

Burnley Homelessness Strategy

2008 - 2013

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Introduction

Welcome to Burnley Borough Council's second Homelessness Strategy. It builds on the successes of the first strategy and sets out the Council's plans to address homelessness for the next five years.

The strategy has been developed against a background of changing legislation and recent national, regional and local developments; it is informed by a thorough review of homelessness that included consultation with key stakeholders and service users. Brief details of stakeholder and service user consultation are provided in Appendix 1.

A high quality 'SMART' action plan has been developed to guide the Council and its partners in building on the successes of the first strategy to provide a first class service in Burnley.

The Strategy forms part of a suite of strategies and plans developed by the Council that address housing issues; it is also linked to a number of local, sub regional and regional strategies and plans that address health, justice and community cohesion.

Background

New Legislation

Local Authority's duties and responsibilities towards homeless people are contained in the Housing Act (Part VII) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

The key provisions of the 2002 Homelessness Act were to require local authorities to adopt a strategic approach to tackling homelessness, to improve the protection available to people who are homeless through no fault of their own and to strengthen the duties owed to certain groups of homeless people.

Further changes were brought about by the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order in 2003. This means that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for applicants with family commitments and that Bed and Breakfast accommodation should be used only in an emergency and then for no more than six weeks. The Government has expressed a commitment to extend this legislation to cover young people aged sixteen and seventeen by 2010

The Government also wants to see a fifty per cent reduction in the use of temporary accommodation for all statutorily homeless people by 2010.

Finally, every local authority must produce a revised, five year homelessness strategy, informed by a review of homelessness in the local authority area, by July 2008.

Achievements of the First Strategy

There has been a significant reduction in the number of people being accepted as homeless in the past 5 years: at the time the first Burnley Homelessness Strategy was published, acceptances stood at over 200; in 2006/7 the figure was 75.

The use of Bed and Breakfast as temporary accommodation for homeless people has declined by nearly 75% percent in the last year.

Prevention measures have been adopted such as the bond scheme which has significantly reduced homelessness by assisting people on low incomes to access private sector tenancies.

There have been some notable developments in multi agency working to minimise homelessness such as the development of joint protocols with Children's Social Care Services, Probation and the Youth Offending Team, but some work remains to be done in developing these agreements into really effective working documents.

The list below shows some of the most significant actions from the original strategy that have either been fully or substantially completed:

- A private sector rent deposit scheme has been created
- Home visits in order to verify information are conducted
- Information available to homeless people and people at risk of homelessness has been improved
- A support and resettlement worker has been employed
- Protocols for domestic violence victims have been agreed and implemented
- A sanctuary scheme for domestic violence victims has been created
- Joint working with Pennine Lancashire boroughs has been developed
- A family mediation service has been commissioned

The Strategy in Context

The Implementation of the actions in the Burnley Homelessness Strategy will assist in the achievement of targets in other Burnley strategies such as the Community Safety Plan. Ultimately it will feed into the Council's Strategic Plan which states

'The Council is keen to ensure that the homeless and other vulnerable groups in the community continue to receive improved services and we will continue to work with our many partners to support these groups and meet their specific needs'.

Further details of the links between the homelessness strategy and other local and regional plans are provided in Appendix 2.

Developing the Strategy

Burnley Homelessness Review 2008

A thorough review of homelessness in Burnley has been undertaken comprising a literature review, an examination of statistics produced by the Council, and, where available, partner agencies, followed by a detailed mapping of needs amongst the various groups affected by homelessness and the services available to them.

Eviction by parents and relatives is now the major route into homelessness. Young people aged sixteen and seventeen and care leavers aged eighteen to twenty are over represented in the homelessness statistics; between them these two groups made up over half of all homeless acceptances by Burnley Borough Council in 2006/7.

Homelessness caused by domestic violence is the second most common cause of homelessness as was the case in 2003, but acceptances have dropped by two thirds in the last year thanks to some effective prevention work and the development of protocols with housing and support providers; those victims that are made homeless now receive a better service in terms of both housing and support.

Homelessness caused by the ending of a Short Hold private sector tenancy is the third most common cause of homelessness and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future given the size of the private sector in Burnley.

Statistical information from the Council on the numbers of homeless people and the causes of homelessness are provided in Appendix 3.

