

## **CABINET**

**4 OCTOBER 2011**

### **HOUSING STRATEGY 2011-2014**

Portfolio Holder	Councillor Howard Doe, Housing and Community Services
Report from:	Deborah Upton, Assistant Director Housing and Corporate Services
Author:	Matthew Gough, Head of Strategic Housing Services

#### **Summary**

The Draft Housing Strategy 2011-14 sets out the main aims and objectives of the strategic housing services. The strategy identifies the ways in which the Council will work to help improve the affordability, accessibility and sustainability of housing in Medway.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The Draft Housing Strategy is consistent with and sets out the Council's contribution to the Council Plan in respect of housing and is in line with the Council's budgetary framework.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Draft Housing Strategy contains information about the housing market in Medway, demographics, housing needs and prioritisation and target setting.
- 2.2 The strategy aims to reflect policies and priorities at national, regional and local level. It will help to deliver the strategic housing priorities for Medway and sits alongside a number of other Council policies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Strategic Plan for Older People and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2.3 The strategy has been produced at a time of significant change brought about primarily by a change in Government, policy direction and the economic crisis. It is therefore important to have an up-to-date strategy, which aims to meet the needs of our community. The strategy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current and emerging needs in Medway.

### 3. Options

#### **Option 1 – Do not adopt the Housing Strategy**

Local Authorities are required to produce and maintain an up to date Housing Strategy that meets the Governments 'fit for purpose' criteria. It also sets out the Council's objectives and expectations to allow partners to develop and deliver their own contribution towards housing provision in Medway. Not adopting the Strategy would mean that the Council would not be meeting this requirement.

#### **Option 2 – Adopt the Housing Strategy**

Local Authorities are required to produce and maintain a Housing Strategy that meets the Governments 'fit for purpose' criteria. The adoption of the Housing Strategy (Appendix 1) would allow the Council to continue to meet this requirement.

### 4. Advice and analysis

4.1 The strategy has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:

- The national, regional and local context
- Achievements and progress of the 2008-2011 Housing Strategy
- Consultation and needs analysis.

The review and consultation process has helped to inform the strategy's aims and objectives and the action plan.

4.2 The strategy is designed around three aims and has seven outcomes.

- **Theme One – Bridging the Gap**

*Working to create a pathway into suitable housing and home ownership by increasing choice*

*Outcome One:* Deliver a range of tenures, properties and locations to meet need

*Outcome Two:* Make the best use of existing housing

*Outcome Three:* Contribute to sustainable and cohesive communities

- **Theme Two – Early Prevention**

*Providing suitable, appropriate and timely housing advice to help people make the right housing choice*

*Outcome Four:* Provide advice across agencies to prevent crisis and increase choice and access

*Outcome Five:* Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs

- **Theme Three - Health and Housing**

*Improving health through quality housing and places.*

*Outcome Six:* Ensure good quality homes, which are energy efficient

*Outcome Seven:* Improve and maintain independence and inclusion by providing effective support.

- 4.3 The Housing Strategy will be delivered not only by the Council but also by and with other partners. The Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board provides the direction through this strategy by working with partners to align their efforts towards the strategy.
- 4.4 The actions are designed to achieve value for money by intervening as early as possible.
- 4.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form has been completed and is attached to this report, showing that it is unnecessary to proceed to a full diversity assessment (Appendix 2).

## 5. Risk Management

- 5.1 The primary risk and influencing factors are set out within the strategy and due to the proposed changes to the national policy and funding the length of time covered by the Action Plan for the strategy has been reduced to help mitigate and manage risks. The strategy will be subject to quarterly review and monitoring, with key identified risks including:-

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Changes to the environment in which the strategy operates.	Possible impact on service demand, funding and opportunities for intervention.	Action Plan reviewed quarterly through the Strategic Housing Partnership Board, with action being taken to mitigate risk.
No up to date Housing Strategy in place.	Local Authorities are required to produce and maintain a Housing Strategy.	The adoption of this strategy would allow the Council to continue to meet this requirement.

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 To ensure the widest possible involvement in the development of this strategy officers have consulted with a diverse range of partners and

stakeholders. Feedback received from the consultation has been taken into account in the subsequent development of the strategy and action plan.

- 6.2 Throughout Spring 2011 a number of focus group exercises were carried out with service users, partners and other stakeholders. This process was used to identify what is currently working well in Medway and what issues need to be changed. The results were used to help set the priorities and formulate the themes of the strategy.
- 6.3 The consultation and research has given consideration to and included:-
- North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment
  - Institute of Public Care Extra Care Housing Needs Analysis
  - Kent and Medway Older Persons Housing Needs and Aspirations Study
  - Stock Condition Survey.
- 6.4 Further consultation has also been undertaken with a wide range of partners, stakeholders, staff and client groups including:-
- Focus Group exercises carried out with the Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Physical Disabilities Partnership Board attended by service users, carers and professionals
  - Workshops with Young People at mhs Homes' Foyers
  - Consultation with Older People at a Tea Dance organised by Medway Older Persons Partnership
  - Focus Group exercises with the Homelessness Working Group Forum and Strategy Monitoring Groups
  - Consultation with the Strategic Housing Partnership.
- 6.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken through the BME Housing Strategy Monitoring Group. This group is chaired by the head of the Medway Racial Equality Council and attendees include representatives from Medway Council including the Principal Community Cohesion Officer, the Community Development Officer, Specialist Housing Information and Advice Officers and Officers from the Housing Strategy and Development Service. External agencies also attend the group and representatives include the Equality Officer from mhs Homes and a BME Housing Scheme Manager from Orbit Housing.

## **7 Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 7.1 The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Housing Strategy on 20 September 2011. The Head of Strategic Housing Services gave a presentation to the committee on the Housing Strategy 2011-2014.
- 7.2 The following sets out the issues raised at the meeting together with officers' comments, following the meeting, in response.

- 7.2.1 Include additional information to the final paragraph of the Tenants Strategy section about the Government's Armed Forces Covenant (page 16 of the Strategy) to explain why the armed forces were so important in Medway.
- 7.2.2 **Response:** As part of this review we will consider the Government's Armed Forces Covenant. The covenant outlines the Government's aspiration that the Armed Forces Community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Medway has a long-standing relationship with the Armed Forces and is an area that is rich in military history. To ensure that this relationship continues we will explore the use of quotas and priority banding for people leaving the Armed Forces
- 7.3.1 Drive the strategy forward with regard to nearly 20% of private sector housing in Medway failing the Decent Home Standard.
- 7.3.2 **Response:** The strategy contains a number of actions to ensure that the quality of housing in the private sector is addressed. We have a target to licence or take legal enforcement action against 100% of licensable HMOs and reduce the number of vulnerable people living in non-decent accommodation by 350 people a year. We will also continue to work with partners to undertake proactive targeted multi agency operations to provide high profile interventions within target communities, whilst working with landlords to raise awareness of their responsibilities.
- 7.4.1 Include a reference in the strategy to the Committee's future in-depth review of supported accommodation.
- 7.4.2 **Response:** Under Outcome Five (Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs) include the following under the heading Supported Accommodation: The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee is undertaking an in-depth review of supported accommodation. Once the outcomes of the review are known we will work to take forward any recommendations to support the actions already identified in the strategy.
- 7.5.1 Include, for the public, a signpost to the portfolio of other documents that sit alongside this strategy, for ease of access.
- 7.5.2 **Response:** We will include an information sheet with the Housing Strategy that will signpost the public to other documents that sit alongside the strategy. This will also include a link to the page on the Council's website which will contain the relevant information.
- 7.6.1 Consider the possibility of 'naming and shaming' landlords providing below standard accommodation.
- 7.6.2 **Response:** We will continue to work with landlords in the private sector through the Landlords Accreditation Scheme and the Landlords Forum

to foster good working relationships. However, where enforcement action taken against landlords leads to prosecution we will publicise this accordingly.

- 7.7.1 Re-visit the map and pie chart on page 8 of the Strategy to ensure that they are easily readable for the public.
- 7.7.2 **Response:** The map and pie chart will be revised when the final format of the document. We will ensure that they are in a format that is easily readable.
- 7.8 Members also commented on: current sheltered accommodation for older people being converted to provide bed-sit accommodation for young people; people placed in housing by the Home Office, e.g. refugees and others being included in the statistics and provisions of the strategy in the future; the Mortgage Rescue Scheme; an article in Medway Matters giving debt advice and information for how and where to access services; the Rural Housing Survey used to inform schemes currently coming forward and also to support bids to the HCA for schemes delivered in those areas; the powers available to the council to bring empty properties back into use; consideration of the Allocations Policy once the Localism Bill legislation has been produced.
- 7.9 The Committee noted the Strategy and requested that officers include an article in the Medway Matters newsletter, set out as a story and giving guidance and information on debt advice.
- 7.10 Subject to Cabinet approval of the above requests from the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee, any agreed changes will be made to the Strategy following Cabinet.

## **8 Financial and legal implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications as regards to the Draft Housing Strategy. The strategy will primarily be delivered within existing resources or in some cases will be used to provide background and supporting evidence in bidding for external resources.
- 8.2 The strategy will be used to direct and provide evidence to attract external funding from partners such as Housing Associations and the Homes and Community Agency.
- 8.3 Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 sets out the requirement for an Authority to have a Local Housing Strategy, there are also requirements for a Homelessness, Private Sector Renewal, and Home Energy Efficiency Strategies, this document will meet these requirements.
- 8.4 There are no other direct legal or contractual implications for the strategy. Where specific projects or initiatives are to be delivered as

part of the strategy they will be considered on an individual case-by-case basis and brought to members as necessary.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the recommendations from the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in paragraphs 7.2 – 7.7 of the report.
- 9.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the Housing Strategy 2011-2014 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **10. Suggested reasons for decision**

- 10.1 Approval of the Strategy will enable the Council to comply with the requirement of Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 that the Council has a Local Housing Strategy and ensure that there is a common understanding of Medway's housing market and how gaps in housing and/or housing related support can be addressed.

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### **Background papers**

Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003





**Housing Strategy 2011-14**  
**Housing for a Better Tomorrow**

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## Introduction

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In 2003, the Government placed a legal duty on all local authorities to develop housing strategies. Medway's Housing Strategy expired in September 2011, therefore we have developed a new strategy setting out our plans for meeting the Council's vision for housing across Medway for the next three years.

The Council has a vision for Medway as a city of rich heritage and a great future. The Housing Strategy contributes to the five priority areas and two core values set out in the Council Plan:

- Safe, clean and green Medway
- Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway
- Adults maintain their independence and live healthy lives
- Everybody travelling easily around Medway
- Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration

The two core values set out the principles of the how we work to deliver these priorities, they are:

- Putting our customers at the centre of everything we do, and
- Giving value for money

This Housing Strategy has been produced at a time of significant change, due to a change of Government, policy direction and economic crisis. However, it is important to have an up-to-date, comprehensive strategy, which aims to address the housing needs of our community. The Housing Strategy will need to be reviewed regularly to reflect any significant policy changes. Through research, analysis and consultation about current and emerging needs in Medway, we are confident that positive changes can be made, even in challenging times.

The Housing Strategy will:

- Fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners
- Set out a clear and evidenced approach
- Provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments

The Housing Strategy contains information about the housing market, demographic issues, the needs of particular groups, prioritisation and target setting. It will help to deliver the strategic housing priorities for Medway and sits alongside a number of other Council policies including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Strategic Plan for Older People in Medway and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The strategy identifies the ways in which the current housing situation falls short and includes outcomes and associated actions to help bridge those gaps. It is not focused on one particular housing tenure, nor is it just about bricks and mortar. It is about the communities in which people live and their hopes for the well-being of themselves and their communities. Housing makes an important contribution to social and environmental objectives such as reducing health inequalities, improving educational attainment and community cohesion. Good housing leads to a better tomorrow.

The Strategy is designed around 3 themes:

### **Theme One – Bridging the Gap**

Working to create a pathway into suitable housing and home ownership by increasing choice

**Outcome One** – Deliver a range of tenures, properties and locations to meet need

**Outcome Two** – Make the best use of existing housing

**Outcome Three** – Contribute to sustainable and cohesive communities

### **Theme Two – Early Prevention**

Providing suitable, appropriate and timely housing advice to help people make the right housing choice

**Outcome Four** – Provide advice across agencies to prevent crisis and increase choice and access

**Outcome Five** – Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs

### **Theme Three - Health and Housing**

Improving health through quality housing and places

**Outcome Six** – Ensure good quality homes, which are energy efficient

**Outcome Seven** – Improve and maintain independence and inclusion by providing effective support

The Housing Strategy will be delivered not only by the Council but also by and with other partners. The Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board provides the direction through this strategy by working with partners to align their efforts towards the strategy. The Board helps to ensure that local knowledge and expertise informs the development of strategy and provides challenge to the Council.

