

Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check

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Following the reorganisation of the government in May 2006, the responsibilities of the former Office for the Deputy Prime Minister in this area were transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check

The Homelessness Act 2002 has changed radically the way that local housing authorities approach homelessness. Effective local strategies contributed significantly to achievements in meeting challenging targets to reduce rough sleeping and in ending the long term use of bed and breakfast hotels for families with children.

At the heart of any local authority homelessness strategy is continued investment in homeless prevention. This approach has demonstrated considerable success in reducing new cases of homelessness. During 2005 homeless acceptances reached their lowest level for 20 years as a result of local authority's increased focus on early intervention to prevent homelessness.

However, DCLG and local authorities recognise that there is much more to do. This self assessment health check has been developed to help local authorities move the agenda forward in conjunction with their partners.

The self-assessment toolkit has been designed by the Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate (HHSD) in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It will help local housing authorities review their homelessness strategy and establish how effective their services are in tackling and preventing homelessness. The toolkit also looks at how to tackle some of the wider causes of homelessness which Housing Quality Network (HQN) identified as gaps in their evaluation of the 2003 strategies. Authorities may also find the assessment tool useful in developing plans to meet the Government's target of reducing temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, and in assessing how robust their action plans are for meeting the aims of the Government's broader homelessness strategy, '*Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*'.

Local authorities may also find it useful to share this toolkit with their delivery partners as part of their homelessness review. In particular it should help local authorities to:

- Assess the quality of the service they provide.
- Improve partnership working.
- Demonstrate to Members and the local community what has been achieved.
- Highlight opportunities for improving services to the homeless.

This document is not statutory guidance and is not linked to any funding decisions by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Local authorities are reminded that when discharging their homelessness functions they must have regard to the *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*, issued under section 182 of the Housing Act 1996. A revised Code of Guidance was issued in July 2006, and formally replaced the previous Code on 4th September 2006.

Undertaking the self assessment.

There is no requirement to complete the self assessment or submit it to DCLG. We hope however, that local authorities and their partners will find the exercise useful. There are numerous options:

- It might be useful for managers in homelessness to complete the exercise separately from the front line staff team with both coming together to compare results at for example, a service planning day. Comparing different perspectives on what has been achieved and where gaps remain could be beneficial.
- The self assessment could be used as the basis to review with partners, the local homelessness strategy. Partners could be asked for their views in advance on the assessment as a whole or on areas relevant to their work, with a strategy working group or stakeholder event considering results.
- Members may wish to use the self assessment as the basis of undertaking a Scrutiny review of the authority's work in tackling homelessness.
- Another local authority or independent organisation could be asked to undertake a review of the service using the self assessment.

However the assessment is carried out it is likely to be beneficial in helping the local authority to review its homeless strategy and tackle homelessness more effectively. It might be sensible to develop an action plan at the end of the exercise highlighting short, medium and long term aims. Help in taking actions forward is available from the Homelessness and Housing support Directorate, as well as your local authority Regional Champion. A list of helpful publications is provided at appendix one. These can help you develop more detailed actions for areas where you identify any gaps.

DCLG hope to develop and improve the self assessment over time. We aim to develop an on line, interactive version early in 2007. We would be grateful to receive any feedback on the document and suggestions for any improvements which could be incorporated into the on line version.

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Section 1: Strategic assessment

1. Local Authority Corporate and Member commitment

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess whether it has in place all the key strategic aspects required to tackle homelessness effectively. It assesses whether there is Member and Chief Officer 'buy in' backed up by adequate resources, and the inclusion of homelessness in any Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA), Local Area Agreements (LAA) or cross-cutting local authority strategic targets. In such an important service area local authorities should be continuously updating their homelessness strategy with SMART action planning, and not waiting until the strategy has to be reviewed in 2008. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Local Authorities are under a duty to keep their homelessness strategy under review and have the power to modify their strategy when it is required.

There should also be links to other strategies, for example:

- *The Regional Reducing Re-offending Strategy,*
- *Supporting People Strategy,*
- *Domestic Violence Strategy,*
- *Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy,*
- *Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy.*

1. Is there Member commitment to tackle homelessness and meet the 2010 temporary accommodation target?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

1.1 Is member commitment evidenced by specific Cabinet committee report highlighting the need to meet the 2010 target, and the importance of meeting it in order to tackle the social exclusion effects of temporary accommodation.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

1.2 Is there evidence of performance on tackling homelessness being regularly reported to Cabinet.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

1.3 Is there evidence of Scrutiny Committee consideration in the last twelve months of local authority efforts in tackling homelessness.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

2. Is there evidence of inclusion in Chief Officer annual work objectives or service plan targets with clear responsibilities linked to chief officer.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

2.1 Is there evidence of discussions regarding tackling homelessness at the Corporate Management team?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

3. Is tackling homelessness part of any existing *Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)* agreement?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

4. Is tackling homelessness being considered for inclusion in any Local Area Agreement targets?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

2. Joint working and partnerships

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess how effective and inclusive its partnerships are to tackle homelessness. No local authority can hope to achieve its long term aims without developing open and transparent relationships between all partners, including housing associations and the voluntary sector. Given the important role partners need to play in tackling homelessness, professional relationships need to be established with sufficient funding, and outcomes agreed through clear, measurable service level agreements or contracts.

5. Is there a Homelessness Forum operating in the Councils area?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

6. Is the Homelessness Forum fully representative of stakeholders? For example, are the following organisations represented: National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Drug Action Team, Children’s services and Adult Social Services, Youth Offending Teams (YOT), Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), refugee organisations, health commissioners and providers, Key Council Departments (e.g. education, housing and benefit advice services).

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

7. Does the Homelessness Forum meet at least quarterly?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

8. Is there a separate homelessness strategy review group in place?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9. Are the following key protocols in place to aid joint working in tackling homelessness?

