



ENHANCING HOUSING OPTIONS IN RURAL SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE

Action Plan

February 2009

1. Introduction

The Enhanced Housing Options Proposal, submitted in September 2008 set out the issues facing Harborough D.C and its partners. The proposal identified the following 5 key objectives

1. Increase the range and number of affordable housing options
2. Support applicants to access private rented accommodation
3. Improve knowledge and understanding of the affordable housing options available
4. Raise awareness of the Housing Options Service
5. Join up the housing advice with the benefits, skills, training and employment advice services

This document sets out the actions Harborough D.C and its partners intend to take in order to achieve the objectives.

2. Strategic Context

The Enhanced Housing Options project contributes directly towards meeting the following Harborough District Sustainable Community Strategy vision, themes and outcomes.
A Sustainable Community Strategy Vision: In 2027 Harborough will be...A District where good quality and affordable homes go hand in hand with local job opportunities...

Theme: Local Action for Strong Communities

- Outcome: Improved quality of life for people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhood (Priority Neighbourhood – Central Market Harborough)
- Outcome: There is equality of access to life opportunities

Theme: A safe & Healthy place to live

- Outcome: more people live in decent homes
- Outcome: a better mix of homes to meet people's needs/ demands
- Outcome: more vulnerable people are supported to maintain independent living
- Outcome: improved access to housing advice services

Theme: An accessible and Prosperous District

- Outcome: Access to services and facilities is enhanced

These outcomes form part of the wider Leicestershire Sustainable Community Strategy and are linked to actions and targets in the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement.

The need to develop additional affordable housing options and to link the housing advice service with employment and benefits related advice are actions within the council's new Homelessness Strategy 2008-13. The key aims and objectives are embedded in the new draft Housing Strategy 2008-13.

The development and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy has been identified by the council as a Corporate Priority (2008/9). A three month private sector pilot project and a recent commitment to recruitment permanently into a private sector housing post, highlights the importance the council attaches to assisting households in urgent housing need.

The Economic Development Strategy 2007-12 vision is to develop "a strong and health economy, which contributes to the prosperity of the sub-region...." The Strategy includes 6 strategic aims, one of these is to develop "an increasingly highly educated and vocationally skilled resident population and workforce, committed to lifelong learning...."

The bid is submitted jointly with South Leicestershire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). From the CAB point of view, working in partnership with the council fits in with their aim of working closely with other agencies. Through this work they will be developing links with RSLs and other key agencies. It also fits in with their Access Strategy and working with people in most need.

3. Action Plan

Objective 1 - Increase the range and number of affordable housing options

Lead Officer – Housing Advisor (Private Sector)

Supported by – Tenure Sustainment Officer, CBL Team Support Officer, Environmental Health Officer, Benefits Manager

Managed by - Housing Needs Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
1.1	Introduce a private lettings sections within the CBL Properties Available booklet	Make a private lettings section a regular feature. A better working relationship with private landlords will lead to greater availability. Advertising properties will raise awareness of private renting as an option and make it easier for applicants to access accommodation.	A small number of private properties are advertised on an ad-hoc basis. Not currently a regular feature.	April 2009 – establish a procedure for seeking permission from private landlords to include their properties in the booklet. April 2009 – Agree the design and layout of the private lettings section	Staff time – Housing Advisor & CBL Team Support Officer to collate and produce. Cost of inclusion in booklet estimated at £250 p.a for materials and copying.	Raise the profile of private renting, making it an option of choice rather than last resort. Linked to targets 5.1 & 5.6 In 2008/9 15 private rented properties advertised through HHS Target for 2009/10 is 50 and for 2010/11 it is 80.	May 2009	Landlord reluctance to allow their properties to be advertised through CBL (L)
1.2	Introduce a weekly website update of private rented properties available.	Update the HHS website on a weekly basis with new private rented properties available. This will ensure that households in urgent need are able to access accommodation as quickly as possible.	The website is updated on a fortnightly basis with properties available. This fits in with the current CBL advertising cycle. Due to the small number of vacancies the private rented properties available section is often blank	April 2009 – Agree the design and layout of the daily upload April 2009 – Agree location on the website so that it is in a prominent position.	Staff time – Housing Advisor & CBL Team Support Officer to collate and upload. No additional cost for inclusion on the website.	Ensure details of private rented properties are easily accessible and that applicants consider them alongside social rented accommodation Linked to targets 5.1 & 5.6 In 2008/9 15 private rented properties advertised through HHS Target for 2009/10 is 50 and for 2010/11 it is 80.	May 2009	As per 1.1 (L) Ability of the website to be able to display the daily update in a prominent location (L)
1.3	Investigate the need for a tenant finder service. This would be a brokerage scheme	Investigate whether we should take the property advertising service a step further and provide a matching and assessment service for applicants and landlords. We will also consider	We have a simple advertising service. Details of interested applicants are passed to landlords without further	Jan 2010 – Consider the impact of 1.1, 1.2 and 1.8. Feb 2010 – Consult with private landlords on the need for a tenant finder service and	Staff time – Housing Needs Manager & Housing Advisor No additional resources	Simplify the process of finding and accessing private rented accommodation Make the process quicker and	March 2010	No risks identified.

