with those properties putting tenants at risk.

The Strategy establishes the role of the Private Sector Housing Renewal team working in partnership with others and sets out the contribution of other sections of the Council in meeting the aims of the Strategy. It enables a holistic approach to be taken to ensure all issues affecting vulnerable residents can be considered.

### **1.2 The role of private sector housing**

North Kesteven faces some significant challenges in coming years if predicted demographic changes are correct. Its population is growing from 106,400 to an estimated 120,000 in 2030. It is predicted in 2030 the proportion of older households will have increased by 66 per cent.

The Council is working with its Central Lincolnshire neighbours, City of Lincoln Council and West Lindsey District Council to develop a Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy. The focus of this strategy is on increasing the provision of housing for the growing population and proportion of older people. Provision of affordable new housing in all tenures is a must but, making best use of the existing housing stock is of equal importance. The Housing Growth Strategy acknowledges the importance of private sector housing condition to ensure household growth is not undermined by a loss of quality housing that already exists.

There were 41,400 existing private sector homes in North Kesteven in 2009. Of these an estimated 11 per cent (5,100) are made available for renting privately. Tenure proportions are shown in the Table below. It is essential that these homes remain fit for purpose if there is to be a chance of meeting housing need.

## North Kesteven tenure proportions

Tenure	Dwellings	Percent
Owner occupied	36,300	77%
Privately Rented	5,100	11%
<b>Private Sector Stock</b>	<b>41,400</b>	<b>88%</b>
Housing Association (RSL)	680	2%
Local authority and other public sector	4,830	10%
<b>Social Housing</b>	<b>5,510</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>All Tenures</b>	<b>46,910</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009

The condition of the existing housing stock is important to ensure that residents are living in decent, safe accommodation which is suited to their needs. Specifically in relation to housing growth the condition of the housing stock is important to ensure that the increase in net housing stock through growth is not offset by a reduction in the number of existing homes which are habitable.

Equally it is necessary to mitigate against the potential unintended consequence of growth that poor quality private sector housing leads to migration from existing communities into more attractive new housing developments leading to low demand neighbourhoods.

### 1.3 Housing and health

It has long been recognised that living in poor condition, cold, damp homes that are not suitable for needs has a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of the occupiers. When accidents and illness occur because homes are poor it has an impact on a person's ability to participate in work, education and other activities. This has a significant impact on costs to the Social Care authority and the NHS:

- Treatment of long term conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) and bronchitis;
- Dealing with injuries such as breaks from falls, electrocution or burns;
- Providing home care services; and
- Residential placements (respite or permanent)

Excess cold is the highest significant hazard rate in homes in North Kesteven. Comparing the costs of treatment to the NHS (£2,217,500) against that of energy efficiency measures to alleviate the problem (£649,090), it can be seen that, with a payback of only 0.3 years, the remedial works are a cost effective way of reducing some of the financial burden on the NHS.

### 1.4 Strategic Priorities

The Strategy sets out the advice and assistance to be provided to occupants of private homes by the Council and its partners with the aim of ensuring residents of North Kesteven can have access to a home that promotes good health. That is one that is safe, warm and weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities to meet their needs. Coordination of activity should result in enabling private sector households to remain living independently in those homes and avoid the need to transfer to social housing.

Bearing in mind the main national and local drivers, this Strategy has five main themes:

1. Ensuring proper housing standards
2. Reducing energy use and providing affordable warmth
3. Supporting independent living
4. Promoting access to the private rented sector
5. Bringing empty homes back into use

These themes must not be considered in isolation but as a holistic approach. In order for a home to promote good health it must be affordable, in good condition, maintain warmth at affordable amount, meet the household's needs (space, disabled facilities, support). These all need to be achieved in both owner occupied homes and in conjunction with promoting access to the private rented sector and bringing empty homes back into use.

## **2. LINKS TO NATIONAL POLICIES AND OTHER LOCAL STRATEGIES**

This Chapter summarises the main legislation, national policies and reports, and local strategies with objectives relating to private sector housing that need to be addressed through this Strategy.

### **2.1 Decent Homes Standard**

It is Government policy that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a decent home. The Decent Homes Standard contains four broad criteria that a property should:

- A – Be above the legal minimum standard for housing, and
- B – Be in a reasonable state of repair, and
- C – Have reasonable modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
- D – Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

If a dwelling fails any of these criteria it is considered to be non decent.

#### *2.1.1 Public Service Agreement 7*

Until 1 April 2008, the Government target for achieving decent standards in the private sector was that set by Public Service Agreement (PSA) 7; where specified proportions of all dwellings occupied by vulnerable residents should be made decent by certain times. CLG continued to use this as an indicator for its Departmental Strategic Objective. It is still felt that in the context of what this Strategy aims to achieve this is a useful reference point to monitor the effectiveness of policies and the impact of changes (such as welfare benefit reforms).

### **2.2 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002**

There was a new general power covering the provision of financial assistance for private sector housing renewal introduced in the Regulatory Reform Order 2002. The Order and guidance sets out the parameters within which financial assistance is to be made available. Blanket no assistance policies are not considered to be acceptable.

### **2.3 Housing Act 2004**

#### *2.3.1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System*

The Housing Act 2004 brought in a new system for assessing minimum standards in housing in the form of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This requires that as a legal minimum standard a house must be free from serious hazards affecting the health, safety and wellbeing of occupants and others in the proximity of the dwelling. The system reflects the fact there is now a much greater emphasis on the links between housing conditions and accidents and ill health.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) draws on a wealth of research into the causes of accidents and ill health to identify 29 potential hazards in homes attributable to the property rather than occupier behaviour. HHSRS provides a method for assessing and rating hazards (according to risk and severity) so that priority can be given to addressing those hazards that are most likely to cause accidents and ill health and have

the worst effects. Where a hazard rating is unacceptably high it is classified as a Category 1 hazard and there is a clear rationale for intervention.

### *2.3.2 House in Multiple Occupation definition*

In an attempt to fill some of the gaps in case law the Housing Act 2004 sets out detailed conditions for what is and what is not a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and when persons are to be regarded as forming a single household and treated as occupying premises as their only or main residence.

### *2.3.3 Mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation*

Larger Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), such as bedsits and shared houses, often have poorer physical and management standards than other privately rented properties. The people who live in HMO are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. As living in an HMO is the only housing option for many people it is vital that they are properly regulated.

Licensing is intended to make sure that:

Landlords of HMO are fit and proper people, or employ managers who are.  
Each HMO is suitable for occupation by the number of people allowed under the licence.  
The standard of management of the HMO is adequate.  
High risk HMO can be identified and targeted for improvement.

Law requires HMO properties to have a licence that:

- Have three or more storeys
- Contain five or more people in more than one household.
- Share amenities such as bathrooms, toilets and cooking facilities.

### *2.3.4 Selective licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation*

In areas with high numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) it is possible to apply to the Secretary of State to establish a licensing scheme for other types of HMO not covered by mandatory licensing, e.g. two-storey properties occupied by three or more students or migrant workers.

### *2.3.5 Additional licensing of private rented homes*

In areas with low demand or high incidences of anti social behaviour it is possible to apply to the Secretary of State

### *2.3.6 Empty Dwelling Management Order*

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) under the Housing Act 2004 provide a mechanism for bringing empty homes back into use that complements voluntary leasing arrangements and that enables dilapidated empty homes to be improved without requiring the owners to fund renovation from their own resources.

## **2.4 Spending Review 2010**

Following the Spending Review 2010 the Department of Communities and Local Government ceased the provision of capital allocations to local housing authorities for private sector housing renewal from March 2011. In its impact assessment the Department stated the following:

“The main purpose of Private Sector Renewal has been to fund repairs to homes in the private sector, although it was a non ring fenced fund and so in practice used for a very wide range of purposes. It is the view of the Government that owner occupiers are primarily responsible for the upkeep of their own properties although there may have been circumstances when it has been right for the Government to intervene.

However, the increased freedoms and flexibilities being given to local authorities as part of the Spending Review mean that discontinuing this funding stream will not necessarily result in less money being spent on repairs to the private sector. Local authorities will have greater freedom to prioritise and allocate budgets to support public services in ways which meet the needs of local people and communities.

Some areas may decide to provide assistance to vulnerable private sector households, while others may prioritise other activity.

Given the mandatory nature of programmes such as the disabled facilities grant programme it is possible that the removal of a separate funding stream for Private Sector Renewal will result in pressure on Disabled Facilities Grant instead. However, the increased freedoms and flexibilities being provided to local authorities as part of the Spending Review mean that they will have greater freedom to prioritise and allocate budgets to support public services in ways which meet the needs of local people and communities. Therefore, it is feasible that local authorities spend more money on repairs to private sector housing, if it is deemed a real priority.”

## **2.5 Energy Act 2011**

The Energy Act 2011 will have a significant impact on private sector housing. This introduces new flagship policies to replace existing initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of housing in the form of the Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), with cost effective energy efficiency measures to be recommended through an enhanced Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The Act also sets out a proposal for it to be illegal for a property with an EPC rating less than Band E to be rented out from 2018.

### *2.5.1 The Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation*

The Green Deal finance mechanism eliminates the need to pay upfront for energy efficiency measures and instead provides reassurances that the cost of the measures should be covered by energy cost savings. The new ECO will integrate with the Green Deal, allowing supplier subsidy and Green Deal finance to come together into one seamless offer to the consumer.

### *2.5.2 Warm Front and Carbon Emissions Reduction Target*

Warm Front is a Government funded scheme which provides grants to make homes warmer, healthier and more energy efficient. It will end on 31 March 2013 subject to funding lasting but until then provides energy efficiency advice and a package of insulation and heating improvements tailored to each property up to the value of £3,500. Some homes that need oil or LPG central heating may receive a grant of up to £6,000.

## **2.6 Localism Act 2011**

Other Government strategy that is relevant to housing includes increasing freedom for local decision making on planning and housing through the Localism Act 2011. This Act abolishes Regional Spatial Strategies and requires local authorities to determine the growth rate for their area. It also makes changes to the provision of social housing including a new finance mechanism for Council homes, flexible tenancies and assistance with home exchanges. This Strategy is, therefore, written in that context.

There are no specific direct implications for private sector housing services other than an amendment to House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing law exempting homes owned by cooperatives from mandatory licensing.

## **2.7 Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England**

The Government has published a housing strategy for England entitled 'Laying the Foundations' in November 2011. This places emphasis on several areas related to existing private sector housing:

- Maintaining a thriving private rented sector through local authorities using their enforcement powers to full potential.
- Bringing empty homes back into use.
- Reducing energy use in housing.

### *2.7.1 Private Rented Sector*

In its Housing Strategy the Government states its desire to see the private rented sector thriving and growing. Stimulating private sector investment in new build private rented housing is for the Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy. However, it also made clear that high standards in the private rented sector are important and encourages local authorities to make "full use of the robust powers that they already have to deal with unsatisfactory properties". New powers to deal with rogue landlords are being considered. These will be important if the Council uses its new power to discharge the homelessness duty in the private rented sector.

### *2.7.2 Empty Homes*

Bringing empty homes back into use is another priority. Funding was made available for housing providers, from which the Council's Housing Strategy and Growth unit bid for and received £120,000 from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The scheme is to secure a number of long term empty homes through Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO), repair and lease them by the Council to manage and rent out. Obtaining and serving the EDMO and securing home improvements is done in line with this Strategy.

For local authorities the New Homes Bonus is to be paid for empty homes brought back into use. For each one the Government match funds the national average Council Tax for six years. The additional revenue has already funded the extension of an existing shared post based in the Housing Strategy team to coordinate tackling long term empty homes.

## **2.8 Health and Social Care Act 2012**

The Health and Social Care Act received Royal Assent on 27 March 2012. This will result in a number of changes to countywide governance and commissioning requiring Lincolnshire County Council to:

- Establish a Health and Wellbeing Board with a duty to encourage integrated working
- Maintain a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Prepare a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Responsibility and budgets for Public Health will transfer to the County Council from 1st April 2013. Lincolnshire has established a Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board that is working towards a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. There is an increased emphasis on prevention rather than care.

