

# Homelessness Strategy Review April 2010

## 1.0 Performance

### 1.1 Main achievements in 2008/9 & 2009/10

- 1.1.1 Homelessness services in Wigan borough are delivered by a partnership of organisations who meet regularly as the Wigan Homelessness Forum. The main statutory advice, prevention and assessment service is delivered by Wigan & Leigh Housing on behalf of Wigan Council, with accommodation and support also being provided by Riverside ECHG, Adactus and Arena Options. This is complemented by a range of support and outreach services including The Brick, Stepping Stone, Catch 22, Citizens Advice Bureau, the PCT Homeless & Vulnerable Persons Team, and other Council services like Connexions, YOT and the Care Leavers team. The overall strategic steer is provided by the Council's Housing Strategy and Supporting People teams who commission services and monitor performance. All Forum partners contribute to the formulation of the Homelessness Strategy as well as being essential to the achievement of its aims.
- 1.1.2 A detailed report of our progress and achievements since the introduction of the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 "*A Place for All*" was presented to EECH Scrutiny Committee and published in November 2009. This report demonstrated the strong progress that has been made by the Council and its partners, resulting in achieving the main targets set in the strategy's Action Plan less than halfway through the life of the strategy.

The main 'headline' achievements since 2008 have been:

- Overall reductions in numbers of people presenting as homeless and repeat homelessness
- Fewer presenting cases being accepted as owed a statutory duty, and a significant increase in the number of presenting cases who have been prevented from becoming homeless.
- Reduction in the numbers of placements into temporary accommodation under statutory homelessness duties
- Roll-out of a range of repossession prevention measures, which has made a significant impact on reducing both landlord and mortgage repossessions
- Improved services for people affected by domestic abuse, including a new service contract for the refuge provision and outreach service, with increased client capacity
- Improved services for people who are rough sleeping or living at no fixed abode, incorporating individual support plans, group activities and strong links with partner agencies
- Service Level Agreements now in place to support the excellent joint working with Citizens Advice Bureaux and Housing Benefits Division
- Protocol in place with Stephenson's solicitors to tackle illegal evictions and harassment.
- Protocol developed with NHS trusts to facilitate good joint working for people being discharged from hospital who are at risk of homelessness. This has been developed in conjunction with other Greater Manchester boroughs and sits with a sub-regional framework
- Provision of over 150 new affordable homes
- Protocol in place between Children & Young People's Services and Wigan & Leigh Housing regarding housing advice and options for care leavers
- New protocol in development between CYPS and WALH regarding 16 & 17-year-olds presenting as homeless, which takes into account new statutory guidance.
- Production of 'WARM' strategy regarding the integration of refugees and migrants.

1.1.3 **Overall trends in homelessness:**

	Peak in 2005	March 2008	March 2009	March 2010
Presentations	3284	2116	1563	794
Acceptances	1544	715	481	325
Temp. Accom.	62	60	59	22
Repeat homelessness	120	16	10	8
Preventions	0	0	376	1017

1.1.4 **Wigan's ranking compared with other local authorities:**

	Presentations (per 1000 households in population)	Acceptances (per 1000 households in population)	Temp. Accom.
2007	8 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	232 <sup>nd</sup>
2009	41 <sup>st</sup>	48 <sup>th</sup>	259 <sup>th</sup>

1.1.5 **Successfully preventing homelessness as a result of repossession:**

	Landlord Possession Orders		Mortgage Possession Orders	
	Per 1000 households	% change since 2008	Per 1000 households	% change since 2008
Wigan	1.92	-45%	4.08	-44%
Greater Manchester	5.05	-9%	4.47	-32%
North West	4.16	-10%	4.02	-35%
England	4.08	-9%	3.13	-35%

1.1.6 **Performance against Action Plan targets:**

	December 2007	December 2009
50% presenting homeless cases prevented/relieved	26%	74%
Max. 19 homeless households in temp accomm by Dec 2010 (maintained to Mar 2011)	73	21
Cease use of B&B except in exceptional circumstances	5	Greatly reduced, but not yet nil

**1.2 Key Performance Indicators**

1.2.1 **NI 156 Number of households living in temporary accommodation provided under the homelessness legislation.**

The information is reported quarterly. The Government targets set for Wigan are: 30 households at 31/03/10, 19 households at 31/12/10 (to be maintained to 31/03/11). The actual figure at 31/03/10 was 21 households.

