

STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
9 MARCH 2011	Public Report

Report of the Acting Strategic Housing Manager

Contact Officer(s) – Sharon Malia

Contact Details – 863764

Head of Service – Adrian Chapman, Head of Neighbourhoods

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an overview of the work being carried out by the Strategic Housing Service in preventing homelessness in Peterborough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to scrutinise the approaches taken, and the progress and achievements made in relation to the homelessness prevention activity across the whole of the Strategic Housing service, to provide challenge where necessary and to suggest ideas and initiatives to support further improvements.
- 2.2 To note the potential impacts caused by future changes identified in section 5.2, and have a more focussed debate on this issue during the new municipal year to identify how we can mitigate against some of the risks.
- 2.3 That the draft Homelessness Strategy is brought back to Scrutiny during the next municipal year, and that a further update is brought back to the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee in March 2012.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The purpose of the Strategic Housing Service is to lead and provide an excellent, holistic and seamless strategic housing service for the residents of the City to create opportunities and tackle inequalities and to deliver substantial and truly sustainable growth.

The Single Data Set reporting requirements for Strategic Housing are:

- Dwelling stock position in authority area
- Condition of private sector housing
- Housing waiting list and choice-based lettings
- Lettings, nominations and mobility schemes
- Lettings to homeless acceptances
- Homes in Multiple Occupation
- Housing capital expenditure
- Private sector renewal assistance
- Private sector demolition
- Households with mortgage difficulties approaching LAs, by outcome and whether in a priority need category
- Households applying for Mortgage Rescue Scheme via LA or fast-track referral, by status of application; and numbers accepted
- Decisions taken on applications (including acceptances), by outcome and ethnicity
- Acceptances by repeat homelessness, age band, household type, priority need, reason for loss of home, referral and immediate outcome

- Temporary accommodation by type of housing (or voluntarily remaining in own home/making own arrangements), families with children, number of children, 16/17 year olds, B&B over six weeks, status of temporary accommodation and household type
- Households for whom the main duty was ended, by duration and outcome
- Decisions and acceptances by nationality
- Homelessness prevention and relief - successful outcomes by the action taken, and unsuccessful outcomes
- Count of people sleeping rough (single night snapshot)
- Estimate of people sleeping rough
- Clients entering Supporting People services, by service type
- Clients entering Supporting People services, by primary client group
- Outcomes for short-term services for clients leaving Supporting People, by service type
- Outcomes for short-term services for clients leaving Supporting People, by primary client group
- Outcomes for short-term services for clients leaving Supporting People achieving outcomes, by support need identified
- Outcomes for long-term services for clients leaving Supporting People achieving outcomes, by support need identified
- Number of housing-related support services administered
- Capacity of housing-related support services administered, measured in household units

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Strategic Housing Service was formed as a result of the re-structure of Neighbourhood Services during Autumn 2010 and brings together the Housing Option Service, Housing Programmes, including housing related support services and the Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency. The team understands and is fully committed to delivering the five key elements which comprise the strategic housing role within the local authority, and works closely with colleagues across departments to prevent homelessness by:

- Assessing and planning for current and future housing needs of the residents of Peterborough across all tenures
- Making best use of the existing housing stock
- Planning and facilitating new supply
- Planning and commissioning housing support services which link homes and housing support services, and
- Working in partnership to secure effective housing and neighbourhood management on an on-going basis

The services and provisions that are now put in place for housing will impact on all the residents of the City for years to come and the Strategic Housing Service will lead on addressing all housing needs of all residents across all tenures in the City. It is acknowledged that access to safe, warm and affordable housing will significantly contribute to residents of the City being able to achieve good health, good employment prospects and good educational attainment for their children.