The first part of the Housing Strategy sets out the National and Local Context in which the strategy is set. The second part sets out how the themes and outcomes of the strategy were developed through consultation with partners, stakeholders and service users. Each theme is presented in the same format, which outlines the achievements since the last Housing Strategy, sets out the current situation and then proposes actions to tackle these issues. The actions from this strategy are designed to achieve value for money by intervening as early as possible and will be reviewed annually, so that we can monitor our progress and ensure that our ambitions can be realised.

The final part of the strategy outlines the resources that are anticipated to be available to ensure that the actions can be achieved. This Strategy recognises that success is

dependent on ensuring that the widest possible range of resources are utilised. This means that account has to be taken of not just resources available to the council, but also those of housing associations, private landlords, owner-occupiers and the voluntary sector, which through partnership and this strategy the council seeks to influence.

## The Strategic Context

<b>Sustainable Community Strategy Vision</b>	<b>City of Medway: Rich Heritage Great Future</b>		
<b>The Sustainable Community Strategy Themes</b>	Medway to have a thriving, diverse and sustainable economy matched by an appropriately skilled workforce and supported by a higher and further education centre of excellence	Medway to be a place where people value one another, play an active part and have pride in their community and Medway as whole	
	Medway to have a safe and high quality environment	Every child to have a good start in life	
	Medway to be recognised as a destination for culture, heritage, sport and tourism.	Medway residents to enjoy good health, well being and care	
<b>Housing Strategy Vision</b>	<b>Housing for a Better Tomorrow</b>		
<b>Housing Strategy Themes</b>	<b>Bridging the Gap:</b> Working to create a pathway into suitable housing and home ownership by increasing choice	<b>Early Prevention:</b> Providing suitable, appropriate and timely housing advice to help people make the right housing choice	<b>Health and Housing:</b> improve health through quality housing and places
	<b>Housing Strategy Outcomes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver a range of tenures, properties and locations to meet need</li> <li>2. Make best of use of existing housing</li> <li>3. Contribute to sustainable and cohesive communities</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Provide advice across agencies to prevent crisis, increase choice and access</li> <li>5. Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs</li> </ol>

## National and Local Context

### National Context

The change of government in May 2010 has already seen a number of changes in housing policy introduced and others set for implementation over the coming months and years. Along with the Coalition's various policy announcements, the medium term housing financial landscape was completely re-drawn with the outcome of the 2010 Spending Review. The Spending Review was in response to the downturn in the UK economy during 2008 and 2009, which spread across the economy from the financial industry to the high street and manufacturers, causing the UK to have a budget deficit of £900 million. The Spending Review has seen a reduction in Government funding for affordable housing investment nationally, a move towards charging affordable rents for new schemes coupled with the ending of 'tenancies for life' and the introduction of the New Homes Bonus. The Government has also proposed greater local freedom for the way social housing is allocated and how the homelessness duty can be discharged, and seeks to give local communities greater control over planning outcomes as a further way of encouraging development.

Along with the Spending Review, the Coalition Government has introduced a number of other changes affecting housing. These include the abolition of a number of quangos including the Tenant Services Authority as the social housing regulator, with its powers being transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA); and the limiting of Local Housing Allowance payments from April 2011, with further changes to the Housing Benefit system to follow. Earlier cuts made to the Area Based Grant included the removal of the administration budget for delivering housing-related support services although the (Supporting People) funding for services themselves has largely been protected, as was the Homelessness Grant. Certain aspects of the previous government's housing and related policy will, however, continue to be pursued by the current

### Affordable Rents

Affordable Rent will offer shorter-term tenancies at a rent higher than social rent, to be set at a maximum of 80 per cent of local market rents. Affordable Rent will be offered on a proportion of providers' vacant properties initially, and also on new stock in due course – it is the intention that the additional rental income providers receive will contribute to the provision of new affordable homes. The impact of affordable rents in will be reviewed when the Tenancy Strategy for Medway is developed.

### Flexible Tenancies

The provisions in the Localism Bill will enable local authority landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length (the minimum length being two years) as opposed to existing lifetime tenancies. These '**flexible**' tenancies will give more freedom to local authority landlords, allowing more effective stock management. All local authorities will be required to publish a **Tenancy Strategy** setting out the kinds of tenancies granted.

government, including the transformation of social care through personalisation of service delivery.

Various strands of social policy have indicated a move towards a closer linking of areas such as housing, health, social care and employment, bridging the work of Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions. Along with the radical reorganisation of patient care introduced by the health White Paper - *Liberating the NHS* - published in July 2010, is the priority given to public health,

via the White Paper - *Healthier Lives, Healthier People* - with an emphasis on the reduction of health inequalities supported by ring-fenced funding. Local people and professionals will have much more input into shaping and prioritising health care in their area, and housing will play a key role in this process.

As a result of the recession, there has been a renewed focus on worklessness and the role that housing can play in helping to tackle this within local communities. Similarly, the need to tackle social exclusion remains high on the national agenda. Related to this are the Government's proposals to radically reform the welfare benefit system and to create a 'Big Society' where citizens, communities and local government are given the power and information they need to come together and solve the problems they face.

On 16 February 2011 the Welfare Reform Bill was introduced to Parliament and legislates for the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. It will see the introduction of a single streamlined benefit that is intended to ensure work always pays and provide a stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties for the most serious offences.

## Regional Context

A Local Investment Plan (LIP) is a document, which sets out the investment required for an area. The Homes and Communities Agency has asked Local Authorities to produce these plans in order to inform funding discussions. The investments set out in the plan will be those required to deliver the agreed economic, housing and environmental ambitions. Medway is part of the North Kent LIP which identifies six core themes essential to the growth and regeneration of North Kent. These are:

- **Economic growth**, to deliver 2,900 jobs per year and taking advantage of our potential in renewable energy and environmental technologies
- **Quality housing**, to create affordable housing, excellent new development and investment in existing communities
- **Skills and employability**, to increase employment opportunities and improve North Kent's skills base
- **Thames Gateway Parklands**, to ensure that we provide the green infrastructure essential to accompany growth in North Kent
- **Transport and infrastructure**, to accommodate population and economic growth and the need to reduce carbon emissions
- **Quality public services**, to make sure that investment in public services in North Kent contributes to the regeneration of the area

In addition, the Plan sets out three cross-cutting themes, setting out issues that need to be taken into account in all aspects of North Kent's growth. These are:

- **Design excellence**, setting out a series of measures that partners will put in place to ensure well designed homes and communities
- **Working for a low carbon future**, highlighting how measures to reduce carbon emissions and the goals set out in the Eco-Region strategy will be taken forward
- **Benefiting communities**, setting out how partners will seek to involve communities in the development of regeneration proposals and the need for long-term investment in community focused programmes and development

The Kent Forum Housing Strategy looks across a whole county area and recognises that there is a great diversity of housing across Kent and Medway and that what is appropriate for one neighbourhood may not be right in another. The document was developed collaboratively between Kent and Medway local authorities and other public, private and third sector organisations with an interest in housing. It is the outcome of analysis, discussion and consultation on the major housing challenges facing us now and in the future.

The strategy has five ambitions:

- The continued delivery of key infrastructure to support managed growth and housing delivery across the County
- The continued regeneration of our disadvantaged neighbourhoods to bring them in line with more affluent parts of the County
- The provision of choice and affordability in housing for the citizens of Kent and Medway, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations
- The managed improvement and retrofit of existing homes to make them fit for now and the future
- To support vulnerable people in housing need to fulfil their potential and live a high quality life through the provision of excellent housing and support services

This Strategy describes a number of options for interventions for influencing housing across District, Borough, Unitary and County Council borders. It does not propose a 'one size fits all' approach but provides a menu of solutions to assist local housing and planning authorities in achieving their local aims.

### **Local Context**

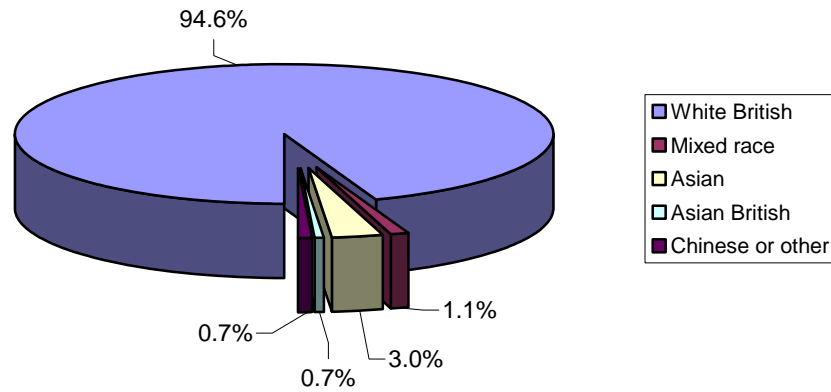
The housing strategy links in with the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF). This is the collective name given to the suite of documents, which comprise the framework for delivering the Council's spatial planning strategy. Medway's LDF is likely to be adopted in 2012. Medway has benefited, and continues to benefit, from considerable investment arising from its strategic location within the Thames Gateway. Recent infrastructure investment includes Chatham Bus Station and the High Speed Rail Link. This is resulting in a welcome diversification of the economic base towards creative industries, financial services, business services, education, environmental and energy technologies. This has added to Medway's long-standing manufacturing strengths and important energy and port facilities located on the Hoo Peninsula. Good progress has been made in raising the skill levels, which are growing significantly faster than the regional and national averages. The unique cluster of universities and the Mid Kent College have contributed greatly to this. However, Medway remains a relatively low wage area with high numbers of people commuting out to work and skill shortages particularly at some levels.

In recent years, as part of the Thames Gateway regeneration area, Medway has undergone extensive regeneration particularly in the former derelict riverside areas of Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham, which have been transformed into thriving business, higher and further education and residential communities. Medway is now looking to continue its regeneration along the riverside, in the town centres and through the only new settlement in the Thames Gateway at Lodge Hill, Chattenden, which will accommodate approximately 5,000 homes.

The population of Medway is currently about 253,500 and is expected to grow to 280,000 by 2026. Overall, Medway is not a deprived area being ranked 150th most deprived local authority area out of 354 in England, but it has higher levels of deprivation than neighbouring local authorities in Kent and the South East. At ward level it has both some of the most affluent and some of the most deprived areas in the country. Within Medway are 25 neighbourhoods which fall into the 25% of most deprived areas in the country.

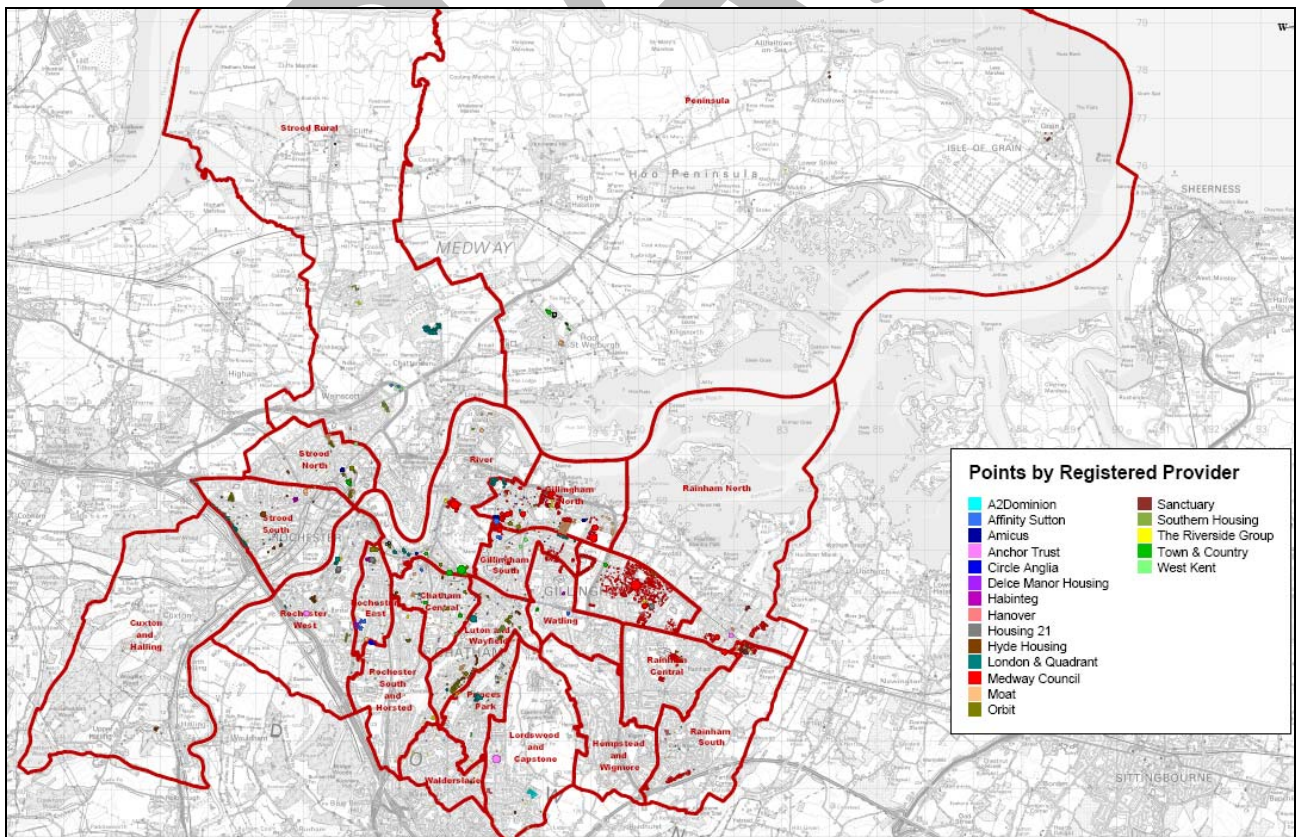
As shown in the diagram below, the majority of Medway's population is White British.