9.1 Protocol with Children's services

a) for intentionally homeless families

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

b) for 16/17 year olds.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

c) for care leavers.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9.2 Protocol with Adult Social Services for the provision of appropriate residential accommodation for older people with high care needs who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9.3 Protocol with health services for planning how people will be discharged from hospital if there is homelessness or a risk of homelessness.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9.4 Protocol with National Offender Management Service for preventing homelessness among offenders due for release.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9.5 Protocol with Drug Action Team services for drug and alcohol dependent cases including those returning from out of borough residential rehabilitation.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

10. Is the council engaged in sub-regional working with other local authorities to prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

11. Does the Local Authority work in partnership with local secondary schools to help educate students regarding the risks of homelessness and services available to young people to help prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

12. Have arrangements been put in place with health, probation, voluntary sector and other housing organisations regarding the following:

a) Named contacts,

YES NO UNCLEAR

b) How information will be shared,

YES NO UNCLEAR

c) Referral mechanisms,

YES NO UNCLEAR

d) Dispute resolution

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

13. In the last 12 months how many of the following stakeholders have received training on homelessness prevention; the options available and how homelessness applications are administered by the local authority?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| a. Health services | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Children's services | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Adult social services | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. National Offender Management | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Refugee community group | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Voluntary Sector advice providers | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| g. The council homelessness forum | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment:

3. Reviewing your homelessness strategy for 2008

14. Has the local authority appointed a specific officer to take forward initiatives in its homelessness strategy? (In smaller local authorities this could be added to the responsibilities of a senior manager.)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

15. What proportion of actions in the original Council Homelessness Strategy Action Plan have been implemented?

16. Have outcomes completed from the original strategy been reviewed and evaluated?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

17. Have the figures relating to housing demand and supply contained in the 2003 Homelessness review been updated?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

18. Has the current Homelessness Strategy Action Plan been reviewed with particular regard to the recommendations contained in DCLG's 2005 homelessness strategy, *Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives*?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

19. Has a project plan been developed for how the local authority will undertake a statutory review and produce a new strategy by July 2008?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

-
- 20.** Is there evidence within any project plan of how the local authority will include all relevant partners and, as a minimum, clear evidence of involvement from local children's services and adult social services, education, health, NOMS and key RSLs?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 21.** Have resource implications been considered including allocating staff time for this task?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 22.** Are plans in place for how the local authority will involve service users in its review? (The Local Authority should sensibly check that the composition of service users who are consulted reflects the diversity of their local homeless population)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 23.** Is there evidence of any gaps identified in the Housing Quality Network (HQN) 2004 individual assessment of the local authority's homelessness strategy having been addressed?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

24. Has the Local Authority's Homelessness Strategy Action Plan been updated at least annually since the publication of the original strategy?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

25. Is there evidence that the current action plan is SMART with at least 50% of actions that have measurable outcomes?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

26. Is there evidence that the action plan incorporates actions on further developing the local authority's homelessness prevention and options strategy and meeting the 2010 temporary accommodation target?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

4. Action Planning to meet the 2010 temporary accommodation target

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess where its plan to meet the temporary accommodation target is comprehensive and robust. It should cover the key components of tackling demand through early intervention and prevention, tackling supply through new housing, affordable housing, opening up the private rented sector, and making best use of existing social housing opportunities. Tackling any backlog in temporary accommodation is the final key component which sensibly should be brought together in a clear model which measures and estimates progress quarter by quarter until 2010. A Local Authority may look to integrate any temporary accommodation action plan into their revised homelessness strategy.

- 27.** Is there an action plan in place for meeting the 2010 temporary accommodation target? (The target requires each LA to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. The baseline assessment is the end of December 2004).

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 28.** If a plan is in place, are numerical targets set for how temporary accommodation will be reduced as a result of each prevention activity?

YES NO UNCLEAR NO PLAN

Comment:

- 29.** If a plan is in place, has it been agreed at Corporate Management Team or member level?

YES NO UNCLEAR NO PLAN

Comment:

30. Are key milestones in place with reductions in temporary accommodation projected up to 2010 and measured on a quarterly basis?

YES NO UNCLEAR NO PLAN

Comment:

31. If a plan is in place, is it comprehensive covering reductions in temporary accommodation through:

31.1 Prevention of homelessness and options

YES NO UNCLEAR NO PLAN

Comment:

31.2 New housing supply for social rented accommodation

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

31.3 Maximising use of the existing social housing supply within the LAs or within partner RSLs stock?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

31.4. Does any Temporary Accommodation reduction plan include a demand and supply model? (one that estimates the effect on demand of prevention activities; calculates any future housing pressures, balances how existing social housing is allocated, and estimates the effect on temporary accommodation of social housing supply).

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

32. Is there a plan for reducing each type of TA currently used?

B&B	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Hostels	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Private Sector Leasing (PSL)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
LA/RSL own stock	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Comment:

33. In the last 12 months how many Qualifying Offers has the local authority achieved whereby the homelessness duty is brought to an end by the applicant voluntarily accepting an Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

Section 2: Prevention of homelessness: self-assessment

Purpose

The 'toolkit' of prevention options considered below allows a local authority to assess what percentage of a 'typical toolkit' that they have in place and also to assess how effective their schemes are against suggested 'good practice' criteria. Overall a local authority may look to 'score' informally in percentage terms firstly the number of initiatives in place and secondly, where they are in place, the effectiveness of these initiatives.

1. Housing advice

34. Is housing advice outreach offered at a range of locations, e.g. GP surgeries, voluntary sector agencies, and community centres?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

35. Is a homelessness prevention court advocacy service in place, provided by either the local authority or one of its partners?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

36. If a court advocacy service is in place are solicitors or voluntary sector agencies part of a duty rota to ensure that social housing tenants can be represented with no conflict of interest?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

37. Is the local authority's strategy for dealing with cases of illegal eviction or harassment being applied (evidenced by casework action in the previous six months leading to warnings or court action having been commenced)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

38. Does the local authority provide a Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO) to support tenants in the private rented sector and help to prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

39. Is a service provided to deal with a threat of homelessness because of disrepair to a tenant's property (evidenced by clear working arrangements between the homeless prevention service and Environmental Health service and evidence of action in the last six months against landlords where there is disrepair)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

40. If independent housing advice is provided in the local authority's area has any Service Level Agreement been reviewed in the last twelve months to ensure that there is sufficient focus on homelessness prevention?

YES NO UNCLEAR N/A

Comment:

-
- 41.** Is there a money advice/debt counselling service in place such as CAB provision and can the Homelessness Prevention Team access emergency appointments in cases of threatened homelessness? (Defined as within 24 hrs)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

2. Effective tenancy outreach

- 42.** Are intervention visits regularly used to prevent homelessness in the private sector and social sector where there is a serious risk of eviction?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 43.** Is use of a local authority's Homelessness Prevention Fund part of this service? (see section on finance and Invest to save)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 44.** If when the number of cases prevented through this approach has been recorded, what is the figure for the last 12 months?

number

Comment:

3. Home visits

45. Do home visits take place for parental/relative exclusions?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

46. If they do take place, what percentage of parental/relative threatened exclusions receive a home visit?

%

Comment:

47. Does the local authority have clear criteria for identifying when home visits are appropriate?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

48. On average within how many working days does a home visit take place? Good practice local authorities recommend visits within 24 hours for urgent cases and within 1 week for non-urgent cases.

Within 24 hrs within 72hrs within a week 1 week plus

Comment:

49. Is a home visit form used?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

50. Does the local authority undertake risk assessments for staff before home visits?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

51. Is there a written procedure for staff covering the issues to be addressed during the visit?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

52. How much time is scheduled for the home visit? (N.B. Good practice Regional Champion local authorities recommend 1hr minimum.)