This report, as well as reporting on the achievements of the teams in the last twelve months, will focus on those challenges and how the Strategic Housing Service intends to meet them.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Homelessness Strategy – Update

5.1.1 Homelessness

The priority of the Housing Options Service has shifted from dealing with homelessness as an emergency to homelessness prevention through effective intervention at earlier stages of need, which has resulted in some significant achievements over the last twelve months:

- Homelessness presentations reduced from 1133 in 2009 to 961 in 2010

- Of the 1133 presentations, a full housing duty was accepted to 408 in 2009, which reduced down to 211 in 2010 (48% reduction)
In comparison over the same period, nationally there has been an 8.2% reduction and locally the East of England has seen an 8.3% reduction.
- Nationally there has been an increase in homelessness acceptances. For the last quarter of 2010, nationally there was a 14% increase. The East of England saw a 30% increase and for Peterborough we saw a 59% reduction. This is all due to the early preventative work of the team.
- In 2010, the team were successful in preventing 222 households from becoming homeless.

5.1.2 **Rough Sleeping**

In early 2010 it was highlighted that Peterborough had an increased problem with rough sleeping in the city, in particular among EEA Nationals who were unable to access public funds. The level of rough sleeping in the city had increased to the third highest in the country behind Westminster and the City of London. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) allocated additional funding to Peterborough and the formation of a positive, pro-active working partnership with the UK Border Agency enabled the Team to create a reconnections service alongside a pilot to achieve administrative removals of Eastern European Nationals who were not exercising their treaty rights.

- In 2010, 89 EEA rough sleepers were reconnected to their country of origin
- In 2010, 19 rough sleepers were administratively removed

Please refer to Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 of this report for letters and statements from our partners commenting on the groundbreaking work of the Homeless Prevention Team. Please refer to Appendix 5 for a case study regarding the reconnection of a Czech family

5.1.3 **Mortgage Repossession**

In early 2010, Peterborough was highlighted as a mortgage repossession hotspot. An officer was seconded to focus solely on assisting households who were at risk of homelessness due to mortgage repossession. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme freezes repossession action through negotiation with mortgage lenders while agreements can be made with our partner housing associations to purchase their properties and rent them back to them, thus preventing homelessness and increasing the housing stock in the area.

- At 31st December 2010, 32 mortgage rescue cases have been successfully completed
- The highest number of successful cases in the region and higher than the rest of Cambridgeshire put together.

5.1.4 **Rent Deposit Scheme**

Regulation of the Private Rented Sector is enabling more people to access this accommodation, enabled by the Local Authority's Rent Deposit Scheme and the Tenancy Relations Officer working within the Housing Options Service. Since 1st April 2010 159 rent deposits have been issued for tenancies in the private rented sector, preventing homelessness for these clients who would not be able to fund the necessary deposit themselves and the requirement for them to find accommodation in the social rented sector. The deposit is made direct to the landlord, which is more effective than paying it to the tenant and further enhances the relationship with that landlord. This is an effective and efficient service to prevent homelessness and to re-cycle funding.

Please refer to Appendix 6 of this report for a case study involving the Rent Deposit Scheme

5.2 Future Changes and the Impact on the City

There are many challenges facing the residents of the City which will have a significant impact on their housing situation and for which they will inevitably seek assistance from the City Council's Strategic Housing Team. It is anticipated that the number of people in the city becoming homeless in the next year will increase dramatically.

5.2.1 Changes to Local Housing Allowance & Welfare Benefit Reform

It is proposed that from the 1st April 2011, Local Housing Allowance rates will be reduced for all households renting in the private sector. Current estimates indicate that rates are expected to be reduced by anything between £4.14 per week for a bedsit and £69.23 for a five bedroom house. This will make it more difficult to obtain suitable accommodation in the private sector. As a result we are expecting to see an increase in numbers of people approaching the Housing Needs Team for advice and assistance in securing accommodation in this sector.

In addition, these rates will also be implemented to current housing benefit claims once they reach their anniversary. Preliminary figures obtained from Housing Benefit show that of the current Local Housing Allowance claimants, there will be 1,942 households affected who are currently in receipt of Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment & Support Allowance or Pension Credits. These households will have no additional income other than their benefit awards.