### Ethnicity of Medway's Population



In Medway, there are 16,328 affordable homes 3,056 of which are owned by the Council. Housing Associations own 13,272 with the majority being owned by mhs Homes (47%). The map below shows the distribution of the affordable housing units.

### Map Showing the Distribution of Affordable Housing Units within Medway





## Consultation

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To ensure the widest possible involvement in the development of this strategy we have consulted with a diverse range of partners and stakeholders. Feedback received from the consultation has been taken into account in the subsequent development of the strategy and its action plan.

### Consultation Events

- Focus Group exercises carried out with the **Learning Disability Partnership Board** and the **Physical Disabilities Partnership Board** attended by service users, carers and professionals
- Workshops with **Young People** in mhs Homes' Foyers
- Consultation with Older People at a Tea Dance organised by **Medway Older Persons Partnership**
- Focus Group exercise at the **Homelessness Working Group Forum** and **Strategy Monitoring Groups**
- Consultation with the **Strategic Housing Partnership Board**

Throughout the Spring 2011 we carried out a number of focus group exercises with service users, partners and other stakeholders. We used this process to identify what was currently working well in Medway and what things needed to be changed. We then used the results to help set our priorities and formulate the themes of the strategy. We structured a number of the focus groups around the existing strategy monitoring groups set up to monitor the delivery of the 2008-11 Housing Sub-Strategies.

## Theme One – Bridging the Gap

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### Theme One – Bridging the Gap

Working to create a pathway into suitable housing and home ownership by increasing choice

**Outcome One** – Deliver a range of tenures, properties and locations to meet need

**Outcome Two** – Make the best use of existing housing

**Outcome Three** – Contribute to sustainable and cohesive communities

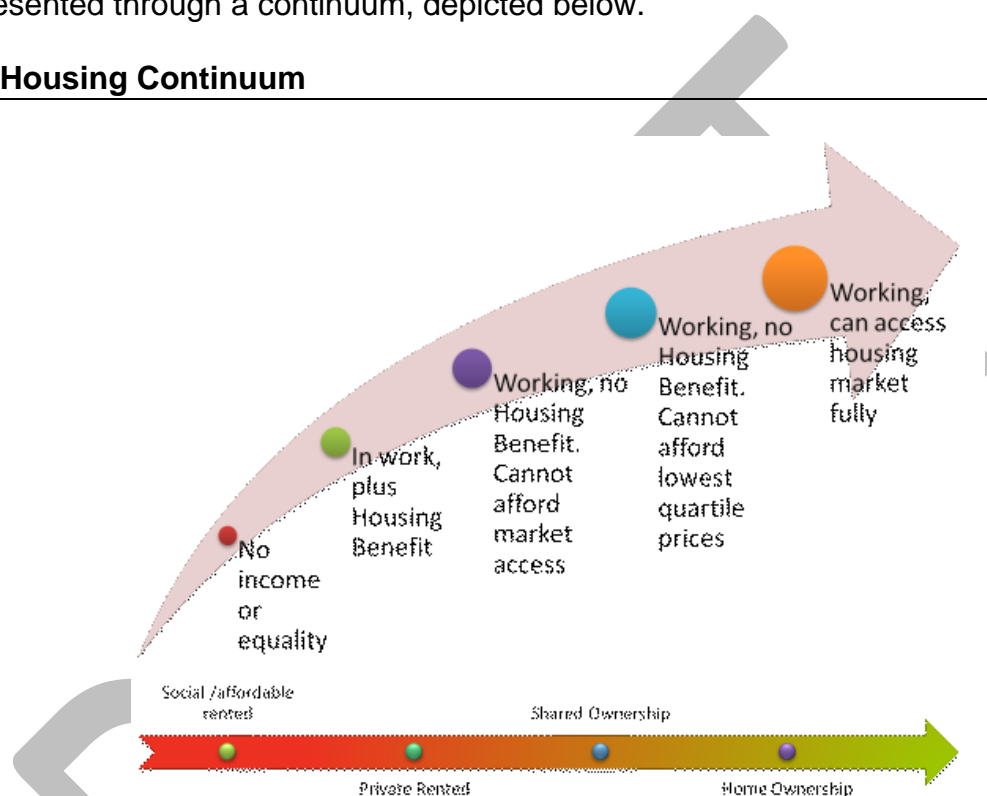
### Outcome One – Delivering the Properties and Tenures in Shortage

Key Achievements 2008-11
1,091 new affordable homes built in Medway
A total investment in new affordable housing of over £129m
134 households housed on the home ownership ladder

## Range and Affordability of Housing in Medway

There is a whole range of housing options within Medway from Temporary Accommodation for those in priority housing need to traditional home ownership and everything in-between. The primary obstacle to providing these options for all residents is that the market does not provide the type of housing needed at a cost many can afford. A key element to housing markets being able to function effectively is to enable choices to be made when seeking housing, regardless of income and financial circumstances. The housing offer of a community is one element to ensure that a diversity of households have their housing needs met. These choices are best represented through a continuum, depicted below.

### The Housing Continuum



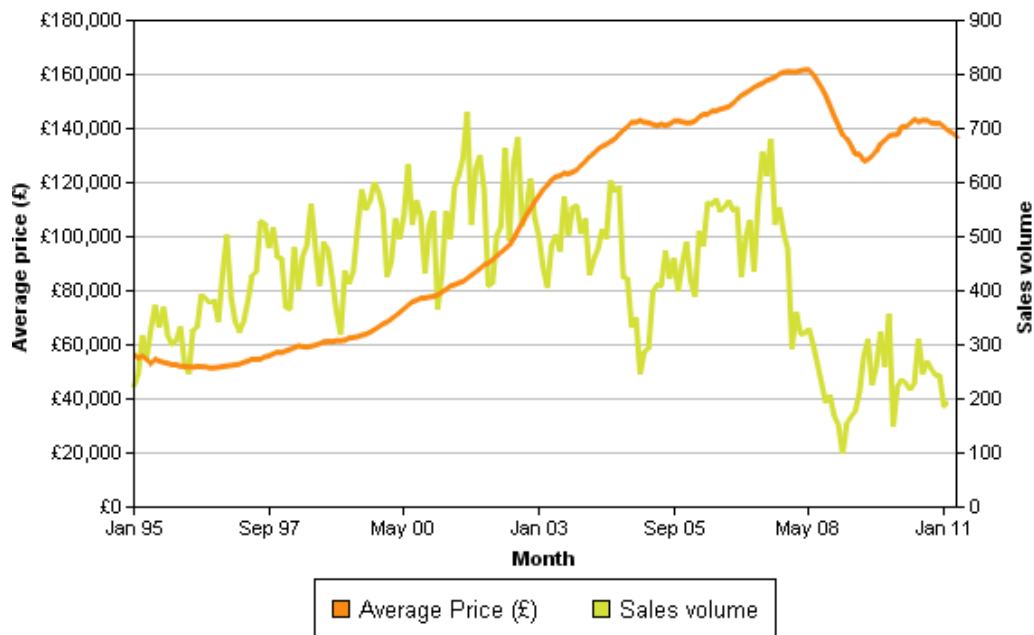
Traditionally the needs of those households unable to access the housing market have been met through social rented housing. Intermediate housing is affordable housing designed to assist those households not eligible for social rented housing but who are priced out of the private housing market by a combination of low wages and/or high house prices. The most common form of intermediate housing in Medway is shared ownership; however the amount and distribution is sensitive to changes in house prices. The credit crunch has led to falling house prices in Medway. This was however accompanied by a credit squeeze making mortgage availability scarcer and more expensive. The credit crunch also led to the tailing off of private housing development and Registered Providers selling fewer properties for shared ownership. Property prices in Medway peaked in April 2008 and by May 2011 had fallen by an average £26,835. Over the first five months of 2011, house prices have fallen by £5,703. In June 2011, the Nationwide

**Housing need** is the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance.

**Housing demand** is the quantity of housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent.

reported that there is uncertainty over whether house prices will rise or fall over the remainder of 2011. They have reported that economic growth looks set to gather pace but is likely to result in only modest gains in employment and wage increases, which will continue to keep many potential buyers unable to purchase property.

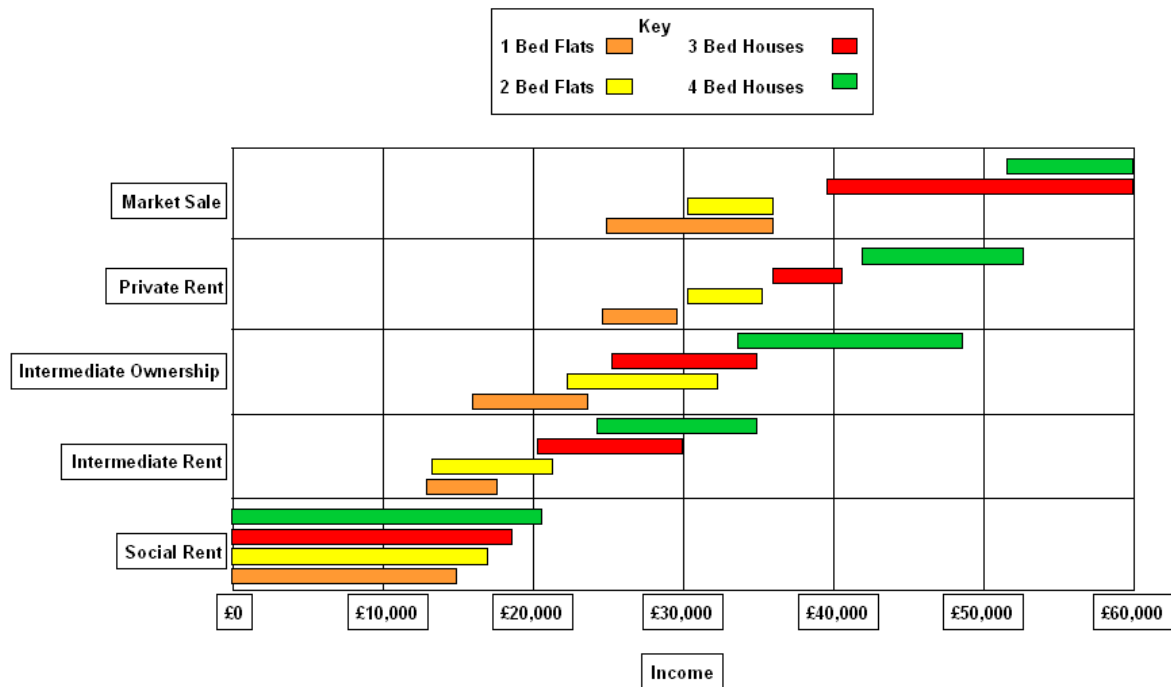
### House Prices and Sales Volumes in Medway – January 1995 to January 2011



Whilst households have been able to borrow at higher levels over recent years, lenders have changed their lending practices reducing drastically the number of mortgages granted. Even if households are prepared in principle to borrow higher amounts to bridge the affordability gap lenders are no longer willing to lend at these levels.

The diagram below shows the affordability of each housing type in Medway broken down by unit size. It can be seen that the need for affordable housing exists for households earning up to approximately £40,000, at which level the housing market can be accessed. Social rented housing is available for households earning up to £20,000 and Intermediate Housing in a variety of forms satisfies the need for housing for the remainder. An affordability gap exists where there isn't a range of Intermediate products to bridge the gap between social rented accommodation and market housing. Failure to bridge this gap results in greater costs for individuals and for some households. This failure will impact on them in terms of overcrowding or homelessness leading to further impacts on their long-term health, wellbeing and educational attainment.

