

**Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy
Action Plan 2008-2013**

Actions	Outputs and targets	Lead	Progress		Target date	Key Partners
Objective 1: Prevent homelessness through early intervention and targeted Housing Advice						
1. Develop best practice procedures to assist private tenants being illegally evicted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set up an internal working group -Review procedures for previous illegal evictions -Develop agreed protocol -Consult and distribute protocol with partner agencies 	East Herts	Delay in starting project due to other service priorities. Project delayed due to lack of staff resources.		<i>Dates to be revised</i>	East Herts Legal Services, Environmental Health, Housing Options, CAB
2. Make available accessible housing options literature and protocols to our partners and service users to support prevention and sustain tenancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop separate service user and partner literature -Promote advice services available from the Council and other agencies eg by advertising & links to other partner's websites 	East Herts Housing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature for service users and partners on Homelessness, Homeless Reviews, Housing Register , general housing advice and shared ownership; reviewed & updated as appropriate. All documents on the Council's website Links to other RSL websites on Council's website and County Council, also national and local advice agencies on housing debt etc. 		<p>completed and ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p>	East Herts Housing Service, RSLs, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group
3. Continue to maintain and extend relevant housing advice services that are accessible to all sections of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to monitor the causes of homelessness - Develop a recording mechanism to review social housing evictions. -Identify barriers and improvements to the service by working with other agencies - Review existing preventions options and ensure they continue to be relevant. 	East Herts Housing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring of causes of homelessness kept up to date and discussed internally and also with Homeless Strategy Group. Riversmead Housing Association have an internal post to independently review all proposed eviction cases prior to eviction to ensure all avenues for prevention explored. Member of Housing Options Teams attends eviction interviews at South Anglia to ensure tenants who are close to being evicted are aware of all the implications. Communities and Local Government have provided a total grant of £50,000, 2010/11 to prevent homelessness. Grant to continue until 2014/15. Housing Options have used some of the funds to extend hours of the in-house CAB debt advice service, to provide rent deposits to access the private sector and also to prevent rough sleeping in the district. Data regarding homeless preventions options are collated by the Housing Options Service and monitored by CLG's Homelessness Team. 		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p>	East Herts Housing Service, RSLs, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group
4. Continue to ensure money advice services and other services offering help with financial problems are available to all those who need them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue to support the funding of the joint working CAB and East Herts debt advice worker - Monitor value for money of the Debt Advice Service 	East Herts Housing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt Advice provided under agreement by CAB from within the Housing Options Service. Linked to the Government Mortgage re-possession initiative and have extended debt advice to 2days per week. One day in Bishop's Stortford and second in Hertford. The Housing Options Service provides an annual Grant to the CAB of £11,500 to provide an in-house Money Advisor two days a week. Resolved debt issues for at least 46 clients in 2010/11 of which half were owner occupiers with mortgage arrears. Average priority debt Apr 2010 - Mar 2011 was £6,800 and non-priority was £14,600. 		<p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	East Herts Housing Service, CAB

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5. Ensure all agencies are aware of referral routes for access to floating support services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and influence Herts County Council's development of floating support service provision. - Obtain data from County Council to monitor take-up of services for East Herts residents 	Herts County Council	<p>County Council have extended the generic Floating Support Service with Origin Housing until 2012.</p> <p>The County Council's Accommodation Solutions Team are currently reviewing the generic Floating Support Service and assessing it's value for money. They have surveyed each district/borough in Hertfordshire as to their views of the current service and the overall benefit of having a Generic County Floating Support Service. The Housing Options Team have had difficulty referring applicants into the service due to high demand and waiting times but broadly favour a floating support service, especially for households in the private sector requiring support. Both Riversmead and Circle Housing Associations have an in-house Tenancy Sustainment Service.</p>		<p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	East Herts Housing Services, Herts County Council