30mins 45mins 1 hour plus

Comment:

53. Is mediation discussed during the home visit if appropriate to the circumstances of the applicant?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

54. Are options discussed at the home visit, including how to access the local authority's rent deposit scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

55. Does the home visit always include an explanation of the local authority's allocation scheme, the prospects for being offered accommodation and realistic likely waiting time?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

56. If relevant, is the information gained from the home visit taken into account in determining whether any duty is owed under the homelessness legislation ?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

4. Mediation

57. Has the local authority a mediation service in place specifically aimed at homelessness prevention?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

58. Is there a formal written agreement covering the service's aims, outcomes, monitoring arrangements and review mechanisms?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

59. Is there a process for distinguishing which cases are appropriate for mediation referral and which are not?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

60. Where a service is in place how many cases have been dealt with by the mediation service in the last 12 months?

61. In what percentage of these cases has homelessness been prevented?

5. Social housing tenants threatened with eviction

62. Does the local authority annually record the number of applications for housing assistance from former social housing tenants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in their area by each social housing provider i.e. Housing Management or ALMO, LSVT, all RSLs operating in the district?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

63. Has a protocol been developed with each Social Housing landlord agreeing how homelessness prevention will be incorporated into their procedures for dealing with cases of rent arrears, anti social behaviour, domestic violence and harassment?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

64. Have all local RSLs been approached concerning the importance of not relying on Ground 8 in possession proceedings, as per Housing Corporation guidance?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

65. Where a local authority retains its stock, is the homelessness prevention team involved or consulted on any decision to proceed to possession where a tenant is outside the terms of a suspended possession order?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

66. Does the local authority fund in part or whole the services of a County Court desk available to all social housing tenants providing representation for possession hearings?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

67. Has the local authority developed an action plan for dealing with tenants responsible for anti-social behaviour that include consideration of homeless prevention measures before eviction? (E.g. demoted tenancies considered, extra support linked to changed behaviour contracts)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

68. Are support services in place to help people who are perpetrators of anti-social behaviour avoid re-offending?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

6. Rent arrears from Social Housing tenants

Where a local authority retains its stock what is its performance for 2005/06 against the suite of rent collection BVPIs. (NB Good performance across this range of indicators should indicate that a local authority has good processes in place to maximise rent collection through fair and supportive collection methods, thereby reducing the number of Notices of seeking possessions needed and reducing the number of evictions for rent arrears. These indicators only apply to local authority owned stock and not RSLs, though sensibly a local authority might wish to agree BV66(c) and BV66(d) as outcome measures for any locally agreed partnership protocol with RSLs.)

Consider performance against the following indicators:

- 69.** BV66 (a): Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owed on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings. (High numbers = better performance on homeless prevention.)

Performance Quartile Upper/Middle/Lower

Comment:

- 69.1** BV66(b): The number of local authority tenants with more than seven weeks of gross rent arrears as a percentage of the total number of local authority tenants (low numbers = better performance on homelessness prevention).

Performance Quartile Upper/Middle/Lower

Comment:

- 69.2** BV66(c): Percentage of local authority tenants in arrears who have had Notices of Seeking Possession served (low numbers = better performance on homelessness prevention).

Performance Quartile Upper/Middle/Lower

Comment:

69.3 BV66 (d): Percentage of local authority tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears (low numbers = better performance on homelessness prevention).

Performance Quartile Upper/Middle/Lower

Comment:

70. For cases of rent arrears from social sector tenancies is there a fast track process ensuring that where a person is prepared to co-operate they will receive access to a professional money advice/debt counselling interview before the local authority or RSL proceeds to a more serious stage in any arrears recovery action?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

7. Better co-ordination with the local authority's housing benefits service

71. Has the homelessness prevention team access to a dedicated housing Benefit officer based in the team or access to a named benefit officer within the benefits service who is able to provide a same day response?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

72. If there is a dedicated or named Housing Benefit officer who is able to take urgent homelessness prevention referrals from RSLs and other partner organisations?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

73. Has a protocol been agreed within the council on how Discretionary Housing Payments can be used to help prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

74. Has the benefits service provided training in the last twelve months to all homelessness staff in the following?

74.1 The requirements of the Verification Guidance contained in the HB/CTB Security Guidance 2006/07.

YES NO

Comment:

74.2 The October 2005 changes to Management Information System regarding how new HB/CTB claims are recorded. [Circular HB/CTB U9/2004 refers]

YES NO

74.3 Overpayments and the local authority's approach to recovery.

YES NO

Comment:

74.4 Pre-tenancy determinations, procedures and how prospective tenants or landlords can apply.

YES NO

Comment:

74.5 Late or back-dated claims and the benefit rules regarding 'continuous good cause'.

YES NO

Comment:

74.6 The criteria and rules covering the local authority's Discretionary Housing Payment arrangements and how to apply.

YES NO

Comment:

74.7 A basic guide to housing benefits for homelessness staff.

YES NO

Comment:

75. Does the local authority have a senior Housing Benefit Manager on any of the following strategic groups? (If they have been developed)

Homelessness Strategy Group YES NO

Homelessness prevention corporate group YES NO

Homelessness forum YES NO

Comment:

8. Rent deposit schemes and their role in prevention

76. What type of rent deposit scheme is in place as a preventative option?

a) Rent in advance

b) Rent deposit

c) Damage Guarantee Bond

d) Finder fee

e) Other – state

f) There is no rent deposit type scheme in place

Comment:

77. Which categories of people is the rent deposit scheme available to? (Tick as many boxes as appropriate)

Statutory homeless cases where a full duty has been applied YES NO

Non-priority homeless households YES NO

Intentionally homeless households YES NO

Comment:

77.1 Is the deposit scheme open to all persons within these classes, including drug users/offenders?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

78. How many new rent deposit tenancies have been obtained in the last 12 months?

79. Is the number obtained at least a third of the previous year's homeless acceptances?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

80. Is there a specific officer responsible for the scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

81. Is there a marketing plan in place for the scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

82. Has marketing material been produced for landlords?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

83. Has good quality, clear information been produced for applicants?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

84. Does the Local authority seek to negotiate with private landlords fixed term ASTs that are longer than six months?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

85. Does the local authority seek to negotiate rent levels with private landlords under the scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

86. Does the local authority have a mechanism in place to ensure that tenants who have access to the local authority's rent deposit scheme are able to access floating support if required?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

87. Is there a housing benefit package available to support the scheme including pre-tenancy determinations, verification of housing benefit documents, and fast tracking of initial payments?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

-
- 88.** What percentage of properties obtained are found by applicants? (Regional Champion Councils report that well balanced schemes operate with approximately 50% of properties found by applicants and 50% through direct contact between the local authority and landlords to promote the scheme.)