	that would bring together local landlords and households in need.	whether it may be possible or appropriate to built on this and develop a complete lettings service.	checks or advice for the landlord.	the options		easier for landlords and prospective tenants. Linked to targets 5.1, 5.2 & 5.6		
1.4	Introduce a tenant finder service if the findings in 1.3 are that the service would be beneficial to landlords and prospective tenants.	Develop service enhancements in accordance with the findings in 1.3.	See 1.3	March 2010 – completion of 1.3. April 2010 – Agree and consult on principles of new scheme May 2010 – Seek political approval June 2010 – Implement and promote to landlords	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Housing Needs Manager Set up costs – est at £1000. This is to produce service information and raise awareness	If implemented a target will be set following discussions with CLG in June 2010. Linked to targets 5.1, 5.2 & 5.6	June 2010	Reluctance of landlords to embrace the Tenant Finder Service. Fuelled by resistance from local letting agents (M)
1.5	Assist in the implementation of the Council's new Landlord Accreditation Scheme.	Assist in promoting the Accreditation Scheme (AS) by encouraging landlords we are working with to be a part of it. Target landlords who are members to advertise their properties through the tenant finder service.	No AS currently in place. The Council is considering its options and a decision is due March/ April 2009.	Interim targets to be agreed with Env Health following political approval	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Env Health Officer. No additional resources	Raise the standard of private rented accomm by improving the quality of accomm and the way they are managed. This will help make the sector more attractive to prospective tenants and eliminate stigma and barriers that exist. Currently 0 landlords accredited. Assuming the AS is introduced in April 2009 we would expect 10 accredited landlords in 2009/10 and 25 in 2010/11. If there is a delay the target will be adjusted accordingly. Linked to target 5.1	Oct 2009	Political approval for the scheme not given (M).
1.6	Encourage landlords with HMO registered properties to advertise them through the CBL	Target landlords with HMO properties registered with Environmental Health. To promote the services available and encourage them to advertise their properties through the tenant finder service.	Landlords of HMO's are not targeted despite the acute shortage of shared accommodation.	Sept 2009 – Discuss and agree incentives we can offer HMO landlords to advertise their property through us. Oct 2009 – Collate database of properties	Staff time – Housing Advisor. Cost of producing and posting promotional material	Increase availability of shared accomm for younger applicants. Allow more applicants to be rehoused in their area of choice, rather	Dec 2009	Meeting target will depend upon applicants with a need for shared type accommodation

	and tenant finder service			Dec 2009 – Target landlords with information about the service the Council can offer.		than be forced to move due to a lack of properties. Linked to targets 5.1 & 5.3 & 5.6. In 2008/9 0 households helped to move in to HMO registered properties. 2009/10 target is 3 and 2010/11 target 6.		seeking assistance during the year.
1.7	Introduce a Private Landlords Forum.	Introduce a forum within the South Leicestershire area. Use the forum to provide training and raise awareness of key issues and policies. The forum will also be used as a mechanism for consulting with landlords on key issues.	Previous attempts to introduce a Forum in the district have failed. There is an opportunity to work together with 2 neighbouring authorities to develop a successful forum.	Two events to be held per year. First event will be March 2009. March/April. Aim for 20 landlords to attend each forum event.	Staff time – Housing Advisor and Housing Needs Manager Other costs – cost of promoting the forum to potential members & hosting forum events, est £1000	Improve our working relationship with private landlords. The build up of trust should lead to more landlords advertising vacancies through us and so increasing the supply of units to applicants in need. Linked to targets 5.1 & 5.2 & 5.6.	May 2009	Lack of interest from local landlords. Low risk as neighbouring authority has shown interest is there is effort is put in (L)
1.8	Remove the housing benefit barriers that discourage private landlords to allocate their properties to HB recipients.	Work with the Housing Benefits team and seek to introduce service improvements such as fast-tracking applications, named contact officers, better use of DHP and consultation prior to cancelling the HB claims of applicants threatened with homelessness	HB works very separately from the housing needs team, with very little understanding or appreciation of the role they can play in preventing homelessness. There is no fast tracking of applications, no named contact officer and ineffective use of DHP to prevent homelessness	May 2009 - Initial discussions with Benefits. June 09 - Agree named HB Officer to assist on housing need cases. Sept 09 – Agree procedure for notifying housing needs teams when cancelling claims from households being assisted by the housing need team. Nov 09 – Agree procedures for fast tracking urgent HB applications April 10 – Agree criteria for use of DHP to help households in urgent housing need.	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Benefits Manager. Other costs – none. Raising awareness of the changes will be done through 1.1 & 1.7.	To ensure that HB is not a reason why a landlord refuses to offer a tenancy to an applicant in housing need. For the HB Dept to be working with the Housing Needs Team to prevent homelessness. Linked to targets 5.1, 5.5 & 5.6.	March 2010	Lack of cooperation from Benefits Dept. Medium level risk as previous attempts to engage with Benefits have not been successful (M)

