

## **Durham County Council**

### **Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer:**

#### **Delivery Plan: Final Draft V1: January 2009:**

#### **1. Introduction:**

- 1.2 The Enhanced Housing Options Approach is a new way of providing housing advice, which empowers clients and transforms lives. John Hills' review on the future role of social housing in England, published in February 2007, highlighted the success of the 'housing options approach' in preventing homelessness, and also praised other 'choice-based' services such as Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) schemes. He saw the value in services, which "treat those in need of housing support in a more adult way...moving towards a system where people make more of their own choices from a wider range of options, providing support when people need it". Key to this approach is the need for early intervention and for services to be accessible to all.
- 1.2 Hill suggested that the excellent work already being carried out by many local authorities around the provision of housing advice and support could form the baseline for more holistic 'enhanced' housing options services, offering advice around a wider range of issues to a wider audience. The housing options approach fundamentally transforms the way that those in housing need interact with providers of housing advice. It empowers people by giving them information and advice about the options and services available and enables them to make informed decisions. Many local authorities have developed effective housing options services and are already realizing the benefits. In County Durham many of the district councils have developed housing options services and a number have invested further to provide prevention services to enable early intervention to avoid homelessness to a wider sector of our communities. However, there is scope to do a lot more. To promote an 'enhanced' housing options approach, Communities and Local Government invited bids from local authorities for two programmes of 'trailblazers.'

#### **2. Durham County Council Bid.**

- 2.1 In April 2008 County Durham Homelessness Action Partnership submitted an expression of interest in developing an Enhanced Housing Options service for County Durham. This bid has been successful and we provided further information on the bid and present this to the CLG / DWP in September. The bid has been successful bringing a grant of £240,000 over a two-year period from April 2009. This will have a significant impact on service design as we moved towards unitary status.

2.2 As an Enhanced service the authority would also become part of a virtual team of developing authorities, to share experiences and challenges during the course of the programme. We would also be closely involved in the development of a tool kit of useful information and ideas for other local authorities hoping to expand their housing options service.

### **3. Outline of HAP Submission:**

3.1 Building on the success of current provision of prevention and housing options services, the enhanced housing options service would seek to provide the following benefits:

- Branding and developing a service, which is client centred and solution focused, with a high profile in the locality and the ability to reach out to rural areas, we will ensure that customers know where to call for help.
- Using Durham Key Options (CBL) as the hub for the enhanced housing options, would allow access for all customers to a range of options. The scheme will see RSL, private sector and low cost home ownership solutions in addition to the development of an advice and information service available via the Durham Key Options Website and associated publicity. This would be accessible via a range of venues public access points, hospitals, prisons, and local information kiosks.
- Common Allocations Policy. Allocations policies used to meet housing need, by ensuring appropriate banding, or via casework advice on assignment or succession etc. Current links will be developed with occupational health and health and social care and supporting people to provide solutions to assist customers to remain their home.
- There is a range of potential delivery partners in the county, many of whom the HAP has worked with previously. These include Acumen Trust, who play a vital role in East Durham bridging the gap between service provision and actively helping people into learning, employment and enterprise has, as all partners, given initial commitment to this expression of interest. Acumen Trust is also the only North East finalist in the CLG SPARK Challenge for developing homelessness social enterprise. We would engage with all relevant voluntary and statutory agencies to develop involvement further to meet the training and employment and other needs of all customers, particularly those young people not in education, training or employment and those long term unemployed or in long term receipt of benefit.

- The local authority would lead enhanced housing options, but the service design would be innovative and customer focused to ensure access to all the community. By developing a range of in-house services linked to the housing options key worker approach we seek to offer an excellent customer experience as we address holistic need.
- Opening times would be varied to reflect the needs of our customers. The service would therefore need to be accessible at weekends and late night openings, in addition to using different media to reach all groups.
- Service user involvement in the development of this service will be crucial. We will undertake an extensive exercise to gather the views of local people on how the service should be delivered and will involve users in the review and refinement of the service on a going basis.