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Objective 2. Develop and improve services to young people						
6. Support the effective working of the Young Persons Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure East Herts are represented at protocol development meetings and publicise content to partners - Ensure East Herts representation on training & monitoring of protocol 	Herts County Council	<p>Senior Homelessness Officer attends county wide protocol development meetings. Protocol substantially reviewed following a House of Lords judgment on the roles of Children, Schools and Families and Housing Services for Homeless 16/17 year olds. Protocol signed by all Districts, HCC and partners and launched 21/7/2010. Training undertaken in 2010/11. Protocol currently under going it's first review after one year of implementation.</p> <p>Protocol training arranged by County Council and supported by the Herts district /boroughs. The County Council and Herts Young Homeless Group and Herts Local Authorities attend regular meetings to discuss difficult cases currently being dealt with under the protocol to ensure consistency of implementation and best practice.</p>		<p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p>	Herts County Council, Herts Young Homeless Group, East Herts Housing Services

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7. Continue to seek initiatives for the provision of additional accommodation for young people aged 16-17 and 18-25 year olds	- Support Herts County and the Crouchfield Trust to increase amount of supported accommodation for young people in East Herts including the development of a young persons hostel.	East Herts and Herts County Council	Council agreed in October 2008 to the development of a 24 bed Young Person Scheme and also to sell a development site owned by the Council for £1 to a Aldwyck HA. Aldwyck have draft drawings that have been commented on by Housing Options and also the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Aldwyck submitted a bid for capital funds for 2011-2015 to the HCA which includes the Young person project. Their bid was recently rejected by the HCA. The Council and Aldwyck to meet shortly to discuss the future of the project.		Ongoing	Herts County Council, Crouchfield Trust, East Herts, RSL(s),
	- Continue to monitor outcomes and support the YMCA project for 16 and 17 year olds.	East Herts Housing Service	The Council undertook a Value for Money exercise of the project which cost £18,000 in 2010/11 and housed 4 young people on 6 month tenancies. The Council issued a notice that it was withdrawing from the project from April 2011. The project has been taken on by Herts CC Children Services under the Young Person Protocol. This has led to a saving of £18,000 for the Council but at no detriment to the services provided for 16-17 year olds in East Herts.		Completed	East Herts Housing Services, YMCA
	- Support partner agencies and HCC with initiatives such as supported lodgings, crash pad etc.	Herts County Council (HCC)	The Council has agreed a Housing Register Protocol for Care Leavers with HCC and has inputted in to the Care Leavers Accommodation Strategy being developed by Children, Schools and Families. The council continues to input into the Crash pad service provided by Herts County Council through Herts Young Homeless Group.;		Ongoing	Herts County Council, East Herts Housing Services
8. Work with HYHG, Aldwyck Housing Association and the County Council to increase the homeless prevention initiatives available for young people including awareness events at school.	- To reduce the number of 16 and 17 year olds placed in the Council's Homeless Hostels - 12 placements 07/08.	East Herts Housing Services	In 2008/09 there were 10 placements and 2009/2010 there were 2 placements of 16 and 17 year olds in the Council hostel in 2010/2011 there were no placements.		Ongoing	East Herts Housing Services
	- Reduce the number of 16 and 17 year olds who present as homeless. Baseline of 12 presentations in 07/08		In 2009/10 the Housing Options team had 8 presentations from 16 and 17 year olds which reduced to two in 2010/11. The Council's has provided, via the Local Strategic Partnership, £5,000 of funding to HYHG, which alongside funding from 4 other LAs in the County and the County Council, is being used to provide a homeless awareness toolkit being rolled out to schools aimed at 14 year olds. Project managed by staff from HYHG but also involves ex-homeless young people during the presentations. Targeting schools that have a high exclusion rates. Very popular with schools as part of the PSCH national curriculum. HYHG recently gave a presentation to the council's Local Strategic Partnership regarding the project and it's outcomes which was well received. Council to consider the continuation funding of this project post April 2012.		Ongoing	

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Objective 3: Improve the type and use of temporary accommodation for homeless households						