1.9	Promote mutual exchange as a fast, effective way of moving to alternative accommodation	Raise awareness of the M.E service so tenants understand what it is and how to search for properties. There is a substantial database of properties but these are not be accessed by all tenants. There is a need to promote the service through the CBL property booklet, website and through RSL newsletters, office notice boards, etc.	All transfer applicants joining the housing register are asked to join the M.E list. Estate agent type property particulars are produced and displayed in the Property Shop. An interactive M.E is available on-line	April 2009 – Maximise the M.E database by contacting all transfer app's as part of annual review. Oct 2009 – New CBL website populated with properties	Staff time – CBL Team Support Officer. Other costs – cost of advertising through CBL property booklet negligible.	That all transfer home seekers consider M.E as a fast, effective way of moving. That they have quick and easy access to available M.E properties 7 mutual exchange moves took place in 2007/8, 2008/9 figures as yet unknown. Target for 2009/10 is 10 moves. Target for 2010/11 to be set in March 2010 Linked to target 5.4	June 2010	No risks identified.
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Objective 2 - Support applicants to access private rented accommodation

Lead Officer – Housing Advisor (Private Sector)

Supported by – Tenure Sustainment Officer, Homelessness Officer, CBL Team Support Officer, CAB Manager

Managed by - Housing Needs Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
2.1	Provide one to one assistance to all households in housing need to help them find & access suitable private rented accommodation	Ensure that vulnerable households and others in housing need have the help they need to find and access suitable accommodation. This will include contacting landlords, arranging viewings, attending viewing when needed, negotiating the rent, applying for benefit, etc. The service will be tailored to the needs of the individual, some will be provided with intensive support whilst others will be empowered to undertake the work themselves.	Assistance is provided to the more vulnerable households. The intention is to widen the support and provide more intensive assistance for those who need it.	May 2009 - Agree procedures within the Housing Needs Team for referring clients seeking assistance to the Housing Advisor	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Tenure Sustainment Officer. Other costs – none	That all households in housing need are provided with the support they need to access private rented accomm. The Housing Options interview sheet will record advice given to all households. Those who are being given ongoing assistance will be provided with a housing options action plan. Currently 0 action plans provided. Our aim for 2009/10 is to provide 85% of households who receive ongoing support with an action plan and 95% in 2010/11. Linked to targets 5.3, 5.6 & 5.9.	June 2009	Increase in no. of households in urgent housing need means there is insufficient capacity assist all households (M)
2.2	Promote the property finding service through the CBL property booklet, website and Property Shop	Encourage households to consider private renting as an option by making them aware of the support service. Use all available media to achieve this. Landlords and local letting agents will be made aware of the service we offer and will be encouraged to signpost clients to us	Assistance is provided to those in need but the service is not promoted. Applicants need to be encouraged to utilise the service before they reach crisis point.	Will depend on successful completion of 2.1 July 2009 – Consult on draft information sheet promoting the service. August 2009 – produce promotional material Sept 2009 - distribute	Staff time – Housing Advisor & CBL Team Support Officer Other costs - Promotional materials and postage estimated at £500	Make households in the district aware of the assistance and support that is available to help find suitable accomm. Help them understand that planning a move is better than leaving it until the last minute. In 2007/8 the Housing Needs team directly assisted 24 households in to private	Sept 2009	If there is a significant increase in caseload due to the economic downturn the idea to promote the service further may have to be put on hold until

						rented accommodation. Our aim for 2009/10 is to assist 45 households and 60 in 2010/11. Linked to target 5.6		capacity constraints are overcome (M)
2.3	Provide a resettlement and support service to all households helped in to private rented accommodation	Continue to support the applicant after they sign up for the private tenancy. Resettlement support, to ensure the applicant moves in and makes a success of the tenancy will be given. The level of support will be tailored to the needs of the applicant. The resettlement support will be clearly documented and a sign off procedure followed.	Low level support provided on an ad-hoc basis as and when the Housing Needs Team has capacity. With more vulnerable clients being placed in private rented a more formalised arrangement is needed. The service is essential in convincing landlords to take on vulnerable clients.	Will depend on successful completion of 2.1 May 2009 – Agree procedures within the Housing Needs Team. June 2009 – Implement.	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Homelessness Officer, inc travel allowance & mileage. Other costs - none	Provide vulnerable households with ongoing support to ensure they become established and make a success of their tenancy. To reduce the number of tenants who lose their tenancy and return for further advice and assistance. In 2007/8 0% of households helped in to private renting were given resettlement support. Target for 2009/10 is 80% and 2010/11 is 90%. Linked to targets 5.5 & 5.7	June 2009	Capacity constraints may mean that resettlement support is prioritised to those in most need of it, so meaning that some may miss out (M)
2.4	Provide move-on assistance to all applicants placed in support housing to help them find suitable settled accommodation	Establish move on plan protocols with the supported housing providers we currently use. We will meet with the resident and their key worker to discuss their needs and take on the long term responsibility for finding the resident a long term solution to their housing needs	Initially discussions have taken place with Supported Housing Providers about the need to help find move on accommodation Results fed in to MOPP working group.	Initial stakeholder event held in Nov 08. Survey of supported housing providers in Dec 08 Analysis of results Jan 09 Action Plan due to be produced in April 09 Meeting to be arranged to discuss actions, priorities and implementation in May 09.	Staff time – Housing Advisor & Homelessness Officer Other costs - none	To provide long term settled accommodation for all households in need. To ensure that households placed in temporary accommodation are assisted to find accommodation and not left in TA. Target for number of households to be assisted through the MOPP will be set once action plan with baseline figures agreed. Linked to targets 5.3 & 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 & 5.9	April 2010	Many of the clients being assisted with have high support needs, there is a danger of not being able to find them suitable move on accomm in their area of choice because their circumstances and past history mean landlords are not willing to take them on.

