

Forward Thinking

The role of housing associations in preventing homelessness in Norfolk

Strategy 2008 - 2011



Foreword

The role of housing associations role in tackling homelessness is as important now as it was at their inception. Currently, we have an affordable housing crisis in the country. With house prices currently being eight times the median income in the Norfolk Broads with even greater affordability gaps in areas of North Norfolk, our role in providing affordable housing is clear. Although we have been successful in building more new homes, housing associations also make a vital contribution to Homelessness prevention by working with stakeholders to create truly sustainable and thriving communities.

In November 2006, the Housing Corporation published 'Tackling Homelessness'. The strategy sets out what housing associations are expected to do in contributing to the prevention and tackling of homelessness.

The major stock holding RSL's in Norfolk have risen to this challenge by forming a strategic alliance, covering 33,380 homes across the county, to work collaboratively on homelessness prevention thereby maximising our impact through efficiency, innovation and joint working.

We recognise the critical strategic leadership of local authorities and through the formation of a single housing association body for the county intend to strengthen strategic relationships through active partnership working and co-operation with all Norfolk authorities and agencies.

This strategy and delivery plan sets out our response to the homelessness agenda. Considerable work has already been done by individual associations, however, through a collaborative approach, we believe the alliance can develop this further. Our delivery plan sets out clear, concise and achievable actions that we feel add tangible value to the citizens of Norfolk.

We want to work with local authority partners to achieve the Government's target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. We are committed to effective partnership working between authorities and agencies to prevent homelessness in Norfolk.

We look forward to working with you.

Mark Jones

Chair of the RSL Alliance July 2007 – July 2008

My role takes me all over the country to discuss how to tackle homelessness with housing associations and their partners. A recurring issue is the need to develop effective planning and service delivery between organisations and across administrative boundaries. This needs to happen to continue the development of services that prevent and tackle homelessness but often there are many barriers to overcome. For this reason, the development of a joint homelessness strategy by the Norfolk RSL Alliance is both refreshing and exciting.

It's also a good read! It explains some of the effective work the associations are already doing, including some examples of specific services and schemes. However, there is valuable discussion about how, through working together, organisations can do more. Most importantly, there is a joint action plan that will deliver real change and significantly progress tackling homelessness in Norfolk.

This is the first document of its kind in England so I hope it will receive support to make it successful and that others learn from what can be achieved by working in partnership.

Nick Sedgwick

Special Advisor (Homelessness), Homelessness Action Team, The Housing Corporation.

Strategy 2008 - 2011

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The Norfolk RSL Alliance

The Norfolk RSL Alliance brings together senior staff from Registered Social Landlords that promote, contribute to and influence the delivery of housing and sustainable communities in Norfolk.

Its objectives are to:

- a. Assist in the delivery of sub-regional housing strategies
- b. Maximise the resources for community investment in the sub-region from central and regional government and other external sources
- c. Encourage more effective use of available resources through increased efficiency, innovation and joint working
- d. Promote continuous improvement in the quality of housing and delivery of sustainable communities in Norfolk by sharing expertise and best practice
- e. To make the links in all policy work between better housing and cross-cutting issues such as building communities, homelessness, anti-social behaviour, including meeting the Respect Agenda, Supporting People, child poverty, health and regeneration.
- f. To inform members of the latest thinking on current issues relating to housing and the wider social cohesion agenda and provide a consultative forum to consider and respond to issues

Membership

Membership of the Alliance is open to any RSL owning or managing homes in Norfolk. Currently its' members are:

Broadland Housing Association,
Cotman Housing Association,
Freebridge Community Housing,
The Guinness Trust,
Victory Housing Trust,
Orbit Housing Association,
Peddars Way Housing Association,,
Saffron Housing Trust
Stonham (Home Group Limited)
Wherry Housing Association.

In addition St. Martins Housing Trust, Orwell Housing Association and Housing 21 have contributed to the development of this strategy.

Executive Summary

This document is the product of a series of tailored meetings and individual discussions during late 2007 - January 2008. It is a collective statement of intent for RSL homelessness prevention services across Norfolk.

These meetings enabled the development of the strategy and delivery plan inclusive of the identification of the resources to deliver it. We have sought to produce a strategy and delivery plan that is clear, concise, realistic and of added value to individual members of the Alliance, our partners and the communities we work in.

This innovative work in Norfolk is the first such strategy produced to date nationally.

We have analysed the current activities and aspirations of the individual RSLs in the Alliance in relation to homelessness and in line with the Housing Corporation's Tackling Homelessness guidance (2006) and its six themes:

- Better Partnership Working
- Sustainable and Mixed Communities
- Preventing Homelessness
- Making Better Use of Existing Stock
- Directing Investment
- Good Practice

The strategy articulates the Alliance's response to the key issues outlined in the Housing Corporation guidance as follows:

- Supporting local authorities in their enabling role in tackling homelessness;
- Ensuring that housing associations are fulfilling their statutory duty to work with local authorities to contribute to tackling homelessness;
- Promoting co-operation between housing associations and local authorities in tackling homelessness;
- Embedding prevention of homelessness and tenancy sustainment as one of housing associations' strategic and operational priorities;
- Promoting better use of existing housing stock; and
- Contributing to reducing homelessness in line with a commitment to promoting sustainable and mixed communities.

We have consulted with key stakeholders, e.g. representatives of local authorities, not-for-profit service providers and other partners on the approach outlined. We have sought their views on:

- The direction of the strategy
- Additional items for the action plan
- Their commitment to the actions outlined
- Additional case studies illustrating effective interventions

Further information

For more information about the strategy, please contact:

Mark Jones
Chair of the Alliance
Managing Director
Wherry housing association
6, Central Avenue
St Andrews Business Park
Norwich
Norfolk
NR7 OHR
Tel : 01603 703811
Mobile : 07736 028494

The strategy has been facilitated by, and in association with:



Space East
1st Floor
36 St Giles Street
Norwich
NR2 1LL

01603 617299
tim@space-east.org

Homelessness – the policy environment

Source: Shelter, Homeless Link and CLG.

Background

The legal framework - The Homeless Persons Act 1977, the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 - defines who is entitled to receive permanent housing by/on behalf of a local authority. The main homelessness duty is owed to people who have a 'priority need' and are not 'intentionally homeless' (that is, judged as having made themselves homeless through their own actions). Priority need groups include households with children and people who are vulnerable as a result of old age or mental or physical disability (set out in Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities). People not in these categories are only entitled to receive advice and assistance on how to find suitable accommodation. Other groups of people also homeless or at risk of homelessness but not automatically given statutory protection include:

- Rough sleepers
- People living in temporary and/or other insecure accommodation

Since 2002, Government policy on homelessness has been co-ordinated through the Homelessness Directorate. The Directorate published 'More than a Roof', a strategy document setting out its new approach to tackling homelessness. This formed the basis of The Homelessness Act 2002. (See the key issues page on 'local authorities and the Homelessness Act'.) The Homelessness Directorate has since issued advice to local authorities (Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness) setting out expectations to achieve specific objectives and targets.

Causes

Homelessness is the most extreme form of housing need. It can affect anyone: families, childless couples and single people. But homelessness is not just a housing problem: it has impacts on health, educational achievement and employment opportunities.

The causes of homelessness are many and varied and each homeless person and household will have become homeless due to their own unique circumstances:

- Loss of income, including unemployment - leading to people falling behind with their rent or mortgage repayments
- Relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, offending behaviour, problems with a landlord, family disputes, or friends and relatives no longer being able to provide accommodation. Mental health or substance misuse problems may also have an impact.

- Lack of available affordable housing - combined with adverse economic and social circumstances. This is the most common route to becoming homeless.
- A substantial number of people housed by local authorities - up to 30% in some areas - have previously been accepted as homeless ('repeat homeless' cases).