### Affordability of Housing Types in Medway by Size

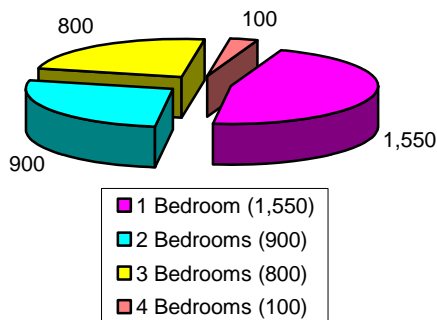


### Housing Requirement and Delivery

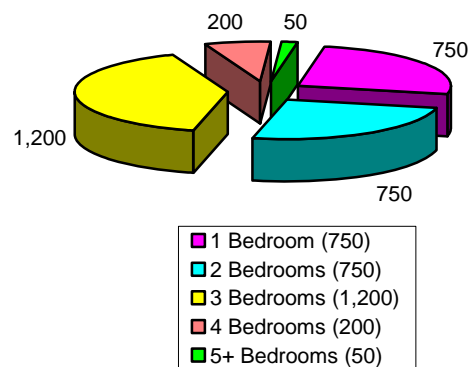
The North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides an evidence base for Medway’s housing requirement broken down by housing type and size. Although house prices have fallen since the peak in April 2008, the requirements still remain relevant due to the recovery in house prices to a similar level to November 2009.

Housing Type	Total Housing Requirement 2008-26	Annual Housing Requirement
Market Housing	9,522	529
Intermediate Housing	2,979	166
Social Housing	3,158	183

#### Demand for Social Housing



#### Demand for Intermediate Housing



In June 2011, 9,912 households had asked to be placed on the Housing Register. Households have their housing situation assessed and a suitable priority awarded. There are currently 1,066 households identified as having urgent or high housing needs and of these, nearly 90 are homeless households in Temporary Accommodation and 200 are living in overcrowded accommodation.

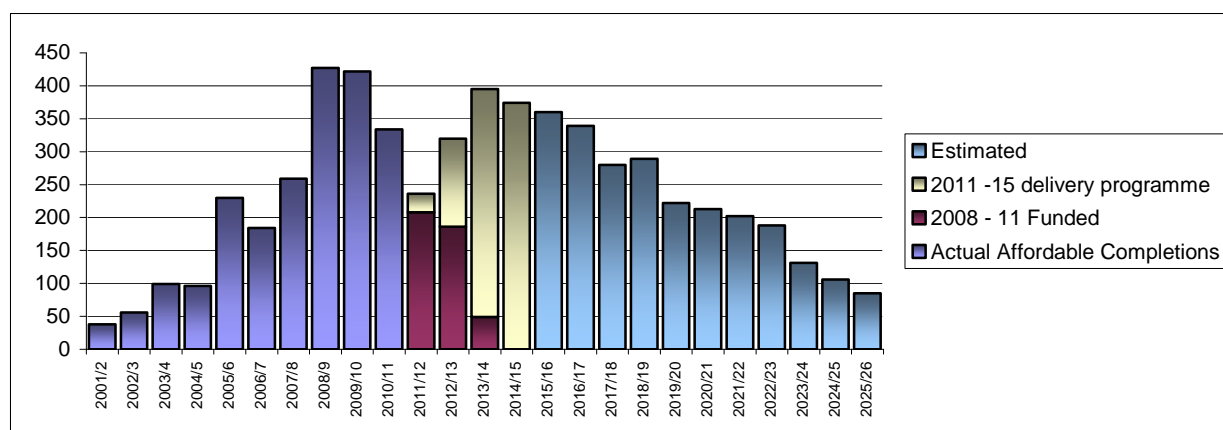
In the face of need for affordable housing, solely increasing social rented housing provision is not considered to be the answer in satisfying the needs of those excluded from the housing market. Offering Intermediate Housing to those households locked into their tenure through the inequality between housing costs and incomes will free up social rented units for households in greater need. It is only through considering the needs of the whole housing market in this way that the necessary stocks and flows can be generated to allow the market to function more efficiently and most significantly offering people choice in their housing solutions.

Medway has a strong track record of delivering affordable housing, which has continued despite the downturn in the market. These affordable homes not only leveraged in large amounts of private finance toward the delivery of affordable housing but also have enabled many regeneration sites to continue delivering units during the market downturn. We have renegotiated through the planning system for key developments to bring forward affordable housing and remove some risk for developers during the early phases of development while the market recovers. However, we have taken a measured approach to guard against an oversupply of social rented housing.

The recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announced a 60% reduction in the levels of government grant available for affordable housing. The gap left by the substantial cut in capital grant is expected to be met, in part, through revenue from the introduction of a new proposed 'affordable rent', to be charged for most newly built homes and many re-let properties. Despite these uncertainties, we are working in partnership with our Registered Provider partners, developers, planners and the HCA to ensure that where funding is needed and available this is secured. To date we have supported firm bids that if successful would deliver an additional 562 affordable units over the next 4 years. In addition to this, previously allocated funding (2008-11 NAHP) is due to deliver 443 affordable units over the current 2011-15 NAHP. Almost all of the units are currently under construction and will be delivered in the next couple of years. We have identified a further 325 affordable homes that have the potential to be delivered over the 2011-15 period without funding from the 2008-11 programme or have not been included in bids in the 2011-15 programme.

The table below shows current estimates of what could be delivered in terms of affordable homes over the next four years. We estimate that a total of 1,325 new affordable homes could be delivered. This will be reliant on a range of factors, not least a significant pick up in house building from what are currently very low rates in Medway. Only 650 completions are expected to be reported for 2010-11. This would need to almost double for all of the anticipated affordable units to be delivered.

## Actual and Estimated Affordable Housing Delivery 2001-26



The demand for housing in Medway outstrips the supply and it has been calculated that our housing need is for the delivery of 349 new affordable homes every year. However, we have estimated that our affordable housing programme will deliver 204 affordable homes each year. This leaves a shortfall of 145 homes per year, which will be addressed by using our existing stock more effectively. Outcome Two explores how making the best use of existing homes can meet housing need, improve housing conditions, regenerate areas and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Actions to Achieve Outcome One	
No.	Action
1	Secure at least 25% of newly built homes as affordable on any site meeting the Council's size threshold
2	Deliver at least 204 additional affordable homes per annum
3	Work with Registered Providers and the HCA to secure an annual investment in affordable housing of £20m per annum
4	Deliver a minimum of 85 new HomeBuy units per annum

## Outcome Two – Make the Best Use of Existing Homes

Key Achievements 2008-11
454 empty properties brought back into use
50 empty properties brought back into use as affordable housing through the Purchase and Repair Scheme
In 2010-11 we assisted 13 people to move to more suitable properties via our Mutual Exchange programme
Joined Kent HomeChoice in May 2010 to achieve better economies of scale and provide a more equitable and efficient service to our clients

Outcome One identified some of the current housing gaps in Medway and it was seen that the solution involved both building new affordable homes and making the best possible use of the existing housing stock.

## **Empty Homes**

Empty homes represent economic, environmental and social costs to the community. As homes deteriorate they can become visually unattractive, therefore affecting the amenity of the local surrounding area as they create an impression of neglect and decline. This can encourage local property price devaluation, as an empty property can devalue neighbouring properties by as much as 20%. Empty homes can also be an attraction for vandalism and anti-social behaviour, which poses a risk for neighbouring properties and local residents, while increasing work for local fire and police services. At the end of March 2011, there were 1,281 empty homes in the private sector. This represents 1.37% of the total private sector housing stock. Whereas this is good progress against the Government target of 3%, one less empty property is a home for a household and less likely to be a potential source of anti-social behaviour. We will continue to work with owners primarily where properties present a risk to adjoining properties or with Housing Providers and landlords to encourage properties to be brought back into use. Due to changes in the funding regime, funding through the Regional Housing Board is no longer available to Local Authorities. Instead capital funding from CLG has been made available to Housing Associations. Therefore a main focus of our work will continue to be through our Purchase and Repair scheme.

## **Purchase and Repair Scheme**

In 2009, we developed a Purchase and Repair (P&R) scheme. In the last two years 50 empty properties have been purchased by a Registered Provider and work completed on them to a minimum of the Decent Homes Standard. The homes were then delivered as new social rented homes. In 2010-2011 we have supported bids to secure funding to deliver a further 20 per year for the next 2 years from the HCA. These new homes (if funding is secured) will be delivered as Affordable Rented properties. We have recently revised the target areas for the P&R scheme based on the most recent multiple deprivation indices. We are now targeting all areas in Medway that fall in the bottom 10% nationally. These include Luton & Wayfield, Central Chatham and parts of North Gillingham.

## **New Homes Bonus**

The New Homes Bonus has been developed by the Government to incentivise Local Planning Authorities to deliver new homes by providing a grant equivalent to the national average for the relevant Council Tax band. The first award will be made in 2011/12 based on delivery of new dwellings in 2010/11. An additional award for affordable homes of £350 per unit is proposed. Funding would also be made available for bringing empty properties back into use. The scheme as currently proposed would run for 6 years, with funding building up year on year then declining after year 6 and running out in year 12. It is not proposed that the grant be ringfenced but the Government envisages that it should be used to mitigate the impact of new development on Communities by being spent on local community facilities. The revenue that the New Homes Bonus will provide will be used to help support the Council's objective of delivering sustainable regeneration.

## **Tenancy Strategy**

In addition to minimising empty homes, making best use of existing housing also includes landlords re-configuring their existing stock to "better fit" those in housing need. The Localism Bill places a new duty on every local housing authority to publish a Tenancy Strategy. All Registered Providers of social housing should then have regard

to this Tenancy Strategy in framing their own tenancy policies. The strategy must be published within 12 months of the enactment of the bill, which by current timescales is November 2012. Whilst the Government has a clear desire to enable social landlords freedoms on the type of tenancy they provide this has to be balanced with consideration of local housing needs and circumstances. The strategy will provide transparency, enabling local communities to understand clearly how social landlords are responding to local housing needs and priorities. The strategy must make clear:

- The kinds of tenancies to be granted
- The circumstances in which a particular tenancy will be granted
- Where tenancies are to be granted for a certain term, the length of term and the circumstances under which a new tenancy shall be granted.

The Tenancy Strategy should take into account our allocations policy. In response to the Government's paper on social housing reform we are planning a review of our housing allocations policy. As social housing is in great demand and priority is given to those most in need, many applicants have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home. The Localism Bill will allow local authorities to set waiting list policies that are appropriate to their local area. By taking transferring tenants who are not in housing need out of the allocations rules, it will be easier for them to move and easier for landlords to manage their stock more effectively. It will be easier for existing social tenants to move within the social sector, as transferring tenants who are not in housing need will be removed from the scope of the allocation rules. They will no longer have to compete with those on the waiting list not in housing need, whilst helping to give clarity to those approaching the Council. It will also help us to develop a waiting list of those in housing need rather than those with housing aspiration.

As part of this review we will consider the Government's Armed Forces Covenant. The covenant outlines the Government's aspiration that the Armed Forces Community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. We will explore the use of quotas and priority banding for people leaving the Armed Forces.

### **Accessible Housing Register**

To make better use of social housing stock we will develop an Accessible Housing Register. The Accessible Housing Register will be an additional but integral component of the Choice Based Lettings scheme we already operate. It will not be a stand-alone register of accessible housing and people who require it, but a framework for collecting information on property access details and using this to assign a category to the property. These property categories can then be used to inform homeseekers about the accessibility features of a property which will enhance choice for disabled people and help inform considerations around future demand for accessible housing.

### **Overcrowding and Underoccupation**

Ineffective use of the housing stock can result in overcrowding and underoccupation. Through our "Creating Space" initiative, we have identified households within the affordable housing stock whose current property does not meet their housing need. We have taken a case management approach to help the most severely overcrowded households into accommodation that is more suitable for their needs and we will be working with our Registered Provider Partners to develop this approach. Incentives are



given to those underoccupying their properties. They are placed in Band A to prioritise their move into smaller accommodation and financial incentives are also offered.

Tackling both overcrowding and underoccupation is aided by the use of mutual exchanges. This creates more mobility within the social stock and gives greater choice to tenants over where they live. Current house-swap schemes are patchy in nature, but the National Home Swap Scheme will be open to all eight million tenants in social housing in England. The new comprehensive system will help to address the contradictory current situation where over a quarter-of-a-million households live in overcrowded accommodation while a further 430,000 households are unable to easily downsize from larger properties they no longer need.