Objective 3 - Improve knowledge and understanding of the affordable housing options available

Lead Officer – Housing Advisor (Private Sector)

Supported by – Tenure Sustainment Officer, Homelessness Officer, Zone Agent

Managed by - Housing Needs Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks
3.1	Promote the private sector to applicants on the housing register and to others in need.	Change attitudes towards private renting by dispelling myths and concerns that applicants have. These relate to issues of affordability, protection from eviction, length of tenancy, etc. We will use the CBL property book, information sheets and website for this purpose.	Applicants are reluctant to consider private renting as a way of resolving their housing needs. Concerns re affordability, security of tenure, etc, mean that it is not considered an attractive option.	Will depend on successful completion of action 1.1, 1.2 & 1.8 July 2009 – consult & prioritise the reasons why private renting is unpopular Oct 2009 – Agree actions and steps needed to change attitudes Jan 2010 - implement	Staff time – Housing Advisor Other costs – promotional materials, cost of inclusion in property booklet, photocopying estimated at £1000.	Improve knowledge and understanding of the private rented sector. For private renting to become mainstream that is considered alongside social renting when applicants are considering solutions to their housing needs. In 2007/8 the Housing Needs team directly assisted 24 households in to private rented accommodation. Our aim for 2009/10 is to assist 45 households and 60 in 2010/11. Linked to targets 5.6 & 5.9	March 2010	Actions to persuade applicants to consider private renting do not work and it still remains an option of last resort (L) More applicants than expected consider private renting as an option and the Housing Needs Team is not able to cope with the number of households needing assistance (L)
3.2	Raise awareness of the lack of social housing in rural areas and the need for applicants to consider other options	Improve the feedback information we provide CBL applicants so they are aware of the lack of social rented properties and waiting times for the most popular areas. This information will be made available through the CBL property booklet, the website and may form part of the revised registration pack. Hand in hand with this we will promote private renting as a way of accessing accommodation in their location of choice. aim of promoting	CBL applicants are given personal feedback on their responses and can access general feedback on all other properties advertised. We do not provide them with an explanation of what the feedback means, the waiting times for different locations and the need	Sept 2009 – interrogate the CBL database to identify average waiting times for social rented accommodation Dec 2009 – Use information to raise awareness of lack of supply of social housing, coinciding with actions in 3.1	Staff time – CBL Team Support Officer & Housing Needs Manager Other costs – producing and distributing information estimated at £250	For applicants to understand the lack of social rented properties in the district and the waiting times for properties in different parts of the district Linked to target 5.6	March 2010	Actions to convince applicants of the lack of social rented housing and the need to consider other options do not work and they decide to remain in unsuitable accommodation (L)

			to consider other options.					
3.3	Work with the Zone agent to promote low cost home ownership and Homebuy products to applicants who may be eligible.	Discuss with the Zone Agent further opportunities to raise awareness of the Homebuy products. Agree an action plan and implement in partnership	Homebuy products are promoted on an ad-hoc basis, as and when there is a new product or change s to existing products. The approach needs to be more high profile.	<p>April 2010 – hold meeting with Zone Agent to discuss products and agree advertising campaign</p> <p>April 2010 – interrogate CBL database for eligible hholds.</p> <p>June 2010 – Produce & distribute Homebuy info to 100% of eligible households on the housing register.</p> <p>In 2007/8 Homebuy information was available but not targeted at eligible applicants on housing register. Target for 20010/11 for 1 targeted mailshot to all eligible households and 1 Homebuy surgery run by the Homebuy agent.</p>	<p>Staff time – Housing Advisor & Housing Needs Manager</p> <p>Other costs – promotional literature and information will be produced in conjunction with the Zone Agent</p>	Ensure applicants have knowledge and understanding of the range of affordable home ownership products. That they have easy access to the schemes and the properties available. Linked to targets 5.6 & 5.9	June 2010	Zone Agent change as reaching end of contract. Current good relationship could be jeopardised.
3.4	Introduce housing options action plans for applicants who are being assisted to find accommodation	Applicants who attend a housing options interview and who are being assisted to find accommodation will be given a written record of the options being considered and the actions required. It will ensure all parties are aware of what was discussed and individual responsibilities.	A written record of conversations and actions is made by the Housing Needs Team but a copy is not given to the applicant. The applicant is aware of their responsibilities and what they need to do but this is not in the form of an action plan.	<p>Depends on successful completion of 1.1 and 1.2</p> <p>April 2009 – Agree procedures within Housing Needs Team</p> <p>June 2009 - Implement</p>	<p>Staff time – Housing Advisor</p> <p>Other costs - none</p>	<p>Make applicants aware of the role the council will play in helping them find suitable accommodation. Also make clear the tasks the applicant must undertake, placing a commitment on them to act on the advice given.</p> <p>Target for 2009/10 is 85% of households being assisted with their housing options to be given Action Plan. This will rise to 95% in 2010/11. Linked to targets 5.6 & 5.9</p>	May 2009	Number of applicants in housing need continues to increase and so the ability to produce action plans for those being assisted is compromised.

