



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

2008 – 2012

Introduction

Ashford Borough Council's homelessness strategy for 2008 – 2012 was written in partnership with stakeholders and followed a comprehensive review of homelessness in Ashford during the latter half of 2007 and the early part of 2008.

The homelessness strategy is available to view at http://www.ashford.gov.uk/pdf/Strategy_homelessness2008-2012.pdf
A hard copy of the strategy can be made available upon request by telephoning the Homelessness Prevention & Strategy Development Officer on 01233 330807.

This Homelessness Strategy Action Plan shows only the SMART actions from the Strategy and should not be read as a stand alone document. The purpose of this document is to provide an easy reference point to monitor the delivery of the actions from the Homelessness Strategy which will enable us to prevent and reduce homelessness in the borough over the next five years.

The actions will be reviewed annually by the Housing and Homelessness Working Group. The actions may be updated and amended to incorporate additional targets to ensure that we are both meeting the requirement of the borough as it grows and achieving local, regional and national targets.

Action Plan 2008 – 2012

Priority 1. Increase the supply of homes for homeless and potentially homeless households

Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 1: Increasing the supply of homes

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>1a. Increase the supply of affordable rented and intermediate tenure homes to meet local need and demand</p> <p>Targets/Milestones</p> <p>Complete 444 affordable grant funded homes between 2006 and 2011</p> <p>Complete 30% affordable housing in the growth area and 35% affordable housing elsewhere in the borough on qualifying sites as set out in Ashford Core Strategy</p> <p>Complete the following developments on strategic sites:</p> <p>Phase1b South and North at Templar Barracks by September 09</p> <p>Park Farm South by March 2009</p> <p>Park Farm East by January 2010</p> <p>Cheesman's Green by March 2012</p>	<p>ABC Enabling and Planning Private Landlords RSLs Moat</p>	<p>Medium 2009/10</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Avenue Lettings Gateway CBL</p>

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>1b. Develop policies to assist in making best use of existing stock by September 2008.</p> <p>Bring empty properties back into use and ensure their availability to those in housing need including homelessness households.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Review of Ashford BC's Lettings Policy by September 2008</p> <p>Develop an empty homes strategy by March 2010.</p>	<p>Private Landlords RSLs ABC</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Empty Property Initiative</p>
<p>1c. Increase the availability of supported housing and housing related support services in the district in line with identified need</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Completion of KCC 40 bed extra care scheme in Ashford by the end of January 2010</p> <p>Identify sites for three new extra care schemes by March 2011</p> <p>Complete supported housing scheme for people with learning difficulties by September 2010</p>	<p>Supporting People Support Agencies RSLs Social Services NHS</p>	<p>Short term for current developments 2008/09 and medium to longer term 2009/12 for future projects</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>NAHP Supporting People grant Contact Point Grant Finder</p>

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
1d. Liaise with the Supporting People team and the members of the Housing Research and Development Team on a quarterly basis concerning the potential for supported housing schemes to be incorporated in new housing developments	ABC Enabling and Planning Supporting People	Medium 2009/10	Medium	NAHP Supporting People grant

Priority 2. Prevent and reduce homelessness

Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 5: Providing accessible information on housing options

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
2a. Undertake a risk assessment of current funding for the Council's homelessness prevention and options service by March 2010.	ABC Partner LAs	Medium 2009/10	Medium	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>2b. Increase early identification and intervention to reduce the number of households who present as homeless</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>All of the preventative measures identified within the strategy will work to reduce numbers presenting and this should be reflected within statistical returns from 2008/09 onwards</p>	<p>ABC RSLs Landlords Health Education Voluntary agencies SP team and providers</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	
<p>2c. Develop a strategic framework for addressing the needs of homeless and potentially homeless young people by March 2010</p>	<p>Connexions Schools/ education Social Services Rainer Stonham VCS Health</p>	<p>Medium 2009/10</p>	<p>High</p>	
<p>2d. Complete refocusing of homelessness and housing advice services by October 2008</p>	<p>ABC</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>2e. Review the current mediation service and potential for expansion based on a value for money approach, good practice and experience in other areas</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>The introduction of an improved early stage mediation service by January 2009</p>	<p>Connexions Social Services KCHT Maidstone's mediation service SEEDA</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>Medium</p>	

Priority 3. Increase access to a choice of settled home

Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 2: Developing sustainable communities

