



FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL



## Meeting Agenda

**Policy & Service Review Scrutiny  
Committee  
Town Hall, Lytham St. Annes  
30 March 2006, 7:00pm**

# **POLICY & SERVICE REVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

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VICE-CHAIRMAN

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## Councillors

Stephen Carpenter

Elizabeth Oades

Maxine Chew

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## **CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

The Council's investment and activities are focused on achieving our five key objectives which aim to :

- Conserve, protect and enhance the quality of the Fylde natural and built environment
- Work with partners to help maintain safe communities in which individuals and businesses can thrive
- Stimulate strong economic prosperity and regeneration within a diverse and vibrant economic environment
- Improve access to good quality local housing and promote the health and wellbeing and equality of opportunity of all people in the Borough
- Ensure we are an efficient and effective council.

## **CORE VALUES**

In striving to achieve these objectives we have adopted a number of key values which underpin everything we do :

- Provide equal access to services whether you live in town, village or countryside,
- Provide effective leadership for the community,
- Value our staff and create a 'can do' culture,
- Work effectively through partnerships,
- Strive to achieve 'more with less'.



## A G E N D A

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2. <b>CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES:</b> <i>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Policy &amp; Service Review Scrutiny Committee held on 10 March 2006.</i>	4
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# REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
CONSUMER WELLBEING & PROTECTION UNIT	POLICY & SERVICE REVIEW COMMUNITY FORUM	30 MARCH 2006	4

## HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

### Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### Summary

The homelessness strategy has been developed by the Homelessness Action Group as a true partnership document. It identifies the strategic framework for homelessness, the Borough profile in terms of homelessness, the advice & support available to homeless people, and an action plan for improvement.

It identifies a number of priority issues, including the need for further 'move on' accommodation to encourage turnover in supported housing schemes, and the importance of preventing homelessness in the first instance. It advocates improved consultation with service users and the continued importance of effective partnership working.

### Recommendation/s

1. That Members discuss and comment upon the homelessness strategy
2. That Members recognise the commitment of partners in preparing and delivering the strategy

### Executive Portfolio

The item falls within the following executive portfolio[s]:

Community and Social Wellbeing (Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse)

## Report

Implications	
Finance	None arising directly out of this report
Legal	None arising directly out of this report
Community Safety	None arising directly out of this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising directly out of this report
Sustainability	None arising directly out of this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising directly out of this report

Report Author	Tel	Date	Doc ID
Name of author	(01253) 658	30/3/06	

List of Background Papers		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
The Housing Act 2004	20/3/06	<a href="http://www.odpm.gov.uk">www.odpm.gov.uk</a>

### Attached documents

1. Homelessness Strategy 2005 - 2008

**Fylde Borough  
Council  
Homelessness  
Strategy  
2005 - 2008**

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1.



## **INTRODUCTION**

The Homelessness Strategy for Fylde tells you how the Council and its partners will work to prevent homelessness occurring, and what services we will provide to people who find themselves homeless, threatened with homelessness, or simply in need of advice.

The Homelessness Strategy is a requirement of the Homelessness Act 2002, and was first published in 2003. Although the Act requires the strategy to be reviewed at least every five years, the authority has elected to publish a new strategy in 2006. Primarily to ensure that it remains practical and relevant and it makes a difference to the lives of homeless people.

The Homelessness Strategy for Fylde has been written by Fylde Borough Council (FBC) housing section in partnership with members of both the Homelessness Action Group and Homelessness Forum. These include representatives from the following organisations:

Age Concern Fylde	Lancashire Youth Offending Team
Connexions	Lancashire Teenage Pregnancy Partnership
Face to Face YMCA	Muir Housing Group
Family Relationships Mediation	New Fylde Housing
Five Piers Housing Association	Pierpoint Group
Former Service Users	Preston City Council
Fylde Coast Women's Aid	Probation Service
Fylde PCT NHS Trust	Richmond Fellowship
Harbour House	Shelter
Job Centre Plus	Supporting People
Kirkham CAB	Sydney Street Family Centre
Lancashire County Council	Wyre Housing Association
Lancashire Police	YMCA
Lancashire Social Services	

All local authorities have a legal responsibility to help homeless people and their families and to ensure their rights are upheld. This duty arises under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The Council has strict rules about who is homeless and in priority need. If clients do not meet these requirements the Council still has a duty to offer clients advice and assistance. The Council, with help from Face to Face YMCA and New Fylde Housing, will assess an application following set criteria. These criteria can be viewed in the 'Homelessness Application Process Explained' leaflet published by Fylde Borough Council.

Reference should be made to the Council's Housing Strategy when reading this document, as explained in more detail in section 3.

Many thanks are extended to all those who contributed to the development of the Strategy. Successful implementation will be dependent on continued good partnership working.

If you require any further information on the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan then please contact Fylde Borough Council Housing Service on 01253 658658, or email [housing@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:housing@fylde.gov.uk)

## **2. DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS**

There is no single, universally accepted definition of homelessness. There are a range of definitions, and for the purpose of this strategy we have used two of these. The first is an aspirational definition on which the vision of the strategy is based and the second is that provided in statutory guidance to which we must have due regard.

### ***Aspirational Definition***

A person is homeless when they do not have a decent affordable home of their choice in which they feel safe and secure.

### ***Statutory Guidance***

Someone is statutorily homeless if they do not have accommodation that they have a legal right to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them (and their household) and which it would be reasonable for them to continue to live in. It would not be reasonable for someone to continue to live in their home, for example, if that was likely to lead to violence against them (or a member of their family)

*Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities – ODPM 2002*

## **3. LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES**

The following flowchart outlines the broader strategic framework, which this strategy feeds into and from. As such the Homelessness Strategy's action plan reflects the priorities set out in the broader strategic sense.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the over-arching body, which reviews and informs the aims and objectives of the Community Plan. The Community Plan represents the long-term vision for the borough over the next 10-15 years. The Corporate Plan represents specific objectives the Council will deliver over a shorter timescale.

Fylde has been rated as having a "fit for purpose" Housing Strategy by Government Office North West. The Housing Strategy contains a detailed action plan covering four priority themes: affordability; homelessness; private sector and supported housing. The Housing Strategy is monitored in the first instance by the Housing Strategy Forum, which the Homelessness Action Group sits underneath. As such, priorities outlined in the Homelessness Strategy must meet the aims of the Housing Strategy and be discussed at the Housing Forum.



#### 4. **ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR**

- ❑ New and improving homelessness partnership with Face to Face YMCA and New Fylde Housing (NFH)
- ❑ Improved customer service – quicker decisions & comprehensive advice, with bed & breakfast minimised
- ❑ Homelessness Action Group committed to providing a cohesive approach to homelessness
- ❑ Family mediation service introduced
- ❑ NFH provide 7 units of temporary accommodation from own stock
- ❑ Housing Corporation funding for NFH to develop a further 5 units for temporary accommodation purposes
- ❑ Nomination agreements in place with 2 private sector landlords
- ❑ A dedicated tenancy support worker for private sector commissioned from NFH
- ❑ A series of awareness raising exercises conducted with young people at secondary schools and the Fylde Youth Council – this is to be rolled out annually
- ❑ Homelessness Charter and a series of information leaflets have been produced by the Council
- ❑ A better understanding of statistics

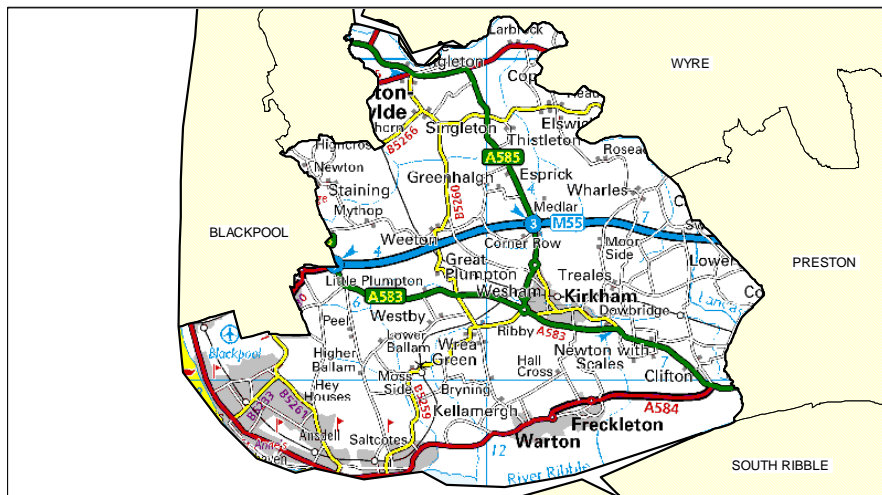
## 5. BOROUGH PROFILE

### Map of Borough and Key Facts (2001 Census)

The Borough of Fylde is very diverse in terms of geography and economy, housing needs and characteristics are similarly diverse.

- ❑ The district covers an area of 62 square miles
- ❑ Population of more than 73000 – 52% female, 48% male
- ❑ 28.5% of population are aged over 59 (national figure of 20%)
- ❑ 8% of the population are aged between 16-24 (national figure of 11%)
- ❑ 55.4% of the population are married. The remaining 44.6% of single people comprises of those who've never married, divorcees, those separated or widowed.
- ❑ 0.6% of the population comprise Black and Minority Ethnic Groups – the majority of whom are white Irish & other white persons.
- ❑ A total of 21 wards of coastal, urban and rural mix
- ❑ Transient population across the entire Fylde coast, particularly between Blackpool and Fylde

### Map of Fylde Borough



## 5.2 Local Housing Market

In building a profile of housing in Fylde, the council continues to analyse the issues of need, affordability, existing provision, housing market, conditions, aspirations and

availability. This in turn informs the development of the Housing Strategy 2004-07 in which homelessness is identified as a priority theme within the Borough.

The following table illustrates the situation, together with comparable figures for both the North West region, and England as a whole.

Tenure	Fylde	North West	England
O/Owned	81.4%	71.4%	68.4%
Private Rent	11.5%	6.7%	10%
Public Sector	7.1%	21.9%	21.6%

Source: Housing Strategy 2004-07

There are 35,190 properties within the Borough. In terms of council tax banding these are broken down as follows, together with a rough estimate of the value in each banding:

Band	Number	Approximate Valuation
A	6,392	Up to £85,000
B	5,873	£85,001 - £110,000
C	8,347	£110,001 - £145,000
D	6,533	£145,001 - £190,000
E	4,264	£190,001 - £240,000
F	2,298	£240,001 - £320,000
G	1,408	£320,001 - £650,000
H	75	£650,001 upwards

Source Council Tax database 2005. Property values are estimates and for guidance only.

### **Owner Occupation**

Owner occupation remains the most popular form of tenure in Fylde, accounting for 81.4% of the existing housing provision. Such a high percentage means that there is a very limited number of properties available to rent. This matter is further compounded by the current housing market which means the vast majority of properties are out of reach to most first time buyers, with only approximately 20% of the properties valued under £100,000.

### **Private Rented Sector**

Because of the limited supply of affordable housing within Fylde the role of the private rented sector becomes crucial. Market values can prohibit housing associations from purchasing and renovating properties to increase affordable dwellings. The Council has successful partnership arrangements with some private sector landlords but the Homelessness Action Group (HAG) is keen to develop this further. The HAG is represented at Fylde's Landlords' Forum and hopes to develop support packages for landlords and tenants in order that more vulnerable people may be housed in this sector. The following figures again demonstrate the affordability problem for people trying to access the private rented sector. The figures shown are the weekly indicative rents as set by the Rent Officer service for

March 2005 for the Fylde Coast area (this is a collective figure that also includes Blackpool and Wyre districts)

Type of Property	Indicative Weekly Rent	Typical Rents Charged
1 bed flat/house	£65	£95+
2 bed flat/house	£77	£150+
3 bed flat/house	£90	£160+
4 bed flat/house	£105	£180+

Source: FBC Housing Benefit

Benefit calculations would generally be based on these figures but they are estimated to represent only 75% of the actual rent charged, and consequently the tenant on housing benefit is often left with a shortfall to pay which adds to the affordability issue.

In terms of the processing of benefit applications it remains crucial that there are no delays in submitting applications together with relevant evidence within 28 days. The Housing Benefit team are happy to provide further training for partners to help facilitate the process.

### ***Social Housing Provision***

At only 7.1% the level of affordable housing under the ownership of Registered Social Landlords is low when compared with neighbouring districts and the rest of the region. This shortage is exacerbated by the loss of properties through Right to Buy (RTB) and Right to Acquire sales, and the lack of affordable housing development. NFH is responsible for the former Council housing stock which since RTB was introduced in 1980, has reduced by 40%, to just fewer than 2000 dwellings. NFH also manages the housing register, which at February 2005 contained 2787 applicants for housing. The Council works with 3 preferred housing association partners, New Fylde Housing, Five Piers (Manchester Methodist Housing Group) and Muir Group. These associations demonstrate a commitment to rehousing people in need via nominations agreements.?