- 89.** What percentage of properties obtained come from landlord contact direct to the local authority?

- 90.** Have the ten largest private sector key local landlords been identified and contacted directly to discuss the scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

9. Effective tenancy or floating support.

- 91.** Do you carry out a systemic support need assessment for households who present to the local authority as homeless or threatened with homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

92. Do you monitor the outcome of the assessments across various ethnic minority community groups?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

93. Have all supporting people contracts that provide services to people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness been reviewed in the last 12 months to ensure that where appropriate they are sufficiently focused on helping to prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

94. Does the council conduct a quarterly review of all cases receiving tenancy or floating support to ensure arrangements for those ready to move off support are working effectively?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

95. Have targets been set with each service provider to minimise the number of cases receiving support who become homeless despite this support?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

96. How effective and timely are the referral routes into tenancy and floating support?
(Where there is a real risk of homelessness occurring can tenancy or floating support be provided within 72 hours including time required for any assessment).

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

97. Has an exercise been carried out to identify where there are gaps in support required to prevent homelessness from high risk groups and is there a mechanism to feedback to Supporting People commissioning teams any gaps in provision discovered?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

Section 3: Tackling the wider causes of homelessness

10. Health Issues

98. Are there well developed links with local primary care, mental health and substance misuse services to allow effective signposting of clients found to have a health concern which needs addressing and referral?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

99. Are there structures and procedures in place for multidisciplinary assessment and ongoing review of a client with complex and multiple needs (such as mental health difficulties)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

100. Is there a mechanism to assess for and provide home adaptations as a matter of urgency in cases where the client would otherwise be at risk of homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

101. Is there a hospital admission and discharge policy agreed with:

a. Your local accident and emergency department

YES NO UNCLEAR

b. General hospital including elderly care

YES NO UNCLEAR

c. Mental health in-patient facilities

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

102. Where such admission and discharge policies are in place do they cover the following:

102.1 identification of a patient's accommodation status.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

102.2 appropriate referral of these patients to the housing department

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

102.3 Are care plans in place for all hospital discharge cases and do plans cover all needs including appropriate accommodation and appropriate support?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

103. Are there arrangements in place to deliver training to health staff on carrying out a basic assessment of housing need?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

104. Is there a well publicised and easily accessible service for telephone advice to health care professionals in the event of a risk of homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

105. Do you have a local multi-agency resource pack covering availability of advice on housing/health/support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to be available at all venues where such a presentation may occur?

i.e. A&E, hospital wards, GP surgeries, etc

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

106. What percentage of hospital discharge cases in 2005/06 who had no home to return to, had their homelessness prevented through a planned discharge into appropriate accommodation rather than have to make an application for housing assistance under the homelessness legislation?

107. Is there a system in place to ensure that health, education and children's services (including child protection teams where appropriate) are informed when a family with children is placed in temporary accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

108. Are there arrangements for a health visitor to visit families in temporary accommodation with one or more children aged 0-5 within two week of moving in?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

11. Education, Employment skills and school outreach

109. Are available education and training schemes and employment advice promoted to households who approach the local authority for housing assistance or who are living in temporary accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

110. Is information on training and employment included in any options information packs provided for households who present as homeless or are living in temporary accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

111. If so is a 'better off in work' calculation provided for applicants at any options interview, including rules relating to part time work and access to benefits, including "in work" benefits such as tax credits?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

112. Has the local authority homelessness service formally worked with Jobcentre Plus to target help for those homeless acceptances who are neither in work nor engaged in training or education?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

113. Have Jobcentre Plus staff been trained on housing options and prevention?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

114. Has the local authority undertaken any of the following initiatives:

a. looked to develop a work experience programme for homeless households by encouraging public and private sector involvement, including the local authority itself.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

b. developed a targeted programme using the Volunteering Officer for any local Voluntary Services Council and/or local charities.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

c. undertaken a skills audit of all homeless households in all or longer-term temporary accommodation.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

d. looked to develop training schemes for homeless households, linked to locally assessed employment skills gaps, including liaison with Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

e. liaison with local partners, including the learning and skills council and local learning providers, to discuss the availability of learning and skills opportunities for homeless households and staff supporting them?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

115. If a household placed in temporary accommodation at a market rent was to obtain employment, could they be moved into lower-cost rented accommodation to reduce their dependence on benefits?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

116. Does the local authority use Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) to help households for a short period of time, who have found work and may be at risk of homelessness due to any reduction in housing benefits entitlement?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

12. Victims of domestic violence

117. Is there a clear protocol in place with the local authority's Housing Management Section (if it still owns stock), Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Association (LSVT) or Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) plus all key RSLs, on how cases of threatened homelessness involving tenants who are victims of domestic violence should be dealt with?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

118. Is there a clear procedure in place as to when and how a 'transfer' can be achieved under the local authority's allocation scheme, in cases of threatened homelessness due to domestic violence?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

119. Where victims of domestic violence present, is emergency accommodation always offered at the same time as any prevention and options are being pursued?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

120. Has the Council developed a sanctuary scheme? (Defined as increased security to allow the victims of domestic violence or harassment the option of remaining in their home with support)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

120.1 If so is it a scheme available to all housing sectors including Social rented, Private rented and owner occupiers?

YES NO UNCLEAR

121. Were the following key partners involved in the development and implementation of the sanctuary scheme and are they still involved in monitoring the scheme?

Police Fire Services Women's Aid RSLs

No sanctuary scheme in place

Comment:

122. Is there a proactive policy in place to take action, where appropriate, to evict a joint tenant who is a perpetrator of domestic violence?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

123. If a sanctuary scheme is in place, in how many cases has homelessness been prevented in 2005/06?

124. Is there a regional/sub-regional or county-wide protocol for re-housing cases on a reciprocal basis where victims of domestic violence wish to remain in the area but not the immediate local authority district?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

125. Where a victim of domestic violence does not want to remain locally is practical help provided to assist a household to move in a planned way?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

13. Rough sleepers and hostels residents

126. Does the local authority carry out an annual street count?

YES NO

Comment:

127. Does the local authority carry out regular street counts for areas with high levels of rough sleeping ?

YES NO

Comment:

128. What was the date and number for the latest count?

Date Number

Comment:

129. Does the local authority have street outreach service?

YES NO

Comment:

130. Does the local authority have a street rescue service?

YES NO

Comment:

131. Do these services have access to emergency hostel bed spaces?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

132. Does the local authority have access to a day centre?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

133. Do rough sleepers and people at risk of rough sleeping have access to:

133.1 Drug services

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

133.2 Alcohol services

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

133.3 General Health Services

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

134. Is there funding in the Drug Action Team (DAT) treatment plan for this client group?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