Objective 4 - Raise awareness of the housing options service

Lead Officer – Housing Advisor (Private Sector)

Supported by – Tenure Sustainment Officer, CBL Team Support Officer, HDC Press Officer

Managed by - Housing Needs Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks
4.1	Re-brand the Harborough Home Search service as a housing options service	Review housing application form, information sheets, website and Property Shop so that they convey a consistent housing options message	HHS is known as the Council's choice-based lettings scheme. There is nothing in the paperwork we produce or documents we use to say we are a housing options service. This is a message that needs to be conveyed consistently and at every opportunity.	Jan 2010 – rebranding of the property shop March 2010 – rebranding of HHS information sheets & letterheads April 2010 – Registration pack and form	Staff time – CBL Team Support Officer & Housing Needs Manager Other costs – Improvements to the Property Shop, signage, etc, cost estimated at £300. Application form & registration pack, design & printing, cost estimated at £500. Website changes will be built in to spec for new ICT system.	Applicants understand that HHS is the one place in the district to receive advice about all affordable housing options. Applicants are aware of the Property Shop and outreach surgeries. Will be measured through the annual "Tell Us What You Think" customer satisfaction survey. No baseline figure for this but between 2009/10 and 2010/11 we expect to see a 20% increase in the number of households who identify HHS & the property shop as their first port of call when seek advice about their housing options. Linked to target 5.6	April 2010	No risks identified. Only concern will be length of time it will take to change applicant's attitudes and understanding of the service.
4.2	Raise awareness of the service with statutory and voluntary agencies	Run a series of events with key agencies highlighting the housing options service and the process for making referrals.	Ad-hoc training is provided to agencies such as CAB about HHS, how the scheme works and the housing options advice that is available.	June 2010 – identify agencies that would benefit from raising awareness session. July 2010 – begin the process of making contact with the agencies identified.	Staff time – Housing Advisor Other costs - none	Agencies working with vulnerable clients and those who are likely to be in housing need understand the range of services and how to signpost applicants. Our aim is to ensure that all applicants in need are able to receive the advice they need to resolve their housing difficulties Target is to raise awareness of HHS and the housing options	Dec 2010	No risks identified. Only issue is willingness of other agencies to listen and take notice of the message being conveyed (L)

						service with 10 key support agencies during the period 2009-11. Linked to targets 5.6 & 5.10		
4.3	Advertise the housing options service through a range of local media	Raise awareness of the service as widely as possible in the district. Target efforts on those locations where residents are most likely to need assistance. Advertising on buses, car park tickets, church and parish magazines will all be considered.	Broad awareness of the Housing Advice and Options service for residents living in 2 market towns but very little in the numerous rural villages.	April 2010 – identify locations where need to raise awareness of the service and opportunities for advertising in these locations	Staff time – Housing Advisor & CBL Team Support Officer Other costs – Advertising costs, estimated at £1000	Applicants in isolated, difficult to reach locations are aware of the housing options service and how to access advice. This will be achieved by targeting local forms of advertising and by linking up with other support agencies (see 4.2). In 2010/11 we will advertise the service in 10 local publications. These will cover rural locations and not the market towns of Lutterworth and Market Harborough. Linked to targets 5.6 & 5.11.	Oct 2010	Lack of advertising opportunities in some of the rural areas within the district could impact on the ability to raise awareness of the service (L)
4.4	Revise the housing application form and registration pack to include housing option information and advice.	Review the questions in the application form about alternative housing options. Include the option of arranging a housing options interview. Ensure procedures are in place to act upon this request. Make the housing register registration pack more of a housing options pack. Make clear the lack of social rented properties, the alternative options available and how to access further information.	The current registration form does ask whether the applicant is interested in receiving housing options information, it also asks whether they are threatened with homelessness and need assistance. The wording of these needs to be revised and improved. The registration pack concentrates on how the CBL scheme works with little reference to property availability and the need to consider other options.	April 2009 – Review the reg form in response to revised Allocations Policy. June 2009 – Commence consultation on revised form June 2009 – Commence review of registration pack. Sept 2009 – Work with design printers to Nov 2009 – Commence consultation on the revised pack April 2010 – Implement revised pack.	Staff time – CBL Team Support Officer & Housing Needs Manager Other costs – No additional costs as cost of designing & printing registration form and application pack is part of existing CBL budget. Intend to make a cost saving as current expensive form/pack will be replaced with a value for money version.	Identify applicants in housing need, those at risk of losing their home, at the earliest opportunity. This will allow us to provide early intervention and assist the applicant before they reach crisis point. Linked to target 5.6.	April 2010	No risks identified
4.5	Review housing advice leaflets to	Identify key advice and options information. Put the information in a	Over 100 information sheets have been	April 2009 – agree key housing advice and	Staff time – Housing Advisor	Make housing options advice readily available and easily	Dec 2009	No risks identified

