

CESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

Date of the meeting: 25th October 2011

Report of: Director of Places

Subject/Title: Housing Strategy

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Housing is a vital element of developing the 'place', assisting in the creation of sustainable communities and our ambition for economic growth. It is a fundamental part of everyone's life and is essential to our health, children's educational achievement, economic wellbeing and to social inclusion.
- 1.2 Cheshire East's first local Housing Strategy sets out the housing vision for the authority and the priority areas, which will be the focus during the period 2011 to 2016. The draft strategy is now complete and we will be seeking adoption through Cabinet on 28th November 2011.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To endorse the adoption of the Housing Strategy.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 In order to articulate Cheshire East's Housing vision we need to produce a local Housing Strategy which sets out our priorities for the future. The strategy will then give strategic direction to our stakeholders both internally and externally.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All Wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All Local Ward Members

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - None - Health –

- 6.1 Housing is fundamental to the well being and prosperity of the Borough. There are direct connections between the quality of the housing stock and

health, educational attainment, carbon reduction and care for older people. Providing sufficient housing is essential to maintain economic growth and vitality – and access to housing is a key issue in rural areas.

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 There is no legal requirement to publish a local housing strategy, however it is good practice for an authority to have either a sub regional or local housing strategy, which articulates the authorities vision and priorities, giving strategic direction to both internal departments and external organisations.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 Our approach to Strategic Housing is fundamental to achieving our priorities within “Ambition for All” our community strategy. In particular, the priorities of: Nurturing strong communities; supporting children and young people; ensuring a sustainable future; and driving out the causes of poor health. Our Corporate Plan supports delivery of these priorities and having an effective approach to housing is a core element of the Council’s ambitions. It is essential therefore that we have a local strategy which demonstrates how we will address these priorities.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 In July 2009, the Cheshire Housing Alliance launched its second Housing Strategy, setting out the housing vision and priorities for the sub-region, giving strategic direction to the new unitary authorities across Cheshire. The sub regional housing strategy was a key strategic document for the authority at a time when we were bringing three Housing Departments together.
- 10.2 In 2010 having commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Private Stock House Condition Survey, which gave an insight into local issues, the Strategic Housing service took the decision to produce a complimentary strategy, which would focus on the unique opportunities and challenges we face within Cheshire East.
- 10.3 The local housing strategy has been developed at a time of significant changes within the social housing sector. We have therefore taken account of changing Government policy, as well as sub regional and local strategic approaches. The strategy links into the newly adopted sub regional Local Investment Plan, statutory Homelessness Strategy and the emerging Ageing Well Plan. It takes account of the Economic Development Strategy and developing Local Development Framework.

- 10.4 Resident and stakeholder engagement has been a priority when developing the strategy to ensure that we address the issues which are important to our communities. Consultation feedback played a fundamental part of formulating our priorities.
- 10.5 The key priorities for delivering a balanced housing market that meets the varied needs of our residents are as follows:
- Delivering market and affordable housing.
 - Making the best use of our existing stock;
 - Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents;
 - Meeting the needs of an ageing population; and
 - Investing in our neighbourhoods.
- 10.6 The strategy addresses these priorities in turn and highlights the national position, our current position, achievements to date and our strategic approach for 2011 to 2016
- 10.7 Our strategic approach demonstrates how we will address some of the issues and challenges we face. These approaches will inform the development of our annual Team Plan which will specific projects and targets which are to be achieved. Performance will be reported on a quarterly basis to both Cheshire East and the Cheshire East Strategic Housing Delivery Group.

11.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 11.1 In order to meet the recommendation set by the Audit Commission to articulate our strategic approach we need to adopt a local housing strategy.

12.0 Access to Information

A copy of the draft Housing Strategy is attached:

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Cheshire East Housing Strategy

Moving forward
2011 - 2016

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce the first Cheshire East Housing Strategy, 'Moving forward' 2011 - 2016 which sets out our long term housing vision for the borough. The strategy has been developed at a time of significant change within the housing sector, with a move towards localism and the flexibility to make local decisions. These changes bring with them great opportunities for the authority to address housing at a local level, in order to create balanced and sustainable communities across Cheshire East.

Housing is far more than just a roof over our heads – it is a fundamental part of everyone's life and is essential to our health, children's educational achievement, economic wellbeing and to social inclusion. Without good quality housing, we risk losing economic investment in Cheshire East. In Cheshire East, we want everyone to have access to a home of decent quality at a price they can afford. We want these homes to be in good quality neighbourhoods that are safe, attractive, and have good access to schools, leisure and employment opportunities.

Cheshire East's Sustainable Community Strategy 'Ambition for All' sets out the vision for the area and priorities for action. Sustainable communities need good quality housing in places that people want to live. This Housing Strategy builds on the Sustainable Community Strategy, and sets out how we will deliver those priorities.

Effective provision of housing is integral to achieving regeneration ambitions for Cheshire East. Housing can often provide the leverage to cross-fund and make development feasible. Appropriate housing provision is essential if Cheshire East Council is to achieve accelerated growth and a step change for Crewe.

We work closely with our Spatial Planning, Regeneration and Adult Services departments to ensure that we can address the local housing challenges we face, and make Cheshire East a place in which people want to live and work. This will then inform the decisions which our external partners make.

"Moving Forward" sets out our five key priorities for delivering a balanced housing market that meets the varied needs of our residents:

- Delivering market and affordable housing.
- Making the best use of our existing stock;
- Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents;
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population; and
- Investing in our neighbourhoods.

This Strategy draws together the ideas and expertise from a range of partners, and I am grateful for their contributions. Together we will work to deliver the good quality housing and services that our communities deserve.

Councillor Jamie Macrae
Portfolio Holder for Environment & Prosperity



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Introduction

This is the first Housing Strategy for Cheshire East. We have drawn on the wealth of experience from across the Council and from our partners to capture our vision for delivering housing. Housing is fundamental to the lives of everyone, and our strategy is to ensure:

- we have good quality housing at an affordable level, in locations where it is required;
- those threatened with homelessness are given the support and assistance that they need;
- that we make best use of our existing housing stock and that it is a decent standard; and
- our most vulnerable residents are given every opportunity to retain their independence.

Cheshire East is part of the Cheshire and Warrington Housing Alliance. The Alliance launched its second Housing Strategy in 2009, setting out the housing vision and priorities for the sub-region. This sub regional approach has been developed further with the adoption of the Local Investment Plan for Housing 2011-2015 in September 2011. This key document responds to the challenges we face through the development of a sub regional framework and an associated set of actions. This document gives strategic direction to the unitary authorities across Cheshire and Warrington, while this local housing strategy focuses on the local opportunities and challenges we face in Cheshire East.

This strategy links with other strategies that influence Cheshire East's neighbourhoods, including the emerging Spatial Planning Core Strategy and Local Development Framework, the economic development strategy, the Homelessness Strategy, the emerging Ageing Well Plan, and the Supporting People strategy. Cheshire East has commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Private Sector House Condition Survey to give us robust evidence as the foundations of this local strategy. We have also taken into account the views of our partners and the local community.

Our Vision

Cheshire East's strategic vision for housing is to support the creation of balanced and sustainable communities. The mix of property types and tenures will support economic growth, and high quality homes will meet the needs of current and future generations. Everyone will be able to reach their potential, regardless of where they live.

NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Our strategy has been developed at a time of significant change within the housing sector. The focus has moved away from central government control to the devolution of power to a local level, giving local authorities and communities the opportunity to shape housing to meet local needs.

Social Housing Reforms

The Coalition Government issued 'Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing' for consultation in November 2010, proposing sweeping changes to the social housing sector. The document sets out a number of new approaches, including:

- changes to the way people access social housing;
- changes to the types of tenancies which are provided;
- changes to the way that the homelessness duty is discharged;
- improving social housing mobility;
- changes to the way social housing is regulated;
- reform of the council housing finance system, and
- unlocking the potential of empty homes as affordable housing.

Localism Bill

The Localism Bill, which is expected to be enacted in Autumn 2011, sets out the legislative framework for a raft of government proposals previously announced in the Budget, Comprehensive Spending Review and in the proposals for social housing reform.

The Localism Bill outlines the proposals for planning reform, including:

- reform of the planning system to give neighbourhoods more power to determine the shape of places;
- a National Planning Framework setting out economic, environmental and social priorities; and
- incentives to deliver sustainable development, including new homes and businesses.

The Localism Bill will transfer power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. This presents opportunities for Cheshire East to address local housing issues through new innovative approaches.

Public Health reforms

People's health and well-being is influenced by the communities in which they live: physical and mental health is affected by poor housing, deprived neighbourhoods, or poor access to green spaces. Sir Michael Marmot's 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' report, commissioned by the previous Government to make recommendations on how health inequalities should be tackled, tells us that inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society – in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Taking action to reduce inequalities in health does not require a separate health agenda, rather it needs action across the whole of society. The report includes six key objectives to tackle health inequalities, which are cross cutting for housing:

- Give every child the best start in life;
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
- Create fair employment and good work for all;
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all;
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities; and
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.

The Government's strategy for public health in England 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' builds on the recommendations made in the Marmot Review through its domain 'Tackling the wider determinants of ill health: addressing factors that affect health and wellbeing'. A transfer of responsibility and resources for public health to local authorities will strengthen its role in shaping the environment and tackling local problems.

Vision for Adult Social Care

The Government's vision for a modern system of social care is built on seven principles, as set out in 'A Vision for Adult Social Care: Capable Communities and Active Citizens': prevention, personalisation, partnership, plurality, protection, productivity and people. Of particular significance to housing are *prevention and personalisation*.

Prevention: New technology, re-ablement, early intervention and appropriate accommodation all play a part in the prevention agenda. Securing good outcomes for disabled people will mean bringing housing services together to improve their well-being and meet emerging needs. Housing related support through Supporting People improves outcomes for individuals and returns savings to other areas, such as housing, health, social care and the criminal justice system.

Personalisation: The Government wishes to see people getting personal choice and control over their services – from supported housing through to personal care. Personalisation will impact on the way that Supporting People commission housing-related support, and change the landscape for providers, by moving away from traditional block contracts towards a growth of a market in services that people want.

REGIONAL AND SUB REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

With a move towards localism, there have been changes in the regional approach, including the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies and the transfer of decision making powers for housing and planning to local councils and the abolition of regional government and regional development agencies. This gives us the ability to determine the level of housing growth we wish to achieve at a local level without the imposition of regional targets.

We are committed to working with our sub-regional partners as there are still commonalities across the sub region which can be addressed in a consistent way, whilst still developing our local approach in Cheshire East.

Sub-Regional Housing Strategy

Cheshire's sub-regional housing strategy priorities are:

- To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development;
- To make best use of the sub-region's existing housing stock;
- To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable residents; and
- To increase the supply of market housing to support economic growth and regeneration and to meet local housing needs.

We will actively work with our partners in Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington to achieve both economic and housing growth across the sub-region.

Local Investment Plan

The aim of the LIP is to describe the overall strategic context for investment in developing the economic base, expanding and strengthening communities and meeting the growing housing needs in the sub-region.

Whilst there is no longer a requirement from the HCA to produce a LIP, the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region has taken the strategic decision to develop a second version, building on the work completed in 2010. The revised document responds to the changing environment in which we are now working and demonstrates our approach to bringing forward housing. The LIP strengthens the linkages and the proposals for economic growth, underpinning the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), demonstrating the essential role that housing can play in supporting economic development. It links into the strategic priorities within both the sub-regional housing strategy and this local housing strategy.

Local Enterprise Partnership

In October 2010, the Government announced the introduction of the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Cheshire and Warrington were successfully selected to become one of the first LEPs.

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP is a partnership between the Unitary authorities and businesses. They play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs.

LOCAL CONTEXT

- **Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)** – The vision and priorities within ‘Ambition for All’ have a number of specific references and implications for our strategic approach to housing. The SCS identifies the need for affordable housing, improving and maintaining the condition of our existing stock, bringing empty homes back into use, as well as providing housing solutions for our ageing population and those with specialist needs. It also recognises the importance of partnership working between the Council and social and private housing providers and developers to increase housing provision.
- **Corporate Plan** - The Corporate Plan outlines how the Council will improve services and outcomes for local residents, businesses and visitors, creating strong and prosperous communities. Housing is highlighted as contributing towards these outcomes through the provision of affordable housing, making the best use of existing stock, by bringing empty homes back into use and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Local Development Framework (LDF)** – The LDF will contribute to the overall housing vision by providing the detail for future development and growth, complementing the economic development objectives. The LDF is now at option appraisal stage, and will be completed by 2013.
- **Local Transport Plan** – The Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 sets out the objectives, policies and priorities for transport and demonstrates the way in which transport will contribute towards ensuring a sustainable future and creating conditions for business growth. There is the need to align transport to housing growth areas to ensure that the areas are sustainable and that we are not creating developments which are reliant on the use of the car, particularly within our rural areas.
- **Economic Development Strategy** - The Economic Development Strategy sets out the thematic and spatial objectives which will guide economic development and housing growth in Cheshire East for the next 15 years. The strategy contributes to the overall vision for housing by establishing the economic role of housing, the inter-relationship between economic development, transport, housing, quality of life and sustainable communities, and by establishing our clear spatial priorities for Crewe, Macclesfield, and our sustainable towns and rural areas. The strategy is supplemented through the more detailed work in ‘All Change for Crewe’ and ‘Macclesfield Masterplan’.
- **Ageing Well Plan** – This is a joint strategic plan between Cheshire East and Central & Eastern Cheshire Primary Care Trust, which sets out how Cheshire East will be a good place to grow old by maximising the opportunities for the ageing population to prepare for the later stages of life, maintaining their quality of life during later life, and having access to person centred services when they need them. Housing services play a key role in the delivery of the vision, by enabling older people to maintain their

independence within their own home, and enabling the provision of good quality accommodation across a range of tenures.