#### **4. Resources:**

4.1. Durham County Council will receive a Homelessness Grant of approximately £300,000. This funding is committed to spend on prevention services and some staffing costs. There will be resources from the general fund; the exact amount is yet to be determined by the Head of Housing. This will be in addition to the £240,000 grant allocation from the CLG to assist in the development of Enhanced Housing Options. The Steering Group will actively consider additional funding sources to compliment current service developments.

#### **5. Implementation:**

5.1 This action plan sets out how the steering group will facilitate the development of Enhanced Services across County Durham from April 2009. In light of Local Government Restructure, it has become necessary to consider the implications for service development. It has therefore been agreed that development of the Enhanced Housing Options Service for County Durham will have a stage implementation. This will be as follows:

<b>Easington &amp; Durham City Locality:</b>	<b>April to July 2009.</b>
<b>Derwentside &amp; Chester-le-Street Locality:</b>	<b>July to September 2009.</b>
<b>Sedgefield, Wear Valley &amp; Teesdale:</b>	<b>August to October 2009</b>

5.2 Learning from each development phase will be used to improve implementation across the county. To ensure the efficient use of time and resources, implementation of systems and procedures, in addition to training will be co-ordinated at a county service level.

5.3 A service diagram is available at the back of this document.

5.4 All actions to be signed off by Head of Department / Head of Housing.

6. **Project management.** In the interim, until the Housing Solutions Manager is in post, Andrew Burnip, Homelessness & Housing Advice Manager, District of Easington will deliver Project Management. Key responsibilities within the delivery plan are clearly highlighted with recourses implications and outputs measurements are appropriate. Please note: Where costs are included this are estimated. Management of separate budget heading spend will be established from commencement of project.

**Aim: To establish steering group & core requirements to deliver Enhanced Housing Options Service across County Durham:**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
HAP Based Steering Group Established.	Full steering group working across county developing and implementing service.	Key voluntary and statutory partners identified and invited to join steering group.	Agree remit / scope and accountability of steering group.	A.Burnip  Steering group	No.	February 09
Co-ordination of service design and development limited to steering group.	Enhanced Housing Options Co-ordinator in post to lead development of service across county.	Consider recruitment / management options for function. Possible risk of delay due to LGR.  Consider SLA with voluntary sector partner as possible model.  Complete job description and see secondment.	Contact HR.  Agree process subject LGR restrictions.  Consider function operating within voluntary sector facilitation.  Procure services as required.	A. Burnip  Glyn Hall  Steering group	EHO GRANT  £30,000	April 09
Current IT & monitoring systems fragmented across county.  Agreement to commission Peter Lally system across county.	IT in place to record homelessness, prevention and enhanced monitoring requirements.	Key IT support posts contacted:  Peter Lally Commissioned to install and manage system.  Agreement with CLG monitoring requirements and outputs for EHOs.  Contact other EHO Las with P. Lally system to share cost of development.	Agreement from Peter Lally to amend reporting of generic system.  Training delivered to service staff on IT use.	A. Burnip  Steering group.	CLG grant up lift.  £21,000  Possible EHO grant to deliver EHO monitoring.	April 09