## **2.9 Hill's Fuel Poverty Review**

Professor John Hills has recently completed a review of the issue of fuel poverty. This concluded that fuel poverty is a distinct issue from general poverty. The review makes comments on the ability to eradicate fuel poverty and concludes that the current definition is flawed. It suggests a new measure based on needing to spend more than the average on energy bills to stay warm, after housing costs and adjusted for household size and composition, and a means of indicating the depth of fuel poverty as represented by the average and aggregate 'fuel poverty gap', defined as the amounts by which the assessed energy needs of fuel poor households exceed the threshold for reasonable costs. This Strategy is, however, based on the current definition of fuel poverty being a household that needs to spend more than 10 per cent of income on energy bills.

The Review goes on to make a number of technical recommendations related to data comparisons to look at the effect of variables affecting fuel poverty measurement. The Review makes a final recommendation that the Government, not just the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) – should set out a renewed and ambitious strategy for tackling fuel poverty, reflecting the challenges laid out in the report and the framework developed for understanding them.

## **2.10 Welfare Benefit Reforms**

Government is reforming the welfare benefit system to help people to move into and progress in work, while supporting the most vulnerable. Reforming the benefit system aims to make it fairer, more affordable and better able to tackle poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency.

On 8 March 2012 the Welfare Reform Act 2012 received Royal Assent. The Act introduces a wide range of reforms to make the benefits and tax credits system fairer and simpler by:

- Creating the right incentives to get more people into work:
- Protecting the most vulnerable in our society
- Delivering fairness to those claiming benefit and to the tax payer.

Draft regulations covering key elements of Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments and changes to working-age benefits will be subject to a public consultation.

Two main features of the Welfare Reform Act are:

1. Replace Disability Living Allowance for eligible working age people (aged 16 to 64) with a new benefit, Personal Independence Payment, from April 2013. Find the latest information on policy developments and the draft assessment criteria in the Personal Independence Payment pages.

2. Universal Credit will help claimants and their families to become more independent and will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single streamlined payment. Key decisions on the detailed policy for Universal Credit are being made over the coming months. Find the latest information on the Universal Credit pages.

The effects of welfare benefit reforms on aspects of this Strategy will be monitored.

## **2.11 Local Strategies**

### *2.11.1 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy*

The Lincolnshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is based on five priority themes derived from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):

- Promote healthier lifestyles
- Improve the health and wellbeing of older people in Lincolnshire
- Deliver high quality systematic care for major causes of ill health and disability
- Improve health and social outcomes and reducing inequalities for children
- Tackling the social determinants of health

Of direct relevance to this Strategy, the social determinants of health theme includes reducing the proportion of private owned and rented homes that fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, tackling fuel poverty and tackling worklessness.

There are plans to spend more money on helping older people to stay safe and well at home and to develop a network of 'wellbeing' services to help older people lead a more healthy life and cope with frailty. One hundredth of spend on adult health and social care will be moved every year for the next 5 years to deliver wellbeing support.

### *2.11.2 Our Community: Our Plan*

This Plan is North Kesteven's community strategy, setting out three themes of Our Economy, Our Homes, Our Communities and identifying challenges that can be addressed through partnerships working together across the District.

Our Homes includes challenges to:

- Support the development of homes to meet our communities' needs
  - Work with partners to address homelessness
  - Work with partners to deliver the empty homes strategy
- Ensure homes are affordable to maintain and decent to live in
  - Provide advice and support to make homes energy efficient

Priority action plans sit under the Plan and are monitored by theme groups.

### *2.12.3 Corporate Plan*

The Corporate Plan sets out what the Council will do to contribute to the delivery of Our Community: Our Plan. The priorities are, therefore, the same as the community strategy themes plus Our Council - to deliver high quality cost effective services for North

Kesteven. It identifies actions for delivering each of the priorities. Of particular relevance to this Strategy are:

- Our Homes
  - To bring empty homes back into use
- Our Communities
  - Encourage sustainable living
  - Improve access to Council services
  - Support vulnerable residents
- Our Council
  - Engage with new partnerships in North Kesteven and Lincolnshire to ensure effective delivery of priorities for the District.

#### *2.12.4 Draft Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy*

The draft Central Lincolnshire Housing Growth Strategy includes objectives to meet the diversity of needs including older persons and to maintain and improve the housing stock and bring empty homes back into use. Within these the following priorities are identified:

- Deliver housing options for older people
- Community regeneration
- Bring empty homes back into use
- Make best use of the housing stock

Specific programmes and projects to deliver objectives are contained in the action plan:

1. Ensure existing accommodation is good quality and appropriate for current and emerging needs –  
Deliver an aids and adaptations programme to enable disabled occupants to remain in their own home through disabled facilities grants and other grants
2. Deliver housing options to meet specific needs -
  - a. Build a clear evidence base with regard to the accommodation currently available to meet specific needs
  - b. Address poor quality accommodation for specific groups through awarding grants to specific needs groups and making non- decent homes occupied by vulnerable people decent
3. Ensure appropriate resources are in place to address the issue of empty homes –  
Implement the Lincolnshire Empty Homes Strategy and toolkit
4. Ensure that housing stock is maintained to a Decent standard –  
Proactively enforce against poor housing standards in the private sector
5. Address overcrowding and under occupancy in existing housing –
  - a. Build a clear evidence base in regards to overcrowding and under occupancy
  - b. Investigate options for resolving under occupancy
6. Improve the energy efficiency of existing housing stock –  
Understand implications of the Green Deal and the local authority role in its implementation

### *2.12.5 Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy*

Lincolnshire's Homelessness Strategy action plan contains a number of tasks of relevance to Private Sector Housing.

1. Explore options to mitigate the impact of the changes to the single room rate by maximising the availability of good quality, well managed single room rents for the under 35s, e.g. supported lodgings.
2. Explore options for a house share model across Lincolnshire.
3. Actively engage and develop relationships with landlords at district level through attendance at landlord forums, landlord focus groups and homelessness prevention workshops.
4. Identify achievable landlord incentive options to increase access to the private rented sector and ensure it is affordable
  - a. Free advertising
  - b. HMO registration fees
  - c. Subscriptions to National Landlord Association or equivalent
5. Contact landlords using the bond schemes across Lincolnshire and encourage landlords to support tenants to get advice if they are affected by the welfare reform.
6. Ensure landlords are aware of support services which could help those affected by the changes, e.g. floating support.
7. Explore options for tenant accreditation models across Lincolnshire.
8. Ensure Local Housing Allowance (LHA) payments are made directly to landlords where possible, to enable access to or sustainment of a tenancy.
9. Support options for bringing empty homes back into use to meet housing need.
10. Explore opportunities for innovative ways to engage customers in bringing empty homes back into use to promote access to the private rented sector, e.g. the development of a 'paint to rent' scheme.

Several of the actions around improving access to the private rented sector have sub regional grant funding identified to support their implementation.

### *2.12.6 Lincolnshire Affordable Warmth Strategy*

The Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP) developed a countywide affordable warmth strategy to run from 2010 to 2016; which was adopted by all district councils in Lincolnshire and the County Council. Contributing to the implementation of its action plan is included in the Partnership NK Our Homes priority action plan. The Strategy has five themes:

1. Raising awareness of fuel poverty and its solutions
2. Targeting action at fuel poor households
3. Improving the energy efficiency of all housing tenures
4. Maximising the income of households at risk from fuel poverty
5. Improving access to fuel services and renewable energy

### *2.12.7 Lincolnshire Empty Homes Strategy*

The Lincolnshire Empty Homes Strategy was developed from an informal partnership between 6 Lincolnshire district councils. The Strategy defines both the national and local issues in relation to empty homes and sets the following aims.

- Reduce the number of long term empty homes by district specific targets each year
- Establish a positive relationship with owners of empty homes to facilitate bringing them back into viable use
- Increase public and organisational understanding of empty homes across the districts
- Help to increase the supply of affordable housing, and reduce homelessness
- Add to the number of good quality, energy efficient properties within each district

The informal partnership is retained with the other Lincolnshire district councils ensuring best practice is shared and roles and responsibilities are shared promoting good time management and maintenance of shared resources.

The project is supported by shared resources and information. Joint literature for owners and a website are managed across the partnership promoting consistency of support for interested parties.

### **2.13 Rugg Review of Private Rented Housing**

Dr Julie Rugg and David Rhodes were commissioned to produce a report on the private rented sector in 2009. This set out six possible policy directions of travel for the Labour Government. The Government has no plans to introduce additional legislation placing more burdens on landlords. The Department of Communities and Local Government does acknowledge that the content of Dr Rugg's report was not without merit and that local authorities might wish to progress elements of it at a local level. Recommendations considered relevant are:

1. Developing a sound evidence base
2. Promoting housing management –
  - a. That a register of landlords is introduced
  - b. That regulation of residential letting agents is introduced
  - c. That Local Lettings should be encouraged.
3. 'Growing' the business of letting – local authorities dealing with landlords as small businesses
4. Equalising the rental choices – the establishment of 'social or local letting agencies' by local authorities with the aim reduce the risks of private renting for low income households.

### **3. THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE BASE**

Priorities for private sector housing and initiatives in this Strategy need to be based on a sound understanding of the nature of the district and its housing. This Chapter, therefore, looks at socio economic factors and housing conditions.

#### **3.1 The District of North Kesteven**

North Kesteven is in the East Midlands, situated just over 100 miles north of London. It is located east of Nottingham and south of Lincoln. North Kesteven is one of seven districts in Lincolnshire and is in the centre of the County. It covers an area of 356 square miles or around 92,000 hectares.

The District is characterised by small settlements and large areas of arable farmland. More than 64 per cent of the population live in rural areas, including settlements or villages or market towns. North Kesteven also has a relatively underdeveloped transport infrastructure. As a result, local communities have historically been self-reliant, with parish and town councils providing services, such as playing fields or play areas, which are frequently provided by district councils elsewhere.

##### *3.1.1 Environment and Population*

The predominately rural nature of the District has encouraged people to move to the area to take advantage of its quality of life, low crime rates, relatively low house prices, good-quality education and local heritage. This is reflected in research, which has shown nine tenths of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

North Kesteven's residents live in around 100 mainly small communities. Major concentrations are in Sleaford, with a population of around 18,800; North Hykeham, with around 14,600 residents; and, 10 larger villages, providing a range of services, with populations of over 2,500. Within the District, 40 per cent of the population live in the "Lincoln Fringe", the area immediately surrounding Lincoln City. 71 parishes serve the District communities, comprising 58 parish councils, two town councils and 11 parish meetings.

The population of the District in 2012 was 106,400, equating to just over one person per hectare. The population grew by 9 per cent between 2002 and 2010, making the District one of the top six fastest-growing districts in England and Wales. This rate of growth is a result of high house-building rates and consequent in-migration to the District, from elsewhere in England, as opposed to natural population change. The fast rate of growth and the time lag in providing services, such as health and education, have placed significant pressure on existing service provision. The growth in population is expected to continue up to 2030 with the largest age group rise (66 per cent) being those of retirement age (65 and over).

##### *3.1.2 Crime and Deprivation*

North Kesteven is in the top 4 per cent of local authorities in England and Wales for its low levels of crime. It is the safest place in Lincolnshire to live, with the District rate being 18 crimes per 1000 people, compared to 34 for Lincolnshire and 54 for England and Wales. A 35 per cent decrease in crime has been recorded since 2006-2007 for North Kesteven. The District also has low levels of anti-social behaviour.

These low levels of crime are a key factor for residents in making North Kesteven a good place to live.

Nationally, North Kesteven is in the top 20 per cent of the least deprived local authority areas in England. The District is the least deprived district in Lincolnshire. The most deprived area in the District is ranked 9,249 out of the 32,482 in England, where a rank of one is the most deprived. However the rural nature of the District means that barriers to housing and service deprivation is a problem in a number of communities.