- **Supporting People Strategy** –Supporting People gives vulnerable adults the opportunity to improve their quality of life and enable them to live independently, achieved through access to various housing related support packages. The strategy for Supporting People is being revised, highlighting priority groups and prioritising the type of support services we need to commission. A review of specialist housing will inform this strategy.
- **Equality and Diversity** - Cheshire East recognises that promoting equality and diversity will improve public services for everyone. The aim, therefore, is to make equality an integral part of the way the Council works by putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation and enforcement and employment practice. Cheshire East's Single Equality Scheme sets out the Council's overall commitment to equality and diversity in one document and sets out the approach to equality and diversity in Cheshire. This strategy takes into account the diverse needs of our community, ensuring that everyone is treated equally. We have undertaken a full equality impact assessment as part of the development of this strategy.
- **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** – The Act places a duty on local authorities to take due regard when developing policies and strategies of the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

Cheshire East: The Locality

Cheshire East has a population of 362,700, making it the third largest unitary authority in the North West. We have a diverse mixture of urban and rural areas, with approximately 39 per cent of the population living in rural areas and 61 per cent in our towns. 93 per cent of the area is classed as being more rural than urban. We have two major towns - Crewe and Macclesfield - and a number of smaller towns including Alsager, Congleton, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow. The unique and diverse character of our towns is seen as a major asset of the area and something which local people highly value.

Area	116,638 hectares
Households	163,280
Population	362,700
Males	184,500 (50.9per cent)
Females	178,200 (49.1per cent)

Sources: Cheshire East Profile, Research and Policy, Cheshire East Council. 2007/8, Dwelling Stock, Valuation Office Agency. 2009 Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

Cheshire East has three distinct housing market areas: the Macclesfield area, which exhibits strong interactions with the South Manchester market; the Crewe and Nantwich area which is largely self-contained with strongest interactions with other areas of Cheshire; and the Congleton area which has noticeable market interactions with North Staffordshire and South Manchester.

Cheshire East is a good place to live. In 2008, 85 per cent of residents said that they were satisfied with their local area. Our residents have a longer life expectancy than the national average, school exam results are above the national average and the crime rate is relatively low.

Cheshire East has a strong local economy which contributes nearly 7 per cent to regional output. It also accounts for 7.4 per cent of its businesses, the highest share of any North West area. We have a strong economic relationship with surrounding economies, particularly Greater Manchester and North Staffordshire. In recent years our economy has become less dependent on traditional manufacturing jobs and more dependent on service sector jobs. Whilst Cheshire East contains only 5.1 per cent of the North West working age population, it contributes 5.5 per cent of the region's workforce. The claimant unemployment rate (2.7 per cent in July 2010) is below the UK average (4.5 per cent).

The average salary of full time workers living in Cheshire East (£26,182) is higher than the national average (£26,050), but for those who both live and work in Cheshire East, their average salary is well below the national average (£23,733). This illustrates the need for Cheshire East to attract and support existing employers that offer highly paid and skilled jobs, and the need for significant physical regeneration of key towns and strategic employment sites in order to improve the competitiveness of Cheshire East as a place to do business.

Despite good overall quality of life, these are some parts of our area where the experience is different. Around 6 per cent of our population live in neighbourhoods classified as being in the 20 per cent most deprived nationally. The majority (9 out of 14) of these

neighbourhoods are in Crewe town, with the rest in Macclesfield and Congleton towns and the Wilmslow-Handforth conurbation. Average household income in the most affluent neighbourhood is around three times that of households in the least affluent areas. Over a quarter of working age people are out of work and claiming benefits in our poorest neighbourhoods.

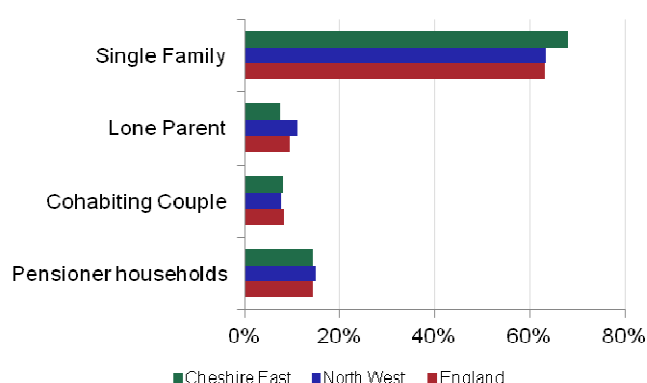
There are some significant health inequalities between parts of Cheshire East. For example, life expectancy ranges from 73 years for men in parts of Crewe to 84 years in parts of Wilmslow. Life expectancy is as low as 77 years for women in some parts of Crewe but is 94 years in parts of Macclesfield.

The population profile of Cheshire is slightly older than that of England and Wales as a whole. Total population forecast to increase by approximately 23,000 to around 383,600 by 2027¹. Over the next twenty years it is anticipated that the number of children will fall slightly. The population aged 65 or above will increase by over 50 per cent with the number of residents aged 85 or above anticipated to double.

Demographics	Cheshire East	North West	England
Children (0-15)	18.2%	18.8%	18.7%
Working age	59.3%	61.5%	61.9%
Older people	22.5%	19.7%	19.3%
85+	1.8%	1.5%	1.5%
White British ⁶	93.4%	89.4%	83.6%
White Irish/Other	2.9%	2.7%	4.6%
Black and Minority Ethnic	3.6%	7.9%	11.8%

Source: 2009 Mid-year population estimates and 2001 Census, Table S049, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

Household Composition



Cheshire East has a significantly higher proportion of single family households compared to England and the North West, and a significantly higher proportion of pensioner households.

Source: 2001 Census, Table S053, Office for National Statistics.

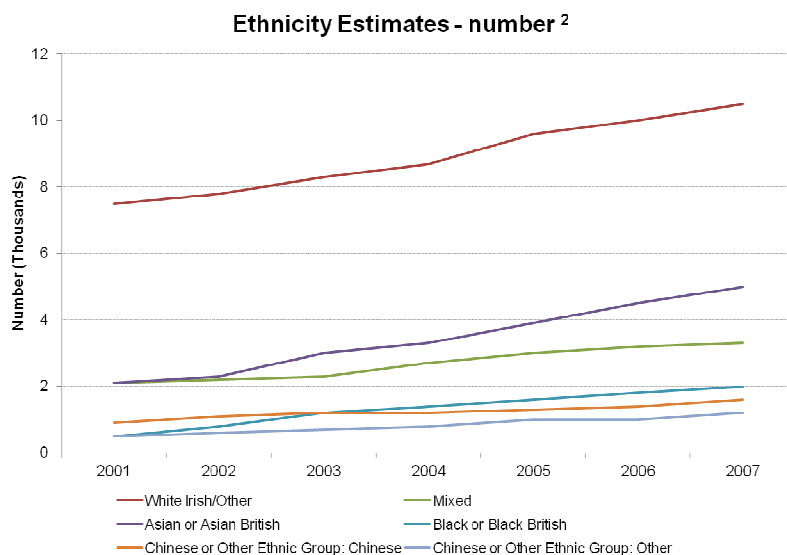
¹ September 2009: Cheshire East Population Forecasts, Research & Intelligence Unit, Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Tenure	Cheshire East	North West	England
Private Sector	88.3% (143,270)	81.3%	82.0%
Housing Association	11.6% (18,776)	13.7%	9.9%
Other Public Sector	0.1% (115)	0.1%	0.3%
LA Stock	0.0% (23)	4.9%	7.9%

Source: Table 100 Dwelling stock: Number of Dwellings by Tenure and district: England; 2010; derived from HSSA returns, Communities for Local Government.

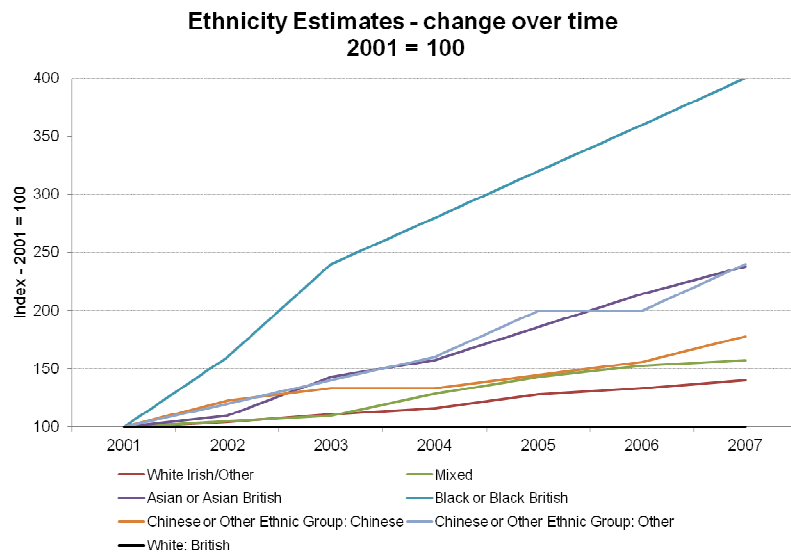
The affordability of housing is a significant issue as prices are high, making buying a home out of the reach of many people. By 2009, house prices in Cheshire East were 6.7 times the average earnings, compared to ratios of 5.2 for North West England and 6.3 for England as a whole. In January 2010, Cheshire East average house prices were £154,400, or 31 per cent above the North West average (£117,900).

The population in Cheshire East is predominantly White British (93.4 per cent), with the black and minority population (3.6 per cent) lower than the profiles for the North West (7.9 per cent) and England (11.8 per cent)².



Whilst this figure may appear low, the number of people in some minority groups has been increasing rapidly in relative terms. The number of black or black British residents is estimated to have quadrupled since 2001 from around 500 residents to 2,000 residents.

² Population Estimates by Ethnic Group Mid-2007, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.



Consultation

The Strategy has developed in a number of stages and takes account of a wide range of stakeholders' views. A Housing Strategy event was held in February 2010 to identify the priorities for housing in Cheshire East. This revealed a broad range of priorities, and an event with elected Members in November 2010 helped us to identify the most important of these housing priorities for their ward members. We have also drawn information from other housing consultation events and research, which has given us a powerful insight into the views and opinions of a broad spectrum of residents, including hard to reach groups.

The draft Strategy was made available for public consultation between May and July 2011, and views were received from local communities, developers, housing partners and parish and town councils. The draft Strategy has been developed to take account of these views, to create this final version of 'Moving Forward: Cheshire East's Housing Strategy 2011-2016'.

1. DELIVERING MARKET AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

“Cheshire East residents will have the opportunity to live in housing in an area of their choice at a price they can afford.”

Increasing the supply of market and affordable housing supports economic growth and development, creates mixed communities and enhances regeneration and place making. Local economies will only thrive if people who work in an area can find the right housing within reach of their jobs. Sustainable, cohesive communities will only develop if there are jobs, good education services, good public health and leisure, sport and cultural activities within easy reach of their homes.

There were dramatic house price increases between 1997 and 2007, fuelled by a rising demand for housing, the ready availability of credit, and the perceived desirability of residential property as a long-term investment.

As house prices have fallen since 2007, home buyers have found it more difficult to get a mortgage. The availability of mortgage credit has declined as lenders have changed product ranges, tightened lending criteria and increased arrangement fees. Although prices are falling, homes aren't becoming any more affordable because lenders' requirements for deposits have risen and those who have found a lender have had to provide a higher percentage deposit than at the peak of the boom in 2006. Even 90 per cent mortgages are now rarely available to first-time buyers. The average first-time buyer put down a deposit of 25 per cent in April 2009.

The increased difficulty that developers and some housing associations have experienced in borrowing has discouraged developers from building new homes. In England for 2009-10 there were 93,140 completions of private sector dwellings, compared to 141,740 in 2005-6.

Across the country in April 2008, there were 100,000 more households on local authorities' social housing waiting lists than in April 2007 and whilst the private rented sector can help meet the housing needs of some people, it cannot meet all need.