**Aim: To develop case management systems to deliver Enhanced Options Services.:**

<b>Baseline:</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Housing Options approach adopted by District Councils. Procedures not aligned / approach to client care fragmented.	Case management and client care principles adopted by county service.	Agree triage system to assist in identifying multiple needs & readiness for enhanced service.	Research potential models of need assessment and adapt to needs of service. Consider SLA with Customer service centres as county delivery points develop.	A. Burnip  Co-ordinator	NO	March 09
Local Government Restructure seeing alignment of services and procedures across the county.	New procedures developed to assist in operation of core and enhanced services.	Establish standard letters offering bespoke advice provision around housing, training and employment options.	Seek partner assistance to ensure standard advice correct. Scope potential IT solutions.	A. Burnip  Steering Group	General Fund.	March 09
Fragmented approach to current in-house case management and client care requirements.	Client care procedures adopted across services incorporating, back to work, welfare benefit and debt health checks..	Establish method for conducting welfare benefit checks and in work better off calculations / debt health checks.	Scope potential IT solutions & possible use of Job Centre + IT packages.	A. Burnip  Co-ordinator  Steering group.	EHO grant.	March 09
No support available to officers to complete welfare benefit, debt checks or better off calculations.	IT support available to enable quick and efficient assessment to be completed and written advice to be given.	IT software to be installed and training given.	IT provider to be sought & possible use of Job Centre + IT packages.	A. Burnip  Steering group	Cost to be confirmed EHO Grant	March 09
Action planning currently focused on housing options.	Bespoke action planning linked to training / employment opportunities / options.  Higher-level support needs identified and met.	Staff trained to deliver enhanced advice and options provision, linked to specialist referral protocols.	Advice templates / interview scripts developed to streamline advice and options process.	A. Burnip  Steering group	Cost to be confirmed EHO Grant	March 09
Fragmented approach to quality checks.	Standard quality checks adopted across service area. Operation of client care and reviews in line with SQM.	Systems and procedures developed and agreed.	In house training developed for staff.	Steering group A. Burnip	NO	April 09

<b>Aim: To develop referral routes to key partners</b>						
<b>Baseline:</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Referral protocols in some district localities with local advice and support sector.	Referral protocols established with key organisations including (not exhaustive list): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support People (Durham Home Stay).</li> <li>• CAB.</li> <li>• DWP.</li> <li>• Job Centre +</li> <li>• Acumen</li> <li>• Centre Point</li> </ul>	Identify key referral partners in each locality.  Agree key partners and establish protocols and feedback routes.	Key partners engage with Enhanced Services.  Supported referral protocols established.  Priority referrals agreed with key partners.	Locality managers  Steering group	NO.	May 09
Vulnerable Adults Protocol Developed in one district.	Vulnerable Adults Protocol delivered across county enabling action planning and partnership working to meet the holistic needs of service users.	Refine current protocol and train staff on its use and application.  VAP incorporated into key worker approach of EHOs officers.	Incorporate VAP training into service training.  Engage partner organisations into VAP protocol.  Review function alongside CAF.	Co-ordinator  Steering group.	NO	May / June 09
Prevention Champions training delivered in one district.	Prevention Champions training delivered as a rolling programme across county incorporating EHOs approach.	Incorporate VAP and Enhanced Service Elements into Prevention Champions training.	Assess current content and amend as appropriate.	A. Burnip Co-ordinator Steering group	CLG Grant. £7,000	June / July 09
Current links with employment and training providers limited.	Links between housing and training / employment needs embedded in service delivery.  Job Centre + Staff and Housing Staff delivering services to each other and identifying customer needs in both regard to housing and employment / training.	Agree delivery model and rolling programme of joint working with Job Centre + & Acumen Trust.  Service delivering and referral protocol established.	Agreed needs of partner organisations to ensure services are targeted to vulnerable groups.  10 LA staff trained. All staff trained	A. Burnip  Steering group  Co-ordinator	NO	Feb / Mar 09  April 09 July 09

