



# Homelessness Strategy

2012/15

**Kettering**  
*Borough Council*



# 1. Introduction

Since its Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010, the Government has substantially reduced its expenditure in public services and affordable housing. It has also announced a whole raft of welfare reforms that are designed to reduce public expenditure on housing benefit and encourage people off benefits and into work.

There has also been considerable changes to the way affordable housing is delivered and provided; the Affordable Rent Model enables registered providers to charge rents equivalent of 80 per cent of the local market rent on new homes, and existing social rented homes that become empty. Furthermore the Localism Act 2011 radically reforms social housing tenure through the introduction of fixed term tenancies, which will typically be five years in length. The Affordable Rent Model along with the increased use of flexible is expected to result in a sustained reduction in secure/assured tenancies at social rents. There are concerns that these new approaches will not contribute enough supply and that the reduced new supply will not meet the needs of vulnerable people.

The effects of the Welfare, Tenure & Council Tax Benefit Reforms and the economic recession are likely to increase the demand for homelessness services. During these austere times it is imperative that homelessness prevention remains on top of everyone's agenda and that adequate resources are available to meet the challenges which are only just beginning to take hold. This can only occur if appropriate resources are made available

Effective partnerships with the public and voluntary sector will be vital to support the needs of our community. The Homelessness Strategy will continue to support well established partnerships and will seek opportunities to pool resources and avoid duplication in a bid to mitigate the negative impacts these challenging times will have on the residents of the Borough.

The Homelessness Strategy sets out our vision for homelessness in Kettering borough over the next three years. The vision links directly to our Community Strategy and our Housing Strategy and illustrates our multi-faceted approach to improving the quality of life for Kettering residents. The Strategy sets out the challenges and opportunities which Kettering faces in relation to homelessness, and the responses which we have developed in consultation with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Kettering Borough Council's Homelessness Review, available separately, provides the evidence base for the Homelessness Strategy.

The purpose of the Homelessness Review is to assess current and future homelessness need in the Borough so that appropriate provision can be planned and provided for. The Homelessness Review should be read in conjunction with this document.

The main chapters to the Homelessness Strategy are:

**Chapter 2: Strategic Context**

**Chapter 3: Welfare Reform**

**Chapter 4: Homelessness Review Key Findings**

**Chapter 5: Homelessness Prevention**

**Chapter 6: Resources**

**Chapter 7: Successes since our last strategy**

**Chapter 8: Priorities 2012/15**

**Chapter 9: Consultation and Monitoring**

**Chapter 10: Action Plans**



## 2. Strategic Context

### 2.1 Setting the scene

Since the publication of Kettering Borough Council's second Homelessness Strategy, in 2008, there have been significant successes in the delivery of homelessness services. The main successes of the last Homelessness Strategy were:

- Homeless applications made to the Council have reduced in the past four years from 229 to 139;
- Homeless acceptances have reduced in the past four years from 159 to 76;
- Homeless households living in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council have reduced from 52 in March 2007 to 14 in March 2012;
- The launch of *Kettering Keyways* our choice based lettings system in January 2008. In November 2010 it became the sub-regional scheme *Keyways* with the councils of Wellingborough and Corby.

Further successes are explored in chapter 7 of this document which demonstrate the innovative work which is being undertaken locally to assist households who are threatened with homelessness.

### 2.2 Links with other strategies and plans

The Homelessness Strategy 2012/15 forms part of a hierarchy of plans and strategies developed by Kettering Borough Council, which seek to transform national strategies and objectives into real improvements in local peoples lives and the way housing is allocated and managed. These include a Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, Sustainable Community Strategy and the Housing Allocations Scheme.

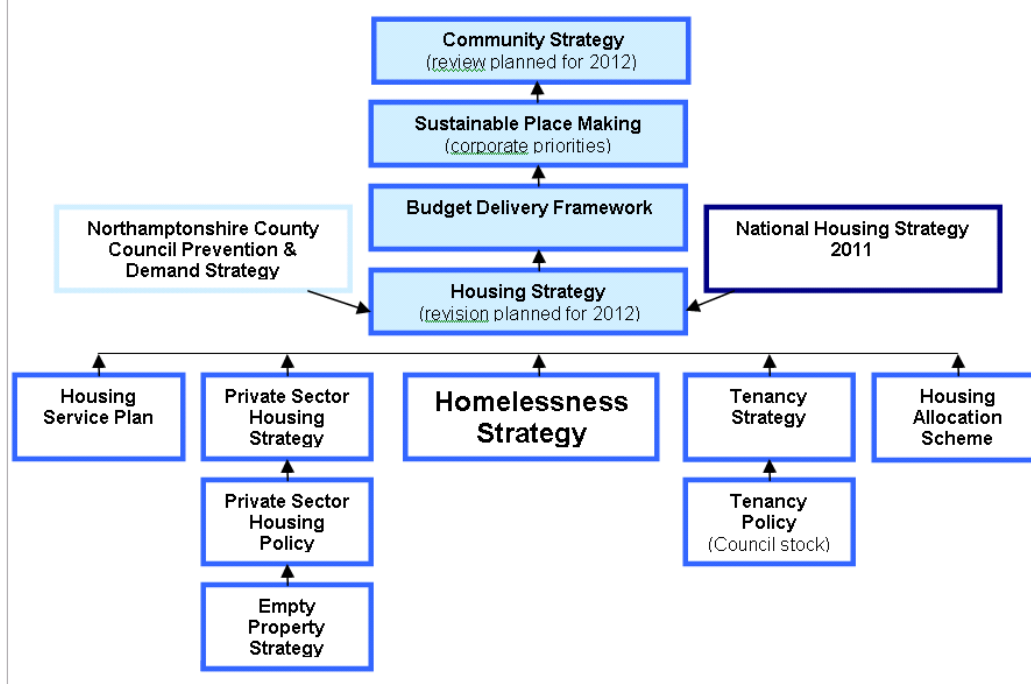
The Community Strategy lies at the top of the Council's hierarchy of plans and strategies (figure 1) and the priorities identified in the Strategy inform the direction of our Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.

The Homelessness Strategy is a significant factor underpinning the Council's Corporate vision of sustainable place making and supports the following strategic aims: managing growth, economy & skills, access to services, efficient & effective service delivery, enhanced local government, tackling anti-social behaviour & crime, and active citizens.

Since the publication of the last Homelessness Strategy in 2008 the political and legislative landscape in which our homelessness services operate has changed considerably. The last Strategy had to be compatible with a significant regional agenda which included Local Area Agreements, the Regional Housing Strategy, the Regional Homelessness Strategy, and the Northamptonshire Homelessness Strategy. The demise of the regional agenda has been brought about by the Government's focus on Localism which transfers power from central government to individuals, communities, neighbourhoods as well as local councils and institutions.

## 2. Strategic Context

Figure 1: Strategic framework



### 2.3 National priorities

The homelessness legislation: Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 ; was introduced to provide the statutory basis for local authorities to tackle homelessness.

In 2002, the Government provided clarity and reinforced the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 this new act requires all local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy, which must be reviewed every five years.

The Governments Housing Strategy '*Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011*' builds on existing policy through a series of key measures for the future of housing in England. Through it the Government is seeking to:

- Increase the number of homes available to rent, including affordable homes, and the opportunities for people to own their own home, whether through access to mortgage finance or be reinvigorating Right to Buy;
- Promote a strong private rented sector through encouraging greater institutional investment into the sector and tough enforcement against rogue landlords;
- Bring empty properties back into use as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing ;
- Protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and support people to stay in their homes;
- Make sure that homes are of high quality, sustainable, and well designed.

## 2. Strategic Context

The Strategy refers to the following reforms and initiatives in relation to housing and homelessness:

- Creation of new flexible tenancies to encourage the efficient use of social housing;
- Introduction of HomeSwap Direct to enable social housing tenants to identify properties they could exchange to anywhere in the Country;
- Tackling rough sleeping through initiative such as 'No Second Night Out' which targets support to people new to rough sleeping;
- Establishment of a new multi-agency teams to work around Troubled Families
- Introduction of the Social Sector Size Criteria to reduce underoccupation and create movement in the social rented sector;
- Armed Forces service personnel with urgent housing need to receive additional priority with the Allocation Schemes of local authorities;
- Providing support to home owners through independent debt advice, free legal advice at possession hearings and access to information and advice;
- Encouraging social housing providers to tackle tenancy fraud in their stock as a way to release much needed stock for families who need it.

The reforms highlighted in the Government's Housing Strategy will form key challenges for the Homelessness Strategy which are discussed in detail in chapter 8.

In August 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government published its homelessness prevention strategy '*Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness*'.

The strategy places an emphasis on an integrated approach at a local level in keeping with the fundamental premise that homelessness is everyone's responsibility. The strategy highlights five priority areas for the Government based on cross cutting themes:

Cross cutting theme	Example of how the government will tackle this
<b>Tackling troubled childhoods and adolescence</b>	by working with schools, local service commissioners to produce an evidence-based documents which sets out effective local approached to preventing youth homelessness;
<b>Improving health</b>	by working with Homeless Link to improve outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs/alcohol and mental health needs through a pilot in five areas;
<b>Reducing involvement in crime</b>	by commissioning Crisis to develop guidance for prison and probation practitioners on improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation;
<b>Improving skills; employment; and financial advice</b>	by testing the support required to help claimants budget and manage their rent payments effectively through a series of Housing Demonstration projects which will run until June 2013;
<b>Pioneering innovative social funding mechanisms for homelessness</b>	by providing 'light touch' support to help other local commissioners develop Social Impact Bond propositions.

## 2. Strategic Context

The Strategy also poses ten local challenges for local authorities to consider which, if adopted, should lead to Housing Options team delivering a 'gold standard' service. These challenges are listed below with how we aim to meet the 'gold standard'.

Challenge	Local action
Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services	Organisations which provide services to prevent homelessness are funded through the Council's voluntary sector commissioning.
Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs	The Council has a LifePlan service which provides on-to-one support to housing options customers to get into training, education & employment.
Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients	The Council's Housing Options service has been focused on prevention since it was launched in 2006.
Adopt a <i>No Second Night Out</i> model or an effective local alternative	There is a county wide <i>No Second Night Out</i> scheme based in the nearby town of Northampton. The demand for this service from Kettering residents will be monitored.
Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support	The Homelessness Strategy 2012/15 seeks to ensure that agreements with mental health services and criminal justice organisations are reviewed to ensure there are planned move on for people leaving institutions.
Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all clients and landlords	In Kettering Borough, we already work closely with landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector to secure accommodation for homeless people. During 2011/12, we piloted a new way of working with private landlords through the recruitment of a Landlord Liaison Officer, enabling us to access a greater supply of good quality, affordable homes for households in housing need, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.  Our Landlord Liaison Officer works closely with private landlords and tenants to minimise the risk of tenancy failure and to give our customers the best possible chance of maintaining a successful, long-term private tenancy
Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme	The Housing Options Team promote the Mortgage Rescue Scheme to households at risk of repossession
Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs	The 2012/15 Homelessness Strategy will be reviewed annually by the multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership.
Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation	A priority of the Homelessness Strategy 2012/15 is to ensure there is appropriate temporary accommodation for homeless young people aged 16/17.
Not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks	No families with children are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in Kettering. The only exception to this would be during emergencies when the longest a family could expect to be placed in B&B would be 6 weeks.



## 2. Strategic Context

### 2.5 Prevention Services (former Supporting People programme)

During the life of the Homelessness Strategy the most significant strategic influence on homelessness services in the Borough will be the County Council's Prevention and Demand Management Strategy.

The former Supporting People programme, introduced in 2003, funded housing-related support services in the Borough and was administered by Northamptonshire County Council. In 2010 the Government removed the ring-fencing of the grant.

Housing related support services are currently commissioned by the County Council's Prevention Service. However the County Council are rolling out radical changes in the way prevention services are delivered in the County which will affect the level of funding in the Borough for services related to homelessness.

In response to unprecedented financial pressures, reduced Government funding, and increasing demands on services, Northamptonshire County Council has developed a Prevention and Demand Management Strategy. The principle of this strategy is that prevention and early intervention can both reduce costs to the public purse and improve outcomes for people. The County Council forecast that they will save £15 million over the next four years through a reduction in duplication and inefficiency, and through also finding ways to help people become more independent and less reliant on more specialist services.

The County Council will move away from commissioning prevention services and move to developing local commissioning arrangements. It is proposed that they will procure a lead partner who will develop an arrangement to manage demand locally. This may be based on a partnerships arrangement, be a consortia or have a series of sub-contracting arrangements.

Budgets allocated to local areas will be defined through the County Council's Fair & Equitable Funding Methodology . This methodology has been developed using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and Office of National Statistics data on population. A model has been created which allocates funding based on the population of the area and the level of that populations need.

We will be able to formulate an appropriate response when the extent of the changes imposed by the County Council's Prevention agenda is apparent. Thus the role of the Homelessness Strategy is to lobby for the protection of local services, where they meet an identified need, and to coordinate a local response to changes as and when they are announced.

In section 6.5 there is a more detailed discussion on the prevention contracts which will be affected by these changes.

## 2. Strategic Context

### 2.6 Tenure Reform and the Tenancy Strategy 2012

The Localism Act 2011 radically reforms social housing tenure through the introduction of a new form of local authority Secure Tenancy: the Flexible Tenancy. Flexible Tenancies are fixed-term tenancies which will typically be five years in length. This means that social landlords will no longer be required to offer new tenants lifetime tenancies.

The Act also requires local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that sits alongside the Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Allocations Scheme.

Kettering Borough Council owns and manages its own housing and therefore the Tenancy Strategy 2012 provides guidance for both the Local Authority and Registered Providers in order to direct consistent policies on granting and renewing tenancies across the Borough. The Tenancy Strategy has significant implications for new tenants of social housing which may impact upon our Housing Options Service if they are not managed properly, particular when fixed term tenancies are not renewed by providers. The Tenancy Strategy sets out the following expectations for providers of affordable housing in Kettering Borough:

#### What is expected of providers of affordable housing in Kettering

Providers will use five years as a minimum term for all fixed term tenancies.

Providers will automatically renew fixed term tenancies other than where the tenants' circumstances have changed significantly.

Information is shared between registered providers and the Council when the decision not to reissue a tenancy has been taken, provided at least 6 months before the tenancy ends with the aim of avoiding homelessness.

Registered Providers will set out in their Tenancy Policy how they will provide advice and assistance to tenants. As a minimum, they are expected to provide timely information and advice services to help people understand their housing options which should include, where appropriate, opportunities to move within and outside the social and affordable rent sectors e.g. into market rent or home ownership

Providers will clearly set the exact circumstances when a tenancy will and will not be renewed in their tenancy policy and clearly communicate this with the tenant prior to them signing their tenancy agreement.

Tenants who have had a review of their tenancy will be given at least six months notice if the provider is minded to end the tenancy, and that adequate reasons for the decision to end the tenancy are given with information on the right to appeal the decision.

Providers will notify the Council of the decision to end the tenancy.

Providers will consider the implications of their decision on the level of homelessness in the Borough and work closely with the tenant to explore realistic alternative housing options. Providers should take responsibility for providing advice and assistance to such tenants themselves and not excessively burden partners including housing advice and assistance agencies.

Registered providers to allow a tenant to remain in their property at the end of the tenancy until a suitable alternative has been found. In cases of under occupation, the tenant should be offered a smaller home with the same or alternative registered provider

## 2. Strategic Context

When social landlords choose to grant Flexible Tenancies there may be times when the Council may support the non-renewal of the tenancy at the end of the fixed term . This will be in situations where the tenants circumstances have changed which reduces their need for the tenancy; such as a change in employment status or occupation of the property; or in circumstances where they have broken their tenant obligations, such as non payment of rent. The Tenancy Strategy identifies the following circumstances when the Council will support the non renewal of a fixed-term tenancy:

### **Circumstances when the Council will support the non-renewal of a fixed-term tenancy**

The households' financial circumstances are significantly improved to the point that they are able to afford and access a different tenure of housing that meets their needs locally and social rent is no longer a viable option

The household is under-occupying their home. In cases of under occupation, the tenant should normally be offered an alternative home with a registered provider.