Key Evidence Sources:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009
- Cheshire homechoice data (social housing waiting list)
- Hometrack
- Cheshire East Local Development framework Annual Monitoring Report 2009-10

THE CURRENT POSITION

Cheshire East is an attractive place in which to live and work. We have a strong local economy with our businesses generating over 6.9% of the North West's economic output, we have good transport links with easy access to the motorway, major road networks, railways and an international airport, all of which make Cheshire East an appealing investment opportunity and supports the authority's ambition for economic growth.

Cheshire East has extensive rural areas. 93% of Cheshire East is classed as at least 'more rural than urban', while 88% is classified as greenspace. 39% of the population lives in rural areas. One in four residents of Cheshire live in rural wards that have a population of below 5,000.

An analysis of migration data within the 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests that just under 70% of households move within the district. In terms of travel to work patterns, 66% of residents work in the district and 34% commute out to work. There are strong migration and travel to work linkages with Greater Manchester and North Staffordshire.

In terms of house prices, Cheshire East is an area of contrasts. The SHMA demonstrated that in parts of the Macclesfield housing market area (HMA), average house prices exceed £300,000, while in Crewe HMA the average house price is £124,652. The demand for housing exceeds supply, with an annual housing supply shortfall of 2,753 open market dwellings. With projected change in demography, this situation will only worsen and therefore there is a need to ensure that we have an adequate land supply to bring forward housing development.

The demand for housing is expected to increase, driven by the declining size of households and, with it, the expectations of higher quality homes and living environments. The amount, type and location of existing and future housing and its relationship with employment provision is a key issue for the Local Development Framework. The growth potential of the area and its contribution to the Manchester City Region's aspirations has to be balanced with environmental safeguards to maintain and protect our Green Belt, countryside, heritage and other assets.

We are developing a number of documents which will ensure that we have an adequate provision of land for housing. These include the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework (LDF) which are due for completion in November 2013. The Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan, to be adopted in December 2014 and will provide policies and proposals to guide the allocation of land for specific uses.

In parallel to the production of the LDF we are progressing a number of regeneration projects aimed at revitalising the key towns of the Borough and creating an environment for sustainable economic growth. There is a need for an expanded and a more diverse housing supply, which will encourage an inflow of younger, economically active workers into the area and reduce the migration of our young people.

Many of our smaller towns and their rural hinterlands enjoy a relatively vibrant economy built upon distinctive local assets. But their viability continues to be threatened by poorly

integrated development, lack of affordable housing, increasing levels of out-commuting and relatively poor access to amenities and services. Intervention in these areas will include specific projects for the market towns of Wilmslow, Congleton and the Weaver town of Middlewich. The projects will review a number of public assets and will assess viability for housing development within these town centres.

Affordability

Higher than average house prices across Cheshire East generates additional challenges in relation to affordability. Cheshire East is ranked the eighth least affordable local authority area in the North West and, with average Cheshire East incomes being insufficient to buy an average priced property, there is a real need for additional social and intermediate affordable housing.

Area	Median House Price	Lower Quartile House Price	Median House Price to Income Ratio	Lower Quartile House Price to Income Ratio
Cheshire East	£172,750	£119,000	6.68	6.55
North West	£123,000	£86,984	5.17	5.02

Source: CLG Live tables

High house prices are preventing access to home ownership for first time buyers, with a median house price in Cheshire East of £172,750. A typical mortgage would require a 25 per cent deposit, or £43,000, and an annual income of nearly £40,000. Repayments would range from £684 to £835 per month. With a median annual income of £29,900, home ownership remains out of reach.

Lower quartile house prices are usually associated with entry-level property types. Across Cheshire East the lower quartile prices exceed £200,000. Housing in the rural areas is more expensive. Lower quartile house prices exceed £200,000 in rural areas around Crewe and Macclesfield. Evidence from the SHMA shows that average lower quartile weekly incomes in rural areas were £380. Using a multiplier of 3.75 this would allow a mortgage of £74,000 excluding deposit. This demonstrates the problems that local people in rural areas have when trying to access housing in their own locality. On average 62% of people in rural areas can afford to access private rented properties if they are available, however the availability of properties for rent in rural areas is much lower than in urban areas.

Aspirations to home ownership across Cheshire East have resulted in owner-occupation of 81.5 per cent of the housing stock, compared to 67 per cent across England. There is a shortage of rented housing, with the private rented sector forming just 7.1 per cent of the housing stock compared to an average of 16 per cent nationally, and social housing at 10.8 per cent compared to 17 per cent nationally. Tenure profile varies across the Borough, notably exceeding 15 per cent social housing in urban areas, while seven sub-areas that were more rural than urban had less than 5 per cent social housing.

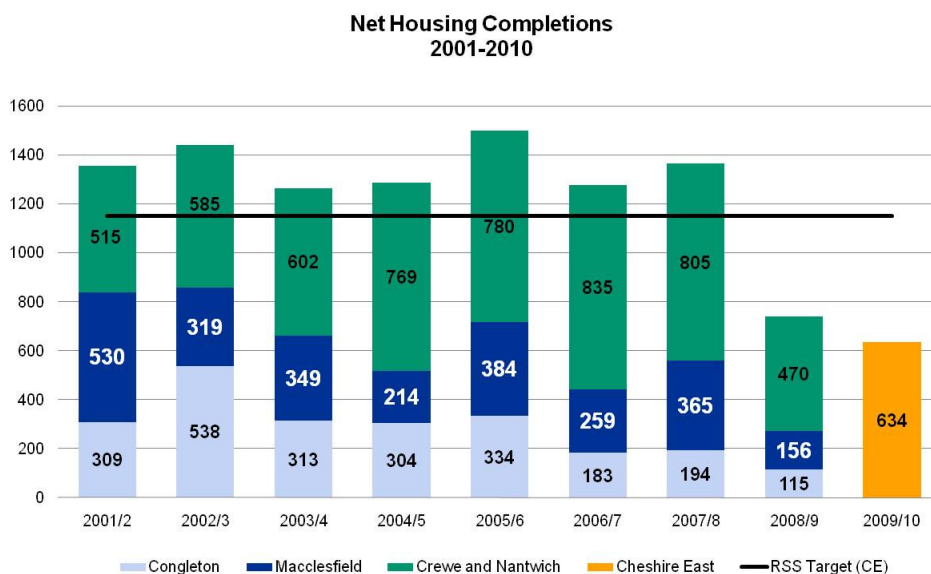
The cost of private renting can be, at worst, prohibitive or put households under financial pressure. Households need to spend 21 per cent of the median annual income on renting privately, compared to 15 per cent for social housing, and 17 per cent on intermediate rent models. The problem is exacerbated for households with lower quartile incomes, with 31 per cent of their income needed for private renting.

Difficulties in accessing home ownership and lack of affordability of private renting have led to increased demand for social housing. Nearly 9,000 households are registered with Cheshire homechoice for social housing.

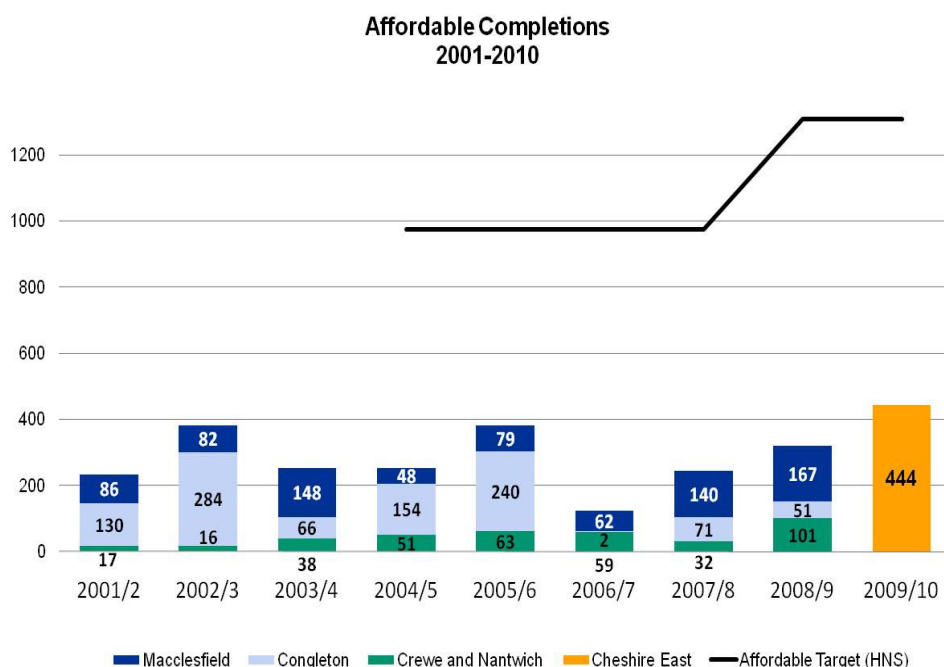
The SHMA found that an estimated 9,561 (6 per cent) households are in housing need, with a greater proportion of people currently living in rented accommodation than owner-occupiers showing housing need. Lone parents and couples with three or more children were more likely to be in housing need. The SHMA highlighted there is a net annual shortfall of 1,243 affordable homes across the borough for the five year period 2009/10 to 2013/14. Whilst this is not a target, it demonstrates the level of need across Cheshire East for affordable housing.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Since 2000, 11,475 (net) dwellings have been completed, with an average of 1,148 per annum. Between 2001 and 2008 there were in excess of 1000 dwellings built each year with a peak in 2005/6 of almost 1,500. However, in more recent years there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of dwellings built, reflecting the national downturn in house building as a consequence of the current recession.



The provision of affordable housing across Cheshire East has increased. In partnership with Registered Providers, 444 new affordable housing units were completed during 2009/10. The diagram below illustrates the numbers of affordable homes built across the area since 2002.



We have developed a range of affordable housing initiatives to help people access housing:

- The Assisted Purchase scheme assisted 16 first time buyers to get on to the housing ladder in 2010-11, by offering a ten year interest free loan. The average loan was £28,000, and the average house price was £123,000, helping people to get on to the housing ladder at the more affordable end of the housing market in Cheshire East.
- We have secured 362 discounted for sale properties across Cheshire East, with a discount of between 20 per cent and 40 per cent, which remains with the property for its lifetime.
- There are nearly 600 shared ownership properties, ranging from 25 per cent to 75 per cent ownership. Rent is paid to a Registered Provider on the remaining share.
- We have negotiated the provision of 52 new affordable housing through legal agreements.
- We have made creative use of commuted sums to enable external funding to go further and provide more units of affordable housing within the rural areas of Bunbury and Cranage

- We have funded a rural housing scheme to make best use of existing stock, purchasing existing properties to be resold on a shared ownership basis.

CONSULTATION

Consultation events have told us:

- We should utilise public-owned land assets to bring forward affordable housing (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- Increasing provision of affordable housing in both rural and urban areas is a key priority (*Members event, November 2010*)
- Building new homes isn't the only solution to increasing housing supply: empty homes are a wasted resource, and focus should be placed on bringing empty homes back into use to reduce the demand for new supply (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- Improving information sharing between partners will smooth the path to bringing forward new development (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- 41 per cent of respondents to the Quality of Life Survey in 2010 felt that providing affordable housing to buy should be a priority, rising to 48% of Poynton residents and 53% of Wilmslow residents.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH - 2011 TO 2016

The environment we are operating in is becoming more challenging as the methods of funding and delivering affordable housing are changing. In a climate of restricted funding for housing, we will need to be more innovative and seek out different opportunities to bring forward market and affordable housing.

We will:

Utilise our land assets to maximise new housing delivery, by:

- Looking into the potential to set up delivery vehicles to focus on the regeneration of sites in Cheshire East and develop market and affordable housing;
- Utilise our land for the development of affordable housing to achieve maximum provision and return, enabling the Council to recycle any future return in the provision of more affordable housing;
- Exploring opportunities to work sub regionally, in conjunction with the HCA, to maximise leverage for use of publically owned land to achieve new affordable housing across the sub region;

Work with sub-regional partners to deliver the priorities within the Local Investment Plan:

- Develop new Financial models

The house price structure, high demand and prime values in the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region results in a low risk investment environment with characteristics which are seldom found in the North of England. This means, the area is attractive to financial institutions and pension companies interested in long-term investment in private rented property. This approach to developing an alternative investment model will be explored with the HCA.

In conjunction with this a joint approach to the deployment of *The New Homes Bonus* is being scoped by the partnership and there is a recognition that there may be benefits to offering investors a uniform offer within the broader housing market area, especially if that offer is competitive when compared to neighbouring localities which may compete for housing and employment investment

- Invest in Economic Growth-

We aim to develop closer links between the sub regional housing partnership, and the agencies working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP, with Cheshire East will drive forward economic growth, building on already established priorities and aspirations. We will seek to ensure that an adequate new housing supply plays its part in supporting and facilitating growth across the sub region

- Use of Public Sector land

In 2011-13 we aim to carry out an audit of supply of land in public ownership across the sub region and in Cheshire East, and identify the associated potential to recycle receipts and value from this land to achieve a higher level of development.