Consultation with agencies identified a potential future problem of homelessness caused by mortgage arrears and a current difficulty in arranging suitable accommodation for people with offending backgrounds.

Apart from the above, the review found no quantifiable evidence of a significant homelessness problem amongst the other groups prescribed by the Government.

Aims of the Strategy

The key strategic aims of the second Burnley Homelessness Strategy are to:

1. Prevent homelessness
2. Develop multi agency working to minimise the effects of homelessness

3. Meet Government targets on rough sleeping, use of Bed and Breakfast and temporary accommodation
4. Provide a Safety Net of Accommodation and Support
5. Monitor changing needs and performance

Objectives

The principle means by which the key aims will be achieved can be summarised as a short list of objectives.

- Developing integrated support pathways to help people to move on from supported accommodation
- Developing protocols with key partner agencies
- Developing services for homeless people with high and complex needs
- Developing specific plans and sub strategies as appropriate
- Ensuring partner agencies and elected members are kept informed on progress against targets
- Ensuring services represent good value for money
- Identifying funding sources
- Improving access to learning, training and employment for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Improving the health of homeless people
- Offering incentives such as the rent bond scheme
- Providing appropriate advice and options
- Working in partnership with other Lancashire authorities

The action plan that accompanies this strategy provides details of specific actions that will enable the aims and objectives of the strategy to be achieved.

Delivering the Strategy

The Housing Advice Service

The Council has a legal duty to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and who meet certain criteria.

Although this is a multi agency strategy, the Council, as part of its strategic and enabling role, will lead on the majority of actions and also undertake internal actions to continually improve the services it offers.

Service Development Groups

The actions in the strategy action plan will be delivered by small focussed groups known as Service Development Groups. Each group will meet to develop a single action in the plan and have a lead officer who will be responsible for arranging meetings, circulating minutes and reporting progress to the Burnley Homelessness Forum and LSP Theme Group(s).

The purpose of the Service Development Groups will be to:

- Develop new provision
- Improve existing provision
- Carry out research projects

The Burnley Service Development Groups will meet as often as necessary and consist of:

- Senior representatives from relevant agencies identified in the action plan, who able to pledge resources on behalf of their agency
- Service users, who should, wherever possible be represented on these groups.

A good example of a Service Development Group would be the one developing a protocol with Calico Housing for identifying and supporting potentially vulnerable tenants and preventing eviction

This group should consist of:

- Burnley Borough Council Housing Advice Manager
- Calico Housing
- Calico Enterprise (Floating Support)
- Service User(s)

Overall responsibility for delivery of the Burnley Homelessness Strategy rests with the Housing Advice Manager who will receive progress reports from the lead officer from each Service Development Group and update the action plan accordingly.

The Housing Advice Manager or Housing Strategy Manager will report twice yearly to the Burnley Homelessness Forum and the appropriate Burnley Action Partnership Theme Group. An annual report will also be provided to elected members advising them of progress against targets. The strategy will then be formally updated.

Cross Borough Working

Burnley has a history of close partnership working with its neighbours in Pennine Lancashire. Personnel from the Housing Needs and Strategic Housing services regularly attend strategic and operational level meetings to share good practice and develop a consistent approach to housing advice and homelessness prevention.

It is highly likely that some of the actions in the Burnley Homelessness Strategy will be replicated in other Lancashire authority strategies.

The proposed development of a Lancashire Homelessness Strategy is a particularly exciting possibility as this will enable common actions from the 12

district strategies to be taken forward at a sub regional level. This will reduce duplication and ensure a common response to issues such as homelessness caused by offending behaviour and substance misuse.

Examples of actions that may be taken up at a Pennine Lancashire or County level include the development of a protocol for hospital discharge, the development of supported accommodation for domestic violence victims with complex needs and a protocol for reconnecting people who have moved to access support services.

Regional Working

The North West Homelessness Strategy recognises that some actions are best delivered on a regional basis.

A prime example of this is the development of protocols with the prison service to prevent people becoming homeless on release.

Other actions that are best taken at the regional level include setting of a standard for service user consultation and homelessness data collection.