The property has been extensively adapted for someone with a disability but the household no longer requires the adaptations. In such cases the tenant should be offered a suitable alternative with a registered provider.

Possession proceedings have commenced or tenancy obligations have been broken e.g. antisocial behaviour, rent arrears etc.

Disposal or refurbishment of the property required.

All social housing providers operating in our Borough are required to produce a Tenancy Policy must set out how they will use flexible tenancies and the circumstances they will or will not grant another tenancy on the expiry of the fixed term. We need to ensure that the way social tenures are used support our vision for our Borough. In practice however there is little scope for us to insist that all registered providers operating in our area adopt the same approach as our Tenancy Strategy in their landlord Tenancy Policies as they are only legally required to 'have regard to' our Strategy.

The Tenancy Strategy has significant implications for the Homelessness Strategy 2012/15, which include:

- Registered Providers are required to offer reasonable advice and assistance to tenants whose fixed term tenancy is not to be renewed to help them find alternative accommodation. The Government has not specified how this should be delivered. To ensure the advice is delivered effectively and efficiently and is of a high standard the Council will investigate whether this service could be provided collaboratively.
- The Council will work closely with Registered Providers to ensure that the process for ending fixed term tenancies is clear and transparent, and tenants are provided with high quality advice and information to facilitate a smooth transition to alternative accommodation where necessary.
- The Housing Allocation Scheme will assist people whose tenancy has not been renewed by giving greater priority to households' needing to downsize and those who no longer require an adapted property. However we recognise that demand for accommodation through the Allocations Scheme will be far greater than supply. We will therefore need to work with Registered Providers to increase new housing supply and encourage mobility through means such as mutual exchange and lodging schemes.

## 2. Strategic Context

- Quarterly Social Landlord Management Forums are held with Registered Providers operating in North Northamptonshire. These forums will be an opportunity for us to work together to agree how the end of fixed term tenancies will be managed and put in place joint working structures to ensure a consistency in approach in the Borough.

The Tenancy Strategy and the impact it will have on homelessness is discussed in more detail later in the Strategy.

### 2.7 Housing Allocation Scheme

The high demand for social housing in the Borough means that we will never to be able to meet the need with our existing resources; we must therefore ensure that our stock is allocated on fair and reasonable grounds to those people who need it the most.

The Localism Act 2011 has brought about changes in the way in which local authorities can deal with applications for social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. In light of the legislative changes, during 2012 a revised housing allocation scheme will be launched in the Borough. The changes will cover six main areas which are summarised in table 1, though this list is not exhaustive. When devising the new scheme the Council will have regard to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) new Code of Guidance for the Allocation of Accommodation, which was published in June 2012.

Perhaps the most significant change is that local authorities are now allowed to end open waiting lists, and instead impose restrictions on who qualifies to access the housing register. The Council's qualifying criteria will mean that some people who would have otherwise been eligible to go onto the register will no longer be allowed; such as households in no housing need or people with no local connection to the Borough.

Changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme will have implications for homelessness as the Council will discharge their duty to statutory homeless households in the private sector. The Council must ensure in doing this they check that properties are decent and safe and are suitable for the occupants.

## 2. Strategic Context

Table 1: Key changes to be made to the Allocation Scheme

Change	Description
<b>Non qualifying persons:</b>	Applicants no longer accepted on the register to include: a) Applicants in no housing need: adequately housed (except those who have applied for sheltered housing) b) Applicants with no local connection; applicants living outside the Keyways partnership area or without a connection with the partnership area by virtue of family, employment etc. c) Applicants whose income and assets are above the threshold.
<b>Existing tenants</b>	Increased priority for under occupiers especially with an associated medical need to move  Allowing for more mobility within sheltered schemes where there is an associated medical need.
<b>Adapted homes and disabled adaptations</b>	Priority for tenants occupying a property with adaptations that are not needed.  Properties with higher level adaptations to be direct let to applicants that need them.
<b>Community contribution</b>	Those applicants who make a positive contribution to their community through fostering and serving in the Armed Forces will be included in the Housing Allocation Scheme. Priority will be given in Local Lettings Plans for other community contributions such as employment and volunteering.
<b>Statutory homeless applicants</b>	We will seek to make an offer of suitable private rented accommodation to applicants approved as statutory homeless where they are deemed able to sustain accommodation. Where accommodation in the private rented sector cannot be offered they will be awarded 4 weeks choice in Band A.
<b>Property eligibility</b>	Room restrictions in the social sector, introduced as part of the Government's Welfare Reforms, will mean that under-occupying housing benefit claimants of working age will have a deduction from their housing benefit for the bedrooms they do not use for sleeping in. Under the current Allocation Scheme applicants can bid for properties which are one bedroom larger than their current need. This will continue under the new scheme however applicants will be have a financial assessment to ensure the property is affordable and an informed decision to accept the property has been made by both the applicant and the landlord.

## 2. Strategic Context

### 2.8 Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

Kettering's Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2012/15 assesses local housing needs, and sets out the priorities and objectives for the improvement of private sector housing in the Borough. The term "housing renewal" refers to physical housing problems that can detrimentally impact on the health and well being of individuals living in poor quality or inappropriate housing, or communities living in areas that suffer poor quality housing. The Strategic Priorities of the Strategy are listed in table 2.

Table 2: Strategic priorities of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2012/15: Strategic Priorities	
1	Ensuring decent, safe and healthy homes in the private sector
2	Supporting a thriving private rented sector
3	Unlocking the potential of empty homes
4	Enabling people with physical disabilities to retain their independence

The Localism Act has introduced a significant change to the way that local authorities can use the private rented sector to house those assessed as being statutorily homeless. Local authorities are now able to discharge their duty to homeless households with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, provided the tenancy offered is for a minimum of 12 months. Before this, local authorities could only discharge the homelessness duty in the private rented sector with the agreement of the household, but this agreement is no longer required.

In Kettering Borough, we already work closely with landlords and letting agents in the private rented sector to secure accommodation for homeless people. This change in legislation presents us with greater opportunities to do more, which is welcomed. However, when discharging our duty in this way we need to ensure that we only use suitable accommodation that is decent and safe.

Furthermore access to the private rented sector will become increasingly important as the supply of new affordable homes developed by registered providers is likely to decline due to reductions in central Government grant needed to build. Moreover changes brought about by the Government's Welfare Reforms will increase the demand for accommodation suitable for single people and childless couples, which will not be met through social housing supply alone.

In the last ten years the supply of privately rented accommodation has increased considerably. At the 2001 Census Kettering borough had relatively low levels of privately rented properties when compared to the rest of the County. However the recent Private Sector Stock Condition Survey found that as much as 23.6% of the private sector stock is privately rented (8493 properties). This increase in the supply of privately rented accommodation will go some way to filling the gap between social housing demand and supply however the Council faces significant challenges in ensuring that the supply of accommodation in the private rented sector is accessible to vulnerable households.

The Council also needs to ensure that when placing vulnerable households in the sector their accommodation is decent and safe. This will mean greater regulation by the Council to ensure properties are at the required standard.

## 2. Strategic Context

This may include for example, the introduction of selective licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) as a way of improving standards across all HMOs, not just those which are subject to mandatory licensing.

The need for our services to provide solutions for our customers in the private rented sector is therefore set to increase; the Council and its partners must focus resources to ensure vulnerable clients can compete in the private rented market. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy is therefore imperative to the success of the Homelessness Strategy and the supply of decent and safe homes in the private rented sector.

### **2.9 Increasing the supply of privately rented accommodation for vulnerable households**

The numbers of households who had their homelessness prevented through support to access the private rented sector is increasing, demonstrating how vital this work is to secure permanent accommodation for homeless households. During 2010/11 49 households were assisted into the private rented sector (with or without a landlord incentive) by 2011/12 this had increased to 110 households.

During 2011/12, we piloted a new way of working with private landlords through the recruitment of a Landlord Liaison Officer, enabling us to access a greater supply of good quality, affordable homes for households in housing need, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Our Landlord Liaison Officer works closely with private landlords and tenants to minimise the risk of tenancy failure and to give our customers the best possible chance of maintaining a successful, long-term private tenancy.

Following a successful pilot project, a Management Service for which landlords pay for the Landlord Liaison Officer to find them tenants and subsequently manage the tenancy will be launched in the Borough. In the near future we will also be consulting a group of landlords about our proposals for future services in the private rented sector.

## 2. Strategic Context

### 2.10 Empty Property Strategy

With the shortage of housing supply in the Borough it is imperative that we make the best use of all our housing resources whether they be in the public or private sector. As at 1st April 2012 there were 326 privately owned empty homes which had been empty for over 6 months in the Borough. Although this was a reduction from the 433 properties from the previous year, there remains many privately owned properties that have been vacant for several years that are unlikely to become occupied unless the Council takes action.

Kettering Borough Council's Empty Property Strategy 2012/15 aims to develop initiatives that will encourage private owners of empty homes to bring their properties back into use. The Council believes that the best way to do this is to work in partnership with owners and offer advice and guidance. The strategic priorities of the Empty Property Strategy directly support the work of the Homelessness Strategy (table 3).

Table 3: Empty Property Strategy 2012/15 strategic priorities

Empty Property Strategy 2012/15: strategic priorities	
1.	Identify long-term, problematic empty homes and improve the way that they are monitored
2.	Continue to work to bring long-term, problematic empty homes back into use, taking enforcement action where necessary
3.	Provide information and support to the owners of empty homes
4.	Use empty homes to prevent homelessness and increase the housing options available to customers on our housing register
5.	Maximise opportunities to increase the available resources for tackling empty homes
6.	Promote the benefits of turning empty properties back into homes and publicise our successes

The Empty Property Strategy aims to develop initiatives to bring empty properties back into use for households in housing need or those who are threatened with homelessness.

In 2011 the Council worked with Rockingham Forest Housing Association to purchase three long term empty properties requiring extensive refurbishment in our Borough. The Council supported the project with a capital grant of £183,000. Following refurbishment the properties were advertised for social rent through Keyways and were therefore available for people in housing need.

Pictured: Rockingham Forest Empty Property Project. Empty property before refurbishment and after with the new tenants.





## 3. Welfare Reform

The Government's Welfare Reforms will have an unprecedented impact on our customers during the life of the Homelessness Strategy. Changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Act have so far principally affected people living in the private rented sector: such as the increase in the shared room rate from 25 to 35 and the restriction of Local Housing Allowance on larger properties. However changes are due to be implemented which will have a marked affect on people across all tenures, including those living in the social rented sector.

This chapter summarises some of the main Welfare Reforms across all tenures and briefly assesses their implications for homelessness in the Borough beginning with the introduction of the Shared Accommodation rate earlier this year.

### 3.1 Introduction of the Shared Accommodation Rate for under 35s

In January 2012 the Shared Accommodation Rate for single tenants living in privately rented accommodation was increased from 25 to 35. This change affected about 60 existing claimants in the Borough who would have seen their benefit drop from a rate for self contained accommodation to the Single Room Rate. During recent visits by the Housing Benefit team many of these people were found to be struggling to afford their current accommodation.

For new claimants the Shared Accommodation Rate will mean that single tenants under the age of 35 will find it difficult to afford self contained accommodation in the private rented sector, making a room in a shared house their only option. This further supports the need for the Council to encourage a greater supply of affordable shared accommodation which is decent and safe for single people in the private rented sector.

### 3.1 Introduction of the Size Criteria in social rented sector

The Government plans to use Welfare Reform to cut the housing benefit of any working-age social housing tenant deemed to be 'under-occupying' their social home. Historically customers in the private rented sector have been paid benefit based on the size of the property they require, this has not applied to the social sector.

The Size Criteria, to be introduced in April 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act, will mean that any working-age household deemed to be under-occupying their home will lose part of their housing benefit. It will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household, with the following exceptions:

- Children under 16 of the same gender expected to share;
- Children under 10 expected to share regardless of gender;
- Disabled tenant or partner who needs non residential overnight care will be allowed an extra bedroom.

Any household deemed to have more bedrooms than they require, as defined by the criteria, will lose a proportion of their housing benefit. For people under-occupying their accommodation by one bedroom they could see their benefit cut by an average of £14 per week, and for those under-occupying their accommodation by two bedrooms this could increase to £23 per week. It is highly likely that some social housing tenants affected by the Size Criteria rules will wish to downsize to smaller accommodation to avoid paying the extra benefit.

## 3. Welfare Reform

Crucially however, there are not enough smaller homes into which social tenants can downsize. As at 1 April 2012 57% of the households registered to move on Keyways required a one bed property while only 30% of the Council stock is one bedroom (table 4). Furthermore 9% of Keyways applicants required a 3 bed property while 33% of the Council stock is bed. This highlights the disparity between what households need and what social housing stock is available.

Table 4: Comparison of Kettering Borough Council Housing Stock Profile by bedroom size (including sheltered) and households registered on Keyways as at April

	Council Stock Profile	Keyways Applicants
<b>Bedsits/1 bed</b>	30%	57%
<b>2 bed</b>	36%	31%
<b>3 bed</b>	33%	9%
<b>4 bed+</b>	0.87%	3%

Social housing tenants are likely to apply to mutually exchange or to transfer their property in a bid to avoid paying the extra housing benefit charge. For those who cannot downsize or who choose not to move, it is likely that we will see social housing tenants in greater financial difficulty as a direct result of the Size Criteria.

Estimates suggest that as many as 35% of working-age Kettering Borough Council tenants in receipt of housing benefit may be affected by the introduction of the Size Criteria: this could be as many as 455 households. In partnership with the Housing Benefit team, the Housing Service will contact all those households affected and inform them of their options. Access to appropriate tenancy support will be vital so households can be supported to manage their money and pay their rent.

### 3.3 Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the biggest change in the Welfare state for over 50 years. The proposed reforms, due to be introduced between 2013 & 2017, will see a selection of different benefits abolished and replaced by one single award called Universal Credit. The benefits abolished will include Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based), Employment & Support Allowance (Income related), Tax Credits and Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit will be paid monthly rather than fortnightly and generally by BACS. Payments including housing credits (the replacement for Housing Benefit) will be paid in most cases direct to the customers, this includes council and housing association tenants whose housing benefit currently goes to their landlord.

There is a huge concern amongst providers of social housing about the ability of vulnerable people to manage their Universal Credit. Landlords are concerned that rent arrears will increase as people are required to pay their rent direct to their landlord. There will be provision for vulnerable people to have their rent paid direct to the landlord however it is likely that there will be much stricter guidelines on who can be classed as vulnerable and ultimately the number of people who will meet the requirements.

## 3. Welfare Reform

At present, when working with clients to find suitable accommodation in the private rented sector Housing Options Advisors can use direct payments as an incentive to landlords to offer a tenancy to a household in receipt of benefit. When the ability to offer this is curtailed it will make it harder to place households in the private rented sector and therefore find suitable accommodation to prevent their homelessness.

Universal Credit will be a web-based service to which applicants must apply online. Those clients who are not computer literate and do not have access to a computer will need to be supported to develop their IT skills. Local services will also need to provide access to computers for their clients.

### 3.2 Benefit Cap

The benefit cap comes into effect from April 2013. The maximum amount of state benefit that a person under pension age can receive will be £500 per week for couples and £350 per week for single customers. The cap will be applied by a reduction in housing benefit so if a customer receives £450 week in Income Support and child related benefits the maximum Housing Benefit they will receive is £50. The Department for Work and Pensions have written to approximately 50 households who will be affected in the Borough. One-to-one meetings were offered with a Housing Options Advisor, Benefits Advisor and Job Centre Plus; although the take up was very low.