### **5.3 Affordability**

Affordability continues to be a major issue within Fylde, and property prices remain high. Figures relating to the period October – December 2004 show the extent of this problem, and these are contrasted with the same period for 2003 and 2002, they are also contrasted with the averages for the whole of Lancashire.

<b>Property Type</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Detached</b>	2004	2003	2002
Fylde	£285,293	£248,454	£198,273
Lancashire	£238,126	£197,187	£163,035
% Difference	19.8%	26%	21.6%
<b>Semi-detached</b>			
Fylde	£174,325	£135,050	£117,455
Lancashire	£134,184	£108,930	£86,932
% Difference	29.9%	24%	35%
<b>Terraced</b>			
Fylde	£148,913	£109,676	£92,677
Lancashire	£73,776	£61,311	£46,680
% Difference	101.8%	78.9%	98.5%
<b>All Types</b>			
Fylde	£192,210	£154,041	£131,052
Lancashire	£121,378	£107,685	£84,069
% Difference	58.3%	43%	55.9%

Source: Housing Strategy 2004-07

In order to provide a greater supply of affordable housing the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides for all housing development in the area to either include some affordable housing within it, or to provide a sum of money to enable other affordable housing to be developed within the Borough. Any monies received for this purpose are ring fenced for affordable housing provision. Such use will help ease the homeless problem in the Borough once the properties are available.

#### **5.4 Existing Homelessness Provision**

- 7 units of mixed sizes from within NFH stock
  - 7 additional one and two bed flats developed by NFH in St Annes with Housing Corporation funding
  - 2 private sector flats managed via a nominations agreement with the Council
  - 12 one bed flats provided at Harbour House as accommodation in a supported environment for young people aged between 16-25 years
  - Tenancy support provided by Harbour House for its ex-tenants, Face to Face YMCA and New Fylde Housing in the private sector
  - 2 flats owned by Face to Face YMCA with long-term tenants in occupation
- For emergency purposes, the Homelessness Team refers people to temporary accommodation where available in Fylde. The temporary accommodation used is bed & bedfast, holiday flats and hostels. The use of hostel accommodation has been severely curtailed since the requirement for a local connection to Blackpool was brought in.

## **6. THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICE**

At the time the council stock was transferred to New Fylde Housing (Oct 2000), the Council took the decision to also contract out their statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness to NFH. This decision was later reviewed and in April 2004 the Council launched a brand new homelessness and advice service in partnership with New Fylde Housing and Face to Face YMCA (Homelessness Project). The statutory functions are now provided and managed directly by the Council. Prior to introducing this new service an exercise was conducted to test the market to identify whether alternative external providers would be interested in delivering the service. Only two external bids were received, neither of which met the Council's performance criteria and council officers also submitted a partnership bid with New Fylde Housing and Face to Face YMCA. It was therefore decided by elected members that as the Council already supported Face to Face YMCA, and New Fylde Housing continued to provide an out of hours service, the best approach was to launch the new service in partnership.

The reasons for this decision were largely surrounding the suspicion that the true homelessness problem was not being adequately reflected by the figures. The provision of specialist homeless and housing advice officers allowed a keener focus to be placed on homelessness, and the subsequent figures below tend to support that decision.

Homelessness presentations have increased over recent years and continue to do so. The target set by the Homelessness Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to prevent families or pregnant family members from staying in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks is being fulfilled. The partnership will continue to explore options to increase the temporary accommodation stock for homeless people.

## **7. PROFILE OF GENERAL HOMELESSNESS IN FYLDE**

### **7.1 FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

All councils have to provide figures on homeless activity within their area, and these have shown a sizeable increase since the duty was brought back in house.

<b>Homeless Presentations in Fylde</b>	
01/04/02 – 31/03/03	24
01/04/03 – 31/03/04	57
01/04/04 – 31/03/05	219

Source: FBC Homelessness Management System (HMS)

Although homeless applications nationally have increased over this same period, it is inconceivable that the problem in Fylde has increased by over 800%. The only other conclusion can be that the true scale of the problem was never fully



recognised. Presentations from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 suggest that the figure for 2005/6 will exceed the previous year, although very early in the year if they continue to come in at the same rate then the annual total will be in the region of 260. All applicants who make a homeless application have to receive a statutory decision. The breakdown of these decisions for 2004/5 is as follows:

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Eligible, unintentionally homeless, priority	79	36
Intentionally homeless	27	12
Not priority	61	28
Not homeless	24	11
Application withdrawn	15	7
Application cancelled	4	2
Found own accommodation	6	3
Other	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FBC HMS

### ***Customer Care***

The average time taken to reach a decision during the year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 was 6.3 working days, which is an excellent response.

97.5% of applicants received a decision within 33 working days of their application. 67.9% of applicants received a decision within 10 calendar days.

Whilst this performance is comfortably within the targets (95% within 33 working days and 50% within 10 calendar days), every effort will be made to maintain this level of performance in subsequent years.

### ***Who are the homeless in Fylde?***

The 219 applicants in 2004/5 can be broken down as follows in terms of household make up.

<b>Family Make Up</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Single applicant without child	122	56%
Single applicant with child(ren)	53	24%
Couple with child(ren)	25	11%
Childless couple	11	5%
Household member pregnant and no other child	8	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FBC HMS

The conclusion drawn from these figures is that a high proportion of single people are not owed a full duty by FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL. However there is a paucity of suitable accommodation for this section of society, and even where such accommodation can be identified there are likely restrictions on housing benefit

payable. Whilst advice and assistance is offered there is a desperate need for the development of suitable accommodation for this client group.

The Homelessness Act 2002 extended the priority need categories to include 16 and 17 year olds. Without this extension the figures for single people would be considerably worse.

Without the availability of many public sector properties for this client group they are forced into the private sector. However, due to the “single room rent” restrictions applicable to under 25’s, the reluctance of many private landlords to accept such clients, and the refusal of many financial institutions to lend money to landlords for developing accommodation for this group, their opportunities are severely restricted. This can then have the effect of forcing the individuals to “sofa surf”, staying at different friends as and when able. This leads to a chaotic and unsettled lifestyle, which has detrimental effects in other areas of their lives. Alternatively there is the possibility of living in a hostel, but again the demand vastly exceeds supply. Consequently there is a need for the development of suitable accommodation, be it either new build with a housing association, or a form of leasing agreement with a body of landlords to ensure that this need is met.

In order to offer a more cohesive approach to helping young people, a joint protocol has been developed with Lancashire. County Council Social Services which sets out responsibilities and procedures for handling homelessness applications from 16/17 year olds. Additionally a joint protocol has been developed with the Youth Offending Team regarding assisting ex-offenders to access housing and related services.

Of the 79 people for whom the “full duty” was owed during 2004/05, the reasons for their homelessness were as follows:

<b>Reasons for Homelessness of Accepted Applicants</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	17	22%
Violent breakdown of relationship	14	18%
Non violent breakdown of relationship	12	15%
Parents no longer able to accommodate	8	10%
Loss of other rented or tied accommodation	8	10%
Other (emergency)	6	8%
Other relatives no longer able to accommodate	5	6%
Other violence	3	4%
Leaving institution or care	3	4%
Violence from an associated person	1	1%
Mortgage arrears	1	1%
Rent arrears	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: FBC HMS

Clearly therefore, the 3 main areas to be targeted to help resolve the homelessness problem in Fylde are:

- ❑ relatives/friends no longer able to accommodate
- ❑ relationship breakdown, both violent and non violent

- loss of assured shorthold tenancy.

The Council's homelessness team conducts visits and makes contact with households to try and resolve issues and prevent homelessness, drawing upon the expertise of the mediation and other support services where necessary.

### ***Equality and Diversity Issues***

The ODPM has highlighted an over representation of ethnic minority households amongst those accepted as homeless by local housing authorities. Homelessness statistics from the ODPM indicate that black minority ethnic (BME) households are three times more likely to become statutorily homeless than the white population. There are also marked differences in the rates of statutory homelessness between the various ethnic minority groups, with people of Black African and African Caribbean origins being twice as likely to be accepted as homeless (10%) as people of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origins (5%).

Examining P1E data for Fylde BC a total of 219 decisions were made during 2004/05, of which 1.8% were of BME origin. The following BME categories were recorded - White Irish, White Other, Asian or Asian British, Other Asian, and Other ethnic origin Chinese.

Fylde BC and members of the Homelessness Action Group have standard recording and monitoring procedures in place for equality and diversity purposes. All members provide homeless statistics at each quarterly meeting allowing action if necessary via the HAG.

<b>Ethnicity: % of resident population in each group April 2001</b>		
<b>Source: Neighbourhood Statistics area profile Census 2001 ONS</b>		
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Fylde</b>	<b>North West</b>
<b>White</b>	<b>98.56</b>	<b>94.44</b>
White British	96.44	92.17
White Irish	0.82	1.15
Other White	1.31	1.11
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>0.93</b>
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0.17	0.33
Mixed White & Black African	0.06	0.15
Mixed White & Asian	0.19	0.26
Other Mixed	0.12	0.20
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	<b>0.44</b>	<b>3.42</b>
Asian or Asian British Indian	0.25	1.07
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0.08	1.74
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	0.03	0.39
Asian or Asian British Other Asian	0.08	0.22
<b>Black or Black British</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.62</b>
Black or Black British Caribbean	0.05	0.30
Black or Black British African	0.05	0.24
Black or Black British Other Black	0.01	0.08

<b>Chinese or Other Ethnic Group</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.60</b>
Chinese	0.23	0.40
Other ethnic group	0.11	0.20

Fylde BC also has access to the Lifeline Language Service, which provides translations and interpreters ensuring that all services including homelessness and housing advice are accessible to everyone.

## 7.2 FACE TO FACE YMCA

As a key member of the homelessness partnership, Face to Face YMCA's service complements the statutory function offered by the Council. As such it also provides a service to homeless households in the borough, whether it be providing information or a direct service, such as a rent bond or referring to the Council for formal assessment. Statistics are collated monthly and analysed on a quarterly basis relating to the numbers and types of cases that Face to Face YMCA handle. A summary of the year up to April 2005 is contained in the table below. There may be some duplication with the cases presented to the Council, as a result of referrals from Face to Face YMCA. The figures also include one-off enquiries, which did not evolve into full cases.

<b>Reasons for Homelessness – Face to Face YMCA</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Actual Figures</b>
Parents/relatives/friends no longer able to accommodate	49%	159
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	21%	67
Leaving institution or care	8%	27
Non violent breakdown of relationship	8%	25
Rent arrears	6%	20
Violent breakdown of relationship	4%	12
Other (incl. Homeless in emergency, returned from abroad etc.)	3%	11
Roofless – rough sleeping (average)	1%	4 (average)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>325</b>

Source: Face to Face YMCA

In summary, the common causes for homelessness as demonstrated by the Council and Face to Face YMCA figures are:

- ❑ Parents/friends/relatives no longer willing to accommodate
- ❑ Termination of assured shorthold tenancy

Another function of Face to Face YMCA is the administration of the Rent Bond Scheme. A summary of the types of households who received a bond during 2004/05 is detailed below.

### Rent Bond Scheme Figures – 2004/05

Age	Gender	Total
16 –18	M	1
16-18	F	0
19-24	M	6
19-24	F	5
25-40	M	16
25-40	F	13
40+	M	11
40+	F	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>55</b>

Source: Face to Face YMCA

As the above table demonstrates, the majority (53%) of clients are aged between 25-40 for both genders. As there were only 5 households with dependant children for all age groups, it can be assumed that most of these clients were non-priority under the homelessness legislation.

### 7.3 HARBOUR HOUSE

Harbour House is a supported housing unit that provides accommodation for young people (16-25 years), together with training to develop life skills which lead to the young people being better able to sustain a tenancy once they have moved on. Once occupants have moved on from Harbour House then floating support may be available to them, and there is currently the capacity for eight people to be supported in this way at any one point in time. However insufficient properties are available to allow Harbour House residents to move on, preventing the accommodation from being used as effectively as possible, as detailed below.

	2002-3	2003-4	2004-5 (to date)
Referrals made to Harbour House	68	116	62
People moving into Harbour House	44	41	20

Source: Harbour House

This shows that whilst the number of referrals nearly doubled between 2002 and 2003 financial years, those actually assisted remained fairly constant.