Resources

The aims of the strategy cannot be realised without resources both in terms of time and finance.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide a housing advice and homelessness service and actions that are the legal responsibility of the Housing Advice Service will be financed from the Council General Revenue Fund.

The Government Homelessness Grant is the source of much of the funding already secured to implement the action plan.

The grant has been used to fund the following initiatives:

- The Private Sector Bond Scheme
- The Family Mediation Service
- The Domestic Violence Sanctuary Scheme
- The Housing Advice Service Support and Resettlement Worker

This grant is time limited however and will not be available after 2011. Consideration must therefore be given to the identification of resources that will enable the actions in the action plan to be completed after this date.

Supporting People is the principle source of revenue funding for existing and any future services that provide support to homeless and newly re housed people who are vulnerable.

From March 2009 Supporting People funding will no longer be 'ring fenced' but will become part of the Lancashire Area Agreement funding 'pot'. The Council will continue to work with other district councils to ensure that homelessness prevention maintains a high profile within the Agreement and sufficient funds are made available for this essential work.

The multi agency nature of the action plan showing how actions support other strategies will hopefully help in identifying other funding sources such as the Housing Corporation and the Primary Care Trust but the majority of the actions will need to be completed with the minimum financial input

Appendix 1 Stakeholder and Service User Consultation

Face to face consultation with key stakeholder agencies formed a major part of the Homelessness Review.

The following agencies were directly consulted either by telephone / email or face to face during the period January to March 2008.

- Accent North West Housing Association
- Burnley Borough Council Housing Needs
- Burnley Borough Council Private Sector Housing
- Burnley Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Burnley Domestic Violence and Abuse Service
- Burnley Family Intervention Project
- Calico Housing Association
- Calico Housing's Elizabeth Street Project
- Harvest Housing (Eaves Brook Homes)
- Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care Services Leaving Care Team
- Lancashire Probation Service
- Lancashire Youth Offending Team
- M3 Project (Supported Lodgings)
- Muir Group Housing Association
- New Era
- Places for People (North British Housing Association)
- SHELTER Lancashire
- Specialist Mediation In Lancashire East (SMILE)
- Stepping Stone Project
- Tower Project

Agencies in Burnley carry out regular service user consultation exercises to ensure that services are developing according to needs.

Appendix 2 Strategic Links

A suite of strategies and plans will be developed to enable the Council and its partners to respond to homelessness issues at appropriate levels. Figure 1 below summarises the proposed and developed plans, the people responsible for the delivery of each plan and the expected outcomes.

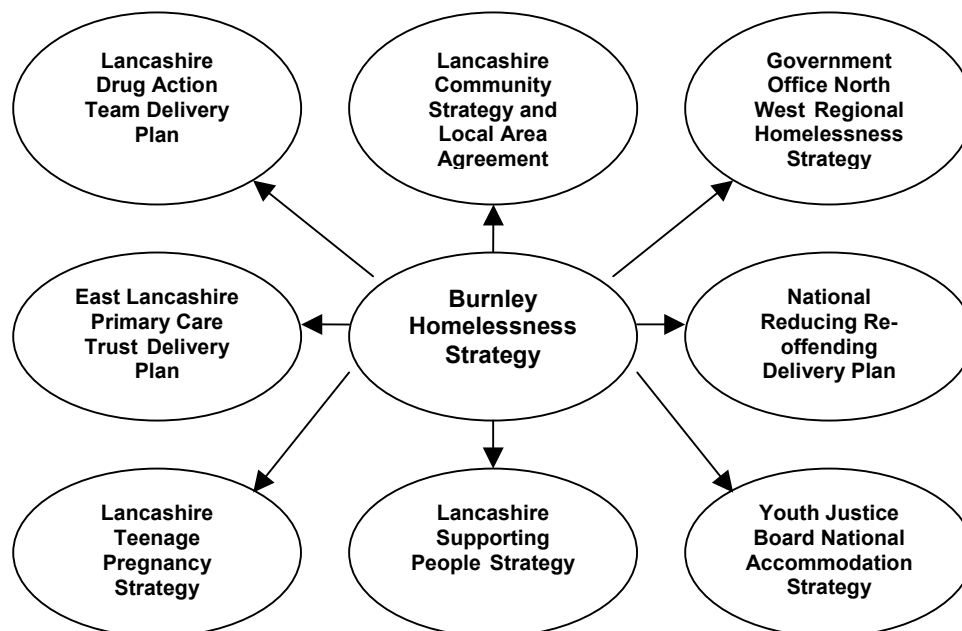
Figure 1 Internal, Local, Sub Regional and Regional Homelessness Strategies