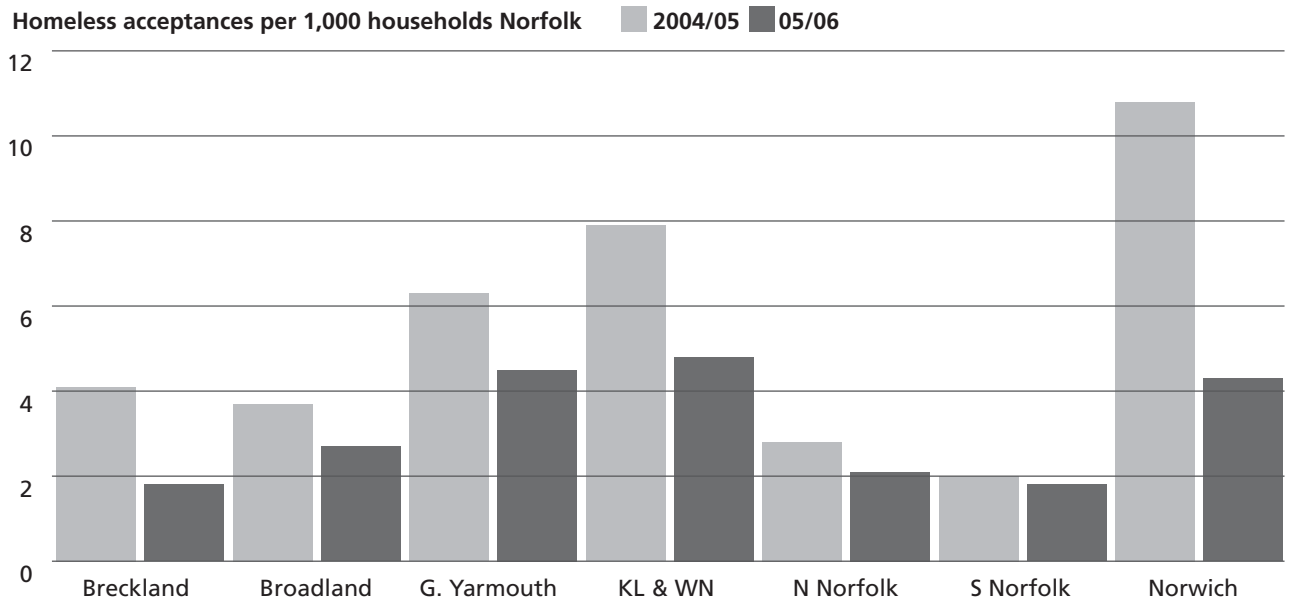
Homelessness is therefore caused by a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider economy and the housing market and others which are personal to the individual or family. However across the majority of homeless groups, the 'personal' factors that cause homelessness are relatively unrecorded and unanalysed.

Structural Factors

The overall supply of affordable housing in England is a key structural factor. In some parts of the country demand is pushing prices up beyond the reach of a larger proportion of the population, thereby increasing pressure on the rented sectors. In turn, this pressure pushes private rents up, causing more people to apply for social housing.

Against this rising demand in some areas, the social housing sector has declined as a proportion of all housing in recent years. There are over one million fewer homes owned by local authorities and housing associations now than in 1977, with social housing falling over that period from 31% to 20% of all housing. The decline in the number of homes in the social sector reflects in part dramatic cuts in public investment during the 1990s. The Housing Corporation's Approved Development Programme and credit approvals for local authority capital investment have been the main sources of funding for social housing during the last decade. Despite increased investment, new social housing development has not yet reached the levels of earlier years because of increases in land and construction costs. In addition to cuts in investment, there are other reasons for the decline in available social housing. Nationally, 1.7 million council homes were sold, mainly under the Right to Buy scheme, between 1979 and 2001. While sales under the Right to Buy scheme have declined, they remain significant in high demand areas.

Although this has resulted in many families and single people being able to buy their homes, with all the benefits to the community that this brings, it has nevertheless removed vast numbers of social houses from public ownership and limited local authorities' scope for housing homeless families and others in housing need. The regeneration of housing estates is vital and often leads to higher sustained occupancy rates. However, it can result in fewer houses where high rise developments are replaced with lower density homes, without additional provision.



Supplementary Table: Local authorities' action under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 and 1996 Housing Acts: Quarter 1,2,3 2007

Government Office region or local authority area	Decisions made during the quarter				Households accommodated by the authority at the end of the quarter						
	Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally	Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	Eligible, but not homeless	Total decisions	Bed and breakfast (including shared annexe)	Hostels (including women's refuges)	LA/HA stock	Private sector leased (by LA or RSL)	Other Types (inc private landlord)	Total in TA	"Homeless at home" awaiting accommodation at end of quarter
Quarter 1											
Breckland	6	2	11	45	8	8	15	1	6	38	5
Broadland	1	1	11	43	6	10	2	11	9	38	0
Great Yarmouth	9	5	50	100	19	0	16	101	7	143	0
Kings Lynn & W Norfolk	5	23	11	87	2	20	21	0	8	51	18
North Norfolk	2	11	2	35	0	0	25	14	4	43	1
Norwich	17	19	5	68	4	14	63	0	7	88	1
South Norfolk	3	1	8	56	7	20	4	7	6	44	0
Quarter 2											
Breckland	6	2	16	49	9	9	14	2	5	39	8
Broadland	0	4	17	52	6	5	1	10	16	38	0
Great Yarmouth	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Kings Lynn & W Norfolk	7	14	7	79	1	18	18	0	9	46	18
North Norfolk	5	18	7	62	0	0	25	11	3	39	1
Norwich	9	9	7	44	12	10	5	0	4	31	1
South Norfolk	3	1	8	39	7	20	3	5	7	42	0
Quarter 3											
Breckland	5	4	11	50	14	9	14	3	6	46	15
Broadland	2	5	24	67	2	7	4	9	13	35	0
Great Yarmouth	12	2	55	113	36	0	14	97	11	158	0
Kings Lynn & W Norfolk	5	3	10	50	1	20	13	0	7	41	5
North Norfolk	4	7	4	40	0	0	27	12	2	41	1
Norwich	17	5	10	57	19	2	3	0	10	34	3
South Norfolk	3	2	17	58	5	14	4	6	3	32	0

In some rural areas of the country the purchase of properties as holiday homes or by long distance commuters has driven up prices, with a resulting shortage of affordable owner occupied housing for local residents on an average wage.

Future Trends

New legislation and the adoption of a strategic approach represent major steps forward in tackling homelessness. However, levels of homelessness remain high, with record numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.

Current situation/problems

The shortage of affordable housing in many parts of England has reached a critical point, with a chronic lack of affordable homes. While the 'Rough Sleepers Initiative' target of reducing the number sleeping rough by two thirds was met in many areas, numbers have started creeping back up.

The upward trend in the number of single person or one parent family households will increase the pressure on housing supply and could lead to an increase in the number of households who apply for local authority assistance. Against this, continued stable economic growth should result in more people being better able to afford their own home or to rent privately.

However, any rise in unemployment, triggering mortgage and rent arrears, may also lead to greater levels of homelessness. The complexity of these and other interacting factors means that it is very difficult to predict future trends in homeless acceptances and wider homeless problems.

Key government aims

- Increase prevention
- Avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation over 6 weeks for families with children

- Reduce the number of rough sleepers from the 1998 baseline
- To halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010.

Temporary Accommodation Target

- Baseline 31 December 2004:
- National – 101,030
- East of England – 8,350

Progress to date 31 December 2006:

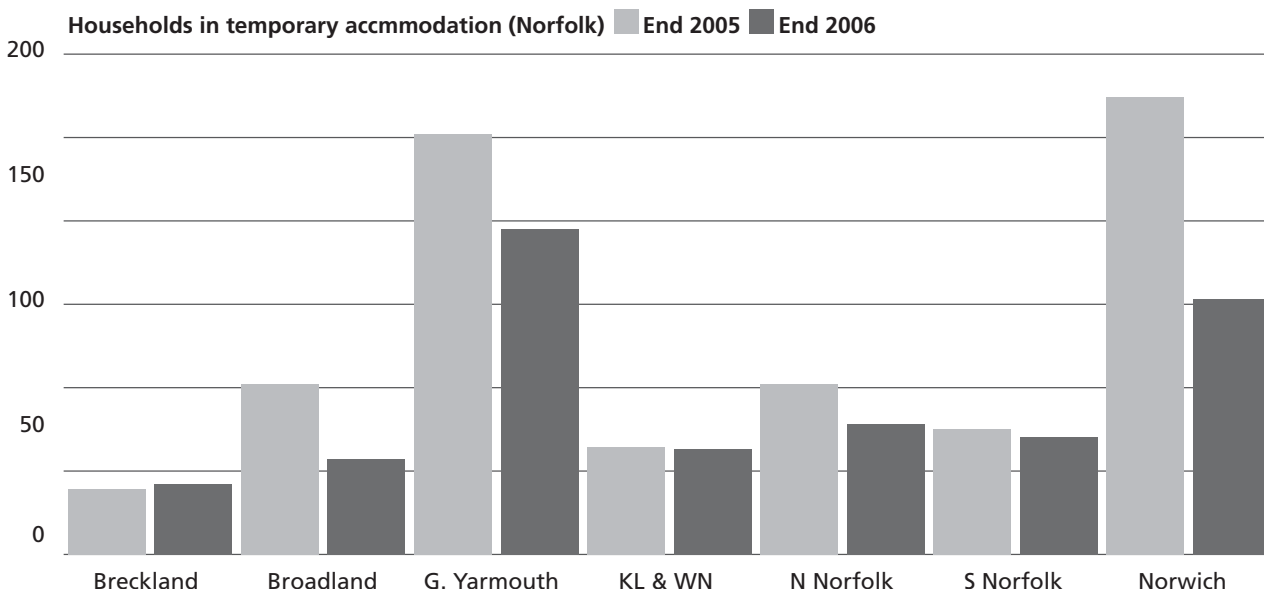
- National – 89,510
- East of England – 5,540