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9. Work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council Supporting People to develop suitable Housing/Housing Support for identified groups	- Attendance at Supporting People consultation and decision making meetings. Continue to engage with Hertfordshire SP regarding de-commissioning and commissioning SP funded services in East Herts.	Herts County Council	The Supporting People Team was disbanded by County Council in June 2010. The budget for provision of services is primarily now managed by the Herts County Council Adult Care Services Management Board. The Council attends strategic meetings held by the County's Accommodation Solutions Team regarding the strategic provision of accommodation for vulnerable client groups across East Herts and Broxbourne attended by strategic housing officers and representatives from registered providers, learning and physical disability teams and mental health.		Ongoing	Herts County Council, East Herts Council
10. Ensure we continue to provide B&B accommodation only in an emergency and not more than 6 weeks and not for 16/17 year olds.	- Monitor and measure the number of households on quarterly basis and report to Homeless Strategy Group and the Governments Homeless Directorate. In 2007/08 the Council placed a total of 13 households in B&B for an average of ten nights	East Herts Housing Services	For 2010/11 have placed 11 households in B&B accommodation for an average of 8 nights. No one has been placed for more than 6 weeks. The Housing Options Team placed no 16/17 year olds households.		Ongoing	East Herts Housing Services, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group, RSLs

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Objective 4: Improve services to homeless households and households in housing need						

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11. Enhance & Improve Choice Based Lettings in East Herts	<p>- Monitor the impact of CBL on Homeless prevention and Homeless households being housed and compare to previous years data.</p> <p>- Commence an Equality Impact Assessment on the Housing Register Policy and Allocations Policy to ensure policy does not have a detrimental impact on particular client groups accessibility to social housing; amend policy as required.</p>	East Herts Housing Services	<p>Homeless prevention continues to work well . Points revised for homeless households in council Hostel Accommodation to ensure that after 3 months they are likely to make a successful bid to ensure continual movement through hostel. Average length of stay in hostel accommodation 14 weeks for 2010/2011 compared to 19 weeks 2008/09. Number of Homeless households accepted as housing a housing duty in 2010/2011 was 39 compared to 43 in 2009/10 and 70 in 2008/09.</p> <p>Completed June 2010 and action plan submitted to Diversity Officer.</p>		<p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p>	East Herts Housing Services, RSLs
12. Increase capacity of rent deposit scheme	<p>- Continue to promote the scheme to private landlords particularly through the Council's Private Sector Landlord Forum to build and maintain a base of landlords.</p> <p>- Strengthen recovery procedures and monitoring on the Rent Deposit scheme to ensure the Council are maximising the financial benefit and re-cycling of money.</p> <p>- Develop a tracking system to monitor the number and reason where tenancies fail within first 6 months.</p>	East Herts Housing Services	<p>In 2010/11 26 private tenancies set up at an average cost of £1,200. The Council has funded the deposits through the government's annual Homeless Prevention Grant. Currently landlords are becoming more reluctant to accept tenants on Local Housing Allowance. This is due to restriction on the amount of the housing allowance paid currently and future proposed changes to the benefits system as well as the buoyant private rented market such that landlords have little difficulty letting to tenants not on housing allowance.</p> <p>Recovery procedure strengthened and now able to use the Council's Sundry Debtor system for recovery. However very work intensive and currently recovering approximately 20% of deposits owed.</p> <p>Each case is monitored by an officer from the Housing Options Team. However the landlord/tenant rarely advise the Housing Options Team if a tenancy is not renewed. Very work intensive to monitor and follow up all tenancies that have been set up using the rent deposit scheme. Current post on maternity leave so work being covered by other members of the team.</p>		<p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	East Herts Housing Services, Environmental Health,