135. What is the average length of stay in any hostels managed by RSLs, charities or voluntary sector providers and used to accommodate rough sleepers or single homeless people in your area?

under 3 months 3-6 months 6-12 months 1 year

136. Is a strategy in place to monitor and take action where there is evidence of hostels 'silting up'?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

137. Is there any monitoring of the outcomes of residents when they leave hostels?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

14. Offenders and ex-offenders

138. Are the needs of offenders and exoffenders including problematic drug users and prolific priority offenders considered in the local authority's housing and homelessness strategies?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

139. Has a referral protocol for homelessness prevention been agreed with either local solicitors who undertake criminal justice work, or the courts, for all persons either placed on remand or who received a short-term custodial sentence? *(NB for those who are tenants arrangements can be made to pay housing benefit for up to 52 weeks whilst on remand or 13 weeks if given a short-term custodial sentence)*

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

140. Have protocols been agreed with the local Probation Service, Prison Service Area Office and Regional Offender Manager (ROM) on ways of working together to prevent homelessness among offenders serving custodial sentences who are due for release?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

141. Where requested will the local authority visit offenders due to be released from any local prison to discuss housing options?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

142. Has a letter been sent or a specific meeting arranged with all local housing providers encouraging them to consider applications from serving prisoners due for release?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

143. Have protocols been agreed with the local Probation Service, and Regional Offender Manager (ROM) on ways of working together to prevent homelessness among offenders serving sentences or under licence within the community and are supervised by the probation service.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

144. Is there an information sharing protocol between housing providers and NOMS providers ie Prison service, Probation service, partner agencies.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

145. Does the local authority work with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and others to ensure that there is a planned approach to offering young offenders suitable accommodation options at the end of their sentence?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

146. Are there appropriate arrangements for discussions to take place looking at the accommodation and support needs of problematic drug users on their release from residential rehab?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

15. Ex-service personnel

147. Are the needs of ex-service personnel considered in the local authority's housing and homelessness strategies?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

148. Are local housing providers encouraged to consider applications from ex-service personnel?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

16. Ethnic minority Homelessness

149. Do you know the current ethnic composition of your local area?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

150. Do you know the extent and major causes of homelessness and housing need within the different populations?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

151. Do you inform, plan, deliver and improve your services with a range of agents that reflect the diversity of your community and homeless population?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

152. Are you able to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive support to ethnic minority homeless households (including an effective interpreting and translation strategy)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

153. Does the composition of your staff – especially frontline staff – reflect the ethnic diversity of the local population?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

154. Do you have strategies in place to maximise ethnic minority access to: community regeneration programmes, renovation and home adaptation grants, rent deposit schemes, etc?

YES NO UNCLEAR

155. Does the Local Authority monitor the length of stay and types of temporary accommodation used for ethnic minority households?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

17. Refugees

Refugee homelessness is more of an issue in London, the South East and designated Home Office Asylum Dispersal Areas. Please contact your regional asylum consortia manager if you are unsure of the size of your local asylum/refugee population.

Questions

156. (For LAs in designated dispersal areas only) IND (formerly NASS) accommodation providers are contractually obliged to notify you of all positive asylum decisions. Do you have procedures in place to promptly respond to these alerts with prompt housing options interviews?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

157. (For LAs in designated dispersal areas only) Have you reached an agreement with any IND accommodation providers to:

a) Where possible convert accommodation to a private rented direct letting once refugee status has been granted? Or

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

b) To delay eviction for a short period whilst any arrangements are made to prevent homelessness by helping the household to secure alternative accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

158. Has a protocol been agreed with the local Asylum One Stop Shop (and/or major refugee voluntary and community organisations) re; the delivery of refugee housing advice and access to sustainable accommodation options?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

159. Do you systematically offer specialist housing related support to new refugees (i.e. claiming benefits, setting up utilities, paying rent, dealing with violence and harassment and accessing community support)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

18. Street Prostitution

160. Has consideration been given to the accommodation needs of those attempting to exit the sex trade, in particular those involved in street prostitution?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

Section 4: Administering homelessness more effectively

1. Conducting options interviews

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess the effectiveness of the critical first options interview process. The structure, content and length of interview are essential components of a successful options approach, as are the referral links between these interviews and more intensive options and prevention initiatives.

161. Can any person threatened with homelessness or in housing need obtain an options interview when they first approach the local authority for help?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

162. Is there a procedure in place to ensure that applicants in need of temporary accommodation can be seen immediately when they present as homeless?

YES NO UNCLEAR

163. How long do applicants have to wait for an interview appointment?

24hrs 72hrs Within 1 week 1 week plus

164. How long are options interviews scheduled to last? (N.B. In order to give options interviews sufficient time many local authorities recommend that at least 45 minutes in any interview is dedicated to options & prevention advice)

15mins 30mins 45mins 60mins plus

Comment:

165. Is there a clear list of the areas that must be covered during an options interview?
e.g. Are options interviews scripted to ensure interviewers know what must be covered
or is a checklist provided to staff of the areas needing to be covered?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

166. Is a standard options interview form used?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

167. Are the options offered followed-up and promoted? I.e. options advice pre application
under part VII, during the enquiry stage; following acceptance of duty; regular contact
with applicants who are waiting in temporary accommodation; achieved through
information leaflets sent out, or calling people back in for follow up options interviews.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

168. Are supervision procedures in place to ensure that there is a consistent approach to all options interviews? i.e. senior officer sitting in on a selection of interviews to ensure:

- all options covered
- information given and follow up action instigated
- applicants were not compelled to accept options.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

169. Is clear information on the options available for applicants in appropriate languages?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

170. Looking at the option interview process is it clear how a referral will be made following an options interview to any specific options and prevention initiative and are these referral arrangements carried out within 24 hours?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

171. Have prevention and options outcomes been agreed with any outsourced Advice Service, and if so, how are these monitored?

YES NO UNCLEAR N/A

Comment:

2. Staff structures

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess whether it has changed its focus sufficiently to be effective in homelessness prevention, and that any new structure is backed by adequate staff resources, management and a balance between resources for prevention and casework assessment.