- Reducing the Carbon Footprint.

Planning policy in Cheshire East will support the introduction of technologies to ensure that all energy demand will be generated by low carbon sources by 2030 and that net CO2 emissions from buildings will be zero.

- Joint procurement opportunities

We will explore the opportunities to work jointly on ventures and achieve economies of scale in areas such as research and development costs, the costs associated with procuring and delivering the sub-regional Affordable Housing Programme, marketing to investors, land reclamation and recycling grant and receipts.

- Development of a Cheshire and Warrington Housing Consortium.

We will work with sub regional partners on the development of a housing consortium for the Cheshire and Warrington sub region. The Cheshire Housing Consortium (CHC) was formed early in 2011 as a response to the reduction in national funding for affordable housing and in order to emphasise the case for affordable housing in Cheshire from a strong base. Many of the RPs who develop in Cheshire have voiced their support for the CHC which has been successful in achieving funding from the HCA's development programme for 2011-2015

- Utilise experience of HCA in order to achieve objectives in Local Investment Agreement (LIA2)

During 2011/12 the sub region will agree and sign up to an LIA2 which contains the detail of how the LIP2 will be jointly delivered by the sub regional local authorities and the HCA.

In addition to working sub regionally to develop the LIP2 we will:-

Meet Housing needs of Existing Residents:

- Increase choice and supply of affordable and accessible housing; Housing markets change over periods of time and therefore the products that we make available to help people access rented and other affordable housing need to change to meet these market conditions.
- Carry out regular reviews to ensure we are developing appropriate products
- Have regular discussions with lenders and Registered Providers to ensure our products meet lending requirements and people are able to access mortgages and housing

Meet the housing needs for a changing population:

- Remodel exist time expired dwellings to meet newly arising need from a range of general and supported needs groups.
- Work with HCA to stimulate growth in the private rented sector.
- Work with Planning and Registered Providers to increase the provision of smaller accommodation for middle aged or older residents which would free up larger family housing for rent upon letting.

Make full use of planning obligation to maximise the provision of affordable housing.

- Planning gain is an important part of ensuring the right affordable housing is provided across the borough. We will therefore work closely with developers to identify the correct mix and proportion of affordable housing is provided on new housing developments.
- We will be creative in how we use commuted sums in respect of providing affordable housing in key priority areas of the Borough.

- We will harmonise S106 agreements in line with new HCA requirements and in support of the provision of new homes to speed up delivery of new housing
- We will review the need for amendments to the current Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing with the aim of increasing provision in the north of the borough where the gap between house prices and earnings is greatest

Promote and support access to broadband within new developments to help drive the economy and flexible working:

- The roll out of superfast broadband to our communities is seen as an essential part of infrastructure requirements needed to support future planning of the Borough. Our recently published Core Strategy Rural Issues Summary Document says:
“In addition to voluntary and community groups offering service (such as community transport schemes) technological improvements can play a key role in supporting rural communities in the future, for example through the rollout of superfast broadband enabling home working and improved access to publicly held information”

Develop the Local Development Framework, setting out where new homes will be built and ensuring that the community’s need for affordable housing is met:

- We are developing a number of documents that will ensure we have an adequate supply of land for housing in the right places. The Local Development Framework will contain a number of separate documents including: Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that will contain the vision, strategy, policies and allocations; Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that will give more detailed guidance on the implementation of policies, for example, on affordable housing and planning contributions; the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that sets out how and when consultation on the preparation of the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents will be carried out; and the Local Development Scheme (LDS) that sets out the timetable for the preparation of the other documents.

Deliver our ambition for growth through the development of plans for our three key spatial priorities for Crewe, Macclesfield and our market towns:

All Change for Crewe

Crewe has a significant amount of land that is available for employment, residential and leisure development. Because of this and its excellent strategic transport links, the town has significant potential to cater sustainably for high levels of housing and employment-use related development. Indeed, there is already significant developer interest in progressing new housing schemes in Crewe ..

It is envisaged that through the delivery of *All Change for Crewe*, by 2030, Crewe will be a nationally significant economic centre with a total population in excess of 100,000 people (rising from 83,000 in 2007), a large highly skilled working age population, plus business density and start-up rates, output, productivity and salary levels that meet or exceed

national levels. Crewe is widely recognised as an important southern anchor to the North West region and a key gateway to the economies of northern and southern England.

All Change for Crewe is a suite of regeneration work programmes to tackle issues around the prevalence of poor quality housing alongside the wider residential environment, amenities, cultural, creative and leisure offered by expanding the range and choice available in deprived areas which will help to lift these communities out of poverty.

Appropriate housing provision is essential if we are to achieve accelerated growth and a step change for Crewe.

Make it Macclesfield

By 2030 significant change will also have taken place in the town of Macclesfield. The redevelopment of the town centre will have taken place and more people will live and work in the town centre, adding vibrancy during the day and into the evening, which together with environmental improvements will have created a safe and desirable place for residents and visitors alike.

Realising the potential of the South Macclesfield Development Area to assist the regeneration of the town will be a key challenge. The 'saved' Macclesfield Local Plan (former Macclesfield Borough Council Local Plan) allocates this area for employment uses. Analysis undertaken suggests that this may not be the right type of use in this location and alternatives should be considered in the Local Development Framework. During a recent public consultation, local residents and businesses indicated that their preferred option included further provision of new homes. We will therefore work with residents and businesses to ensure the most appropriate mix of housing is developed

Sustainable Town Centres

Many of our smaller towns and their rural hinterlands enjoy a relatively vibrant economy built upon distinctive local assets. But their viability continues to be threatened by poorly integrated development, lack of affordable housing, increasing levels of out-commuting and relatively poor access to amenities and services. Intervention in these areas will include specific projects for the market towns of Wilmslow, Congleton and the Weaver town of Middlewich. The projects will review a number of public assets and will assess viability for housing development within these town centres. The hierarchy of towns and service centres has been defined in the LDF Core Strategy.

Delivering Affordable Housing in Rural Areas

- The Council considers that the development of affordable housing in rural areas is best achieved in partnership with Parish Councils and local communities. The Government's proposals for localism and neighbourhood planning will enable communities to bring forward proposals for development in their area and will enable them to have more influence over where developments should take place and what they should look like.

- The Council has appointed a Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) who can help local communities with this process and provide Parish Councils with independent advice, support and information in developing local affordable housing schemes
- We will take account of the sustainability of villages in Cheshire East when considering the priorities for the development of affordable housing.
- We will utilise the RHE to work closely with communities to carry out rural needs surveys and facilitate provision.
- We will produce a Rural Housing Enabling Guide for Cheshire East which will identify priority areas for development of affordable housing
- We will work with sub regional partners to develop capacity to develop Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in Cheshire East and across the sub region

2. MAKING THE BEST USE OF OUR EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Cheshire East residents will live in decent homes, regardless of tenure. They will be able to afford to heat their homes and maintain a healthy lifestyle in a safe home.

The use of the existing housing stock will be maximised, increasing the availability of decent, affordable and appropriate housing.

The private rented sector will be a flexible, well-functioning aspect of the Cheshire East housing market, meeting the aspirations and housing needs of a wide range of households.

There is a long established relationship between poor housing and ill health. Poor housing conditions, and their impact on the health of the occupants, were the primary drivers of state intervention in housing dating back to the major social reforms of the 1800s. Cold and damp homes exacerbate ill health, particularly respiratory illnesses in older people and young children, and contribute to excess winter deaths, and poor mental health and wellbeing. The annual cost to the NHS of dealing with the worst health and safety hazards in homes in England is estimated to be over £600million.³

A long standing Government target has resulted in the improvement of the majority of social housing; the challenge now is to sustain those improvements. Some poor housing conditions do still remain, particularly in the private sector. The prime responsibility for maintaining and improving housing rests with the owner, however we recognise that there are some vulnerable homeowners who lack the resources to improve their homes to a decent standard.

Fuel poverty is a particular threat to people's independence and health, as the inability to afford to heat the home can lead to either inadequately heating the home, or occupiers prioritising their heating over other essential items such as an adequate and healthy diet. A household is in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10 per cent of its income on fuel to sustain satisfactory heating. The most recent figures state that 2.8 million households in England are in fuel poverty.

In many parts of the country there is a shortage of housing which is fuelling high house prices and preventing many people from accessing a decent home. Empty homes reduce the availability of housing in an area and often disrepair, neglect, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour detracts from a local neighbourhood. Under-occupancy of homes limits the supply of good quality family homes, often resulting in overcrowding in other homes as families struggle to find suitable housing at a price they can afford. There are an estimated 258,000 overcrowded social rented homes across England, with a further 428,000 being under-occupied by at least 2 bedrooms.

³ The Real Cost of Poor Housing. BRE (2010)

The private rented sector is an increasingly important growing tenure. Private renting offers a multitude of roles to a wide range of people, serving as a first port of call for new households, a 'bolt-hole' when housing circumstances change, a stopping-off point as people change jobs and move house, and – for many households – a long-term home. Of particular importance is the increasing reliance on the private rented sector to provide homes for vulnerable people, as a result of long housing waiting lists and the imbalance between demand and supply of social housing. Forthcoming changes to Housing Benefit regulations could result in younger single households being forced into shared housing, where fire risks are at their highest.

Key Evidence Sources:

- Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009
- Council Tax data
- Empty Homes Survey in Congleton LAP 2010
- BRE stock modelling 2010

THE CURRENT POSITION

- Registered Providers have invested heavily in the social housing stock in Cheshire East to ensure 100% of the housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standard, with only a very small proportion of households refusing works (2%). Registered Providers have business plans in place to address non-compliant properties, and have established property standards above the level required for decent homes.

"A faster than expected delivery of the £43 million improvement programme, with decency increasing from 51% decency in 2006 to 94% in 2009/10 – 100% will be met – customer satisfactions with the Improvement Programme has increased from 87% in 2007/8 to 98.2% in 2008/9" - Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust

- Housing conditions in the private sector present a slightly different picture. 72.4% of the private housing stock in Cheshire East meets the decent homes standard, but over 40,000 homes fall below this basic level (27.6%, compared to 34.4% in England).

Reasons for failure of dwellings as a decent home by tenure

Reason	Owner Occupied		Privately Rented	
	Dwellings	Percent (of stock)	Dwellings	Percent (of stock)
Category 1 hazard dwellings	23,900	20.2%	5,990	21.4%
In need of repair	8,820	7.5%	2,630	9.4%
Lacking modern facilities	1,130	1.0%	730	2.6%

Poor degree of thermal comfort	11,780	10.0%	4,570	16.3%
Non-decency total	31,250	26.4%	9,120	32.5%

Source: 2010 House Condition Survey

- There are an estimated 31,000 vulnerable households living in the private sector; 35.2% (11,000) are still living in non-decent homes. The highest level of non-decency for vulnerable households can be found in Macclesfield, where there is also a higher proportion of pre-1919 housing of non-decent standard than in other Cheshire East areas.

Non-decent dwellings with vulnerable households

Area	Tenure	Vulnerable households in non decent dwellings	Percent vulnerable households in decent dwellings	Percent vulnerable households in non decent dwellings	Shortfall for vulnerable occupiers on PSA7 target
Crewe	Owner Occupied	1,710	68.0%	32.0%	110
	Privately Rented	530	62.0%	38.0%	110
Macclesfield	Owner Occupied	1,130	72.0%	28.0%	-80
	Privately Rented	1,970	48.2%	51.8%	830
Market Towns	Owner Occupied	3,600	65.3%	34.7%	480
	Privately Rented	760	69.3%	30.7%	20
Rural	Owner Occupied	1,130	61.6%	38.4%	250
	Privately Rented	120	83.4%	16.6%	-110
Cheshire East	Owner Occupied	7,570	66.7%	33.3%	760
	Privately Rented	3,380	59.9%	40.1%	850
Total		10,950	64.8%	35.2%	1,610

Source: 2010 House Condition Survey

- The previous Government's target to ensure that at least 70% of vulnerable households are living in decent homes in the private sector by 2010 has not been met. This target was removed in 2008; however it continues to provide a good measure against progress in tackling housing conditions for our most vulnerable households.
- The financial impact of poor private sector housing conditions on health services in Cheshire East is estimated at £4.3 million per year. £1.4 million is attributable to

excess cold, and £1.2 million to falls on stairs. The average cost of mitigating falls on stairs is just £519 per dwelling.