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13. Monitor trends, identify demand and provide evidence for services for 'Rough Sleepers' and 'Hidden Homeless' households.	- Continue to carry out annual surveys of 'Rough Sleepers' and 'Hidden Homeless' households to monitor needs	East Herts Housing Service, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group	Rough Sleepers Count carried out annually ; last survey February 2010. The partner agencies reported a total of 7 rough sleepers in the week with a maximum of 3 sleeping rough on any one night. Communities and Local Government (CLG) have consulted on alternatives methods for measuring rough sleepers. Agreed method is to do a desk top count with partners and submit an estimate November each year. Next survey due November 2011. CLG have given the Council a one off grant of £8,000 to reduce rough sleeping in the district. Currently in discussion with partner agencies that frequently have clients sleeping rough as to how to most effectively spend this money.		Ongoing Annual	East Herts Housing Service, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group
14. Improve communication with homeless households	- Relaunch the Homeless User Survey.	East Herts Housing services	On hold pending staff resources		Mar-10	East Herts Housing services

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Objective 5: Develop and improve partnership working to maximise benefits to homeless households						
15. Ensure existing services are working together effectively and meeting the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	- Ensure the Homeless Strategy Group is as fully representative of agencies in the District as possible by expanding the membership through targeted promotion -Agree a rolling timetable of training and topic discussions at the East Herts Homeless Strategy Group	East Herts Housing Services	Current active membership includes CAB, YMCA, PCT, Aldwyck, Riversmead and Circle Anglia Housing Associations, Vale House, Children Schools and Families. Other agencies are on the circulation list but are not active members. Meetings have not been held for 9 months. Anticipate holding the next meeting in November 2011 and reduce frequency to 6 monthly. Topics for future discussions now regular part of Agenda for next two meetings i.e. 6 months in advance. Topics have included, Floating Support, care leavers, rehousing of offenders, affordable housing development and the County Council Move-on project. Agencies in County have been significantly reviewed in the last year which has meant that formal representation has been limited.		Ongoing Completed and ongoing	East Herts Housing Services, East Herts Homeless Strategy Group

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16. Agree an information sharing protocol for relevant partners within data protection guidelines for the prevention of homelessness and the Housing Options Service	<p>-Check Council's Corporate Data Sharing protocol and tailor for Housing Options Service</p> <p>-Agree scope of information to be shared & draft protocol</p> <p>-Consult and distribute protocol with partner agencies for signing</p>	East Herts Council	<p>Housing Strategy and Policy Manager attended in-house Data Sharing training.</p> <p>Data sharing protocol drafted and agreed with Head of Health and Housing. Currently being rolled out for signing with partners agencies. To date identified approximately 30 agencies that require signature. protocol discussed with Information Manager & signed copies held centrally.</p> <p>Distributed to our primary agencies including our registered providers, CAB, and others advocacy agencies.</p>		<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed and ongoing</p>	East Herts Council, RSLs, advocacy groups in East Herts, Statutory and Voluntary agencies
17. Improve information exchange and planning across local authority boundaries.	- Ensure representation by East Herts in key government and sub-regional working/information sharing groups for example the London Commuter Belt Homeless Group.	East Herts Housing services	Senior staff in the Housing Service continue to engage in a wide range of County Strategy and Development officer Groups, Young Person Project Board, choice based letting Group, Herts Homeless officers Group, Stansted Housing Area Partnership (SAHP) and Herts Heads of Housing. And others as required and applicable. Government has reviewed sub-regional structures eg the London Commuter Belt and dis-banded them.		Ongoing	East Herts Housing Services