The location, geography and makeup of the District reflect national crime trends with the east of England, rural areas and the least deprived areas having lower rates of crime.

### *3.1.3 Economic Position*

Historically, the area has been heavily dependent on agriculture and related industries, but in line with the national picture, this sector has been in decline. As a result the District has qualified for European Objective Two funding, to support social and economic restructuring. Businesses in the District may also be eligible for the Competitiveness Programme.

Employment in the District is predominately service based with 74 per cent of jobs being in this industry area. This is reflected in the District having a low GVA per head of population. The remaining jobs are in the manufacturing (13.3 per cent), construction (8.4 per cent) and tourism-related (7.5 per cent) industries. The District is in the top 90 per cent of Districts nationally for GCSE attainment and has a high proportion of people in managerial and professional occupations as opposed to lower skilled occupations.

In terms of economic activity, the District performs better than the national picture with 75.8 per cent compared to 70.2 per cent of the population being economically active. Unemployment in the District is low at 2.1 per cent compared to the national figure of 3.9 per cent, as of August 2011. The figure is based on people who are unemployed and claiming Job Seekers Allowance.

The District relies on a low-wage economy, with gross average weekly earnings in 2010 being £426.60. This is below the average of £465.20 and £500.40 for the region and Great Britain.

## **3.2 Housing Market**

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was commissioned by the Central Lincolnshire District Councils to give an understanding of how housing markets operate in the area.

### *3.2.1 Housing Affordability*

In considering affordability, a key issue is the relationship between earnings and house prices. The SHMA concludes that:

This affordability issue means that for many new households private renting will be the solution.

### *3.2.2 Value of dwellings and equity*

Of relevance to this Strategy is the amount of equity tied up in owner occupied homes. Owner occupiers were asked in the 2009 Private Sector House Condition Survey about the value of their dwelling, the level of any outstanding mortgage, any other debt and consequent equity. Relationships between available equity and dwelling condition are relevant to the Regulatory Reform Order 2002; Government guidance focussing on local authorities moving towards facilitating loans and equity release rather than giving grants when offering financial assistance to householders.

The average value of a dwelling was £158,000 based on average sale prices compiled by the Land Registry from January to March 2009. The average mortgage level for owner occupied dwellings in North Kesteven, based upon occupier responses, is £77,000 resulting in an average equity of £81,000 per dwelling.

### *3.2.3 Residents with disabilities*

It is estimated that 6,500 (16.1 per cent) occupied dwellings have at least one resident with a long term illness or disability. Just under half of these are likely to be significant enough to represent people who are likely to have specific housing needs. In order to address the specific housing needs of residents with disabilities, the provision of disabled facilities grant (DFG) by local authorities remains mandatory.

## **3.3 Private Sector Housing Conditions**

### *3.3.1 Private Sector House Condition Survey*

Section of the Housing Act 2004 places a duty on local housing authorities to keep the condition of the housing stock under review so that they can make proper decisions about the action they need to take to deal with unsatisfactory housing. This duty is fulfilled through the commissioning of a private sector house condition survey. The Council last commissioned a survey in 2009 working in partnership with all other Lincolnshire district councils and it is this survey that forms the main basis for this strategy.

The survey was a sample of a nominal 1,000 dwellings and covered owner occupied and private rented tenures. The survey was based on a stratified sample of addresses in North Kesteven, in order to gain a representative picture across the district. A sample of 1,950 was drawn with, in practice, 990 surveys being undertaken in total.

The sample was drawn using the Building Research Establishment (BRE) stock model data. This allocates properties into four bands (strata), based on the projection of vulnerably occupied non decent dwellings. This form of stratification concentrates the surveys in areas with the poorest housing conditions and allows more detailed analysis. This procedure does not introduce any bias to the survey as results are weighted proportionally to take account of over-sampling.

The models are based on information drawn from the Office of National Statistics Census data, the Land Registry, the English Housing Survey and other sources. It is this data that is used to predict dwelling condition and identify the 'hot-spots' to be over-sampled.

Each of the 990 surveys conducted contained information on the following areas:

- General characteristics of the dwelling;
- Condition of the internal and external fabric;

- Provision of amenities;
- Compliance with housing health and safety;
- Age and type of building elements;
- Energy efficiency measures;
- Compliance with the Decent Homes Standard; and
- Socio-economic information about the household.

The Council shall plan to commission another private sector house conditions survey during 2015.

### *3.3.2 Summary of findings*

Detailed statistics on a range of areas where information was derived from the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 are set out in Appendix 1. The main findings on which to base this Strategy can be summarised as follows.

#### Dwelling stock

- Most dwellings across the District are houses (or bungalows).
- Inner conurbations are predominantly pre-1919 houses, often terraced or stone cottages in town and village centres with older properties pepper potted across the rural areas.
- A high proportion of the stock was built after 1965 with much development from then to the early 80's being estates of bungalows, with some detached houses.
- More recent estate development has returned to houses.

#### Houses in Multiple Occupation

- There are only estimated to be low numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and few properties have been verified as an HMO.
- No HMO properties are known for sure to need a mandatory license.

#### Decent Homes Standard

- Primary reasons for failing the Decent Homes Standard in North Kesteven are serious hazards and thermal comfort.
- 34.5% of vulnerable households on benefits live in non decent homes.

#### Housing Health and Safety Rating System

- Principal Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazard failures are excess cold, falling on level surfaces and falls on stairs.
- Category 1 hazards are strongly associated with older dwellings and dwellings occupied by heads of household aged under 25 and over 65 and those in receipt of benefit.
- Proportionately, Category 1 hazards are more strongly associated with the privately rented sector.

#### Energy Efficiency

- Fuel poverty levels are higher than the England average.
- The cost to remedy the 6,400 owner occupied dwellings in fuel poverty is £5.6 million.
- The mean Standard Assessment Performance (SAP (energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good))) is 57, which is higher than that found nationally (49).
- The less energy efficient dwellings are older dwellings (pre 1919), semi detached houses and bungalows and privately rented dwellings.

## **5. RESOURCES**

This Chapter sets out the staffing and financial constraints within which the Strategy and its initiatives are developed.

### **5.1 Private Sector Housing Renewal team**

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team is currently made up of a manager and the equivalent of one and a half officers. The half time officer spends the other half of their time delivering disabled adaptations in Council owned homes. This is a small team in comparison to other district councils which limits the ability to deliver services directly. Support from other sections of the Council along with effective collaborative and partnership working with other local authorities, statutory and voluntary organisations and charities is, therefore, a necessity.

The role of the Private Sector Housing Renewal team is not only to deliver services directly but to ensure that services being delivered by others contribute to the holistic approach to private sector housing and fulfilment of the aims of this Strategy.

### **5.2 Partnerships**

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team represents the Council on two main groups that supports partnership and collaborative working. Both groups coordinate their activity under the banner of Improving Homes and there is an element of cross representation between the groups. Each group maintains a work plan and will from time to time establish a small working group to progress particular initiatives.

#### *5.2.1 Lincolnshire Private Sector Housing Group*

The Lincolnshire Private Sector Housing Group is a long standing group to share best practice in the private sector housing field. It aims to achieve some level of consistency between districts, particularly in relation to services that people might encounter in different areas (e.g. enforcement action where the landlord owns properties in more than one district). The Group also develops protocols with other organisations such as Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service for Houses in Multiple Occupation and Children and Adult Social Care Services for delivering disabled adaptations.

#### *5.2.2 Home Energy LINCS Partnership*

The Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP) is made up of officers from the local Energy Conservation Authorities (District Councils), Lincolnshire County Council (Sustainability and Public Health). The Partnership has been formed under a Memorandum of Understanding signed up to by senior managers of the local authorities. Representatives from other partner organisations attend as appropriate.

### **5.3 Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency**

The Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency is a local charity commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council's Public Health Directorate to deliver a range of housing support services for vulnerable residents.

## **5.4 Disabled Facilities Grant team**

The long term future of this team is to be agreed but is currently made up of secondments from partner organisations, particularly the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency. The team runs a shared service across a number of district council areas providing households with additional support to secure disabled adaptations. That is support above the Council's statutory duty to administer grant applications with the aim of streamlining the process for applicants and minimising end to end delivery times.

Providing disabled adaptations is seen as particularly important given the possible health implications, care and support costs of residents not obtaining essential disabled adaptations in a timely fashion. However, it is essential that delivery of this aspect of the private sector housing service is integrated with all other aspects.

## **5.5 Sustain NK**

The Sustainability team in North Kesteven is funded through the Partnership NK fund to give advice on all aspects of sustainability and climate change. There is of course a considerable overlap in the case of energy efficiency of housing and the Private Sector Housing Renewal team delivers under the auspice of Sustain NK. The Private Sector Housing Renewal team leads on home energy conservation strategy (the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) duty) and affordable warmth. Sustain NK tends to cover aspects of energy efficiency relating to low carbon or renewable technology and oversee the district wide carbon management plan.

## **5.6 Housing Needs**

It is the Council's Housing Needs team that provides advice to tenants on maintaining tenancies and their rights. The team also provides general housing options advice and promotes the private rented sector as tenure of choice. Clearly there are strong links with private sector housing in terms of housing standards and making best use of housing by encouraging relocation as an alternative to extensive renovations or adaptations.

## **5.7 Housing Support**

The Housing Support team of Support Coordinators deliver practical support to enable people to remain living independently in their homes

## **5.8 Financial Resources**

Based on current predictions, the Council will attempt to maintain the following minimum budget levels throughout the lifetime of this Strategy.

### *5.8.1 Capital funding*

- Mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFG) and discretionary support for disabled occupants - £365,000
- Discretionary financial assistance for private sector housing renewal, Handyperson services, relocation support, etc - £310,000 for 2012-15, to be established thereafter

The Council will investigate the potential to use other sources of funding of its own and from partner organisations to support private sector housing renewal and bringing empty homes back into use; including New Homes Bonus (District Council and County Council elements), second homes Council Tax discount grant payments and funds diverted from adult health and social care services into initiatives to prevent ill health and accidents.

#### *5.8.2 Revenue funding*

From revenue funding the Council will, subject to review provide £35,000 per annum to commission technical services from the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency to support vulnerable households with home improvements (half disabled adaptations support and half housing renewal). Revenue funding of up to £12,000 will also be used to contribute to partnerships considered essential to effective service delivery (E.g. Housing Intelligence for the East Midlands, Decent and Safe Homes) and membership of organisations (such as NEA (the national energy efficiency charity)).

#### *5.8.3 External funding*

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team is responsible for researching the availability of and bidding for sources of external funding to deliver specific projects that support the aims of this Strategy. In addition the Council shall aim to maximise the benefit of national funding initiatives such as Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) for residents.

## **6. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING PRIORITIES FOR NORTH KESTEVEN**

This Strategy sets out the support that the Council provides to help support home owners and private tenants to remain living independently in their homes. Its principle focus is on raising housing standards within the remit of the Private Sector Housing team but also covers wider support to enable independent living.

The aim is to ensure that existing private sector housing remains fit for purpose to provide an essential housing choice for a large number of residents. In doing so it is important to ensure that all factors affecting the occupiers are addressed together and not in isolation.

There are a number of defined housing standards described in Part 1 of this Strategy that could be applied to private sector housing; however, the Council feels it should support residents to reach as high a standard and quality of life as possible through its interventions.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall aim to ensure that the objectives of each priority theme is met through a holistic approach that enables private tenants and vulnerable home owners to live in a home that meets their needs in all respects. For example, the Council does not believe it would be appropriate for funding to be secured for disabled adaptations if there are serious hazards within the property or the householder is unable to achieve adequate levels of warmth at an affordable cost.