Strategy or Plan	Owned by	Expected outcomes
Housing Advice Improvement Plan	Burnley Housing Advice Team	Internal Service Improvements
Burnley Homelessness Strategy	Burnley Homelessness Forum	Development of Local Initiatives
Lancashire Homelessness Strategy	All Two Tier Lancashire Authorities	Joint Working with Lancashire Agencies
North West Homelessness Strategy	All Lancashire Authorities	Joint Working with National Agencies

The first plan contains actions for the Housing Advice Team to deliver. The Burnley Strategy contains actions pertaining to the Borough of Burnley. The Pennine Lancashire, Lancashire and North West plans are to be implemented in partnership with appropriate partners

Actions from the Burnley, Pennine Lancashire and Lancashire homelessness strategies will significantly impact on the strategic plans of agencies with a County wide remit. Figure 2 below shows the principle strategic links at County level

Figure 2 The Burnley Homelessness Strategy and other Lancashire Strategies



Appendix 3 Homelessness Statistics

Table 1 below shows the numbers of homeless applications and decisions made by Burnley Borough Council since April 1999. It should be noted that these data only refer to actual homeless applications and not the total number of *enquiries* received by the Housing Advice Service.

Table 1 Homeless applications and decisions April 1999 – March 2007

Year	Homeless applications	Ineligible households	Not homeless	Homeless Non priority	Priority but intentionally homeless	Full duty accepted
1999/0	473	1	103 22%	82 17%	28 6%	259 55%
2000/1	624	2	147 23%	113 18%	43 7%	302 48%
2001/2	630	6	168 26%	94 15%	54 9%	328 52%
2002/3	533	0	120 22%	62 12%	53 10%	299 56%
2003/4	344	0	52 15%	52 15%	19 6%	221 64%
2004/5	347	2	28 8%	87 25%	22 6%	208 60%
2005/6	190	2	15 8%	55 29%	29 15%	89 46%
2006/7	77	2	1 1.3%	18 23%	9 12%	47 61%

Source: Burnley Borough Council P1E returns.

Table 2 shows the number of homelessness decisions made and outcomes arising where the applicant was from an Asian ethnic background.

Table 2 Homelessness decisions made on applications from Asian heritage people April 1998 – March 2007 with percentages of the total (see Table 1)

Year	Total applicants	Ineligible applicants	Not homeless	Homeless but not in priority need	Intentionally homeless	Full duty accepted
1998/9	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	2%
1999/0	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	3%
2000/1	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	4%
2001/2	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	7%
2002/3	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	7%
2003/4	8 2%	0	3 6%	1 2 %	0	4 2%
2004/5	16 4.5%	0	2 7%	4 14%	1	9 4%
2005/6	6 3%	2	0	0	0	4 4%
2006/7	3 4%	1	0	0	0	2 4%

Source: Burnley Borough Council P1E returns.

Table 3 shows the causes of homelessness where a full duty was awarded since April 2003. Where significant, percentages have been given; these have been rounded to the nearest whole number for convenience.

NB numbers and percentages relating to domestic violence perpetrated by partner and associated persons have been amalgamated.

Table 3 Main causes of homelessness (where full duty accepted) April 2003 – March 2007

Cause of homelessness	2003/4 number and %	2004/5 number and %	2005/6 number and %	2006/7 number and %
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	40 18%	20 10%	14 16%	16 34%
Other relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate	28 13%	50 24%	12 14%	11 23%
Non violent relationship breakdown	27 12%	24 12%	6 7%	0
Violent breakdown of relationship	50 23%	49 24%	25 28%	8 17%
Racially motivated violence or harassment	3	1	0	0
Other forms of violence or harassment	8 3.5%	12 6%	7 8%	2 4%
Mortgage arrears	3	5	0	0
Rent arrears on:		76		
Local authority accommodation	0	0	0	0
Housing association accommodation	0	0	0	0
Private sector accommodation	0	0	0	0
Termination of assured Short Hold tenancy	23 10%	15 7%	12 13%	5 10%
Other reason for loss of Short Hold tenancy	18 8%	10 5%	6 7%	2 4%
Required to leave NASS accommodation (Asylum Seekers)	0	0	0	0
Left prison / on remand	2 1%	3 1.5%	4 5%	1 2%
Left hospital	9 4%	8 4%	1	0
Left institution or LA care	0	2	0	0
Left HM armed forces	3	3	2	0
Other (emergency returning from abroad etc)	7 3%	6 3%	0	2 4%
Total	221	208	89	47