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Objective 6. Increase the supply of appropriate, good quality affordable housing						
18. Monitor the number of new affordable homes in the District NI 155	-Maximise number of units produced & monitor percentage of affordable housing on schemes eligible for affordable housing. Target of up to 40% on eligible sites.	East Herts Housing Services	Monitored by the Council's Housing Enabling Manager and also included on the Council's Service Plan for 2009/10. Completed 122 units of affordable homes in 2008/09 and 185 in 2009/2010 but only 64 in 2010/2011. This is considerably lower than in previous years and reflects the current economic climate for new private housing development. However there were 75 new affordable homes granted planning permission, as part of new private developments, from April 2010 to March 2011. The majority of which are on site with anticipated completion during 2011-2012. In addition from April 2011 to date there have been 134 new affordable homes granted planning permission again as part of larger private developments. We continue to negotiate from a starting position of 40% affordable homes all private developments.		Completed and ongoing	East Herts Housing Services
19. Continue to work with the LCB Empty Homes Group to maximise the number of empty homes brought back into use and offered to rent	<p>- Publicise scheme to identify suitable properties</p> <p>- Monitor the number of properties brought back into use via the scheme. No target set.</p>	East Herts Environmental Health Service	<p>Web page available and reports received from members of the public via online reporting. Revised Empty Homes Strategy developed.</p> <p>Completed three properties on PLACE Scheme. Empty property renovated and tenanted with applicants referred from the Housing Options Team.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	East Herts Council, LCB Empty Homes Group

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20. Encourage private landlords to engage with the Housing Options Team and provide accommodation for households on low incomes	- Attend the Council's Private Sector Landlords Forum to establish options for working together, advising of changes in legislation and generally improving relationship.	East Herts Council Environmental Health Service	Housing Options staff continue to do presentations and attend the Council Private Sector Landlords Forum; last Forum March 2011. Landlords often initiate contact with the Housing Options Service when they have a suitable property that they are able to offer for rent at the Local Housing Allowance rate.		Ongoing	East Herts Council Environmental Health Service and Housing Services
21. Improve the current approach to reducing under occupation	<p>- Ask RSLs to provide estimates of the current levels of under occupation and where it is concentrated.</p> <p>- Research good practice in effective under occupation schemes</p> <p>- Work with RSLs to develop initiatives/ incentives to reduce under occupation.</p>	RSLs	<p>This is a complex and sensitive issue that will need a range of tailored options to incentivise individual households to move to smaller accommodation. South Anglia have begun audit of tenants starting with those occupying 4 bedroom homes.</p> <p>This is a national concern amongst social housing landlords. National research shows that financial incentives have little impact on encouraging applicants to move to smaller social housing accommodation but that the type and quality of accommodation is more of an incentive. Need to develop a policy document with our RSLs as increasingly difficult to meet our housing need for larger accommodation households eg 2 and 3 bed houses.</p> <p>The Council's Housing Register Policy provides the same level of points for each bedroom a transfer applicant wishes to give up as for those that are lacking bedrooms. Riversmead and South Anglia identifying levels of under-occupation targeting larger accommodation first. Have developed tailored incentive schemes and will be approaching individual tenants that are significantly under occupying.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Mar-12</p>	East Herts Council Housing services, RSLs

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22. Implement a District Wide Common Housing Register (CHR) and maximise the number of HAs that are participating in CHR	<p>- Promote the benefits of a CHR to those landlords not yet participating</p> <p>- Develop a CHR protocol for all participating RSLs to sign up to.</p>	East Herts Housing Services	<p>Both the two main stock holding authorities now part of the Common Housing Register and Housing Register Policy amended to allow existing social tenants needing a transfer to be pointed suitably. All housing associations with stock in the district now able to refer their existing tenants needing a transfer to the Council Housing Register.</p> <p>CHR protocol included within the Memorandum of Understanding on Choice Based Lettings. Document consulted on with partner housing associations with stock in the District. Majority of the document agreed; some minor details still under discussion with RSLs. However document used as a working protocol between Housing Options and RSLs.</p>		<p>Completed</p> <p>Oct-10</p>	East Herts Council Housing services, RSLs
23. Action around the Repossession and Eviction Prevention grant provided by central government.	Monitor use of the one off grant for 2010/11 within the guidelines set out by central government.		Money has been used to enhance the debt advice service provided by the CAB from within the Housing Options Service and £7,992 has been spent to prevent 6 households from sleeping rough by enabling them to access accommodation in the private sector.		Completed	East Herts Council Housing services, CAB

Updated August 2011