1.2.2 **NI 155 New affordable homes**

124 new affordable homes were completed in 2009/10. Although this National Indicator is not included in Wigan's LAA, it is a target of the Housing Strategy and NW Regional Housing Strategy to maximise this number.

**1.3 Contribution to other strategies & priorities**

1.3.1 **North West Regional Homelessness Strategy**

The development of Greater Manchester inter-agency hospital discharge protocols between homelessness services and NHS Trusts was included on the NW Regional Homelessness Strategy Delivery Plan for 2009/10. Wigan Council has been a leading participant in this initiative.

### 1.3.2 **'Vision 2026' Wigan Borough Housing Strategy** (launched Oct 2009)

The strategic aims of the Housing Strategy are grouped into three themes. Most of the aims and objectives of the Homelessness Strategy fall into the 'People' theme.

The following objectives are aligned:

- Prioritising the prevention of homelessness by tackling its root causes as well as intervening when a situation has reached crisis point.
- Comprehensive housing advice service available to all throughout the borough, not just to those who present as potentially homeless.
- Addressing the imbalance between long-term supported accommodation (e.g. sheltered housing schemes for older people), which is relatively abundant in the borough, and the short-term supported accommodation projects which help people go on to live independently – where significant gaps in provision remain.
- Developing new options for single homeless people (Wigan borough currently has only a fifth of the national average of resources/options for this client group) e.g. Supported Lodgings for young people, some form of emergency provision
- Reducing rough sleeping
- Reducing the numbers of people having to be accommodated in temporary accommodation and the length of time they stay there
- Improving referral pathways to substance misuse and mental health treatment and reintegration services
- Addressing worklessness in deprived communities and amongst vulnerable groups

The three key targets of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan of 2008 are mirrored as objectives in the over-arching Housing Strategy.

### 1.3.3 **Allocations Policy Review**

The Council's Housing Allocations Policy determines the prioritisation of applicants for Council housing (managed by Wigan & Leigh Housing) and for accommodation owned by organisations with whom the Council has a Nominations Agreement. At present nominations are made to at least 50% of all RSL lettings and it is an aim of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan to use existing resources to best effect by maximising nominations. It is hoped that in the future RSLs will make a higher proportion of their lettings via nominations and that accredited private sector landlords may enter into nominations agreements.

Following an extensive period of development and consultation, and influenced by the issue of CLG's *'Fair and flexible: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England'* in December 2009, the Council adopted a new Allocations Policy in March 2010. This will be implemented from approximately October 2010 when WALH have undertaken the necessary changes to their IT system and application paperwork, and completed staff re-training. The new policy prioritises homeless people who are owed a statutory duty and those for whom prevention measures are not likely to be successful to ensure speedy rehousing.

### 1.3.4 **Affordable Housing Strategy**

This aims to increase the supply of affordable homes, to ease the pressure on the housing register and enable the Council to discharge its duties to homeless people without blocking access for people in other housing need.

The strategy sets a target of approximately 530 new homes between 2006-2011.

As at April 2010:

- The Council have acquired over 40 empty newbuild properties for social letting
- The Council, WALH & other RSLs are between them currently building around 150 new homes
- Wigan Housing Solutions is currently managing approx 100 private sector properties through a combination of the Bond Scheme, Management Agreements and Private Sector Leasing.
- Over 100 properties have been made available under the Homebuy Direct shared equity scheme.
- Over 20 private landlords have joined the re-launched Accreditation Scheme

### 1.3.5 **Supporting People Commissioning Framework**

The Supporting People Commissioning Framework for 2008 -2011 was developed in reference to the Homelessness Strategy and shares some strategic aims:

- Building on already successful partnerships with the Third Sector
- Developing services that respond to individuals' needs
- Delivering services across all tenures
- Addressing the historic under-funding of short-term support services serving the needs of vulnerable groups

As a full participatory partner in the Wigan Homelessness Forum, the Supporting People Team at Wigan Council are continually informed about the changing pattern of needs and initiatives taking place in the borough. Commissioning of new services to fill the gaps in support services e.g. Supported Lodgings, new Domestic Abuse refuges and outreach, enhanced Rough Sleepers service, is prompt once the need has been identified. In turn, the requirements of the new Quality Assessment Framework ensure that housing support services are effective and outcomes-focussed.