**Aim: To ensure officers have the required training and management support / supervision to deliver enhanced services.**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
Current training delivered to meet customers-housing need.	Officers / Managers trained at an introductory / intermediate level to give basic advice and signposting on welfare rights, debt and opportunities for training and employment.  Clear referral routes to specialist providers: CAB / Solicitors / Welfare Rights.	Identify appropriate training provider able to deliver sessions across a range of advice needs, prevention services and support needs to ensure EHOs staff develop key worker approach.	Establish baseline knowledge across service.  Consider training needs of partner organisations. Consider training by partner organisations to EHOs staff. 10 LA staff trained. All staff trained	A Burnip.  Steering Group.	EHO Grant.  £20,000/Pump priming funding	April 09 July 09
Current county services operating housing options approach, with some limited access to a range of prevention tools.	Access to prevention tools offered to all customers as appropriate.  All officers proactive in engaging innovative responses to housing and related need.  Client centred approach adapted to service deliver to ensure customers needs are assessed and met.  Realistic action plan developed utilizing options tools to full effect.  All EHOs officers embracing service model and demonstrating innovation in service delivery and support to customers.	Supervision and management arrangements ensure processes and procedures are implemented to maximise outcomes. Managers providing appropriate levels of supervision and support to front line staff to ensure core principles of service implemented.  Possibility Place Training delivery to all housing solutions officers and managers to assist in management of change.	Training provider able to deliver core message.  Prevention tools developed to be accessible across service areas.  10 LA staff trained (Easington/Durham Locality)  All staff trained	A. Burnip  Locality Managers	General Fund / Supporting People / CYPS.  CLG Grant.  EHO Grant.	April 09 ongoing.   April 09  July 09
Key worker approach to service delivery not embedded.	EHOs officers operating holistic, client centred approach to innovative service delivery to meet identified need.	Appropriate staff training, supervision and management commitment established across County service.	Identify appropriate training provider and ensure key worker approach embedded in service via supervision and management support.	A. Burnip  Locality managers  Co-ordinator	EHO Grant. (Training)/ Pump priming funding.	April 09 onwards.



**Aim: To embed partnerships with employment and training providers.**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
No joint working between housing options and training / employment services or agencies.	Partnerships embedded in EHOs services.  Partnerships with Job Centre + and voluntary sector providers.	Gain commitment from partners to deliver holistic services across current service delivery points.	Establish links at appropriate level within partner organisations.  Utilise current partner networks to develop innovative service delivery models.	A. Burnip  Steering group:  Co-ordinator	No	April 2009 onwards.
No joint working between housing options and training / employment services or agencies.	Established referral routes and pre-course activities developed for Acumen's Possibility Place linked to Employability Framework (REF):	Take lead from Acumen trust on the needs of potential service users and initiatives to engage socially excluded groups.  Agree outcomes and number of participants / sessions to be delivered.	Develop pre-Possibility Place course. Agree numbers & participants  Establish referral routes.  Promote service with socially excluded customers. Deliver Possibility Places Session in Easington / Durham locality.	A. Burnip  Steering Group  Co-ordinator	£25k.  EHO Grant	April 2009 onwards.  April 09 onwards.
No joint working between housing options and training / employment services or agencies. .	Core EHOs service able to offer job search / training function to customers via support worker role and in waiting areas.	Take lead from Acumen and Job Centre + to establish most effective operating functions to enable supported search facilities at EHOs access points.	Research current operating functions and product models and secure implementation.	A. Burnip Steering Group  Co-ordinator	EHO Grant	April 2009 Onwards.
Housing options services operating in isolation to possible social enterprise solutions to customers and community needs.	Develop partnerships to deliver social enterprise initiatives across County Durham.	Develop working group with partner organisations to scope potential joint bids.	Ensure appropriate partner organisations attend working group.	Steering group  Co-ordinator	No.	June 2009 onward
No direct referral link to in house opportunities for customers.	Former service users accessing Local Government training & employment opportunities.	Establish commitment from DCC and develop advertising protocol.	Identify appropriate lead within DCC and canvas commitment.	A. Burnip	No	April/May 2009