### **Older Persons' Accommodation**

Another important factor in making the best use of the existing housing stock is the use of sheltered housing. Sheltered Housing in Medway is an important element of older people's housing provision. It is recognised, however, that some of the stock is not in the right location or does not provide the accommodation type that is in most demand. There is considerable research evidence to show that older people have a diversity of aspirations depending on their income, family and education. However there has been very little choice in terms of the housing and support options available to older people. Sheltered housing has largely been provided as a standard service, with very little consideration of the needs of older people. Increasingly, older people are becoming more selective and have higher expectations. These expectations are increasingly having an impact on the provision of sheltered housing where some schemes are becoming difficult to let. Bed-sit and small units are less popular and increasingly the private sector is stepping in to meet the needs of those older people who are able to release equity from the sale of their homes and can afford meet service charges.

The contribution that sheltered housing has made in the past to older peoples' accommodation is significant but people's needs and aspirations have changed over time. The way that services and support are provided has changed but in general, the accommodation has not changed. It may no longer be "fit for purpose" and is therefore not contributing to the provision as it should. A key element of the Housing Strategy is therefore ensuring that the stock is fit for purpose, meeting current and projected needs and expectations. To this end we will be undertaking a review of accommodation for older people in Medway.

<b>Actions to Achieve Outcome Two</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Report the void levels within the affordable housing stock on a quarterly basis and work with Housing Associations to reduce the number of void properties
2	Deliver the "Creating Space" initiative to help tackle overcrowding and improve the housing conditions of 15 households per annum
3	Achieve 25 on-line mutual exchanges per annum
4	Develop a range of options to help bring 100 empty homes back into use per annum
5	Maintain the number of long term private sector empty homes below 1.6% of all private sector stock
6	Consult, develop and implement a new Allocations Policy for Medway
7	Develop a delivery programme for Extra Care and Sheltered Housing to meet

	demand
8	Undertake a review of accommodation for older people in Medway

## Outcome Three – Contribute to Sustainable and Cohesive Communities

<b>Key Achievements 2008-11</b>
All new affordable homes achieved Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and some homes achieved Level 4
Nomination Rights were achieved for all new affordable homes
Contributed to the Development Brief for Rochester Riverside and other regeneration sites to secure the delivery of affordable housing
Developed and delivered the In Focus project to target resources in a specific area

The development of sustainable communities is integral to the new Housing Strategy. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life. This approach includes future proofing new properties to make sure they are adaptable to a household's future needs, developing mixed tenure communities, ensuring high quality design and build and considering affordability.

The sustainability of a community will also involve the degree to which people of all generations and backgrounds are able to live, interact and have a meaningful say in the way their neighbourhood is run. Achieving sustainable communities requires effective partnership working across a wide range of social, economic and environmental areas. This will include:

- Developing local solutions to local problems
- Encouraging public, private and voluntary sectors to work together to improve local quality of life
- Encouraging local people to become involved in determining local priorities and influencing services and taking council decisions that impact on their neighbourhood

### Sustainable Communities Protocol

To ensure delivery of a successful housing development, a mixed community should include an appropriate mix of tenure, income levels and household type and should be supported by access to infrastructure. Medway, along with Kent Local Authorities has developed a Sustainable Communities Protocol for use when developing local lettings plans. Child density indicators and employment activity are two key elements to ensure long term sustainable communities as is the total number of children and the child to adult

The **Code for Sustainable Homes** is the national standard for the sustainable design and construction of new homes. The Code measures the sustainability of a new home against nine categories of **sustainable design**, rating the 'whole home' as a complete package. The Code uses a **one to six star rating system** to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a new home against these nine categories. One star is the entry level and six stars is the highest level, reflecting exemplar development in sustainability terms. Every new affordable home built within Medway will meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.

ratio. An appropriate mix of income levels is essential and should be considered in relation to the development as a whole and take account of the likely circumstances of those who buy properties on the open market or through the shared ownership route. We seek a ratio of 60% social rented and 40% intermedite rent and shared ownership homes on any development.

Local discussions will determine the appropriate integration of affordable housing on a development and good practice design principles allow for a variety in external appearance while ensuring that externally and internally, developments are tenure neutral. The aim should be to create a visual environment in which it is not possible to identify the tenure of any individual property. All developments adhere to the Secure by Design principle, ultimately designing out crime to enhance security for all those who live on the development. New affordable housing in Medway will meet level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Medway has also set a target of 50% Lifetime Homes for affordable homes, to enable people to continue to live in their homes as their needs change as well as to facilitate easy access for disabled people, families with young children or elderly relatives. A higher target has not been set to take into account physical restrictions and factors on sites.

### **Rural Housing**

Affordability in Rural areas can have an impact on the sustainability of a community. Young people may have to move away from the village they grew up in and older people may have to leave due to a lack of suitable housing which meets their needs. In order to understand Rural Housing needs further, we have worked in partnership with Action for Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) to undertake an assessment of the housing needs of households in Medway's rural parishes. This evidence base will be used to inform the development of a Rural Exception Policy by Medway's Development Control Service. The policy will enable small sites to be used, specifically for affordable housing in rural areas that would not normally be used for housing because, for example, they are subject to planning constraints.

### **Development Briefs**

We ensure that we are actively involved at the earliest stage of a development and contribute to drawing up the Development Brief. Development Briefs are used to inform developers and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies. A Development Brief is intended to provide guidance, which will help to ensure that high quality, sustainable, residential development occurs. It is published as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and will become a material consideration that can be taken into account when determining an application for planning permission.

### **Regeneration Areas**

The delivery of affordable housing is an important factor in regenerating areas. 76% of all new homes built in 2009-10 were on sites with an element of affordable housing. Without the delivery of the affordable housing most of these sites would not have been able to come forward due to restrictions within the site for economic factors. The Audit Commission Inspection praised Medway on taking a pragmatic and flexible approach in ensuring sustainable development continues despite the adverse economic conditions. We have renegotiated Section 106 agreements for key developments to bring forward affordable housing and remove some risk for developers during the early phases of

development while the market recovers. Such an approach has allowed Rochester Riverside to start on site after considerable delays.

The largest development site in Medway is Lodge Hill at Chattenden on the Hoo Peninsula. It consists of 400 hectares of land formerly used by the Ministry of Defence. Most of this is previously developed and has the potential to accommodate around 5,000 new homes and 20-25 hectares of employment land. It is expected that the first residential dwellings would be delivered in 2013. The Development Brief for the site describes a successful new community that should include a wide range of housing types, from town centre flats to larger family houses. Lodge Hill is Medway's only large development site outside of the waterfront and town centre regeneration areas. It should take the opportunity to concentrate on family housing. This will help to balance the higher proportions of flats and smaller units likely to be provided elsewhere. The rural setting also means that Lodge Hill has potential to accommodate "executive" housing: large, high quality houses in more spacious plots, whilst still providing a mix of affordable housing. The type of people who will live at Lodge Hill is likely to be widely spread across a diversity of backgrounds and different age groups with a variety of skills, specialities, needs and abilities. It is not possible to successfully engineer this diversity, but the type and tenure of properties built can make Lodge Hill more or less attractive to different people. It is therefore of great significance that the housing offer within the proposed community provides choice to a range of households with a variety of different circumstances. We will continue to be involved with the development and delivery of Lodge Hill.

### **In Focus Project**

In line with good practice and building upon previous experience we are targeting resources into priority areas, which have been identified using a range of data sources. The result of this approach was that priority areas were identified for intervention, which included the area of the All Saints Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative in Chatham. This work builds on work already undertaken in this area and assists in the delivery of common community priorities.

The 'In Focus' project sought to undertake targeted housing research across all of Medway. Working in association with the Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre and Creative Environmental Network we have developed a detailed Medway-wide house-by-house database. This information has then been used to model the possible impact of improvements to the housing stock, in particular it will allow us to focus on the impact of work to improve energy efficiency the main reason for failure of minimum housing standards within the All Saints area.

Consultation with the community has helped inform the development of specific projects, in addition to work already underway in the area, which is now being picked up under the overall *In Focus* umbrella. Key to the success of the project is a clear understanding of local needs and ensuring that the community is engaged and can help shape and influence local delivery. In depth analysis of information on clients approaching the Council for housing advice and assistance combined with feedback from officers and the community highlighted the need to provide improved advice on housing related issues to new migrant arrivals. Funding secured from the Migration Impact Fund to invest a total allocation of £173,177 from CLG combined with the Council's own investment to help address the issues identified. As part of this initiative 2

dedicated officers have been appointed one as a Slovak (Roma Community) Housing Options Officer, the other as a housing advisor to the new migrant communities.

We have also worked in partnership with the Environmental Enforcement Team, Safer Communities, the UK Border Agency, Kent Police and Trading standards to deliver a number of operations in the area, including Operation Wellington. This was an intelligence led initiative in which risk assessments were made of properties leading to a number of residential premises in the area being visited. In all 136 properties were visited and resulted in several arrests being made, with action being taken by Kent Fire and Rescue against inappropriate uses of non-residential accommodation and the identification of HMO's and residential accommodation. This type of intervention will continue as appropriate and be lead by local cross agency intelligence.

The In Focus Project currently covers the All Saints and Luton area however we will look to extend this model to include the additional priority area of North Gillingham.

<b>Actions to Achieve Outcome Three</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Achieve a balanced approach with regards to tenure with 60% affordable rented homes and 40% Intermediate tenure homes
2	Ensure that 100% of affordable housing schemes meet Secured by Design standard
3	Lead on the development of the affordable element of Development Briefs for all major residential sites in Medway
4	Ensure new affordable housing schemes meet the standards set out within the "Creating Sustainable Communities in Kent and Medway" protocol
5	Adopt in association with Registered Providers Local Lettings Plans for all development of more than 10 units
6	Continue to target resources to improve the worst housing conditions primarily in the All Saints, Luton and North Gillingham areas
7	Work with partners to undertake proactive targeted multi agency operations to provide high profile interventions within target communities

## **Theme Two – Early Prevention**

### **Theme Two – Early Prevention**

Providing suitable, appropriate and timely housing advice to help people make the right housing choice

**Outcome Four** – Provide advice across agencies to prevent crisis and increase choice and access

**Outcome Five** – Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs

### **Outcome Four – Provide Advice Across Agencies to Prevent Crisis and Increase Choice and Access**

<b>Key Achievements 2008-11</b>
By the end of March 2011 we had reduced the number of households in Temporary Accommodation to 102
467 people were referred for mediation, 315 of which were assisted
Homeless applications have decreased by 36% with 1,068 being made over the total period
Information Hub located at Chatham Contact Point to provide access to range of advice agencies and advice surgeries set up in targeted areas

Access to information is key to helping people to make the right housing choices so that crisis can be prevented.

### **Information and Advice Services**

Medway has a wide range of housing and debt advice services based at our advice hub, Chatham Contact Point (CCP). This hub is located centrally in Chatham and alongside services provided by the Council, a range of local and national groups provides specialist and general advice to people who need it. However, the majority of housing advice work is targeted at households in high need. This represents value for money for all agencies giving housing advice to avoid any duplication and to provide information and advice early to avoid the use for more expensive intervention later.

Advice surgeries are held at various other contact points across Medway and are targeted at areas where analysis shows fewer people visit CCP. For example there is a designated surgery for the Slovak Roma community in Luton where a high percentage of that community live. Home visits are also offered for vulnerable customers. This means that people in housing need find it easy to access information wherever they live in Medway. We also work in conjunction with the Citizens Advice Bureau and libraries to provide debt advice in the community.

### **Developing a Clear Housing Pathway**

Consultation work carried out has identified the need to develop a clear, easy to understand pathway into housing. We have linked in with the Transition Strategy Group, Adult Social Care, Connexions, carers and service users to look at how we can develop the housing pathway for people with Learning Disabilities. It is anticipated that this will provide the basis for aiding discussions when talking to people about their housing options during their transition planning meetings. The process will start talking to 14 years olds in school year 9 about their future housing aspirations and then will continue to review and develop their plans until the young people reach age 16. At this point clients will be able to go onto the Housing Register and talk about their future housing needs in more detail. By age 18 clients should have a clear idea about the different housing options available to them and how they go about making those choices. Once a clear housing pathway is developed it can be used to help other service users in making the right housing choice.

### **Prevention Measures**

Homelessness prevention in Medway is based on the Housing Options model, on the assumption that, by providing advice, support (including financial support) or advocacy before homelessness actually arises, alternative solutions can be found and the need for a homeless application will not arise. Prevention can take the form of enabling people to remain in their current home or by finding them alternative accommodation.

In partnership with other agencies we have developed a number of initiatives. We have developed protocols with social landlords to ensure that the Housing Solutions team receives early warnings of potential homelessness. This is important as it targets those most likely to face losing their home. Our arrangements with Housing Benefit also help to reduce the risk of homelessness, with two dedicated Housing Benefit officers employed to fast track applications. Staff in the Housing Solutions team have also been trained to complete housing benefit applications and Housing Benefit staff have attended landlord meetings to help facilitate positive relations and encourage landlords to rent accommodation to those on benefits.