#### 1.3.6 **Private Sector Housing Strategy**

The Private Sector Housing Strategy is due to be re-written in 2010, but some overall strategic aims have already emerged:

- Improving property standards
- Helping to regenerate neighbourhoods
- Improving the 'image' of the private rented sector as a housing option
- Bringing empty properties back into use as homes

The objectives of the Private Sector Housing Team are to ensure that more tenants living in the private rented sector will see the safety and quality of their homes and neighbourhoods improve, and are less likely to become homeless. Initiatives such as the Accreditation Scheme and the Landlords' Forum aim to drive up property management standards and professional expertise (e.g. in dealing with Housing Benefit) which will encourage landlords to take on tenants for the long-term, and people who may be in receipt of benefits or support packages, which makes a private rented tenancy a more attractive and realistic proposition for people in housing need.

### **1.4 Barriers to delivery**

1.4.1 The effects of the recession are expected to continue to have an impact on the borough for some time including job losses and reductions in household income for those used to relying on overtime or casual work, difficulties raising mortgage finance, and the increased family and relationship strains that such stresses tend to give rise to. It will be challenging to maintain our previous level of success in reducing homelessness in a context of dwindling budgets and increased housing need.

1.4.2 The incidence of domestic abuse remains high in Wigan borough compared with other boroughs, and (partly because of our success in reducing homelessness caused by debt) the proportion of homelessness arising from some form of violence has risen to nearly 30%. Local intelligence indicates that this is partly linked to a corresponding high rate of alcohol misuse, but there are other underlying factors that can give rise to domestic abuse, and finding ways to prevent the social and individual behaviours that ultimately lead to violence is a complex process and beyond the scope of housing services alone.

1.4.3 Traditionally the borough has also had a comparatively high rate of teenage pregnancy, although 2009/10 saw a welcome and significant decrease of approximately 7%. As with violence however, the reasons young women become pregnant despite having no resources to accommodate themselves and their babies are many-layered, and their first contact with housing agencies is likely to be after the fact.

1.4.4 The development of the Supported Lodgings scheme for homeless young people has been

hampered by an internal re-structure within the Children & Young People' Services department which has resulted in losing key staff resources. This means that all the supported accommodation available for young people is still one form or another of group living, which is not ideal for all clients. Preparation of the policies and delivery procedures for the Supported Lodgings scheme has continued but future resources have yet to be identified.

## **1.5 Challenges for 2010-2013**

- 1.5.1 Despite a dramatic improvement in the rate of prevention of potentially homeless cases, Wigan borough still gets the highest number of presentations (per 1000 households) in Greater Manchester, even above the inner city districts of Manchester and Salford. Part of the reason for this is the affordability gap between incomes and market rents/purchase prices, and high levels of housing need, but there is also a contributing tradition amongst some communities that presenting as 'homeless' is perceived as a fast track to obtaining Council housing. We will need to extend the culture shift embedded in the 'prevention agenda' beyond service providers and out into the community.
- 1.5.2 Clients with complex needs and/or chaotic lifestyles are still not always receiving joined-up services. It is almost impossible for such individuals to make sustainable rehousing plans unless their support and independent living issues are also properly addressed. Pathways from housing agencies into treatment and reintegration services must become more robust and agencies must understand their work as part of a holistic person-centred service.
- 1.5.3 There remains no effective emergency access provision for single homeless people. However, due to the reduced demand on temporary accommodation for people to whom the Council owes a statutory duty, the opportunity has opened up to review the resources available and explore new models of provision.
- 1.5.4 Young people still make up a disproportionate number of homeless cases, with the single most frequent cause being the breakdown of relationships with parents/relatives etc. Moreover the current arrangement where every provider of supported accommodation operates its own assessment and allocation system means that vulnerable young people have to 'knock on every door' to find an available place and may not end up in the best one for them. It is proposed to develop a central 'hub' or 'gateway' to deal with applications for supported accommodation, ensure that Child in Need assessments are carried out for under-18s, identify support and other needs, and ensure that allocations are made to the most appropriate applicant.
- 1.5.5 Despite our continued commitment to ensuring that truly homeless young people aged under 18 are properly accommodated, we are acutely aware of the potential pressure on budgets if complying fully with the 'G v Southwark' ruling results in greater numbers of such young people becoming looked after children.
- 1.5.6 Since our supported accommodation provision is limited, we need to explore a model of floating support that can be delivered in a client's current home or in temporary accommodation and is flexible enough to 'step up' or 'step down' in intensity as required.
- 1.5.7 Wigan borough remains a repossessions 'hot spot' nationally despite the excellent performance of prevention services such as the CAB. The services available are very effective, but we need to do more to encourage people to get help at an earlier stage of their financial difficulties, shifting the emphasis of money and housing advice from a reactive approach to a pro-active one, as we have done with homelessness presentations.
- 1.5.8 There is still a lot more scope to expand the Accreditation Scheme and Private Sector Leasing and we will need to find ways to do this without overwhelming the resources available through Wigan Housing Solutions.