Although the number of household affected by the benefit cap in the Borough is low it is likely that those affected could face affordability problems which could put them at risk of homelessness.

### 3.5 Localised Council Tax Support

Financial assistance with paying Council Tax is called Council Tax Benefit. This is to be abolished in April 2013 when a Localised Council Tax Support will be introduced. The Government wants Councils to develop schemes based on local priorities which provide an incentive to work for people of working age. The Government has protected pensioners from any reduction in support as a result of the reform.

Members of the Council are yet to decide how the new local Council Tax Support scheme will be delivered in the Borough. However when the localised scheme is launched it is likely that customers who have never paid Council Tax before will be required to under the new scheme. Council Tax Benefit reform is therefore likely to compound affordability problems for the most vulnerable in our community.

### 3.6 Welfare Reform and the Implications for Homelessness

Over the next few years the Government's Welfare Reforms will have a significant impact on our customers. Prevention and support services will be vital as households learn to manage on reduced benefits and greater autonomy in respect of managing the income they receive from benefits. As the Welfare Reforms will principally affect affordability we could see homelessness rise as households adjust to managing their budgets. Services which support households back into work, such as the Councils LifePlan service, will become increasingly important as households are incentivised to return to work in a bid to increase their household income.



## 4. Homelessness Review 2012 - Key Findings

In February 2012 a review of homelessness in the Borough was undertaken. The purpose of the Homelessness Review (available separately) is to assess current and future homelessness need in the Borough so that appropriate provision can be planned and provided for as part of the Homelessness Strategy.

A variety of data sources were used to inform the review including P1E homelessness data, Ministry of Justice data on mortgage and landlord repossessions, Land Registry data related to house prices and sales transactions, and stakeholder interviews.

The main findings of the review are summarised below.

### 4.1 Kettering's Housing Market Context

- **Kettering is experiencing rapid population growth:** by 2020 the population is expected to increase by a further 12% from 90,600 to 102,000.
- **There is a high demand for social housing:** As at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 2,471 households were registered on Keyways, the Council's choice based allocations scheme.
- **New social housing lettings are low.** Between April 2010 and March 2011 there were 483 new social housing lettings in Kettering Borough (excluding transfers and exchanges) of which 40 per cent were Council lets.
- **On average it takes 10 weeks from when a homeless applicant is accepted as homeless (Section 184 decision) to them finding secure accommodation.**
- **The mean (average) household income in Kettering Borough is £35,346 (CACI, 2010).**
- **According to figures published in December 2011, proportionately Kettering has slightly lower levels of JSA claimants than nationally, however youth unemployment is higher than national averages. The proportion of people claiming out of work benefits is slightly lower than national averages.** In May 2011, 13.1% of the working age population in Kettering Borough were claiming out of work benefit, compared with 14.5% nationally.
- **House prices in the Borough have fallen.** In the last four years average house prices in Kettering Borough have fallen by 15%.
- **Average house prices in Kettering Borough are lower than the England average.** In September 2011 the average house price in Kettering was £149,137: which was 62% lower than the England average.
- **In the last four years the number of house sales transactions has fallen.** Transactions in July to September 2011 were almost 60% lower than the same period in 2007.

## 4. Homelessness Review 2012 - Key Findings

- **Kettering Borough Council has historically been successful in delivering new affordable housing.** From 2006/07 to 2010/11 950 new affordable homes were delivered in the Borough.
- **Changes to the national funding regime for affordable housing will significantly reduce the numbers of affordable housing units delivered in the Borough:** this will put increasing pressure on the existing social and privately rented housing stock.

### 4.2 Private Rented Sector

- **There has been a significant increase in the supply of privately rented homes in the Borough.** The Private Sector Stock condition survey reported that 23.6% of the private sector stock was privately rented (approximately 8493 properties).
- **The number of people living in the private rented sector claiming Local Housing Allowance has been increasing.** In December 2011 there were 1,807 was an increase of 12.5% from the same period in 2010.

### 4.3 Mortgage and landlord possession statistics

- **In the last few years there has been a downward trend in mortgage possession claims and those claims that led to an order in Kettering.**
- **In the first quarter of 2012 there were 40 mortgage possession claims issued in Kettering.**
- **Despite this downward trend, mortgage possession claims in Kettering are above the average for England.** Based on mortgage possession claims in the last four quarters, there were higher rates of claims per thousand of the population in Kettering (3.95) than the England average (3.01).
- **Since 2008 there has been an increasing trend of landlord possession claims in Kettering.** When comparing the four most recent quarters with the previous four quarters, there has been a 29% increase in landlord possession claims in Kettering.
- **In the first quarter of 2012 there were 65 landlord possession claims in Kettering;** this was a 20% increase on the same quarter in 2011.
- **Despite the increasing trend of landlord possession claims the number of claims made in Kettering is lower than the England average.** Claims made during the last four quarters represent an average of 5.79 per thousand households which is lower than the England average (6.35).
- **Between 2008 and 2010 landlord possession claims leading to orders in Kettering were on an upward trend, in 2011 they decreased slightly.**

## 4. Homelessness Review 2012 - Key Findings

- **In the last four quarters landlord possession claims leading to orders have continued to fall (-4%) when compared to the previous four quarters.**
- **Landlord possession claims leading to orders are lower than England averages.** During the last four quarters, the average number of landlord possession claims leading to orders per thousand households was 3.55 which was lower than the England average of 4.36.

### 4.4 Analysis of P1E data

- The number of homeless applications in Kettering Borough has reduced over the past four years from 229 in 2007/08 to 139 applicants in 2010/11. This is less than half the number of applications received in 2005/06.
- The launch of Kettering Keyways in January 2009 led to a drop of 121 homeless applications between 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- The number of households accepted as homeless by the Council has dropped each year since 2007 in line with the reduction in total applications.
- In Kettering the proportion of applicants who are accepted as homeless is 55% which remains above the National average of 43%.
- Loss of accommodation (including termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy), parental eviction and violence are the most common causes for homelessness locally.
- Historically homeless due to the termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies has been a concern in Kettering. In 2010/11 22% of households were homeless due to the loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy compared with 15% nationally. During 2010/11 the majority of homeless households accepted by the Council were in priority need due to having dependant children (49%). This figure is much lower than the national figure of 60%.
- The proportion of acceptances in priority need for being pregnant (18%) or due to mental health/disability (17%) are also much higher locally when compared to national figures.
- Between 2008/09 and 2010/11 671 households had their homelessness prevented. The proportion of households able to remain in their existing home has increased; this is due to the work of the Tenancy Support Services provided by the Council & Accommodation Concern.
- In 2010/11 90 households were assisted to find alternative accommodation while 113 households were assisted to remain in their current accommodation.
- The number of households assisted to have their homelessness prevented increased significantly in 2011/12 to 478 (up from 203); 233 households were assisted to remain in their existing home while 245 were assisted to find alternative

## 4. Homelessness Review 2012 - Key Findings

- Over the last few years there has been a significant reduction in the use of temporary accommodation from the peak of 52 in March 2007 to 15 in December 2011.
- A single night count of rough sleepers was undertaken in November 2011 during which one rough sleeper was found.

### 4.5 LifePlan

- In 2009 the Council launched a LifePlan service to assist vulnerable housing customers into employment, training and education. Since this date over 120 clients have received one-to-one support to help them develop their skills and realise their potential.

The findings of the Homelessness Review have influenced the strategic priorities identified in this strategy which are discussed in detail in chapter 8.



## 5. Homelessness Prevention

### 5.1 Homelessness Prevention Initiatives

Homelessness Prevention activities enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or provide options to enable a planned move into alternative accommodation. Homelessness prevention activities deliver better outcomes for our customers as well as reducing costs to the Council. Appendix A of the Homelessness Review 2012 (available separately) provides a brief outline of all the prevention activities taking place in Kettering, these are also summarised in table 5.

The homelessness prevention initiatives available in Kettering aim to tackle the main cause of homelessness locally. We recognise however that we need to continually review and develop our housing options service so that it continues to reflect the needs of our customers. We will do this by monitoring trends in homelessness and developing housing options in response to our findings.

Prevention method	Organisation providing service
Housing Advice	Housing Options Team, Kettering Borough Council
Keyways sub-regional choice based lettings system	Housing Options Team, Kettering Borough Council
Tenancy Support (Council tenants)	Tenancy Services, Kettering Borough Council
Mortgage Rescue Scheme	Housing Options Team, Kettering Borough Council
Tenancy Support (all tenures)	Accommodation Concern
Housing Advice	Accommodation Concern
Court visits	Housing Options & Tenancy Services, Kettering Borough Council
Introductory tenancy visits	Tenancy Services, Kettering Borough Council Housing Management teams of Registered Providers
Spend to Save	Housing Options Team, Kettering Borough Council Accommodation Concern
Support to access the private rented sector (including rent deposit bond scheme)	Housing Options Team and landlord Liaison Officer, Kettering Borough Council
Sanctuary Scheme	Housing Options Team, Kettering Borough Council in partnership with the Northern Sunflower Centre, Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service and Northampton Care & Repair.
Discretionary Housing Payments	Housing Benefit Team, Kettering Borough Council
Tenancy training courses ( <i>Move On Move In, New Opportunities New Skills</i> )	Partnership of local statutory and voluntary organisations led and funded by Kettering Borough Council.
Tenancy Training Flats for Young People and tenancy Training House for Rough Sleepers	Partnership between Kettering Borough Council and Accommodation Concern's Tenancy Support Service.

## 5. Homelessness Prevention

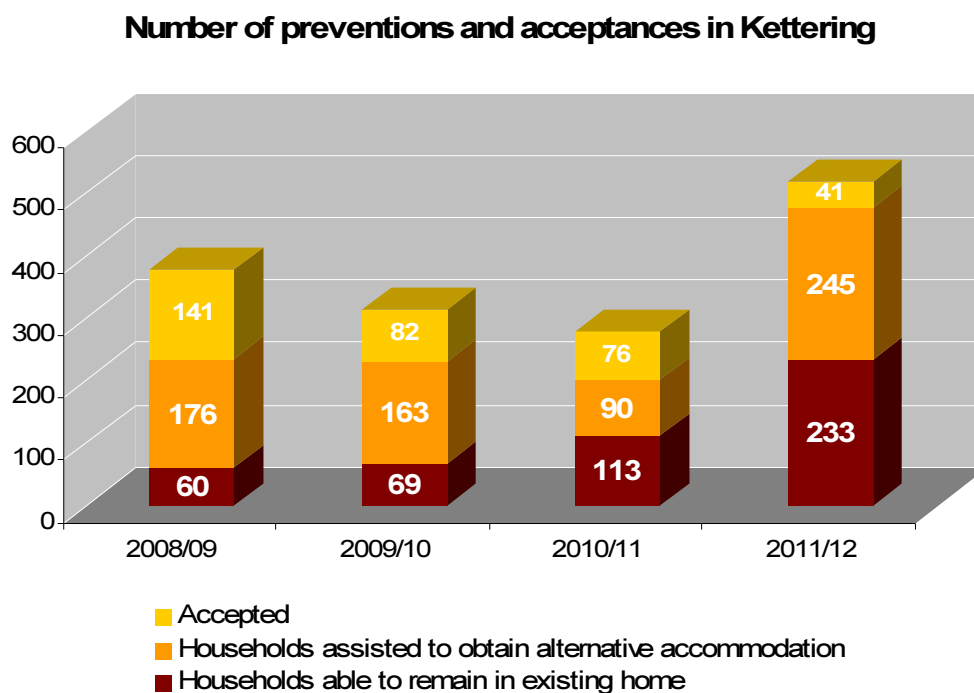
### 5.2 Homelessness Prevention Performance

Since the last Homelessness Strategy, Homelessness Prevention has continued to become a significant part of the work of the Housing Options team and our partners. During 2011/12 478 households had their homelessness prevented; an increase from 203 in the previous year (figure 2).

Homeless Prevention activities can assist people to remain in their existing home, such as mediation, and negotiations with landlords; or assist people to find alternative accommodation, such as access to supported accommodation or the mortgage rescue scheme.

Tenancy Support Services work to support people to remain in their homes and form a significant part of the prevention work to assist people to remain in their existing homes. Access to the private rented sector with and without a landlord incentive forms almost a quarter (23%) of the prevention work to assist people to find alternative accommodation, while securing accommodation through Keyways forms 17%.

Figure 2: Preventions and acceptances 2008/09 to 2011/12



During 2011/12 519 households were assisted either through prevention measures or the statutorily homeless route; this was an increase from 279 in the previous year. This highlights the increasing demand for our services which is putting pressure on our existing resources. The Council is reliant on the DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant to fund homelessness prevention initiatives, without this grant additional resources would need to be sought in order to continue providing this service. The following chapter will discuss the main resources for homelessness activities in detail.

## 6. Resources

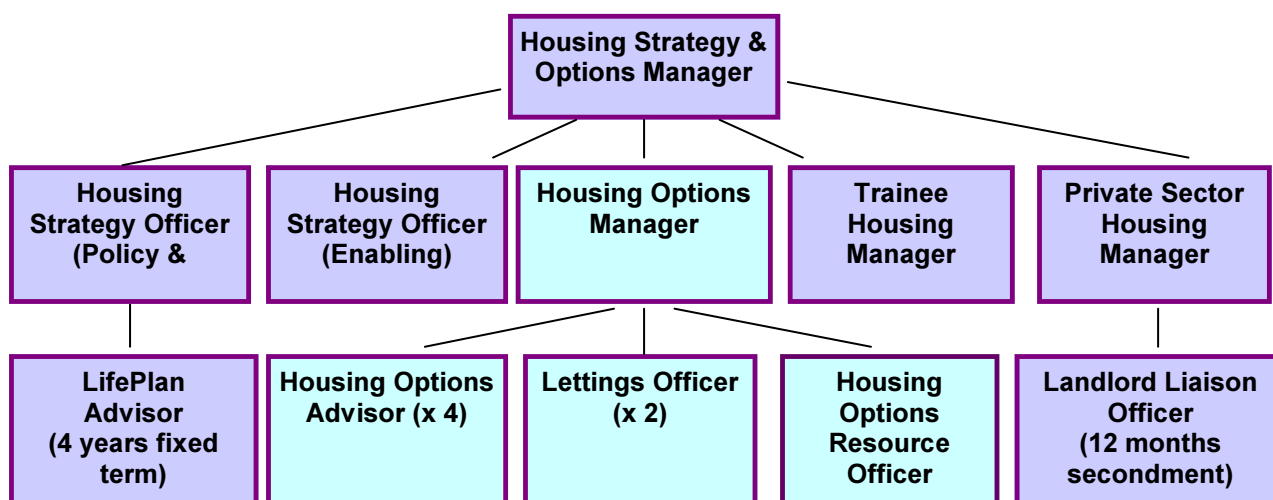
This chapter details the main housing-related resources available to tackle homelessness in Kettering.

### 6.1 Housing Options Team

The Housing Options team are responsible for homelessness prevention case work; receiving and administering homeless applications; supporting applicants living in temporary accommodation; and ensuring applicants are placed in suitable permanent accommodation. They also work closely with other members of the wider Housing Strategy and Options team to assist clients to access permanent accommodation in the private rented sector, and to support applicants to access training, employment and education opportunities.

The Housing Options team consists of one manager, four housing options advisers, two allocations officers, and a Housing Options Resource Officer. In the wider Housing Strategy and Options Team there is a LifePlan Advisor and Landlord Liaison Officer who directly support the work of the Housing Options team (figure 3).

Figure 3: Housing Strategy and Options Team chart structure



### 6.2 Local authority expenditure

The Housing Options team assist homeless households to maintain their current accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation through a variety of Homelessness Prevention measures. During 2011/12 £31,518 was on preventing homelessness through measures which include Sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse, referencing fees and rent shortfalls for private rents.