Households at risk of domestic violence often have to leave their homes because of the risk of repeat incidents of abuse. We have jointly funded a sanctuary scheme that operates across all tenures. Sanctuaries are an additional accommodation option for households at risk of domestic violence that can, where suitable and appropriate, offer households the choice of remaining in their homes. Sanctuaries are created by enhancing security in the property through the provision of safety equipment. This is important in protecting vulnerable people and enabling them to stay securely in their own homes, when they have either suffered or are at risk of domestic abuse.

We run a Mortgage Rescue scheme, which gives eligible people financial help to stay in their own homes. The property is purchased by a Housing Association and then rented back to the homeowner enabling them to remain in their home.

### **Access for All**

By analysing the diversity profile of our customers we can better tailor service delivery and shape our business strategies so that resources are allocated more appropriately to customer need. The Equality Act 2011 came into force in April 2011. The duty covers all the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The new regulations refer to equality analysis and focus more attention on the quality of the analysis and how it is used in decision-making. We will work to consider the impacts of the new duty and how we can use the equality analysis to shape our services.

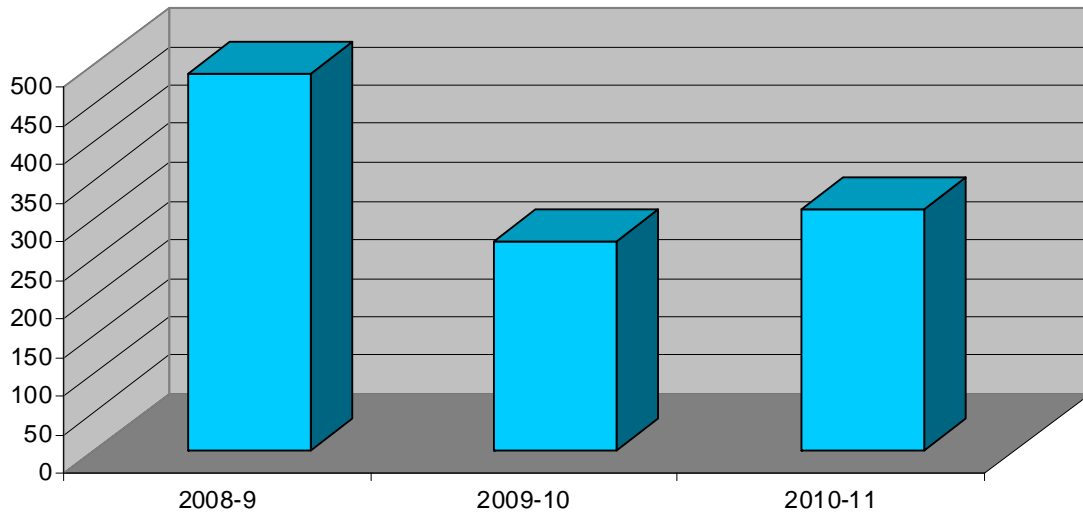
### **Homeless Applications**

In some cases early intervention will not be successful in preventing homelessness. By analysing homelessness applications made, we can use this information to improve our prevention measures.

Over the last three years the number of homeless applications in Medway has decreased by 36%. This downward trend has shown that the prevention of homelessness in Medway has improved and that services are better linked, enabling people to maintain tenancies and remain in their homes. Our housing advice service has been challenged by the current economic climate, which is resulting in more households seeing their income reducing, whilst the cost of living is increasing. This has led to an increase in rent and mortgage arrears and people having to move out of their homes for a range of reasons. This is perhaps reflected by the increase of 13% in applications in 2010-11. To meet the challenge of increasing homelessness applications we will ensure that existing processes, protocol and prevention techniques

work well and make improvements as necessary. We will also build on already strong partnerships that exist to help us make the best use of limited resources.

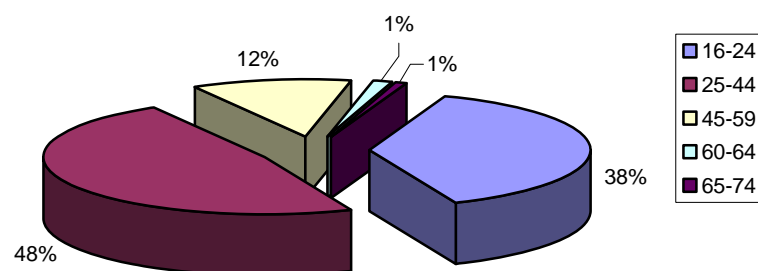
### Number of Homeless Applications 2008-2011



### Young People

Young people continue to be over-represented amongst those presenting as homeless and often have complex needs that require additional and on-going support. Of the people who were accepted as homeless in 2010-11, 38% were aged 16-24. This clearly shows that the younger generation in Medway are experiencing issues around accessing or maintaining accommodation or housing services. One of the main challenges we face is to help raise the profile of the advice and assistance that is available particularly for young people, who have raised this specific issue through our consultation work.

### Homeless Applications in 2010-11 by Age Group



Work has started on identifying the housing needs of young people in Medway, which will give a robust evidence base for us to work with partners to provide suitable accommodation. Alongside this needs analysis, we will also continue working with



Connexions and other agencies to provide an accessible advice service including on-line information. We will also explore how we can work with families through Medway's Children's Trust, schools, colleges and Universities in Medway to provide housing advice.

### Reasons for Homelessness

The main reason for homelessness in 2010-11 was that parents/relatives were no longer willing to provide accommodation, with 81 approaches being made for this reason. Another 36 approaches were made due to rent arrears within private rented accommodation. Work should therefore be based around assisting people within these situations or facing housing barriers, whether it be better benefits advice and access to surgeries to apply for assistance or empowering people with the knowledge of their housing options so families are able to make decisions and choices to achieve suitable arrangements for their families in accessing their own homes.

In terms of the reasons for accepted households being in priority need, during 2010-11, households with a dependent child accounted for the greatest proportion (55%); mental illness or disability accounted for 11%, physical disability for 8% and households including pregnant women 8%.

#### Priority Need

A person is considered to be in priority need if they or anyone that the applicant usually lives with (unless that person is not eligible for assistance) are:

- Pregnant women
- People with dependent children
- People made homeless by a natural disaster
- Young People between 16 and 21 who are at risk of sexual or financial exploitation
- People at risk of violence
- People who are vulnerable because of old age, illness, mental health problems or physical disability

### Actions to Achieve Outcome Four

No.	Action
1	Explore further ways of working with Medway Revenue and Benefits Service and the HRA to help prevent homelessness by ensuring that early warning is given of benefit refusals or suspension where eviction may ensue
2	Review the advice and assistance available in cases of domestic abuse and to those assisted through the Sanctuary scheme
3	Consider the impacts of the Equality Duty 2011 and use analysis to tailor our services
4	Continue work in partnership to develop a clear Housing Pathway for clients with Learning Disabilities
5	Review the range of debt and financial advice available and how these services are sign posted
6	Work in partnership with agencies to improve young people and parents' knowledge of housing issues

## Outcome Five – Improve housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs

<b>Key Achievements 2008-11</b>
Supported Housing Gateway system was set up, which since 1 April 2009 has placed 1,903 vulnerable people in supported accommodation or provided them with floating support.
A Medway Landlord Accreditation scheme has been developed with over 200 landlords signed up
New HomeBond scheme developed, which assisted 231 people in 2010-11

Prevention of homelessness is not just about advice; it's about other interventions as well as managing the move on of those in supported housing so they are not plunged back into crisis. It also involves intervening to help those discharged from hospital and those leaving prison and helping to identifying suitable accommodation and affordable housing to help meet their needs.

### **Matching People with Support**

Our Supported Housing Gateway is an IT system that brings together accommodation and support providers and matches them to provide appropriate support packages for each client. The system was implemented in 2009 and has enabled us to have a more efficient and effective way to match people with the support services or supported accommodation they require. During 2010-11, 976 people were placed into supported accommodation or provided with floating support. These people had a range of support needs but the majority was either homeless with support needs or people with mental health problems.

The current economic climate means that more vulnerable people are at risk of becoming homeless. Supporting People (SP) is a government programme that funds housing-related support services to help vulnerable people live independently. SP have indicated that a strategic approach will be adopted to ensure that the programme can continue to provide floating support to vulnerable people. However, demand is likely to increase for such services and therefore Supporting People will be revising their programme to reflect this.

### **Temporary Accommodation**

Effective support is provided to people living in Temporary Accommodation. Starter packs are provided for those with few possessions and there is also support for those leaving temporary accommodation. All tenants of social housing get a visit within two weeks of moving into their new homes and are then visited at least quarterly thereafter. A 'move on' protocol with social housing providers helps secure permanent accommodation and we target clients who have been in Temporary Accommodation the longest time. Over the last three years the number of people placed in Temporary Accommodation has reduced from 151 at the end of 2008-9 to 102 people at the end of 2010-11. We will continue to work with a range of providers to help reduce the number of people in Temporary Accommodation, whilst providing clients in this accommodation with support. We will also continue to carry out inspections of the properties to ensure that relevant standards are met.

### **Moving On**

Once a person has been placed in Supported Housing they are allocated a key worker who will help them start the process of achieving and maintaining independent living. Once they have been successfully allocated a property, there will be a final assessment before they leave their supported residence to determine whether they will require floating support whilst living independently to ensure that their tenancy is maintained. There are two Foyers operating in Medway and floating support packages are offered to help young people if they are re-housed into independent accommodation.

We have developed a protocol with four Registered Providers and our own HRA team to provide suitable accommodation for young people leaving care. We have currently agreed the use of five units within mhs Homes' housing stock and five units within our own stock. Once suitable accommodation becomes available, our Children's Team will be notified and carry out an inspection of the property and assess its suitability. The young person leaving care will then be placed in the accommodation until they are 18 years old. They will have the option to take up the tenancy with the landlord. If the young person decides not to take on the tenancy the unit will be re-let as general needs accommodation, thus maintaining the sustainability of the stock.

### **Partnership Working**

We work in partnership with various agencies to improve the housing offer in Medway. A Homelessness Forum is held on a quarterly basis to discuss current issues and agree a common approach to meeting housing need. The Homelessness Forum will have an active role in helping to ensure that the actions contained in the strategy are delivered.

We have developed protocols with a number of agencies to assist people into settled accommodation. We have worked in partnership with Medway Maritime Hospital to develop a discharge protocol for acute patients who will be of no fixed abode upon their discharge from hospital. Recognising that these clients may be vulnerable and in need of assistance to find and secure accommodation, we now have a duty member of staff that the Hospital Discharge Co-ordinators can contact in advance of patient discharge to ensure that the client has a smooth transition from hospital care to independent or supported accommodation. Visits to the hospital can be arranged for clients who have mobility issues or are not yet ready for discharge, where an officer will complete all necessary application forms on the ward. Similarly, we are currently working with HMP Elmley to write a protocol for prisoner release. Using the tried and tested method of a one point contact, the Resettlement Team will forward details regarding the client in order to ascertain whether we will have a duty to accommodate the individual. In order to ensure that clients can attend one interview with all agencies that are involved with their case, visits to HMP Elmley, Rochester and Cookham Wood Youth Offenders Institute are regularly arranged with other professional agencies.

### **Private Rented Sector**

In the private rented sector, we aim to promote good management standards through our Landlords' Forum and regular newsletters. The Medway Landlord Forum is an essential point of contact between the council and the private rented housing sector to enable the exchange of ideas and allow discussion between people who are promoting and developing a partnership between providers and regulators. The forums are held three times a year, with speakers from Medway and beyond, to discuss topics suggested by local landlords.

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team and housing advice services work together to tackle individual cases of poor management and other tenancy relation issues, carrying out legal enforcement work where necessary. We have also developed a Tenants Information pack which landlords can give new tenants when they move into a property. The information pack is designed to give tenants information about all aspects of renting a home and explains both their and the landlord's responsibilities. This approach to managing private sector stock also offers better accommodation to people living or wanting to live in Medway. The Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme will further improve standards in the private rented sector through the provision of information and property management training for landlords with properties in Medway. The Kent Landlords Accreditation Scheme (KLAS) is a Kent-wide scheme that recognises good landlords and agents who have the skills needed to run a successful rental business and provide good quality, safe accommodation.

### HomeBond

Medway Council offers a HomeBond scheme to help our customers with a flexible deposit bond for those who are in need of housing or are threatened with homelessness. The HomeBond scheme aims to give potentially homeless families or individuals the opportunity to choose a property in an area they wish to live before they become homeless. It is an agreement available to people who are in need of housing. It is a bond between the council and landlord/agent that they may claim against if the tenant leaves the property in a state of disrepair. The scheme may also, in certain circumstances, help with the rent in advance in the form of a returnable grant or loan.