Based on the evidence in the first section the main issues needing to be addressed in the private sector housing stock in North Kesteven through this Strategy's themes are considered to be:

1. Improve home energy efficiency to tackle the interrelated issues of serious excess cold Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, failure of the thermal comfort criteria of the Decent Homes Standard and fuel poverty;
2. Remedy substantial disrepair and building elements that are old and in poor condition;
3. Provide specially adapted properties for disabled occupants with disabled adaptations being completed in good time;
4. Address limitations on access to the private rented sector such as demand outstripping supply, poor conditions and rent affordability; and
5. Numbers of long term empty homes.

From these the Strategy's five priority themes have been established as:

1. Ensuring proper housing standards.
2. Reducing energy use and delivering affordable warmth.
3. Supporting independent living.
4. Promoting access to the private rented sector.
5. Bringing empty homes back into use.

The table following summarises the main services currently being delivered to implement these themes.

### **6.1 Private sector household database**

Working in partnership a comprehensive, countywide household database is to be established and maintained. The Lincolnshire Research Observatory will put forward a proposal on how this is to be achieved.

## SERVICES TO DELIVER INITIATIVES

<b>ENSURING PROPER HOUSING STANDARDS</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Services to deliver initiative</b>	<b>Outline of service</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Provide advice and assistance.	Housing options.	Undertake property inspections and produce condition report to support re-housing.	Housing Renewal team, Lincolnshire HIA.
	Dilapidation schedules.	Undertake property inspections and produce a schedule of repairs for owners.	Housing Renewal team, Lincolnshire HIA.
Equity release schemes.	Signpost to schemes and support.	Promote safe, equity release schemes and support.	Housing Renewal team, Lincolnshire HIA.
Charitable funding.	Signpost to sources and support.	Referral to Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency.	Housing Renewal team, Lincolnshire HIA.
Housing financial assistance.	Cases needing support (where no other appropriate route to meet a vulnerable household's needs is identified).	Property inspections, schedule of repairs, and case report. Referral to Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency.	Housing Renewal team; Lincolnshire HIA; £310,000 capital per annum.
	Equity release set up costs.	Payment of initial set up costs that cannot be rolled into equity release loans.	Housing Renewal team; From £310,000 capital.
	Relocation.	Payment of relocation expenses where such expenses would jeopardise moves.	Housing Renewal team; From £310,000 capital.
Handyperson assistance.	Countywide Handyperson scheme.	Referral to Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency	Housing Renewal team; Lincolnshire HIA.
	Small works assistance.	Provide small sums to fund minor repairs for older and disabled owners on low incomes	Housing Renewal team, Lincolnshire HIA; £20,000 capital per annum from £310,000
Housing standards enforcement.	Informal and formal enforcement action (notices).	Undertake property inspections, hazard rating and action in accordance with Housing Standards Enforcement Policy	Housing Renewal team.
	Prosecutions and work in default.	Initiate prosecutions and carry out work in default following non compliance with statutory notices.	Housing Renewal team; Legal Services Lincolnshire.

	Immigration inspections.	Undertake property inspections and complete pro forma for submission to UK Border Agency.	Housing Renewal team.
Houses in Multiple Occupation	Identification and inspection.	Desktop exercises and inspections to identify premises followed by routine inspections at intervals determined by risk assessment.	Housing Renewal team.
	Mandatory licensing of certain Houses in Multiple Occupation.	Process mandatory House in Multiple Occupation license applications.	Housing Renewal team. Partnership with neighbouring authority.
<b>REDUCING ENERGY USE AND DELIVERING AFFORDABLE WARMTH</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Services to deliver initiative</b>		<b>Resources</b>
Providing advice and assistance.	Generic advice and signposting.	Provide basic advice and refer on to other organisation for specialist advice and support.	Housing Renewal team; Sustainability team.
	Events and road shows.	Provide and staff a stand at appropriate events and put on road shows.	Housing Renewal team; Sustainability team.
	Sustain NK website.	Place up to date information on the Sustain NK website with link from the corporate website.	Sustainability team.
Energy company funds.	Signpost to schemes and support.	Referral to energy companies.	Housing Renewal team.
Energy Performance Certificate Domestic Energy Assessors.	Provide Energy Performance Certificates.	Independent, impartial advice on appropriate energy efficiency measures.	Housing Renewal team; Property Services unit.
Community energy champions.	Recruit a network of community energy champions.	Deliver basic energy awareness training to champions to deliver in-house advice and support for older people.	Housing Renewal team.
Home Energy LINCS Partnership.	Maintain Partnership as integral group to support delivery of Energy Conservation Authority duties.	Continue chairmanship of Partnership and support working groups.	Housing Renewal team.

<b>SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Services to deliver initiative</b>		<b>Resources</b>
First Contact.	Respond to referrals received through First Contact.	Make initial contact to establish issue and provide basic advice or services. Signpost on to other organisations. Complete First Contact outcome forms.	Customer Services unit, Community Initiatives unit, Housing Renewal team, Housing Needs team.
Preventing repossession.	Mortgage Rescue Scheme.	Promote and refer home owners.	Housing Needs team.
Managing leasehold properties.	Lease private sector homes for placements.	Management service for vulnerable people placed in homes.	Housing Management unit; Property Services unit.
Housing options.	Housing Needs advice.	Generic advice on options for re-housing. Referral to Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency.	Housing Needs team.
Floating support services.	Support to prevent homelessness.	Home visits to help households prevent homelessness occurring or re-occurring.	Housing Support team.
	Money advice services.	Generic advice from national Money Advice Service website. Referral to Money Advice Team or other organisations.	Money Advice team (shared service).
	Supporting older residents.	Visiting support service to help people live as independently as possible.	Housing Support team.
	Lifeline.	Provide an operator covered emergency call system.	Housing Support team.
Disabled adaptations.	Mandatory disabled facilities grant (DFG).	Deliver mandatory DFG in an expedient, streamlined manner.	DFG team (shared service); £365,000 capital per annum.
	Grant conditions.	Impose and enforce grant conditions to ensure best use is made of resources.	Housing Renewal team.
Discretionary assistance for disabled people.	Relocation assistance.	Provide support to relocate as an alternative to costly or non reasonable and practicable adaptations.	Housing Renewal team; From £365,000 capital.
	Funding outside the mandatory DFG scope.	Consider requests for additional works or funds and aim to identify funds where appropriate.	DFG team (shared service); From £365,000 capital.

<b>PROMOTING ACCESS TO THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Services to deliver initiative</b>		<b>Resources</b>
Provide advice and assistance.	Landlord forums.	Participate in the organisation and delivery of a series of countywide landlord forums.	Housing Renewal team.
	Landlord committee.	Facilitate a landlord committee if established.	Housing Renewal team.
	Lincolnshire Landlords Electronic Newsletter website.	Maintain a website and publish newsletters in partnership at regular intervals	Housing Renewal team; Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) project.
	Landlord agent registration fees.	Payment of fees for people on low income seeking private rented homes to register with a Letting Agent or Estate Agent.	
	Harassment and illegal evictions.	Provide advice, assistance and, if necessary enforcement in cases.	Housing Needs team.
Landlord and Letting Agent Accreditation.	Landlord Accreditation Scheme.	Promote landlord accreditation schemes and support processing of applications and property inspections.	Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) project; Housing Renewal team.
Local Letting Agency.	Contracted out Social Letting Agency service.	Refer properties to Provider. Sit on and support Board or Steering Group.	Housing Renewal team.
Rent support.	Housing Benefits.	Process applications for Housing Benefit.	Housing Benefits team (shared service).
	Discretionary housing payments.	Consider applications for discretionary funds where Housing Benefit is insufficient.	Housing Benefits team (shared service).
	Rent deposit guarantee and rent advance schemes.	Process applications for schemes to enable access to private rented homes.	Housing Needs team.

<b>BRINGING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Services to deliver initiative</b>		<b>Resources</b>
Dilapidation schedules.	Support for owners to bring empty homes back in to use.	Undertake property inspections and produce schedule of repairs with guide costs.	Housing Renewal team.
Empty homes working group.	Coordinate all empty homes activity.	Regular attendance at the Group meetings and complete follow up actions.	Housing Strategy and Growth unit; Housing Renewal team.
Empty Dwelling Management Orders.	Issuing of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (Interim (following Residential Property Tribunal decision) and Final).	Property inspection and case preparation for Interim EDMO. Serving of Interim and Final EDMO.	Housing Strategy and Growth unit; Housing Renewal team.
Enforced sale.	Force the sale of property to recover costs.	Case preparation and serve notices.	Legal Services Lincolnshire.
Compulsory Purchase Orders	Purchase long term empty homes to secure re-use	Pass case to consultant following Council approval.	Contracted out.

## **7. ENSURING PROPER HOUSING STANDARDS**

### **7.1 Providing advice and assistance**

The significant shift in emphasis on home owners being responsible for repairs to their properties has to be reflected in this Strategy. The majority of home owners will, therefore, be offered no more than self help to secure home improvements. Nevertheless, the Council recognises that there will be situations where support is necessary and appropriate for either vulnerable home owners, landlords committed to providing a good service and owners of empty homes willing to bring them back into use.

#### *7.1.1 Trusted trader scheme*

The Council supports the trusted trader schemes run by the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency, which was developed in conjunction with Lincolnshire County Council's Trading Standards and Lincolnshire Police. The Council will work with the Agency and contractors to ensure that the range of improvements that residents need to make to their homes is covered on the list.

#### *7.1.2 Housing Options*

There will of course be times when necessary repairs are beyond the means of home owners or the funding options available are not agreeable. In these cases the Council's Housing Needs section will provide the household with advice on alternatives to home ownership. This will include access to the Council's own housing stock through Choice Based Lettings, housing through Registered Social Landlords or private renting.

Where an existing home owner or private tenant is seeking social housing, the Private Sector Housing Renewal team will on request undertake an inspection and provide the Housing Needs section or Registered Social Landlord with a report to support their application. For private rented properties the objective to ensure the property is of a proper standard for future tenants remains absolute.

In cases where the Housing Needs team is directing an applicant into private rented premises, it may call upon the Private Sector Housing Renewal team along with others to inspect the proposed home to ensure it meets defined housing standards.

If the Council is aware that serious hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) exist then it has a duty to take some form of appropriate action. This action will take into account the wishes of the occupant and possibly be made in consultation with other statutory organisations such as Lincolnshire County Council's Adult and Children Social Care Directorate or Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service. In most cases this will be a non statutory Hazard Awareness Notice but in extreme cases may involve serving a Prohibition Order on all or part of the premises or other enforcement options in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

#### *7.1.3 Right to Buy*

The Government has re-stimulated the Right to Buy of Council homes with increased discounts available to tenants. The Council recognises that this could lead to problems maintaining properties for new owners on lower incomes. The Council's Design and Maintenance section will, therefore, advise prospective purchasers of the foreseen planned maintenance and, in liaison with the Private Sector Housing Renewal team, give

advice on the likelihood of some or all of this falling within the support provisions under this Strategy and the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy.

#### *7.1.4 Dilapidation Schedules*

Private Sector Housing section staff will undertake property inspections and produce a schedule of repairs with indicative costs in order to fulfil one of the following aims:

1. For helping an owner occupier to determine the best course of action to secure repairs or consider alternative housing;
2. Demonstrating to a private landlord the works needed to avoid enforcement action being taken against them, for landlord accreditation and or for the property to be accepted onto a Local Letting Agency;
3. Providing an empty home owner with details of the works necessary to put the property in a state suitable for letting or that are likely to affect the sale price of the property.

These inspections are for advice only and do not replace the benefits of having a full independent building survey conducted. Indeed in many cases the report may recommend that a detailed structural, services or damp report is obtained and recommendations put into action.

## **7.2 Equity release schemes**

Where a home owner owns the freehold interest in their home and its value is more than any outstanding mortgage or other debt(s) secured against the property, then the Council shall promote the use of safe, equity release schemes to the owner. Examples of such schemes are those promoted by Foundations, the coordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies (Just Retirement Solutions) and the Home Improvement Trust (House Proud). The Council shall work towards establishing one scheme branded as its own.