Temporary Accommodation in the East of England:

- 43% in Social Housing
- 30% in Private Sector Housing leased by RSL or LA
- 17% in hostels

Emerging Targets/Priorities

- By 2010 16/17 year olds will not be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation unless it is an emergency and restricted to six weeks
 - Improved access to mediation services
 - Establish more supported lodgings schemes
- 16/17 year olds - currently 9% of all homelessness acceptances are 16/17 years olds. From CLG survey (2006) East of England had 100 16/17 year olds in B & B.



Key messages / recommendations

More affordable housing is needed to tackle current shortages and help reduce numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.

- Housing authorities must work closely with other statutory and voluntary sector bodies to produce a range of policies and services that will help prevent current and future homelessness. Services should include tenancy sustainment and rental deposit schemes. There must also be close liaison with Housing Benefit and rent arrears teams
- The Housing Benefit system should be made simpler, more transparent and promoting greater choice for claimants
- Allocations schemes and policies should be developed in the context of homelessness reviews and strategies and with regard to current/future levels of homelessness in the area
- Homelessness prevention interventions should not be targeted exclusively towards households judged likely to meet the 'priority need' test
- Data gathered for homelessness strategies and reviews, should be used to inform homelessness prevention priorities
- Look at the scope for developing specialist skills within the agencies / stakeholders
- Establish clear service standards, performance indicators and (where applicable) targets for homelessness prevention services

The Homelessness Act 2002 is central to the 'prevention-focused' approach CLG seeks to encourage among local authorities. Under the Act every housing authority is required to develop a homelessness strategy, based on a review of homelessness in their local area. Strategies must aim to prevent homelessness and ensure that accommodation and support will be available for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Identify the services needed to prevent homelessness occurring or reoccurring
- Identify the resources currently available to meet these needs and additional resources required
- Involve public, voluntary and private agencies in partnership work
- Design or review homelessness prevention service referral procedures to ensure that these maximize appropriate referrals to the particular service concerned
- Design monitoring systems for homelessness prevention to collect data on interventions, on service user outcomes and on service quality
- The costs of homelessness are high. Provided homelessness prevention schemes are run efficiently and are effective, preventing homelessness will

result in substantial savings, for both local and central government

- Establish "spend to save" policies on prevention within services
- The likely significance of the indirect costs of homelessness may be an additional argument for targeting prevention at any household at risk of homelessness, not just those likely to be owed the main homelessness duty.
- The wider impacts of homelessness – and the costs to other services associated with them, such as health, education, social services and the police – should provide good evidence for officers to use in securing the engagement of those other services in formulating a homelessness strategy for a district

Our partners and the policy environment in Norfolk

The strategic context

There is little substantive baseline evidence of the demand for homeless services across the county. Further work based on an assessment of LA housing needs assessments is necessary and forms part of this three year strategy. There are however a range of homelessness and supported housing related strategies that provide a substantive assessment of the needs and priorities across the county.

We have ensured that we have cross-referenced this draft strategy with the wide range of other related strategies both thematically and geographically. These include:

- Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2008-11
- Greater Norwich Hostels Strategy 2007-11
- Draft Great Yarmouth and Waveney Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013
- Breckland Homeless Strategy Review and Action Plan 2007
- Rural East Anglia Homelessness Review (draft 2007)
- Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Homelessness Strategy (2007)
- North Norfolk Homelessness Strategy (2006)
- The draft Norfolk Supporting People Strategy 2008-2013
- The draft recommendations from the Norfolk Supporting People Move On plan.
- Norfolk Housing and Support Strategy and Action Plan for Offenders / Norfolk Offender Accommodation Strategy
- Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership Strategy (2007)
- BME Housing Needs Research (2007)
- Norfolk Mental Health Accommodation Action Plan (2006)

We have identified the following as common themes across these strategies:

- Services are client /customer focussed - service users influence service development
- Priority should be given to early intervention to prevent homelessness (youth homelessness requires particular attention)
- Effective support into more independent accommodation is critical
- There is a need to secure an adequate supply of suitable accommodation (including private sector rented accommodation and permanent affordable accommodation)
- There is a need to make best use of all housing stock to prevent homelessness
- The use of temporary accommodation needs to be reduced and the quality and location of the temporary accommodation used needs improving
- There is a need for high quality housing advice, assessment, support and resettlement services (backed up by effective information sharing arrangements)
- Access to, and participation in, good quality training is necessary
- Effective multi-agency working to prevent homelessness is required (i.e. landlords, probation, prisons and offenders' agencies, Norfolk County Council Children's and Adults Services, Supporting People and the not-for-profit sector)
- There is a need to explore and exploit all funding opportunities

In this context the Norfolk RSL Alliance sees its responsibilities as follows:

- To support local authorities with the formulation and delivery of the National Affordable Housing Programme 08/11 and related sub-regional housing and homelessness strategies and action plans, in accordance with Government requirements.
- To ensure sub-regional strategic and investment priorities and targets including local authority Homelessness Strategies & Hostels Strategies are based on a robust analysis of local housing requirements, stock condition, housing market conditions and resources available, and have been formulated in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.
- To develop and maintain effective arrangements between the Alliance and the public, private and voluntary agencies that contribute to the delivery of strategic housing objectives, including the Housing Corporation, Norfolk Supporting People, social care and health care commissioners and providers, the police service, Norfolk Offender Accommodation Forum and the probation service, Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership and other relevant commissioning bodies.
- Identifying opportunities for joint working and joint project delivery between housing providers including through joint commissioning of projects and services and shared working on areas of common interest. In this instance, specifically in relation to homelessness.

The role of housing associations

Housing associations are registered with the Housing Corporation. Nationally, housing associations are England's largest provider of affordable rented homes and our rents are regulated by the Government. Housing associations are not-for-profit businesses and are not part of the public sector. Many receive government funding, for example for building new homes, providing specialist housing or regenerating neighbourhoods, but most of our income comes from rents and associations are able to borrow against their property holdings on the private market.

Whilst, each housing association determines its own allocation policy, all are obliged to select tenants according to housing needs and almost all take new tenants through nominations from local authorities. Some Associations also make use of specialist referrals arrangements or have arrangements with, for example, social services or not-for-profit agencies.

Some housing associations offer support for people with a range of needs including older people, people with disabilities and learning difficulties, and people who have been homeless. Many are involved in community initiatives such as employment training, regeneration and projects with children and young people.

Some of the key products and services housing associations provide in Norfolk are:

Homes for rent

Housing associations provide around 33,380 homes for rent in Norfolk and will continue to develop stock through development programmes during 2008-10. Most of these homes are rented at affordable rates, while a significant minority are sold through low-cost home ownership schemes.

Low-cost home ownership

Housing associations offer a range of affordable home ownership options, often known as shared ownership, including:

- Newbuild Homebuy where people buy a share in a home and rent the rest from a housing association
- Social Homebuy, which allows housing association tenants to buy a stake in the home they live in
- Open Market Homebuy, where a housing association lends people a lump sum towards the price of a property of their choosing, to be repaid when the property is sold.