The average length of stay at Harbour House increased from 3 months to over 5 months during 2004-05, reducing the number of young people being assisted. This also has an impact on the number of referrals as agencies and individuals will normally ring Harbour House prior to making a referral to check whether there are vacancies or numbers on the waiting list. When there are vacancies or there is no waiting list the referral rate increases dramatically.

Harbour House currently works with two landlords providing a total of three flats that can be used by floating support clients. However more young people could be assisted if more housing provision was available.

## **8.0 MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

### **8.1 The Richmond Fellowship**

Richmond Fellowship work in partnership with two Housing Associations to provide supported housing to adults with severe and enduring mental health problems. At present there are 11 supported flats in the Fylde area that have 24 hour access to staff support. Staff support tenants to develop their life skills and access education, training or employment as well as supporting them to maintain their tenancy. Richmond Fellowship also work with Lancashire County Council Community Mental Health Team to ensure that the mental health needs of tenants are fully met. In addition to the accommodation based services, Richmond Fellowship also provides a Floating Support service to people in the Fylde and Wyre area. The service can support up to 15 individuals at a time and can support anyone with a mental health problem in the community.

Referrals to the services come from a wide variety of sources including: Lancashire County Council, Blackpool NHS Trust, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Primary Care Trusts, Fylde Borough Council and Face to Face. Vacancies for supported accommodation placements are offered to individuals with the greatest needs, Again there is a lack of suitable move on accommodation.

The following figures show an estimate of referrals as at June 2005.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No of referrals</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>No of referrals</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>No of referrals</b>
Male	9	18-25	6	White British	13
Female	8	26-35	5	Other	1
		36-45	1	Unknown	3
		46-65	5		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>17</b>		<b>17</b>

<b>Disability</b>	<b>No of referrals</b>	<b>Source of referral</b>	<b>No of referrals</b>
With disability	2	Blackpool	10
Disability unknown	3	Preston	3
		Fylde/Wyre	3
		Other	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>17</b>

Source Current referral information for Richmond Fellowship waiting list on supported housing and floating support schemes in Fylde. 09.06.05

### **8.2 Lancashire County Council**

Lancashire County Council Mental Health team assists people to find accommodation within the Fylde. They find that there is not enough access to supported accommodation for those with major mental health illness especially

those who would be classified as having dual diagnosis, or personality disorder, or a combination of all three.

They also have concerns about people with mental health problems being housed in hostel or B&B accommodation when homeless due to a lack of appropriate housing. This often exacerbates their difficulties and may make them even more vulnerable to relapse.

## **9.0 DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES**

### **9.1 The Pierpoint Group**

The Pierpoint Group is based in St Annes and provides a “holistic” treatment programme for men and women aged 18-64 years with substance abuse problems, dependency or addiction. Facilities include a 29-bed primary treatment centre; a 16-bed secondary treatment centre and a 13 bed supported living unit. The community based programme offers a 14 place day treatment centre for people who wish to remain in their own home whilst accessing treatment.

The Pierpoint Group acknowledges that there is a shortage of emergency or overnight accommodation for service users. There is also a shortage of affordable accommodation for anyone wishing to remain in the area once his or her treatment has ended.

### **9.2 Prolific and Priority Offenders Team**

This is a multi agency team including Probation, Youth Offending Team, Alcohol and Drugs Services and the Community Drugs team based at St Annes Police Station.

The role of the team is to provide appropriate interventions to clients who continually offend, and to try and encourage them to cease their activities. A high percentage of crime is drugs related and the team case manage/key work known drug users who are within the criminal justice system in the Fylde area. The team tries to ensure that they receive the relevant through care and after care in order to reduce their possible drug related criminality.

The National Treatment Agency monitors engagement within treatment and recognises that a high percentage of people do fall out of treatment citing accommodation issues as a main reason. The Team also acknowledges that it can be difficult to support an individual when they are classed as homeless.

### **9.3 Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS)**

This is a day Care Service, offering one to one support, including counselling to clients wishing to address their drug and alcohol problems who live in the FY8 (Lytham/Lytham St Annes) and PR4 (Freckleton, Kirkham and Warton) postcode

areas. The service is only open to clients who have entered the criminal justice system and who have been referred through the Drug Intervention Programme.

The service also operates a prescribing clinic, which is run jointly with Community Drugs Team Blackpool. Clients can also access other services including Progress 2 Work, offering both work and educational opportunities and St Annes YMCA, giving clients the chance to develop sporting interests.

## **10.0 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

### **10.1 Fylde Coast Women's Aid**

Those fleeing domestic abuse have little choice but to either locate refuge accommodation, but if none is available they may have to present themselves as homeless to the local authority.

Fylde Coast Women's Aid is currently the only specialist provider of domestic abuse related services in the Fylde area providing support to women and children who have been or who are suffering domestic abuse.

. As well as offering safe, secure accommodation for three women and their children in Fylde, the organisation offers a range of other services, including, access to counselling services, floating support services and a help line service. Through these services advice and information is also provided on opportunities for women to retain possession of their accommodation, assist in seeking injunctions and gaining occupation orders.

Between April 2003 and March 2004 the refuge in Fylde accommodated fifty-one families.



## **11.0 PRIORITY ISSUES**

### **Target Priorities**

- Main causes of homelessness to be targeted with a view to preventing homelessness:
  - Parent/friends no longer willing to accommodate
  - Violent and non-violent relationship breakdown
  - Loss of assured shorthold tenancy
- Improved consultation with homeless households and other service users
- Move-on accommodation required to encourage turnover in supported schemes
- Emergency homelessness accommodation to be developed
- Support services to continue to be promoted
- Continue to improve the interface between homeless-related agencies
- Continue to support the rent bond guarantee scheme operated by Face to Face YMCA
- Increased interaction with private sector landlords, particularly through the Landlords' Forum
- More statistical information on single homelessness especially youth homelessness.

## **12.0 PARTNERSHIP**

Fylde places partnership and multi-agency working at the core of delivering effective responses to homelessness. Working relationships with partner organisations need to have trust, understanding, awareness and common goals. The partners contribute in varying ways to the alleviation of homelessness. By offering different areas of speciality it is possible to maximise the use of resources and avoid unnecessary duplication of roles. It is therefore crucial that each organisation knows of the work of the others and that appropriate signposting takes place between agencies. With this in mind a commitment has been made to publish a directory giving details of agencies operating within the Fylde area.

Commitment is also given to ensuring adequate nomination agreements are in place with Registered Social Landlords and private sector landlords to ensure that FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL can suitably influence the housing of homeless people within the Borough.

All of the agencies contributing to the homelessness strategy have committed to providing data to identify trends.

## **13.0 ADVICE AND SUPPORT**

Providing good quality housing advice and support are essential in addressing homelessness. They help protect individuals rights and can also empower people by supporting them to find their own solutions to housing problems. The partners recognise that preventing homelessness is important, with the provision of tenancy support, housing advice and mediation available to assist in this respect.

- Fylde Borough Council employs a specialist Housing Advice Officer. During 04/05 424 people sought advice, many of those who approached for assistance have seen a positive outcome to their queries.
- Face to Face YMCA offers a drop in service in St Annes that offers coffee, meals, conversation and signposting to other organisations. Face to Face YMCA also offer housing advice and operate the Rent Bond Guarantee Scheme from their office in St Annes.
- New Fylde Housing operate a floating support service for general needs clients and have a dedicated support officer for private sector residents.
- More specialist support can be accessed from the Richmond Fellowship for those with mental health problems.
- Lancashire Youth and Community Service operate the Equaliser project, which supports young people with chaotic lifestyles who have a tendency to lose accommodation with parents. The scheme aims to support them towards reconciliation and if that fails they endeavour to find accommodation for them either supported or independent.

There are a number of services available which complement the local advice and support services:

**Connexions** is a support service for young people aged 13-19 years and which maintains a database of all those resident in, or receiving education in Lancashire. Its primary aim is to help young people overcome the barriers that could prevent their participation in learning and/or employment. Those without a permanent home are amongst the highest at risk of disengaging. Connexions works with individuals and signposts them to those partner agencies, such as Face 2 Face, for specialist support.

**Shelter Lancashire** is a major provider of independent housing advice services across the county. Their casework team runs some advice surgeries in Lancashire and a telephone advice line is available. They currently advise on a wide range of issues, including homelessness, poor housing conditions, rents, tenancy agreements and court proceedings.

Shelter Lancashire provides a weekly advice surgery at Kirkham Prison because prisoners are often unable to deal with ongoing issues surrounding their homes or housing situation, whilst imprisoned.

The most frequent queries dealt with are: -

- Homelessness on release
- Illegal eviction
- Possession proceedings

- Rent arrears
- Housing benefit
- Mortgage arrears

**Supporting People** issue, manage and monitor contracts for funded support to vulnerable people throughout Lancashire. Agencies receiving supporting people monies must undergo quality assessment under the review framework to ensure their services are strategically relevant for the area and are meeting performance requirements.

**Family Mediation** is a service available to those whose housing circumstances may break down, rendering them homeless. It is an important method of homeless prevention, helping resolve issues before a crisis point is reached.

#### **14.0 SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT**

FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL currently completes satisfaction surveys with all clients who have accessed the homelessness and housing advice service. Once a decision has been made the client is contacted to see if they would be willing to complete a survey. In general satisfaction rates are high, with the out turn for 2004/05 at 98 % satisfied.

#### **15.0 PREVENTION of HOMELESSNESS**

Preventing homelessness is one of the major requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002. Councils are tasked with anticipating ways to prevent homelessness, intervening at the right time, rather than simply responding to crises. Many of the services such as tenancy support and housing advice provided by a number of agencies supports the preventative approach.

Family Mediation in Fylde was launched in December 2004, and has helped a number of young people to reconcile with family and return home. The long term aim of the service is to help decrease youth homelessness in Fylde.

A common cause of homelessness is eviction for rent arrears, this is often caused simply because of a delay in the payment of housing benefit. This is generally not a problem in Fylde due to good communication with claimants, housing benefit staff, homelessness staff, Department of Work and Pensions and the Rent Officer Service. It is essential that this level of co-operation is maintained so that preventable homelessness does not occur. We will ensure that advice and representation is available for people facing eviction because of rent arrears, benefit or debt problems.

The formation of a Credit Union would also assist in the problem of rent arrears and helping clients through other financial difficulties. Face to Face YMCA has set up a study group to take this forward and establish a Credit Union in Fylde.

Information leaflets will be targeted at those leaving institutional care such as prison or hospital. At the same time we will seek better co-operation from the institutions in an attempt to get advanced warning of potential homeless cases.

## **16.0 ACTION PLAN**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Lead Agencies</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress/comments</b>
<i>1. Terms of reference and confidentiality agreement to be produced for the HAG</i>	FBC/HAG members	FBC to produce a draft for the HAG meeting in Oct 05	All agencies signed up by 31 Oct 05.	Review terms of reference of the group amend if necessary		Clear working parameters and ability to openly share information within the group.	Internal/ Staff time	<b>COMPLETE</b> Draft copy produced, amendments made and final version agreed Nov 05. Members signed up to ToFR at Jan 2006 meeting.
<i>2. Feasibility study to determine viability of a Credit Union</i>	Face to Face YMCA	Draft paper for discussion at the HAG meeting in Jan 06		Proposed launch of Fylde Credit Union early 2007		Financial help for local residents to help sustain tenancies	Face to Face YMCA staff time	Credit Union study group now set up. Setting up the CU will now be undertaken by the study group and Face to Face YMCA. Updates will be given at each HAG meeting via Stephen Heath
<i>3. Service Level Agreement with Housing Benefits</i>	FBC/HAG	Housing Policy Manager to pursue with the HB Manager on behalf of the HAG.		Development of draft via e-mail prior to Oct 06 meeting.  SLA agreed Feb 07		High standard of service with "fast track" facility to avoid delayed benefit payments and prevent homelessness	Internal/ Staff time	Due to staff changes the newly appointed Policy Officer will take this forward during 2006. This will be reviewed later this year and if necessary the target date will be amended.
<i>4. Tenancy support and mediation to continue to be provided</i>	HAG members	Review services quarterly and consider the take-up and outcomes				Prevention/ resolution of harassment to prevent homelessness	Existing services already funded but to be reviewed quarterly	Stats are provided monthly by PANDA and presented at each HAG meeting. Stats will also be provided by NFH at

Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments
							during the data analysis by the HAG	each HAG meeting
<i>5. Consultation with young people on homelessness and housing issues</i>	HAG members	Presentation to secondary schools in particular years 9 and 10	3 secondary schools Lytham, St Annes and Kirkham	3 secondary schools Lytham, St Annes and Kirkham	3 secondary schools Lytham, St Annes and Kirkham	Greater awareness of housing issues. Prevention of homelessness	Internal staff time	Presentations planned for Summer 06 in Kirkham. St Annes schools planned for later 2006 subject to approval from Head Teachers
<i>6. Service users to inform the development of homeless service</i>	FBC  HAG members	Continuous satisfaction monitoring by FBC.  Service users to attend HAG meetings		Potential Service users to be identified and invited to HAG meetings		Acting upon service user feedback to continuously improve services	Internal staff time	Questionnaires are sent to each client who accesses the Homelessness service at FBC. Results are monitored quarterly.  ADS service users to be invited to attend HAG meetings. Update April 06 meeting
<i>7. Provide training to HAG members on all homelessness-related issues</i>	FBC and HAG members	HAG members to identify training needs.		Training needs identified at April 06 meeting.  Training programme implemented by August 06	Training programme reviewed and updated April 07	Ensure all partners have an equal level of knowledge with a view to providing a high level holistic service to customers.	Some will be free but costs to be assessed if provided by external trainers, such as Shelter	Training needs to be identified by HAG members at April 06 meeting. Programme made up of training sessions or informative presentations from partners.
<i>8. Develop an information sharing protocol for</i>	FBC/HAG members	Agreement between agencies in Fylde working	Information received from Shelter	Draft agreement presented to	Agreement in place April 07	Seamless co-operation between	Internal/ Staff time	Information received from Shelter and this will be discussed at

Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments	
<i>statutory and voluntary agencies working with the homeless</i>	Blackpool BC/ Preston CC Wyre BC	with the homeless  Cross-boundary sharing of relevant information with other boroughs	regarding protocols for sharing information	HAG members Feb 07		Cross boundary Agreement in place Oct 07	agencies in support of homeless individuals or those at risk of becoming homeless. Individuals may approach any agency and be referred to the appropriate place for support		the April 06 meeting.
<b>9. Enable the sharing of statistical info. Between FBC and other agencies working with the homeless.</b>	FBC/ HAG members	Each agency to bring their homeless management info and relevant stats to each quarterly meeting of the HAG for discussion by the group.		Define and agree common data set by Sept 06  Referral documentation amended to facilitate data required by October 2006		Greater awareness by all members of the HAG about the levels and types of homeless issues in the borough.  Inter-agency awareness of services available and accessed by homeless households.  A robust baseline knowledge to	FBC/HAG members	Stats received from Face to Face YMCA. Relevant statistical information from other members to be identified Summer 06	

Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments
						inform decision-making.		
<b>10. Increase the number of units available as move-on accommodation.</b>	FBC/ HAG Member/ Harbour House/ Landlords Forum	Presentation to Landlords' Forum with a view to increasing numbers.		10 additional units available per year at affordable rents. 10 tenancies to be held at any one time.		Increased ability to accommodate homeless people each year.  Support provided will ensure that young people will maintain tenancies in decent affordable accommodation.	Internal/ Staff costs plus potential development costs	Proposed Jan 2006 that Blackpool Wyre and Fylde will set up a joint LL forum, which will meet Qrtly or Bi-monthly. Still in early stages. Once dates are available a presentation to Landlords Forum will be arranged
<b>11. Prevention work to be concentrated on the main causes of homelessness in the borough.</b>	HAG members	Quarterly analysis of the homelessness data will dictate priorities for action.  Better utilisation of the mediation and support services available.	5% reduction in homelessness applications per year	5% reduction in homelessness applications per year		Homelessness prevented.  Less agency resources required in tackling homelessness cases.	Existing services to be reviewed under service agreements.  Internal/ Staff costs	Mental health sub group has been set up. First meeting March 06. Issues around mental health identified as a priority, stats and further research are required
<b>12. Continued support for the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme managed by Face to Face YMCA</b>	FBC/Face to Face YMCA	Performance management information to be assessed each quarter.		.		Young people especially have easier access to decent private sector accommodation.	Existing costs plus implications of review outcomes	



Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments
		Service reviewed as appropriate						
<b>13. Landlord accreditation scheme to be promoted.</b>	HAG members	Accredited landlords to be publicised.  All agencies working with p/s landlords to promote benefits of service on ongoing basis.				Better quality landlords and accommodation in the borough.  Peace of mind for tenants and landlords.	Internal/Staff time plus advertisement costs.	Current provision of L/L accreditation scheme to be reviewed.
<b>14. Develop support packages for landlords and tenants in order that more vulnerable people may be housed in the private sector.</b>	HAG members	To extend the tenancy support service for the private sector already provided by NFH and face-to-face YMCA  Enable different agencies to refer to these services		To be developed by January 2007		Wider choice of accommodation available to vulnerable people within Fylde  Support packages will ensure LL continue to provide properties and encourage other LL to rent to vulnerable tenants	Internal staff time with input from Face to Face YMCA, NFH and Harbour House	
<b>15. Submission to the council and other agencies for capital and revenue to support projects/initiatives</b>	HAG members	Any proposals to be fully analysed and costed with an evidenced need.				Resources effectively targeted to areas of greatest need.	Internal/Staff time  Projects to be individually	

Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments
<i>to improve homeless services.</i>		Proposals submitted via Housing Policy Manager upon agreement by the HAG.  Reference should be made to the Housing Strategy in the development of any bids.  Ensure Best Value principles are adhered to.				Robust audit trail to provide to inspecting bodies.	costed as appropriate.	
<b>16.</b> All HAG advice agencies to pursue the Community Legal Services Quality Mark and a relevant quality system are introduced for the homelessness casework.	HAG members	Each agency to provide progress updates to the HAG meetings and share best practice with non-qualifying members				More efficient effective services	Internal/ Staff time plus any membership costs for audit companies	
<b>17.</b> Produce a directory of homelessness and related services to be used by all agencies and service users in the Borough	FBC/ HAG members	FBC to gather examples of best practice from other areas.  HAG members to contribute to the directory by	Draft directory produced by end Mar 06.	Final directory produced by 31 April 06.		Clearer understanding of all homelessness related services available in the borough with contact details	Internal/ Staff time plus printing costs	Decided to use the Wyre BC template. Other examples have been sought regarding ideas for inclusion.  On schedule to be

Objective	Lead Agencies	Target	05/06	06/07	07/08	Outcome	Resources	Progress/comments
		writing sections relevant to their agencies.				to aid signposting and referral systems.  Duplication of efforts minimised and more streamlined service for customers.		complete by April 2006
<b>18. Improved medical services available to homeless individuals at the drop in centre.</b>	HAG members	HAG to determine what services are required  HAG to engage with PCT to develop services		Analysis of service requirements complete by June 06		Improved quality of life for most vulnerable homeless households.  Increased chances of accessing other services as a result.	Internal/Staff time plus development costs of services. (Shared with PCT)	

## **17.0 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

It is important to be able to measure the effectiveness of this strategy through:

- Homelessness Action Group (quarterly)
- Feedback to the Housing Strategy Forum to ensure homelessness remains a priority within wider strategic housing aims (bi-annual)
- Customer consultation – the views of service users will be sought, and, where appropriate, changes will be driven by their responses.
- Feedback from stakeholders (various strategic groups and partnerships)
- Monitoring of statistical returns to the ODPM, to identify changes in trends
- Best Value Performance Indicators

## **18.0 USEFUL CONTACTS**

**Fylde Direct  
Public Offices  
292 Clifton Drive South  
Lytham St Anne's  
Lancashire FY8 1LH  
Tel 01253 658658**

**Fylde Direct  
Public Offices  
Moor Street  
Kirkham  
Lancashire PR4 2AU  
Tel 01253 658658**

**Fylde Borough Council  
Town Hall  
St Anne's Road West  
Lytham St Anne's  
Lancashire FY8 1LW  
Email: [housing@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:housing@fylde.gov.uk)  
[www.fylde.gov.uk](http://www.fylde.gov.uk)**

**New Fylde Housing  
Warwick House  
Kilnhouse Lane  
Lytham St Anne's  
01253 642000  
Email: [info@newfyldehousing.co.uk](mailto:info@newfyldehousing.co.uk)**

**Face- to-Face YMCA  
14 St Davids Road South  
St Annes  
Telephone: 01253 720270  
Email: [f2f@fyldecoastymca.org](mailto:f2f@fyldecoastymca.org)**

**Shelterline  
Free 24 hour advice on housing and homelessness 0808 800 4444  
Email [lancashire@shelter.org.uk](mailto:lancashire@shelter.org.uk),**

**Shelter**

35 A-C North Albert Street  
Fleetwood  
Lancashire  
FY7 6AJ  
Telephone: 01253 874324 or 01254 56593

**Citizens Advice Bureau (Kirkham & Rural Fylde)**

Council Offices  
Moor Street  
Kirkham  
Preston  
PR4 2AU  
Telephone: 01772 682588

**Citizens Advice Bureau**

Aston Gardens Gate House  
5 St Georges Road, St Annes  
FY8 2AE  
Telephone: 01253 720710  
Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Connexions**

14 St Davids Road South  
St Annes  
Telephone: 01253 720948  
Website: [www.cx-lancs.co.uk](http://www.cx-lancs.co.uk)

**Pierpoint House**

Residential Primary Treatment  
385 Clifton Dr North  
St Annes  
01253 723144

**Harbour House**

4 Dock Rd  
Lytham  
01253 794433

**For independent advice about benefits:-**

Lancashire County Council Welfare Rights Service,  
Ground Floor, Guildhall Offices, 58-60 Guildhall St,  
Preston PR1 3NU  
Tel: 01772 533656  
Email: [preston@lancswelfarerights.com](mailto:preston@lancswelfarerights.com)

**Lancashire Welfare Rights also run advice sessions at:-**

Kirkham, Social Services Office,  
29 Station Road,  
Kirkham

On Mondays at 9.30 – 11.30 a.m.

Phone 01772 533656 to make an appointment.

Lytham

County Information Centre

4 Clifton Square, Lytham

On Fridays 9.30a.m. – 12 noon

**Accommodation for under 25's**

Elm House 22 Derby Rd Blackpool Tel: 01253 625520	Kensington House 2 Langdale Rd Blackpool Tel: 01253 761334
Vincent House 61 Furness Ave Blackpool Tel: 01253 302069	Bay House 72/74 Alexandra Rd Blackpool Tel: 01253 341565
The Blackpool Foyer Chapel Street Blackpool 01253 292878	Harbour House 4 Dock Rd Lytham Tel: 01253 794433
Oak House 9 Knowle Ave Blackpool 01253 351193	The Night Shelter St John's Walk Blackpool Tel: After 9pm 01253 291038
Merryweather House 8 Fishergate Hill Preston Tel: 01772 253480	Fylde Cost Women's Refuge PO Box 33 Blackpool Tel: 01253 596699
Fox Street Night Shelter Fox Street Preston Tel: 01722 556371	Holly House (Male only) 20 Pleasant St Blackpool Tel: 01253 291795

This document and related policies and information are available on the  
Councils website [www.fylde.gov.uk](http://www.fylde.gov.uk)  
and from the following Council Office Town Hall St Annes FY8 1LW 01253 658658

If you have any comments or want to know about the Homelessness Strategy you can contact  
Pauline Parker Homelessness Officer 01253 6586581  
Alison Parsonage Housing Advice Officer 01253 658680  
Lucy Edwards Assistant Housing Policy Officer 01253 658682



# REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
CONSUMER WELLBEING & PROTECTION UNIT	POLICY & SERVICE REVIEW COMMUNITY FORUM	30 MARCH 2006	5

## HOUSING SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### Summary

The private sector housing service was reinspected by the Audit Commission during the Autumn of 2004, with the inspection report completed in November 2004. That report concluded that the service was a fair service with promising prospects for improvement. Members have received updates since that inspection, with the improvement plan attached highlighting progress to date and areas still requiring action.

### Recommendation/s

1. That Members discuss and comment upon the action plan.

### Executive Portfolio

The item falls within the following executive portfolio[s]:

Community and Social Wellbeing

(Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse)

### Report

1. The attached improvement plan highlights progress to date and areas still requiring action.
2. Responsibility for the Housing Service transferred to the Consumer Wellbeing and Protection Manager in December 2005, after the Built Environment Manager left the employment of Fylde Borough Council. Unfortunately capacity within the housing service continues to be an issue due to the long term sickness of the Housing Manager together with two further vacancies within the service. After interview the Housing Policy Manager post was not filled and due to uncertainty about capital funding for



2006/07, the Technical Officer post has not been filled. Given the capital funding settlement it is anticipated that the latter post will be advertised in the near future.

3. The housing service is due for a 'light touch' Audit Commission inspection during June 2006, with the attached plan an important way of demonstrating progress to date.