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>3a. Increase understanding of the impact of the housing market and housing market interventions on homeless and potentially homeless households</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Carry out a sub-regional housing market assessment by April 2009</p>		<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>Medium</p>	
<p>3b. Improve the housing options available through the allocations policy and choice based lettings scheme</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Implement new allocations policy by September 2008</p>	<p>ABC Refuges RSLs</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>Review nominations agreement by July 2008 and six monthly thereafter</p> <p>Review progress in advertising intermediate tenure properties through CBL by September 2008</p> <p>Participate in the development of a sub regional lettings scheme to be completed by September 2008</p>				
<p>3c. Increase the role of the private sector in providing a choice of settled and affordable homes</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Review progress on work with lettings agents to include private sector homes on CBL by March 09</p> <p>Advertise private sector properties through CBL scheme by September 09</p> <p>Establish new Landlord Liaison Officer role and new working arrangements with landlords by August 2008</p> <p>Improve options to assist people to access private tenancies and review viability of options on a six monthly basis from December 2008 onwards.</p>	<p>Housing Benefits Landlord Liaison Officer Landlords</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	
<p>3d. Increase the rate of successful and sustainable move-on from temporary accommodation (supported housing,</p>	<p>All supported housing providers, RSLs and service</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>hospital etc)</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Research the need for move-on using the MOPP toolkit or develop similar system for Ashford by December 2008</p>	users			
<p>3e. Develop an understanding of the urban/rural dimension to homelessness</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Monitor rural homelessness and housing advice applications and produce an analysis to inform future policy approach. Review findings May 2009</p>	Hot Team Housing Strategy Officer	Medium 2009/10	Medium	
<p>3f. Strengthen joint working with housing benefits service</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Develop a service level agreement with housing benefits section by May 08</p> <p>Review use of discretionary housing payments to maximise prevention activity on a quarterly basis from August 2008 onwards.</p>	Housing Benefits Housing Options	Medium 2009/10	Medium	
<p>3g. Promote and encourage the use of existing protocols related to homelessness and develop new protocols.</p>	Housing options Various Stakeholders	Short 2008/09	Medium	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>Milestones</p> <p>Deliver training to partners on use of protocols by March 2009</p> <p>Monitor existing protocols on a quarterly basis from September 2008 onwards.</p> <p>Develop new protocols for ex-offenders by June 2008, domestic violence by March 2009, hospital discharge by March 2009, and management of people with alcohol/ drug dependency by June 2009</p>				

Priority 4. Further develop partnerships with key stakeholders to improve the delivery and co-ordination of housing relate services to vulnerable people
Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 3: Supporting Independence

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>4a. Monitor and review the homelessness strategy through the joint housing and homelessness strategy working group and continue to strengthen the involvement of the homelessness forum in developing and delivering the homelessness strategy.</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Monitor and review homelessness strategy action plan through the Housing and</p>	Homelessness Strategy Working Group	Short 2008/09	High	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>Homelessness Strategy Working Group on a quarterly basis from September 2008 onwards and report to members annually Hold meetings of the homelessness forum on at least a twice yearly basis and continue to seek to strengthen membership</p> <p>At annual review meeting develop additional challenging targets to include within the Homelessness Strategy to ensure that the strategy evolves in line with service delivery, local demand and government targets.</p>				
<p>4b. Ensure a homelessness dimension to existing client group and other stakeholder forums and those to be set up in the future</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Establish baseline information relating to existing stakeholder groups including any agreed action plans or terms of reference, and identify where the Housing Options Service is under represented by September 2008</p>	Housing Options Stakeholder forums	Medium 2009/10	Medium	
<p>4c. Increase understanding of the causes of homelessness and the</p>	Kent LAs SP Providers	Short 2008/09	High	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>housing and support needs of vulnerable adults</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Review Ashford BC and Partners' Older Persons Housing Strategy and expand to include all vulnerable adults by March 2009</p> <p>Supporting People and partners reviewing SP Older Persons Strategy by March 2009</p>	Other Agencies			
<p>4d. Improve data monitoring arrangements</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Develop a monitoring framework to identify what data we need to monitor and the frequency for monitoring and reporting by September 2008</p> <p>Produce quarterly monitoring reports by March 2009</p> <p>Report monitoring information to members annually</p>		Short 2008/09	High	
<p>4e. Ensure the contribution of the homelessness services in achieving the National Indicators is recognised</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Determine what outcomes data needs to be collected to</p>		Medium 2009/10	Medium	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>demonstrate homelessness and related services contribution to National Indicators and ensure that it is incorporate in the annual monitoring plan by September 09</p>				
<p>4f. Investigate further ways of working with partners across boundaries to prevent homelessness and to improve the range of services available to homeless households</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Investigate options for a work experience programme for homeless households by December 2008</p> <p>Investigate training opportunities for homeless households by December 2008</p> <p>Review with partners the need for and availability of services for rough sleepers by March 2009</p> <p>Ensure requirements of the homelessness strategy are embedded in the council's 'invest to save' strategy by March 09</p>	<p>Housing options ABC colleagues Other Las Stakeholders</p>	<p>Medium 2009/10</p>	<p>Medium</p>	
<p>4g. Develop an improved knowledge and understanding of the time and resources available and required to deliver all of the</p>	<p>Housing options ABC colleagues Other Las Stakeholders</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>preventative measures and action points within the strategy</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Work with Housing and Homeless Strategies working group at quarterly meetings commencing September 2008 to develop knowledge or resources.</p> <p>Include an improved resources section within the Strategy by July 2009.</p>	rs			