172. Has the service been restructured in the last 2 years and specifically changed the focus of the service toward homelessness prevention?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

173. Number of staff (FTE) preventing homelessness:

Comment:

174. Number of staff (FTE) processing homelessness applications:

Comment:

175. Is there sufficient management capacity to operate the homelessness service efficiently?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

176. Estimate percentage of homelessness staff resources dedicated to:

Prevention %

Made up of:

- option interviews %
- liaison or interviews with landlords %
- home visiting %
- rent deposit options %
- other prevention and options activities %

Processing homelessness applications %

Comment:

177. Have job descriptions been reviewed in the last 2 years to provide sufficient focus on prevention?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

178. Are plans in place to increase resources within the homelessness service?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

178.1 If so, are these plans realistic and achievable with a clear timetable of when additional resources will be in place?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

179. What percentage of the staff structure is actually in post at today's date?

Comment:

179.1 Has the local authority experienced problems with recruiting homelessness staff?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

179.2 Are Person Specifications for jobs competency based rather than experience and/or qualification based?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

180. What is the staff turnover rate for the homelessness service in 2005/06?

181. Record sickness (%) 2005/06 for the service-long-term and short-term (using the Local Authority's own corporate definition)

181.1 Long-term

181.2 Short-term

181.3 Is it higher or lower than the local authority average?

Long term H/L Short term H/L

182. What is the percentage of agency staff in the homelessness service compared to permanent staff at the date of this self-assessment? (N.B. agency figures higher than 15% may contribute to instability.)

182.1 Agency

182.2 Permanent

3. Performance management

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to fully assess its past, current and projected performance against all key homelessness indicators including BVPIs, and the official P1E Homelessness statistics and encourages the development of local performance and quality indicators or targets.

183. In how many cases was homelessness prevented in 2005/06 using BVPI 213?

Number of cases

Is this figure in the upper, middle or lower quartile for U/M/L comparison with local authorities. (NB quartile figures likely to be published by December 2006)

184. Have there been reductions in homelessness over the last two quarters compared to 12 months previously recorded by the P1E returns? (Measurement by statutory homeless acceptances)

YES NO

Comment:

185. Are levels of homelessness and housing need for the last financial year 05/06 up or down compared to 04/05?

Rough sleeping	UP <input type="checkbox"/>	DOWN <input type="checkbox"/>
Homeless applications	UP <input type="checkbox"/>	DOWN <input type="checkbox"/>
Homeless acceptances	UP <input type="checkbox"/>	DOWN <input type="checkbox"/>
Numbers in temporary accommodation	UP <input type="checkbox"/>	DOWN <input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting list	UP <input type="checkbox"/>	DOWN <input type="checkbox"/>

Comment:

186. Are the local authority's figures for acceptances per thousand households 2005/06 above or below the regional average for the local authority? (All England figures by local authority are available on the DCLG website and broken down by Region including causes of homelessness).

ABOVE BELOW

Comment:

187. When considering homeless acceptances for each of the main causes of homelessness do any figures stand out as well above or below the average for the region? (If yes how is the local authority looking to analyse these figures further?)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

188. Is there evidence of the local authority benchmarking its performance on homelessness against other relevant local authorities?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

189. What is the council's performance against the homelessness BVPIs for 2005/06?

Comment:

190. Rough sleeping – BVPI 202

Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

191. Percentage change in families in TA – BVPI 203

Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

192. Average time spent in B&B and hostels – BVPI 183(a) and (b)

a Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

b Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

193. Repeat homelessness – BVPI 204

Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

194. Homelessness prevention – BVPI 213

Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

195. Tackling domestic violence – BVPI 225

Performance Quartile U/M/L New Target 06/07

On Target – Y/N

196. Has the local authority collected local homeless performance information to supplement the P1Es and BVPIs?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

196.1 Is performance information on homelessness collected and analysed by service managers at least monthly?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

197. Is the above information being reported monthly to the senior Housing Services Management Team and quarterly to the local authority's Corporate Management team?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

4. Administering homelessness services

Purpose

The section on administering homelessness services will help a local authority to assess whether it has in place the required processes and procedures that are essential for an effective service. Process mapping the ways people are initially directed into the options service and what happens next following an options interview potentially could produce some of the biggest 'gains' in effectiveness.

198. Has the local authority reviewed its 'first contact' form to incorporate prevention and options?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

199. Does the local authority have homelessness procedures in place which incorporate homelessness prevention and the provision of housing options?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

200. How are procedures accessible on:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| On PC Desktop | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Manual paper files for each officer | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Centrally held office procedure file | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment:

201. Has the authority applied 'systems thinking' analysis to all its front line homelessness services? (Based on the principle of breaking down processes into sufficient detail to understand the gaps, areas for improvement, and business re engineering)

- YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

202. Is the local authority making full use of its homelessness IT system? Consider the following statements.

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Is the IT system user-friendly? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are there good reporting systems on performance? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does it aid casework ? | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment:

203. Have relevant staff been trained on (and do they fully understand how to use) all aspects of the homelessness IT system?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

204. Are electronic address checks carried out to facilitate assessments using any internet-based credit reference company (any checks must be made with client consent and procedures must cover data protection requirements)?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

5. Decision making

Purpose

This section will help the local authority to assess whether its decision making processes are adequate to ensure correct, fair and consistent decisions are made; that processes for conducting inquiries are appropriate; and that in preparing decisions good supervision and management procedures are in place.

205. Has the quality of decision letters been externally validated using peer groups, a solicitor or Shelter?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

206. Are case notes adequate based on examining a dozen randomly chosen case file decisions?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

207. Are case files easy to understand and do they follow structured file management rules?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

208. Has the local authority developed a series of template letters that cover each of the homelessness duties that may be owed, in order to aid decision making?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

209. Is homelessness prevention and housing options advice given in writing to all applicants including those deemed to have no priority need?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

210. Are all decisions on whether a duty is owed under the homelessness legislation checked and signed-off by a senior officer?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

211. Where senior officers check decisions on homelessness cases is a 'case quality' feedback sheet used to help officers improve their decision making?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

212. In assessing whether homelessness cases are processed in good time, what percentage of case decisions take longer than 33 working days?

%

Comment:

213. At the date of completing this self-assessment is there a backlog of decisions awaited on homelessness cases, over and above average live caseloads for the local authority?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

214. Is there a system of one-to-one supervision meetings to manage homelessness caseloads and to support staff in making effective investigations and correct decisions?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

215. Has training taken place in the last 12 months covering the following:

215.1 The homelessness legislation

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

215.2 Interview skills

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

215.3 Statement taking

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

215.4 Housing benefit, maximising benefits and basic debt advice.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

215.5 Landlord and tenant law, including court advocacy procedures.

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

6. Finance/Invest to save

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to assess whether it has control over the costs of homelessness and is using money effectively to 'reinvest to save' in new prevention services. Has it for example an adequate homeless prevention fund which might be as much as £10-20,000 outside of London and £30-50,000 in London.

216. Has the council or corporate management agreed a formal 'invest to save' strategy for the homelessness service?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

217. Is there a Homelessness Prevention Fund in place which is separate from any rent deposit scheme funding?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

218. How much is it per annum?

Comment:

219. Which of the following officers have authority to spend money from the Homeless Prevention Fund? (Tick as many as apply).

frontline reception Options advisors visiting staff
homelessness caseworkers senior managers only

Comment:

220. How much of any Homelessness Prevention Fund was spent in 2005/06? (Do not include money spent on rent deposits which should be recorded separately).