Furthermore, the Deposit Bond Scheme, used as a homelessness prevention initiative, involves underwriting a deposit up to a maximum value, which would be payable by Kettering Borough Council should a private landlord need to claim for damage caused to a property upon the tenancy ending. The value of the bonds issued during 2011/12 was £9,860. During 2011/12 payments totalling £4,755 were made to landlords against bond agreements.

Furthermore during 2011/12 the Council spent £57,433 on bed and breakfast accommodation for households threatened with homelessness.

## 6. Resources

### 6.3 Homelessness Prevention Grant

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has allocated the Council a total of £324,440 in the last 3 years for homeless prevention initiatives (table 6).

In September 2012 DCLG announced that the Homelessness Prevention Grant will be extended until July 2015. The provisional allocation for Kettering is £112,830 per year. DCLG are currently consulting on a proposal for the Homelessness Prevention Grant to be rolled into the Business Rates Retention Scheme. Should this happen it is imperative that the grant is allocated for the purpose of Homelessness Prevention as any reductions in the amount allocated will have implications for the Housing Options Service.

Table 6: Homelessness Prevention Grant awarded 2010/11-2012/13

Grant	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Homelessness Prevention Grant	£40,000	£113,470	£113,470
Homelessness Prevention Grant top up	£20,000	-	-
Youth Homelessness Grant	-	£7,500 (£30k split between 4 LAs)	-
Preventing Repossessions Fund	-	-	£30,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£60,000</b>	<b>£120,970</b>	<b>£143,470</b>

Table 7 details how the Homelessness Prevention grant was used during 2011/12: 65% of which funded additional staffing resources. The rest of the allocation was used on initiatives to assist access to the private rented sector, a spend to save prevention fund for Housing Options Advisors, and a Sanctuary Scheme for victims of domestic abuse. The Council was also awarded a grant for youth homelessness which was used to set up a Tenancy Training pilot project for homeless young people.

Table 7: Breakdown of Homelessness Prevention Grant 2011/12

Initiative	Expenditure
Staffing	£73,470
Access to private rented sector	£25,000
Spend to save prevention fund	£10,000
Sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse	£5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£113,470</b>

## 6. Resources

### 6.4 Voluntary sector commissioning

Kettering Borough Council commissions voluntary sector organisations to provide a range of services in the Borough, some of which are related to homelessness. These are listed in table 8 with the amount of grant they received.

In 2009 Accommodation Concern was awarded a four year contract to deliver a housing advice service for non-priority homeless households. Accommodation Concern provide housing advice in the Council's Customer Services Centre on Thursday and Fridays and appointments from their Town Centre offices Monday-Thursday morning and afternoons.

The debt and money advice service is provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau. In May 2012 the service relocated to the Council's Municipal offices. The CAB facilities are independent to the Borough Council's and include a reception, interview rooms and office space. The CAB is open for drop-in and appointments Monday-Friday 10am-3pm.

In addition to the voluntary sector grants, the Council supports the Northamptonshire Inter Personal Violence pooled funding. Interpersonal Violence includes Child Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Abuse, Honour Based Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking and Harassment and Trafficking. This pooled funding supports initiatives such as the Sunflower Centre which offers support to high-risk domestic abuse victims in the Borough.

Table 8: Kettering Borough Council's grants to voluntary sector organisations to provide services which support homeless households

Service	Organisation	Cost per annum
Debt & Money Advice service	Citizens Advice Bureau	£50,000
Housing Options Advice for non-priority homeless households	Accommodation Concern	£20,000
Support to victims of domestic abuse (Inter Personal Violence pooled funding)	Sunflower Centre	£23,831
<b>Total</b>		<b>£93,831</b>

The contracts with the voluntary sector are due to be renewed in early 2013. Members of the Council's Executive Committee will continue to support third sector organisations to deliver services locally and have identified the Housing Options and Debt advice as priority services.

## 6. Resources

### 6.5 Prevention contracts

As discussed in Section 2.5, Northamptonshire County Council commissions several housing related support services in the Borough. Housing related support is specifically aimed at helping people to establish themselves, or stay in, their own homes. Examples of housing related support include helping people learn to manage their money, apply for benefits, and develop independent living skills. Table 9 summarises all the housing related support services (excluding for example, services for older people & Children's centres) in Kettering which are commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council.

Table 9: Prevention contracts in Kettering (housing related support only)

Service	Service group	Service provider
Floating support: Generic & intensive	Floating support	Accommodation Concern
Broadway supported accommodation for young people	Accommodation based service—young people	English Churches Housing Group
PHaSE accommodation—drug and alcohol	Housing related support	Council on Addiction (CAN) Northamptonshire
Carrington Street	Accommodation based service—mental health	Kettering Mind
Floating support: mental health	Floating support	Kettering Mind
Women's Refuge	Accommodation based service—women at risk of domestic violence	Northampton Woman's Aid
Catch 22 Accommodation Service	Housing Related Support—ex-offenders	Catch 22
Floating support: travellers	Housing Related Support—floating support—travellers	Central & Cecil Housing Trust
Floating support: learning disabilities	Floating support	Delos Community
Youth Offending Support Service	Housing related support	Northamptonshire County Council
Home Improvement Agency	Housing related support	Kettering Borough Council
Kettering Dispersed Alarm	Social alarm	Kettering Borough Council
Supported lodgings	Floating support: single homeless	Stonham Housing Association
Floating support: mental health	Floating support	Northants Community Health Trust

Source: Information published on Northamptonshire County Council's website which was edited by the author to take account of recent changes

## 6. Resources

Prevention Services contract holders are now entering a period of uncertainty. Current prevention services providers have been informed that all current contracts will be reviewed. This may mean that some services will cease, while some may will be considerably reshaped.

The outcome of this review is likely to radically reshape housing and related support services in the Borough.





## 7. Successes since our last Strategy

Since the publication of Kettering Borough Council's second Homelessness Strategy, in 2008, there have been significant successes in the delivery of homelessness services. The main successes of the last Homelessness Strategy under each priority are summarised in the following pages. It demonstrates the innovative work which is being undertaken locally to assist households who are threatened with homelessness.

### 7.1 Success in reducing & preventing homelessness

Priority 1	Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough
	<p>In the last three years 671 households have had their homelessness prevented. In 2010/11. Of the 203 households assisted in 2010/11: 113 households were assisted to remain in their existing home while 90 households were assisted to find alternative accommodation.</p> <p>The Council fund Accommodation Concern to provide a housing advice service for non priority households (25 hours per week). During 2011/12 this service prevented 73 households from becoming homeless.</p> <p>In July 2008, the Minister for Housing announced that Kettering Borough Council had been chosen as one of twelve local authorities to be accepted onto the Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer EXTRA programme. As a result, we were awarded a grant over three years to develop our housing options service and explore new areas of working around worklessness, under-occupation, and housing advice services to vulnerable adults leaving prison and institutional care.</p> <p>118 young people have been taught the necessary skills that will help them sustain a successful tenancy through <i>Move On Move In</i>, our pre-tenancy training course.</p> <p>29 people have completed our tenancy training courses for vulnerable adults <i>New Opportunities</i>, <i>New Skills</i> and <i>Mind Your Tenancy</i></p> <p>In 2010 Amber's accredited Practical Housing Units were launched. PHUs are training workbooks that focus on the basic skills, knowledge and understanding that underpins a tenant's ability to sustain a tenancy. Over 40 units have been completed by residents in the Borough.</p> <p>To improve standards in the private rented sector the East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme was launched in the Borough in 2009 as an option for private landlords. There are currently 29 EMLAS accredited landlords.</p> <p>In 2009 The Council launched an innovative new LifePlan service which is assisting vulnerable tenants and housing options clients into training, employment and volunteering opportunities in the Borough. LifePlan was the winner of the East Midlands CIH Regional Best Practice Award 2010.</p> <p>Since the Council's Tenancy Support Service was set up 152 tenants have been supported. In 2010 the total amount of income attributable to tenancy support was £29,174.79.</p> <p>During 2009/2011 nine households in the borough had their homelessness prevented through the Governments Mortgage Rescue Scheme.</p>

## 7. Successes since our last Strategy

### 7.2 Success in providing support services to vulnerable people

Priority 2	Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people
	<p>In 2011, as part of a large general needs development in Jobs Court, Kettering, Leicester Housing Association (ASRA) built 4 units of self-contained accommodation for adults with learning disabilities.</p> <p>During 20011/12 45 Disabled Facilities Grants were completed for private tenants, owner occupiers and housing association tenants to assist them to remain independent in their homes: the value of the grants was £196,000.</p> <p>In 2011 the Private Sector Housing team launched a Housing Options approach with owner occupiers and private and housing association tenants who apply to the council for a Disabled Facility Grant. To date seven applicants have been successfully re-housed into more suitable accommodation as a result of the new service,</p> <p>In 2009 a Mental Health &amp; Housing Forum was established which meets quarterly and has representatives from the Joint Commissioning Team, Mental Health Team and Assertive Outreach Team.</p> <p>During 2010/11 Orbit Housing Association completed four self-contacted flats in Tordorf Place, Kettering as part of a larger general need scheme for people with Aspergers</p> <p>In January 2008 in partnership with the Police, Arson Task Force and domestic abuse agencies, a sanctuary scheme was launched in the Borough. This scheme enables victims of domestic abuse to remain in their home by undertaking security improvements to their home. Since the scheme launched nine victims of domestic abuse have had their property improved at an average cost of £1,570 per property.</p> <p>To help prevent homelessness among offenders due for release from prison a MAPPA housing protocol has been in operation since 2003 and was reviewed in November 2009.</p> <p>The Council's work around improving the Housing options service for ex-offenders was cited as best practice in the East Midlands Public Service Agreement 16: Assistance for Vulnerable Adults Good Practice Guidance published by Government Office for the East Midlands in 2009.</p> <p>Silver Service was launched in August 2008 following a comprehensive review of the Council's sheltered housing service.</p> <p>The Stepping Stones Project was launched in 2012 to help free up hospital and specialist care centre beds. The service provides a furnished, self-contained, one bed-roomed flat in Kettering whilst their own property is being adapted or more suitable accommodation is obtained.</p>

## 7. Successes since our last Strategy

Priority 2 (cont)	Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people
	<p>In 2011/12 a PHaSE supported housing &amp; treatment facilities for people with drug and alcohol problems was launched in Kettering. The accommodation is provided through 5 flats for those with substance misuse problems in Kettering. The PHaSE project received £600,000 capital funding from the Department of Health to provide twenty new units of supported accommodation for recovering substance misusers in North Northamptonshire. The scheme was developed through a partnership between Northamptonshire Drug and Alcohol Action Team, the former Northamptonshire Supporting People Team, the local authorities of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough and the National Treatment Agency (NTA).</p> <p>A revised Gypsy &amp; Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) for Northamptonshire was published in 2011. The report was commissioned in response to the Housing Act 2004 which requires local authorities to consider the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers within their local housing strategies.</p>

### 7.3 Success in reducing & preventing homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households

Priority 3	Reduce and prevent homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households (including Rough Sleepers)
	<p>In April 2011, with funding from CRISIS, Accommodation Concern employed a Street Outreach Worker to work with entrenched rough sleepers with diverse and complex support needs in the Borough.</p> <p>In November 2011 we undertook a single night count of Rough Sleepers in the Borough. During the count we found one rough sleeper: this compares to three rough sleepers we found during both the 2007 and 2005 counts.</p> <p>In April 2012 to assist rough sleepers with their transition into independent living a pilot tenancy training house project was launched for people with experiences of street homelessness. The house is located in Kettering town centre and has been leased by the Council from a private landlord for a period of one year. While in the training house residents are given the opportunity to develop the skills they will need to live independently. Intensive support is provided by Accommodation Concern's Tenancy Support Service. The aim of the training house is to give residents as much experience of running their own tenancy as possible. Once tenants have demonstrated they are ready for their own tenancy they are given the highest priority on the Keyways Allocation Scheme.</p>

## 7. Successes since our last Strategy

### 7.4 Success in increasing the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

Priority 4	Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households
	<p>In 2010/11 we delivered 220 new affordable homes in the Borough; a further 82 were completed during 2011/12.</p> <p>In the last 5 years almost 38% of all new homes built in Kettering have been affordable housing. This is primarily due to the success in securing Homes and Communities Agency grant funding for windfall developments.</p> <p>During 2010/11, we assisted 49 households into the private rented sector through measures such as the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme. The Council now has a dedicated Landlord Liaison Officer to deliver services to Private landlords.</p> <p>In 2009 our <i>HomeMove</i> service was launched using a grant from the Department &amp; Communities of Local Government under their Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer programme. The Service offers practical as well as financial support to tenants wishing to downsize from family accommodation: since the scheme launch over 50 households have been assisted to downsize.</p> <p>In 2011 it was announced that the Council had been successful in its bid to be part of the Government's Social Mobility Vanguard project to improve mobility in social housing. The Council will receive £70,500 to pilot schemes which promote mobility through offering a housing options approach to vulnerable Council tenants who apply for disabled adaptations, and through promoting moves through mutual exchange.</p>

### 7.5 Success in providing suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

Priority 5	Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households
	<p>There has been a significant reduction in the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households. As at 31 March 2012 14 households were living in temporary accommodation in the borough, a reduction from the peak of 52 in March 2007.</p> <p>The Council has re-modelled the type of temporary accommodation it uses. Hostel accommodation is no longer used and has been replaced by high quality self-contained accommodation leased from private landlords.</p> <p>In accordance with the legislation no families with children are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in Kettering. The only exception to this would be during emergencies when the longest a family could expect to be placed in B&amp;B would be 6 weeks.</p> <p>The Council has a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol that begins when the temperature is forecast to drop to zero degrees (or below) for three consecutive nights. The Protocol ensures that suitable accommodation can be provided quickly for rough sleepers to prevent harm and death due to severe weather conditions. The Council will place people in bed and breakfast when the SWEP is in place.</p>

## 8. Priorities 2012/15

This chapter looks in detail at our priorities in relation to homelessness for 2012/15. There are five strategic Homelessness Strategy priorities for the Borough which are:

<b>Homelessness Strategy Priorities 2012/15</b>	
<b>Priority 1</b>	<b>Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough</b>
<b>Priority 2</b>	<b>Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people</b>
<b>Priority 3</b>	<b>Reduce and prevent homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households (including Rough Sleepers)</b>
<b>Priority 4</b>	<b>Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households</b>
<b>Priority 5</b>	<b>Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households</b>

Each of our five Homelessness Strategy priorities is discussed in detail on the following pages. Under each priority are a number of key challenges which have been identified through our Homelessness Review, discussions with partners, and our multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership. Our proposed actions to overcome these challenges are identified which form the targets listed in our action plans in Chapter 10.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 1 - Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

#### Challenge 1 - Focus prevention activity to tackle the common causes of homelessness locally

For several years the common causes of homelessness in the Borough have remained unchanged these are:

- ◆ parents or other associate no longer able or willing to accommodate;
- ◆ violent and non violent relationship breakdown;
- ◆ termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

We have developed our Housing Options service in response to these common causes of homelessness however we need to ensure that we regularly review our housing options to respond to the needs of our community.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Regularly review our housing options toolkit to respond to changing trends locally.
- ◆ Housing Options Service to offer housing options and homelessness training to partners in the Borough.
- ◆ Housing Options Service to publish a guide to housing options services for partners.
- ◆ Develop a Z-card which details all the homelessness and housing services available in the Borough.

#### Challenge 2 - Ensure services which support tenants to maintain their tenancies are protected

In recent years specialist supported accommodation in the Borough has been declining in number such as the YMCA hostel and Meadhurst. As services like these are withdrawn there is a need to ensure that tenancy support is available to support vulnerable adults, who may have otherwise been accommodated in specialist accommodation, to maintain their own tenancies in the private or social rented sector.