Source: Burnley Borough Council P1E returns.

Table 4 shows the percentage of acceptances, against the three main causes of homelessness since 1998.

Table 4 main causes of homelessness as percentages of total acceptances April 1998 – March 2007

Cause of homelessness	1998/9	1999/0	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	17%	20%	26%	22.5%	21%	18%	10%	16%	34%
Relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate	13%	11%	12.5%	15%	17%	13%	24%	14%	23%
Total	30%	31%	38.5%	37.5%	38%	31%	34%	30%	57%
Non violent breakdown of relationship	12%	13%	12.5%	11%	9%	12%	12%	7%	0
Violent breakdown of relationship	18%	17%	13%	22%	22%	23%	24%	28%	17%
Total	30%	30%	25.5%	33%	29%	36%	36%	35%	17%
Termination of Assured Short Hold tenancy	12.5%	14%	12%	11%	11%	10%	7%	13%	10%
Other reason for loss of tenancy	15%	11%	13%	8%	2.5%	8%	5%	7%	4%
Total	27.5%	25%	25%	19%	13.5%	18%	12%	20%	14%

Source: Burnley Borough Council P1E returns.

Table 5 shows the number of people accepted as being in priority need by the Housing Advice Service between April 2003 and March 2007.

Table 5 Homeless acceptances by priority need category April 2003 – March 2007

Category of priority need	2003/4		2004/5		2005/6		2006/7	
Emergency	7	3%	4	2%	1	1%	2	4%
Family	114	52%	68	33%	36	40%	7	15%
Pregnant (no other children)	14	7%	28	13%	2	2%	1	2%
Aged 16 or 17	14	7%	19	9%	9	10%	17	36%
Aged 18 – 20 formally in care	1	0.5%	3	1.5%	3	3%	5	11%
Vulnerable due to:								
Old age	6	3%	5	2.5%	0		0	
Physical disability	6	3%	8	4%	4	4.5%	0	
Mental illness or handicap	12	6%	21	10%	7	8%	4	8.5%
Drug dependency	0		0		3	3.5%	0	
Alcohol dependency	0		1	0.5%	0		0	
Being a former asylum seeker	0		0		0		0	
Having been in care	0		0		0		1	2%
Leaving armed services	1	0.5%	0		0		1	2%
Having been in custody / on remand	1	0.5%	3	1.5%	0		1	2%
Fleeing domestic violence	9	4.5%	2	1%	1	1%	2	4%
Fleeing other violence	7	3.5%	20	10%	6	7%	0	
Other special reason	29	13%	26	12.5%	15	17%	6	13%
Total	221		208		87		47	

Source: Burnley Borough Council P1E returns.

Apparent anomalies between the data in Table 3 and Table 5 can be explained by the fact that the *cause* of homelessness may not always be the *reason* for acceptance of duty. For example: a woman with children fleeing domestic violence would be awarded a homelessness duty because of her status as a family; a single woman with no children would be accepted if the Housing Advice Service considered her to be vulnerable due to domestic violence.

Appendix 4 List of Actions

The recommendations from the Burnley Homelessness Review have been categorised in line with their adherence to the SMART* criteria and according to their geographical relevance.

Actions for the Burnley Homelessness Strategy

Those recommendations that are principally relevant to the borough of Burnley and meet all of the SMART criteria are summarised below.

Actions will be grouped into 5 categories:

1. Preventing Homelessness
2. Facilitating Multi Agency Working
3. Meeting Government Targets
4. Providing a Safety Net of Accommodation and Support
5. Monitoring Changing Needs and Performance

Some actions may appear in more than one category

Actions will also be categorised according to the objective(s) they support and be divided into short, medium and long term priorities.