As well as the reduction in the Local Housing Allowance Rates, there is also going to be a cap on the maximum rate paid for an eligible household. These rates are:

- £250 per week for a one bedroom property
- £290 per week for a two bedroom property
- £340 per week for a three bedroom property
- £400 per week for all properties of four bedrooms or more

Although these rates will not affect the properties which are available to rent in Peterborough, they will make areas of inner London and some more affluent areas in the area (e.g. Cambridge) unaffordable for households who are claiming benefits. It is a real possibility these households will be left with no option but to relocate to areas where the accommodation is cheaper and Peterborough is bound to be an attractive option for these households with its good transport links back to these areas.

Job losses in both the public and private sector are likely to increase and the current higher than target inflation rates point to an inevitable rise in interest rates later in the year. This could lead to homeowners being put under additional financial pressure with the risk of them not being able to maintain their mortgage repayments resulting in their properties becoming repossessed.

5.2.2 A8 Nationals and the discontinuation of the Workers Registration Scheme for May 2011

Since 2004, when the A8 countries joined the EU (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) the UK applied transition arrangements regulating A8 nationals' right to access the labour market for up to seven years. On 1st May, 2011 the UK will no longer be allowed to treat A8 nationals any differently from non accession nationals.

Up until May 2011, all A8 Nationals were required to register with the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) and could only access public funds if they could demonstrate that they have been working continuously for a period of 12 months while registered on the WRS. From May 2011, this will no longer be the case as the WRS will cease to exist and A8 Nationals will have the same rights as other EEA Nationals.

However, A8 Nationals will still need to satisfy the habitual residence or right to reside tests. The rules are complex, but essentially it will mean that an A8 National may be entitled to certain welfare benefits. A8 Nationals who have previously been working in the UK may be entitled to certain benefits if they become unemployed. Also, A8 Nationals that have been in the UK for 5 years or more may qualify for permanent residence and as such may be eligible for welfare benefits. Access to benefits may also lead to eligibility to housing benefit and council tax benefit.

5.2.3 **The increase in demand for University Places**

Demand for places at University Centre Peterborough has recently been reported to have risen by more than 350% compared to 12 months ago with 187 applications for places on courses having been received for the next academic year. The aspiration to bring 4,000 students to the city in the next five years in order to become a university in its own right will put further pressure on housing availability in the city.

5.2.4 **The Localism Bill and the Consultation on “A Fairer Future for Social Housing”**

The Localism Bill proposes reforms which will:

- Enable local authorities to make their own decisions to adapt housing provision to local needs, and make the system fairer and more effective.
- Give local authorities more control over the funding of social housing helping them to plan for the long term
- Have people who live in social housing new ways of holding their landlord to account and make it easier for them to move

The proposals outlined in the consultation document “Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing” are:

- Landlords will be given greater flexibility over the type and length of tenancy that they can offer. Local authorities are to take on strategic overview of the principles by which different types and lengths of tenancy are offered, in accordance with the objectives of their homelessness and housing strategies
- Plans to introduce a new tenure – ‘affordable rent’ – which will be offered over fixed terms and at a higher rent (80% of market value). Increased rental income will assist in funding development of new affordable housing, whilst the introduction of a fixed term option will allow landlords to grant tenancies of an appropriate length, depending upon the tenant’s circumstances
- Plans to financially incentivise local authorities to bring empty homes back into use, and to provide funding for landlords to assist them in doing so.
- Plans to end ‘open’ housing waiting lists, and allow local authorities to decide the criteria for who should and should not be able to join registers. This includes removing existing social tenants from the ‘allocations framework’ (i.e. removing transfer applicants from the general housing register).
- Plans to allow local authorities greater flexibility in how they bring their homelessness duty to an end, including offers of accommodation in the private sector without the applicant’s agreement.

5.2.5 **Changes to the Mortgage Rescue Scheme**

The scheme is due to close to new applications in Spring 2013 and the government has made some changes to how the scheme will operate from March 2011.