**Aim: To ensure innovative access to Enhanced Housing Options are developed across County Durham:**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
Current services delivered from Local Authority Premises.	<p>Various service delivery points across the County including (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALMO/LSVT shop front premises:</li> <li>Job Centre +</li> <li>Community Centres via video conferencing</li> <li>Acumens shop front in Bishop Auckland &amp; Seaham.</li> </ul>	Agreement confirmed from partner organisations.	<p>Research conducted on potential locations to maximise customer access.</p> <p>Premises identified across the county.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Co-ordinator</p>	EHO Grant:	April 2009 onwards.
Current service hours Monday to Friday 9am to 5 pm.	Service accessible on Saturday and one late night opening per week.	<p>Establish centres to deliver access as required.</p> <p>Promote flexible working options to officers to encourage voluntary take up.</p>	<p>Research optimum service delivering time and workflow.</p> <p>Consider late night opening via ALMO / RSL contact centre.</p> <p>Identify premises to facilitate opening extended times.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Locality Mangers.</p>	No	May/ June 2009 onwards.
Home visits offered in some localities.	Home visiting officers in each locality offering EHOs service to customers identified at risk of homelessness / exclusion.	<p>Develop robust referral systems and supporting paperwork / client care documentation for home visiting officers.</p> <p>Enable full range of prevention tools to be available to officers.</p> <p>Up load prevention tools, CBL systems etc onto Laptops for home visiting officers.</p>	<p>Assess current systems and procedures for home visiting and amend to meet additional needs of EHO service.</p> <p>Enable full range of prevention tools to be offered in customer's homes.</p> <p>Laptop and appropriate solutions identified to ensure above.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Co-ordinator</p> <p>Locality managers .</p>	<p>EHO Grant.</p> <p>£5,000</p>	April / June 2009

**Aim: To ensure innovative access to Enhanced Housing Options are developed across County Durham:**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
<p>Current services delivered from Local Authority Premises.</p> <p>Rural localities or those poorly served by public transport potentially isolated from current services.</p>	<p>Home visits adopted as per above action.</p> <p>Video conferencing booths via telecare services piloted as delivery options for Enhanced Housing Options service &amp; Choice Based Lettings.</p> <p>Enhanced Housing Options / CBL rural bus piloted to take service to rural communities.</p>	<p>Draft technical specification for EHO service.</p> <p>Deliver service in current pilot areas &amp; evaluate use.</p> <p>Secure additional funding to provide resource to county.</p> <p>Research current use of community bus services and assess possible partnership to deliver outcome.</p>	<p>Establish commitment from video conferencing pilots to incorporate EHO service.</p> <p>Work with providers to ensure appropriate information and resources are uploaded onto systems with regard to prevention service, housing option sand enhanced services.</p> <p>Identify potential funding partners to develop and deliver EHOs / CBL bus.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Steering group</p> <p>Co-ordinator.</p>	<p>EHO Grant: £10,000</p> <p>TBI</p>	<p>April 2009 onwards.</p>
<p>Current services to not engage with HMP serving the county, beyond statutory requirement under S.184. HA 96.</p>	<p>EHO service delivered to one County Durham Based Prison to provide returning prisoners housing and enhanced options.</p> <p>Established links to probation services.</p>	<p>Develop resources to be delivered within 1 HPM.</p> <p>Develop outreach surgeries to returning prisoners identified as potential beneficiaries of EHOs services.</p>	<p>Contact HMP governors to establish potential area for pilot.</p>	<p>Co-ordinator</p>	<p>EHO Grant.</p> <p>Current staffing.</p>	<p>May/ June 2009 onwards.</p>

**. Aim: Service aims communicated effectively to customer and partner organisations.**

<b>Baseline:</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
No communications strategy.	<p>Communications strategy developed and implemented to ensure service aims and objectives are effectively communicated to customers and partners.</p> <p>Strategy effective in raising the profile of service to be the first option for customers rather than that of last resort.</p>	<p>Confirm launch date for service.</p> <p>Deliver 4 media events over the first 12 months.</p> <p>Utilise media in delivering prevention message.</p> <p>Establish key media message delivered via Partners</p>	<p>Establish support from marketing and communications teams.</p> <p>Draft communication strategy with key service messages and work plan for delivery.</p>	<p>Steering group</p> <p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Co-Coordinator.</p>	EHO Grant:	April 2009 onwards.
Service currently has no corporate image or identify.	Corporate image of EHOs service readily recognisable by customers and partners.	Develop image of service and branding options.	<p><del>Extended times.</del></p> <p>Establish working group to look at design options.</p>	Head of Department Locality Managers.	No	May/ June 2009 onwards.
Service branding, options information, service leaflets and self help information limited.	<p>Full service launch with vibrant branding established across county service.</p> <p>Leaflet, service information, options packs and self help information available to all customers and partners via a variety of media.</p>	<p>Agree service promotion literature.</p> <p>Confirm self help information and make available via web site, CBL.</p>	<p>Establish working group to consider options.</p> <p>Develop self-help information to assist in prevention.</p> <p>Develop EHOs pack to incorporate enhanced service elements and information from partners.</p>	<p>Co-ordinator</p> <p>Steering group</p>	EHO Grant.	June 2009