Regeneration

Housing associations in Norfolk are involved in regeneration across the county. We are key partners in large scale programmes such as Bretts in Gt Yarmouth, the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area in Kings Lynn, Mile Cross, Marlpit and Larkman and Riverside in Norwich. They also refurbish and improve former council estates

under stock transfer programmes, and operate community regeneration initiatives to improve the local environment and cut social exclusion.

Supported housing and floating support

Housing associations provide homes with support for people who need some assistance to live independently. These include: sheltered housing for older people; rehabilitation for people with drug and alcohol problems; housing with job and life skills training for young people or people who have been homeless; and housing with specialist support for people with disabilities.

A member of our Alliance, Stonham (Home Group Limited) (along with Julian Housing) provide floating support for vulnerable adults across the majority of the county and operates the Gateway for referral access to the Great Yarmouth floating support service.

Temporary accommodation

We provide temporary accommodation such as hostels for homeless people. We also lease accommodation from private landlords and buy homes in the general market adding to the supply which is available to local authorities to use as temporary homes for people in urgent need of housing, particularly families and key workers.

Community services

We provide community services including employment and enterprise training, financial advice, crime reduction projects, children and young people initiatives, community centres and many other initiatives.

Adding Value? Rebuilding Lives

Recent research in the East of England, commissioned by Space East highlighted the value of the not for profit sector to the regional economy. Not-for-profit organisations in the supported housing sector make a significant contribution to the regional economy. For every £1 put into the sector by the public purse, benefits of £1.37 are derived over a period of just one year. These benefits are in terms of savings made to health, crime, homelessness, independent living and social services costs.

The value of early intervention

These benefits are compounded over the years, emphasising the value of preventative services. The study looked at a number of case studies to identify pathways and to cost the different interventions for individuals over a number of years. This showed that early intervention to avoid exclusion becoming entrenched can generate savings of a significant scale.

Key success factors

The report identified some key success factors for interventions targeting social exclusion via the supported housing sector. These points reinforce the findings from previous research, from the Social Exclusion Unit, Audit Commission, Cabinet Office and other sources, and reflect the areas where the not-for-profit sector often has particular expertise and a proven track record in delivery.

These success factors include the following:

- Provision of a range of support and advice services in addition to housing provision, in particular finance-related advice, health services, education and training and employment support. Ongoing support by trusted individuals to provide encouragement, motivation and

challenge was found to be a significant factor in encouraging take up of services

- Support to enhance life skills. Successful outcomes often depended on individuals being involved in setting goals and taking ownership of their support plan
- Good social capital and local networks, and an ability to draw on a range of formal and informal sources of support for the client within their community. This aspect is increasingly recognised as important to achieve successful outcomes and there are examples of commissioners now including it in their commissioning requirements, for example in Lambeth and Suffolk. For a full report go to www.space-east.org

Investment East

Investment East demonstrates the sector's significant contribution to the Regional Economic Strategy and to the Regional Housing and Regional Social Strategies. It highlights the correlation between housing investment and wider community gains. housing associations are iN Business for Neighbourhoods and through this are assisting in delivering growth in a sustainable manner.

Headlines: 2003-2008

- £2.2bn spent on developing 21,000 affordable homes
- £7m investment in non-housing capital projects
- £21m in people-based projects
- £2.5 m p.a. on staffing Community investment

Community investment

Developing economic skills base

- Delivered 63 projects
- Invested almost £2.5 million
- Assisted over 640 people per annum to access jobs
- Trained 2,500 people
- Offered personal and social development training to a further 2,500 people

Children and young people

- Invested £7.65 m
- Assisted 18,000 young people
- Delivered 158 projects
- Over 9,500 accessing sport
- Over 6,500 improving educational attainment
- Diversionary activities

Safer and stronger communities

- Delivered 167 projects
- Invested over £8.17 million in this area
- Assisted over 12,400 people to overcome financial exclusion
- Delivered community cohesion projects benefiting over 24,000 people
- Undertaken greener or liveability initiatives that impact on over 12,700 homes across the region
- Over 34,000 people engaged in the Respect agenda or anti-crime initiatives which also impacted on 12,250 homes.

Healthier communities and older people

- Delivered 61 projects
- Invested over £2.5 million

Key messages

- Making a vital contribution to the regional economy
- Working in partnership to deliver truly sustainable communities
- Investing in the future for new and existing communities
- Interested in sustainability not just growth

Investment East is based upon independent research undertaken by Helen Cope. The full report is available at: www.housing.org.uk or www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Homes provided through the Social Housing Grant Norfolk

The figures given cover all local authority areas in the county, including any unitary authorities. They summarise information related to homes provided through the Social Housing Grant over the last nine years. The 2006-08 data are estimates, based on current forecasts.

Number of homes provided for rent in the last nine years	4,486
Number of homes to be provided for rent in 2006-08	1,077
Number of homes provided for low-cost ownership in the last nine years	866
Number of homes to be provided for low-cost ownership in 2006-08	389
Number of rural homes provided in the last nine years	827
Number of rural homes to be provided in 2006-08	379
Number of families housed in the last nine years	1,987
Number of families to be housed in 2006-08	663
Number of 3+ bedroom homes to be provided in 2006-08	285
Number of key workers housed in 2004-06	163
Number of key workers to be housed in 2006-08	144
Proportion of homes to meet EcoHomes 'Very Good' standard in 2006-08	95%
Number of housing association homes in a decent condition	25,948
Proportion of housing association homes in a decent condition	83.0%
Total amount spent by the Corporation in the last nine years	£125,846,546
Total amount to be spent in 2006-08	£46,309,415

Housing Corporation 2006

In addition, approximately £125 million pounds of private finance has been raised by RSLs in delivering the affordable housing programme in Norfolk over the last 9 years.

How housing associations currently address homelessness related issues in Norfolk

Theme 1: Partnership working

There is ongoing dialogue between RSL Alliance members and local authority partners through a range of forums and through formal liaison on housing stock. There are extensive levels of liaison between housing associations and charitable agencies. When individual RSL strategies are produced, endorsement is sought from key partner organisations.

However, there are few examples of formal partnership arrangements with local authorities and other partner organisations in agreeing strategies specifically relating to homelessness. Partnership on an operational basis, with local authorities and other statutory organisations on specific client needs is minimal. There is also little evidence of protocols with other service providers to aid joint working in tackling homelessness, in particular with the PCT, NDAP or social services.

"We have a partnership agreement in place with a specialist Homelessness support provider, which enables them to access our buildings and facilities expertise in order to provide high quality direct access accommodation to homeless people in Norwich".

Nominations

Lettings by housing associations in Norfolk as a result of local authority nominations vary but the majority of RSL Alliance members in Norfolk accept between 50-100%. The average across 6 members for 2006-07 was 71% (with 22% of these provided to the statutory homeless). We recognise that it would be helpful to benchmark these figures against national and / or regional figures.

The Alliance will undertake a critical analysis and impact assessment of our lettings policies in which the views of local authority strategic enabling partners will be sought. We will look at what our lettings policies state in respect of accepting young tenants, tenants with previous rent debts, tenants where histories of offending behaviour, poor mental health or problematic drug use. We will also look at tenancy surrender policies and their implementation.

Saffron is committed to working closely with South Norfolk Council in trying to satisfy the local housing need through the Common Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings in line with the strategic objectives and legal obligations placed upon the local authority, including providing access to households who are accepted as being statutorily homeless.

Extract from Access to Housing Policy

Some members have information sharing protocols with local authorities. We support the introduction of a countywide information sharing protocol that would enable a consistent approach to capturing and managing support needs. We are currently involved in a project commissioned by the Housing Corporation to draft such a document. To be most effective the protocol will also include key agencies including adult care services, the police and the probation service.

We will explore the potential for integration into the existing health and social care joint information sharing protocol and it would make sense for our work to be developed within this framework.

Credit Union in Thetford - Norfolk

"Almost 2 million people on low incomes are denied access to basic financial services. They are often driven to exploitative doorstep lenders charging crippling interest rates, which averaged 177% APR last year."
National Housing Federation, (April 2006).

Thetford is an area with one of the highest levels of rural financial deprivation. Financial exclusion, access to basic banking services and access to affordable credit are key issues for local residents.

In partnership with the Keystone Development Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Peddars Way HA, a member of the Flagship Housing Group, has funded a credit union with a start-up fund of £10,000. It also provides a collection point to handle cash at its estate based office in Thetford.