<b>Implications</b>	
Finance	Implementation of the housing strategy action plan will continue to have significant financial implications for the Council.
Legal	No further implications arising out of this report
Community Safety	No further implications arising out of this report
Human Rights and Equalities	No further implications arising out of this report
Sustainability	Improved housing services contribute to creating sustainable balanced communities.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	Failure to demonstrate good progress may have implications for future governance of the Council and will impact on future Comprehensive Performance Assessment inspection outcomes.

Report Author	Tel	Date	Doc ID
Clare Platt	(01253) 658602	30 March 2006	PSR CF 30.3.06 Housing Services Imp Plan

List of Background Papers		
Document	Date	Where available for inspection
Agenda / Minutes Performance Improvement Community Forum	25 July 2005	<a href="http://www.fylde.gov.uk">www.fylde.gov.uk</a>
Audit Commission Private Sector Housing Reinspection Report	November 2004	<a href="http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk">www.audit-commission.gov.uk</a>

#### **Attached documents**

1. Housing Services Improvement Plan

<b>HOUSING SERVICES ACTION PLAN</b>							
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Delivery</b>		<b>Outcome/s</b>	<b>Progress / Milestones</b>	<b>Milestone Dates</b>
			<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>Equality &amp; diversity</b>						
<b>1.1</b>	Training for members & staff (para 38)	Officer time, Member time & expenses	June 2005	DJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved knowledge and awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training developed &amp; delivered</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ June 05</li> </ul>
<b>1.2</b>	Implement revised equalities scheme (para 31)	Officer time & expenses	December 2006	DJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ability to identify, assess and monitor impact of policies, services and employment on equality &amp; diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft scheme to consultants</li> <li>▪ Reality check &amp; feedback</li> <li>▪ Final scheme agreed</li> <li>▪ Local Govt Equality Standard Level 1 obtained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 10/3/06</li> <li>▪ 15/4/06</li> <li>▪ 1/6/06</li> <li>▪ 31/12/06</li> </ul>
<b>1.3</b>	Establish equalities working group (para 32)	Officer time	March 2006	DJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure ongoing equalities developments addressed &amp; monitored</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working group established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/3/06</li> </ul>
<b>1.4</b>	Profile clients of homelessness service, analyse results and manage performance (para 42)	Officer time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure equality of access to service</li> <li>▪ To identify vulnerable groups for proactive intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Profile service users 05/06</li> <li>▪ Consider outcome of profiling and implement necessary actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15/4/06</li> <li>▪ 15/5/06</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Improved customer involvement in planning, delivery &amp; monitoring of services corporately (para 51)</b>	Officer time	December 2006	PWw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services addressing customer needs</li> <li>▪ Improved targeting of resources</li> <li>▪ Ensure consultation appropriate &amp; effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizen's panel meeting</li> <li>▪ Listening Day</li> <li>▪ Performance management framework reviewed &amp; implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ June 05</li> <li>▪ Aug 05</li> <li>▪ Dec 05</li> </ul>
<b>2.1</b>	Customer feedback analysed, reported & actions implemented (para 52)	Officer time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Services addressing customer needs</li> <li>▪ Improved targeting of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing satisfaction surveys analysed, recorded and action documented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1/4/06 &amp; quarterly</li> </ul>
<b>2.2</b>	Update leaflets to identify availability in community languages & Braille (para 59)	Officer time & expenses	May 2006	LE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved accessibility of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing leaflets updated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/4/06</li> </ul>
<b>2.3</b>	Update information on website (para 65)	Officer time	May 2006	LE / AS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved accessibility of services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing information updated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/4/06</li> </ul>

<b>HOUSING SERVICES ACTION PLAN</b>							
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Delivery</b>		<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Progress / Milestone</b>	<b>Milestone Dates</b>
			<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>			
<b>3</b>	<b>Develop older person's strategy (para 138)</b>	Officer time, Member time & expenses	December 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify gaps in service provision &amp; potential solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fylde &amp; Wyre Older Peoples Strategic Partnership Board established &amp; meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sept 05</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Extend range of options open to those living in poor private sector housing conditions (para 181)</b>	Officer time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved range of options available to improve private sector properties, especially low income &amp; vulnerable households not eligible for grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review current renewal policy &amp; identify alternative options for assistance</li> <li>▪ Community Forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 20/3/06</li> <li>▪ 30/3/06</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Develop a prioritisation scheme for renewal grants that targets assistance to vulnerable people in poor housing and targets resources more effectively (para 191)</b>	Officer time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved targeting of grant resources to most vulnerable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify appropriate system for consideration by Community Forum</li> <li>▪ Implement necessary changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30/6/06</li> <li>▪ 1/4/06</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Identify benefits of in house grants agency and implement necessary changes (para 80 &amp; 189)</b>	Officer time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scheduling and supervision of building work as part of a more professional service</li> <li>▪ Income for reinvestment in service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Benefits of in house grants agency identified</li> <li>▪ Consideration by Community Forum</li> <li>▪ Implement system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 20/3/06</li> <li>▪ 30/3/06</li> <li>▪ 1/4/06</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Develop a structured risk based assessment process for HMOs and use to prioritise inspections (para 147)</b>	Officer time	May 2006	RW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More effective targeted use of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk based inspection regime established, in accordance with Housing Act 2004 requirements</li> <li>▪ System implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15/3/06</li> <li>▪ 6/4/06</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	<b>Develop timetable to demonstrate cost effectiveness of housing service (para 85)</b>	Officer time	May 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure cost effectiveness of service is established</li> <li>▪ Ensure resources used most appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop timetable for benchmarking purposes with partners</li> <li>▪ Implement timetable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30/5/06</li> <li>▪ 15/6/06</li> </ul>

<b>HOUSING SERVICES ACTION PLAN</b>							
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Delivery</b>		<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Progress / Milestone</b>	<b>Milestone Dates</b>
			<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>			
9	<b>Establish fit for purpose housing strategy (para 133)</b>	Officer time, Member time & expenses	September 2005	JC/LC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy and action plan agreed to improve housing provision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing strategy &amp; action plan agreed 'fit for purpose'</li> <li>▪ Implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ September 2005</li> <li>▪ Ongoing</li> </ul>
10	<b>Align aims of community, corporate &amp; service plans (para 115)</b>	Officer time	April 2006	PWw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clear understanding &amp; articulation of housing aims across relevant documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review housing aims in all documents</li> <li>▪ Establish one set of aims &amp; articulate through all documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/3/06</li> <li>▪ 30/5/06</li> </ul>
11	<b>Review with NFHA the banding criteria relating to property condition for choice based lettings (para 165)</b>	Officer time	May 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Appropriate use of enforcement powers in private rented sector</li> <li>▪ Appropriate use of social housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review criteria for choice based lettings by NFHA</li> <li>▪ Agree &amp; implement changes as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/4/06</li> <li>▪ 30/5/06</li> </ul>
12	<b>Review management, administration and processes for grant aid and enforcement (para 149, 172, 173)</b>	Officer time	June 2006	RW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved quality and standard of service</li> <li>▪ Ensure financial probity in relation to grant aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reasons for any delays in enforcement identified &amp; corrected by time limited procedure</li> <li>▪ Review &amp; implement necessary improvements to grant administration &amp; approvals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 30/5/06</li> <li>▪ 30/5/06</li> </ul>
13	<b>Prepare projections of potential geographical need for grant &amp; DFGs on area basis (para 43)</b>	Officer time	July 2006	RA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved geographical knowledge of grant aid intervention</li> <li>▪ Ability to identify potential to work on neighbourhood basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Plot geographical distribution of current and projected cases</li> <li>▪ Review results and develop action plans as necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 15/6/06</li> <li>▪ 15/7/06</li> </ul>
14	<b>Cease practice of charging administration fee for DFGs (para 186, 210)</b>	Officer time	April 2005	JC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved targeting of capital budget</li> <li>▪ Government guidance followed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practice ceased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1/4/05</li> </ul>

<b>HOUSING SERVICES ACTION PLAN</b>							
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Resources required</b>	<b>Delivery</b>		<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Progress / Milestone</b>	<b>Milestone Date</b>
			<b>Implementation Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>			
15	<b>Consult &amp; implement with social services a unified process for monitoring the outcome &amp; satisfaction of DFGs (para 208)</b>	Officer time	May 2006	CEP/DL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Results of feedback used across organisations to improve service to customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consult with social services re unified satisfaction survey</li> <li>▪ Implement survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/5/06</li> <li>▪ 1/7/06</li> </ul>
16	<b>Introduce simplified form of a schedule of rates for grant aided work (para 84)</b>	Officer time	March 2006	RW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evidence value for money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Specification of works agreed and implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1/3/06</li> </ul>
17	<b>Review homelessness strategy (para 103)</b>	Officer time & expenses	April 2006	LE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved targeting of resources</li> <li>▪ Improved service to homeless people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strategy reviewed by Homeless Action Group</li> <li>▪ Strategy agreed by group and Members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 28/2/06</li> <li>▪ 31/3/06</li> </ul>
18	<b>Ensure all support services and partnerships are managed by service level agreements (targets &amp; monitoring) (para 129, 130)</b>	Officer time	September 2006	DJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure value for money</li> <li>▪ Improve capacity through partnership</li> <li>▪ Ensure interventions &amp; resources are targeted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review &amp; amend service level agreements for CAB &amp; Age Concern</li> <li>▪ Review &amp; amend housing related service level agreements</li> <li>▪ Review &amp; amend remaining service level agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 31/3/06</li> <li>▪ 30/6/06</li> <li>▪ 31/8/06</li> </ul>
19	<b>Report the findings of the reinspection</b>	Officer time, Member time	April 2006	CEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Member commitment, involvement and input into housing services action plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Findings of report shared with partners</li> <li>▪ Action plan reported to management team, improvement board &amp; community forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dec 2004</li> <li>▪ 1/4/06</li> </ul>

# REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
CONSUMER WELLBEING & PROTECTION UNIT	POLICY & SERVICE REVIEW COMMUNITY FORUM	30 MARCH 2006	6

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOUSING ACT 2004

### Public/Exempt item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### Summary

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 the Housing Act 2004 brings into force a new enforcement regime based on a system of risk assessment. This is called the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which now replaces the “fitness standard” detailed in the Housing Act 1985.

The Act also details a mandatory licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in order to focus attention on those properties which represent the greatest risk to the occupiers. HHSRS also forms the basis for physical assessment but the scheme also covers the assessment of owners and managers in that management must be effective and that they must themselves be “fit and proper persons”.

Also introduced for the first time are Empty Property Management Orders designed to assist in bringing long standing properties back into use both to satisfy housing demand and to remove them as a nuisance to the wider community.

### Recommendation/s

1. That Members note this development in housing legislation

### Executive Portfolio

The item falls within the following executive portfolio[s]:

Community and Social Wellbeing (Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse)

## Report

1. A summary of the provisions of the Housing Act 2004 was placed before members on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005. At that time was any guidance on implementation and in particular the necessary supporting regulations were not available. At writing all of the supporting regulations have still not been published, particularly those in relation to the specific amenities standard which the new licensing regime will apply.
2. The legislation comes into force on 6 April 2006. The information attached relates to three specific areas of the legislation:
  - The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
  - The licensing of houses in multiple occupation
  - Empty dwelling management orders
3. The licensing of houses in multiple occupation requires the setting of a licence fee locally, but it must only reflect the actual cost of licensing. This, and a local licensing policy will be progressed through consultation prior to agreement. Meanwhile action can still be pursued using the new HHSRS, incorporating the new amenities standards once published.

Implications	
Finance	None arising directly out of this report
Legal	None arising directly out of this report
Community Safety	None arising directly out of this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None arising directly out of this report
Sustainability	None arising directly out of this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None arising directly out of this report

Report Author	Tel	Date	Doc ID
Name of author	(01253) 658	30/3/06	

List of Background Papers		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
The Housing Act 2004	20/3/06	<a href="http://www.odpm.gov.uk">www.odpm.gov.uk</a>

## Attached documents

1. The Housing Act 2004 guidance

# The Housing Act 2004 - Guidance

## 1. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System

### Background.

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) uses a risk based approach; the aim is to provide a system to enable risks from hazards to health and safety in dwellings to be removed or minimised.

The key principle of the system is that a dwelling, including the structure and associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or other amenity space, and means of access, should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and, by implication, for any visitors.

The system can deal with 29 hazards summarised as follows:

- Dampness, excess cold/heat.
- Pollutants e.g. asbestos, carbon monoxide, lead.
- Lack of space, security or lighting, or excessive noise.
- Poor hygiene, sanitation, water supply.
- Accidents - falls, electric shocks, fires, burns, scalds.
- Collisions, explosions, structural collapse.