In 2010-11, 231 people were assisted via the HomeBond scheme, the majority of which were lone female parents (45%). The HomeBond scheme is promoted at the Landlord Forums to help enable more people to access the private sector rental market. We will undertake a review of the HomeBond scheme to help improve access to the private rented accommodation in Medway.

<b>Actions to Achieve Outcome Five</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	In partnership with Registered Providers and Children's Services implement an initiative which will deliver at least 10 homes for Looked After Children
2	Maintain the Supported Housing Gateway with 1,200 referrals made per year to promote the most effective use of accommodation and support funded by Supporting People
3	Work with HomeChoice to improve the move on of clients out of Temporary Accommodation
4	In association with Children's Services, identify the resources required to ensure young vulnerable people are being offered suitable housing options and choices
5	Maintain the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and Landlords' Forum to encourage and support private landlords
6	Review the use of the HomeBond scheme to help improve access to private rented accommodation

## Theme Three – Health and Housing

### Theme Three - Health and Housing

Improving health through quality housing and places

**Outcome Six** – Ensure good quality homes, which are energy efficient

**Outcome Seven** – Improve and maintain independence and inclusion by providing effective support

### Outcome Six – Ensure Good Quality Homes, Which are Energy Efficient

Key Achievements 2008-11
8,391 people were given energy efficiency advice by the Energy Savings Advice Centre
Creative Environmental Networks delivered an Energy Efficiency training programme to frontline staff dealing with vulnerable people. This included the PCT, Social Care and Age Concern
Delivered a number of grants and loans to improve the energy efficiency of housing within Medway

This Strategy recognises that housing quality and availability impacts upon health outcomes in a number of ways including:

- General health and well-being
- Levels of health inequality
- Household income
- The ability to live independently and contribute to community life
- Levels of personal safety and community cohesion
- Health and safety risk factors

#### Medway's Housing Stock

The Housing Stock in Medway mainly comprises properties, which were built since 1945 (64%). 23% of the stock was built before 1919 and 13% between the wars. Aging properties generally require more work and investment to maintain them in good repair. In addition to this they present a challenge in terms of keeping them hazard free under the new Health and Housing Safety Rating System and meeting the Decent Homes Standard for vulnerable households.

#### Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) replaces the previous Fitness Standard, and is used to assess the condition of housing. The HHSRS is best described as a means of identifying faults in a dwelling and evaluating potential effects on the health and safety of the occupants, visitors, neighbours and passers-by.

The Housing Stock Condition survey highlighted a number of issues within the private housing stock in the Medway area and in particular that nearly 20% of homes fail the Decent Homes Standard, the majority doing so due to excess cold.

### **Housing Assistance**

Timely and appropriate maintenance can prevent a property falling into disrepair. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 repealed much of the prescriptive legislation governing the provision of renewal grants to homeowners and replaced it with a new wide-ranging power to provide assistance for housing renewal. Medway offers a range of assistance to reduce the number of households living in substandard and non-decent housing. Advice, information and financial assistance is offered with the aim to:

- Repair and improve non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable households so that they achieve the Decent Homes Standard
- Encourage landlords to invest in their homes to achieve the decent homes standard
- Improve energy efficiency in homes occupied by vulnerable households to a level that achieves the Decent Homes Standard and to reduce the number of households living in fuel poverty
- Improve the take-up of sustainable energy measures

We operate both a Warm Front and Coldbusters scheme to help people in the private sector improve their properties. We also provide Decent Homes Loans up to a maximum of £10,000 to people in receipt of means tested benefits. In addition to offering the Decent Homes Loan, we work with our partners to identify other assistance available for the applicant to provide additional resources to bring the property up to the Decent Homes Standard. On completion of the works the property must achieve the Decent Homes Standard. In some circumstances an Energy Efficiency Top Up Grant may also be available to ensure the property achieves the thermal efficiency criterion under the Decent Homes Standard.

#### **Warm Front Scheme**

Government scheme that provides 100% grants up to £2,700 for insulation and heating improvements to those claiming benefits or who are aged over 60.

#### **Coldbusters Scheme**

The scheme offers grants up to £5,000 for loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, gas, electric or oil central heating, replacement boilers, and draught proofing for those on benefits.

### **Affordable Housing Stock**

We have gathered stock condition surveys on 88% of properties owned by the Council and we undertake a programme of rolling stock surveys. Our asset management database is regularly validated and updated with historic works records. From this information we have calculated that an investment requirement of £175.1 million is needed over the next 30 years, of which £36.4 million is required within the first five years of the plan. Within the constraints of the finances available a programme of works has been developed in consultation with our residents. The Asset Management Group will frequently assess the sustainability of our stock and review our re-investment priorities. Further details are given in the Interim HRA Business Plan 2011-12.

<b>Actions to Achieve Outcome Six</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Continue to develop links with Health to assist in the delivery of an area based approach
2	License or take legal enforcement action against 100% of licensable HMOs
3	Maintain the program of inspections of non-licensable HMOs in accordance with the prioritisation scheme
4	Review the site licensing arrangements of residential mobile home sites
5	Reduce the number of vulnerable households living in non-decent sub-standard accommodation by 350 per annum
6	Provide financial assistance to 250 vulnerable and low income homeowners and tenants to meet minimum standards
7	Develop a scheme of professional development courses for accredited landlords to improve standards and professionalism
8	Assist 35 households per year via energy efficiency loans and grants and give advice to 1,500 people via the Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre

## **Outcome Seven – Improve and maintain independence and inclusion by providing effective support**

<b>Key Achievements 2008-11</b>
The Home Improvement Agency dealt with 5,491 enquiries and completed 3,162 jobs to help people remain living independently in their own homes
The first 60 unit extra care scheme is now under construction on the Victory Pier site in Gillingham with completion date expected in the early summer of 2012
8 units of specially designed supported housing for clients with Autism have been delivered
6 units of specially designed supported housing for clients with a Learning Disability have been delivered
An Occupational Therapist recruited to the HomeChoice team to help more efficiently match people with support needs to accommodation
445 vulnerable people assisted to adapt their properties with the help of a Disabled Facilities Grant

We recognise that health, housing and support are inextricably linked. The appropriate support and care services can help people to remain independent and enjoy living in their homes for as long as possible. Well-maintained, warm, secure and suitable housing can help prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital or institutional care.

### **Personalisation of Services**

In meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable people we need to address the personalisation agenda within social care and work with partners to provide greater choice and control for people requiring support to remain in independent accommodation. Personalisation of services means starting with the person and their individual circumstances rather than the service. The previous government policy, Putting People First, sets out how personalisation will radically transform service provision in social care. The new coalition government has stated its commitment to the personalisation agenda. We will work closely with our Supporting People team to enable vulnerable people to have the opportunity to improve their quality of life by giving

them access to the support they need to live more independent lives. Since the last Housing Strategy, the Supporting People programme has undergone many changes and challenges. From April 2011, the Supporting People grant had its ring fence removed allowing greater local flexibility in delivering housing related support in their areas. There has however been a reduction in funding and we will need to consider the impact of this in terms of service delivery.

### **Living Independent Lives**

We aim to enable people to live independently in their existing homes, and the Council has supported this approach through a shift from institutional care to more individually tailored services to assist people to live in the community through the provision of aids and adaptations and assistive technology, as well as targeted specialist accommodation and accessible social care support based on individual need and choice.

The older population in Medway is increasing, with the numbers of people aged 65 and over projected to increase from 36,000 to 46,100 by 28% in the next ten years. The numbers aged 85 and over are projected to increase by 38% in the next ten years and more than double in the next 20 years. The steady overall growth in the population will put pressure on existing services. The Housing Strategy recognises that increasing proportions of the older population in future years are likely to own their own home. This has significant bearing on older people's housing aspirations and their expectations. Broadly, many homeowners will seek to stay in their existing homes for as long as they can. There will however still be significant numbers of older people who may need specialist accommodation that mesh support, care and housing provision. The Council is working to adapt homes and provide support so that people can remain living independently rather than in more costly supported accommodation. We work in partnership with Hyde In Touch to provide a Home Improvement Agency service in Medway. The service supports older or disabled people who need a repair or adaptation to their home, helping people maintain their independence, safety and dignity. The service helps with things like:

- Organising repairs and adaptations
- Making sure people are receiving the right benefits
- A handyperson service to do small jobs around the home
- Finding organisations that can help with other problems

We work with the Occupational Therapy Service to help people with a disability to adapt their home to suit their needs. We provide advice that may be able to assist with the cost of funding the work via a Disabled Facilities Grant. Between 2008-9 and 2010-11 we assisted 445 vulnerable people to adapt their properties using a Disabled Facilities Grant.

### **Residential Care**

While residential care is the preferable option for some people, it is not the solution for everybody. As promoting choice and independence are key themes in national and local priorities, we are working to develop alternatives to residential care. By improving the housing offer in Medway we can enable people to make choices about the type of accommodation they would like to move in to. In 2009-10, 289 people aged 65 and over were admitted to permanent residential or nursing care purchased or provided by Medway Council. The Older People Strategic Plan 2010-13 identifies the long-term



objective to ensure that all appropriate people can access Extra Care Housing as an alternative to residential care. Although we have a number of schemes currently in the pipeline or on-site, there is currently no Extra Care Housing in Medway. Analysis carried out by the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes indicated a need for between 445 and 453 units of Extra Care Housing to match the requirements of the current older population.

### **The Provision of Specialist Housing**

We want to support people to remain in or work towards independent living, helping them to participate in mainstream society and make a contribution to the local economy. We hope to achieve this by looking at a range of opportunities to help improve access to different types of housing, delivering services to peoples homes and where appropriate developing purpose built specialist accommodation to meet needs. For the future we will focus our work on assisting people to live independently with support. We will also need to consider affordability issues for people to move into appropriate accommodation. We have identified a need to undertake further research into the housing and support needs of certain client groups - in particular people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health problems and people who are deaf and have sensory problems.

In regards to people with Learning Disabilities, we have used the Valuing People Now Housing Commissioning Toolkit to build up a picture of the current situation in terms of housing demand and supply. The toolkit is intended to assist local authorities with their partners to plan effectively for the housing requirements of local people with learning disabilities and to be able to deliver a wider range of housing options in practice. It is intended to assist local authorities to deliver the objective of more people with moderate to severe learning disabilities living in their own homes. A comprehensive understanding of the future housing needs of people with learning disabilities is a core component of having a plan to extend housing options and choices. It is hard to plan services and accommodation if the housing need is not known. We have been working with Adult Social Care to cross match clients known to them with those on the Housing Register. We are extending this work to look at clients with physical disabilities and mental health issues.

<b>Actions 2011-14</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
1	Deliver 10 fully wheelchair compliant homes per year
2	Deliver 9 homes specifically designed for clients with Learning Disabilities
3	Provide at least 150 households with major adaptations within their home through our Home Adaptations Service
4	Through the HomeSafe scheme provide minor works, safety and security checks to allow 2,700 vulnerable people to feel safe within their own homes
5	Assist 3,940 vulnerable households to undertake adaptations, repairs and improvements to their home
6	Work with the Institute of Public Care and Adult Social Care to undertake housing needs analysis on a range of client groups including those with dementia and learning disabilities
7	Deliver a minimum of 100 extra care units by 2013 and identify development opportunities to meet the additional demand.

## Resources

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This chapter provides an assessment of the resources available for delivering the Housing Strategy as far as these can be known and projected. These include both capital funds for new investment and revenue funding for ongoing services. The assessment also covers both our own resources and those from external sources such as the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Housing Programme.

### **The National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP)**

The NAHP is currently the mainstream funding source for the provision of new affordable homes. The funding is directly allocated by the HCA through a competitive process to Registered Providers (RPs) of affordable housing. These are primarily Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) but also include some private developers. In the new funding model there are four broad funding streams, which are expected to contribute to the development of new affordable housing supply:

- The additional borrowing capacity generated from the rental stream of Affordable Rent properties.
- Existing sources of cross subsidy i.e. provider surplus, income from sales, S106 contributions etc.
- Reduced costs from efficiencies, land contributed at low or nil cost or recycled New Homes Bonus funding.
- Homes and Communities Agency funding where required for the development to be viable

### **Housing Allocations, Advice and reducing homelessness**

The Council invests in initiatives that are targeted at:

- Reducing homelessness
- Providing advice on housing related issues
- Administering the Council's Housing Register
- Allocation of empty social housing where the Council has nomination rights.