High interest doorstep lending from both regulated and un-regulated sources was rife on the estate with the lowest doorstep lending rates available being 64% APR.

The Rainbow Saver Anglia Credit Union Ltd, is owned and run by its members as a financial co-operative, and will give advice and guidance on how to manage finances.

It provides residents with a savings scheme whereby they might save as little, or as much, as they like.

The service is run by volunteers but, like any bank, is regulated by the Financial Services Authority and Members can vote for other members to become credit union officers, which also contributes to community cohesion

Theme 2: Sustainable and Mixed Communities

RSL Alliance members are involved in a range of activities to help tenants address debts and benefit issues. For example through partnership working with the Community Legal Service, a secondment from CAB on Money Advice, through employing debt management advisors and through employment and training schemes.

Funds are also made available to Tenancy Support Workers to aid those residents unable to purchase basic furnishings and white goods. Grants are sourced and applications are assisted and sponsored where necessary.

"We work in partnership with Norfolk Credit Union and offer reduced weeks membership prior to borrowing and provide a 'loan guarantee' for some loans" - Saffron HT

The majority of members carry out detailed risk assessments for all new residents to identify support needs and tenancy sustainability. All follow allocations procedures that allow for an appeals process. All Associations seek to work closely and in partnership with local authorities to be more proactive in the prevention of homelessness through giving appropriate advice on other housing options available, and making sure that the housing application of any potential homeless case has the appropriate priority approved by their Allocations and Lettings Schemes.

"Wherry has void target times, by reducing the re-let period this ensures properties are void for the minimum amount of time. Wherry has a robust system to ensure the nominees are able to maintain the tenancy offered.

We also work closely with the strategic housing team on a day to day basis at an operational level."

A number of Alliance members are researching and developing local lettings policies to address incidents of ASB, and address the support needs of vulnerable people. Where they are in place individual area local lettings policies are based on tenancy sustainability data as well as anti-social behaviour and arrears profiling.

The Alliance is committed to undertaking and sharing a work stream across its membership in which management interventions around arrears, meeting support needs or ASB either resulted in homelessness or in an outcome through which homelessness was prevented.

A number of Norfolk's RSLs operate starter tenancies. Some Alliance members are currently piloting schemes in order to identify problems at an early stage and to enable

an Association to take effective action leading to the sustainment of the tenancy. These are being closely monitored to assess whether they are appropriate and effective.

Lastly, we recognise the rapidly changing demographics of Norfolk. We seek to respond appropriately and in an informed manner.

“Broadland housing association directly funds three dedicated tenancy supporter workers who ensure that vulnerable customers can successfully sustain their tenancies.

The Association has mainstreamed tenancy support work into its core housing management function. This ensures that existing customers are not unnecessarily exiting the Association’s services and potentiality presenting themselves at a later date as homeless”

Theme 3: Preventing Homelessness

Alliance members recognise the need to appoint Homelessness Champions to drive forward their approaches to tackling homelessness. The role is recognised as important and is currently done within wider job briefs. Similarly, homelessness is not generally considered separately within the majority of corporate plans but through the development of this strategy will be given greater attention. All members seek to ensure that policies reflect best practice and regulatory guidance. However, there are a range of local agreements with a variety of support providers. Many also employ specialist staff to supply debt management and benefit advice as well as a specialist ASB Officers who work closely with the Local CDRP.

Financial support

Across Alliance members during 2006/07

Rent Collection rates average 99.68%

Notices of Seeking Possession served average 0.65%

All members of the Alliance provide access to debt advice at early stages of recovery. Some have also adopted pre-action rent arrears protocols. Some provide options for tenants such as non-Court action providing tenants enter into money advice programmes with Citizens Advice Bureaux. Pre-action protocols, seek to avoid the use of possession orders where possible and encourage repayment agreements. Home visits are made by appointment at key stages during the arrears process. Referrals are made to support/advice agencies as appropriate. These aim to

reduce arrears and further decrease eviction levels. All new tenants are visited in their homes early in their tenancy to identify potential affordability issues or benefit problems. Officers work proactively with local authority housing benefit and homelessness teams and support & advice agencies to seek resolutions and prevent homelessness. Some members have signed SLAs with housing benefit teams and their staff are being trained on housing benefit issues.

We will research the development of a county wide preventative action rent arrears protocol.

Evictions

Evictions are seen as a last resort. Service standards and commitments are operated to ensure enforcement action takes place - as a last resort, in accordance with Housing Corporation Regulatory Code. At the same all members recognise the value of pro-actively working with residents to maximise benefit entitlements, debt management, external support and affordable repayments as well as simply offering a variety of ways to pay.

“Because the Trust is typically the last resort for people who have nowhere else to go, we go to great lengths to avoid eviction for anti-social behaviour”.

Anti-social behaviour

There is considerable investment in anti-social behaviour prevention initiatives. Members are committed to taking firm, prompt and appropriate action in relation to antisocial behaviour. All members have procedures in place to ensure perpetrators of antisocial behaviour are referred to tenancy support services. All are working with key agencies to explore diversionary activities in terms of young people and anti-social behaviour. We also use the legal tools available to address incidents and have successfully obtained injunctions with power of arrest and dispersal orders. Members seek preventative actions through initiatives to prevent ASB and to reduce the risk of homelessness, such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, rehabilitating those taking part and we look at ways in which behaviours can be changed. ASB policies place dispute resolution as a paramount requirement with use of all ASB tools before eviction is considered appropriate.

Domestic Violence

All members have a policy commitment to ensure that the victims of domestic violence are safe from fear and threat of violence. Some provide and fund emergency accommodation and work with key agencies to explore solutions and find alternative sources of accommodation and support. Most members have reporting mechanisms in place and are participating in the Sanctuary Scheme.

Housing Advice

Across the Alliance all frontline staff have a working knowledge of Homelessness legislation and procedures. Experienced staff can offer advice and assistance on queries concerning circumstances that may lead to homelessness, identify any need for support and make the necessary referrals to appropriate agencies such as Stonham Home Stay and Julian Housing Support.

In-house Tenancy Welfare Officers provide housing advice centred on sustaining tenancies. All front-line staff are trained to use housing options such as mutual exchange and internal transfers as a way of mitigating the risk of crisis scenarios that lead to homelessness.

We recognise that as an Alliance we are well placed to work in partnership across a number of specific areas – for example we may roll out an initiative with the Norfolk Drugs and Alcohol Partnership and its Housing Guide which seeks to identify the range of accommodation and policies needed for people who are at risk of homelessness in respect of problematic substance use.

Temporary accommodation

The majority of members provide interim accommodation in accordance with homelessness legislation. Again, support is offered to current and prospective tenants in avoiding homelessness via in-house tenancy support services. Referrals to and joint working with, specialist support agencies (e.g. mental health, substance dependency) are commonly in place.

We will look to develop a series of events that will enable key stakeholders to come together to consider what steps can and should be taken by all relevant agencies to improve our work on preventing homelessness and on providing sustainable housing solutions. We will look at both generic cross cutting issues and also drill down into specific client groups for example, those with substance dependencies and ex-offenders.

The Alliance will work closely and proactively with floating support providers, and with care providers, to ensure vulnerable tenants receive an appropriate mixture of housing management, housing related support and care.

We will also work with Supporting People on the delivery of the Move On Strategy and look at the developing of Move On protocols

Theme 4: Making Better Use of Existing Stock

Re-let times

Across seven members, on average homes are re-let within 31 days. A range of approaches are taken to ensure the occupancy of homes are targeted to those in housing need and not sub-let. Tenancy audits in various forms are implemented by members. Good relations, local presence and intelligence enable staff to have a thorough knowledge of their tenants and communities.

Under occupation

Alliance members encourage tenants to use house exchange to maximise their opportunity of finding a home. This is also done through the common housing registers to ensure that properties are appropriately allocated.

Forming part of continuous improvement plans members are exploring initiatives for under occupation for example financial incentives, priority moves and short term tenancy support through the move process.

It is envisaged that participation in Choice Based Lettings Schemes, which offers an incentive to down-size, may decrease under-occupancy.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is recognised and addressed through current Allocations and Lettings Schemes by the relatively high number of points that can be awarded for overcrowding. Most commonly this is an issue addressed via the Common Housing Register administered by local authorities and by advice and support on alternative housing options. Mutual Exchange Options are promoted. CBL banding policies again may assist in reducing overcrowding. There are also some ongoing discussions with local authorities regarding possible co-funding property rebuilds and refurbishments in order to provide larger units.