Local authorities have a duty to keep the housing conditions in their area under review.

### Inspection and Outcome.

It is for the authority to determine the circumstances in which it considers an inspection ought to be carried out.

During an inspection a physical assessment of the whole property during which deficiencies are noted and recorded. Once the inspection has been completed, the inspector judges:

- Whether there are any hazards
- The likelihood of an occurrence and the range of possible outcomes for those hazards.

The inspector first assesses the likelihood of an occurrence over the next 12 months, which exposes a member of the vulnerable age group to a hazard. The severity of a potential hazard is then assessed in relation to a member of the age group most vulnerable to the hazard and who might typically occupy the dwelling. The likelihood and the severity combine to generate a hazard score.

Scores are divided into ten bands (A-J); band A is the most serious and J the least serious. Hazards, which fall in bands D-J, are Category 2 hazards.



## **Enforcement Tools.**

All properties contain hazards, for example stairs, electrical outlets etc. The emphasis should be to minimise the risk to health and safety as far as possible either by removing the hazard altogether or minimising the effect, as appropriate.

The hazard score does not dictate the action to be taken; authorities are under a general duty to take appropriate action in relation to a Category 1 hazard, using the most appropriate of the following formal courses of action:

- to serve an improvement notice
- to serve a prohibition notice
- take emergency remedial action or make an emergency prohibition order
- to make a demolition order
- to declare a clearance area

The enforcement options are not tied to a particular level of hazard. The action authorities choose to take must be the most appropriate course of action in relation to the hazard in all the circumstances.

According to circumstances it may be appropriate to take informal action i.e.

- to serve a hazard awareness notice

which is a purely advisory course of action.

## **Power of Entry.**

Local authorities have power of entry to properties under the Act when certain conditions are met.

The powers of entry allow authorities to leave recording equipment and to require the production of documents to enable it to carry out its enforcement functions.

## **Prosecution.**

Local authorities can prosecute owners for failing to comply with an improvement or prohibition notice.

## **Power to Charge.**

The Act gives local authorities the power to charge to recover costs of enforcement action. Any such charge must be reasonable and can only cover the Councils costs, in connection with the inspection of the premises, the subsequent consideration of any action to be taken and the service of notices.

## **Appeal/ Residential Property Tribunals.**

An owner or agent who has an improvement notice or prohibition notice served on him can appeal within 21 days of service. Appeals are heard by Residential Property Tribunal (RPTs). RPTs consist of a legal expert, a technical expert and a lay member.

## **2. Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation**

### **The Aim and form of the new legislation**

The aim of this regime is to provide greater protection for the health safety and welfare of the occupants.

As anticipated the Regulations prescribe that mandatory licensing will be limited to those properties, which present the greatest risk to the occupiers, and local housing authorities are now given a duty to compile a register of all licenses granted

### **Mandatory Licensing will apply to:**

- Larger properties of three storeys or more, which house more than five persons, and comprise of two or more households

### **Main Requirements in summary:**

- Provision is made for the assessment of Landlords in that they must be a “fit and proper person” and the most appropriate person to hold the licence.
- Any proposed manager must also be a “fit and proper person”
- The regime provide a focus for the implementation of HHSRS in these properties in that the premises must be reasonable suitable for occupation by the number of persons specified in the application
- The management arrangements must be satisfactory.
- A licence can only apply to one HMO and is not transferable
- There are a number of mandatory conditions
- Local housing authorities may also specify conditions

Other properties under three stories but still meet the HMO definition will not require licensing but their owners will still be expected to comply with the Act and supporting Regulations, particularly in respect of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

The Act also provides for a system of discretionary Selective Licensing should the local authority deem it appropriate to do so. Additional licensing is subject to approval by the Government; or be specific to a generally approved class of designation. Any such scheme can only last for five years at most and must be regularly reviewed. If they are not found to be securing their original aims then they must be revoked.

### **Target Problems for Selective Licensing include:**

- Areas of low housing demand
- Anti social behaviour

### **Exemptions from being defined as an HMO are provided for:**

- Properties managed or controlled by Registered Social Landlords & other public sector bodies
- Buildings regulated under other legislation (to be confirmed by further regulation)
- Buildings managed by Universities and occupied by students
- Certain buildings occupied by religious communities
- Buildings Occupied by freeholders and long lease holders, with less than the number of prescribed licences or tenants that are not converted blocks
- Buildings occupied by no more than two persons who form two households

### **Enforcement**

A licence may be revoked if:

- There is a significant breach of the licence conditions
- A licence holder or others involved in management cease to be fit and proper persons.

However in this circumstance the local authority must make a Management Order.

### **Management Orders**

An Interim Management Order enables the authority to step in and manage the property, although the owner retains their other rights as owner. Such orders can run for up to a year until satisfactory longer-term management arrangements can be made. Alternatively, a Final Management Order lasting up to five years can be made. The costs associated with these regimes can be deducted from rent monies received, but any residual income must then be paid to the owner.

**Appeals** are to Residential Property Tribunals (RPT)

An Appeal may be made to an RPT against the Local Housing Authority decision to:

- Refuse to grant a licence
- Grant a licence but imposing condition which are imposed
- Vary a licence
- Revoke a license
- Refusal to vary or revoke a licence

Appeal must normally be made within 28 days of any decision being made, but if good reason is established an RPT may extend this period.

### **3. Empty Dwelling Management Orders**

The Housing Act 2004 contains provisions about the occupation of privately owned empty homes. The device introduced for securing the occupation of empty homes is known as an Empty Homes Management Order (EDMO)

This legislation is designed to be used alongside existing provisions to provide an alternative course of action in order to facilitate bringing these properties back into use. It will back up negotiations with owners in respect of voluntary leasing arrangements and provide an alternative to action to achieve enforced sale or for compulsory purchase.

The provision is similar to Management Orders described in Licensing of HMOs above but with important distinctions reflecting the different problems posed by empty homes.

#### **An Interim Empty Dwelling Management Order**

To make an interim EDMO, a local authority must apply to a residential Property Tribunal (RPT). There must be no one in occupation either lawful or unlawful. The local authority must make reasonable efforts to notify the relevant proprietor that they are considering making an EDMO and ascertain what steps he is taking, or intends to take to secure the reoccupation of the dwelling. The local authority must consider that making an interim EDMO is the most course of action, taking account of the rights of the owner and the wider community in which the dwelling is located.

In approving an interim EDMO a RPT must be satisfied that:

- The dwelling has been unoccupied for at least six months.
- That there is no reasonable prospect that the dwelling will be occupied in the near future
- There is a reasonable chance that the dwelling will be reoccupied if an interim EDMO is made, &
- The local authority has complied with its duties in seeking to make an interim EDMO
- The property is not in an exemption category i.e.:
  - Proprietor is temporarily resident elsewhere.
  - Proprietor is absent receiving personal care, i.e. in hospital or care home etc
  - Proprietor is absent temporarily providing personal care to another
  - Proprietor is a serving member of the armed forces and absent as a consequence
  - Property is used as a holiday home
  - Property is genuinely on the market for sale
  - Property is comprised in an agricultural holding or a farm business tenancy
  - Property is usually occupied by an employee of the relevant proprietor in connection with the performance of his duties under the terms of his contract of employment.
  - Property is made available for occupation by a minister of religion as a residence from which to perform the duties of his office.
  - Property subject to a court order freezing the assets of the relevant proprietor
  - The property is prevented from being occupied as a result of a criminal investigation or criminal proceedings
  - The property is mortgaged, where the mortgagee is in possession
  - The proprietor has died and six months has not elapsed since the grant of representation was obtained in respect of this person.

An interim EDMO comes into force immediately as soon as it is authorised and can last up to 12 months. Once in force the local authority must take steps to secure occupation and proper management of the dwelling. However they cannot grant occupation rights to the dwelling without the written consent of the relevant proprietor. Where such consent is obtained the local authority may revoke the interim EDMO and seek to replace it with a voluntary lease agreement. Where the consent is not obtained, the local authority may revoke the interim EDMO and seek to replace it with a Final EDMO

### **Final Empty Dwelling Management Orders**

A local authority may make a final EDMO either to replace an interim EDMO or a previous final EDMO if it considers that the dwelling would otherwise become or remain unoccupied. For example, if the relevant proprietor refused to allow the grant of occupation rights under an interim EDMO and the local authority considered that once the order ceased to have effect the dwelling was likely to remain unoccupied, that would be grounds to revoke the interim order early and make a final order to replace it.

This must be the most appropriate course of action taking account both the interests of the wider community and of the relevant proprietor and any third parties.

Authorisation from the RPT is not required, however the relevant proprietor has the right of appeal to the Tribunal against the decision.

The local authority must review the operation of any final EDMO from time to time. If it cannot secure occupation then it must revoke the order.

Subject to any appeal the final EDMO comes into force no sooner than the day after the period for appeal has expired and lasts for a period specified in the order which is up to a maximum of seven years

### **Management Scheme**

A final EDMO must contain a Management Scheme setting out how the local authority intends to carry out its duties and how it will account for monies expended and collected whilst it is operative. Full accounts must be kept and provided to anyone with an interest in the dwelling.

The management scheme must include details of:

- Any works proposed to be carried out together with an estimate of the relevant costs
- The rent the dwelling may be expected to fetch on the open market and the rent that the local authority would expect to obtain.
- Any compensation to be paid to third parties
- Where the rent to be charged is below market rent the difference must be accounted for. For example, the local authority is permitted to charge a sub market rent, but if this leads to a deficit in income it cannot look to recoup this from the relevant proprietor.
- How the relevant proprietor is to be paid any surplus monies, after the deduction of relevant expenditure and compensation payable.
- The scheme may also state the local authority's proposal to carry forward any monies to a subsequent final EDMO or where there is a deficit how this is to be recovered under a further final EDMO

# REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
CONSUMER WELLBEING & PROTECTION UNIT	POLICY & SERVICE REVIEW COMMUNITY FORUM	30 MARCH 2006	7

## PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

### Public item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### Summary

The revised policy focuses on promoting the Decent Homes Standard in the private sector with particular emphasis on provision for vulnerable people.

The policy introduces the concept of "Home Improve" loans for the first time. These will be offered as alternative funding for applicants who fail to achieve grant funding by the means test and yet are unable to access high street finance in the traditional way. Similarly it may be offered to supplement grant monies to fund other works required. A grant agency service is also offered, to assist applicants through the grant process.

### Recommendation/s

- That Members consider the draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
- That Members agree the policy be consulted on further with partners
- That Members agree any consequent amendments be authorised by the Portfolio Holder for Community and Social Wellbeing prior to implementation

### Executive Portfolio

The item falls within the following executive portfolio[s]:

Community and Social Wellbeing (Councillor Patricia Fieldhouse)

## Report

- 1 The purpose of this Policy is to set out the principles by which Fylde Borough Council will assist owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords in the private sector with housing renewal in light of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. It also supports the wider housing strategy of the Borough and is identified as necessary in the action plan to that document.
- 2 The policy provides information about how our strategy has been developed, the priorities that we wish to address and the types of assistance that will be available, including where to obtain the services, eligibility, how to apply, conditions etc. It introduces equity loans as part of the package, and recognises the role of a grant agency in delivering assistance whilst also increasing revenue to the Council.
- 3 This policy supports achievement of the Decent Homes Standard in the private sector housing in Fylde Borough. Decent homes are important for the health and well-being of those living in them and are a key element of any thriving, sustainable community. Although there is a detailed definition of what constitutes a decent home, in summary it should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities.
- 4 The Government believes that everyone should have the opportunity to have a decent home. It is aiming to make all council and housing association housing decent by 2010. However it also wants to improve conditions for vulnerable households in privately owned housing, especially the rented sector and those with children.
- 5 This policy supports both national framework and the local housing strategy.

Implications	
Finance	This policy introduces the concept of equity loans as a means of reducing dependence on grant aid.
Legal	No new implications, although the detailed conditions attached to equity loans will require further investigation.
Community Safety	Decent housing is an important element of a thriving sustainable community where people feel safe.
Human Rights and Equalities	Assistance is targeted at the most vulnerable and deprived people of the Borough.
Sustainability	Decent housing is an important element of a thriving sustainable community
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

Report Author	Tel	Date	Doc ID
Richard Wood	(01253) 658660	20.03.06	

List of Background Papers		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection

**Attached documents**

1. Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy



# **Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy**

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## **Purpose of the Policy**

- 1.1** The purpose of this Policy is to set out the principles by which Fylde Borough Council will assist owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords in the private sector with housing renewal in light of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- 1.2** The guidance provides information about how our strategy has been developed, the priorities that we wish to address and the types of assistance that will be available, including where to obtain the services, eligibility, how to apply, conditions etc.
- 1.3** The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, contained in this document, will be effective from ? .It will be subject to regular review, with revised versions produced when significant changes occur e.g. to the type of assistance available.
- 1.4** This policy document limits itself to consideration of works of repair, improvement or adaptation rather than enabling housing provision in the first place, which will be considered through the Housing Strategy.