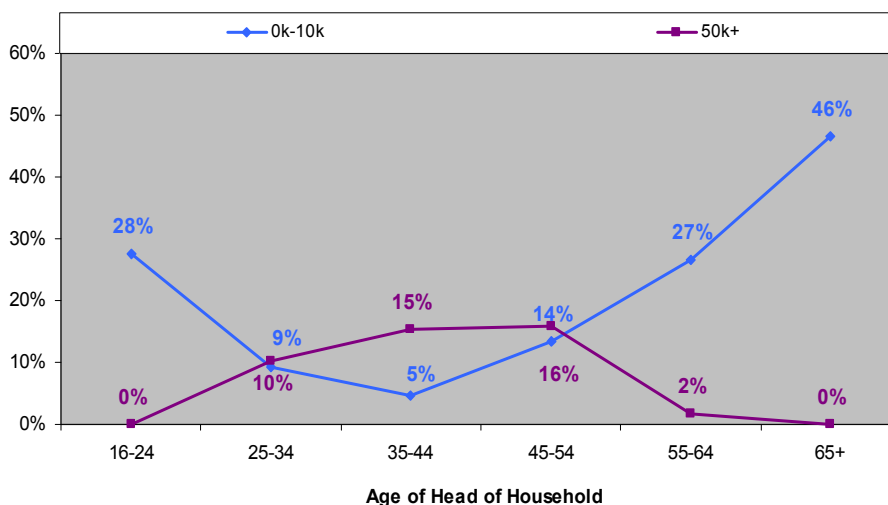
- The average cost of bringing homes up to the Decent Homes Standard is £5,560 per property, and investment of £224.4million is needed across the Borough, if all homes were to meet this standard.

Reason	Total Cost (£ million)	Average Cost per dwelling (£)*
Category 1 Hazard	£105.1	£3,520
Repair	£62.7	£5,470
Amenities	£29.1	£15,620
Thermal comfort	£27.5	£1,680
Total	£224.4	£5,560

Source: 2010 House Condition Survey

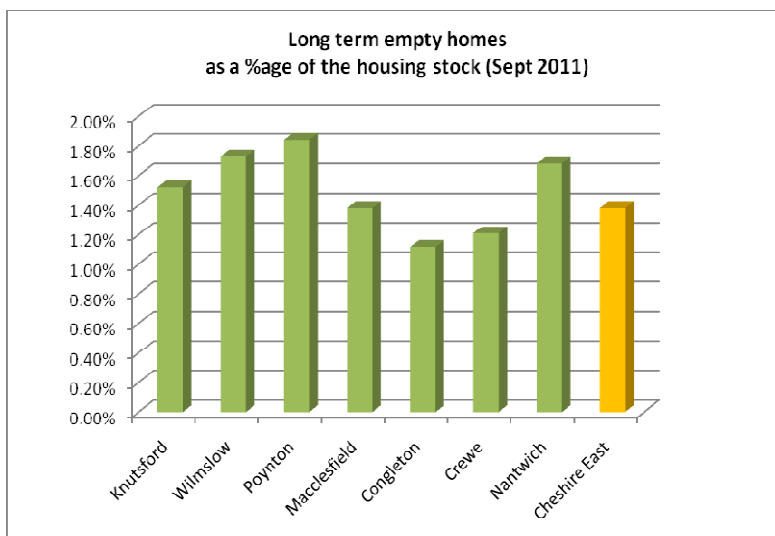
- The private rented sector in Cheshire East is in better condition than nationally (44% non-decent in England), but, whilst numerically small, still has the highest proportion of non-decent homes in Cheshire East. 32.5% (9,120) of private rented homes are non-decent, compared to 26.4% owner-occupied properties, and 2% in the social rented sector. There is a higher proportion of vulnerable people living in non-decent private rented homes (40.1%) than owner-occupiers (33.3%).
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are not a common feature in the private rented sector in Cheshire East, with only 27 licensable HMOs and an estimated 560 non-licensable HMOs.
- 46% of households where the head is age 65+, and 28% of households aged 16-24 has an annual income of less than £10,000. Demographic changes will present further challenges for improving and maintaining the quality of the housing stock in Cheshire East, with an increasing number of older people remaining in their homes for longer on fixed incomes and reliant on dwindling savings.

High and low incomes by age of head of household



Source: 2010 House Condition Survey

- Thermal comfort and excess cold are the main factors for non-decency in the older housing stock, with 21.7% of pre-1919 private housing having poor thermal comfort. The more modern stock contributes to an average SAP⁴ rating of 56 in the private sector, compared to a national rating of 50.
- Social housing has better SAP ratings than the private sector, ranging from 65 to 75 among Registered Providers in Cheshire East.
- An estimated 16,400 households are in fuel poverty in Cheshire East, which is slightly better than the national picture (11.7% in Cheshire East, compared to 15.4% in England).
- Households have indicated that the main home improvements needed are better levels of insulation, heating and double glazing⁵. This will contribute towards improving thermal comfort.
- Across Cheshire East there are over 3,000 long term empty homes (empty for longer than 6 months)⁶. Macclesfield Local Area Partnership (LAP) has the highest number of empty homes, followed by Congleton and Crewe LAPs. However, as a proportion of the housing stock, Wilmslow LAP has the highest proportion of long term empty homes, followed by Poynton and Knutsford LAPs.



Source: Council Tax data 2011; Dwelling estimates and size of area (mid-year 2008)

Analysis of empty homes data and local surveys demonstrate that there are three main contributory factors to the level of empty homes:

⁴ SAP, or Standard Assessment Procedure, is a government rating for energy efficiency.

⁵ Household Survey as part of Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009

⁶ Council Tax data at 18th Jan 2011

- The current economic climate has led to empty homes being on the market for longer than a six month period (28% of long term empty homes in Congleton LAP in 2010 were for sale or to let).
- A combination of empty specialist housing such as older people's accommodation, new build homes in a struggling market, and Registered Providers' decommissioned sheltered stock awaiting remodelling is inflating the level of long term empty homes.
- 94% of owners in Congleton in 2010 expressed willingness to bring their long term empty homes back into use, but quoted the affordability of major repairs as the main barrier.

PROGRESS TO DATE

- A subsidised home insulation and renewable energy programme has seen over 3,700 thermal comfort and energy efficiency improvements, assisting in the reduction of energy bills for households.
- We have invested over £770,000 in vulnerable households' homes through affordable loans, to bring them up to a decent standard.
- Home improvement agencies form a key part of our strategy to support vulnerable homeowners to improve, maintain and repair their homes. Over 6,500 older people have received housing related information, advice and support, enabling them to maintain their independence.
- Handyperson services for low level tasks are a valuable contributor to preventing disrepair spiralling and resulting in higher repair costs. 4,500 small repairs have been carried out across Cheshire East to support older people to remain living independently in the home of their choice. For each £1 spent on handyperson services in 2009-10 in Cheshire East, there was a cost benefit of £1.97. Cost benefits for health were estimated at £46,332, for the individual were £48,048 and for social services £103,567.
- A stepped approach to enforcement of housing legislation has resulted in improved housing conditions for over 400 private tenants.
- We have licensed all known high-risk Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), and have commenced a programme to identify and inspect all non-licensable HMOs across Cheshire East, working with our partners at Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service.
- The introduction of Cheshire homechoice has led to a decrease in the length of void social housing properties across the whole of the Borough. For one housing provider, there has been a reduction from an average of 56 void days to 39 void
- Another housing provider has seen the following changes:

	Pre Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	Post CBL
Bungalow	23 Days	15 Days
Flat	25 Days	20 Days
House	16 Days	9 Days

- We are on track to assist more than 60 households into accessing private rented accommodation with the use of the deposit guarantee scheme.

- The Private Sector Liaison officers have increased the number of landlords who they work with by 24 in the last financial year resulting in increased access to the private rented sector and supporting and encouraging best practice amongst landlords across the area.

CONSULTATION

Consultation events have told us:

- Bringing empty homes back into use is one of the top priorities for Cheshire East (*Members event, November 2010*), with 59 per cent of residents who responded to the 2010 Quality of Life Survey in agreement.
- We need to focus on improving housing conditions in the private rented sector, including tackling overcrowding and disrepair (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- Incentives are needed to tackle under-occupancy so that we can make best use of the social housing stock (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- To tackle fuel poverty we need to improve access to information on energy tariffs, insulation and renewable energy schemes, and maximising income (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*). Linked to this was improving the energy efficiency of our housing stock, where 41 per cent of Poynton Local Area Partnership residents felt this was important (*Quality of Life Survey, 2010*).
- Developing private landlords' skills and knowledge was highlighted as a priority, particularly in Crewe and Nantwich Local Area Partnership areas (*Quality of Life Survey, 2010*)

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH – 2011 TO 2016

We will:

Improve decency across all tenures by:

- **Providing a range of affordable financial options for home repairs, targeted at vulnerable low income households living in the worst housing conditions**

Capital resources for private sector renewal are at a premium, so we need to make best use of the limited resources we have to ensure that they are used where they are most needed, taking advantage of the freedoms and flexibilities afforded to us through the Regulatory Reform Order that swept away the previous grant regime. We will revise our Financial Assistance Policy to make sure that packages of assistance are affordable and attractive, focussing on the needs of the most vulnerable households that need our support. We will make use of local intelligence and indices of deprivation to target the promotion of the assistance available to areas where there is a higher presence of low income households.

- **Providing support to older and vulnerable households to improve, repair and maintain their homes**

Investment and support for home improvement agencies (HIAs) will enable us to target our resources at the most vulnerable households. We are working with Adult Services and Central & Eastern Cheshire PCT to review the HIA services in Cheshire East. Moving forward, we will continue to work closely with the new HIA and our health and social care partners to ensure that opportunities for partnership working and service development are maximised, and that where vulnerable households are identified living in very poor housing conditions, comprehensive support plans are put in place. Handyperson services provide an early intervention to prevent further decline in the condition of a property; the expansion of handyperson services across Cheshire East will have a positive impact on housing conditions.

- **Registered Providers continuing to invest in their stock in order to achieve and sustain decency across all accommodation**

With the achievement of the decent homes target by the major providers of social housing in Cheshire East, their focus is now on maintaining properties to that minimum standard, investing in those properties where the tenants refused decent homes work as they become vacant, and developing their 'decent homes plus' approach: improving properties to a higher standard. Carbon reduction and tackling fuel poverty are the main themes running through the decent homes plus proposals.

- **Explore an approach to improving housing within our town centres**

Housing can contribute to the night time economy, community safety and the regeneration of town centres. We will work in partnership with Regeneration to explore new initiatives and area based housing renewal.

Take a proactive approach to improving access to good quality housing in the private rented sector by:

- **Improving landlords' and tenants' knowledge of good management and property standards**

Landlord Forums across Cheshire East are well attended and provide a mechanism for two way dialogue between agencies and landlords. We will continue to develop the forum meetings to increase knowledge on a range of topics and changes in housing and planning policies and legislation, and to consult with landlords on service developments. Likewise, we will continue to develop our newsletters and good practice guides to develop a library of quality resources for landlords to access. We will develop a tenant referencing scheme, and provide training to tenants to support them to maintain their tenancies. We will promote information on landlords and tenants rights and responsibilities, and make them aware of services available to support them. We will provide advice, guidance and support to new landlords to encourage them to work with the Housing Options team and accept referrals from us for people in housing need.

- **Working with sub-regional partners to implement and develop the Cheshire Landlord Accreditation Scheme**

Joint working across Cheshire and Warrington has led to the development of an accreditation scheme, looking at both how the landlord manages the property as well as the standards of the properties being let. The scheme recognises landlords who operate successful businesses and provide tenants with safe, well managed and good quality accommodation. We will continue to work with Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington to develop the scheme, bringing together incentives to encourage a larger membership. We will ensure that any landlord who we signpost or refer our customers to is a member of the accreditation scheme. Educational establishments and large employers in the area often market private rented accommodation to their students or staff; we will seek to ensure that they only associate with accredited landlords.

- **Targeting inspections on an area-based approach in areas with high levels of privately rented properties**

There are no significant concentrations of privately rented housing in Cheshire East, although privately rented student accommodation is growing in the Crewe area. Where there are pockets of privately rented housing, we will focus our attention on ensuring that housing conditions meet the legal minimum standard, and use Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 to improve housing where landlords are operating wilfully outside of the law. We will identify privately rented housing using information from the house condition survey, reports from tenants and neighbours, and by close partnership working with other departments and agencies, including Cheshire Fire & Rescue and the Police. We will ensure that vulnerable and hard to reach groups know about and can access our services, particularly migrant workers who are often living in multiple-occupancy properties, and often in the poorest conditions.

- **Focusing our attention on ensuring houses in multiple occupation are free from fire risks and other significant hazards**

Fire hazards are a significant concern in HMOs, so by employing our tiered enforcement policy (education, informal liaison and, where these are not effective, formal enforcement of housing legislation) we will seek to ensure that all HMOs are free from significant fire risks. We have started a comprehensive programme to identify HMOs across Cheshire East, drawing on a number of information sources. As we identify and inspect properties, we will determine a rolling inspection programme, based on the risks posed by each individual property and their management. We will work in partnership with Cheshire Fire & Rescue and the Border Agency to bring about improvements in rented accommodation for migrant workers, who frequently find they are living in hazardous conditions.