Maximising the contribution of the private sector

There is minimal involvement with the private rented sector. This is largely seen as the remit and responsibility of the local authorities. We will research our role and contribution towards the operation of rent deposit and /or tenancy deposit schemes and our possible contribution and role in private sector leasing schemes.

Temporary accommodation

We provide a portfolio of temporary accommodation much of which is purpose built and managed as specific schemes with dedicated staff. Procedures are in place to ensure standards are maintained. Occupancy is reported to local authorities on a regular basis. Some members of the Alliance provide hostel accommodation. Accommodation for the homeless is provided within existing stock and this provision was made within some stock transfer agreements. Some members are in discussions with housing partnerships regarding suitable vacant properties for conversion and use as interim

accommodation specifically addressing the needs, where appropriate, of vulnerable groups e.g. 16-18 year olds.

Reducing temporary accommodation by 2010

Members of the Associations have Shared Ownership schemes and Homebuy schemes and are increasing the supply of affordable housing by new development and increasing provision of social rented units between 2008 and 2010 which will help address / reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation. In addition members of the Alliance are attempting to maximise the effective use of present stock to meet housing need.

Some members of the Alliance are also considering their role in providing possible "crash-pads" to local authority partners.

Theme 5: Directing Investment

All new schemes are developed in partnership with local authorities and other key partners to ensure that supply is addressing real demand. Development policies are targeted at tackling housing need. Growth strategies / development plans closely consider housing need. Demand for the product or service is critical when designing new services. Associations work with local authorities to ensure that housing needs identified in an area (by housing needs surveys, housing market assessments, housing strategies and register statistics) are accommodated by the provision of new accommodation including specialist provision.

Customer care and post tenancy surveys are undertaken by Associations. Although we know that our schemes have a major impact on reducing homelessness, there is currently no in-depth assessment of their impact.

Alliance members will look to integrate supported housing to achieve mixed developments on larger sites as a matter of course. Additionally we will acknowledge and build into development processes the understanding that units for people with physical disabilities require a larger footprint.

We will identify where the work of our Associations contributes directly and indirectly to the 35 Local Area Agreement indicators and targets that are developed and agreed for Norfolk.

Access to funding to deliver homes that tackle homelessness

Some members of the Alliance access Supporting People funding that enables them to deliver housing support to reduce and prevent homelessness. Developments (many of which are rented to homeless households) are funded by the Housing Corporation, local authorities and other public sector organisations (i.e. English Partnership), and by competitive borrowing rates that allow many schemes to be developed without public subsidy.

The Alliance will undertake further investigatory work to determine whether all funding streams are being accessed to assist in the prevention of homelessness.

As provider of last resort, it is difficult for the Trust to take a strategic view and assess the impact of its activities on the incidence and prevalence of homelessness. Our view is that homelessness will never be totally eradicated, because people fall out of relationships, lose homes and jobs.

Some people simply cannot cope with the stress and strains of modern life and with the closure of long-stay psychiatric hospitals and the disintegration of extended family support networks, they end up on the streets. A housing response is obviously required along with related support services.

St Martin's Housing Trust

Theme 6: Sharing Good Practice

We will endeavour to share our work where it is proven to be effective amongst ourselves and with stakeholders. We recognise the value of innovation and research into continually improving our services and we will establish effective ways of doing this.

Theme 7: Effective Communication

We will regularly communicate with our partners and stakeholders through press releases, publications and events. We will compile a communications plan and we will develop this as part of work on community engagement strategies. We are keen to demonstrate the impact of the strategy and the activities stemming from it.

We will formally launch the Alliance and the strategy and we plan to roll out the dissemination of the strategy nationally as agreed and with the support of the Housing Corporation.



Our common purpose

In partnership and in association with key partners:

- We seek to make a real difference
- We will provide forward thinking, demand-driven, added value and cost effective services that seek to reduce homelessness
- We will offer communities leadership, choice, good value and access across our services
- We are committed to jointly directing investment into homelessness prevention services
- We will share ideas, experiences and risks
- We seek to positively shape and influence related policy developments
- We will actively showcase and promote the contribution of Social Landlords in Norfolk

Our vision is straightforward

In line with a range of policy drivers and a commitment to promoting sustainable and mixed communities:

- We will proactively work with key partners in their role in tackling homelessness
- We will contribute to reducing homelessness through aligning our priorities with related housing and homelessness strategies
- We will embed the prevention of homelessness and sustaining tenancies as key strategic and operational priorities
- Through innovation and creativity we will make best use of existing housing stock

What are we trying to achieve?

Our strategic aims

- i We will have demonstrable, strong working arrangements across the Alliance
- ii We will ensure we have strong partnerships with statutory, charitable and private sectors
- iii We will develop criteria to measure success and value for money
- iv Using diverse approaches, we will increase access to services for all our residents and communities
- v We will increase opportunities for leverage to fund our activities
- vi We will seek to increase supply and development
- vii We will actively showcase and promote the contribution of Social Landlords in Norfolk

To reduce homelessness, by 2011, will have achieved the following:

i We will have demonstrable, strong working arrangements across the Alliance

We will:

- be clear about our constituents and stakeholders
- be clear about our different roles and priorities
- ensure consistency across our services
- research experiences in accessing homelessness services
- coordinate representation of the Alliance at both strategic and operational levels

ii We will ensure we have strong partnerships with statutory, charitable and private sectors

We will

- Assess and build on agreements with key agencies and other stakeholders
- Participate and where appropriate lead on inter-agency work where it benefits communities
- Promote regular dialogue with key partners and tenants through our Alliance meetings
- Support the development of private sector leasing schemes

iii We will develop criteria to measure success and value for money

We will

- monitor the strategy and delivery plan
- cost the strategy

We will also put in place effective mechanisms:

- to analyse needs and gaps
- to measure impact and outcomes
- for feedback from communities
- for shared learning

iv Using diverse approaches, we will increase access to services for all our residents and communities

We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop:

- a range of incentive schemes that alleviate the financial exclusion of our tenants
- starter tenancies schemes
- good practices that strike the right balance between enforcement and prevention and that lead to reduced evictions
- an employment opportunities programme
- an offenders employability initiative
- a county-wide mediation service in conjunction with district strategic housing authorities

- an expanded family support scheme in conjunction with district strategic housing authorities
- a mentoring and coaching scheme for residents
- a formalised empty homes programme

We will also

- encourage a commitment to In-Business for Neighbourhoods by all members of the Alliance

v We will increase opportunities for leverage to fund our activities

We will

- access funding streams for delivering services that assist in reducing homelessness
- research the benefits of a creating a 'Special Purpose Vehicle' to lever in additional funding for the skills and enterprise agenda

vi We will seek to increase supply and development

We will

- Promote well designed and appropriate developments
- Contribute to the development programmes of housing sub regions in tackling homelessness and the additional supply of specialist housing and interim accommodation
- Use information relating to housing need and homelessness in growth strategies

vii We will actively showcase and promote the contribution of Social Landlords in Norfolk

We will

- regularly engage with and respond to residents and the communities we work with
- Regularly communicate with our partners and stakeholders through press releases, publications and events
- Demonstrate the impact of the strategy and the activities stemming from it

Risk analysis

While we are ambitious we also recognise the need to keep the strategy realistic and deliverable.

The implementation of the strategy is dependent on the corporate 'buy in' of individual Associations both at governance and operational levels.

The division of work and resources needs to be fair and equitable across the Alliance.

There is a need to ensure an ongoing commitment to the plan across partners.

The plan requires flexibility within a changing political landscape.

There is a need to demonstrate the tangible benefits of the strategy through measurable outcomes.

The delivery of the strategy will be most effective if it is supported and understood

- by residents and communities.
- by local authorities both at strategic and operational levels.

The delivery of the strategy will also be most effective if there is a focused and continuing engagement with key partners such as not-for-profit agencies, adult care and children's services, probation and prison services.

Delivery Plan – What will we do?

The delivery plan is clearly work in progress. We recognise greater detail is required. These details will be compiled through the creation of the various task groups identified.