## **Summary of the Housing Renewal Framework**

- 2.1** The introduction of the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) in July 2002 made sweeping changes to legislation governing home assistance in England and Wales. The RRO and associated Government Guidance provided local authorities with a much greater degree of flexibility in devising both a strategy for dealing with poor conditions in private sector housing and in the tools available.
- 2.2** It is the Governments stated view that it is primarily the responsibility of homeowners to maintain their own property. However, the Government is also committed to improving housing quality across all tenures and accepts that some homeowners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, may not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in good repair. Local authorities have an important role to play providing assistance in these cases.

## **Policy Implementation**

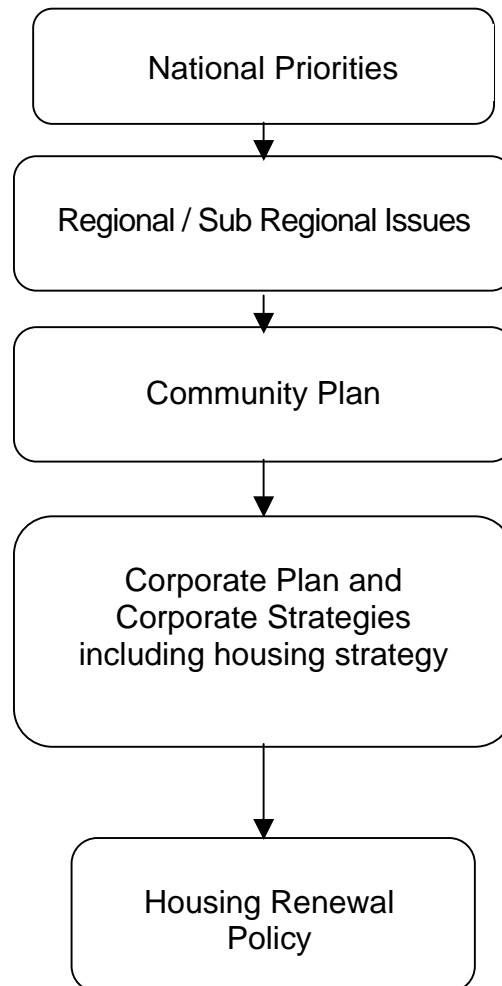
- 3.1** This Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy will become operational on ? and will be subject, as a minimum to review through the overall Housing Strategy process.
- 3.2** Amendment will only be necessary in the case of significant change to policy. Smaller changes will be made by the Housing Manager, with Portfolio Holder approval.
- 3.3** The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy will be amended to reflect changing needs of the local community and/or its homes or in the event that it is found not to be meeting its objectives. Such information will be conveyed to the Council by various means including stock condition surveys and customer satisfaction surveys.
- 3.4** It is intended that the first major review of the policy will take place 12 months after adoption when the effectiveness of the policy in meeting its objectives can be assessed. However, there may be external factors, which result in the need for a major review to be carried out earlier than anticipated, e.g.
  - Changes to capital spending plans
  - Acute changes to local circumstances
  - National policy/legislative changes
  - Local Strategic Partnership influences
- 3.5** The change in methodology of assessing statutory fitness of housing using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System will be implemented early in the life of this policy as will the introduction of the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation. These will affect the process behind this policy but will not in themselves create significant change to the policy.
- 3.6** Performance issues within this policy domain will be reported in accordance with the corporate performance management framework, reporting performance indicators to Cabinet and Community Forum Groups on a regular basis.

## **Principles on which the Policy is based**

- 4.1** It is agreed that homeowners should be responsible for their properties. In parts of Fylde Borough house prices and the buoyant housing market enable owners to release equity to enable property maintenance and improvement to be undertaken. However, in some cases owners are on low fixed incomes and are consequently unable to release funds in this way.
- 4.2** Fylde Borough Council believes that it owes a duty to its residents to ensure that the quality of housing is as high as possible.
- 4.3** To this end it provides financial assistance to the most deprived and vulnerable people, to bring their homes up to a standard considered acceptable, and as a minimum, to the Decent Homes Standard.

## Links to other Strategies and Policies

5.1 The Council carries out its responsibilities using various strategies, plans and policies, which have been developed to take account of national, regional and local demands and priorities. A simple illustration of this hierarchical arrangement is shown below:



5.2 In particular private sector housing renewal contributes to the following key themes relevant to housing in the Community Plan:

- Inclusive Communities where Everyone Feels Valued – meeting the housing needs of all our residents, especially the needs of frail older people, people with disabilities and people with mental health problems.
- Health and Social Wellbeing - supporting and promoting independent living for elderly residents and other vulnerable groups within the community; increasing awareness of safety in the home and fuel poverty particularly amongst older people and families on low incomes and improving the health of people in houses in multiple occupation
- Improving Community Safety - reducing crime and fear of crime so that people of

all ages can enjoy living and working in Fylde

**5.3** The Council's Corporate Plan 2003-2007 supports the long term vision outlined in the Community Plan

**5.4** The corporate objectives aim to :

- Conserve, protect and enhance the quality of the Fylde natural and built environment
- Work with partners to help maintain safe communities in which individuals and businesses can thrive
- Stimulate strong economic prosperity and regeneration within a diverse and vibrant economic environment
- Improve access to good quality local housing and promote the health and wellbeing and equality of opportunity of all people in the Borough
- Ensure we are an efficient and effective Council

**5.5** The Private Sector Housing Policy also has close links to, and impacts upon, the following strategies and policies:

- Housing Strategy
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Enforcement Policy
- Homelessness Strategy

## **Main Priorities for Assistance**

**6.1** Based on the results of our Private Sector Stock Condition and Housing Needs Survey 2002, and the consultation carried out for our Housing Strategy 2004-2007, the following priorities and key policy frameworks have been identified:

### **6.2 Assistance for vulnerable people**

We recognise that there are residents in need of support in order to deal with disrepair, ill health caused through the condition of their home or the need for adaptations due to a disability. We will continue to help these vulnerable households, including those with children.

### **6.3 Property Based**

Empty homes are a wasted resource and when they are in a derelict or semi-derelict condition can blight an area. They can easily become a major eyesore and a source of problems in an area, as well as being a waste of housing accommodation. In targeting empty properties we will bring such properties up to the Decent Homes Standard, back

into use and provide much needed affordable homes. Similarly the schemes align with Government policy to bring at least 70% of private rented properties up to Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

#### **6.4 Theme based**

Improving energy efficiency is a key priority for the Council both in terms of reducing damaging CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and tackling fuel poverty. Energy efficiency measures will in future be incorporated at every reasonable opportunity when offering housing renewal assistance.

#### **6.5 Enforcement**

As well as providing financial assistance, advice and other types of practical help, we will also use enforcement powers available to us to improve private sector housing. If necessary, we will use our legal powers to force irresponsible owners to manage and maintain their properties. The types of action we can take include serving statutory notices, the use of clearance/compulsory purchase powers or enforced sale procedures.

### **Resources**

- 7.1** This policy recognises that there is a variety of sources of funding for private sector housing renewal. Some funding streams may be available only for specified projects or areas; others will be capable of being distributed at the local authority's discretion. Other sources of funding, such as loans, may be available from the private sector including charitable organisations and the discretion for allocation may be outside the control of the Council.
- 7.2** Local authority funding for intervention will be limited and it will not be possible to rectify all the known problems. In order to ensure that the most cost-effective use of the available finance is made, funds will be targeted to areas of work at the beginning of each financial year.
- 7.3** If circumstances require a reallocation of funds during the financial year, the Portfolio Holder for Community and Social Wellbeing will reserve the right to redistribute the remaining funds to meet the changing circumstances, in accordance with delegated powers.
- 7.4** Home owners requiring works costing a relatively small amount of money (up to £1,000) will be encouraged to join a Credit Union whereby the amount of money they can borrow is directly related to the amount they regularly save.

## Types of Assistance Available

- 8.1** We aim to provide assistance to homeowners and private landlords based on a mixture of advice and information, signposting, equity release loans and grants.
- 8.2** This part of the guidance sets out brief details of our key services and explains the forms of support and assistance that we may be able to offer. It will cover:
- the types of assistance we offer.
  - what the assistance can be used for.
  - who will be eligible for the assistance.
  - the amount of assistance available (where financial).
  - how we will deliver that assistance.
  - any condition attached to the provision of assistance.

### i) Facelift Schemes

- 8.3** These discretionary schemes are intended to improve the front façade of a whole block or street, the aim being to improve the visual appearance and feel of the street or block, without carrying out major works.
- 8.4** In certain situations, the Council may put together a scheme to improve the appearance of a number of properties including such works as cleaning and painting the external fabric of buildings and the rebuilding of garden walls to blocks of properties. The aim being to have a positive impact on the wider area, encourage owners to invest in their homes and help contribute to the overall stability of the neighbourhood.
- 8.5** What types of works might be included?

We will prepare schedules of work for such schemes after consulting with owners. The list of works will vary to take into account the condition of the properties, local environmental issues and how we can make a visual impact on the surrounding area.

Works can include:

- Some environmental improvements.
- Brick cleaning.
- External redecoration.
- Rainwater gutters and pipework.
- Boundary wall renewal.



- Some elements of increased security and energy efficiency may also be included, such as window locks and insulation.

In some cases, these schemes may be extended to all elevations of the properties, not just the front facades. Work is normally to the outside of the property, to leave the external fabric in reasonable repair. Internal work will only usually be included to make good disturbance caused by external works.

#### **8.6 Who is eligible for this type of assistance?**

- These schemes will be offered at the discretion of Fylde Borough Council. Streets or blocks of properties will be surveyed and assessed before it is decided whether they are suitable. Whilst there will be no minimum number of properties within a block that may benefit from this assistance, visual impact, the value of the block treatment, level of interest and contribution to overall strategy will be considered in deciding viability.

If owners are eligible for this type of scheme they will be contacted by the housing service.

#### **8.7 How much assistance is available and what conditions are attached to scheme?**

These will be identified according to the needs of the individual scheme.

### **ii) Housing Renewal Assistance**

**8.8** This assistance is offered at the discretion of the Council and is intended to help people to carry out a range of repairs to their homes.

**8.9** The dwelling must:

- demonstrate actionable category 1 or 2 hazards (in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System); be in disrepair or lack basic amenities (previously described as "unfit for human habitation"); where repair and improvement is the most appropriate course of action.

**8.10** The applicant must:

- be an owner occupier, resident in the property at least three years;
- be an owner occupier of residential mobile home, which is subject to a mobile homes agreement, and resident in the property at least three years;
- be a tenant who is a long lease holder with a full repairing obligation, resident in the property at least three years;
- be a first time buyer;

**8.11** What type of works qualifies for assistance?

Where the above criteria are met, assistance will be considered for works to:

- improve the dwelling to meet the Decent Homes Standard, including a requirement to remove actionable category 1 or 2 hazards (in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- provide specified energy efficiency and home security measures.
- allow essential works to enable an elderly occupier to remain in their own home

**8.12** How much assistance is available?

The maximum grant is £10,000, inclusive of any fees, charges and VAT. The grant is subject to a means test.

**8.13** General conditions attached to approvals are shown at Appendix A.

**iii) Home Improve – Equity Loans**

**8.14** ‘Home Improve’ is an equity scheme which allows low income homeowners to release equity in their property, which can then be used to repair and improve their home. There are two key objectives:

- To lever private finance into private sector housing renewal.
- To assist vulnerable low income homeowners to improve and repair their homes.

The principle is that instead of giving grant aid, or possibly to fund additional works not covered by grant, money is paid as a loan secured by a legal charge against the value of the homeowner’s property, as an equity stake. No interest is paid on the equity stake; instead the loan (equity stake) is linked to the property value as a percentage. As the value of the property grows so does the equity stake and on sale of the property the money is recycled into further loans.

There is no limit on the current time the charge lasts for and the Council will only reclaim the loan at the point of sale or if the client chooses at any time to pay off the loan. This effectively means that low-income clients can afford to borrow money to carry out essential improvements or repairs.

**8.15** Working collaboratively with other local authorities, including Wyre Borough Council, together with the Regenda Group, Fylde Borough Council is working to set up a loan scheme. Any policy will identify the criteria for assistance, both general and financial, plus the exclusions to the scheme and the types of eligible works.