	ensure they are relevant, up to date and deal with key housing option issues.	user friendly format and make it available through the council offices, property shop, websites and in a regular information slot in the CBL property booklet.	produced, dealing with a range of issues. We need to reduce this and concentrate on core issues,	options information sheets June 2009 – agree design and format of information sheets. Sept 2009 – agree content and consult Jan 2010 – new leaflets available to the public and on HHS website	Other costs – Printing costs. Nominal amount as printed in-house.	accessible. Linked to target 5.6		
4.6	Establish a regular presence at the proposed Harborough Access Centre	The proposed Access Centre will provide coordinated advice to households with a range of needs. It is our intention for the Housing Needs Team to have a presence at the centre and be able to offer interviews or a drop in service	Advice services within the district are not coordinated. Households in need, especially those with young children find it difficult to know what advice is available and then to access it. The new centre aims to address this issue by bringing services together.	Timetable for implementing Access Centre to be discussed at a meeting in March 2009. Milestones and targets will be updated following the meeting. It is unlikely that the Access Centre will be operational until 2010/2011.	Staff time – Housing Needs Manager Other costs - None	Link with other services in order to provide applicants in need of advice and assistance with a one stop	T.B.C	Delays in finding and securing a suitable venue (M) Wide range of agencies involved means could be difficult getting agreement on key decisions, thereby leading to delays in venue opening (M)

Objective 5 - Join up the housing advice with the benefits, skills, training and employment advice services

Lead Officer – Social Inclusion Officer (CAB)

Supported by – Tenure Sustainment Officer, Homelessness Officer, Housing Advisor (Private Sector)

Managed by - Housing Needs Manager & South Leicestershire CAB Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Targets/Outcomes	Complete by	Risks
5.1	Review the content of the existing Housing Options interview to include questions relating to skills benefits and employment	Review the pre-homelessness checklist form so that questions relating to employment, skills, benefits, child-care, etc are asked during the interview. The answers to these questions will determine whether assistance is needed from the social inclusion officer.	We do ask about income and benefit entitlement but only in connection with the applicants housing needs. We provide benefit advice and make occasional referrals to Money Advice. Issues relating to employment, benefit, etc normally emerge as part of a conversation rather than being a core part of a structured housing options interview.	April 2009 – Discuss content and referral procedure with housing needs team and Social Inclusion Officer May 2009 – Revise the Housing Options check sheet. May 2009 – Ensure all members of the Housing Needs Team are suitably trained June 2009 - Implement	Staff time – Housing Needs Manager, Tenure Sustainment Officer and Social Inclusion Officer Other costs - none	For HHS to have a clear understanding of the financial circumstances of all applicants seeking assistance so that accurate referrals can be made to the Social Inclusion Officer. Target is to offer the service to offer 95% of households attending a housing options interview in 2009/10 and 97% in 2010/11. Target is for 80 social inclusion interviews in 2009/10 and 100 in 2010/11. Linked to targets 5.12, 5.13	June 2009	Officers undertaking the housing options interviews do not have sufficient knowledge and are not trained to ask questions relating to benefits, employment, skills, etc (L)
5.2	Introduce a social inclusion service, including dedicated officer who will provide specialist advice to applicants in housing need to address the issues of worklessness, benefit entitlement and debt	Provide additional advice and support to applicants who, through the housing options interview, have been identified as likely to benefit from the social inclusion service. The S.I officer will discuss the applicant's needs, aspirations and barriers to success and devise an action plan. The S.I officer will provide ongoing support, ending their involvement only when agreed with the client	Referrals to CAB debt advisor made on regular basis. Signposting to benefits, training and work related advisors but little knowledge of these services, no discussion of options and no ongoing assistance for the applicant	April 2009 – Recruit suitably qualified and experienced May 2009 – Ensure any training gaps are filled April/May 2009 - Officer to contact local agencies, to understand local service provision and how to access and refer cases. Target will then be set regarding number of referrals and number of positive outcomes.	Staff time – Social Inclusion Officer, CAB Manager & Housing Needs Manager Other costs – none	To maximise the income and opportunities of applicants in housing need. The aim is to reduce worklessness, increase incomes and through this improve the range of long term, sustainable housing options available to the applicant. This in turn should reduce homelessness Linked to targets 5.13,	June 2009	Difficulty in recruiting a suitable qualified and experienced officer as quickly as we would like (H). Plans already in place to ensure suitably experienced officer in place by April 2009. Reluctance of