Strategic Aim 1: We will have demonstrable, strong working arrangements across the Alliance

Objective: We will be clear about our constituents and stakeholders

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Identify key constituents and stakeholders	Map key agencies and stakeholders	Chair/members	Chair	Mar 08
Agree memorandum of understanding	Individual members sign off agreement		Chair	June 08
Communicate work of Alliance to all stakeholders	Correspond with all stakeholders outlining terms of reference., strategy and delivery plan	Chair/members		June 08

Objective: We will be clear about our different roles and priorities

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Circulate draft strategy for consideration, review and refinement	Consultation period through to 17th December	Time & publication	Space East	Completed
Test the proposals with residents	All members to undertake consultation with tenants		All	June 08
Ensure wide support by partners	Circulate responses to draft Sign off final document			March 08
Establish a homelessness lead for the Alliance	Take through SMT in each association		Chair	
Identify homelessness champions at SMT level in each Association	Take through SMT in each association		Chair	March 08
Finalise Strategy for sign off across individual Associations	Take to each Board for agreement		Chair	March 08

Objective: We will ensure consistency across our services

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Identify a practitioner sub-group to assess current and future needs	Regular meetings Briefing to new group		Chair/ All	March 08
Establish detailed work plans for each work flow			Chair of practitioner group	June 08
Compile a homelessness action plan for individual associations	Remit of each Alliance member		All	Sept 08
Share good practice on pre-eviction protocols	Look at county wide pre-eviction protocol		Freebridge HA Practitioner group	June 08
Share good practice on preventative rent arrears protocols	Look at county wide protocol		Freebridge HA Practitioner group	June 08

Objective: Research experiences in accessing homelessness services				
Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research current diversity across the workforce in relation to the communities we work in	Establish baseline		Practitioner group	June 08
Compile a workforce development programme that ensures our staff are well briefed on diversity and homelessness related issues			Practitioner group	Sept 08
Objective: Coordinate representation of the Alliance at both strategic and operational levels				
Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Map forums and representative bodies			Chair / Executive	March 08
Delegate representation across members of the Alliance			Chair / Executive	March 08

Strategic Aim 2: We will ensure we have strong partnerships with statutory, charitable and private sectors

Objective: Assess and build on agreements with key agencies and other stakeholders

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Work in partnership with local authorities and other partner organisations in agreeing strategies, especially relating to homelessness	Establish regular communication and forums for working in partnership		Executive	March 08
Agree work plans in partnership with local authorities and other partner organisations, at a service level to tackle homelessness			Practitioner group	June 08
Organise a series of events that will enable key stakeholders to come together to consider what steps can and should be taken by all relevant agencies to improve our work on preventing homelessness and on providing sustainable housing solutions.	Events planned for 2008/09		Practitioner group	June 08
Participate in the strategic work being led by local authorities in respect of homelessness prevention, access to and quality of services and move on from hostels.	Agree working protocols with service providers (e.g. hostels) to aid joint working in tackling homelessness		Practitioner group	Sept 09
Assess existing and improve where necessary information sharing protocols between members and other key agencies that enables a consistent approach to capturing and managing support needs.	Ensure that any information sharing protocol developed is consistent with and linked into those used between health and NASSD		Practitioner group	March 09
Work with local authorities to increase the supply of good quality temporary accommodation	Establish regular communication and forum for working in partnership		Executive	Sept 08
We will identify where the work of our Associations contributes directly and indirectly to the 35 LAA local indicators and targets that are developed and agreed for Norfolk.			Executive	June 08

Objective: Participate and where appropriate lead on inter-agency work where it benefits communities

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Map relevant inter-agency forums and opportunities	Assess roles and contribution Associations can make		Executive / Practitioner group	Sept 08
Identify any gaps in representation and fill these	Assess roles and contribution Associations can make		Executive / Practitioner group	Sept 08

Objective: Promote regular dialogue with key partners and tenants through our Alliance meetings				
Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Work with (for example) substance misuse, mental health and offender agencies on relevant issues	Ensure Alliance representation in key relevant strategic and operational work		Executive / Practitioner group	Sept 08
Compile programme of activity with partners	Supporting People, NOAF, MH Accommodation Strategy and N-DAP Housing Strategy Group; and review of sheltered and older person's housing support and the SP Offender Review.		Practitioner group	Sept 08
Work with Supporting People on the delivery of the Move On Strategy and look at the developing of Move On protocols			Practitioner group	Sept 08
Research tenancy surrender policies for ex-offenders and their implementation.			Practitioner group	Sept 08
Look at greater collaboration with MAPPA / PPO schemes			Practitioner group	Sept 08
Ensure Alliance representation in relevant strategic work across the county			Practitioner group	Sept 08
Objective: Support the development of private sector leasing schemes				
Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research existing and planned schemes via LAs and other partners			Practitioner group	Dec 08

Strategic Aim 3: We will develop criteria to measure success and value for money

Objective: Monitor the strategy and delivery plan

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Monitor the strategy and delivery plan	6 monthly reviews		Executive	Ongoing
Create a mechanism to ensure Alliance members are informed of relevant housing needs and plans			Executive	Ongoing
Analyse the Housing Corporation toolkit			Practitioner group	Ongoing
Analyse homelessness statistics available across authorities and other agencies in Norfolk	Via Homelessness Lead for District's Officers Group		Peddars Way HA / Practitioner group	March 08
Undertake a critical analysis and an impact assessment of local lettings policies	Create baseline Consult tenants Seek views of local authority strategic enabling partners. Look at what our lettings policies state in respect of accepting young tenants, tenants with previous rent debts, tenants where histories of offending behaviour, poor mental health or problematic drug use. The Alliance is committed to undertaking and sharing a piece of work across its membership in which management interventions around arrears, meeting support needs or ASB either resulted in homelessness or in an outcome through which homelessness was prevented.		Executive	Sept 08
Where appropriate set up mechanisms to collectively monitor on regular basis (Why are people not accessing affordable housing and why are they leaving?)	Core figures 31/3/08 Annual reports 1. Re-let times for empty homes 2. Rent Collection 3. Tenant Arrears 4. Notices of Seeking Possession served 5. Percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears 6. Approaches to arrears recovery that contribute to homelessness prevention 7. Approaches to anti-social behaviour, harassment and domestic violence contributing to homelessness prevention 8. Rejected through nominations process		Peddars Way HA / Practitioner group	June 08

Strategic Aim 4: Using diverse approaches, we will increase access to services for all our residents and communities.

Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop a range of incentive schemes that alleviate the financial exclusion of our tenants

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Identify leads for researching the proposed services			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Initiate research to include, the benefits and expansion of a credit union and payment incentive schemes			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Explore viability of Norfolk-wide Credit Union to serve Alliance members			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Explore feasibility of rent deposit schemes in conjunction with District Councils and Supporting People			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Explore alternative delivery of financial advice services			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Commission activities based on the plan			Broadland Housing Association	June 08

Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop starter tenancies schemes

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Undertake further research into the advantages and disadvantages of starter tenancies.			Freebridge HA	June 08

Objective: We will actively support research into and develop good practices that strike the right balance between enforcement and prevention and that lead to reduced evictions

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Develop a working arrangement with Stonham HomeStay for early intervention			Stonham (Home Group Limited)	June 08
Look at both generic cross cutting issues (i.e. floating support) and also drill down into specific client groups for example, those with substance dependencies and ex-offenders and those experiencing domestic abuse.	Create schedule of events		Practitioner group	Sept 08

Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop an employment opportunities programme			
Action	Milestones	Resources	By when
Investigate feasibility of subsidiary / partnership for delivery of county wide programme		Broadland Housing Association	March 09
Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop an offenders employability initiative			
Action	Milestones	Resources	By when
Research good practice and current baseline		Broadland Housing Association	March 09
Investigate possible niche contribution and role in offender employability initiatives		Broadland Housing Association	March 09
Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop a county-wide mediation service in conjunction with district strategic housing authorities			
Action	Milestones	Resources	By when
Research good practice and current baseline		Peddars HA	March 09
Investigate possible niche contribution and role in mediation services		Peddars HA	March 09
Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop an expanded family support scheme			
Action	Milestones	Resources	By when
Research good practice and current baseline		Broadland Housing Association	March 09
Investigate possible niche contribution and role in family support schemes		Broadland Housing Association	March 09
Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop a mentoring and coaching scheme for residents			
Action	Milestones	Resources	By when
Research good practice and current baseline		Practitioner group	March 09
Investigate possible niche contribution and role in mentoring and coaching schemes for residents		Stonham (Home Group Limited)	Sept 09