## **2.0 Impacts (achievements so far)**

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## **2.1 Equality & Diversity**

- 2.1.1 Homelessness services actively target those people who are most likely to be disadvantaged in society, and during the recent economic downturn we have focused additional resources on repossession prevention work and advice for people on low incomes. The impact of this is that repossessions have fallen faster in Wigan borough than the national average.
- 2.1.2 Disabled people and people with medical problems are more at risk of homelessness than others, but the new Hospital Discharge Protocol will ensure that in-patient clients are referred for help with their housing situation before they have to leave hospital, enabling sustainable solutions to be explored.
- 2.1.3 We are aware of the on-going high level of homelessness amongst young people and our new Action Plan seeks to address the root causes of this and to increase the range of housing options available to this vulnerable client group. In Wigan borough, the most frequent reason that a young person becomes homeless is a breakdown of the relationship with their parents, leading to them being asked to leave the family home. A great deal more work could be done with young people and families to educate people about housing options and the realities of the current market, as there is an out-dated perception in some communities that turning a young person out of the house is a fast track to their being given a Council flat, and there is scope to extend mediation and family intervention work to reduce the rate at which domestic situations disintegrate into dysfunction or abuse.
- 2.1.4 The requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework, which apply to all services funded by Supporting People, ensure that measures are in place to ensure equality of access to all potential clients, and that the support and accommodation provided can meet the differing needs of clients due to their age, ethnicity/nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation and/or disability.
- 2.1.5 We rarely receive complaints of unfair treatment and have no current reason to believe that any service is discriminating against or providing an inferior service to any group. However the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 will mean that we will need to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the diversity of the borough and go further to ensure that we uncover any 'hidden' needs amongst people who perhaps do not use services currently.
- 2.1.6 The largest BME population in Wigan borough consists of asylum seekers and refugees, which is an extremely diverse group of people whose only commonality is a lack of familiarity with local services. We therefore maintain close links with community support groups to respond to needs as they arise.
- 2.1.7 The recently re-launched Landlords Accreditation Scheme also ensures that private rented sector tenancies are a realistic option for people of all backgrounds and we will closely monitor any issues arising from private landlords letting to a more diverse clientele.
- 2.1.8 The new Supporting People contract for Domestic Abuse services will bring about an increase in the number of places available for women and their children fleeing violence and a marked improvement in the quality of this provision.

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## **2.2 Sustainability & Health**

- 2.2.1 There is an abundance of evidence to show that experiencing homelessness is bad for people's health, particularly when it involves a stay in temporary accommodation. Children's educational and social progress can be affected, and the whole household is likely to suffer from increased stress. Reductions in the use of temporary accommodation, rehousing homeless people quickly and supporting them to maintain stable tenancies can therefore significantly improve health outcomes as well as housing ones.

- 2.2.2 The ALWPCT Homeless and Vulnerable Persons Team, work across Wigan borough with homeless people living in all forms of temporary accommodation, including providing a drop-in clinic daily at The Brick for rough sleepers. The range of services provided includes mental health assessments and linking clients in to substance misuse treatment; which are key areas around which individuals can construct their own pathway back to settled housing, and popular courses covering issues such as nutrition, smoking and self care.