## **7.3 Charitable funding**

Depending on a households past situation, there may be one or more charities that could be approached to fund home improvements. Examples are the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA), Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute (RABI) and Royal British Legion. Households would be referred to a Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency Caseworker for further support securing charitable funding.

## **7.4 Housing Financial Assistance Policy**

The Council shall maintain a Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 following guidance issued in Circular 16/03. The Policy will be reviewed within the constraints of available sources of funding to take into account the effectiveness it is having in meeting the objectives of this Strategy. The Council will work with partners and strive to source new funding for private sector housing renewal.

### *7.4.1 Cases needing support*

In cases where no sources of funding or other suitable housing options appear to be available to the home owner, the Council will consider making some financial assistance available direct. Each case would be considered on its merits by the Head of Housing,

Partnerships and Communities, taking on board the recommendations of the Private Sector Housing Renewal team made following liaison with the Housing Needs team. In such cases the funds will be provided on a repayable basis when the property is sold and secured as a Land Registry Charge placed upon the property.

#### *7.4.2 Equity Release set-up costs*

The Council will provide small sums to cover the set-up costs that have to be provided up front where a home owner opts for an equity release scheme and the set up costs cannot be built into the loan.

#### *7.4.3 Relocation*

Where a home owner pursues moving home the Council will consider providing financial support towards the costs associated with the move (E.g. Legal expenses, furniture removal). This would be where the move might be jeopardised because of financial constraints.

### **7.5 Handyperson service**

Lincolnshire County Council's Public Health Directorate has commissioned the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency to broker a countywide Handyperson service available to all vulnerable residents. The cost of work carried out through the Handyperson service is met by the home owner except insofar as it meets the objective(s) below.

#### *7.5.1 Small works assistance*

Smaller jobs that would nevertheless result in removing a serious hazard arising from a defect to the structure and fabric of a property, or prevent such a defect leading to a serious hazard, can be particularly troubling for vulnerable home owners. In order to help with such expenses the Council will maintain a pot of capital funding held by the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency to support jobs. This will be allocated by the Agency in accordance with the Council's Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy and monitored by the Private Sector Housing Renewal team.

#### *7.5.2 External funding*

The Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency may be aware of sources of funding such as from Lincolnshire County Council's Social Care or Trading Standards directorates, Lincolnshire Police and Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue for the purposes of:

- Funding small scale disabled adaptations;
- Reducing crime or the fear of crime; and
- Reducing the risk of fire or providing early warning in the event of a fire.

Eligible households will be advised of this by the Agency.

### **7.6 Housing enforcement policy**

The Council shall work with landlords and owners in a number of ways as described in other sections of this Strategy. However, following a complaint about poor housing standards in a private rented home, the Council will take appropriate action against landlords in respect of serious Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards, fuel poverty, substantial disrepair and fire safety. In addition, action may be taken

in respect of owner occupied dwellings in appropriate cases. Such action will be in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Concordat, Housing Enforcement Policy and Scheme of Officer Delegation. This includes a period of informal action to encourage a landlord to take action voluntarily.

If informal action does not result in improvements within a reasonable time, formal action can take in one of several forms:

- Hazard Awareness Notice;
- Improvement Notice;
- Emergency Remedial Works;
- Prohibition Order;
- Demolition Order

Notices can be suspended, for example if a property becomes unoccupied and is unlikely to be re-let. If a property is in a particularly poor state an Emergency Prohibition Order can be made.

Private Sector Housing Renewal team officers shall initiate enforcement action and prosecution, decisions being ratified in accordance with the Council constitution scheme of delegation. Private Sector Housing Renewal team officers will serve a range of notices to undertake inspections and obtain evidence to build a case for enforcement.

#### *7.6.1 Charging for Notices, Prosecution and Works in Default*

In order to reflect the fact that statutory notices take time to administer and as a deterrent for cases going so far the Council will make a charge under Sections 49 and 50 of the Housing Act 2004 for serving notices. Furthermore, where the owner fails to meet the requirements of housing enforcement notices the Council will where appropriate not hesitate to prosecute. Decisions to prosecute or carry out works in default will be made by the Head of Housing, Partnerships and Communities taking advice from the Private Sector Housing Renewal team after having obtained legal advice from Legal Services Lincolnshire. It might also be appropriate for the Council to carry out repair works in default and apply a Local Land Charge to the property.

#### *7.6.2 Immigration inspections*

In addition to enforcement the Private Sector Housing Renewal team inspects properties for immigration control. The pro forma developed for this purpose is completed by the Officer for submission to the UK Border Agency. The person requesting the inspection and report shall be charged for this service.

### **7.7 Other Enforcement Options**

There are occasions where enforcement under the Housing Acts might not be the most appropriate or straightforward route to achieve proper housing standards. In such cases the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall liaise with other appropriate sections of the council. In order to decide on actions it may be necessary to convene ad hoc case meetings.

#### *7.7.1 Environmental Protection*

The Environmental Protection unit deals with a range of statutory public health nuisances under legislation including:

- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949
- Public Health Act 1936

This is primarily where premises defects are causing damage or nuisance to neighbouring premises. There are, therefore, occasions where such action is necessary to enable people to keep their own homes in good order.

#### *7.7.2 Dangerous Structures*

If it is believed premises represent a risk of harm to passers by the Building Control unit can take action under section 79 of the Building Act 1984.

#### *7.7.3 Listed Buildings*

Where a listed building is falling into disrepair the Council has a duty to preserve the premises. This can include serving notice on the owner under the Listed Building and Conservation Area Act 1990 and undertaking work in default. Such options are dealt with by the Planning Enforcement team in conjunction with the Development Control (conservation) team.

#### *7.7.4 Visual amenity*

Where the condition of a dwelling or its land is affecting the visual amenity of the neighbourhood the Planning Enforcement team can take action including the service of a notice under section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

### **7.8 Anti Social Behaviour**

In order for people to continue to reside in and enjoy living in private sector homes it is sometimes necessary for the Council's Anti Social Behaviour team to investigate complaints and take appropriate action against perpetrators in line with the policy.

### **7.9 Registered Social Landlord Premises**

In an increasing number of cases Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants complain that property defects are not being put right by their landlord. Whilst the Council has the same enforcement powers over RSL properties, it believes it should not need to use them on social landlords. The Council will, therefore, establish communications with RSL repair and maintenance sections with the aim of ensuring cases can resolved.

### **7.10 Houses in Multiple Occupation**

Inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) will be carried out:

- a) When any HMO is first identified;
- b) Following a complaint about poor housing standards; and
- c) Periodically in accordance with a risk based inspection programme, with a maximum of five years between inspections.

The Council will maintain an up-to-date protocol with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue covering their principal fire safety duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2003.

The Council will insofar as is practicable maintain a list of all HMO properties.

On inspecting a HMO the Council will apply the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the HMO Management Regulations and the Local Government Regulation Housing – Fire Safety Guidance.

#### *7.10.1 Mandatory Licensing of Certain Houses in Multiple Occupation*

There are thought to be exceptionally few Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) requiring mandatory licensing in North Kesteven. Progressing licenses has, therefore, not been a priority to date. Nevertheless, the Council now recognises it should pursue owners operating a licensable HMO illegally. Where a HMO requiring a license comes to the attention of the Council, the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall send a standard application pack to the owner. By informal agreement, the application will be returned to and processed by one of the neighbouring district councils and the owner shall be required to pay the fee due as set by that council. The Private Sector Housing team shall conduct a follow up inspection within the time period the license is operational to ensure conditions attached to the licence are complied with.

#### *7.10.2 Additional licensing of all Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)*

Given the low estimated numbers of HMO in North Kesteven, low levels of complaints and anticipated low risks; the Council is unlikely to need to consider additional licensing of all HMO. This position will be reviewed as HMO are identified and in light of complaints received by tenants.

### **7.11 Park homes**

The Council recognises the unique challenges faced by occupants of park homes on permanent residential sites. The Private Sector Housing Renewal team will inspect units under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) but is mindful that park homes are not covered by the Housing Act 2004. Poor conditions in rented units will, therefore, be addressed where possible through powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in conjunction with the Council's Environmental Protection section.

Changes resulting from Government consultation on a Better Deal for Mobile Home Residents will be monitored and put into action by the Council as they arise. The Council will also consider ways of improving energy efficiency and alleviating fuel poverty for Park Home residents. Working collectively with other licensing teams, the Council will lobby for changes to model site license conditions so they might be better used to tackle poor conditions and fuel poverty.

## **8. REDUCING ENERGY USE AND DELIVERING AFFORDABLE WARMTH**

### **8.1 Developing Strategy and Actions**

This Strategy sets out the overall approach the Council will take to reduce energy use from homes and deliver affordable warmth. Much of the approach to be taken benefits from the Council working in partnership with a range of organisations through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP).

#### *8.1.1 Home Energy Conservation Strategy*

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) required the Council to adopt a home energy conservation strategy and report annually on progress. It included a target of reducing energy use in existing homes by 30 per cent over a 10-15 year period. This aim was fulfilled after 12 years and the Labour Government had planned to repeal the Act. However, the current Government has reaffirmed the Act. Guidance requires the Council to produce a further home energy conservation report by 31 March 2013, setting local targets and reporting on progress to the public and the Department of Energy and Climate Change every two years until 2027. Strategies can be developed alone or by a consortium of local authorities and subject to other partners' agreement the Council, therefore, intends to develop a common report structure through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP).

### **8.2 Providing advice and assistance**

In the main the Council will refer enquirers to the independent, impartial national energy advice helpline for general advice on how to save energy in the home. Over time, the Council will aim to increase the amount of local advice made available through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP).

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team will deliver energy advice direct to home owners who are in or at risk of being in fuel poverty together with signposting to other services that might help deliver affordable warmth (e.g. fuel bulk purchase schemes, financial or debt advice). These are offered by a wide range of organisations such as Age UK, Citizens Advice Bureau and Community LINCS (the rural community council for Lincolnshire). Landlords who need to make energy efficiency improvements to the homes they rent are also offered bespoke advice.

Lincolnshire County Council will support a targeted campaign to ensure residents are given a consistent message around claiming benefits they are entitled to. Initial money health checks would be through the national Money Advice Service website with local support building on this.

The Sustainability team will deliver more detailed advice on reducing energy use in homes through changing to heating that uses renewable fuel sources and micro generation of electricity. This will include advice on Government financial incentives such as the Feed in Tariff or Renewable Heat Incentive.

Staff in both the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Sustainability teams will maintain a qualification appropriate to the provision of sound, energy efficiency advice. This is at present the City and Guilds qualification in Energy Awareness.

### *8.2.1 Events and road shows*

In addition to one-to-one advice, both the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Sustainability teams shall contribute to the general promotion of energy efficiency and affordable warmth advice through website and leaflets and attendance at events, road shows, clubs, etc., when considered appropriate.

### *8.2.2 Sustain NK website*

The Sustain NK website shall be used as the platform for the majority of general energy efficiency advice. The Council's corporate website will focus on advice on staying warm in the home with links to the Sustain NK website for energy efficiency measures, links to other appropriate sites and third party contact details.

## **8.3 Green Deal**

The Government sees local authorities as having a significant role in the implementation of Green Deal:

- As possible Providers, co-ordinating finance and delivery
- Working in partnership with commercial Green Deal providers and community partners
- Acting as advocates to promote Green Deal

In principle, the Council is committed to working in partnership with commercial Green Deal providers and community partners through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP). It is intended this would be achieved through the development by Legal Services Lincolnshire of a framework agreement that Providers could sign up to, to deliver a local branded scheme. Consideration will be given to the role that Council officers will play in advising residents on the package of measures.

## **8.4 Energy Company Obligation**

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will necessitate close working relationships being developed with a number of suppliers and/ or managing agents. ECO is the mechanism to achieve affordable warmth for residents not heating their homes enough at present. In addition, ECO funding will ensure Green Deal finance is for solid wall properties and homes in or adjacent to the worst deprived wards and rural wards.