Reduce the incidence of Fuel Poverty by:

- **Working across tenures to improve health through warmth**

Funding from National Energy Action has enabled us to develop a “Hotspots” referral network to tackle the causes of fuel poverty, by increasing awareness and improving access to service to maximise income, improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort, and improve home safety. Core partners are Cheshire East Council (Private Sector Housing, and Benefits), Energy Projects Plus, Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre and Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service. The network will be developed to expand the range of secondary partners, to include front line health and social care staff, third sector providers and community groups. Raising awareness of the causes, effects and remedies of fuel poverty is critical, not only for residents, but also for front line workers to recognise the signs for residents they come into contact with.

As the use of practical insulation measures widens through Government and utility supplier initiatives and self-funding by householders, we will turn to behavioural change as our focus, such as changing the way people use their heating and other energy consumables, finding the best energy tariffs, and keeping warm in the winter months. We will build on the work being carried out by Registered Providers, extending it into the private sector, and linking with the Hotspots referral network.

- **Targeting practical and financial support for vulnerable homeowners to tackle the effects of cold and damp homes**

With excess cold being highlighted as the most common Category 1 hazard in the private sector, and lack of thermal comfort being the second highest reason for failure of the decent homes standard, the revised Financial Assistance Policy will have a strong theme of tackling the effects of cold and damp homes. Cheshire and Warrington have secured £7.2million investment in improving energy efficiency in hard to treat social and privately rented housing. We will work with partners across the sub-region to deliver this package of renewable technologies and solid wall insulation between 2010 and 2013.

- **Utilising housing legislation to effect thermal improvements in the private rented sector**

Landlords have a duty to ensure that their tenants are living in adequate housing conditions free from Category 1 hazards. Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 gives us the necessary powers to require owners to carry out works to reduce or eliminate Category 1 hazards. We will use these powers, together with providing information and advice, including signposting to available grants and discounts, to landlords to ensure that they address excess cold hazards in the most cost effective way.

- **Maximising the use of government-initiated carbon reduction schemes**

Our financial resources will not stretch to meeting the needs of every household in Cheshire East. We will therefore raise awareness of the Energy Savings Trust Advice Centre for high quality advice, utility suppliers' carbon reduction schemes,

any grants and discounts that are available locally and nationally, support Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP) projects in Cheshire East, and promote the use of the Warm Front programme. We will seek out and respond to opportunities to draw further investment into Cheshire East, such as the Green Deal.

Bring Empty Homes back into use by:

- **Monitoring and analysing the incidence of empty homes to identify opportunities for early intervention**

Understanding the reasons why homes become, and remain, empty is critical to our strategic approach to tackling empty homes. Linking together different datasets on empty homes will enable us to gather good intelligence on empty homes and create a single point of reliable information. Comprehensive data from Council Tax records, reporting by the local community and local intelligence will enable us to analyse where empty homes are and identify key trends. Where we start to see clusters of empty homes, we can direct intervention and resources to eliminate the risk of housing market failure.

- **Developing a range of innovative resources to support owners**

Research into the reasons why homes remain empty will inform the level and type of support we offer owners to return empty homes back into use. Research in the Congleton LAP demonstrated that financial assistance for home repairs was the main barrier, and there was also interest expressed in leasing schemes. We will respond to these priorities through the development of sustainable but affordable financial assistance, and developing leasing models in partnership with housing providers, to give owners the best possible opportunities to bring the house back into economic use. Good quality information and advice for owners of empty homes is vital. We will develop our online and printed resources, so that owners have a one-stop portal of information about their options to bring empty homes back into use, and can make informed choices. We will maximise our resources by working in partnership with Registered Providers, and responding to opportunities for funding for empty homes, including funding from the New Homes Bonus and the Homes and Communities Agency's affordable housing framework.

- **Focusing our interventions on empty homes**

We need to ensure that we maximise the use of our limited resources to have the best impact. We will:

- Work with LAPs to prioritise areas where there are high concentrations of empty homes
- Focus our attention on the most problematic properties, determined through a risk-based assessment
- Carry out enforcement in accordance with the principles of better regulation, and taking a stepped approach: information and education, liaison with the owner, and where this fails, use our statutory powers
- Facilitate partnerships between Registered Providers and owners to utilise empty properties to meet the growing need for social housing.

Reduce overcrowding and under occupancy by:

- Providing holistic housing advice to ensure households are able to access appropriate accommodation

This also includes Housing Options Advisors advising on Housing Benefit entitlements; the Money Advisor maximising income for households to enable them to afford larger properties or to be able to afford to downsize, and making best use of Cheshire homechoice to award the appropriate level of priority to households to enable them to move into social housing.

- Continuing the use of the Deposit Guarantee Scheme and the Prevention Fund to support households into accessing more appropriate accommodation in the private rented sector
- Working with our sub-regional partners to develop a strategic approach to tackling overcrowding and under occupancy consistently across Cheshire and Warrington
- Developing the Cheshire homechoice web system to deliver an enhanced housing options package, so that households are able to see all properties that are suitable for them across all sectors

Work with Registered Providers to improve void management by:

- Developing the Cheshire homechoice policy and procedures to ensure that allocations can be made quickly and effectively to reduce the length of time that properties are vacant
- Encouraging more Registered Providers to join the Cheshire homechoice partnership to ensure consistency across the Borough and make better use of the enhanced system that is in place

3. Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents

Cheshire East residents will have a range of housing options and the opportunity to live independently within an appropriate housing setting, with access to housing support at the time that they need it.

Commissioning and funding good-quality housing-related support has wide benefits for vulnerable people, such as reductions in admissions to residential or nursing care, faster transfer of care from hospital to home, enabling the ability to sustain tenancies and reductions in teenage pregnancies and drug-related offences. Government research has found that an investment of £1.6 billion in the supporting people programme delivers £3.41 billion net financial benefits through reduced costs in homelessness, health services, tenancy failure, crime and residential care.

Changes in social policy and medical advances has enabled more people of all ages, with varying levels of disability and complex needs, to live with a degree of independence in the home of their choice. Older people are by far the main recipients of help with home adaptations; however, many children with serious medical conditions are being treated more effectively and living longer into adulthood, which can mean that families need to adapt their homes more than once as the child's requirements change. One-off investment of between £2,000 and £20,000 to adapt an older person's home can contribute £6,000 annual savings through a reduced need for residential care.

Households who live in temporary accommodation are some of the most vulnerable and socially excluded in our society. They are more likely to experience difficulties in accessing appropriate health services and experience uncertainty and isolation. Issues can be compounded by a move to new, short term accommodation away from their support network, sharing facilities with strangers and having to support themselves and in some cases children on tight budgets. Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation as well as reducing the length of stay for those households who have no alternative is essential.

Local authorities have been actively reducing the levels of rough sleeping, recognising the negative impact on some of our most vulnerable residents. The new Government wish to take this a step further and has an ambition to end rough sleeping by 2012.

The upcoming reforms by the Coalition Government will bring significant changes for vulnerable residents as services across a number of sectors are challenged to rationalise and refocus. The effects of changes in the Ministry of Justice, Department of Work and Pensions, the Home Office and the Department of Health will all impact on some of the most vulnerable residents. The changes will be witnessed in areas such as access to benefits which will affect accommodation options, joined up working and commissioning of services and access to support to deliver and maintain independent living.

KEY EVIDENCE SOURCES:

- The Supporting People Needs analysis (2009)
- Study into Migrant workers (2009)

- Gypsy & Traveller Assessment (2007)
- Homelessness Review & Strategy (2009/2010)
- Home Improvement Agencies Review (2010)

THE CURRENT POSITION

Although overall Cheshire East is a wealthy area with a high quality of life, there are many individuals and families within our communities who are vulnerable. Several reviews and research projects relating to specific client group activity have helped us understand who these vulnerable people are and to guide our strategic priorities to maintain and prioritise delivery.

Supporting People (SP) has been the main source of funding for supported housing services for vulnerable adults. The funding is now received as part of the Area Based Grant and is no longer a named ring fenced grant. Commissioning arrangements, informed by an annual needs assessment, enables us to provide appropriate services. Annual expenditure on housing support related services was £9 million in 2009-10.

Supporting People needs analysis information in 2010 told us:

- There is an under-supply of supported accommodation for:
 - Older people with mental health problems / dementia,
 - Single homeless people,
 - People with mental health issues,
 - People with physical / sensory disability,
 - People with drug / alcohol issues
 - Gypsies and Travellers,
 - Young people leaving care
 - Young people at risk
 - Offenders
 - Homeless families with support needs
- The most significant unmet needs were for those with alcohol problems (under-supply of 381 units) and young people at risk (203 units)
- There is a lack of non-accommodation based support in many areas, notably for older people, those with alcohol misuse problems and people with learning disabilities

The Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment was carried out in 2007, to establish the current and future accommodation needs and aspirations of Gypsies and Travellers in the area. The study told us:

- Household sizes of Gypsy and Traveller families average 3.5 people per household, significantly larger than the average household size in the settled community.
- There is a need for additional permanent & transit pitches across the Borough. Between 2006 and 2010, 27 to 42 pitches were needed, and from 2011 to 2016 a further 19 to 22 pitches.

- Migration rates out of Cheshire East for Travellers are low.

A study on the housing and support needs of emergent migrant communities living and working in the Cheshire area was completed in 2009. The study told us:

- The highest concentration of migrant workers is in the Crewe area, living in the private rented sector
- There are low numbers of migrant workers living in social housing, with less than 40% of migrant workers contacting a social housing provider for accommodation, believing that if they had a job they were not eligible.
- Migrant workers face affordability issues in accessing housing, including struggling with the upfront costs of renting and the loss of deposits when moving.

A comprehensive review of services for homeless households was carried out to formulate a picture of the scale and nature of homelessness in Cheshire East and likely levels of future homelessness. This told us:

- Affordability is a significant issue with prices well above the North West average and private renting expensive in comparison to social rents.
- High demand for 1 and 2 bedroom properties in the social rented sector with significant waiting time for households requiring this type of accommodation.
- Overcrowding and under-occupation are both issues.
- Accommodation is needed for those with complex needs
- A full review of temporary accommodation in the Borough is needed.

A review of the Home Improvement Agency services was carried out in 2010, as the first stage in developing and jointly commissioning a modern, integrated and fit for purpose HIA service with a concentrated focus on achieving better outcomes for older, disabled and vulnerable people. The review told us:

- Demand for adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant programme is high, and increasing (figures)
- There were large variations in the length of time to complete adaptations across Cheshire East, with several instances of people waiting 2 years or more
- Demand for ground floor facilities and additional living space is increasing, with the majority being for disabled children: in 2009-10 the average cost of adaptations for children was £6,450, and for children was £21,500.
- The HIA service needs to better form part of a whole systems response to safeguard adults and children through proactive intervention.

PROGRESS TO DATE

We exceeded the target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation for families by 50 per cent, going from a baseline of 224 at 31st December 2004 to just 8 at 31st December 2009.

We have worked closely with the Housing Benefits team to make improvements for customers with the following benefits; reducing the level of evictions from private landlords and ensuring quick and effective payments to both individuals and landlords to prevent homelessness.

Other important examples of joint working include:

Working with Connexions, Just Drop-In, Youth Offending Service, YMCA and Forum Housing - to develop the roles of two young people's workers in the area who are the first point of contact for young people who are likely to become homeless or have a housing issue.

CAB – working together with CAB to provide advice and assistance in the Courts to households who are at risk of losing their home across all tenures.

Furthermore, the introduction of the Fit to Face Future programme will deliver workshops to people with debt and money issues to enable them to take control of their finances and prevent the reoccurrence of debt.

Strategic work with Domestic Violence services - ensures the needs of people fleeing violence are taken into account and responded to appropriately.

Working with Job Centre Plus, CAB, RSLs, and Health - to create and deliver a 27 point Recession Action Plan, with the aim of ensuring that information is available to help households.

In collaboration with Connexions, Children's Services, YOS, Adullam Homes and the three main Registered Providers we have expanded the Vulnerable Young Persons Scheme. This has been expanded to cover the whole of Cheshire East to give additional housing options for young vulnerable people.

Working with Children's Services to deliver a joint protocol on our response to homeless 16 and 17 year olds. This has made a clearer pathway for them to access the most appropriate service.

Working with Plus Dane to deliver a furnishing project for the benefit of disadvantaged households in Cheshire East.

Commissioning two schemes with Wulvern and Plus Dane to deliver supported accommodation to ex-offenders.

Commissioning of the Nightstop Project which has led to 51 young people being

referred to the scheme (between March 2009 and June 2010), where homeless 16 to 25 year olds are offered accommodation at a volunteer's house for up to three nights whilst a suitable alternative or return to home is negotiated.

We have improved access to our services for the Polish community through translation services.

Secured funding from Supporting People to fund tenancy support in the private rented sector and for people in temporary accommodation, to enable vulnerable households to access a wider range of accommodation and ensure long term tenancy sustainment.

Introduced a move-on process for households in supported accommodation as part of Cheshire homechoice.