During 2009/10 the team carried out over 2300 health and social care needs assessments with homeless clients, which provided an access point to specialist services and some measurable outcomes:

- 102 clients referred to domestic violence services
- 154 clients referred to drugs and alcohol services
- 145 clients referred to CBT or other mental health services
- 507 clients registered with a GP
- 388 clients offered immunisations
- 123 clients stopped smoking following a four week course

## **2.3 Resources & Value for Money**

- 2.3.1 Historically, homelessness services in Wigan borough have been under-funded to the extent that many services seen as a fundamental requirement for tackling homelessness in other areas simply did not exist in Wigan. When the supply of social rented housing exceeded demand, it appeared relatively easy to tackle homelessness by providing better access to Council tenancies, but as the balance between supply and demand has reversed we have had to become more sophisticated in our approach. It is now widely understood that rehousing by itself only deals with the symptoms of homelessness and does not address the underlying causes. Addressing the root causes of homelessness, to avoid the need for families and individuals to go through this traumatic and expensive process altogether, is the challenging ambition we have set ourselves.
- 2.3.2 Funding for services has been based on historical spend and hasn't increased in line with the scale of the task, but we have been able to make the most of any rises in homelessness budgets (Supporting People, Homelessness Grants and successful pilot initiatives) by learning from the experience of other boroughs' best practice, to provide effective and efficient services. Our successes in reducing the numbers of households who have to be placed in temporary accommodation and the length of time they stay there, have also contributed to significant efficiency savings, e.g. our spend on Bed & Breakfast accommodation alone has reduced from £176,000 in 2005/6 to £25,000 in 2009/10, and continues to fall.
- 2.3.3 The Homelessness Strategies of 2003 and 2008 have been instrumental in bringing about the biggest ever changes to homelessness services in Wigan borough and we are now in the position that, despite a relatively low level of provision remaining in some areas because of limited funding, most of the strategic gaps have now been plugged. The challenge now is how we can continue to expand provision and fill the remainder of the gaps (most notably being emergency accommodation for single people) with limited opportunity for new funding and likely cuts in grant funding. We will need to be more creative about how schemes can be funded, e.g. using mainstream funding (rental income) where previously grants have been available as there appears to be very little scope for greater efficiencies within existing services. Unfortunately there is also a real possibility that funding cuts could force us to lose some services that we now see as an integral part of our strategy for tackling homelessness.

## **2.4 Learning points and good practice**

In general, the Forum partnership is pleased to have made good progress with the original Homelessness Strategy Action Plan drawn up in 2008, particularly with our early achievement of the key targets. We believe that the strategy is still fit for purpose, and the overall aims remain relevant, but that the Action Plan can now be refreshed to incorporate new and more challenging targets for 2010-2013 that build on our achievements so far.

## **3.0 Changes in strategic / policy context**

### **3.1 Local**

- 3.1.1 Wigan has traditionally been under-funded for projects commissioned by the Supporting People Team and it has been indicated that Local Area Grant funds can be made available to help optimise the borough's provision of supported accommodation. One of the most important gaps identified through consultation with our partners is a mechanism for clients to apply for and be allocated the most appropriate accommodation for their needs. At present each supported accommodation project deals with applications according to its own separate criteria, which means that clients may have to complete multiple paperwork and assessments and be placed on several waiting lists before obtaining whatever place becomes available first, which may not be the best option for them. A supported accommodation 'gateway' or 'hub' model could significantly reduce inefficiencies and ensure that client's needs are assessed holistically, with fairer outcomes and reduced inappropriate allocations.

### **3.2 Regional / Sub-regional**

- 3.2.1 The government strongly supports greater joint working within sub-regions and Wigan is a full participant in the sub-regional allocations projects: Pinpoint (a choice-based lettings service bringing together all ten Greater Manchester local authorities and 21 RSLs) and the 'Working Xtra' pilot projects to explore flexibilities in lettings to address worklessness. Potentially these initiatives could reduce the number of properties available to let to homeless people, but the numbers involved are likely to be relatively small, and balanced by greater opportunities to access properties in neighbouring boroughs.
- 3.2.2 Whilst there are economic and social advantages to attracting working people to move into the borough, we do not want to fund the expansion of local services for people with intensive support needs, only to find that the new clients they are helping are people from outside the borough. To this end, a re-focussing of rough sleepers services since the award of a new Supporting People contract to The Brick means that the free breakfast drop-in has now been discontinued, so the incentive for homeless people to access services is that they will be offered a personalised support plan to address their needs.