## **8.5 Public Health Initiatives**

During the past winter the Council played an active role in promoting and referring into the Responders to Warmth programme. This was funded through the Department of Health Warm Homes, Health People fund and delivered by the Lincolnshire Community Foundation working with partners on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council's Public Health directorate.

The Responders to Warmth scheme was aimed at residents with a long term health condition affected by the cold who would otherwise not be eligible for funding support. Services included:

- Green Doctor inspections through Groundwork to determine the
- Small scale works (e.g. draught proofing) through the county Handyman service
- Loft and cavity wall insulation

- Fast track heating repairs and installations

The Council hopes the benefit of such a scheme on an ongoing, sustainable basis will be seen and will continue to work with Public Health through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP) to coordinate a future Warm Homes, Healthy People scheme with other energy advice and schemes in the county.

## **8.6 Energy company funds**

The Council will work with partners to identify other schemes that assist people with home energy improvements such as the following two examples from energy companies.

### *8.6.1 Health through Warmth*

The Health through Warmth scheme was set up by N Power in 2000, working together with NEA (National Energy Action) and the NHS. The aim of the scheme is to improve levels of warmth, comfort and quality of life for vulnerable people who have cold related illnesses and need help with the installation of heating and insulation measures or repairs to existing systems or appliances which they can't afford themselves. The scheme is now available to homeowners who meet the eligibility criteria across England and Wales. The Council will, therefore, make referrals to the Health through Warmth team where appropriate.

### *8.6.2 Caring Energy*

The E.ON Caring Energy Fund aims to assist vulnerable E.ON customers who are living in low income households (a household income of less than £16,190pa and savings below £8,000). They may be facing financial difficulty and may not be eligible for financial help from Government schemes.

The E.ON Caring Energy Fund could offer the following assistance to successful applicants:

- Payments in full or part to cover the cost of installing cavity wall insulation and/or loft insulation
- Payments in full or part to cover the cost of repairing or installing heating measures which in some cases could include repair of unsafe gas heating systems
- Payments in full or part could be made to cover the cost of household appliances.

## **8.7 Energy Performance Certificate Domestic Energy Assessors**

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) gives information on how to make homes more energy efficient and reduce energy costs. All homes bought, sold or rented require an EPC. Lincolnshire Trading Standards will be asked to lead a media campaign in partnership with the Private Sector Housing Renewal team to raise awareness of Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) for tenants in the private rented sector.

The Design and Maintenance team has a number of trained Domestic Energy Assessors (DEA) to issue an EPC. It is also planned to train Private Sector Housing Renewal and Sustainability team staff to issue an EPC and then have potential for some DEA trained staff to be trained as Green Deal assessors.

Where it is appropriate and doing so would meet this Strategy's aims, an EPC or independent Green Deal assessment will be offered to private sector residents either at

cost or free of charge depending upon the purpose. For example, landlords could be offered an EPC at cost whilst working with the Council to improve their home and tenants advised on the implications of their landlords funding measures through Green Deal.

### **8.8 Community Energy Champions**

Supporting older people through the process of financing energy efficiency improvements will not be possible through the limited numbers of competent staff that the Council employs. Staff in the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Sustainability teams, along with staff employed by other partners will be trained to deliver basic energy efficiency awareness training. Working in partnership with others the Council will then aim to recruit and support a network of community energy champions. These champions could be called upon to undertake an audit of an older person's home in their locality and help them to secure home improvements.

### **8.9 Bulk fuel purchase and collective energy switching**

The Council wishes to investigate the opportunities provided by bulk fuel purchase, collective energy switching schemes and district heating to support communities by driving energy costs downwards.

### **8.10 Home Energy LINCS Partnership**

The Home Energy LINCS Partnership (HELP) shall be developed as the coordinating group for all energy advice and schemes in the county, including those developed under Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). The Council will, therefore, continue to play a major role in the Partnership, represented by the Private Sector Housing Renewal team. The Memorandum of Understanding for the Partnership, reporting mechanism and resources of HELP will be reviewed in order to drive forward the actions in the Affordable Warmth Strategy and ensure it is inclusive of all relevant partner organisations, particularly Public Health.

The Council will request that the Partnership investigates the feasibility of setting up or partnering with a Community Interest Company or similar not for profit organisation. It is believed this would put the local authorities in the best position to work with Green Deal providers. However, if this aspiration should not transpire the Council supports the strengthening of the Partnership through its Memorandum of Understanding.

### **8.11 Carbon Action Network**

The Council will continue to play an active role in the East Midlands Carbon Action Network (CAN), represented by the Private Sector Housing Renewal team. The Council believes that an enhanced national Carbon Action Network should be the local authority network on Green Deal desired by the Department of Energy and Climate Change in its Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 guidance.

### **8.12 NEA – The National Energy Efficiency Charity**

The Council supports NEA as the main campaigning charity on fuel poverty issues and shall maintain local authority membership throughout the lifetime of this Strategy. The support offered through this membership shall be maximised through attendance at East Midland fuel poverty forums, national conference and discounts on training for Council staff and partners.

## **9. SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING**

### **9.1 First Contact**

The Council is a committed partner in the countywide First Contact signposting scheme under a Service Level Agreement with Lincolnshire County Council. First Contact works with public and voluntary services to help older people stay safe and well in their own home. It is funded by NHS Lincolnshire and is run Lincoln Age UK and administered by Lincolnshire County Council.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team responds to referrals from owner occupiers and private tenants who are seeking advice on housing standards, assistance with repairs and keeping the home warm. If other housing needs should be identified the referral would be passed to the Housing Needs or Housing Support teams. Onward referrals are often made to other organisations.

The Council is also expanding the use it makes of First Contact to refer older residents for services from other organisations that help them remain safe and independent at home. Front line staff who visit people in their homes and Customer Services Centre staff will be trained to complete checklists with residents.

Plans are being developed for First Contact to be rolled out as First Contact Plus for all adults. This will include the offer of advice on wider housing needs (maintaining tenancies, supported housing, homelessness and energy efficiency). This will necessitate an initial triage of referrals to identify the appropriate team(s) to respond (Housing Needs, Housing Repairs, Housing Support, Private Sector Housing Renewal or Sustainability). Triage of referrals will be carried out by Customer Services.

### **9.2 Preventing Repossession**

#### *9.2.1 Mortgage Rescue Scheme*

The Council promotes and refers home owners to the national Mortgage Rescue Scheme. This is a Government sponsored program that aims to help vulnerable households struggling to meet mortgage repayments, and at risk of losing their homes. It provides direct financial help for eligible home owners.

### **9.3 Managing Leasehold Properties**

In a small number of cases the Council has entered into a leasehold agreement with property owners whereby it manages properties on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council's Adult Social Care service who house and support people with special needs. This approach could be replicated on an ad hoc basis to meet particularly challenging housing needs.

### **9.4 Housing Options**

#### *9.4.1 Housing Needs*

It is important that before embarking on home improvements to enable a household to remain living in their home they ensure they are making the right choice. It could be that to move, either within the same housing tenure or into a different one will work out better. The Private Sector Housing Renewal team will establish the suitability or otherwise of the property in regards to condition, affordable warmth and space. If the householder raises a

potential need for disabled adaptations details shall be referred to Lincolnshire County Council's Adult and Children Social Care, Customer Contact Centre for assessment.

If the householder signals a desire to move or the property is unsuitable in a number of regards but solutions cannot be found to one or all of the problems, then the case will be passed to the Housing Needs team to intervene. This will initially take the form of general advice but could lead to applications for a Council owned home, Residential Social Landlord home or into a Local Letting Agency.

In order to give priority for Council owned housing so that a current home owner or private tenant can transfer, the Private Sector Housing Renewal team will provide a report on the state of the property to Housing Needs. If serious hazards are identified that fail minimum housing standards appropriate action will need to be taken to reduce or remove the hazard or inform the occupier of the risk.

#### *9.4.2 Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency Housing Options Service*

Where it is felt an older, disabled or vulnerable person household would benefit from more direct one-to-one housing options support they shall be referred to the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency Housing Options visiting service. The service will:

- Work closely with the person and those connected with their wellbeing and care to provide up to date local housing option information to enable them to make the housing decisions that are right for them, whether it is to stay and adapt or improve their existing home, or move to more suitable accommodation.
- Put people in touch with reputable organisations that will provide financial and legal expertise and specialist removal firms sensitive to the household needs.
- Visit people in the home to discuss their housing needs and carefully assess what is important to them and identify options available in the local area.

Housing Options advice will, therefore, provide a one stop shop, one to one support to help deal with all the questions and hopefully provide the answers households need to help them make an informed decision about their current and future housing needs.

### **9.5 Floating support services**

#### *9.5.1 Support to Prevent Homelessness*

The Council receives funding to deliver short term intervention through a visiting support service aimed at preventing homelessness from occurring or reoccurring. Housing Support Workers will provide practical support and assistance such as:

- Managing household budgets to prioritise rent or mortgage payments
- Keeping on top of cleaning and maintenance of the home

#### *9.5.2 Money Advice Services*

For general advice on money the Council will refer residents to the national Money Advice Service website ([www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)) to carry out a money health check.

The Council funds a visiting money advice service through its shared Revenues and Benefits service. Where it is identified that income needs to be raised to maintain

independent living advice can be given to help them obtain benefits. For more specialist debt advice a referral will be made to the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

### *9.5.3 Supporting Older Residents*

The Housing Support team provides a visiting support service to help people live as independently as possible but with the reassurance that help is at hand if needed. Support coordinators give support and advice on:

- Getting help with personal care in the home (help with washing, dressing, cleaning, shopping, etc)
- Obtaining adaptations to the home or equipment
- Making the most of household income and paying bills
- Local amenities and visiting services (hairdressers, dentists, opticians)
- Local support groups, social activities and clubs
- Transport and travel
- Household repairs and maintenance
- Health and safety issues

Support Coordinators will, therefore, make regular referrals to the Private Sector Housing Renewal team and complete First Contact checklists with residents.

### *9.5.4 Lifeline*

People who use the visiting support service will usually have a Lifeline (a home emergency call system) enabling a resident to call for help at any time just by pressing a button. The Council's Lifeline service is available to anyone who is:

- Elderly
- Disabled or suffering from health problems
- Worried about being in the house alone
- Feeling vulnerable and isolated in the home
- Worried about a vulnerable relative
- Being harassed or threatened with violence

When the button is pushed the telephone automatically dials the Council's control centre in Lincoln from where an operator gets in touch, arranges assistance and summons help as appropriate.

The Lifeline is a not-for-profit service with a small weekly charge for hire, maintenance and monitoring of the service. Residents on low incomes can be helped to apply for a grant to pay for the service.

## **9.6 Disabled Adaptations Policy**

The Council shall maintain a Disabled Adaptations Policy setting out how it supports residents in the private sector who need disabled adaptations. The Council places great importance on ensuring that residents who need them obtain essential adaptations to their home in a reasonable timescale. The Council recognises that delivering adaptations in people's own homes can reduce pressure on Lincolnshire County Council's Adult and Children Social Care services and NHS Lincolnshire. Developing ever more effective joint working and funding arrangements is, therefore, an ongoing priority.

The Policy will set out a number of potential options for the provision of different adaptations such as:

- Loaning stair lifts, step lifts, modular ramps, etc as opposed to permanent provision;
- Delivering small scale adaptations through simplified application processes; and
- Using non permanent, modular buildings to provide additional rooms, as opposed to extensions.

Financial assistance to support disabled occupants to be made available by the Council, other than mandatory disabled facilities grant (DFG), will be set out in the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002. DFG can be provided to qualifying houseboats and caravans.

### *9.6.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant*

The principle financial assistance available from the Council comes in the form of mandatory disabled facilities grant (DFG). DFG is made available to meet criteria under Section 29 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

There is no prescriptive list of work that falls under the criteria but the Disabled Adaptations Policy will set out some of the limitations. For example, ensuring that access to a garden is safe extends only to the area in the immediate vicinity of the point of access; not fencing gardens, landscaping, etc. Where alternative means of funding work that might attract DFG is on offer the Council will encourage and support the disabled occupant in securing such funding, e.g. Warm Front, Green Deal or Energy Company Obligation funding for heating provision.