- For the ‘Government Mortgage to Rent’ option, the grant rate to providers is reduced further, capping it at 47%
- The rate at which a property sold through the scheme is purchased at has changed which means the price offered by the Housing Association to a household getting Mortgage Rescue will be 90% of the market value. This has been reduced from 97% to ensure more people can be helped through the scheme but means some households with equity will need to think carefully and seek money advice when deciding whether to proceed.

- Local Authorities will be able to set their own criteria for the scheme at a regional level
- Local authorities will be required to produce a Mortgage Rescue Scheme eligibility criteria policy and eligibility will be applied more vigorously. Local authorities must ensure that householders are only put forward in high priority cases where all alternative options have been explored.

5.2.6 **Reductions to the Capital Programme for Repairs Assistance**

As part of Peterborough City Council's Medium Term Financial Plan the Repairs Assistance budget will be reduced by 40% in 2011/2012 from its current level of £1.7 million to £1,020,000. The Renewals Policy has been refreshed in light of the proposed reduction in funding and as a result of changes to Disabled Facility Grant legislation which makes provision to consider access to gardens and to allow local authorities to place conditions on the granting of Disabled Facility funding. Please refer to Appendix 7 of this report for the draft Renewals Policy. It is proposed that Repairs Assistance funding will only be awarded to qualifying householders where defects in the property pose a serious risk to the health and/or safety of the occupants thereby triggering a Category 1 hazard under the Housing Act 2004 Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

5.3 **The Teams within Strategic Housing Services**

The key aim of the teams within Strategic Housing is to prevent homelessness and all team members are committed to providing the best housing service to all residents of the City.

5.3.1 **The Housing Needs Team**

The recent realignment of the Housing Options Team, as part of the Neighbourhoods re-structure, to become the Housing Needs Team has positioned this team at the core of Strategic Housing and has achieved efficiencies but has also planned for growth in order that they will be well placed to meet the housing challenges that the City faces over the next few years.

The Housing Needs Team undertakes the work of the authority in fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to the delivery of specialist housing advice to the people in the district who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, assisting people who present to the authority as homeless and producing and maintaining a homelessness strategy. The team's main focus is on homelessness prevention and they provide detailed advice and assistance and use all available tools to prevent homelessness

Peterborough City Council currently manages the combined housing register and maintaining control of the allocations of social housing is essential as it is a key element for the Authority to be able to discharge its statutory duty to homeless families. The Housing Register provides a key tool in identifying the level of housing need in the city and informs various housing needs studies which underpin affordable housing policies.

Since the transfer of the authority's housing stock to Cross Keys Homes under the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT), the Council entered into The Peterborough Homes Partnership with all the major housing associations operating in the City. Under the terms of this partnership agreement, Peterborough City Council is contractually obliged to nominate 95% of our housing association partner's available properties.

The Peterborough Homes Board is the steering group of the partnership and will provide an excellent forum in which to debate the proposed Social Housing Reforms once the consultation exercise has been completed and it will also provide the platform to agree the way forward to meet the complex housing needs of the City.

The recent Housing Needs Service restructure will provide an enhanced CBL service to the partnership, incorporating updated software (CBL 2) and a dedicated CBL Lead Officer to ensure that the allocations process runs as smoothly as possible and also to be the main point of contact for partner housing associations. The Lead Officer will also be responsible for continuous development of the scheme in order to maintain and improve the Council's performance on minimising the time a property is void.

The team also fulfil the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide Housing Advice both through basic, low level advice on the telephone or more complex cases which often result in a face to face discussion. The team propose to further focus the service on homelessness prevention rather than be responsive once homelessness has occurred. Every effort is taken to actively encourage customers to take advice before their situation becomes a major problem or crisis

5.3.2 **The Housing Programmes Team**

The Housing Programmes Team consists of the decision making role for all housing funding programmes including Repairs Assistance and Disabled Facility Grants and all housing related support provided through the Supporting People programme.