£

Comment:

221. Does the local authority know the total cost of providing the homelessness service, including gross and net costs for staff, the provision of temporary accommodation and homelessness prevention initiatives?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

222. Is the local authority using Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to help prevent homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

223. Is the homelessness service administering all or some of the local authority's DHP payment fund?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

224. Has the local authority spent or exceeded its government-set DHP allocation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

225. Has the local authority been able to access other forms of funding to prevent homelessness e.g. Drug Action Funds, anti-social behaviour funding?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

226. Do officers responsible for the homelessness service fully understand how all forms of temporary accommodation are financed, including gross and net costs taking into account the housing benefit subsidy for each type of temporary accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

227. Will at least 75% of DCLG’s Homelessness grant funding have a direct and measurable outcome effect on either the number of cases where homelessness can be prevented or the number of households placed in temporary accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

7. Knowledge of the homelessness legislation

Purpose

This section helps a local authority assess whether staff are confident in dealing with applications for housing assistance and applying the homelessness legislation where there is reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. Staff should be able to answer all of the key questions below with confidence and demonstrate a clear understanding of the legislative provisions, case law and the Code of Guidance – which will help lead to fair and correct decision making. It is for Local Authorities to ensure that they discharge their statutory functions properly, and that staff are adequately trained.

228. Are all staff who assess whether a homelessness duty is owed to housing applicants familiar with the following key concepts of public law and with the specific provisions of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. In particular, staff should be familiar with the statutory definition of homelessness.

228.1 Are the staff familiar with the key principles of public law and how they apply in relation to homelessness decisions, including the ‘Wednesbury’ test of reasonableness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.2 What in law triggers a requirement on the authority to make inquiries to determine whether a duty may be owed to a housing applicant under the homelessness legislation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.3 The legal provisions that determine whether an interim duty to secure accommodation is owed?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.4 The statutory definition of homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.5 Which categories of housing applicant have a priority need for accommodation under the homelessness legislation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.6 The test of 'vulnerability' (for the purpose of having a priority need) under case law?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.7 The provisions that determine whether an applicant has become homeless intentionally?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.8 'The main homelessness duty', when is it owed to an applicant, and under what section of the Act is it owed?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.9 The ways in which 'the main homeless duty' ends?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.10 What duties are owed to applicants who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness, and in which section of the Act are they found?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.11 How a local authority would determine whether accommodation is suitable to meet a homelessness duty to secure accommodation ?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.12 What duty is owed to an applicant who is eligible for assistance and has been found to be homeless but not to have a priority need for accommodation?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

228.13 The duties owed to applicants who are eligible for assistance and found to have become homeless intentionally?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

232. Waiting times – Is the Council’s corporate standard set and met for the Homeless Service?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

233. Are service standards in place for the service and widely available for applicants?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

234. Are there sufficient number of interview rooms to cover options, prevention and casework functions?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

235. Is there a customer satisfaction survey in use and is it used on an ongoing basis?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

236. Has a mystery shopping exercise taken place in the last 12 months?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

237. In last 12 months has the service undergone an independent external review by for example; a Peer review group; the Homeless Forum; Shelter; Regional champions?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

238. Is one planned for the next 12 months?

YES NO

Comment:

9. Temporary accommodation standards

239. Has the local authority set a target to end the use of Bed and Breakfast for all households within two years?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

240. Has the local authority ended the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for all 16/17 year olds?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

241. Is the local authority matching or bettering the national average figure of 85% of all households placed in self-contained accommodation which includes 91% of families in self-contained accommodation? (as at end March 2006)

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

242. Are all local authority households accommodated in temporary accommodation placed within the authority's boundaries at the date of the self-assessment?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

243. Are procedures in place for inspecting the quality of temporary accommodation and its management?

- a. Bed and Breakfast at least monthly YES NO
- b. hostels at least monthly YES NO
- c. leased accommodation at least quarterly YES NO

Comment:

244. Have written standards been set for the quality of all temporary accommodation used or procured, including units managed by RSLs and other partners?

- YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

245. Is floating support available for any vulnerable households in temporary accommodation that require support?

- YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

246. Are arrangements in place to notify Children’s Services, Education and Health for all placements made into temporary accommodation?

- YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

10. Maximising housing supply

Purpose

This section helps a local authority to take a comprehensive look at how it is using the available social housing stock in its area. It covers lettings, nominations, exclusions and encourages a local authority to take a close look at its existing allocations scheme to ensure that it is not inadvertently either 'encouraging' homelessness applications or preventing those that are homeless from being housed into settled accommodation.

- 247.** Where stock is owned by the local authority or managed by an ALMO what percentage of new or introductory lettings in 2005/06 were given to those owed a main homelessness duty?

- 248.** Is this more or less than 2004/05?

More Less

- 249.** Have targets been set for the percentage of new or introductory lettings to be given to statutory homeless households in 2006/07 following a comprehensive supply and demand analysis?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

- 250.** What percentage of new or starter tenancy RSL lettings were as a result of a local authority nomination?

- 251.** What percentage of these lettings as a result of nomination were let to statutory homeless households?

252. Considering all new, secure and introductory/starter tenancy lettings for both local authorities and RSLs, is the percentage of lettings to the statutory homeless above or below the regional average for 2004/05? (regional figures are available from Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate (HHSD))

Above Below

253. Is there a nominations agreement with each of the main RSLs operating in the local authority area and if so has this been reviewed in the last twelve months?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

254. In the last twelve months a specific meeting with each of the main RSLs to discuss nominations, exclusions, and ways of helping the local authority to tackle homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

254.1 If there has been a meeting, or meetings, were they successful in achieving change to:

	Y/N
Nominations arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved RSL prevention of homelessness for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved RSL prevention of homelessness for tenants experiencing domestic violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involvement of the local authority's RSL in the homelessness strategy or forum	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reaching an agreement with RSLs that they will not rely on using Ground 8 in possession proceedings as per Housing Corporation guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>

255. Has there been an in-depth analysis of the local authority's allocations scheme to ensure that it is not contributing to any 'silting up' of temporary accommodation or preventing homeless acceptances from moving on from temporary accommodation within a reasonable period of time?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

256. In Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder areas is there joint planning with the HMR team to ensure that any plans do not have a negative impact on homelessness?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

257. Is there a social housing under occupation scheme in place?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

258. If so, does it cover both local authority and main RSL stock?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

259. Have targets been set for 2006/07 for any properties freed up through an under-occupation scheme?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

260. Is information on shared ownership schemes being provided to working households accepted as homeless as part of any options interview?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

261. Has training been given to homelessness prevention staff on how shared ownership schemes operate in the local authority area, including how to assess the suitability of applicants against financial eligibility criteria to assess their ability to afford this option?