Tenancy support can provide help and advice in a lot of different areas, including benefits, budgeting and debt. The support is temporary and can be provided for as long as it is needed. Its aim is to enable people to live as independently as possible

A cross-tenure floating support service is provided by Accommodation Concern with funding from Northamptonshire County Councils' Prevention Services. Accommodation Concern employs 15 Tenancy Sustainment Workers in Kettering and Corby.

The Council has its own Tenancy Support Service: a Tenancy Support Advisor is funded through the Housing Revenue Account to work with Council tenants.

It is vital that tenancy support services are protected in order that tenants are supported to maintain their tenancies as the affordability and homelessness problems we can expect residents to face, brought about by the Welfare & Tenancy Reforms, start to take effect. This is particularly prevalent given the likely transitional issues which will arise as a result of welfare and tenancy reforms.

It is also important that as new funding opportunities become available that the Council and our partners are proactive in making bids so that we can maximise the resources in the Borough.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Lobby to maintain existing Tenancy Support services which are funded through Northamptonshire County Council's Prevention Services where there is an identified need.
- ◆ Keep abreast of the funding opportunities that become available and be proactive in making bids.
- ◆ Develop a plan to influence joint-commissioning arrangements in our area including new health and well-being boards.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 1 - Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

#### Challenge 3 - Minimise the impact of the Government's Welfare Reforms on our residents and tenants

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3 the Government's Welfare Reforms will have an unprecedented impact on our customers during the life of the Homelessness Strategy. Prevention and support services will be vital as households and given greater autonomy over their finances alongside reduced income from their benefits. As the Welfare Reforms will principally affect affordability we could see homelessness rise as a direct result of households being unable to manage their finances.

The Size Criteria, to be introduced in April 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act, will mean that any working-age household deemed to be under-occupying their home will lose a proportion of their housing benefit.

We are likely to see a steep rise in the number of social housing tenants who apply to mutually exchange or to transfer their property in a bid to avoid paying the extra housing benefit charge. For those who cannot downsize or who choose not to move, it is likely that we will see social housing tenants experience greater financial difficulty as a direct result of the Size Criteria.

In partnership with the Housing Benefit team, the Housing Service will contact all those households affected and inform them of their options. Access to appropriate tenancy support should be facilitated in order so households can be supported to manage their money and pay their rent.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Housing Services to launch a cross team co-ordination group to co-ordinate the Services response to Welfare Reform and minimise the impact on our customers.
- ◆ The Council's Tenancy Support service will provide support to people to manage their finances and reduce the likelihood of homelessness.
- ◆ The Council's LifePlan service will support tenants who wish to return to employment to increase their income and longer term financial prospects.
- ◆ All tenants affected by the Size Criteria will be contacted and made aware of the housing options open to them which will include transfers, mutual exchange, and gaining employment.
- ◆ Money management training will be offered to equip tenants with the skills required to manage their Universal Credit.
- ◆ Support will be offered to tenants to help them use and access online services which will help them claim benefits, seek work and access the Council's online services.

#### Challenge 4 - Support tenants and prospective tenants to gain the necessary the skills they need to maintain successful tenancies

Tenancy support services can be complimented by tenancy training courses which aim to develop a tenants' skills in an informal setting with sessions delivered by expert professionals. The Council and its' partners have had considerable success in delivering tenancy training courses in the Borough. Changes brought about by the Government's Welfare Reforms will mean that residents will increasingly need to take responsibility to manage their finances. It is anticipated that the need for services which support tenants to gain the necessary skills they require to manage a tenancy will increase.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 1 - Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

#### Challenge 4 (continued)

##### Tenancy Training Courses

We recognise that some people do not have the necessary skills to enable them to maintain a successful tenancy.

In response to this, we offer our pre-tenancy training course *Move On Move On In* to vulnerable young homeless people living in the Borough. The project aims to improve the life skills of young people so that they can develop their self-confidence, realise their potential and maintain successful tenancies.

*Move on Move In* runs two night per week over two weeks and sessions are delivered on budgeting, managing a tenancy, first aid, fire safety in the home and home maintenance.

Following the success of *Move On Move In* we have developed *New Opportunities New Skills* - a tenancy-training course aimed at people over the age of 25 and *Mind Your Tenancy* a course designed specifically for people with mental health problems.

##### Practical Housing Units

For some people committing to attend a tenancy training course can be challenging, in response to this we offer Amber Practical Housing Units (PHUs) which are training workbooks that focus on the basic skills knowledge and understanding that underpin a person's ability to sustain a tenancy. Students are required to work through practical tasks and complete a module workbook. Upon completing the workbook to a satisfactory level students are awarded a certificate which is accredited by the awarding body AQA and is equivalent to a D-G at GCSE. Partners working with vulnerable clients in the Borough are encouraged to deliver PHUs with their clients. Support workers at Broadway supported housing scheme have delivered PHUs as part of their keywork sessions and staff have delivered one off sessions to work through the workbooks in partnership with the Council.

##### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Continue to help our tenants develop the skills needed to maintain successful tenancies through our programme of tenancy training courses *Move on, Move In* and *New Opportunities, New Skills*.
- ◆ Pilot a tenancy training course for prospective private sector tenants.
- ◆ Pilot a *Move On, Move In* course specifically for young residents of Riverside's Broadway Supported Housing scheme.
- ◆ Continue to help our tenants develop the skills needed to maintain successful tenancies through giving them the opportunity to complete Practical Housing Units through the Council's LifePlan service.
- ◆ Promote the completion of Practical Housing Units by organisations working with vulnerable clients in the Borough. Offer training to staff at partner agencies so they can deliver PHUs to their clients
- ◆ The changes brought about by universal credit and the abolishment of Council Tax Benefit means that staff working in the Housing Benefit and Council Tax teams will need to offer support to residents to manage their finances. The Housing Service will investigate how cross-departmental support could be offered to best support the needs of vulnerable residents in the Borough.
- ◆ Support young people & rough sleepers to gain necessary tenancy skills through the Tenancy Training flats pilot project.



## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 1 - Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

#### Challenge 5 – Budget cuts faced by statutory and voluntary organisations in the Borough and the impact they will have on homelessness services

During these austere times, it is not surprising that in the stakeholder interviews undertaken as part of the Homelessness Review, budget cuts were a significant concern to our partners.

During the closure of the YMCA supported accommodation in 2011 the Council worked with both the provider and the funder to minimise the disruption to the young people through a planned programme of move on. As services will inevitably continue to be cut we could see more well-established services close. As far as possible we would want to protect services but if this is not possible we will take a similar approach as we did with the closure of the YMCA to reduce the affect of our vulnerable clients.

Until we know more about what services are at risk as part of the County Council's Prevention & Management Strategy it is difficult to make an assessment of the likely impact this will have on homelessness however, during the life of this strategy, it is likely that there will be significant changes ahead that will need to be properly planned for.

#### Proposed action:

- ◆ In partnership with funders of local services, identify services which are at risk and work to minimise the impact of these cuts on vulnerable clients.
- ◆ Lobby to protect services at risk where there is an identified need for that service.

#### Challenge 6 - Preventing homelessness amongst households faced with mortgage repossession

In the last few years there has been a downward trend in mortgage possession claims and those claims that led to an order in Kettering. Despite this downward trend, mortgage possession claims in Kettering are above the average for England. Based on mortgage possession claims in the last four quarters, there were higher rates of claims per thousand of the population in Kettering (3.95) than the England average (3.01) (Ministry of Justice, 2012).

A recent Shelter report on England Repossession Risk Hotspots 2011/12 (Shelter, 2012) looked at the rate of mortgage claims issued per 1,000 private homes. Kettering was ranked 81<sup>st</sup> out of 324 LAs for mortgage claims. The rate of claims in Kettering per 1,000 private homes was 4.25, this was higher than the East Midlands average of 3.58 and the England average of 3.50. The neighbouring authorities of Northampton, Wellingborough and Milton Keynes were identified as 'hotspot' areas with the highest rates of repossessions nationally.

The Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme, delivered locally by Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association, is designed to support vulnerable owner-occupiers facing repossession to remain in their home. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme comprises of two distinct options, shared equity, where the household remains as a homeowner and Mortgage to rent, where the household becomes a tenant of the housing association.

Eligible households, who would be owed the main homelessness duty under the homelessness legislation are referred to BPHA by the Housing Options team. During 2009/11 nine households had their homelessness prevented through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme: while no households had their homelessness prevented through the scheme in 2011/12, despite referrals being made. The tight rules in relation the property price caps (£155,00 for Northamptonshire), repairs cap of £20,000 and equity have meant that fewer households have benefited from the scheme than we had anticipated.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Continue to offer the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme as a Housing Option for households at risk of repossession.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 1 - Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

#### Challenge 7 - Introduction of flexible tenancies for new social housing tenants

The Localism Act gives social landlords more freedom and flexibility in the way they manage their stock and respond to local needs and circumstances. Since April 2012 registered providers and Councils have been able to give new tenants either a secured/assured tenancy or a 'flexible tenancy' for a fixed term.

The act requires every local housing authority to publish its policies in a Tenancy Strategy. An outline of Kettering Borough Council's Tenancy Strategy was given in chapter 2.6. The Tenancy Strategy sets out our expectations of Registered Providers operating in the Borough. All social landlords should have regard to our Tenancy Strategy when setting their own tenancy policies.

The introduction of flexible tenancies represents a major change in the way the Council and Registered Providers manage tenancies which will have a significant impact on our customers.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Consult and negotiate with Registered Providers to ensure their Tenancy Policies meet the needs of our area as set out in the Tenancy Strategy.
- ◆ Consult Registered Providers through the Social Landlords Forum to develop collaborative responses to the changes brought about by Tenancy Reform.
- ◆ The Council will work closely with Registered Providers to ensure that the process for ending fixed term tenancies is clear and transparent, and tenants are provided with high quality advice and information to facilitate a smooth transition to alternative accommodation where necessary.
- ◆ Through Keyways, our choice based lettings scheme, new social housing tenants should be educated on the implications of the various tenancies being offered by social housing providers in the Borough.
- ◆ Monitor the outcomes of the Tenancy Strategy to assess the impact on housing services across the Borough.

#### Challenge 8 - Review of the Kettering Housing Allocation Scheme

During 2012 the Kettering Housing Allocation Scheme will be reviewed, an outline of which was given in Section 2.5. The revised policy will have a significant impact of housing options services in the Borough. One of the most significant changes is that applicants with no housing need will no longer be accepted on to the register.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Review the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme in light of recent legislative changes.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people*

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 1 - Review the Northamptonshire Joint Protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds

The Northamptonshire Joint Protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds was published in 2009 and is an agreement that establishes the roles and responsibilities of different agencies outlining the respective statutory responsibilities of the seven borough housing departments and Northamptonshire County Council Children and Young People Service with respect of homelessness for 16 and 17 year olds.

In addition, where homelessness has been confirmed, it details the practical joint working arrangements between housing departments, Children and Young People Service and other agencies that can assist with the housing and support of homeless 16 and 17 year old in the county.

During the Stakeholder interviews, undertaken as part of the Homelessness Review, partners expressed concern about the protocol and how it is being practically applied. There is therefore an urgent need to review the Protocol to ensure that 16 and 17 year old homeless individuals are receiving the appropriate housing and support from agencies.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Work with Children & Young People's Services to ensure homeless 16/17 years olds can access good quality temporary accommodation such as crash and nightstop as an alternative to bed and breakfast.
- ◆ Review the Northamptonshire Joint Protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds.

#### Challenge 2 - Deliver a multi-agency response to youth homelessness

Young people are at a high risk of homelessness; 40% of those accepted by the Council as homeless in 2011/12 were under 25, compared with 35% nationally. The Council recognises that to tackle youth homelessness there must be a multi-agency response which begins with the schools; who know which children are at risk. The integrated focus should be on prevention, supporting young people to stay with family networks as long as it's safe and possible to do so. When a young person needs to leave their family network, agencies should pro-actively plan options with the young person rather than waiting for crisis.

The Council and its partners have has considerable success in developing initiatives to tackle youth homelessness. In recognition of this the Council was selected by Communities and Local Government as the East Midlands Centre of Excellence for Youth Homelessness for 2008/09. We now wish to develop our services further by offering a coordinated pathway for young people experiencing homelessness in the Borough through the development of our first Youth Homelessness Strategy.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Develop a multi-agency Strategy to tackle to youth homelessness in the Borough.

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 3 - There is a limited number of supported housing bed spaces for young homeless people in Kettering

The closure of the young persons YMCA hostel in 2011 has had a significant impact on services locally. The number of supported accommodation bed spaces available for young homeless people reduced from 41 to 24; putting pressure on the Broadway Supported Housing Scheme and on organisations working to meet the accommodation needs of young people. Furthermore In 2009 the teenage parents support scheme based at Hillbury House in Kettering was closed because the building was not fit for purpose: since this date there has not been any specialist accommodation for teenage parents in the Borough.

With limited number of supported housing placements young homeless people find themselves spending extended periods of time in inappropriate temporary accommodation or local authority care. They may also be sent to stay in accommodation out of the area which can reduce their chances of success as they are less able to engage with from support networks.

Stonham provide a supported lodgings scheme in Kettering for young people aged 16-25 years old who are unable to live at home but are not ready to live independently. It gives the opportunity for a young person to live in a home environment while receiving practical and emotional support. The host supports the young person to learn basic lifeskills and young people can live in supported lodgings for up to 2 years. Stonham select host families and support both the families and the young people throughout the placement. Supported Lodgings is a good housing option for young people whose needs are appropriate to the scheme although places are limited in the Borough. The Supported Lodgings Scheme is not suitable for young people who have high support needs, these young people will find supported accommodation much more suited to their needs.

Young people also find it difficult to secure accommodation in the private rented sector. The shared accommodation rate for young people seeking accommodation in the private rented sector often mean they can only afford a room in a shared house. This is compounded by high fees to secure private rented accommodation which can put young people at a disadvantage in terms of securing accommodation.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Develop initiatives which assist vulnerable young people to access accommodation in the private rented sector such as tenant accreditation, and shared houses with support.
- ◆ Work with Stonham, the Supported Lodgings provider for the area, to maximise placements for young people appropriate to the scheme.

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 4 - There has been an increase in the proportion of priority need acceptances due to mental illness/disability in the Borough

Homeless acceptances due to mental health have been increasing in the Borough. In 2006/07 10% of acceptances (16 applicants) were due to mental health/disability; by 2010/11 this had increased to 17% (13 applicants). While overall homelessness acceptances have been reducing in recent years, households accepted because of a mental illness still remains high. The Council is located in close proximity to the Welland Centre which is a purpose built mental health inpatient centre that covers the population of Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough, Rushden and surrounding towns and villages. This adult acute and intensive care 47 bed inpatient unit provides a range of services to people aged between 16 and 65. The Council plans to work more closely with health professionals from the Centre to ensure patients being released from hospital have a planned move on therefore reducing crisis presentations at the Council.

Access to accommodation for people with a mental health diagnosis can often be challenging as many people may have been unable to access or sustain accommodation as a result of their complex needs. The Meadhurst supported accommodation scheme, which had a number of respite and crisis bed spaces, closed in August 2011. Furthermore 78 Headlands also closed in 2012 which offered move on accommodation from hospital and crisis accommodation. With specialist supported accommodation closing in the Borough the options available to people with mental health problems are diminishing.