In order to approve a DFG the Council has to be satisfied that the work is (a) necessary and appropriate and (b) reasonable and practicable, having regard to the age, condition and layout of the home. The Council has a duty to liaise with the Social Care authority to determine the necessity and appropriateness of adaptations. DFG is only awarded where the need arises as the direct result of an occupant's permanent and substantial disability; not other medical needs. To ensure the smooth operation of DFG the Council shall review the demand and consider the use of a retained, independent Occupational Therapist acceptable to the Social Care authority whose recommendation would be deemed to fulfil the duty to consult.

The Council would expect to fund a DFG only where it can ensure the home is suitable in all other respects.

### *9.6.2 Grant Conditions*

Mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFG) are subject to general conditions regarding completion of works, payment and conditions of occupation. Where the Council believes there has been a breach of these conditions it will make a demand for repayment of grant. Subject to the following, there is no general provision regarding possible repayment of grant in the event of disposal of the property.

Where a DFG of £5,000 or more is provided and it is considered that the work undertaken to the property adds some value to the home (e.g. an extension, conversion, bathroom or kitchen refurbishment) then a Local Land Charge of up to £10,000 will be applied to the property. The amount will then be repayable upon sale of the home.

The Council also imposes the following additional conditions on DFG:

1. The applicant must notify the authority of his or her intention to make a relevant disposal of any dwelling and shall furnish to the Council any information reasonably required by them in connection with such notification.
2. Where the applicant has an insurable interest in the property, he or she shall arrange and maintain in effect adequate insurance of the property throughout the grant condition period.
3. Where the applicant has a duty or power to carry out works of repair to the grant aided property, the applicant shall ensure that, to the extent that such duty or power allows, the property meets minimum housing standards throughout the grant condition period.

Where facilitates funded through DFG could be reused if no longer needed by the disabled occupant the Council may impose an additional grant condition enabling the Council, or the Social Care authority on their behalf, to remove it.

### *9.6.3 Registered Social Landlord Tenants*

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants are entitled to apply for mandatory disabled facilities grants (DFG). However, the Council shall maintain a protocol with the main RSL providers operating in the district to set out how adaptations to their properties will be funded and maintained and, where mandatory DFG is involved, establish expedient mechanisms for completing applications and the resultant adaptations.

## **9.7 Discretionary assistance for disabled people**

### *9.7.1 Relocation assistance*

Where a home owner pursues moving home as opposed to having adaptations undertaken the Council will consider providing financial support towards the costs associated with the move (E.g. Legal expenses, furniture removal). On occasions this might be because the Council decides it is not reasonable and practicable to carry out adaptations. The extent to which the new home needs adaptations funded through mandatory disabled facilities grant (DFG) or other schemes under the Private Sector Housing Renewal Financial Assistance Policy will be a determining factor in ensuring overall value for money.

### *9.7.2 Funding Outside the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant Scope*

There are cases where the mandatory disabled facilities grant might not be sufficient to enable a disabled occupant to remain living at home:

1. Necessary and appropriate works cost in excess of the maximum mandatory DFG
2. The assessed contribution towards the cost of works cannot be met
3. Works falling outside the mandatory criteria are needed for the welfare or employment of the disabled occupant

In Case 3 the Private Sector Housing Renewal team working with the Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency will facilitate works but only where external funding or funding for other Council strategic priority areas (e.g. business start up) can be identified.

For additional funding towards mandatory works the Council shall consider part funding such works, the advance to be secured as a Land Registry Charge against the property. Decisions shall be taken by Executive Board following recommendation by the Private Sector Housing Renewal team. Funds can be sourced from the mandatory DFG budget, depending on demand or elsewhere.

If an applicant does not have the capital available to pay their assessed contribution outright then the Council will enable applicants to pay their assessed contribution over a period of time by Direct Debit.

## **10. PROMOTING ACCESS TO THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

The Council recognises that the private rented sector is growing and will need to continue to do so to help meet housing needs in the district. The Council takes its statutory enforcement role seriously and where landlords are not meeting the standards required will deliver a robust service as described in Ensuring Proper Housing Standards above.

However, whilst a large proportion of the Private Sector Housing Renewal team's time is spent on enforcement; this is only to deal with a small proportion of the worst private rented housing. Enforcement should only need to be a last resort. This Strategy, therefore, places a larger emphasis on the proactive role the Council will play in helping landlords. This is in particular for owners where being a landlord is not their business, or reluctant landlords such as those who inherit a property but do not wish to dispose of it.

In order to maximise the benefits the private rented sector has in meeting housing need it is also essential to offer support to private rented tenants. This support is offered by the Council's Housing Needs team. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council can now also discharge its homeless duty through housing applicants in the private rented sector without their agreement. Ensuring such homes are available and appropriate and that the tenancy can be sustained is, therefore, increasingly important.

### **10.1 Providing advice and assistance**

The Council will promote sources of advice that are available to landlords, existing private tenants and residents considering private renting.

#### *10.1.1 Landlord Forums*

Landlord forums have not been well attended in North Kesteven. However, the Council believes that these are still a useful means to facilitate two way communications between the Council and landlords and supports their continuation. In order to maximise the opportunities landlords have to attend forums the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall continue to support and contribute to a series of countywide landlord forums. These are coordinated by the Lincolnshire Private Sector Housing Group. The Group aims to hold a minimum of six forums per annum, one of which is in Sleaford or North Hykeham with others in neighbouring areas at Boston, Lincoln, Gainsborough, Grantham and Skegness.

In order to maximise the benefit landlords will get from attending the Council will encourage landlords themselves to form a committee and establish the subjects they wish to see covered at forums. The Private Sector Housing Group shall then facilitate these and source suitable presenters to cover the topics.

#### *10.1.2 Landlord Committee*

The Council will investigate the appetite for a group of private sector landlords to form a committee enabling them to contribute to the development of initiatives in this Strategy and new initiatives they deem to be of benefit. If established, the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall facilitate such a committee to feed into the Our Homes Priority Theme Group.

#### *10.1.3 Lincolnshire Landlords Electronic Newsletter and Website*

In addition to the forums, topics of current relevance to landlords will be put together into a newsletter and posted on a countywide website. Officers from private sector housing

teams across the county contribute articles to be edited by one member of the Lincolnshire Private Sector Housing Group in liaison with the Chair of the Group. The Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) project team will contribute articles of national relevance to the newsletter. DASH then uploads newsletters onto the website. Landlords are encouraged to sign up to receive notifications that a new newsletter has been posted and of landlord forums. The website also contains a resources page that gives landlords information.

The Council's own website shall contain a link to the countywide website as well as items specific to North Kesteven and contact details for the Private Sector Housing Renewal team.

#### *10.1.4 Landlord and Letting Agent Associations*

The Council believes that a landlord or less experienced letting agent will gain significant benefit from becoming a member of a landlord or letting agent association such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA), National Landlord Association (NLA) or Residential Landlord Association (RLA). Such associations will be promoted on the countywide website along with events they are organising. The Council will take up the offer of free local authority membership of organisations in order for officers to be as informed as they can be.

#### *10.1.5 Letting Agent Registration Fees*

Where someone is searching for a private rented home but is on a low income the Council can pay the registration and administration fees for them to go on the books of a Residential Letting Agent or Estate Agent. This fee covers credit agency references.

#### *10.1.6 Harassment and Illegal Evictions*

The Council's Housing Needs section provides advice, assistance and, if necessary, enforcement in cases of harassment against tenants and illegal eviction by landlords.

### **10.2 Landlord and Letting Agent Accreditation**

The Council will work with the other Lincolnshire district councils and in partnership with the Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) project to establish and promote a common accreditation scheme for landlords and letting agents across Lincolnshire. This will build upon the East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme (EMLAS) currently endorsed by the Council. Sign up to EMLAS has been low and so the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall promote the scheme and the benefits of accreditation.

Crucially, prospective tenants need to be made aware of the advantages of selecting a property owned by an accredited landlord or managed by an accredited letting agent. Where the landlord or letting agent is a member of another accreditation scheme with similar criteria for acceptance the potential to passport onto the local scheme will be considered.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal section shall aim to maximise the number of inspections of properties owned by accredited landlords so that they can be given advice on the improvements that could be made. If serious hazards are found these would have to be dealt with but the Council will take a slightly more lenient approach to enforcement against accredited landlords where it can.

### **10.3 Landlord Register**

The Rugg report contained a recommendation for a national register of landlords that has not been pursued by the current Government. The Council believes this would have been a useful tool to both help and support landlords and also identify rogue landlords. For the benefit of its proactive work with landlords the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall maintain a register of private sector landlords, whether accredited or not, and the addresses of properties that they rent out.

### **10.4 Tenant Passport Scheme**

Landlord accreditation schemes support tenants but landlords support could come in the form of a passport scheme to gauge how reliable a potential tenant might be. This could include research into past tenancies, anti social behaviour and a credit reference. The Council's will, therefore, look for examples of best practice and set up such a scheme.

### **10.5 Local Letting Agency**

The Council is working in partnership with City of Lincoln and West Lindsey District Councils to establish a Local Letting Agency service. The pilot setting up of a service is being progressed.

### **10.6 Rent Support**

#### *10.6.1 Housing Benefits*

Housing benefit is of course both available to help people on lower incomes access the private rented sector along with Council Tax Benefit. However, the impact of welfare benefit reforms will be monitored and action taken to mitigate the effect.

#### *10.6.2 Discretionary Housing Payments*

The shared Benefits service also has a fund of money used to top up housing benefit or council tax benefit or both, where they think someone needs extra financial help to pay their rent or council tax with each application based on its merits.

#### *10.6.3 Rent Deposit Guarantee and Rent Advance Schemes*

In order to help make renting in the private sector an affordable option for residents on lower incomes or receiving benefits with no savings the Council can:

- Pay the first month's rent direct to the landlord;
- Offer the landlord a written guarantee for the deposit.

This scheme is available to adults who:

- Are unintentionally homeless or potentially homeless;
- Deemed as having a priority need by homeless legislation;
- Currently live and have lived in North Kesteven for the last six months, or have a local connection as determined by homeless legislation.

## **10.7 Single Room Accommodation**

Due to welfare benefit reforms greater numbers of single people aged less than 35 might be searching for rooms within shared homes. The Council's Housing Needs section will need to be able to direct people to such accommodation in the private sector.

### *10.7.1 House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) identification*

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall, therefore, maintain a register of confirmed HMO properties. HMO landlords will be encouraged to become accredited.

Information sharing between the Private Sector Housing Renewal team, other Council teams such as Development Control and Planning Enforcement and external partners such as Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service needs to be improved so that there is routine sharing of knowledge to ensure owners are aware of the need to meet differing legislative requirements.

### *10.7.2 Rent a Room Scheme*

The Council will promote the Rent a Room scheme so that where appropriate owner occupiers or private tenants who are under occupying their homes could benefit from a tax free income from renting furnished accommodation in their only or main home to a lodger. It could be possible to develop a match making service linking people searching for single rooms to those making rooms available.

## **11. BRINGING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE**

### **11.1 Empty Homes Policy**

The Empty Homes Policy sets out the policy, processes and working arrangements for bringing empty homes back into use. Strategic responsibility for bringing empty homes back into sits in the Development, Economic and Cultural Services division. The Housing Strategy and Growth team coordinates activity and monitors overall progress.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team works closely with the Housing Strategy and Growth team on a number of initiatives handling operational (enforcement) actions to bring empty homes back into use. Empty homes will be sought to feed into the Local Letting Agency. Most empty homes brought back into use will become private sector homes. The Private Sector Housing Renewal team will aim to ensure that each property achieves the highest standard it can to meet the aims of this Strategy.

Of the enforcement options possible to deal with problematic empty homes one will be the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) under the Housing Act 2004 as detailed in the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

Funding from sources such as Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will be maximised to ensure homes, once occupied are as affordable to heat as possible.