Objective: We will actively support research into and where appropriate develop a formalised empty homes programme

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research current baseline	Via Homelessness Lead for District's Officers Group		Peddars HA	June 08
Support lodging scheme to fill under-occupied homes in conjunction with the SP framework and SP funded supported lodgings provider			Executive	Sept 08
Provide support to new landlords			Executive	Sept 08
Set up training for residents to go into home ownership			Executive	Sept 08
Undertake research into the most effective means to manage under occupation			Executive	Sept 08
Investigate our possible contribution and role in adding additional affordable temporary housing via for example private sector leasing.			Executive	Sept 08
Undertake further investigatory work in respect of the Alliance's role and contribution towards the operation of rent deposit schemes.			Executive	Sept 08
Innovate in our existing stock across the Alliance			Executive	Ongoing

Strategic Aim 5: We will increase opportunities for leverage to fund our activities

Objective: We will access funding streams for delivering services that assist in reducing homelessness

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research potential funding streams			Broadland Housing Association	June 08
Plan applications with key partners			Executive	Sept 08

Objective: Research the benefits of a creating 'Special Purpose Vehicle' to lever in additional funding for the skills and enterprise agenda

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research good practice and current baseline			Broadland Housing Association	Sept 08
Investigate possible advantages and risks of SPV			Broadland Housing Association	March 09

Objective: We will cost the strategy

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Pool current research and produce a baseline across the strategic aims			Executive	Sept 08
Finalise a cost benefit analysis and resource plan			Executive	Sept 08

Objective: We will put in place effective mechanisms to measure impact and outcomes

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research good practice and current baseline	Establish baseline based on strategic aims and delivery plan		Executive / Practitioners group	Ongoing

Objective: We will put in place effective mechanisms for feedback from residents

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research good practice and current baseline			Practitioners group	June 08
Compile proposal for delivery			Practitioners group	Sept 08

Objective: We will put in place effective mechanisms for shared learning			
Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead
Research good practice and current baseline			Practitioners group
Compile proposal			Practitioners group
			By when Sept 08
			Sept 08

Strategic Aim 6: We will seek to increase supply and development

Objective: Promote well designed and appropriate developments

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Work with development teams to further this			Executive	Sept 08
Use Housing Corporation impact assessments			Executive	Sept 08

Objective: Contribute to the development programmes of district councils and housing sub regions in tackling homelessness and the additional supply of specialist housing and interim accommodation

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Research current baseline			Executive	Sept 08
Investigate possible contribution and role in adding additional supply of specialist housing and interim accommodation	Look to integrate supported housing to achieve mixed developments on larger sites as a matter of course.		Executive	Sept 08
	Build into development processes the understanding that units for people with physical disabilities require a larger footprint.			

Objective: Use information relating to housing need and homelessness in growth strategies

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Work with LAs and development teams to further this	Work with District's Lead		Stonham / Executive	Ongoing

Strategic Aim 7: We will actively showcase and promote the contribution of Social Landlords in Norfolk

Objective: We will regularly engage with and respond to residents and the communities we work with

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Ensure this is part of a communications plan			Practitioner group	June 08
Develop as part of work on community engagement strategies			Executive	Sept 08

Objective: Regularly communicate with our partners and stakeholders through press releases, publications and events

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Compile and agree a communications plan			Chair / Executive	March 08
Compile Alliance publicity			Chair / Executive	March 08
Formally launch the Alliance and the strategy			Chair / Executive	March 08
Roll out dissemination of the strategy as agreed through Housing Corp. funding			Broadland Housing Association Chair / Executive	March 08

Objective: Demonstrate the impact of the strategy and the activities stemming from it

Action	Milestones	Resources	Lead	By when
Regular reports to Executive from practitioner group			Executive	6 monthly
Regular reports to Executive from practitioner group to Boards, partners and other stakeholders			Executive	6 monthly

Resources

The following are useful resources and have been useful references in developing the strategy and delivery plan.

HOUSING MARKET NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Net shortfall or surplus of affordable units

Total current unmet housing need

Times annual quota for the reduction of current need

Equals annual requirement of units to reduce current need

Overall shortfall or surplus

Homelessness and supported housing strategies across the county:

- Greater Norwich Homelessness Strategy 2008-11
- Greater Norwich Hostels Strategy 2007-11
- Draft Great Yarmouth and Waveney Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013
- Breckland Homeless Strategy Review and Action Plan 2007
- Rural East Anglia Homelessness Review (draft 2007)
- Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Homelessness Strategy
- North Norfolk Homelessness Strategy
- The draft Norfolk Supporting People Strategy 2008-2013
- The draft recommendations from the Norfolk Supporting People Move On Plan.
- Norfolk Housing and Support Strategy and Action Plan for Offenders / Norfolk Offender Accommodation Strategy
- Draft Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership Strategy
- BME Housing Needs Research (2007)
- Norfolk Mental Health Accommodation Action Plan (2006)

Data sources

www.core.ac.uk/core

www.rsrsurvey.co.uk

www.housingpis.co.uk

www.clg.gsi.gov.uk

THE HOUSING CORPORATION

www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Tackling Homelessness; the Housing Corporation Strategy (2006)

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

www.communities.gov.uk

Homelessness prevention: a guide to good practice (2006)

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

www.communities.gov.uk

ODPM - Homelessness

Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives. A strategy for tackling homelessness (2005)

Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness: Nomination Agreements and Exclusions (2004)

Achieving Positive Shared Outcomes in Health and Homelessness (2004)

local authorities' Homelessness Strategies: Evaluation and Good Practice (2004)

housing associations and Homelessness Briefing (2003)

ODPM Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate Policy Briefings

Briefing 14: Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives - One Year On (March 2006)

Briefing 12: Hostels Capital Improvement Programme (HCIP) (September 2005)

Briefing 11: Providing More Settled Homes (June 2005)

Briefing 10: Delivering on the Positive Outcomes (December 2004)

Briefing 9: Homelessness Strategies: Moving Forward (November 2004)

Briefing 6: Repeat Homelessness Policy (January 2004)

Briefing 5: Improving Employment Options for Homeless People (September 2003)

ODPM Supporting People publications

www.spkweb.org.uk

Supporting People: The Support Needs of Homeless Households (2003)

Other ODPM publications

The use of possession actions and evictions by social landlords (2005)

Housing Allocation, Homelessness and Stock Transfer - A guide to key issues (2004)

Audit Commission

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Homelessness, Responding to the New Agenda (2003)

Glossary

Debt advice/Money advice – advice and assistance provided to help people to prioritise and repay debts

Discretionary Housing Benefit – a fund available to Housing Benefit Departments to pay over and above people's entitlement to benefit for a short time – for example, to pay for a more expensive rent for a short time while someone is looking for cheaper accommodation

Families Unit – a new Supporting People funded team at Norwich City Council Landlord Services providing intensive support to families who are struggling to maintain their tenancy (see tenancy support)

Floating support – formerly called tenancy support - funded by Supporting People, based at Norfolk County Council. This is support to help people maintain tenancies – delivered via visits to the home – helps with all aspects of running a home. Delivered in Norfolk by Stonham Homestay and Julian Housing Support

Homelessness Prevention Fund – a fund of money available to housing advice staff to assist with rent deposits, rent in advance, rent or mortgage arrears

housing association leasing scheme – as private sector leasing scheme but whereby a housing association leases the properties and the local authority nominates the tenants to the Association

Landlord accreditation scheme – a joint scheme with the Eastern Landlords Association and the three Authorities whereby landlords meeting the management and property standards for their accommodation are accredited and obtain certain benefits. It helps tenants to choose reputable landlords

Mediation – a service which aims to help both sides of a dispute to a resolution – here it is used for young people whose parents are asking them to leave home

Private sector leasing schemes – whereby local authorities lease properties from private sector landlords and then rent them to people threatened with homelessness

Rent deposit scheme – local authority provides private landlord with the deposit required to secure a tenancy for client

Rent in advance scheme – local authority provides private landlord with the amount of rent in advance required in order to secure a tenancy for a client

Spend to save fund – a homelessness prevention fund

Temporary accommodation housing adviser – a new advice post at Norwich City Council concentrating on temporary accommodation.