Joint working with Adult Services, Home Improvement Agencies and Registered Providers has seen improvements in the Disabled Facilities Grant process. Timescales have reduced through improved joint working, lean systems and better monitoring of cases through the adaptations process. There is greater consistency in recommendations for adaptations in line with Fair Access to Care criteria. Better value for money is being achieved, for example an estimated £70,000 will be saved each year through a single contract for lifts, and joint funding of adaptations with Registered Providers is enabling the DFG programme to meet the needs of more people. Greater financial investment in adaptations is being made, with increased central government funding for adaptations contributing to over £2.5million expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants in Cheshire East between 2009 and 2011.

CONSULTATION

Consultation events have told us:

- We need to improve access to information for people in housing need, including improved provision of money advice (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*) and how to access specialist services for substance abuse, cultural issues, and disability needs (*Homeless Strategy event, 2010*)
- Advice on access the private rented sector, tenancy support and securing longer letting agreements are essential to reduce the potential for homelessness (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010, and Homeless Strategy event, 2010*)
- Pre-tenancy training is needed for households in temporary accommodation to improve their independent living skills (*Homeless Strategy event, 2010*)
- The Housing waiting list does not give enough priority to those in supported housing (*Homeless Strategy event, 2010*)
- Specialised accommodation is needed for people with mental health and/or substance abuse issues (*Homeless Strategy event, 2010*)
- More suitable housing for people with disabilities is needed (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH – 2011 TO 2016

We will:

Reduce the incidence of homelessness by:

Delivering the objectives of the Homelessness Strategy which focuses on five key themes: Prevention; Processes; Tenancy Support; Temporary Accommodation; and Permanent Accommodation. The action plan is delivered and monitored by a multi agency steering group.

Some of the actions from the strategy are highlighted below and will result in the following outcomes:-

Prevention	Action	Outcome
Tackle financial issues for those most at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend access to money advice in Cheshire East 	Fewer households falling into arrears with mortgage or rent. Fewer households accumulating debts. More households able to respond appropriately to a financial crisis
Processes	Action	Outcome
Improving referral processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work closely with all partners involved with homelessness and support 	Successful working practices are established with all partners to enhance service delivery
Tenancy support	Action	Outcome
Resolving gaps in provision of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with supporting people to increase provision 	Successful and longer term tenancy sustainment
Temporary accommodation	Action	Outcome
Improving the provision of temporary accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a comprehensive review of temporary accommodation available 	improved quality of accommodation; more households accessing wider services such as work, employment, health services.
Permanent accommodation	Action	Outcome
Increase access to affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer a range of affordable housing options 	More households accessing affordable housing options

Outcomes also identified include:

- Increase in vulnerable groups accessing social housing due to improved advice services
- Improved move-on from temporary/supported accommodation
- Use of temporary accommodation/Bed & Breakfast reduced

Commission appropriate housing related support services for vulnerable people by:

- Remaining an active partner on the Supporting People Commissioning Body – a partnership that also comprises Probation and the Primary Care Trust. The purpose of this body is to make allocation decisions regarding service commissioning / decommissioning and strategic agreement. The Body reviews Supporting People contracts with providers and these reviews focus on:-
 - Strategic relevance of service
 - Value for money
 - Analysis of need
- Assisting in the development of the Supported Housing Strategy, which will take account of the findings of the Homelessness Review and the Temporary Accommodation and Supported Housing Review.

Develop new supported housing:

The delivery of new supported housing will be a challenge for the authority within the current economic climate. Supported housing traditionally needs higher rates of subsidy than general needs housing. We will work with our Registered Providers to explore ways in which to develop specialist accommodation.

Services will continue to be focused on specific client groups such as:

- **Increase the provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers by:**
 - Utilising our land assets for the provision of a permanent Gypsy and Traveller site.
 - Increasing current provision on our existing Gypsy and Traveller site, and improving the site to ensure the provision is safe and fit for purpose.

Develop spatial policies on the level of provision and locations through the Local Development Framework.

- **Improve access to suitable housing for people with disabilities and care needs, by:**
 - **Modernising the Disabled Facilities Grants programme.** Increases in the ageing population and better life chances mean that the growth in demand for support to adapt housing will continue. We will continue to invest in adaptations, and work with Registered Providers to maximise resources and ensure that funding is distributed equitably, both across tenures and across the Borough. We will seek alternative ways of procuring adaptations to achieve value for money, using collective buying power with our partners to drive down costs. We will continue to

review our processes to minimise the time that disabled people have to wait for the housing adaptations that they need, and we will benchmark our costs and performance against similar local authorities, to become one of the best performing authorities for adaptations. We will develop the HIA service as part of an integrated approach to connecting health and social care resources, centred around the Independent Living Centres. Joint working across housing, health and social care will provide a whole systems response to maximising the safeguarding of vulnerable people and enabling people to remain in the home of their choice, with or without support, for as long as possible.

- **Delivering minor adaptations.** We will improve access to services across Cheshire East by delivering minor adaptations through the HIA service. We will develop services for self-purchasing customers and customers with personalised budgets, to complement the social care services available.
 - **Supporting self-help.** There is an increasing body of people who want to self-purchase equipment and adaptations, or who do not qualify for social care support, as well as the increasing numbers of people receiving personalised budgets and direct payments. Through the HIA service, we will develop services that are attractive and responsive to the needs of people outside of the social care system. We will develop affordable finance solutions for people who do not qualify for disabled facilities grants, to enable them to continue to live independently in the home of their choice as long as possible.
 - **Providing an accessible housing register.** We will improve access to solutions for households in housing need in the following ways: by training third parties such as Age Concern, library staff and supported accommodation on the homechoice system to enable more people to access the register and place expressions of interest in appropriate properties; improving contact with rural areas by linking in with the mobile libraries so access to advice and assistance with the register is more readily available.
- **Improve provision of Temporary Accommodation by:**
 - Working in partnership to develop an appropriate supply of temporary accommodation across the area.
 - Investing in our current provision to ensure we are providing good quality accommodation which is fit for purpose.
 - **Bring an end to rough sleeping by:**
 - Developing a strategic plan in partnership with stakeholders, which will set out our approach to meet the Government's ambition to eradicate rough sleeping.

- **Meet the needs of Migrant communities by:**
 - Regularly disseminating information through appropriate networks on social housing policies and affordable housing options.
 - Building relationships with private sector landlords to increase access to housing and ensure that housing is safe and decent.
 - Assessing the impact on future housing needs of the Eastern European tradition of caring for older generations in the home.
- **Respond to Housing Welfare Reform by:**
 - Raising the awareness of Members and front line staff on the proposed changes to the welfare benefits system.
 - Linking with the Housing Benefit department, Registered Providers and Job Centre Plus to ensure messages are delivered to the key people affected at the right time.
 - Providing information, support and advice to local private sector landlords on the changes to the local housing allowance to ensure we continue to have an adequate supply of private rented accommodation.
 - Ensuring that money advice and debt counselling services are equipped to give appropriate advice and assistance.

4. Meeting the housing needs of an ageing population

Older people in Cheshire East will have the opportunity to live in good quality, accessible and adaptable housing with access to support services and advice, enabling them to live independently in later life.

Older people's health, well being and quality of life are so closely linked to the suitability of their homes and neighbourhoods that connections across housing, health and social care are critical to ensuring independence in later life. Maintaining independent living and a full and active life for many older people is dependent upon help and support being available to overcome poor housing conditions, unsuitable housing and difficulty gaining access in and around the home. A home should help people be independent and give them the security to be active members of their communities.

An ageing society is one of the major challenges we face in housing. We know with some certainty that the number of people age 65 and over will increase dramatically over the next 15 years. As we get older, our housing needs change. As well as providing appropriate housing and support for the older people of today, there is also the challenge of ensuring that the right type of housing and support is available for future generations.

Key Evidence Sources:

- Private Sector House Condition Survey 2010
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2009
- Cheshire Older Persons Housing Strategy 2007
- Extra Care Housing Report 2010
- Home Improvement Agency Review 2010
- Supporting People Needs Analysis 2009

THE CURRENT POSITION

- The number of people in Cheshire East who are over the age of 65 is set to increase significantly within just a few years (56 per cent by 2027). Cheshire East is projected to experience a proportionately larger increase in the older population than both the North West and England as a whole.
- In retirement, fixed incomes and dwindling savings present challenges to older people to maintain their home and access leisure and social activities that keep them healthy. Older people in Crewe experience a greater level of income deprivation than other areas of Cheshire East. Across the Borough, an estimated 46 per cent of households where the head is age 65+ have an income of £10,000 or below.

- Some of the older sheltered housing stock is becoming difficult to let, and we are also seeing an increasing number of long term empty privately owned older people's accommodation across the Borough.
- Increases in the population of very elderly, or 'frail old' people are forecast to increase very significantly, with the 80-89 age group increasing by 82 per cent and the 90+ age group increasing by 155 per cent.
- An estimated 33.2 per cent of people in the 55-64 age group, and 30.6 per cent in the 65+ age groups are living in non-decent housing. Older people are more likely to have Category 1 hazards present in their home (40.1 per cent), posing a significant risk to their health and safety. Excess cold and falls on stairs pose the greatest risk to older owner-occupiers in Cheshire East.
- In the 85+ age group, there is an increasing need for adaptations to help them maintain independence in their own home; in particular there is a greater demand for adapted bathrooms and showering facilities.
- Demand for assistance with home repairs and maintenance and gardening were high in the Extra Care Strategic Housing Market Survey in 2010, with over 25 per cent of residents already in need of help with repairs, and over 30 per cent feeling they would need help in the next five years.
- 38 per cent of respondents stated that they would prefer to live in their current home, with sheltered housing being preferable to extra care housing. Only 4 per cent of respondents expressed a desire for residential care, and just 2 per cent would rent from a private landlord.
- There are no specific Supporting People services for older people with dementia or mental ill health, however this client group is supported through other services as a secondary client group, either in accommodation based or floating support services. As part of the updating of the Supporting People Strategy and the Strategic Review of Floating Support, linking in with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, we will seek to clarify that the housing related support needs of these particular client groups are being met and if necessary look to commission services to close any gap in unmet need.
- In 2009-10 in Cheshire East, the largest group of new social housing tenants were aged between 60 and 74 (34 per cent), with a further 26 per cent aged between 75 and 84. 15.5 per cent were aged 85+. The main reason cited by older people for moving home was because their current home was unsuitable due to ill health or disability.
- Home improvement agencies (HIAs) provide housing related support to over 3,000 older people each year. Research in 2007 highlighted the demand for HIA services, with the majority of respondents highlighting their desire to remain living in their own home, but needing support with property maintenance, gardening and accessing an

approved traders register. A review of current services in 2010 highlighted the different levels of service provision and funding across Cheshire East.

- In recent years there has been a shift away from the traditional residential care provision towards models that offer much more independence and choice. Extra care housing offers people their own self-contained home, with options to receive appropriate levels of care as required to sustain independent living.

Progress to date:

Nine Extra Care schemes with state of the art facilities for older people, high quality care and support provision and events and activities to enable residents to remain active and independent have been developed across Cheshire East

Handyperson services have been developed using central Government funding, and the remit expanded to include gardening services, as well as a pilot scheme for home decorating.

£615,000 was invested into adapting homes of older people through the Disabled Facilities Grant programme in 2010-11, which enabled 141 older people to live independently.

A multi agency approach is being developed in order to produce an “Ageing Well” plan for Cheshire East.

Registered Providers are developing services to improve the lives of our older residents including:

Examples of good practice:

Introduction of an innovative five-tiered community support Lifeline Service. – **Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust**

Older Persons Floating Support Service — **Plus Dane Housing**

Affordable Warmth Campaigns - **Great Places Housing Group** and Plus Dane Housing

Floating support through Tenancy Support Officers – **The Regenda Group**

Healthy, Wealthy, Wise Scheme for over 50s, encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle and promoting mental well being, as well as income maximisation advice - **Wulvern**

CONSULTATION

Consultation has told us:

- We need to integrate working with Adult Social Care and through the Local Development Framework to provide an increased range of housing options for older people (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)

- Incorporate lifetime homes standards into new housing provision (*Housing Strategy event, February 2010*)
- Providing a range of housing options for an ageing population, and supporting older people to live independently were two of the top five priorities identified for Cheshire East (*Members event, November 2010*)
- Older people need to be able to access a broad range of information about housing in one place (*Draft Ageing Well Plan development, 2010; Older people's Housing Strategy events, 2007*)
- Low level practical help such as handyperson services and shopping is needed and valued (*Older People's Housing Strategy events, 2007*)
- There is demand for bungalows and smaller properties suitable for older people with disabilities (*Older People's Housing Strategy events, 2007*)
- 55 per cent of respondents to the 2010 Quality of Life Survey felt that help to enable older people to live independently in their own homes was important, increasing to 71 per cent in Knutsford.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH – 2011 TO 2016

We will:

Improve the range and quality of information available to older people, to enable them to make informed decisions about their housing, by:

- Enhancing Cheshire homechoice to expand the range of information about housing options for older people.
- Delivering the Ageing Well Plan, Supported Housing Strategy and the Extra Care Housing Strategy to improve information for older people.
- Making best use of the existing and emerging information channels that are available, such as 'Choice', the adult social care directory; 'InfoLink', an NHS resource; 'First Stop', the national advice service on housing and care options in later life; and local networks with community groups and the third sector.