Preventing Homelessness:

- Deliver preventative work in schools and Burnley College
- Take steps to address the high number of young people and care leavers being accepted as homeless
- Identify funds to maintain support and resettlement post when Government homelessness grant ceases
- Identify funds to provide bonds in future years when Government homelessness grant ceases
- Identify funds to enable a domestic violence homelessness prevention service to continue to be offered in Burnley
- Agree a protocol with Calico Housing for identifying and supporting potentially vulnerable tenants and preventing eviction

Facilitating Multi Agency Working:

- Develop a move on pathway with the Elizabeth Street Project
- Develop a move on pathway with Stepping Stone
- Agree a protocol with Calico Housing for identifying and supporting potentially vulnerable tenants and preventing eviction
- Carry out research into the impact of exclusion policies on homeless people
- Develop protocols for the following groups:
 - intentionally homeless families
 - young people entering mediation
- improve data collection methods in partnership with health and criminal justice agencies

Meeting Government Targets

- Develop a plan to end completely the use of Bed and Breakfast for Families
- Develop a plan to end the use of Bed and Breakfast for 16 and 17 year olds by 2010
- Adopt a supply and demand model for the use of temporary accommodation
- Reduce by 50% the use of temporary accommodation by 2010

Monitoring Changing Needs and Performance:

- Amend the housing advice data base to more accurately reflect precise nature of enquiries and outcomes
- Develop a reporting mechanism between the Connexions and Housing Advice Services
- Monitor referral and destination data from Elizabeth Street Project
- Monitor referral and destination data from Stepping Stone
- Report progress to the Burnley Homelessness Forum and the Burnley Strategic Partnership biannually
- Update the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan annually

Lancashire Actions

These actions are likely to be common to all Lancashire authorities and concern the development of strategic and operational agreements between the County Council and the 12 non unitary boroughs in Lancashire.

The following actions are best delivered at a sub regional level and should be considered for inclusion in a Lancashire Homelessness Strategy if this is agreed.

It may be argued however that some of these actions really should be carried out in much wider arena such as that being created by the arrival of the North West Homelessness Strategy but the development of the sub regional strategy would be a necessary precursor to this.

- Support plans to develop specialist accommodation for domestic violence victims with extra needs due to chemical dependency
- Support plans to research potential unmet need for specialist accommodation for domestic violence victims from the BME Community
- Support the development of an enhanced supported lodgings option for young people with high support needs
- Identify a lead officer to engage with the Benefits Agency to develop a protocol that enables young people engaged in mediation to maintain their eligibility for benefits
- Consider developing a common referral form for young people's housing and support services
- Develop agreements with housing associations to ensure vulnerable households are afforded reasonable preference in their allocation policies
- Identify a Lead Officer from east Lancashire to engage with the National Offender Management Service to develop joint actions
- Identify a Lead Officer from east Lancashire to engage with the Youth Offending Team to develop joint actions
- Identify Lead Officer from east Lancashire authorities to engage with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team at a senior level to help meet joint targets

- Identify means of improving the data collection and retrieval from partners, with particular reference to health services and people leaving institutions
- Support proposals for the development of a mental health and housing initiative
- Develop an agreement concerning level of support for people placed in Elizabeth Street Project with neighbouring authorities and Leaving Care
- Work with other east Lancashire authorities to develop emergency accommodation for young people
- Develop protocols for the following groups:
 - Offenders
 - People being discharged from hospital
 - People with mental health problems
 - People with drug / alcohol problems

Regional Actions

Actions that can only really be effectively addressed at a regional level are listed below. These should be delivered by an executive level officer, from one of the North West authorities: this officer will have been given a mandate to agree procedures with representatives from agencies with a national and/or regional remit.

The following actions are best delivered in this way:

- Develop protocols for people leaving prison
- Consider the development of a 'rent up front' scheme to secure accommodation for prisoners prior to release
- Develop a regional standard for engaging service users
- Develop a region-wide minimum standard for collecting data
- Explore the possibility of developing a common set of criteria governing deferment and exclusion of applicants for social housing
- Explore the possibility of developing more Assured Short Hold and introductory tenancies in social housing for certain groups of applicants