Northamptonshire County Council has a reablement team of social workers covering North Northamptonshire. The team work with people for short periods of time (up to 6 weeks) to address specific issues with the aim of preventing them from accessing services longer term. While this will go some way to supporting people to prevent them losing their accommodation it is vital that specialist accommodation is available in the Borough.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Northamptonshire County Council's Joint Commissioning Team to de-commission an existing 8 bed housing scheme for mental health service users in Carrington Street and develop a new scheme as the current building is not fit for purpose.
- ◆ Work in partnership with mental health service providers to address the gap in supported accommodation and emergency accommodation for service users with mental health diagnoses in the Borough. Explore opportunities for revenue funding for this service.
- ◆ Work in partnership with mental health service providers to provide appropriate support to enable people with mental health diagnoses to live in general needs accommodation.
- ◆ Work with health professionals from the Welland Centre, Kettering to ensure clients being discharged have a planned move from the hospital to prevent crisis presentations at the Council.
- ◆ Review Kettering Borough Council's Housing Directory for Mental Health professionals which details housing related support services in the Borough.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people*

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 5 - Ensure our housing options services are accessible to people with a Learning Disability

As part of the consultation on the revised Housing Allocation Scheme a series of workshops were undertaken with the Ordinary Living Group of the Northamptonshire Learning Disability Partnership Board.

This consultation proved invaluable in understanding the allocation system from the perspective of adults with a learning disability and as a result we plan to undertake a root and branch review of our Keyways allocation system to ensure its accessibility is optimised for vulnerable people.

##### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Undertake a Equality Impact Analysis of the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme.
- ◆ In partnership with members of the Northamptonshire Learning Disability Partnership Board undertake a review of the Keyways allocation system to ensure its accessibility is optimised for people with a learning disability.
- ◆ Undertake a Systems Review of the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme to improve efficiency and reduce waste.

#### Challenge 6- Develop new units of affordable housing for adults with learning disabilities to enable them to live independently in the Borough

In partnership with Registered Providers and Northamptonshire County Council we have successfully delivered new units of accommodation for adults with learning disabilities as part of general needs affordable housing schemes. Despite the reduction in Government funding for affordable housing supply we will continue to work with Registered Providers to provide permanent accommodation for adults with a learning disability.

##### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Where funding permits, continue to work in partnership with Registered Providers to develop new units of accommodation for adults with learning disabilities, as part of general needs affordable housing schemes.

#### Challenge 7- Enabling people with physical disabilities to remain living in their own homes

As the life expectancy of the population continues to increase and people choose to remain living independently in their own homes; the number of people who require disabled adaptations to their homes will increase. The Council administers adaptations in Council accommodation through the Neighbourhood Service team while applications for assistance from people living in privately rented, owner occupied or registered provider accommodation are administered by the Private Sector Housing Team.

Applicants who apply for disabled adaptations are often unaware of the housing options which exist which could better meet their housing needs. In response to this, in 2011 we launched a new service which takes a housing options approach to applications for disabled adaptation across all tenures. This enables Council staff to explore a wide variety of housing solutions with elderly and disabled people to enable them to decide whether an adaptation in their existing home or a move to an alternative home better suited to their needs is appropriate. During 2011/12 two Council tenants successfully moved to accommodation better suited to their needs while a further 11 applicants are looking for suitable accommodation through Keyways.

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### (Challenge 7 continued)

In recognition that some disabled applicants require specialist housing for several years, the Council has worked with Registered Providers to build new homes to full mobility standards, however recent cuts in Government funding for new affordable housing will be detrimentally affect this type of work being undertaken in the future.

The Council funds disabled adaptations in two ways. Disabled adaptations in Council properties are funded through the Housing Revenue Account: each year £300,000 is allocated for this purpose and approximately 90 disabled adaptations are completed.

For Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) in private and registered provider accommodation the Council receives a central government grant. The Council received £215,000 for the year 2012/13. The current budget made available for DFGs is insufficient to cover current and future projected demand. This is the only source of funding allocated to disabled adaptations work in private sector housing. The Council will need to secure funding from alternative sources if it is to continue to meet demand.

#### Proposed action:

- ◆ Explore alternative funding streams for disabled adaptations to cope with increasing demand for DFGs.
- ◆ Where funding permits, work with Registered Providers to develop new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards in the Borough.
- ◆ Continue to offer residents who apply for a disabled adaptation to the home the opportunity to explore a range of housing solutions including moving to accommodation which better suites their needs.
- ◆ Review our Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure adapted properties that become available for letting can be directly matched to applicants who require them; thus making the best use of our existing resources. Furthermore, ensure the revised Allocations Scheme gives priority to people wishing to release adapted properties that they no longer require.

#### Challenge 8 - Provide services for older people with more challenging needs such as dementia and mental health

Sheltered housing is designed to meet the needs of older people who wish to remain in the community and live independently but would benefit from additional support. The Council has ten sheltered housing schemes across Kettering borough, each with a dedicated Scheme Manager and the additional assistance of the Support Worker Team. All schemes consist of either flats or bungalows for rent, some of which have been adapted for people with disabilities.

Scheme Managers and Support Workers provide personalised support and although they do not provide care they are the link to other agencies and services.

Residents of our sheltered schemes are becoming increasingly immobile and unwell; there is a rise in residents who have mental health diagnoses and dementia. Our services need to adapt to the changing needs of our older people to ensure we can continue to support them to live independently.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Undertake a feasibility appraisal of the existing Council stock let to older people to ensure it continues to provide accommodation appropriate to the changing needs of our customers.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people*

### Priority 2 – Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 9 - Following the publications of the revised Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Northamptonshire, ensure that the future additional pitch need is met

The aim of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is to quantify the accommodation and housing related support needs of Gypsies & Travellers. The needs are identified in terms of residential and transit sites and bricks and mortar accommodation. The results of the GTAA will be used to inform the allocation of resources as an evidence base for policy development in housing and planning.

The results of the GTAA has shown that from 2012-2017 Kettering requires 3 extra pitches and 1 transit pitch; and from 2017-2022 Kettering requires 10 residential pitches and no transit requirement. Therefore the total number of pitches required from 2012 – 2022 is 14.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Develop a new 10 pitch permanent gypsy & traveller site in Kettering borough to meet the need identified in the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment up to 2017.
- ◆ Identify further sites to meet the need identified by the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment up to 2022.
- ◆ Work in partnership with Development Services to ensure that suitable alternative accommodation is available when planning enforcement action is taken. This may include offering housing options interviews, advice and support.

#### Challenge 10 – Providing extra care accommodation for older people in Kettering

The Council is committed to improving housing choices and support to older people. There are currently few extra care schemes in the Borough. Extra care schemes provide supportive, stimulating environments in which older people may live wholly independently, and also receive care and support if required, to a level that might previously have only been available in a residential or nursing home. The Council wishes to explore funding opportunities for an extra care scheme although with recent cuts to revenue funded housing and support services through the Council, securing funding is unlikely.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Explore potential sources of funding for an extra care provision for older people in Kettering



## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people*

### Priority 2 – Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 11 – Providing a Housing Options Service to ex-offenders

Early notification of a prisoners release or an offender's increased housing need saves the Housing Options team time and financial resources as we have the opportunity to find a housing solution which prevents them from presenting at the Council in a crisis. In 2010, with funding from Supporting People, the Council piloted a scheme which ensured that there was appropriate housing and support in place for clients leaving prison or under probation supervision. A Housing Options Advisor (Transitions) was employed on a fixed-term to:

- Act as the main Housing Options service contact for partners and clients in the CJS;
- Work with partners in the CJS to identify clients with housing needs;
- Undertake Housing Options interviews in prisons and Probation;
- Undertake a holistic assessment of the clients needs during the interviews and develops a personalised *Housing Action Plan* specific to them.

This work produced significantly improving outcomes for this client group and in the working relationships between the Housing Options service and criminal justice partners. Budget cuts have meant that the Housing Options Advisor (Transitions) role has not continued however we wish to review how we can work with partners in the criminal justice system so they can assist their clients.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Work with partners in the criminal justice system to review the Council's approach to assist clients leaving prison or under probation supervision.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people*

### Priority 2 - Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

#### Challenge 12 - Domestic abuse is a significant cause of homelessness in the Borough

Through an analysis of P1E homelessness data relationship breakdown due to violence is a significant cause of homelessness locally. During 2010/11 Kettering Borough Council accepted 11 households as homeless due to a violent breakdown of relationship involving partner or an associated person (this accounted for 14% of acceptance during that year).

In Council accommodation, domestic abuse committed by a tenant, family member or visitor could fall within the description of antisocial behaviour. We will access remedies specifically designed to deal with domestic abuse (for example, non-molestation orders) and will refer to agencies specialising in advising victims of domestic abuse. Housing Services will not usually become involved in the legal process; however, we will advise and assist in tenancy related matters. If a perpetrator of domestic violence is remaining in a property we will normally take action to gain possession consistent with the Council's duty to have proper respect for the home and family life of all concerned.

The Council has developed services to assist domestic abuse victims across all tenures, which includes a Sanctuary scheme which provides security measures so victims feel safe in their homes. During 2012/13 the Council received £6,800 from the Home Office to undertake target hardening measures to the homes of high-risk domestic abuse victims across all tenures.

We recognise however that we must continue to develop services in the Borough to help victims of domestic abuse including harassment and honour based violence.

#### **Proposed actions:**

- ◆ Review the Council's protocol on the management of Council tenants who are victims of all forms of interpersonal violence including domestic abuse.
- ◆ Investigate the potential to develop reciprocal arrangements with local authorities in Northamptonshire to ensure properties which have become available for re-let which have had additional security works under the Sanctuary scheme are re-used for victims of domestic abuse.
- ◆ Continue to bid for Home Office funding to undertake target hardening measures to the homes of high-risk domestic abuse victims (Community Services).
- ◆ Continue to provide funding to the County Inter Personal Violence funding pool which supports services for domestic abuse victims across Northamptonshire such as the Sunflower Centre (Community Services).

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Non-statutorily homeless households*

### Priority 3 - Reduce and prevent homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households (including Rough Sleepers)

#### Challenge 1 - Provide advice & assistance to non-statutorily homeless households

Within the terms of the homelessness legislation 'non-statutory' homelessness is either where households or individuals are not found to be eligible; do not fall within the definition of priority need; who are deemed to be 'intentionally' homeless; or have not gone through the legal application for housing.

Individuals and families who fall outside of the definition of statutory homelessness include single people and couples who have no dependent children and do not fall into the statutory definition of vulnerable; and families with older children who are no longer dependent.

Through a voluntary sector Service Level Agreement the Council commissions Accommodation Concern to provide a housing advice service for non-priority homeless households (this is in addition to the Council's housing options advice service). The existing SLAs we have with the voluntary sector will end in March 2013. Members of the Council's Executive Committee have recognised the importance of continuing to fund a housing advice service and as such a further SLA will be commissioned for 2013 to 2016. As part of this process the current SLA will be revised to reduce duplication of work and improve the customer interface for non-priority households.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Through a Service Level Agreement continue to commission a voluntary sector organisation to provide housing options advice to non-priority and intentionally homeless households
- ◆ Using DCLG funding work with the local authorities of Northamptonshire to develop services for non-statutorily households across the County.

#### Challenge 2 - Increasing numbers of economic migrants living in poor housing conditions in Kettering

The Council's Private Sector Housing team is becoming increasingly aware of migrant workers living in overcrowded and unsafe housing conditions including structures not fit for human habitation such as garages and sheds. It is difficult to establish the extent of the problem in the Borough as people living in these properties often do not speak English and may only live there for a short time.

Partners are also reporting an increase in Eastern Europeans approaching for housing advice: one charity reports that many of the issues they face are deposit disputes and illegal evictions. This has a significant impact on resources such as the requirement for translation services.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Develop leaflets to advise migrant workers of their rights in the UK.
- ◆ Private Sector Housing Team to work with landlords to improve the standard of Houses in Multiple Occupation across the Borough.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Non-statutorily homeless households*

### Priority 3 - Reduce and prevent homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households (including Rough Sleepers)

#### Challenge 3 - Provide transitional accommodation for people who are sleeping rough

During the stakeholder interviews, undertaken as part of the Homelessness Review, it was identified that there is no transitional accommodation in the Borough for Rough Sleepers. Transitional accommodation enables rough sleepers to prove to a landlord that they are engaging with support and are tenancy ready.

In response to this, in April 2012, to assist rough sleepers with their transition into independent living, the Council launched a pilot tenancy training house project. One person with experience of street homelessness has been given the opportunity to live in the training house until they are ready to move on to more settled accommodation. The house is located in Kettering town centre and will be leased by the Council from a private landlord for a period of one year.

While in the training house residents are given the opportunity to develop the skills they will need to live independently. Intensive support is provided by Accommodations Concern's Tenancy Support Service; residents are assisted with all manner of issues including setting up utilities, living on a budget, and managing relations with neighbours.

The aim of the training house is to give residents as much experience of running their own tenancy as possible. During their time in the house their progress will be reviewed and an assessment will be made as to whether they are ready to move on into independent living.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Monitor the outcomes of the Rough Sleeper Tenancy Training House pilot project for the residents. Assess the feasibility of extend the project beyond the current end date of March 2013.

#### Challenge 4 – To provide advice and support to access accommodation for people who are street homeless

In November 2011 we undertook a single night count of Rough Sleepers in the Borough. During the count we found one rough sleeper: this compares to three rough sleepers we found during both the 2007 and 2005 counts. Hot spot counts are not an exact science but they can give a good indication of trends in rough sleeping. An important difference between the most recent count and the previous counts is the fact that Accommodation Concern has employed a Street Outreach Worker which is funded by CRISIS and the Department for Communities & Local Government. The Street Outreach service is aimed at supporting rough sleepers so they can reconnect into settled accommodation.

This service is a significant contributor to the result of our count and has demonstrated the difference these roles can make to levels of rough sleeping locally. Accommodation Concern's Street Outreach Worker is funded until March 2013 after which funding for this service remains uncertain.

Partners are reporting an increase in rough sleeping and undoubtedly as a result of the Government's welfare reforms we are likely to see levels of rough sleeping continue to rise.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Support the continuation of Street Outreach in the Borough to reconnect rough sleepers into settled accommodation.
- ◆ Develop partnerships with the Police to support the work of street outreach through the use of enforcement powers when support has been refused.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households*

### Priority 4 - Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

#### Challenge 1 - Improve access to accommodation in the private rented sector for vulnerable households

As discussed in detail in section 2.9 it is imperative that the Council and its partners focus resources to ensure vulnerable clients can secure decent and safe accommodation in the private rented sector.

The high demand for social housing, particularly from single people and childless couples, will not be met through social housing supply alone. The reduction in Government funding for new affordable housing supply will further compound the problem and put increasing pressure on the existing social housing stock.

Changes to the Allocation Scheme in 2012, which will restrict households who can access the register, may also mean that an increasing number of households will need to turn to the private rented sector to satisfy their housing need.

As a local authority, recent legislative changes have also meant that we are now able to use the private rented sector as a way to discharge our duty to homeless households through an offer of suitable accommodation. The Council will be utilising this option in order to deal with the gaps in the supply of affordable accommodation.

Thus during the life of the Homelessness Strategy, developments in the private rented sector will be of considerable importance in the prevention of homelessness for our vulnerable residents. Following a successful pilot project the Council will be developing a full management service for private landlords to ensure vulnerable clients can access decent and safe accommodation in the private rented sector.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Following a successful pilot project the Council will develop a Tenancy Management Service for private landlords for a period of one year.
- ◆ Check all properties used by the Council to discharge their homelessness duty are safe and suitable for the occupants.
- ◆ Ensure resources are available to enable the Private Sector Housing team to undertake a planned programme of inspections in Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure they meet statutory minimum requirements standards.

#### Challenge 2 - Increase accommodation across all tenures which is suitable for single persons

There is a high demand for accommodation for single people or couples, as at April 2012 57% (over 1500) of the applicants on Keyways were single people or couples. The demand for accommodation for these households cannot be met through social housing supply alone.

Welfare Reforms in the private rented sector have restricted the type of properties these households can access if they are on housing benefit. In January 2012 the Shared Accommodation Rate for single tenants living in privately rented accommodation was increased from 25 to 35. This means that a greater number of people will find it difficult to afford self contained accommodation in the private rented sector, making a room in a shared house their only option.