**. Aim: Develop responses to the potential impact of current recession on delivery of Enhanced Options Services.**

<b>Baseline:</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Action:</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
<p>Small increase in mortgage repossession approaching local authority for assistance.</p> <p>Potential increase in mortgage repossession cases approaching local authority for assistance.</p> <p>No mortgage rescue package available to assist.</p>	<p>Mortgage Rescue available to those who qualify and where rescue is appropriate and affordable and where all other prevention methods have failed.</p> <p>3 specialists offers trained to deliver service in locality.</p> <p>1 peripatetic money advice worker seconded to team.</p>	<p>Specialist Mortgage rescue team established within County Durham Housing Solutions Team.</p> <p>Mortgage rescue team able to respond to customer needs.</p> <p>Seek work stream commitment.</p> <p>Fund 1 money advice worker to delivery team. (Agreement form CLG confirmed)</p>	<p>Establish links with money advice within the county. Agree referral routes to above.</p> <p>Contact zone agent and confirm commitment / process</p> <p>Develop in house procedures / processes and supervision arrangements to support above.</p> <p>Identify and train staff to deliver service.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Steering group.</p> <p>Work Stream</p> <p>CO-ordinator</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>EHOS</p>	<p>April / June 09</p>
<p>Evidence of large-scale redundancies in manufacturing and service sectors.</p> <p>No link to rapid response to advice workforce prior to redundancy</p>	<p>Enhanced Housing Options established within rapid response team to deliver targeted support at work place to those customers facing redundancy.</p>	<p>Agreement sought from partners at ONE North East for service involvement.</p>	<p>Confirm links and key organisations / personnel to agree protocol.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>April / June 09</p>
<p>Limited corporate strategy to respond to recession in merging County.</p> <p>Limited links to Welfare rights and other partners.</p>	<p>Strategy agreed at corporate level to co-ordinate response to recession and potential increase in demand for services.</p>	<p>Establish senior management commitment and co-ordinate / join working groups to develop response.</p>	<p>Identify current work at county and district level and coordinate.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p>	<p>No.</p>	

**Aim: Embed Enhanced Housing Options Service within CBL virtual hub.**

Baseline:	Outcome	Milestones	Outputs	Action:	Resource implications	Deadline
<p>Choice based lettings currently operating I 1 district.</p> <p>Housing Options not linked to Durham Key Options web site or service delivery points.</p>	<p>CBL delivered across County Durham by July 2009. (Subject to board approval).</p> <p>Enhanced Housing Options delivered in partnership with Durham Key Options service delivery points.</p> <p>Durham Key Options developed as hub for Enhanced Housing Options service.</p>	<p>Delivery currently managed by project board.</p> <p>EHOs elements developed to fit within CBL website.</p> <p>Service developments considered with partners and Abrisas to develop innovative uses of EHO module.</p>	<p>Northern Housing Consortium to act as procurement agents.</p> <p>Service specification agreed with Abrisas.</p> <p>Confirmation that EHO developments and self-help can be delivered via CLB site.</p> <p>Development of CBL hub with partner organisations.</p> <p>Service charge with provider agreed beyond 2011.</p>	<p>A. Burnip</p> <p>Rachel Collings. (NHC)</p> <p>Steering group.</p>	<p>EHO Grant £30,000 yr.</p> <p>£25,000 year 2.</p>	<p>July 09</p>
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