Priority 5.Improve the quality and range of housing options advice and assistance available

Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 5: Providing accessible information on housing options

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>5a. Update and expand the range of leaflets/fact sheet covering housing options including Service Standards by March 2009.</p>	Other agencies inc Gateway, VCS, PCS, DWP and HB	Short 2008/09	Medium	
<p>5b. Provide timely and high quality advice and information that enables households to resolve their housing issues</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Implement new IT system by March 2009</p> <p>As part of service refocus,</p>	Gateway Housing options CAB Shelter	Short 2008/09	High	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>review current practice and implement improvements by September 2008. Continuously review and update practice to keep up with legislative changes and new initiatives.</p> <p>Work with CAB to develop Court desk service by March 2009</p> <p>Investigate options for a Mortgage by March 2009</p>				
<p>5c. Raise awareness of the Housing Options service and housing issues among key local agencies</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Produce a newsletter on a six monthly basis from November 2008 onwards.</p> <p>Raise awareness of current issues at the quarterly homeless officers meetings from strategy implementation date onwards.</p> <p>Undertake an awareness campaign regarding the Local Housing Allowance during 2008</p>	<p>CAB Shelter NHA</p>	<p>Short 2008/09</p>	<p>High</p>	
<p>5d. Raise awareness of the role other agencies have to play in preventing and responding to homelessness</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Establish a programme of inter-agency briefings at the Homelessness</p>	<p>Housing Options Stakeholders</p>	<p>Medium 2009/10</p>	<p>High</p>	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
Forum meetings from July 2008 onwards.				
<p>5e. Ensure opportunities to receive feedback from customers are maximised</p> <p>Milestones</p> <p>Add a 'callback' section to the customer satisfaction survey by August 2008</p> <p>Offer a feedback opportunity via the website – by August 2008</p> <p>Analyse customer satisfaction surveys on a quarterly basis. This has commenced and will continue quarterly.</p>	HSWG	Short 2008/09	High	
<p>5f. Ensure that a best practice service is offered to customers</p> <p>Milestone</p> <p>Identify best practice and use information to inform service standards by September 08. Review six monthly from March 2009 onwards</p> <p>Achieve a charter mark for the advice service by September 2009</p>	Housing Options Gateway VCS	Short 2008/09	High	
<p>5g. Improve knowledge and monitoring of diversity groups accessing housing options services and assist with community integration</p> <p>Milestones</p>	Housing Options	Short to Medium 2008/10	High	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Resources
<p>Incorporate equality impact assessments for all new and reviews of existing housing options initiatives from December 2008 onwards.</p> <p>Include an equality impact assessment in the annual review of the homelessness strategy action plan which will take place in July 2009.</p> <p>Ensure that computer systems are set up to provide monitoring data on a quarterly basis by September 09</p>				

Priority 6. Enable the provision of suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

Housing Strategy Strategic Priority 5: Providing accessible information on housing options

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Impact and cost assessment
6a. Develop a plan with clear targets by March 2009 to eradicate the use of temporary accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds		Short to Medium 2008/10	Medium	
6b. Enable the redevelopment of Ashford Women's Refuge by January 2009 to improve standards of accommodation		Short 2008/09	Medium	
6c. Evaluate the Private Sector Leasing		Short 2008/09	Medium	

Objectives/Actions	Who should be involved?	Short Medium or Long Term	High Medium or Low Importance	Impact and cost assessment
arrangements to include projected need and consider opportunities for working with other Kent authorities to provide value for money by December 2008				
6d. Undertake an appraisal of suitable temporary accommodation options to provide an alternative to bed and breakfast by December 2009		Short to Medium 2008/10	Medium	

*Actions taken directly from the Housing Strategy