Once agreed by Members, details of the final scheme and associated conditions will be incorporated into this document.

**iv) Energy Efficiency and Warmth (Landlords) Scheme**

**8.16** This scheme assists responsible private sector landlords, accommodating vulnerable people, undertake works which will bring their accommodation up to the Decent

Homes Standard. Landlords will retain all liability for repairs and requirements to resolve actionable category 1 or 2 hazards (in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System).

**8.17** What types of works qualify for assistance?

- Eligible works to include works to provide for adequate thermal insulation and space heating, including:
  - loft insulation;
  - wall insulation;
  - draught proofing;
  - double glazing;
  - heating systems;
  - central heating system (boiler A rated);
  - central heating controls;
  - water heating;
  - hot water insulation;
  - hot water controls.

**8.18** Who is eligible for this type of assistance?

Private sector landlords who:

- own the property; and
- are able to meet their share of the cost of bringing the property up to the Decent Homes Standard

**8.19** How much assistance is available?

A maximum grant of £5000 is available

**8.20** Additional conditions attached to approvals include:

- The property must comply fully with the Decent Homes Standard on completion.
- Any funding available from utility companies or government grants must be accessed initially, with funding through this scheme only considered as a last resort.

**8.21** There are no conditions about future occupation or sale in respect of this scheme.

## v) Empty Property Renewal Assistance

**8.22** This is intended to provide funding to improve long term privately owned empty properties and return them to a habitable condition for renting.

**8.23** What type of work might be included?

The property must be fully improved to the Decent Homes Standard, including the installation of energy efficiency, security, means of escape in case of fire and heating provisions.

**8.24** Who is eligible for this type of assistance?

Private sector landlords who:

- own the property; and
- are able to meet their share of the cost of the works; and
- have consent from the mortgage company to carry out the works and let the property; and
- have obtained any necessary planning permission for the proposed works before making an application for the grant.

The property must:

- be in substantial disrepair and / or demonstrate actionable category 1 or 2 hazards (in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System);
  - have been empty for a minimum of six months;
  - be a self-contained unit or be capable of conversion into a number of such units;
- and
- have more than 5 years remaining on any lease.

**8.25** Due to limited financial resources, each application will be subject to an individual appraisal to decide whether any grant will be payable. Regard will be had to the value of investing public funds in the proposed works and how the investment will relate to the Council's housing strategy. Issues such as supply and demand, location, tenure, type, rent levels and the landlord's management history and commitment to providing good quality accommodation will be taken into consideration.

**8.26** How much assistance is available?

A maximum grant of 50% of the cost of the approved works, to a maximum of £10,000 per dwelling returned to use.

## 8.27 Conditions

- The Council will reserve tenant nomination rights for a period of five years with rents restricted to those payable through housing benefit.
- If at the time of completion the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard and fully comply with current housing legislation, final grant monies will not be released
- Five year repayment condition
- Local authority and necessary professional fees will be included as eligible costs
- Applicant to provide a five year certificate of intended letting. The property to be available for letting to a person other than a member of the applicants family throughout the five year period following the date that the Council certifies that the grant works have been completed.

## vi) House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Scheme

**8.28** The main purpose of this scheme is to raise the standard of houses in multiple occupation.

**8.29** What types of works might be included?

The property must be fully improved to the Decent Homes Standard, including the installation of energy efficiency, security, means of escape in case of fire and heating provisions.

**8.30** Who is eligible for this type of assistance?

Private sector landlords who:

- own the property; and
- are able to meet their share of the cost of the works; and
- have consent from the mortgage company to carry out the works and let the property; and
- have obtained any necessary planning permission for the proposed works before making an application for the grant.

**8.31** Due to limited financial resources, each application will be subject to an individual appraisal to decide whether any grant will be payable. Regard will be had to the value of investing public funds in the proposed works and how the investment will relate to the Council's housing strategy. Issues such as supply and demand, location, tenure, type, rent levels and the landlord's management history and commitment to providing good quality accommodation will be taken into consideration.

**8.32** How much assistance is available?

A maximum grant of 50% of the cost of the approved works, to a maximum of £10,000 per property. A HMO is considered to be a single property for these purposes.

**8.33** Conditions:

- The Council will reserve tenant nomination rights for a period of five years with rents restricted to those payable through housing benefit.
- If at the time of completion the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard and fully comply with current housing legislation, final grant monies will not be released
- Five year repayment condition
- Local authority and necessary professional fees will be included as eligible costs
- Premises must have adequate thermal insulation and space heating. Adequacy to be determined by the Council and specified in a schedule of works to accompany grant approval.
- Applicant to provide a five year certificate of intended letting. The property to be available for letting to a person other than a member of the applicants family throughout the five year period following the date that the Council certifies that the grant works have been completed.

**vii) Disabled Facilities Grant**

**8.34** A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory grant provided to adapt the home of a disabled person to meet their needs. The need for this adaptation is determined by an Occupational Therapist from Lancashire County Council Social Services Department. The Housing Service will only act on a referral made by the Occupational Therapist and, providing the work is considered reasonable and practicable, administer the DFG.

**8.35** The Council must carry out a means test (prescribed by legislation) to assess how much the applicant has to pay towards the work, except in the case of children's adaptations which are not means tested. The grant covers any reasonable costs in excess of the owner's assessed contribution, subject to a mandatory grant limit of £25,000. The Council will offer advice and assistance to enable an applicant to access loans or raise their contribution towards the cost of the works.

In exceptional circumstances the Council has the discretion to pay a DFG of over £25,000 on larger schemes, where there are genuine issues of hardship/inability of the applicant to fund works in excess of the Council's maximum statutory contribution. In such cases the Housing Manager will consult with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Social Wellbeing, who may authorise the work.

**8.36** Because resources are limited, a multi-agency panel will prioritise applications for DFGs prior to referring appropriate cases to Fylde Borough Council. The Housing Service will then prioritise according to the following criteria:

- Priority 1** - service user and/or carer at high risk of physical injury, needing alternative care arrangements until/unless work is completed.
- Priority 2** - provision of independent or safe access to essential facilities and to the property without which there would be a potential breakdown of the current situation.
- Priority 3** - works will prevent long term admission to residential care. Work will offer an improved quality of life, and improve the service user's long term ability to remain at home e.g. provision of a shower for non-medical reasons as an alternative to strip wash/home care assistance

#### **viii) Home Loss and Disturbance Grant**

**8.37** A discretionary grant to support the Disabled Facilities Grant process.

**8.38** Who is eligible?

- Existing tenant in a registered social landlord's dwelling which has been previously adapted; where those adaptations are no longer required, and where the Council has identified another disabled person requiring those essential adaptations.
- Existing tenant who has voluntarily undertaken to move to suitable alternative accommodation offered by a registered social landlord.
- The disabled person requiring the essential adaptations and accepts the adapted dwelling.

**8.39** How much assistance is available?

A maximum grant of £2,000 is payable

**8.40** Conditions

Payable on tenant moving into the alternative accommodation within a specified time period set by the registered social landlord.

#### **ix) Agency Service**

**8.41** This service provides a full agency service to grant applicants, to assist the applicant in the complete process of making an application for assistance and the management of the works of improvement, repair or adaptation of the dwelling.

**8.42** The service may include the following:

- Help with completion of necessary forms
- Help with obtaining financial information, photocopying of documents as required
- Help with obtaining proof of title
- Help with obtaining plans, Building Regulation or Planning Approval
- Help with obtaining estimates from, and the selection of contractors
- Help with organising the contract particulars, start and completion dates.
- Liaison with other agencies at the start or during the works
- Monitoring the progress of the works
- Help with the resolution of difficulties/disputes that may arise during the course of the works.
- Consultation with the applicant on the approval of payments to contractors.

**8.43** There is a fee of up to 15% of the cost of works plus value added tax at the current rate payable by the applicant. The fee payable is an eligible expense and so will be grant aided.

The maximum fee charged will be capped at the value of the maximum eligible works for a disabled facilities grant of £25,000

In certain cases, and on larger schemes, the Housing Manager will consult with the Portfolio Holder for Community and Social Wellbeing, to agree an appropriate agency fee.

**x) Care & Repair Wyre & Fylde**

**8.44** A service for elderly and disabled householders in Fylde and Wyre, offering help, advice and support with repairs and adaptations to the property.

**8.45** What type of work might be included?

The aim of the handyperson scheme is to keep people safe in their homes and prevent the risk of trips and falls. As such the scheme provides help with small jobs around the house such as:

- Replacing light bulbs
- Easing doors and windows
- Making safe loose carpet and flooring
- Fitting smoke alarms and batteries



- Fitting door chains and minor security measures
- Fitting grab rails and hand rails
- Installing key safes
- Making safe tripping hazards

There is also assistance available for people who are seeking a reputable contractor for repairs or adaptations to the home, information about for local authority grants, finance schemes (including social fund loans), claiming benefit entitlement, help with form filling, and insurance claims

**8.46** Who is eligible?

Residents who:

- Are over 60 years or disabled

**8.47** How much assistance is available?

Although the labour for the handyperson service is free, there is a charge for any materials used.

**xi) Advice and Information about Improving and Maintaining your Home**

**8.48** Access to appropriate advice and information is a keystone of our policy.

**8.48** We give advice and assistance and seek to drive up standards to improve ways in which clients are given information about our services.

**8.49** All enquirers are offered advice and information, relevant to their needs, to assist them in resolving their property repair or maintenance problem. We will 'signpost' enquiries to a range of partners and other agencies that may be more appropriate to their specific needs. We will advise about any local schemes or initiatives operating in the area.

**8.50** From time to time, we will arrange, with our partners, specific promotions and campaigns targeted at particular communities.

**Procedures and Processes**

**Enquiry Process**

**9.1** Initial enquiries for general assistance should be made to Fylde Borough Council Housing Service, Fylde Borough Council, Town Hall Lytham St Anne's, Lancashire, FY8 1LW. Telephone: 01253 658658.

**9.2** Priority will be given to enquiries where there appears to the Council to be a serious and imminent risk to the health and safety of the occupants of a dwelling.

## **Application**

**9.3** The following documents are required as part of the application process:

A completed application form including a test of resources where required.

Estimates from two builders for the works specified by the Council, together with details of any preliminary or ancillary fees or charges. In the case of disabled adaptations of a specialised nature one estimate may be accepted.

Proof of the applicant's interest in the property.

Proof of income and capital.

Proof of National Insurance number.

Where works require building control approval, planning approval or listed building approval, proof that this has been given.

Plan of the proposed work (where requested).

Written permission from the owner of the property where the application is being made by someone other than the owner.

**9.4** Following receipt of a completed application, a decision will normally be made and the applicant will be notified in writing within 12 weeks. The notification will be in the form of an approval, a refusal or a deferral. Approvals will be phased depending on the available budget with priority being given to cases where there appears to be a serious and imminent risk to the health and safety of the applicant

## **Complaints or Comments about this Policy**

**10.1** We welcome any queries, complaints or suggestions which should be addressed in the first instance to the Consumer Wellbeing and Protection Manager, Town Hall, Lytham St Anne's, Lancashire, FY8 1LW, telephone 01253 658658, e-mail [consumerwellbeing@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:consumerwellbeing@fylde.gov.uk). Complaints will be dealt with by following the corporate complaints procedure.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Housing Assistance - Summary Of Grant Conditions**

1. In approving an application for a grant the Council will require as a condition of the grant that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification they decide to impose.
2. It is a condition of the grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of approval of the application. This period may, however, be extended by the Council if they think fit, particularly where they are satisfied that the eligible work cannot be, or could not have been, carried out without carrying out other works which could not have been reasonably foreseen when the application was made.
3. Conditions of future occupation are attached to this approval for a period of 5 years beginning with the date certified by the Council as the date of completion of the eligible works to their satisfaction. (The grant condition period)
4. It is a condition of this approval that the dwelling will be occupied throughout the grant condition period by the applicant or a member of the applicants family as the only or main residence of the applicant or a member of the applicants family
5. If a breach of the conditions occurs the Council may on demand require repayment of the whole of the amount of the assistance paid. The Council may demand such lesser amount of repayment as it considers reasonable in any particular case.
6. If a breach of the conditions occurs the Council may on demand require repayment of the whole of the amount of the assistance paid. The Council may demand such lesser amount of repayment as it considers reasonable in any particular case.
7. Any condition that creates a liability to repay assistance shall be recorded as a Local Land Charge.
8. The liability to repay assistance may be discharged at anytime by payment to the Council of the amount of assistance paid or such lesser amount as the Council may agree in any particular case.

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