(i) **The Peterborough Home Insulation Project (PHIS)**

This project comes to an end on the 31st March 2011. This project was funded through a successful bid to the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) for £500,000 in both 2009/10 and 2010/11 and this was match funded by Peterborough City Council's capital programme for Repairs Assistance. The project was to tackle the most energy inefficient properties in the city occupied by low income, vulnerable households likely to be in fuel poverty. By providing insulation measures and efficient heating systems householders have been able to remain living in their homes and not be forced to look for alternative accommodation that they can afford to heat. The project has also made a considerable contribution to the Council's aspirations to be the home of the Environmental Capital by reducing carbon emissions in domestic dwellings.

From the beginning of the project in April 2009 to the 31st January 2011, the project has achieved:

- 1,140 loft and cavity wall measures
- 209 A-rated energy efficient boilers and/or central heating systems
- 143 client contributions to enable Warm Front funding of insulation and heating measures to progress
- 43 hard to treat properties externally insulated

(ii) **Housing Related Support through Supporting People Funding**

The Peterborough Supporting People programme vision is to provide flexible housing related support services which are innovative, cost effective, high quality and fully integrated to enable people to live as independently as possible and maximise their potential in the community.

The programme recognises the following client groups as a guide for service commissioning:

- people with alcohol problems
- people with drug problems
- homeless families with support needs
- offenders/people likely to offend
- mentally disordered offenders
- frail elderly
- older people with support needs
- older people with mental health problems/dementia
- people with a physical disability
- refugees
- rough sleepers
- single homeless with support needs
- teenage parents
- gypsy and travellers
- young people at risk
- care leavers
- people with mental health problems
- people with a learning disability
- People fleeing domestic violence
- HIV/AIDS
- generic services

As part of Peterborough City Council's Medium Term Financial Plan proposals a significant savings requirement was identified to the housing related support and advice services offered to vulnerable residents by organisations including the NHS, social landlords and the voluntary sector. Many contracts are up for renewal on the 31st March 2011 with a small number running through to 2013 and 2014.

A partnership approach was taken with all the providers of housing related support and savings have been negotiated and agreed in order to meet the target overall saving of £1.4 million. Providers have been able to make administrative and back office efficiencies and that have had limited impact on the frontline delivery of support services to the most vulnerable residents of the city. The Housing Programmes Team will commence a detailed review and re-profiling exercise of all housing related support in conjunction with the providers based on housing need and the prevention of homelessness and to ensure those vulnerable individuals that need support the most receive the appropriate level of assistance.

(iii) **The Care & Repair Home Improvement Agency**

Care & Repair is the key vehicle in which the Council delivers its grants to residents of the City ensuring the vulnerable elderly, disabled and low income families can remain living independently in safe, warm and healthy homes. The link between cold, damp, unhealthy homes and the effect of housing conditions on the health of occupants is well documented and Care & Repair, through its delivery of a wide range of services, significantly contributes to the preventative health agenda.

Its work around the adaptation, improving housing condition as well as benefit entitlement checks and income maximisation ensure that the Agency prevents homelessness by assisting their clients groups to remain living independently. It is anticipated that by the end of 2010/11 Care and Repair will have assisted 5,000 vulnerable Peterborough residents during the year.

The Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency delivers the following:

