

## **Enhanced Housing Options: Wakefield Action Plan 2009 – 2011**

There are three priorities that make up the Wakefield Enhanced Housing Options (EHO) programme these are: Maintaining Home Ownership and Enhancing Housing Options; Tackling Worklessness among Priority Groups; and Reducing under Occupation. All three elements of the Action Plan will be driven forwards by a senior member of staff; Ann Pittard, Service Director – Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (WMDC), Development and Strategic Housing who will ensure the project is running to time and budget and that all actions are being delivered. This officer will ensure consistency and integration across the three strands of the project and will ensure any further cost savings are made wherever possible. This officer will be the principal contact with officials at the Department of Communities and Local Government.

## **Priority: Maintaining Homeownership and Enhancing Housing Options**

### **Objective 1:**

To assist homeowners threatened with repossession by implementing the Communities and Local Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

### **Baseline / Existing support provided:**

Wakefield is one of few Local Authorities in the country offering a successful mortgage assistance loan scheme. Given the level of finance available it has not been appropriate to publicise this widely. In November 2008 however, national publicity significantly increased the volume of enquiries, demonstrating a level of demand previously unknown. This has supported the decision for Wakefield to be a Fast Track Authority to drive forward the national CLG Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Action	Timing	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	EHO Funding
To implement the CLG Mortgage Rescue Scheme and refer 20 vulnerable homeowners threatened with repossession to RSLs by the end of March 2011.	<p>To refer three vulnerable homeowners threatened with repossession by the end of September 2009.</p> <p>Refer a further five households by March 2010</p> <p>Refer a further six households by September 2010.</p> <p>Refer a further six households by March 2011.</p>	<p>To agree the roles and responsibilities of the existing teams in relation to this new initiative by the end of March 2009.</p> <p>To set up processes within the existing teams to deal with initial enquiries by the start of April 2009.</p> <p>To recruit an officer to deliver the CLG Mortgage Rescue Scheme by the 1 April 2009.</p>	<p>Irene Carey</p> <p>To be supported by Jon Feasey, Open Door Project and Stephen Tew, Springs Advice Service.</p>	<p>Springs Advice Centre, the Open Door Project, WMDC and the Citizens Advice Bureau will take initial enquiries, from existing resources.</p> <p>The officer would be funded from the Enhanced Housing Options (EHO) Funding at Scale 6, a total cost of £28,291 per annum.</p> <p>Monitoring of this activity will be carried out by the agencies involved using existing resources.</p>	<p>This would require £28,291 for financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11, a total contribution of £56,582.</p>
To help 400 people who require advice on maintaining their homes but who are ineligible for the CLG Mortgage Rescue Scheme.	To help 400 people by the end of March 2011 through the provision of money advice and debt counselling and other appropriate prevention options from the Prevention Toolkit.	To be providing assistance as the CLG Mortgage Rescue scheme goes live.	Irene Carey, supported by Jon Feasey, Open Door Project and Stephen Tew, Springs Advice Service.	Support would be provided by existing agencies, from existing resources.	There are no EHO funding requirements from this action.

## **Priority: Maintaining Homeownership and Enhancing Housing Options**

### **Objective 2:**

To provide an excellent, customer focussed, housing options advice service for all existing and potential service users across all housing tenures.

### **Baseline / Existing Support Provided:**

There is currently a wide range of advice provided on housing options in Wakefield. Accessible, visible points of contact are needed for service users to easily access co-ordinated housing options advice.

Action	Timing	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	EHO funding
WMDC and Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) (in partnership with other RSLs in the District) to develop property shops to promote housing options across all tenures.	First property shop to be established by April 2010.	<p>Suitable locations to be identified by the end of November 2009.</p> <p>Location will be determined by current demand and future predicted demand for services. This will enable the setting of a target for people to be assisted. Therefore a target will be agreed at the end of November 2009.</p> <p>All customer service staff have received training on housing options in order to provide information and signpost to relevant agencies by the end of March 2010.</p>	Jon Feasey, Open Door Project/Steve Rawson, WDH	<p>This would be scoped and developed by existing officers from WMDC and WDH.</p> <p>The costs of setting up and running the property shop would total £54,146. Of this £10,000 would be for publicity material; £14,146 would be to fund half a post (at scale 6) from the Open Door Project to provide the training and training materials for all the customer service staff; and, £30,000 would be for the set up costs for the property shop.</p> <p>Publicity will be developed which will explain how service users can access housing options services &amp; what housing options are available to them (by</p>	<p>The costs for the set up of this initiative will be:</p> <p>2009/10 – Publicity &amp; 0.5 post = £24,146  2010/11 = Running of Property Shop = £30,000    Total = £54,146</p>

				<p>April 2010). This will be in the form of leaflets and also utilising the Homesearch, WDH and WMDC websites.</p> <p>Access points will be developed to encourage where possible self service facilities for customers.</p> <p>By the end of March 2011 resources would be identified for continuation of this initiative.</p>	
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## **Priority: Tackling Worklessness among Priority Groups**

### **Objective 3:**

To assist new tenants to WDH homes in eight priority neighbourhoods (where worklessness is above 28%) gain training or employment;

To provide an enhancement service, based on current good practice, to support people experiencing homelessness prepare to access employment support.