Deliver services to enable older people to be able to remain living in their own home independently, by:

- Providing housing related support services through specialist providers.
- Developing the Home Improvement Agency service across Cheshire East, to offer:
 - a wider range of practical low-level services such as handyperson services, home safety and security, and gardening;
 - a rapid response to meeting older peoples' needs for home adaptations;
 - Guidance through the funding options for home repairs;
 - Support to employ contractors to carry out home repairs and adaptations, reducing opportunities for rogue traders and bogus callers

- A range of services for older people who aren't eligible for or don't want to access social care for equipment and adaptations.
- Ensuring assistive technology and community equipment and adaptations are accessible and available across all tenures, regardless of older peoples' eligibility for social care funded services.
- Focusing on older people living in fuel poverty through the Hotspots campaign to maximise income, increase access to insulation grants and offers, and help people to understand energy tariffs.
- Offering affordable financial assistance for home repairs focused on safety and warmth,

Increase the range of housing options for older people wanting to move to accommodation that is more appropriate to their needs, by:

- Working in partnership to provide accommodation with a greater range of tenure options that is of good quality and better design, and meets Lifetime Homes standards, offering longevity and flexibility for the changing needs of ageing
- Support the Cheshire and Warrington Housing Alliance provider members to deliver a downsizing scheme that can help tenants of registered providers who are under-occupying their home to move to a smaller property. Downsizing benefits the individual by helping them to manage, maintain and afford their home and has the added value of freeing up much needed family housing, which is in very short supply across Cheshire and Warrington. As a result this housing can then be offered to those families who need it most
- Continue to deliver through the development of the Local Development Framework the allocation of sites available specifically for specialist housing for older people to meet the identified need and mixed communities and to develop good practise guidance for developers

5. Investing in our neighbourhoods

Cheshire East residents will achieve their potential, regardless of where they live.

Localism is at the heart of the Coalition's programme for government. Whether it is in policies to allow neighbourhoods the right to plan the future of their communities, or to challenge to take over the running of local services or community assets, or to transform standards of education in local schools, empowering communities is central to shifting the balance of decision making toward local neighbourhoods.

The Localism Bill when enacted will increase the powers of Local Government as well as provide opportunities for local people to have more say in the delivery and ownership of many amenities. Within this context the role of housing is central in providing a focus for what has been described as a Place shaping agenda.

Strategic housing is much wider than just the built environment. It is about the 'place' and assisting in creating sustainable communities in which residents feel safe, secure and are able to access opportunities in employment, education and leisure which meet their aspirations. Good neighbourhoods enhance the well being of people in many ways.

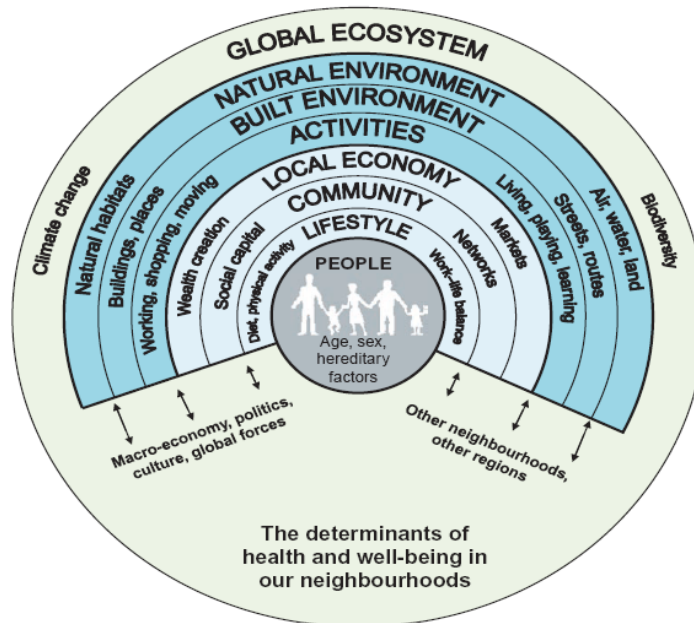
It is no coincidence that in Cheshire East many of the neighbourhoods with the worst profile for health and well being, unemployment, educational attainment and crime and disorder include a significant proportion of social housing. The causal relationships of this are complex and it is clearly not true that housing itself is the cause of the problems. However it is clear that Social Housing providers working in a range of partnerships can bring resources, capacity and competence to work with local people to improve neighbourhood well being.

Quality, cost and accessibility of housing and the standard of the wider physical environment are important shapers of overall neighbourhood amenity and satisfaction. Factors such as balancing different housing tenures, responsiveness of local housing management and the operation of housing allocation systems have a major impact on neighbourhoods.

Health and Well being

Health inequalities are a consequence of social inequalities, as the Marmot review stated *"Inequalities in health arise because of inequalities in society – in the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. So close is the link between particular social and economic features of society and the distribution of health among the population, that the magnitude of health inequalities is a good marker of progress towards creating a fairer society. Taking action to reduce inequalities in health does not require a separate health agenda, but action across the whole of society"*. In order to reduce health inequalities Marmot recommends taking actions across all the social determinants of health.

Social determinants of health: source Barton and Grant (2006)



KEY EVIDENCE SOURCES

- Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2025
- LAP data
- Quality of Life Survey 2010
- 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' 2010
- Localism Bill

THE CURRENT POSITION

Housing providers, within the context of a proactive and wide reaching housing strategy, can assist in tackling social and health inequalities in a number of ways. Most obviously the importance of providing Decent homes and addressing issues of damp and warmth have an immediate impact on health. Home safety and addressing issues of overcrowding and accessibility also have immediate consequences on physical health as well as secondary impacts on mental health and general feelings of well being. Overcrowding adds to family pressures in many ways including having detrimental impacts on educational attainment.

Housing providers engage with the well being agenda both directly through the built environment but also using resources in partnerships to deliver a range of well being activities. For example one Organisation worked with local people to develop a walking

club which both addressed issues of social isolation and provided exercise. Another Housing association worked with G.P's ,public health professionals and people within a neighbourhood to develop an Expert Patient scheme which enabled people to access health care more appropriately which helped both individuals and health professionals.

There are many direct and indirect ways in which housing can work in local neighbourhoods to engage people and partners to improve well being. This should be reinforced by ensuring there is Strategic Housing representation on the Health and Well Being Board.

Employment and Training

At a macro economic level the health of the construction industry and the housing market are central both to the national economy but also the economy of Cheshire East. This is both in terms of the employment generated by capital spend on new and refurbished homes but also by the many jobs created in repairs, maintenance and other subcontracting activities relating to the housing industry.

For many areas with a preponderance of social housing the jobs created in this area are, along with service industries an essential part of a neighbourhood economy if it is not to be benefit dependent.

Many housing organisations provide employment, apprenticeships or work tasters directly or in partnership with their developers and subcontractors. Some organisations are also working within the DWP Work Programme to assist people back into work either by providing jobs directly or brokering work with others.

Other organisations have assisted local people in developing social enterprises to provide environmental services to clean up and maintain neighbourhoods. This provides both a benefit to the environment but also creates capacity within the neighbourhood for training and growth of assets which will be important should neighbourhoods seek to benefit from some of the Community ownership provision in the localism Bill. Housing is uniquely positioned to help neighbourhoods and local groups develop this.

Housing organisations can also have an impact on education. In many areas with relatively poor levels of attainment young people do not remain in education beyond 16 and often lack skills and qualifications in later life. There is often a correlation between such attainment and people in either social housing or poor quality private sector provision. The relatively long term relationship between social housing provider and people in a neighbourhood can be important in providing opportunities to young people with no apparent aspiration for education and training.

Some organisations are working in partnership with schools to set up homework clubs and other training opportunities for disadvantaged young people as well as involving parent s who are tenants in the process.

Engagement and Localism

A local area partnership approach has been developed in Cheshire East, drawing together a range of community groups and public, private and third sector organisations in order to

improve outcomes for local people and places, and tackle some of the issues associated with areas of deprivation.

In some of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Cheshire East the focus is very much on the community and neighbourhood-led interventions to connect the neighbourhood to growth and opportunities nearby.

Seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) have been established across Cheshire East:

- Congleton
- Crewe
- Knutsford
- Macclesfield
- Poynton
- Nantwich
- Wilmslow

Their role is to improve services, ensure that local people influence decision making and to actively engage and empower communities. The LAPs have each produced their own local area plans, which have been influenced by the local community and town and parish plans.

Registered Providers operating across Cheshire East play a vital role in the place shaping agenda, and are therefore an essential partner bringing housing onto the agenda of the LAPs. They are committed to providing new affordable homes and specialist accommodation to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable residents. They make a real difference to the lives of those residents living within the communities, in which they operate, contributing to reducing health inequalities, employment and training opportunities and the sustainability of areas.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The LAPs have identified a number of cross-cutting issues that impact on our strategic approach to housing, including:

Poynton LAP area:

- Supporting the ageing population
- Identify the need for affordable housing and influence housing provision for local people, both young and old

Macclesfield LAP area:

- Identify the need for affordable housing and influence housing provision for local people both young and old

Congleton LAP area:

- Enhancing the availability of affordable housing for purchase and rent

Our Registered Providers contribute to a number of our priority areas. The following initiatives demonstrate some of the current good practice to achieving “Ambition for all”:

- Neighbourhood working at Bromley Farm, supported by the Plus Dane Group, has developed a number of projects including environmental action days, a community allotment, health events, a worklessness project and a digital project with the School. This work is being developed into a ‘good practice’ model for use in other neighbourhoods;
- A participatory budgeting exercise with Wulvern in Crewe which will provide an opportunity to obtain funding with local community groups determining priorities;
- A successful Playbuilder bid for the Radway estate in Alsager, supported by the Plus Dane Group;
- An emergency contact ‘business card’ for Poynton LAP residents has been funded by Johnnie Johnson Housing; and
- Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust allowing use of an empty property for a bike project on the Weston estate in Macclesfield.

“Our community investment work focuses on tackling worklessness, promoting community cohesion, developing education partnerships, supporting community development and promoting financial inclusion. Our work has been recognised with a national award by the Institute of Community Cohesion for partnership working” – Contour Housing Group

“Wulvern deliver regeneration through the neighbourhood management model, building on strong established partnerships. An example of this is the Neighbourhood Management pilot in Maw Green, including physical regeneration of the Sherborne estate” - Wulvern

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH – 2011 TO 2016

We will:

Work with the LAPs to improve our deprived neighbourhoods, reducing both social and health inequalities experienced by some communities across Cheshire East.

We will work with and support the LAP areas to develop innovative approaches to deliver the priorities identified in the LAP action plans and the wider social and economic issues, including:

Generic Priorities:

- Increase the provision of affordable housing in order to develop mixed communities (Section 1: Delivering market and affordable housing)
- Reduce the level of empty homes, which can have a detrimental effect on neighbourhoods.
- Work with the LAP's to enable them to promote and signpost residents to the services which are available across the authority.
- In partnership with Registered Providers develop a Cheshire East Tenants Panel in order to give tenants a voice and establish best practice which can be replicated across the authority.
- In partnership with Registered Providers establish and promote opportunities to tackle worklessness.
- Improve resident's health and reduce health inequalities by addressing the wider determinants of health, including:
 - Reducing social exclusion for some of our most vulnerable residents.
 - Improving energy efficiency to reduce fuel poverty and tackle housing conditions that exacerbate respiratory and other chronic illnesses
 - Improve access to the workplace and reduce long term unemployment.

Specific Priorities and Projects:

- **Whole area approach to local service delivery on the Moss estate in Macclesfield** - The aim is to put the community at the heart of service design, identifying opportunities for partnership working in order to deliver more efficient and effective services. It has been established that the following areas need to be addressed and brought together, namely:
 - Community engagement/development
 - Re-engineering services so that they are tailored to the needs of the community, are joined up and provide value for money
- **Comprehensive assessment of housing needs for both older and vulnerable people in Poynton** - The Poynton LAP has the highest percentage (21.5%) of adults aged 65+ compared with Cheshire East (17.7%). A working group will collate the wealth of information already in existence from organisations dealing with housing issues, but also ensuring that the local view and needs are identified to guide and influence the future provision (Section 4: Meeting the housing needs of an ageing population)
- **Knowledge Transfer Partnership** – This project deals with raising the aspirations of young people in specific areas of Crewe. A two year study will be undertaken by an advocate based with Wulvern, to consider a range of recommendation to improve the aspirations of young people.

Contribute to the Congleton LAP Housing sub-group developing innovative approaches - One of the identified priorities is to tackle empty homes, focusing on neighbourhoods with the highest level of long term empty homes.