### **3.3 National**

- 3.3.1 The change of government following the May 2010 general election gives rise to some uncertainty about funding and policy priorities over the next few years. Given the fragile condition of the overall economy as it starts to recover from recession, and the need to repay the deficit caused by the massive bank bail-outs of late 2008, it is however expected that local government budgets will face significant cuts. Services may therefore have to manage to achieve more with less money, and our focus on preventing homelessness will need to explore earlier interventions, tackling the root causes of homelessness rather than merely patching up crisis situations. More than ever, efficiencies must be achieved by services working seamlessly together around common objectives and a clear vision.
- 3.3.2 The House of Lords ruling 'R (G) v LB Southwark' in May 2009 clarified the law about the interaction between homelessness and 'child in need' duties toward 16 and 17-year-olds. The clarification was welcomed but it has necessitated a re-assessment of how housing services and CYPS work together. A new protocol for dealing with young people who present as homeless is one aspect of improved liaison that will lead to better outcomes for clients, but there is a potential to put pressure on CYPS budgets if greater numbers of young people become 'looked after' by the Council.

## **4.0 Communications, feedback, consultation & involvement**

## **(including hard to reach groups)**

### **4.1 Allocations Review consultation process**

Consultation with partner agencies during the Allocations Policy review highlighted that while many services work well according to their internal performance objectives, there is more that needs to be done to co-ordinate services to 'wrap around' the most vulnerable clients. The feedback received from the consultation process influenced the development of the policy to give statutory homeless people very high priority.

### **4.2 Homeless peoples health needs survey (Homeless Link)**

The national charity Homeless Link asked Wigan to participate in a ground-breaking audit of the health needs of homeless people, in order to map where these are insufficiently met. 'Wave 1' interviews were carried out in September 2009 with clients of The Brick drop-in health service and 'Wave 2' interviews in March 2010 were extended to single people in supported or temporary accommodation. This exercise provided the opportunity to get information directly from service users about their experiences.

### **4.3 Action Plan workshops at Homelessness Forum meeting 24/03/10**

The Wigan Homelessness Forum consists of over 20 organisations providing services to people at risk of homelessness and meets quarterly to share information and best practice. The meeting of 24/03/10 was especially focussed on the Homelessness Strategy Review and the need to refresh the Action Plan. Three work groups discussed objectives, priorities and potential barriers around the themes of:

- Clients with complex needs and/or chaotic lifestyles
- Preventing youth homelessness and access to supported accommodation
- Prevention repossessions and housing options in the private sector

### **4.4 Learning from others – Blackpool Rough Sleeping Champions conference 29/04/10**

- 4.4.1 Blackpool Council's 'Above & Beyond' programme, which is offered to help homeless people address their personal issues and engage with a support plan, makes use of structured sessions of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to encourage people to change their attitudes and motivations and has proved very successful.
- 4.4.2 Blackpool Council also has a well-developed outreach service which receives referrals from a variety of sources, including the general public, to connect with rough sleepers and link them to services. Given that the town tends to attract rough sleepers from all over the UK, the Housing Options service has also developed robust procedures for 're-connecting' people with services in their originating district when they have no local connection priority in Blackpool.
- 4.4.3 The temporary accommodation available in Blackpool is limited, but makes full use of the opportunity to engage with clients at a crucial stage in their 'journey' through homelessness and is fully committed to the 'Place of Change' agenda.
- 4.4.4 The key to how services work together in an integrated way in Blackpool is to have an effective Housing Options service at the centre of the 'hub'. This model has earned Blackpool Council a green flag in its 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment and the status of Regional Champion for homelessness services.

**5.0 Risk Register**

	<b>Risk/threat</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Control/mitigation</b>	<b>Reduction in risk</b>
5.1	The new government may have radically different policy priorities, forcing us to reconsider what our strategic objectives should be.	New performance targets may have to be set, resources may have to be re-focused	M	M	We already review our strategies annually and publish updates every 6 months, which means we can respond quickly to policy changes. Our track record in this is proven by our fast and creative response to the unforeseen recession of 2008	L
5.2	A significant cut in government funding could lead to the Supporting People budget and/or Homelessness Grant being reduced	Existing services may have to be curtailed.	H	M	We can prove excellent value for money and outcomes to justify funding support. The proposed supported accommodation gateway will also bring savings. Some services can become self-funding over time. Every service needs an action plan and a winding-plan.	L
		New services e.g. emergency access hostel, could not be commissioned	H	H	Other sources of funding are being investigated for the Recycling Lives project	M
5.3	The economy may take a long time to recover from the downturn.	Worklessness levels in the borough may rise, leading to more repossessions through debt.	M	H	Our advice and intervention services to deal with repossessions have a proven track record. We are well placed to make more use of options in the private sector affordable and good quality	L
5.4	The economy may recover quickly, triggering a rise in house prices.	Repossessions may rise because landlords/lenders could now profitably sell properties.	M	M		L
5.5	The Council could face an expensive legal challenge on a homelessness decision from an applicant	Legal expenses could eat up resources needed for essential services	H	L	We monitor all decision-making closely and keep up to date with case law and good practice advice	L
5.6	Social landlords who have over-relied	The financial viability of	H	L	We seek to ensure that	L