YES NO UNCLEAR

Comment:

ANNEX 1

GOOD PRACTICE/GUIDANCE PUBLICATIONS

The following may be useful to refer to when developing any actions plans after completion of the self assessment.

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Homelessness prevention: a guide to good practice (2006)

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Homelessness publications

www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1162505

Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives. A strategy for tackling homelessness (2005)

Tackling homelessness amongst ethnic minority households – a development guide (2005)

Resources for homeless ex-service personnel in London (2004)

Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness: Nomination Agreements and Exclusions (2004)

Achieving Positive Shared Outcomes in Health and Homelessness (2004)

Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies: Evaluation and Good Practice (2004)

Reducing B&B use and tackling homelessness – What's working: A Good Practice Handbook (2003)

Housing Associations and Homelessness Briefing (2003)

Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness – A Homelessness Directorate Advice Note to Local Authorities (2003)

Addressing the health needs of rough sleepers (2002)

Care leaving strategies – a good practice handbook (2002)

Drugs services for homeless people – a good practice handbook (2002)

Homelessness Strategies: A Good Practice Handbook (2002)

More than a roof: a report into tackling homelessness (2002)

Helping rough sleepers off the streets: A report to the Homelessness Directorate – Randall, G and Brown, S (2002).

Preventing tomorrow's rough sleepers – Rough Sleepers Unit (2001)

Blocking the fast track from prison to rough sleeping – Rough Sleepers Unit (2000)

Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate Policy Briefings

- Briefing 14: Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives – One Year On (March 2006)
- Briefing 13: *Survey of English local authorities about homelessness* (December 2005)
- Briefing 12: *Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP)* (September 2005)
- Briefing 11: *Providing More Settled Homes* (June 2005)
- Briefing 10: *Delivering on the Positive Outcomes* (December 2004)
- Briefing 9: *Homelessness Strategies: Moving Forward* (November 2004)
- Briefing 8: *Improving the Quality of Hostels and Other Forms of Temporary Accommodation* (June 2004)
- Briefing 7: *Addressing the Health Needs of Homeless People Policy* (April 2004)
- Briefing 6: *Repeat Homelessness Policy* (January 2004)
- Briefing 5: *Improving Employment Options for Homeless People* (September 2003)
- Briefing 4: *Prevention of Homelessness Policy* (June 2003)
- Briefing 3: *Bed and Breakfast Policy* (March 2003)
- Briefing 2: *Domestic Violence Policy* (December 2002)
- Briefing 1: *Ethnicity and Homelessness Policy* (September 2002)

Supporting People publications

www.spkweb.org.uk

- Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for People with Mental Health Problems* (2005)
- Guide to Housing and Housing Related Support Options for Offenders and People at Risk of Offending* (2005)
- Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Homeless Households* (2003)
- Supporting People: The Support Needs of Homeless Households* (2003)
- Supporting People: Guide to Accommodation and Support Options for Households Experiencing Domestic Violence* (2002)
- Reflecting the Needs and Concerns of Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Supporting People* (2002)

Other ODPM publications

www.communities.gov.uk

- Sustainable Communities: Homes for All. A Five Year Plan* (2005)
- Improving the Effectiveness of Rent Arrears Management* (2005)
- Housing Allocation, Homelessness and Stock Transfer – A guide to key issues* (2004)

Guidance on Arms Length Management of Local Authority Housing (2004)

Allocation of Accommodation – Code of Guidance for local housing authorities (2002)

Working together, Connexions and youth homelessness agencies, London, Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) and Connexions (2001)

Other Government publications

Audit Commission

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Homelessness, Responding to the New Agenda (2003)

ALMO Inspections. The Delivery of Excellent Housing Management Services (2003)

Housing Services After Stock Transfer (2002)

Department for Education and Skills

www.dfes.gov.uk

Safeguarding Children, The second joint Chief Inspectors' Report on arrangements to Safeguard Children, Commission for Social Care Inspection (2005)

Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004)

Working with Voluntary and Community Organisations to Deliver Change for Children and Young People (2004)

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk/Home/fs/en

Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community (2006)

Working together to safeguard children (2005)

Government response to Hidden Harm: the Report of an inquiry by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (2005)

Making a Difference: Reducing Bureaucracy in Children, Young People and Family Services (2005)

Independence, well-being and choice: our vision for the future of social care for adults in England (2005)

Commissioning a patient-led NHS (2005)

Health reform in England: update and next steps (2005)

National service framework for children, young people and maternity services (2004)

From Vision to Reality: Transforming Outcomes for Children and Families (2004)

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2003)

Tackling Health Inequalities: a programme for action (2003)

Guidance on accommodating children in need and their families – Local Authority Circular 13 (2003)

Children Missing from Care and Home – a guide for good practice published in tandem with the Social Exclusion Unit’s report Young Runaways (2002)

Getting it Right: good practice in leaving care resource pack (2000)

The framework for assessment of children in need and their families (2000)

Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century (2000)

Working Together to Safeguard Children: a guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2006) HM Government

National Service Framework for mental health: modern standards and service models (1999)

Home Office

www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Advice note on accommodation for vulnerable young people (2001)

Housing Corporation

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Tenancy management: eligibility and evictions (2004)

Local Authority Nominations. Circular 02/03/Regulation (2003)

Non-Government publications

Centrepoint

www.centrepoint.org.uk

Joint protocols between housing and social services departments: a good practice guide for the assessment and assistance of homeless young people aged 16 and 17 years, Bellerby, N. London (2000)

Chartered Institute of Housing

www.cih.org

The Housing Manual (2005)

Housing and Support Services for asylum seekers and refugees: a good practice guide, John Perry (2005)

Strategic Approaches to Homelessness; Good Practice Briefing 24 (2002)

Commission for Racial Equality

www.cre.gov.uk

CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing, The Commission for Racial Equality (2006)

Disability Rights Commission

www.drc-gb.org/

The Duty to Promote Disability Equality: Statutory Code of Practice (2005)

National Housing Federation

www.housing.org.uk

Level threshold: towards equality in housing for disabled people: good practice guide (2005)

Flexible allocation and local letting schemes (2000)

Homeless Link

www.homeless.org.uk

Hospital admission and discharge: Guidelines for writing a protocol for the hospital admission and discharge of people who are homeless (2006)

Shelter

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/home/index.cfm>

Sexual exclusion: issues and best practice in lesbian, gay and bisexual housing and homelessness (2005)

Youth housing: a good practice guide (2004)

Local authorities and Registered Social Landlords – best practice on joint working (2002)