It is therefore important that the growth of shared houses, or Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), is encouraged in the Borough.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough*

### Priority 4 - Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

#### Challenge 2 continued

HMOs can often be associated with poor standards of housing and safety. People living in rented or shared accommodation are seven times more likely to have a fire (CLG, 2008). To address this an important priority in the Council's Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2012-15 is to ensure the standard of HMOs in the Borough meet legislative requirements through a regular inspection programme undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team. Furthermore, landlords managing HMOs can apply to the Council for a Grant to ensure their properties met the Decent Homes Standard. The Council will award a Decent Homes Grant in return for nomination rights to the property.

It is vital that the Private Sector Housing Team has the resources to ensure there is an effective HMO inspection programme.

In addition to HMOs, we also need to encourage the new supply of accommodation for single people such as room to rent schemes. The Government's 'Rent a Room' scheme allows homeowners or tenants to earn £4,250 a year tax free from letting a room in their house to a lodger. When the housing benefit room restrictions come into force many social tenants will need to pay for any spare bedrooms they have in their homes.

To assist under-occupying tenants to pay for any spare rooms they have as part of the Size Criteria the government has amended what counts as income in its draft regulations for universal credit. Currently, claimants must declare income from lodgers. This can affect their entitlement to housing benefit, jobseekers' allowance and income support. Under the new regulations, from October 2013 tenants will be able to keep income from lodgers and retain full entitlement to benefit. The room let to a lodger will, however, be classed as a spare room and fall under the Size Criteria, which will be £14 per week on average. This means that tenants with one spare bedroom who decide to have a lodger should be able to retain £3,522 per year tax free after they have paid the additional housing benefit. This is likely to be a significant incentive to tenants to take in lodgers and represents an opportunity for the Council to increase the supply of accommodation for single people.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Ensure Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Borough are decent and safe through a regular inspection programme by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team.
- ◆ Investigate the feasibility of advertising rooms in shared houses on Keyways.
- ◆ Investigate the feasibility of promoting the 'Rent a Room' Scheme amongst Kettering residents where homeowners and tenants can earn tax free income from renting a spare room in the homes.
- ◆ Monitor proposed changes to Universal Credit which will allow claimants to keep income from lodgers without it affecting their benefit entitlement. Should this come into force investigate the possibility of promoting lodgers in Council and Registered Provider accommodation.
- ◆ Encourage Registered Providers with stock in the Borough to promote schemes to their under-occupying tenants which encourage them to rent their spare rooms.
- ◆ Explore the option of introducing discretionary licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure all HMOs are decent and safe, not just those that are applicable for mandatory licensing.

### Priority 4 - Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

#### Challenge 3 - Make best use of the existing social housing stock through tackling unlawful occupation and subletting

The limited supply of social housing stock means it is important that we minimise unlawful occupation and subletting to maximise the number of homes available to those who need them.

Unlawful occupation is most commonly taken to mean the subletting of the whole of a home by the tenant, it also covers other activities such as key-selling (where the tenant leaves the property and passes on the keys in return for a one-off lump sum payment) and unauthorised succession where someone misrepresents their circumstances in order to qualify to succeed to the tenancy following the previous tenant's death. Obtaining a tenancy through false statement is where a tenant knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement in order to gain a tenancy.

The Council has set up a working project group to look at the issue of unlawful occupation. Properties at risk of fraud will be identified through a data matching exercise. The penalties to the occupants found to be unlawfully occupying Council properties will be the loss of their tenancy.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 it became a criminal offence to squat in a residential building. A squatter is someone who has entered or remained in a property without the consent of the landlord or tenant. Squatters are not a common problem in Council tenancies however where there are problems the process of removing the squatters will be much efficient with the new legislation.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Set up a working group to tackle tenancy fraud in Council stock through the identification and recovery of properties that are being used unlawfully.
- ◆ Develop policies and procedures which encourage lawful subletting in Council accommodation,
- ◆ Minimise the number of tenancies fraudulently obtained by revising the verification checks of prospective tenants allocated a property through Keyways.

#### Challenge 4 - Make best use of the existing social housing stock through tackling under occupation

Demand for social housing in the Borough significantly outstrips supply yet at the same time we know that the stock that is available is not being well used.

During autumn 2009 the Housing Service undertook a Tenant Profile of Council tenants. Tenants were asked if they had one or more bedrooms that were not currently used for sleeping in. Nearly 30% of tenants told us they were under occupying their property by at least one bedroom. However upon further analysis of bedroom size and breakdown we estimated that it was likely that nearly 40% of our tenants are under occupying their homes.

In 2009 the Council launched a HomeMove scheme to tackle under occupation. Each *HomeMove* client is entitled to £1,000 which they have the option to choose as cash only, or part incentive & part cash. Incentives available to tenants wishing to downsize through *HomeMove* include; re-direction of mail, utility changeover, skip hire, packing boxes, carpets, three-months contents insurance, re-siting of satellite dish and redecoration.

The *HomeMove* Advisor also offers one-to-one support to tenants needing additional help throughout the moving process which includes help with using Keyways.

The *HomeMove* scheme has proved a success; during the three years since HomeMove was launched over 50 households have been assisted to downsize to smaller accommodation.

### Priority 4 - Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

#### Challenge 4 continued

The Size Criteria introduced as part of the Welfare Reforms will have a considerable impact on reducing under occupation in our Council stock. However the Size Criteria is only applicable to housing benefit claimants of working age and we know that many of our under occupiers are of pensionable age. During 2011/12 over 80% of tenants assisted to downsize through HomeMove were of pensionable age.

With the introduction of the Size Criteria there will be less need to incentivise working age households to downsize however with the increased number of people who are likely to be downsizing there will be a greater requirement for the HomeMove Advisors support to move. Thus HomeMove will continue to have an important role to play in supporting vulnerable tenants to downsize.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Revise the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme to give a greater priority to under-occupiers living in social housing.
- ◆ Review the Council's HomeMove scheme to offer greater support to tenants affected by the Size Criteria including support to downsize through transfers and mutual exchanges.
- ◆ Monitor the impact of the Size Criteria, introduced as part on the Welfare Reforms, and its impact on the levels of underoccupation in social housing in the Borough.

#### Challenge 5 - Reduced government funding for new housing supply through the Affordable Homes Programme

Kettering Borough Council has historically been successful in delivering new affordable housing schemes. From 2006/7 to 2011/12 we delivered over 1000 new affordable homes through a variety of means, from large scale strategic sites (planning gain), to smaller windfall affordable housing led schemes.

We are now facing a period of uncertainty due to significantly reduced funding for new affordable housing supply through the Homes and Communities Agencies Affordable Homes Programme. Furthermore all new homes built with subsidy from the Homes and Communities Agency during 2011-15 are expected to be offered at Affordable Rents of up to 80% of market rent, which in some cases are higher than social rents and therefore less affordable for our vulnerable residents. Registered Providers who enter into a Delivery Agreement with the HCA will have the option to convert a percentage of their properties to Affordable Rent upon relet, in order to generate additional capital for future development.

Social rent will still be the most favourable type of tenure for many tenants, particularly those with low incomes; this is supported by the findings of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment draft update 2012. We are concerned about the potential impact higher rents will have on benefits dependency, particularly for those who are looking to get back into work. We will continue to promote the use of lower cost social rented housing where feasible.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Using Keyways monitor the impact of Affordable Rent in respect of the demand for properties advertised at an affordable rent compared with social rent. Feedback our findings to the Homes & Communities Agency and Department and Communities & Local Government.



### Priority 4 - Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households

#### Challenge 6 - Promote social mobility among social housing tenants

In 2011 the Minister for Housing, Grant Shapps MP, announced that Kettering Borough Council would be one of an elite group of twelve councils who have been chosen to enhance the opportunities for vulnerable Council tenants to move to accommodation which better suits their needs. Under the Social Housing Mobility Vanguard project the Council launched an *Enhanced HomeMove* scheme which promotes transfers and mutual exchange as a housing option for older and disabled people needing adaptations to their home.

Under the old system Council tenants who applied for disabled adaptations were not made aware of the housing options available to them prior to a referral to the Occupational Therapy Service. Under the new system all tenants applying for an adaptation will be visited by our HomeMove Advisor and a Housing Option interview will be undertaken to establish whether a move to another property better suited to their needs is an option. Should the tenant choose to move they will be offered practical, financial and one-to-one support to move by our HomeMove Advisor. By promoting other housing options, we are reducing the time tenants are left living in unsuitable properties and we may also go some way to reduce the number of tenants on the adaptations waiting list.

The second element of our Social Mobility Vanguard project is the promotion of mutual exchanges and the expansion of our *HomeMove* service through the following:

- 1) Actively promoting mutual exchange as a housing option for tenants including advertising the service on Keyways and undertaking direct marketing campaign to tenants;
- 2) Offering home visits to ensure understanding of exchange service;
- 3) Supporting tenants to search for a mutual exchange including assistance with accessing *House Exchange*, our mutual exchange website;
- 4) Offering guidance on how to make a property more appealing to prospective tenants;
- 5) Offering benefit advice and guidance;

The opportunity to Mutual Exchange will be an important housing option for under occupying tenants affected by the introduction of the Size Criteria in social housing.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Evaluate the outcomes of the Social Mobility Vanguard project when it ends in March 2013.
- ◆ Promote Mutual Exchange as a housing option for tenants wishing to downsize to avoid paying extra Housing Benefit as part of the introduction of the Size Criteria .
- ◆ Continue to promote mobility amongst Council tenants who apply for disabled adaptations to their homes through undertaking Housing Options interviews. Offer practical and financial support to vulnerable tenants who choose to move to more suitable accommodation.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide suitable temporary accommodation*

### Priority 5 - Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

#### Challenge 1 - Re-model the profile of our temporary accommodation portfolio to ensure it meets the needs of our homeless clients & minimises expenditure on bed breakfast accommodation

The Council currently manages a small portfolio of Council stock and properties leased from private landlords as temporary accommodation for homeless households. In addition to this bed & breakfast accommodation is used in an emergency.

Reducing emergency placements of homeless households in bed & breakfast accommodation is a key priority for the Council. At a time when resources are scarce it is imperative that expenditure on bed & breakfast is kept to a minimum.

During 2011/12 over two thirds of the households placed in bed & breakfast accommodation were single applicants and just over half of these were under the age of 25. To reduce the use of B&B there is a need to increase the proportion of bedsits/1 bed units in our temporary accommodation portfolio so that we can better meet the needs of our homeless customer.

Clients with mental health issues (often with additional support needs to) are the main cause of crisis bed and breakfast placements. Of the placements in 2011/12, 5 were as a result of clients being discharged from a mental health hospital and all of those 5 cases had been placed in bed & breakfast. The Council will work with partners working in mental health to minimise the number of crisis presentations. This will enable us to match applicants with appropriate interim accommodation because the move will be managed.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ To increase the proportion of bedsits/1 bed units in our temporary accommodation portfolio so that we can better meet the needs of our homeless customer.
- ◆ To work with other agencies to minimise the number of crisis presentations to the Council's Housing Options service. This will enable us to match applicants with appropriate interim accommodation because the move will be managed.

#### Challenge 2 - Provide suitable temporary accommodation for single homeless people under the age of 25

Due to a lack of alternatives young homeless people are being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation. Specialist crisis accommodation for single young people is required which offers short-term immediate access, and which enables a cooling off period maximising the chances of prevention work being undertaken by the Housing Options team.

Providing appropriate temporary accommodation will improve the outcomes for these vulnerable young people and minimise expenditure on emergency accommodation for Children's and Young People's services and ourselves.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Work with the local authorities of Northamptonshire to investigate the feasibility of a County Nightstop scheme where emergency accommodation is provided for young people in the homes of approved volunteers.
- ◆ Investigate the financial viability of a crash-pad temporary accommodation scheme in the Borough to provide suitable emergency accommodation for young people.

## 8. Priorities 2012/15 *Provide suitable temporary accommodation*

### Priority 5 - Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

#### Challenge 3 - Ensure Kettering residents can access County-wide temporary accommodation resources including the County *No Second Night Out* project

In May 2012 a purpose-built 48 bed direct access hostel called *Oasis House* opened in Northampton. *Oasis House* is a county initiative for single homeless people who require support. The £5.5m scheme prevents rough sleeping and creates employment opportunities, providing the most vulnerable people in the county with the opportunity for positive change through a multi-functional development.

*No Second Night Out*, also in Northampton, is for people who are either in a crisis or are entrenched rough sleepers. The accommodation comprises of two flats, each of which has three bedrooms. *No Second Night Out* is a national scheme, the aim of which is to rapidly identify and support new rough sleepers so they do not have to spend a second night on the streets. *No Second Night Out* is one of the challenges the Government has posed through its '*Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness*' report.

#### Proposed actions:

- ◆ Ensure an effective protocol is in place with Northampton Borough Council and its partners so that Kettering residents can utilise the services of *Oasis House* and *No Second Night Out*.
- ◆ Monitor the demand for the *No Second Night Out* scheme in Northampton from Kettering residents. Should there be a high demand from Kettering residents develop a local *No Second Night Out* scheme to rapidly identify and support new rough sleepers.
- ◆ Explore the potential for a multi-agency solution to deliver direct-access emergency accommodation in Kettering.

## 9. Consultation & Monitoring

### 9.1 Consultation

The Homelessness Strategy was distributed to partners for consultation during September 2012. Consultation was also undertaken with the Council's Homelessness Prevention Partnership. Members of the partnership include; Youth Offending Service, Children & Young People's Services, Accommodation Concern, Northamptonshire County Council Commissioning Team, St Judes Community Project, Churches Together, English Churches Housing Group, Re-ablement Team, Daylight Centre Wellingborough, and Home Housing . Members of the group agreed that the following items should be included as proposed actions in the Homelessness Strategy:

- ◆ Concern was raised that there is no direct access emergency accommodation in Kettering. It was agreed that the group would explore if a multi-agency response to this could be developed.
- ◆ It was agreed that a Z-card should be created which summarises all the services available locally for people at risk of homelessness.
- ◆ The Council's Housing Options Team will offer training to partners on homelessness and the housing options services available locally.
- ◆ A document summarising the Housing Options available locally will be made available to partners.

### 9.2 Monitoring

To ensure our Homelessness Strategy 2012/15 is responsive to emerging needs it will be reviewed annually. The multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership will be responsible for monitoring the action plans at the back of the document.

### 9.3 Comments

We welcome any comments or queries about this document. Any such matters should be returned to:

Housing Strategy

Kettering Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Bowling Green Road  
Kettering  
NN15 7QX

Email: [housingstrategy@kettering.gov.uk](mailto:housingstrategy@kettering.gov.uk)  
Phone: 01536 410 333

## 10. Action Plans

The pages which follow contain the action plans for this Strategy. The Action Plans will be regularly monitored by the multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Partnership to ensure we remain on target to deliver the Strategy.