	on sales from shared ownership may find their projected income reduced	providers could be at risk			homelessness services are delivered by a wide range of providers with a broad funding base	
5.7	Climate change may bring about colder winter weather like 2009/10	The Council would have increased accommodation costs from its duties to homeless people	M	M	The on-going strategic review of temporary accommodation should enable greater flexibility in how we use this resource in future	L
5.8	Government reviews of the Housing Benefit system could reduce the Local Housing Allowance rates	More people would be unable to afford a private rented tenancy	M	M	Wigan borough has traditionally low rents and some properties are already let at lower than LHA rents. We will continue to work with landlords to support an affordable private rented sector.	L

## 6.0 Refreshed Action Plan for 2010 - 2013

What we need to do	How we will do it	Desired outcome	Resources	Lead agencies & timescale
<b>Strategic theme: Prevention</b>				
<i>Culture change from pro-active to reactive</i>				
Ensure that the right advice is given to people at the right time	Develop referral processes to homelessness prevention services for 'problem noticers' from a range of agencies	People at risk of homelessness can be given advice and help before their situation reaches crisis point	Within existing resources	WALH HF partner agencies
	Agencies to recognise their linked roles and responsibilities in preventing homelessness through two-way training	All agencies understand how their work contributes to a holistic approach, and know how to access complementary services for their clients	Within existing resources	All HF partner agencies
	Develop a comprehensive on-line housing advice resource.	Anyone can access good information and signposting to specialist services at any time	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy
<i>Improving access</i>				
Continue to focus on prevention as the primary role of homelessness services and extend prevention work to address the root causes of homelessness	Identify and offer early support to families where youth homelessness statistically likely	Fewer young people become homeless before they are ready to live independently	Scope /seek funding if required	WALH CYPS
	Continue and develop educative work about housing and homelessness with at risk groups	People have better knowledge of housing options and the realities of homelessness	Scope / seek funding if required	Housing Strategy WALH
	Peer awareness raising – involve formerly homeless people in giving advice and support	Public understanding of homelessness and housing options is more realistic	Within existing resources	The Brick Adactus Arena ECHG
	Work with partners to	Fewer people become	Within existing resources	All HF partner agencies

	address root causes and prevention of domestic abuse	homeless as a result of domestic abuse		
	Seek to identify people at risk of losing their home due to a prison sentence	Fewer people leave prison without suitable accommodation to go to	Within existing resources	All HF partner agencies
	Consider potential to make DVDs or one-line video clips as a prevention tool	Key housing advice messages are accessible to all through non-traditional channels.	Seek funding?	Housing Strategy Wigan & Leigh College? The Brick WALH
<i>Targeted intervention</i>				
Seek to minimise mortgage and landlord repossessions in the borough	Extend landlord repossession prevention outreach work to clients in private sector	Fewer private sector tenants are evicted for rent arrears.	Within existing resources	CAB WALH
	Establish referral system to Wigan Housing Solutions for landlords with tenants in rent arrears	Fewer private landlords fall into mortgage arrears as a result of non-payment of rent by tenants	Within existing resources	CAB Wigan Housing Solutions WALH
<b>Strategic theme: Accommodation</b>				
<i>Develop more affordable homes</i>				
Continue to support the development of new properties	Produce better information about housing needs to inform affordable housing strategy and funding bids	Funding bids are successful for the developments that best meet the borough's needs	Within existing resources	WALH Housing Strategy
	Consider options for provision of emergency accommodation which can manage people with complex needs	People with complex needs can access help to reintegrate and address their issues, better safety and health outcomes.	SP funding?	Housing Strategy
<i>Make best use of existing stock</i>				
Improve access to existing accommodation	Implement new Allocations Policy	Allocations of social housing is simpler and fairer	Within existing resources	WALH
	Seek to maximise the use of Nominations	All applicants can access all tenures of social housing on a 'level playing field'	Nominations costs/charges under review	Housing Strategy WALH
	Participate in Pinpoint (sub-	People who need to move	Within existing resources	WALH