### **Baseline / Existing Support Provided:**

WDH work with Job Centre Plus to advise tenants who are experiencing debt and rent arrears to help them access employment. This project should be extended to provide a service for all new tenants to WDH properties in priority neighbourhoods to assist them into training or employment.

The existing project; run through Turning Point in partnership with the Open Door Project helps people experiencing homelessness prepare to find employment/training opportunities cannot currently address demand. Additional resource is required to ensure we are able to service a larger audience. Turning Point is the UK's leading social care organisation and currently runs a successful Progress2Work programme, which provides support through employment and advice and in-house workshops to develop employability skills for people with

a range of issues including drugs, alcohol, offending and homelessness. A seconded worker from Open Door currently works with homeless people to engage them in, where appropriate, opportunities to prepare them to consider employment in the future. Currently the one worker does not have capacity to engage to support homeless people. This project will offer additional resource and would provide opportunities to run an in-house workshop of work preparation skills specifically targeted at homeless people.



Action	Timing	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	EHO funding
To support a number of WDH tenants to enable them to access employment or training by March 2010. The number will be determined by analysis of WDH's Tenants Census and research information.	By March 2010	<p>Project development worker to be recruited by April/May 2009.</p> <p>Establish target for number of people assisted into employment or training by June 2009.</p>	Steve Rawson, WDH supported by Catherine Lunn, WMDC	<p>Existing officer resources to establish priority neighbourhoods where concentrations of worklessness exist and therefore where the advisor needs to target geographically.</p> <p>EHO to fund the advisor post at SO1 a total cost of £31,282 for 2009/10.</p> <p>The advisor would develop the project and then ensure existing staff are trained and systems were in place to ensure its continuation and possible extension to other RSLs.</p>	The contribution from EHO funding would be £31,282 to set up the project and run it for one year whilst training existing staff to continue the work.

<p>To provide extended /enhanced support to 'hard to reach' homeless clients through current successful programmes which will support clients into preparing to access employment and training support.</p>	<p>15 month programme July 2009 to September 2010.</p>	<p>Contract agreed with provider by May 2009.</p> <p>First clients successfully targeted by August 2009.</p> <p>125 clients targeted for support during the project period (this target is based on their current annual client target of 100 per year. We would anticipate that actual recorded targets would average eight or nine clients per months).</p>	<p>Catherine Lunn, WMDC/contracted provider.</p>	<p>Additional specialist staff resource to enhance and extend current successful provision, building on best practice already identified for drug users.</p>	<p>Contribution to staffing and overhead costs of £3,300 per month (£3,300 x 15 months) Total = £49,500.</p>
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## **Priority: Reducing Under Occupation**

### **Objective 4:**

To ensure existing social housing stock is utilised to best effect through under occupation being reduced.

### **Baseline:**

WDH currently have an officer who is tackling under occupation. This role would need to be upgraded to cover the activities described below.

Action	Timing	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	EHO resources
Analyse the extent of under occupation in WDH stock to gain a full picture of occupancy levels.	By the end of April 2009.	Analysis completed by end of April 2009.	Customer Contact Manager, WDH.	To be carried out from existing WDH resources.	EHO resources will be used to upgrade an existing post at a cost of £1,989.
To consult with tenants on potential movement options in order to release under occupied stock.	By end of March 2010.	<p>Consultation with tenants to take place from April 2009 to March 2010.</p> <p>Consultation to inform the development of toolkit and run in tandem with it.</p>	Customer Contact Manager, WDH	The existing post will need to be upgraded in order to carry out these extra responsibilities. This will cost a total of £1,989.	
To produce an under occupancy toolkit and increase the options available for dealing with under occupancy.	By March 2010.	<p>Tenant consultation running from April 2009 to March 2010 will inform the development of the toolkit.</p> <p>Toolkit to be produced by March 2010.</p>	Customer Contact Manager, WDH		

To share the tool kit with other RSLs in the District, along with their own best practice to ensure under occupation is minimised.	By end of March 2011.	Dissemination of tool kit and best practice from March 2010 to Mar 2011.	Strategic Housing, WMDC, Customer Contact Manager, WDH and other RSLs in the District.		
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