## Homelessness Strategy Action Plans 2012-2015 – Version 1

### Strategic Priority 1 Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Regularly review our housing options toolkit to respond to changing trends locally.	New initiatives launched	Housing Options Service	On-going	Housing Options Manager
Housing Options Service to offer housing options and homelessness training to partners in the Borough.	Number of colleagues from partner organisations attending training sessions.	Housing Options Service	Re-launch by April 2013	Housing Options Manager
Housing Options Service to publish a guide to housing options services for partners.	Publication of housing options guide.	Housing Options Service	December 2012	Housing Options Manager
Develop a Z-card which details all the homelessness and housing services available in the Borough.	Publication of a Z-card.	Homelessness Prevention budget.	April 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Lobby to maintain existing Tenancy Support services which are funded through Northamptonshire County Council's Prevention Services where there is an identified need.	Cuts to existing services are minimised.	Housing Service & Voluntary Sector organisations	On-going	Head of Housing
Keep abreast of the funding opportunities that become available and be proactive in making bids.	Number of new services funded by external organisations.	Funding Opportunities from organisations external to the Council	On-going	Housing Strategy Officer & Homelessness Prevention Partnership

## Strategic Priority 1 Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Develop a plan to influence joint-commissioning arrangements in our area including new health and well-being boards.	Staff from Housing Services able to influence health & well-being boards.	Housing Services	On-going	Head of Housing
Housing Services to launch a cross team co-ordination group to co-ordinate the Services response to Welfare Reform and minimise the impact on our customers.	Cross departmental initiatives launched which minimise the impact of Welfare Reform on Council tenants.	Housing Services	November 2012	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
The Council's Tenancy Support service will provide support to people to manage their finances and reduce the likelihood of homelessness.	Number of Council tenants who have had their homelessness prevented through the Tenancy Support Service.	KBC's Tenancy Support Advisor	On-going	Tenancy Support Advisor
The Council's LifePlan service will support tenants who wish to return to employment to increase their income and longer term financial prospects.	Number of Council tenants who have returned to work.	KBC's LifePlan Advisor	March 2014	LifePlan Advisor
All tenants affected by the Size Criteria will be contacted and made aware of the housing options open to them which will include transfers, mutual exchange, and gaining employment.	Council tenants contacted and made aware of the impact of the Size Criteria.	Housing Services & Income and Debt	December 2014	Rent & Business Support Manager
Money management training will be offered to equip tenants with the skills required to manage their Universal Credit.	Number of money management training events held.	Housing Services & Income and Debt	December 2013	Rent & Business Support Manager, Housing Strategy



## Strategic Priority 1 Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Support will be offered to tenants to help them use and access online services which will help them claim benefits, seek work and access the Council's online services.	Number of Council tenants using on-line services.	Cross-Council Services	On-going	Officer Tenancy Services Manager
Continue to help our tenants develop the skills needed to maintain successful tenancies through our programme of tenancy training courses <i>Move on</i> , <i>Move In</i> and <i>New Opportunities</i> , <i>New Skills</i>	Number of Council tenants completing the course.	Housing Services Voluntary & Statutory Organisations	On-going	Housing Strategy Officer
Pilot a tenancy training course for prospective private sector tenants.	Number of private tenants completing the course.	Housing Options Voluntary & Statutory Organisations	June 2013	Housing Strategy Officer
Pilot a <i>Move On</i> , <i>Move In</i> course specifically for young residents of Riverside's Broadway Supported Housing scheme.	Number of residents completing the course.	Housing Options, Voluntary & Statutory Organisations and Riverside	February 2014	Housing Strategy Officer
Continue to help our tenants develop the skills needed to maintain successful tenancies through giving them the opportunity to complete Practical Housing Units through the Council's LifePlan service.	Number of Practical Housing Units completed by tenants.	LifePlan Advisor Amber License Fee and cost of administering awards	March 2014	LifePlan Advisor
Promote the completion of Practical Housing Units by organisations working with vulnerable clients in the Borough. Offer training to staff at partner agencies so they can deliver PHUs to their clients.	Number of Practical Housing Units completed by residents from other organisations.	LifePlan Advisor Amber License Fee and cost of administering awards	March 2014	LifePlan Advisor
The changes brought about by Universal Credit and the abolishment of Council Tax Benefit means that staff working in the Housing Benefit and Council Tax teams will need to offer support to	Support available to residents affected by Welfare Reforms.	Housing Service & Income & Debt	On-going	Welfare Reform Project Group

## Strategic Priority 1 Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
residents to manage their finances. The Housing Service will investigate how cross-departmental support could be offered to best support the needs of vulnerable residents in the Borough.				
Support young people & rough sleepers to gain necessary tenancy skills through the Tenancy Training flats pilot project.	Number of young people who have successfully moved into sustainable accommodation.	Trainee Housing Strategy Officer, LifePlan Advisor, Accommodation Concern	Pilot project until 31 March 2014	Housing Strategy Officer
In partnership with funders of local services, identify services which are at risk and work to minimise the impact of these cuts on vulnerable clients. Lobby to protect services at risk where there is an identified need for that service.	Number of initiatives developed.	Housing Services, voluntary and statutory agencies	On-going	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Continue to offer the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme as a Housing Option for households at risk of repossession.	Number of Kettering residents assisted through the Scheme.	Housing Options Service	On-going	Housing Options Manager
Consult Registered Providers through the Social Landlords Forum to develop collaborative responses to the changes brought about by Tenancy Reform.	Number of collaborative initiatives developed.	Registered Providers Housing Strategy	December 2013	Housing Strategy Officer (enabling)
The Council will work closely with Registered Providers to ensure that the process for ending fixed term tenancies is clear and transparent, and tenants are provided with high quality advice and information to facilitate a smooth transition to alternative accommodation where necessary.	Protocols in place with RPs when they are ending fixed term tenancies	Registered Providers Housing Strategy	December 2013	Housing Strategy Officer (enabling)
Through Keyways, our choice based lettings scheme, new social housing tenants should be educated on the implications of the various tenancies being offered by social housing providers in the	New social housing tenants understand their tenancy.	Housing Options	Initial launch April 2013 and then on-going	Housing Options Manager

### Strategic Priority 1 Reduce and prevent homelessness in the Borough

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Borough.				
Monitor the outcomes of the Tenancy Strategy to assess the impact on housing services across the Borough.	Written assessment published.	Housing Strategy	April 2014	Housing Strategy Officer (Enabling)
Review the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme in light of recent legislative changes.	New Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme launched.	Housing Strategy	March 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager

### Strategic Priority 2 Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Work with Children & Young People's Services to ensure homeless 16/17 years olds can access good quality temporary accommodation such as crash and nightstop as an alternative to bed and breakfast.	Number of new units of temporary accommodation available for 16/17 year olds	Homelessness Prevention Grant Children & Young Peoples Services Housing Options	July 2013	Housing Options Manager
Review the Northamptonshire Joint Protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds	Northamptonshire Joint Protocol working effectively across all agencies.	Housing Options Children & Young Peoples Services	December 2012	North Northants Housing Coordinator

## Strategic Priority 2 Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Develop a multi-agency Strategy to tackle to youth homelessness in the Borough. Develop initiatives which assist vulnerable young people to access accommodation in the private rented sector such as tenant accreditation, and shared houses with support.	Launch of inaugural Kettering Youth Homelessness Strategy. Number of initiatives launched.	Housing Strategy	December 2013	Housing Strategy Officer (Policy)
Work with Stonham, the Supported Lodgings provider for the area, to maximise placements for young people appropriate to the scheme.	Number of young people accessing Supported Lodgings.	Stonham Housing Options	December 2013	Housing Options Manager
Northamptonshire County Council's Joint Commissioning Team to de-commission an existing 8 bed housing scheme for mental health service users in Carrington Street and develop a new scheme as the current building is not fit for purpose.	Existing mental health housing scheme re-commissioned.	Northamptonshire County Council's Joint Commissioning Team	December 2014	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Work in partnership with mental health service providers to address the gap in supported accommodation and emergency accommodation for service users with mental health diagnoses in the Borough. Explore opportunities for revenue funding for this service	Number of new supported accommodation placements available for mental health service users.	Mental Health Service Providers	December 2014	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Work in partnership with mental health service providers to provide appropriate support to enable people with mental health diagnoses to live in general needs accommodation.	Mental health service users supported to maintain accommodation.	Mental Health Service Providers Housing Services	December 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Work with health professionals from the Welland Centre, Kettering to ensure clients being discharged have a planned move from the hospital to prevent crisis presentations at the Council.	Number of tenants leaving the Welland Centre who have had a planned move-on.	Welland centre Housing Options	April 2013	Housing Options Manager

## Strategic Priority 2 Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Review Kettering Borough Council's Housing Directory for Mental Health professionals which details housing related support services in the Borough.	Publication of revised Housing Directory for Mental Health professionals	Housing Options	April 2013	Housing Options Manager
Undertake a Equality Impact Analysis of the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme.	Equality Impact Assessment completed	Housing Services	December 2012	Supported Housing Manager
In partnership with members of the Northamptonshire Learning Disability Partnership Board undertake a review of the Keyways allocation system to ensure its accessibility is optimised for people with a learning disability.	Applicants with a Learning Disability able to access Keyways	Housing Strategy Northamptonshire Learning Disability Partnership Board	June 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Undertake a systems review of the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme to improve efficiency and reduce waste.	Improved customer satisfaction with Keyways system.	Housing Strategy	April 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Where funding permits, continue to work in partnership with Registered Providers to develop new units of accommodation for adults with learning disabilities, as part of general needs affordable housing schemes.	Number of affordable housing units for people with Learning Disabilities completed	Housing Strategy Registered Provider	On-going	Housing Strategy Officer (Enabling)
Explore alternative funding streams for disabled adaptations to cope with increasing demand for DFGs.	Increased funding available for Disabled facilities Grants	Private Sector Housing Team	On-going	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Where funding permits, work with Registered Providers to develop new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards in the Borough.	Number of new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards.	Housing Strategy Registered Provider	On-going	Housing Strategy Officer

## Strategic Priority 2 Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Continue to offer residents who apply for a disabled adaptation to the home the opportunity to explore a range of housing solutions including moving to accommodation which better suites their needs.	Number of housing options interviews undertaken with residents who have applied for a DFG	Private Sector Housing Team	On-going	(Enabling) Private Sector Housing Manager
Review our Housing Allocations Scheme to ensure adapted properties that become available for letting can be directly matched to applicants who require them; thus making the best use of our existing resources. Furthermore, ensure the revised Allocations Scheme gives priority to people wishing to release adapted properties that they no longer require.	Number of fully adapted vacant properties which are directly let to a disabled applicant	Housing Strategy Housing Options Housing Management	March 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager
Undertake a feasibility appraisal of the existing Council stock let to older people to ensure it continues to provide accommodation appropriate to the changing needs of our customers.	Appraisal completed.	Supported Housing Team	September 2013	Supported Housing Manager
Develop a new 10 pitch permanent gypsy & traveller site in Kettering borough to meet the need identified in the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment up to 2017. Identify further sites to meet the need identified by the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment up to 2022.	New gypsy & traveller site/s developed in Kettering borough	DCLG funding	On-going	Supported Housing Manager
Work in partnership with Development Services to ensure that suitable alternative accommodation is available when planning enforcement action against gypsy & travellers is taken. This may include offering housing options interviews, advice and support.	Protocol in place to offer housing advice to gypsy & travellers where enforcement action has been taken	Housing Options Development Services	March 2013	Housing Strategy & Options Manager

## Strategic Priority 2 Provide appropriate support services to vulnerable people

Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Explore potential sources of funding for an extra care provision for older people in Kettering				
Work with partners in the criminal justice system to review the Council's approach to assist clients leaving prison or under probation supervision.				
Review the Council's protocol on the management of Council tenants who are victims of all forms of interpersonal violence including domestic abuse.				
Investigate the potential to develop reciprocal arrangements with local authorities in Northamptonshire to ensure properties which have become available for re-let which have had additional security works under the Sanctuary scheme are re-used for victims of domestic abuse.				
Continue to bid for Home Office funding to undertake target hardening measures to the homes of high-risk domestic abuse victims (Community Services).				
Continue to provide funding to the County Inter Personal Violence funding pool which supports services for domestic abuse victims across Northamptonshire such as the Sunflower Centre (Community Services).				

Strategic Priority 3 Reduce and prevent homelessness amongst non-statutorily homeless households (including Rough Sleepers)					
Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer	
Through a Service Level Agreement continue to commission a voluntary sector organisation to provide housing options advice to non-priority and intentionally homeless households					
Using DCLG funding work with the local authorities of Northamptonshire to develop services for non-statutorily households across the County.					
Develop leaflets to advise migrant workers of their rights in the UK.					
Private Sector Housing Team to work with landlords to improve the standard of Houses in Multiple Occupation across the Borough.					
Monitor the outcomes of the Rough Sleeper Tenancy Training House pilot project for the residents. Assess the feasibility of extend the project beyond the current end date of March 2013.					
Support the continuation of Street Outreach in the Borough to reconnect rough sleepers into settled accommodation.					
Develop partnerships with the Police to support the work of street outreach through the use of enforcement powers when support has been refused					



Strategic Priority 4 Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households				
Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
Following a successful pilot project the Council will develop a Tenancy Management Service for private landlords for a period of one year.				
Check all properties used by the Council to discharge their homelessness duty are safe and suitable for the occupants.				
Ensure resources are available to enable the Private Sector Housing team to undertake a planned programme of inspections in Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure they meet statutory minimum requirements standards.				
Ensure Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Borough are decent and safe through a regular inspection programme by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team.				
Investigate the feasibility of advertising rooms in shared houses on Keyways.				
Investigate the feasibility of promoting the 'Rent a Room' Scheme amongst Kettering residents where homeowners and tenants can earn tax free income from renting a spare room in the homes.				
Monitor proposed changes to Universal Credit which will allow claimants to keep income from lodgers without it affecting their benefit entitlement. Should this come into force investigate the				

Strategic Priority 4 Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households					
Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer	
possibility of promoting lodgers in Council and Registered Provider accommodation.					
Encourage Registered Providers with stock in the Borough to promote schemes to their under-occupying tenants which encourage them to rent their spare rooms.					
Explore the option of introducing discretionary licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation to ensure all HMOs are decent and safe, not just those that are applicable for mandatory licensing.					
Set up a working group to tackle tenancy fraud in Council stock through the identification and recovery of properties that are being used unlawfully.					
Develop policies and procedures which encourage lawful subletting in Council accommodation,					
Minimise the number of tenancies fraudulently obtained by revising the verification checks of prospective tenants allocated a property through Keyways.					
Revise the Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme to give a greater priority to under-occupiers living in social housing.					
Review the Council's HomeMove scheme to offer greater support to tenants affected by the Size Criteria including support to downsize through transfers and mutual exchanges.					
Monitor the impact of the Size Criteria, introduced as part on the					

Strategic Priority 4 Increase the supply of permanent housing for homeless households					
Task	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer	
Welfare Reforms, and its impact on the levels of underoccupation in social housing in the Borough.					
Using Keyways monitor the impact of Affordable Rent in respect of the demand for properties advertised at an affordable rent compared with social rent. Feedback our findings to the Homes & Communities Agency and Department and Communities & Local Government.					
Evaluate the outcomes of the Social Mobility Vanguard project when it ends in March 2013.					
Promote Mutual Exchange as a housing option for tenants wishing to downsize to avoid paying extra Housing Benefit as part of the introduction of the Size Criteria.					
Continue to promote mobility amongst Council tenants who apply for disabled adaptations to their homes through undertaking Housing Options interviews. Offer practical and financial support to vulnerable tenants who choose to move to more suitable accommodation.					

## Strategic Priority 5 Provide appropriate move on accommodation for households leaving supported housing

Task	Outcome	How we will measure success	Resources	Target date	Lead officer
To increase the proportion of bedsits/1 bed units in our temporary accommodation portfolio so that we can better meet the needs of our homeless customer.					
To work with other agencies to minimise the number of crisis presentations to the Council's Housing Options service. This will enable us to match applicants with appropriate interim accommodation because the move will be managed.					
Investigate the financial viability of a crash-pad temporary accommodation scheme in the Borough to provide suitable emergency accommodation for young people.					
Ensure an effective protocol is in place with Northampton Borough Council and its partners so that Kettering residents can utilise the services of Oasis House and <i>No Second Night Out</i>					
Monitor the demand for the <i>No Second Night Out</i> scheme in Northampton from Kettering residents. Should there be a high demand from Kettering residents develop a local <i>No Second Night Out</i> scheme to rapidly identify and support new rough sleepers.					
Explore the potential for a multi-agency solution to deliver direct-access emergency accommodation in Kettering.					