	regional choice based lettings scheme)	across borough boundaries are able to do so		
	Develop Local Lettings Policies to tackle strategic aims e.g. worklessness	Worklessness in target groups decreases	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy WALH
Continue to maximise housing options in the private sector and encourage improved standards of accommodation and management.	Expand Accreditation Scheme	Private landlords seek accreditation, tenants start to expect this as a minimum standard	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy
	Contract out Bond Scheme	More people on low incomes are able to access private rented tenancies without cost to Council	Within existing resources?	Wigan Housing Solutions
	Expand Private Sector Leasing and Management Schemes	Wigan Housing Solutions has a range of good quality properties available and is self-financing	Within existing resources	Wigan Housing Solutions
	Implement refreshed Empty Homes Strategy	Empty properties are brought back into use as homes	Within existing resources	Private Sector Housing Team
	Develop effective Landlords Forum	Private landlords are better informed and the public recognises what make a good landlord	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy
<i>Temporary accommodation</i>				
Review access into existing supported accommodation to ensure best fit with needs, and planned move-on into appropriate accommodation.	Complete strategic review of temporary accommodation and consider reconfiguration of resources and services	Supported accommodation is available for clients who are not owed a statutory duty, temporary accommodation is a 'Place of Change'	Within existing resources	Supporting People Housing Strategy
	Develop Move-On Plans Protocol using the Homeless Link good practice model	Clients leaving supported accommodation can move on promptly into permanent accommodation they are able to sustain	Within existing resources	Supporting People Housing Strategy
<b>Strategic theme: Support</b>				
<i>Make best use of existing provision</i>				

Align allocations and needs more closely	Develop integrated 'gateway' for supported accommodation allocations	Applicants' needs are fully assessed and they can access the best place for them	SP funding	Supporting People Housing Strategy
<i>Increase provision</i>				
Expand the range of supported accommodation options available, especially for people who can't access a hostel	Consider opportunities to develop an accommodation & training project based on the 'Recycling Lives' model.	Clients over 25 can receive support and work training to prepare them for independent living	HCA funding bid for development SP funding for service	Housing Strategy
	Develop the Supported Lodgings scheme through to implementation	This option is available to young people for whom a hostel setting is not appropriate	SP funding	CYPS Housing Strategy
	Develop 'Step-up, step-down' floating support service	Flexible support is available for people who cannot access a hostel but who may need intensive help at challenging times	SP funding	Housing Strategy Supporting People
<i>Improve access to and quality of support</i>				
Identify support needs of applicants before they become tenants and link with services	Finalise and promote hospital discharge protocol	In-patients at risk of homelessness are identified and resettlement work started early	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy WALH
	Develop service for applicants based in Property Shops	Applicants are linked in with the support they need to maintain a tenancy before they move in	Within existing resources	WALH
	Strengthen referral pathways between HOAC, The Brick and substance misuse, mental health and re-integration services	Rough sleepers can access help to address the issues that could prevent them being able to sustain a tenancy.	Within existing resources	The Brick Supporting People WALH
<b>Strategic theme: Excellent services</b>				
<i>Strengthen partnership</i>				
Promote joint working &	Improve promotion of full	Clients can access	Within existing resources	All HF partner agencies

wrap-around services	range of services available to homeless people; strengthen inter-agency referral pathways	information about the full range of services from their first point of contact		
<i>Raise standards</i>				
Develop and expand Housing Options services, incorporating best practice models	Review Housing Options Services contract with WALH	The Housing Options service excels in its advice and prevention role and is seamlessly integrated with the allocations function	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy
<i>Ensure services are focussed on the needs of the borough</i>				
Improve liaison with CYPS and Adult Services	Develop protocol re. compliance with 'G v Southwark' ruling.	Young people's needs are holistically assessed and received appropriate help from Social Care	Within existing resources	CYPS WALH
	Develop joint commissioning mechanisms	Housing and 'social' needs are considered together when commissioning services	Within existing resources	Housing Strategy Supporting People CYPS

## Appendix

### Joining it all together

A directory of homelessness prevention measures, advice and support services in Wigan borough