- Disabled Facility Grants adapting the physical attributes of residents homes to meet their needs and to keep them living independently in their own homes. This is for all tenures of housing across the city, owner occupiers, private tenants and Housing Association tenants.
- Repair Assistance grants repairing owner occupied properties to ensure there are no hazards in the property to compromise the health and safety of the residents.
- All grants involve surveying the property, liaising with the client and their family, drawing plans, preparing schedules, tendering the work, overseeing the work and contractors, securing funding for the work (including accessing emergency funds), providing free advice and maintaining a vetted contractors list.
- The minor aids and adaptations programme on behalf of Adult Social Care which is for small works such as key clamps, ramps and hand rails to assist with hospital discharge, hospital at home and maintain independent living. These works are done where possible within 24 hours of the referral (from the Occupational Therapist), if urgent. All other works are completed within 7 days of the referral. On average 1200 of these are completed per year.
- The fitting, testing and servicing of items of Assisted Technology to enable very vulnerable mentally and physically disabled people to remain living at home.
- Handy person services where vulnerable clients can access reliable contractors to carry out very small jobs, such as replacing tap washers, where they pay only for the materials. Thus giving them peace of mind and negating the likelihood of them being taken advantage of by bogus contractors.
- Private work for disabled client that wish to fund or part fund adaptations.
- Holistic checks of the person/property to identify what assistance is required and refer on or take action as appropriate.
- Provide advice, assist or actually raise funds for building/adaptation works on the client's behalf including accessing charitable funding.
- Provide State Benefit entitlements checks in order to maximise household income.

- Make referrals to local and national heating and insulations schemes
- Undertake Fuel Poverty checks and complete SAP energy rating of the client's property.
- Assist with relocation and relocation grants for disabled adults/children for clients whose homes cannot be adapted to meet their needs.
- Undertake Feasibility Studies to establish the scope, validity, feasibility and potential eligibility of disabled adaptation work.

Tables 1 and 2 below show the comparison between Peterborough Care and Repair and four other Home Improvement Agencies, working in Unitary Authorities, from four different regions, for 2009/10.

Table 1

	Region	HIA type	Fte staff	ONS 2009 mid year estimates		Number of jobs		Value of jobs	
				All Persons	Persons aged 75 and over	Under £1000	£1000 or more	Under £1000	£1000 or more
Peterborough		In house	9	171200	11200	1179	474	£107,427	£2,928,280
A	NW	In house	N/K	283700	24200	3	237	£2,866	£969,873
B	L	In house	N/K	342800	21100	15	179	£9,220	£1,584,931
C	NE	External	5	100400	8500	4	136	£1,933	£721,969
D	SE	External	N/K	254800	15400	4	123	£1,866	£983,401

Table 2

	Time first visit to completion		Total cases closed	Cases Referred on	Substantial advice given	Handyperson cases	All or part works	Total of identified cases	Number of Dfgs	Value of Dfg funding
	Under £1000	£1000 or more								
Peterborough	2.1	19.4	5086	352	187	3190	1651	5380	330	£1,848,369
A	17.8	16.9	2181	3	135	1749	239	2126	205	£946,828
B	24.6	55.8	1672	65	504	380	449	1398	114	£1,323,418
C	8.1	14.7	1298	247	85	823	133	1288	125	£714,687
D	13.1	59.3	2044	511	126	1202	101	1940	107	£980,422

There is also a very effective collaborative working relationship with the Occupational Therapists, some of which are based within Care and Repair, which is a national ground breaking arrangement. Care and Repair are cited by Foundations on their website as national good practice in how to deliver agency services. The number of cases that Care and repair achieve in the year due to the working arrangement puts them into the top quartile of Home Improvement Agencies in the Country.

A recent handyperson forum in London provided cost comparisons for 2008/9 for handy person schemes. The average job costs at Peterborough are half the national average and the scope of work exceeds the other agencies. The number of jobs locally for the current year is approaching 4,000. This is a high number when compared to similar schemes.

Table 3 below gives the comparisons.

Table 3

Type of area	Average no of handy persons employed	Average no of jobs completed	Average total cost of service	Jobs per handyperson employed	Cost per handy person employed	Cost per job completed
rural	2.36	984	£70,961	416	£30,068	£72.27
Semi-rural	2.20	887	£62,138	403	£28,244	£70.08
City	2.87	1309	£118,575	456	£41,315	£90.60
Peterborough	None directly employed	1998	£91,864	None directly employed	None directly employed	£45.97

Peterborough Care & Repair was rated as excellent in respect of the European Foundation Quality Management assessment and has also received the HIA Quality Assessment Framework mark.