The Council also provides grant funding to external agencies to deliver preventative homelessness services such as mediation services. Investment in the areas assists in most cases the most vulnerable members of our community to maintain or access accommodation. Previous investment in the areas has contributed to a reduction in homelessness and the reduced use of temporary accommodation.

### **Funding for Disabled Facilities Grant**

In recent years the Government has provided resources to local housing authorities specifically to cover the cost of funding Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). DFGs are available to households with a disabled person who need to have adaptations carried out to their property and must be paid where there is an entitlement, although it is subject to a means test. The amount of funding available to councils has been set according to an assessment of need determined nationally.

### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

As well as funding the costs of housing management, day-to-day repairs and cyclical maintenance, the HRA may be used to finance capital expenditure on the housing stock. However, the level of income that can be generated from tenants' rents has for some years been constrained by the national rent restructuring formula. This limits the range and extent of services and investment that can be funded, and in practice it has not been possible to use this funding source for capital projects. Fuller details on the HRA are provided in the Interim HRA business plan 2011-12 and will take into account the impact of the forthcoming reform of social housing finance.

### **General Fund**

As well as other Council services, the General Fund is used to cover the costs of non-landlord related activities such as providing housing advice, homelessness administration and temporary accommodation. In previous years the Council has also used an element of its available capital resources to fund homelessness related capital projects.

## **Delivery and Monitoring**

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The Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board was established in 2007 as a dynamic forum of key public and private players involved in housing, brought together to help deliver decent and safe homes for all residents living in Medway.

The action plan sets out the actions we will take, and each action has a timescale and a target or performance indicator to achieve. Actions may have one or more organisation leading or contributing to its implementation.

The actions are flexible and may alter to meet changing circumstances, but are all based on achieving the vision and priorities. Many actions and projects are well underway and some have already been noted within this strategy.

It is important that the action plan is monitored to ensure that progress is on target, (especially in these changing times), and to ensure that our actions remain the right ones.

The Strategic Housing Partnership Board will monitor progress of the action plan on a quarterly basis and separate task and finish groups will be set up to carry out specific projects meet the outcomes of the strategy.

## Theme One – Bridging the Gap

Working to create a pathway into suitable housing and home ownership by increasing choice

### Outcome One - Deliver the Properties and Tenures in Shortage

No.	Action	Monitoring
1	Secure at least 25% of newly built homes as affordable on any site meeting the Council's size threshold	Annually
2	Deliver at least 204 additional affordable homes per annum	Annually
3	Work with Registered Providers and the HCA to secure an annual investment in affordable housing of £20m	Annually
4	Deliver a minimum of 85 new HomeBuy units per annum	Annually

### Outcome Two – Make the Best Use of Existing Homes

No.	Action	Monitoring
1	Report the void levels within the affordable housing stock on a quarterly basis	Quarterly
2	Deliver the "Creating Space" initiative to help tackle overcrowding and improve the housing conditions of 15 households per annum	Annually
3	Achieve 25 on-line mutual exchanges per annum	Annually
4	Develop a range of options to help bring 100 empty homes back into use per annum	Annually
5	Maintain the number of long term private sector empty homes below 1.6% of all private sector stock	Quarterly
6	Consult, develop and implement a new Allocations Policy for Medway	April 2012
7	Develop a delivery programme for Extra Care and Sheltered Housing to meet demand	April 2012
8	Undertake a review of accommodation for older people in Medway	April 2012

### Outcome Three - Contribute to Sustainable and Cohesive Communities

No.	Action	Monitoring
1	Achieve a balanced approach with regards to tenure with 60% social rented homes and 40% intermediate homes	Annually
2	100% of affordable housing schemes to meet Secured by Design standard	Annually
3	Lead on the development of the affordable element of Development Briefs for all major residential sites in Medway	Annually
4	Ensure new affordable housing schemes meet the standards set out within the "Creating Sustainable Communities in Kent and Medway" protocol	Annually
5	Adopt in association with Registered Providers Local Lettings Plans for all development of more than 10 units	Annually
6	Continue to target resources to improve the worst housing conditions primarily in the All Saints, Luton and North Gillingham areas	Annually

7	Work with partners to undertake proactive targeted multi agency operations to provide high profile interventions within target communities	Annually
<b>Theme Two – Early Prevention</b> Providing suitable, appropriate and timely housing advice to help people make the right housing choice		
<b>Outcome Four – Provide Advice Across Agencies to Prevent Crisis and Increase Choice and Access</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
1	Explore further ways of working with Medway Revenue and Benefits Service and the HRA to help prevent homelessness by ensuring that early warning is given of benefit refusals or suspension where eviction may ensue	Ongoing
2	Review the advice and assistance available in cases of domestic abuse and to those in the Sanctuary scheme	December 2011
3	Consider the impacts of the Equality Duty 2011 and use analysis to tailor our services	April 2012
4	Continue to work in partnership to develop a clear Housing Pathway for clients with Learning Disabilities	April 2012
5	Review the range of debt and financial advice available and how these services are sign posted	December 2011
6	Work in partnership with agencies to improve young people and parents' knowledge of housing issues	April 2012
<b>Outcome Five – Improve the Housing Offer to Better Meet a Range of Housing Needs</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
1	In partnership with Registered Providers and Children's Services implement an initiative which will deliver at least 10 homes for Looked After Children	Annually
2	Maintain the Supported Housing Gateway with 1,200 referrals made per year to promote the most effective use of accommodation and support funded by Supporting People	Annually
3	Work with HomeChoice to improve the move on of clients out of Temporary Accommodation	Annually
4	In association with Children's Services, identify the resources required to ensure young vulnerable persons are being offered suitable housing options and choices	April 2012
5	Maintain the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and Landlords' Forum to encourage and support private landlords	Annually
6	Review the use of the HomeBond scheme to help improve access to private rented accommodation	April 2012
<b>Theme Three - Health and Housing</b> Improving health through quality housing and places		
<b>Outcome Six – Ensure Good Quality Homes, Which are Energy Efficient</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
1	Continue to develop links with Health to assist in the delivery of an area based approach	April 2012

2	License or take legal enforcement action against 100% of licensable HMOs	Annually
3	Maintain the program of inspections of non-licensable HMOs in accordance with the prioritisation scheme	Annually
4	Review the site licensing arrangements of residential mobile home sites	April 2012
5	Reduce the number of vulnerable households living in non-decent sub-standard accommodation by 350 per annum	Annually
6	Provide financial assistance to 250 vulnerable and low income homeowners and tenants to meet minimum standards	Annually
7	Develop a scheme of professional development courses for accredited landlords to improve standards and professionalism	April 2012
8	Assist 35 households per year via energy efficiency loans and grants and give advice to 1,500 people via the Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre	Annually
<b>Outcome Seven – Improve and Maintain Independence and Inclusion by Providing Effective Support</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>
1	Deliver 10 fully wheelchair compliant homes per year	Annually
2	Deliver 9 homes specifically designed for clients with Learning Disabilities	Annually
3	Provide at least 150 households with major adaptations within their home through our Home Adaptations Service	Annually
4	Through the HomeSafe scheme provide minor works, safety and security checks to allow 2,700 vulnerable people to feel safe within their own homes	Annually
5	Assist 3,940 vulnerable households to undertake adaptations, repairs and improvements to their home	Annually
6	Work with the Institute of Public Care and Adult Social Care to undertake housing needs analysis on a range of client groups including those with dementia and learning disabilities	April 2012
7	Deliver a minimum of 100 extra care units by 2013 and identify development opportunities to meet the additional demand	April 2013

## Appendix 2 - Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

<b>Directorate</b> Business Support	<b>Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change</b> Housing Strategy 2011-14		
Officer responsible for assessment Rachel Britt	Date of assessment 8 August 2011	New or existing? New	
<b>Defining what is being assessed</b>			
<b>1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives</b>	The Housing Strategy 2011-14 identifies the ways in which the current housing situation falls short and included outcomes and associated actions to help bridge those gaps. The Housing Strategy contains information about the housing market, demographic issues, the needs of particular groups, prioritisation and target setting. It will help to deliver the strategic housing priorities for Medway and sits alongside a number of other Council policies.		
<b>2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?</b>	Medway residents, other Council departments, Affordable Housing Providers, statutory agencies, public sector partners are intended to benefit.  The Housing Strategy provides actions to meet identified housing need.		
<b>3. What outcomes are wanted?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To deliver a range of tenures, properties and locations to meet need</li> <li>2) To make the best use of existing housing</li> <li>3) To contribute to sustainable and cohesive communities</li> <li>4) To provide advice across agencies to prevent crisis, increase choice and access</li> <li>5) To improve the housing offer to better meet a range of housing needs</li> <li>6) To ensure good quality homes, which are energy efficient</li> <li>7) To improve and maintain independence and inclusion by providing affective support</li> </ol>		
<b>4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?</b>	Contribute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regeneration of Medway</li> <li>• Development opportunities</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Partnership working</li> </ul>	Detract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, regional and nation economic conditions</li> <li>• Increasing housing need</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Who are the main stakeholders?</b>	Residents, Affordable Housing Providers, developers, other Council departments		
<b>6. Who implements this and who is responsible?</b>	Operational housing services, other Council departments and Affordable Housing Providers		

<b>Assessing impact</b>		
<b>7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial/ethnic groups</i>?</b>	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	<p>The strategy has been developed in conjunction with the BME Housing Strategy Monitoring Group. The group has examined ethnicity monitoring reports from various members of the group in considering the impact of the strategy. The group has also considered DIAs undertaken such as the Allocations Policy and Homelessness Decisions.</p> <p>The Migrants Impact Fund Project focused on providing new migrant arrivals with better access to housing advice and solutions, ensuring the availability of safe and decent homes in the private sector. The rationale for the project was predicated on the large number of new arrivals from the Slovak community accommodated in houses of multiple occupations and other private rented accommodation in the Luton and All Saints neighbourhoods close to central Chatham in addition to parts of North and South Gillingham.</p> <p>The strategy identifies the need to consider the impacts of the Equality Act 2011 and how we can use the equality data to shape services.</p>	
<b>8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>?</b>	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	<p>Consultation has been undertaken with both the Learning Disability and the Physical Disability Partnership Board. The Valuing People Now Planning and Commissioning Housing for People with Learning Disabilities Toolkit has been used to plan for our housing requirements for people with Learning Disabilities.</p> <p>The strategy includes the need for the provision of specialist accommodation and identifies the need to undertake further research into the housing and support needs of certain client groups - in particular people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health problems and people who are deaf and have sensory problems.</p>	
<b>9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i>?</b>	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		



<b>10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>?</b>	<b>YES</b>	Medway does not routinely collect information on this, to monitor or identify issues directly related to housing.
	<b>NO</b>	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		
<b>11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?</b>	<b>YES</b>	Brief statement of main issue
	<b>NO</b>	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		
<b>12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to people's <i>age</i>?</b>	<b>YES</b>	Brief statement of main issue
	<b>NO</b>	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	<p>Young people are over-represented amongst those presenting as homeless e.g. 38% of people accepted as homeless in 2010-11 were aged 16-24. Work has started on identifying the housing needs of young people in Medway, which will give a robust evidence base for us to work with partners to provide suitable accommodation.</p> <p>The older population in Medway is increasing, with the numbers of people aged 65 and over projected to increase from 36,000 to 46,100 by 28% in the next ten years. The numbers aged 85 and over are projected to increase by 38% in the next ten years and more than double in the next 20 years. The strategy considers the housing needs and aspirations of older people and we have identified the need to carry out a review of accommodation for older people in Medway.</p>	
<b>13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i>?</b>	<b>YES</b>	Brief statement of main issue
	<b>NO</b>	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		
<b>14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the function (e.g. speakers of other languages; people with caring responsibilities or dependants; those with an offending past; or people living in rural areas)?</b>	<b>YES</b>	If yes, which group(s)?
	<b>NO</b>	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		

15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		

<b>Conclusions &amp; recommendation</b>		
16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?	YES	Please explain
	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment?		
<b>NO</b>	<b>This function/ policy/ service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case.</b>	
<b>NO, BUT ...</b>	<b>What is required to ensure this complies with the requirements of the legislation? (see DIA Guidance Notes)?</b>	Minor modifications necessary (e.g. change of 'he' to 'he or she', re-analysis of way routine statistics are reported)
<b>YES</b>	<b>Give details of key person responsible and target date for carrying out full impact assessment (see DIA Guidance Notes)</b>	

<b>Action plan to make Minor modifications</b>		
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Actions (with date of completion)</b>	<b>Officer responsible</b>

<b>Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review</b>		
<b>Date of next review</b>		
<b>Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)</b>		
<b>Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?</b>		
<b>Signed (completing officer/service manager)</b>	<b>Date</b>	
<b>Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)</b>	<b>Date</b>	

*NB: Remember to list the evidence (i.e. documents and data sources) used*