						5.14 & 5.15		applicants to engage with officer (M)
5.3	Establish regular progress meetings with the Housing Needs Team to update the applicants options action plan	Ensure the Housing Needs Team and Social Inclusion Officer are working together, that each is kept informed of progress and actions and that there is no duplication of work. A weekly meeting will be established to exchange information, assuming the applicant has consented.	Regular informal discussion on cases with CAB debt advisor but no other	Dependent upon successful completion of 5.1 and 5.2. Housing Options Action Plan to be devised April 2009 and implemented from June 2009. Meetings to take place between SI officer and Housing Needs Team on monthly basis, commencing July 2009.	Staff time – Social Inclusion Officer, Housing Advisor, Tenure Sustainment Officer Other costs – none	Develop a complete options plan for applicants in need, bringing together the housing and social inclusion aspects of our work. Linked to targets 5.9, 5.13, 5.14 & 5.15	June 2009	Update meetings could be placed at risk if the number of people being assisted is higher than expected (M)
5.4	Establish clear links and procedures with key agencies to ensure the swift and correct referral of applicants in need of assistance	Improve our working relationship with agencies such as Job Centre+, employment agencies, colleges and F.E institutions, Benefits Agency, etc so that the Social Inclusion Officer is aware of all local services and is able to refer applicants appropriately. Named officers at each organisation will be identified and referral procedures and protocols established where needed,	Limited knowledge of local services. Applicants needing specialist advice are usually signposted to agencies such as CAB or Job Centre+, with them then referring them on.	April/May 2009 – joint discussion with key agencies to establish referral procedure.	Staff time – Social Inclusion Officer, CAB Manager, local statutory and voluntary agencies. Other costs - none	To be aware of the range of options and be able to make speedy referrals to support and advice agencies. Linked to targets 5.13, 5.14 & 5.15	May 2009	Reluctance of agencies to be involved and dedicate time (M).
5.5	Promote the service to applicants on the housing register, RSL tenants and other residents who are likely to benefit.	Widen the service to help other low income households. Target the service at those most likely to benefit. The ability to widen the service will depend on the capacity of the officer. The priority will remain assisting applicants in housing need.	No service provision.	Sept 2009 – 6 month assessment of service and decision made on whether scope to widen further. Oct 2009 – Agreement on who to target service at and methods of promoting it. Milestones will be reviewed if capacity issues limit the ability to widen the service	Staff time - Social Inclusion Officer, CAB Manager & Housing Needs Manager Other costs – promotional literature, postage, advertising costs.	To assist other members of the local community. To make them aware of the opportunities available to them and make the most of them. Maximising incomes will help safeguard their current housing and make other options available to them Linked to targets 5.13, 5.14 & 5.15	Oct 2009	Lack of capacity could mean that it is not possible to widen the service in this way (H). Very little we can do to mitigate this.

4. Budget

Expenditure

	Year 1	Year 2
Housing Advisor – Private Sector (1 fte, inc on costs)	£30,156	£30,848
Assistant Housing Advisor – Increase in responsibilities	£1191	£1482
Operating budget (see overleaf for breakdown)	£3700	£3405
Accommodation, ICT, Insurances, etc.	£16,586	£16,966
Social Inclusion Officer & admin supp – inc oncosts	£16,731	£17,735
Start up costs for Social Inclusion Officer (I.T & advertising)	£1500	£100
Accommodation, ICT, Insurances, etc	£1800	£1854
Total Expenditure	£71,664	£72,390

Income

HDC contribution towards cost of private sector officer	£15,078	£15,424
HDC contribution towards office costs and overheads	£16,586	£16,966

Grant funding

<i>Housing Advisor – Private Sector (1 fte, inc on costs)</i>	£15,078	£15,424
<i>Assistant Housing Advisor – Increase in responsibilities</i>	£1191	£1482
<i>Operating budget (see overleaf for breakdown)</i>	£3700	£3405
<i>Social Inclusion Officer & admin supp – inc oncosts</i>	£16,731	£17,735
<i>Start up costs for Social Inclusion Officer (I.T & advertising)</i>	£1500	£100
<i>Accommodation, ICT, Insurances, etc</i>	£1800	£1854
Total Income	£71,664	£72,390

Operating budget

Action	Year 1	Year 2		Year 1	Year 2
1.1 Private lettings section in property booklet	£250	£250	3.2 Social renting opportunities	£250	£250
1.4 Tenant Finder Service		£750	4.1 Rebranding housing options	£500	
1.7 Landlord Forum	£750	£655	4.3 Promoting Housing Options service	£700	£500
2.2 Property finding service	£500	£500			
3.1 Private renting	£750	£500	Total	£3700	£3405

Other expenditure

The Housing Needs Manager will take a key role in managing the project, monitoring outcomes and assisting in implementing some of the actions. Likewise, other members of the Housing Needs Team, including the Tenure Sustainment Officer, Homelessness Officer and Team Support Officer will assist the Housing Advisor. The costs associated with this have not been included in the above budget.