Developing the work of the Agency - As Care and Repair is situated within the Strategic Housing Services they have been able to provide holistic services to their clients which involve partnership working with other agencies such as:

- Fitting of smoke alarms and carrying out fire safety audits, on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Service, for each client visited who does not have a smoke detector fitted to their property, including all clients who receive the Handy person service.
- Providing timely independent building advice, arranging and overseeing works required under the Sanctuary Scheme ensuring that clients exposed to Domestic Violence are safe in their own homes and not at risk of homelessness.
- Liaising with the Police assisting with home security, helping with Home Shield and providing services to extend the range of the Bobby Scheme.
- The Agency has an open invitation from “Safer Local Trades” to advertise free of charge a private surveying/project management/architectural service aimed at older people and vulnerable groups.
- Care and Repair are currently reviewing the Handy Person Scheme to ensure it targets those individuals who need it and looking at the types of work that have been undertaken in the last couple of years to ensure the scheme in the City meets the needs of the client.
- Due to the relationships that Care and Repair have built up with the other Home Improvement Agencies in Cambridgeshire over the last few years, and the fact that in Peterborough we deliver the same amount of work per year as the other five agencies put together. Peterborough is often requested for information and best practice advice. This year this has culminated in one of our surveyors being placed within Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Home Improvement Agency for alternate weeks for a 4 month period to date to help them with their work flow and operating procedures. Care and Repair have been paid for all the time the surveyor has been with them. The Agency has also provided advice and guidance in the creation and review of other HIA on an ad hoc basis, such as Luton and Southend.
- Care and Repair were one of the first areas of the Council to pilot agile working with their caseworkers using laptops and scanning equipment in the field. This will be rolled out to all the staff with the imminent move of the team to the fourth floor of Bayard.
- Care and Repair Caseworkers now provide the means testing for their clients therefore eliminating delay in information to the client. They also undertake all the repairs assistance eligibility visits in respect of Repairs Assistance cases.
- With the range of shared services with Rutland County Council now including housing we will be working with them to look at their Home Improvement Agency Services and how they can best be delivered moving forward.

Please refer to Appendix 8 for a selection of recent case studies for Care & Repair.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Homelessness prevention has implications for all sections of society and all wards and parishes of the local authority area. More people may fall into the vulnerable category and homelessness because of the current economic climate. There is a higher risk of losing their home irrespective of tenure.

Financial implications – There are financial implications with regard to hostel and bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless clients and cold weather provision for rough sleepers.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation will take place once the Homelessness Strategy has been reviewed, which will encompass all the work being carried out to prevent homelessness by Strategic Housing described in this report. Focus Groups with key stakeholders will take place later in the year.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 It is recommended that the draft Homelessness Strategy will be brought back to the group and that a further update be brought back to the Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee in March 2012

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1 Please follow the link to the DCLG consultation document, Local Decisions: A Fairer Future for Social Housing
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1775577.pdf>

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 **Appendix 1** – Letter from Homeless Link (the umbrella organisation for homelessness services in the UK) describing the partnership working with Peterborough City Council Homelessness Prevention Team and the Homeless Link Regional Manager
Appendix 2 – Statement from Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire (East) Local Immigration Team regarding the success of the UKBA Pilot for the administrative removal of A8 Nationals sleeping rough in Peterborough
Appendix 3 – Letter from the East of England LGA regarding the good practice example of the Homelessness Prevention Team and the success of Peterborough City Council's input to the Regional Conference on A8's Sleeping Rough
Appendix 4 – Statement from the Salvation Army regarding the partnership work at the Drop-In Service
Appendix 5 – Case Study regarding reconnection of a Czech family
Appendix 6 – Case Study regarding the Rent Deposit Scheme
Appendix 7 – Draft Renewals Policy
Appendix 8 – Care & Repair Case Studies

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