### **11.2 Dilapidation schedules**

There are a number of reasons why a schedule of repair work needed to bring an empty home up to standard for occupation will be needed. This includes:

- Rental following an Empty Dwelling Management Order
- Rental by an owner or owner occupation by them or a member of their family
- Inclusion in the Local Letting Agency

The Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall produce the schedule of repair works needed in such cases at no cost to the owner(s) of the empty homes.

### **11.3 Empty Homes Working Group**

Private Sector Housing Renewal team officers attend the Empty Homes Working Group on a regular basis to ensure the above aims are met. The officer attending is empowered to agree that inspections and housing standards enforcement within the remit of the team shall be progressed to contribute to an empty home being brought back into use.

### **11.4 Empty Dwelling Management Orders**

An Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) will be progressed with the approval of Heads of Service under the Council constitution's scheme of delegation, with notification to Corporate Management Team. The Head of Development, Economic and Cultural Services shall make the strategic decision to follow the EDMO route whilst the Head of Housing, Partnerships and Communities shall be involved in the decision on operation (property management).

The Housing Strategy and Growth and Private Sector Housing Renewal teams shall develop a case for an Interim EDMO, putting together the bundle for submission to the Residential Property Tribunal (RPT). Officers shall represent the Council at RPT

inspections and hearings. If successful the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall make the EDMO and register it as a Local Land Charge. If an Interim EDMO is granted the Housing Management team will work with cooperative landlords to let the home.

If it is necessary to do so the Private Sector Housing Renewal team shall prepare a Final EDMO to be issued in accordance with the Council constitution's scheme of delegation. If the final EDMO is appealed against by the owner officers shall prepare a bundle for submission to the RPT and represent the Council at inspections and hearings.

### **11.5 Enforced sale**

On occasions it will be necessary to force a property to be sold to bring it back into use and recover costs such as from having carried out work in default. Legal Services Lincolnshire shall coordinate the Enforced Sale Procedure following the approval of Executive Board sought by the team responsible for the enforcement action having led to the property being empty or the charge having been placed on the property.

### **11.6 Compulsory Purchase Orders**

It might be identified that to purchase an empty homes is the appropriate route to follow. This decision will be approved by Executive Board on the recommendation of the Housing Strategy and Growth team and ratified at a full Council meeting. Cases are expected to be few and far between with officers having little opportunity to build up expertise. It is, therefore, anticipated that the lead on this procedure would be contracted out to an expert in the field.

## ACTION PLAN

This action plan summarises new proposed initiatives to develop and actions to fulfil the aims of the Strategy as outlined in Chapter 6 to 11.

<b>MAINTAINING AN EVIDENCE BASE</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Private sector house condition survey	Commission a sample survey alone or in partnership.	31 December 2015	Housing Renewal team, contracted out; £50,000 revenue (2015-16)
Private sector household database	Establish and maintain a database in partnership.	30 October 2013; Ongoing	Housing Renewal team, shared service; £100,000 joint district council funds
<b>ENSURING PROPER HOUSING STANDARDS</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Providing advice and assistance	Develop materials and website content.	30 June 2013	Housing Renewal team; Graphics team
Equity release scheme	Establish a local branded equity release scheme in partnership.	31 December 2015	Housing Renewal team; £5,000 revenue per annum
Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy	Complete a new Policy. Review annually.	31 March 2013; Ongoing annually	Housing Renewal team
Housing Standards Enforcement Policy	Complete a new Policy.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
Charging for Notices, Prosecution and Works in Default	Establish scale of charges and implement.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
Registered Social Landlord Premises	Establish communications with repair and maintenance sections.	31 December 2013	Housing Renewal team
Houses in Multiple Occupation	Update protocol and working arrangements with Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue in partnership.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
	Establish a partnership with a neighbouring authority to administer mandatory licensing of certain Houses in Multiple Occupation.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team

Park homes	Lobby for changes to model site license conditions.	31 December 2014	Environmental Services (Licensing) team
<b>REDUCING ENERGY USE AND DELIVERING AFFORDABLE WARMTH</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Home Energy Conservation Strategy	Complete a new Strategy in line with Government guidance.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
Providing advice and assistance	Develop promotional materials	31 December 2014	Housing Renewal team
Events and road shows	Establish a programme of events to promote energy efficiency.	31 October 2012. Annual.	Housing Renewal team; Sustainability team
Sustain NK website	Develop website content and link from corporate website.	31 December 2014	Housing Renewal team; Sustainability team
Green Deal	Set up a local branded Green Deal scheme through the Home Energy LINCS Partnership.	31 October 2013	Housing Renewal team; £50,000 shared district council funds
Energy Company Obligation	Establish relationships with energy companies.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
Public Health initiatives	Support the development of warm homes, healthy people scheme.	30 April 2013	Housing Renewal team
Energy Performance Certificate Domestic Energy Assessors	Training staff to support residents and landlords.	31 December 2013	Corporate training budget
Community Energy Champions	Train staff to deliver basic energy awareness training. Recruit and support a network of community energy champions.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team; £8,000 Partnership NK funds
Bulk fuel purchase and collective energy switching	Investigate the feasibility and if appropriate establish schemes to drive down energy costs.	31 March 2014	Housing Renewal team
Home Energy LINCS Partnership	Review the Partnership Memorandum of Understanding and develop as the coordinating group for all energy advice and schemes in the county.	30 September 2013	Housing Renewal team

<b>SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
First Contact	Establish mechanisms for responding to First Contact referrals for all adults.	30 September 2013	Community Initiatives team; Housing Renewal team; Housing Needs team
Disabled Adaptations Policy	Complete a new Policy in partnership.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team; DFG team
	Enhance grant conditions to make best use of available resources.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
Registered Social Landlord tenants	Establish disabled adaptation protocols with providers.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team
<b>PROMOTING ACCESS TO THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Landlord committee	Establish the demand for a committee and set up if desirable.	31 March 2014	Housing Renewal team
Landlord and Letting Agent accreditation	Establish and promote a common accreditation scheme in partnership.	31 March 2014	Housing Renewal team
Landlord register	Put together a register of landlords from a range of sources.	31 March 2014	Housing Renewal team
Tenant passport scheme	Set up a tenant passport scheme based on examples of best practice.	31 March 2015	Housing Needs team
Local Letting Agency	Complete pilot Ethical (Local) Letting Agency and procure a long term Provider.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team; £25,000 shared district council funds and £48,000 shared East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership funds
Single room accommodation	Identify Houses in Multiple Occupation and obtain promotional material for the Rent a Room scheme.	31 March 2013	Housing Renewal team

<b>BRINGING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE</b>			
<b>Initiative</b>		<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Empty Dwelling Management Orders	Complete inaugural Empty Dwelling Management Orders to establish procedure and implement management arrangements.	31 March 2013	Housing Strategy and Growth team; Housing Renewal team; Tenancy Services team
Compulsory Purchase Orders	Establish a reserved, contracted out service to complete Compulsory Purchase Orders approved by Council.	31 March 2014	Housing Strategy and Growth team; Housing Renewal team

## APPENDIX 1 – PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING CONDITIONS

### Summary of Key Condition Findings

Characteristic	Owner occupied	Privately rented	All private sector stock	England
Dwellings	36,254	5,130	41,384	
<i>Per cent of stock<sup>1</sup></i>	77.4%	10.9%	88.3%	
Non decent dwellings <sup>2</sup>	8,400	1,437	9,837	
<i>Rate</i>	23.2%	28.0%	23.8%	35.3%
Vulnerable households in decent homes <sup>3</sup>	4,361	1,495	5,855	
<i>Rate</i>	62.6%	75.8%	65.5%	57.3%
Serious hazard dwellings	5,181	861	6,042	
<i>Rate</i>	14.3%	16.8%	14.6%	23.5%
Households in Fuel Poverty	6,380	1,443	7,823	
<i>Rate</i>	17.6%	28.1%	18.8%	16.0%
Mean SAP <sup>4</sup>	57	53	57	49
Residents over 60	17,572	1,486	19,058	
<i>Rate<sup>5</sup></i>	49.0%	33.2%	47.2%	35.9%
Households in receipt of benefit	6,966	1,972	8,938	
<i>Rate<sup>5</sup></i>	19.4%	44.1%	22.2%	17.0%
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentages given as a proportion of total housing stock, the remaining 11.7% is all social housing, which was not surveyed as part of this study</li> <li>2. Non decent dwellings fail the Government Decent Homes Standard which aims to ensure homes are warm, safe, in good condition and have reasonably modern facilities</li> <li>3. Refers to households in receipt of an income or disability benefit, as defined under former Public Service Agreement 7 objectives</li> <li>4. SAP is the government's Standard Assessment Procedure for rating energy efficiency on a scale of 1 (poor) to 100 (excellent)</li> <li>5. As a percentage of occupied dwellings, not all dwellings</li> </ol>				

### Dwelling use within the private sector housing stock

Dwelling use	Dwellings	Percent
House or Bungalow	39,860	96.3%
Purpose Built Flat	1,280	3.1%
Converted Flat	200	0.5%
HMO	60	0.1%
Licensable HMO	<0.01	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41,400</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Occupancy Status within the private sector housing stock

Vacancy Status	Dwellings	Percent
Occupied	39,750	96.0%
Vacant awaiting new owner	300	0.7%
Vacant awaiting new tenant	580	1.4%
Vacant being modernised	70	0.2%
Long term vacant*	700	1.7%
<b>Total vacants</b>	<b>1,650</b>	<b>4.0%</b>
<b>Total stock</b>	<b>41,400</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\* Includes vacant dwellings to let where they are being modernised prior to letting or have not been let for over 6 months

## Reasons for Failure of the Decent Homes Standard

Reason	Dwellings	Percent (of non decent)	Percent (of stock)	Percent (EHCS 2006)
Category 1 hazard dwellings	6,000	61.0%	14.6%	23.5%
In need of repair	2,400	24.4%	5.9%	8.3%
Lacking modern facilities	200	2.0%	0.4%	2.1%
Poor degree of thermal comfort	6,000	61.0%	14.5%	17.0%

## Reasons for Category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rating System hazards

Hazard	Percentage of all Category 1 hazards
Excess cold	65.2%
Falls on the level	31.3%
Falls on stairs	21.3%
Electrical hazard	5.1%
Food safety	3.6%
Collision and entrapment	2.2%
Damp and mould growth	1.6%
Falls between levels	1.1%
Fire	1.1%
Personal hygiene	1.1%
Hot surfaces	1.0%
Entry by intruders	0.6%
Water supply	0.3%
Crowding and space	0.1%

### Non decent dwellings with vulnerable households

Vulnerable households in non decent dwellings	Percent vulnerable households in decent dwellings	Percent vulnerable households in non decent dwellings	Shortfall for vulnerable occupiers
3,080	65.5%	34.5%	400

### Energy performance SAP by band

EPC SAP Range Banded	Owner occupied	Privately rented	Whole Stock	EHCS 2006
Band A (92-100)	0.5%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%
Band B (81-91)	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Band C (69-80)	20.5%	19.0%	20.3%	4.4%
Band D (55-68)	41.8%	22.0%	39.4%	26.7%
Band E (39-54)	27.6%	45.6%	29.8%	44.0%
Band F (21-38)	7.0%	10.7%	7.5%	20.0%
Band G (1-20)	2.4%	2.7%	2.4%	4.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### All energy efficiency measures that could be carried out

Measure	Dwellings	Percent of stock
Loft insulation	40,600	98.1%
Wall insulation	8,500	20.5%
Double glazing	3,100	7.5%
Cylinder insulation	16,600	40.1%
New boiler	8,200	19.8%
New central heating	300	0.7%
<b>Any measures</b>	<b>41,300</b>	<b>99.8%</b>

### Fuel Poverty by Tenure

Tenure Type	Fuel Poor	Not Fuel Poor
Owner occupied	18.0%	82.0%
Privately rented	28.0%	72.0%