In addition to the Housing Needs Team, other Departments within Harborough D.C will be involved in implementing the actions; this includes the Benefits Department and Environmental Health. The contribution from these departments has not been included in the budget.

Other local agencies, including the Job Centre+, Benefits Agency, local colleges and F.E establishments will also assist with this project. Their contribution has not been included in the budget.

The additional expenditure is estimated to equate to approximately £20,000 per annum.

5. Measuring success

During the last 3 years Harborough D.C has seen a significant increase in the number of households in urgent housing need. In 2006/7 280 households in urgent need sought assistance from the Housing Needs Team, in 2007/8 this figure increased to 410. By the end of 208/9 we expect this figure to have reached 560. Despite a doubling in the number of households seeking assistance homelessness in the district has fallen. In 2004/5 122 households made a declaration of homelessness, by 2007/8 this figure had fallen to 75. The level of repeat homelessness has been zero for the past 3 years.

Our overriding aim is to maintain, and if possible, reduce the number of households presenting as homeless. In light of the current economic climate it may be difficult to achieve this. A more accurate measure of our success may be the percentage of households seeking advice and assistance that go on to present as homeless. In 2006/7 29% of households who sought urgent assistance went on to present as homeless. In 2007/8 this figure fell to 18%. During the first 6 months of 2008/9 this figure fell to 11%.

Objective	Ref	Indicator description	Comments	Existing Indicator?	Baseline 2007/8	Target 2009/10 2010/11	
Increase the range and number of affordable housing options	5.1	The number of affordable private rented properties advertised through the CBL service	Affordable = within 10% of the local LHA rate. Includes properties advertised online or in property booklet.	Currently recorded but not reported	15	50	80
	5.2	Number of landlords who are members of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme	Assumes political approval of scheme and implementation in April 2009.	No Accreditation Scheme currently in place	0	10	25
	5.3	Number of households assisted to find accommodation in a licensed HMO	As registered with Harborough D.C's Environmental Health Team	No	0	3	5
	5.4	Number of mutual exchange moves that take place		Reported through annual HIP returns	7	10	tbc
Support applicants to access private rented accommodation	5.5	% of households who we have assisted into private rented accommodation who returned for further assistance within 12 months because they had lost their tenancy.	Measures those who have been actively assisted to find private rented accomm in the last 12 months and where the landlord has taken action to recover the tenancy due to breach of conditions. Includes where sec 21 notice served because of tenancy breach.	No.	16%*	10%	5%
	5.6	The number of households assisted to obtain private rented accommodation, thus preventing or relieving their homelessness	Will include properties secured with or without landlord incentive scheme.	As per P1E – Homelessness Prevention & relief.	23	45	60
	5.7	% of applicants helped into private renting who are provided with resettlement support	Only relates to applicants who were provided with assistance to secure the private rented accommodation	Recorded but not reported	10%	85%	95%

	5.8	% of applicants who are placed in supported housing projects for the homeless who are assisted to find a long term solution to their housing needs.	Includes all homeless applicants who are found a place in supported housing, whether they are in priority need or not.	No	50%	75%	90%
Improve knowledge and understanding of the affordable housing options available	5.9	% of applicants provided with a housing options action plan.	Only relates to applicants who are being actively assisted to find accommodation, not those being provided with advice.	No. Service not provided	Zero	85%	95%
Raise awareness of the housing options service	5.10	The number of housing options raising awareness sessions held with key local agencies	Relates to publications covering rural parishes within the district	No.	1-2*	10 over 2 yrs	
	5.11	The number of local publications the housing options service is advertised in.		No. Advertise on an ad-hoc basis only	Zero	10	
Join up the housing advice service with benefits, skills, training and employment advice services	5.12	The number of households who attend housing options interview who are offered a social inclusion interview	This measures those who are offered an interview irrespective of whether this is taken up Must be clear connection between the advice given and the outcome achieved	No. Service not provided.	Zero	95%	97%
	5.13	The number of social inclusion interviews undertaken		No. Service not provided	Zero	80	100
	5.14	% of applicants interviewed who, as a result of the advice given, gain employment or attend skills training.		No. Service not provided	Zero	tbc	tbc
	5.15	% of applicants interviewed who, as a result of the advice given, receive additional benefits		No. Service not provided	Zero	tbc	tbc

*estimated as accurate figures not available.

6. Monitoring & Evaluation

Quarterly performance reports will set out progress against actions. They will also be used to monitor performance targets, as set out in section 5.

A more comprehensive report will be produced in April 2010. This will be used as a basis for updating Members, partners within the CBL Steering Group and other stakeholders.

Quarterly progress meetings will be held with the CLG Specialist Advisor.

At the point in time the budget does not allow for an independent evaluation of the service after 12 or 24 months. We will review this in April 2010. If funds can be identified the Centre for Comparative Housing Research will be asked to evaluate the service.