

Lancaster Homelessness Review 2014 - 2019

February 2014

Review conducted by Jon Cook Contineo Consulting Ltd

Summary

This review will inform the next Lancaster Homelessness Strategy for 2014 – 2019. It comprises an evaluation of the previous homelessness strategy, recognition of national and local 'drivers', a needs analysis, service 'map' and recommendations for future actions.

Lancaster City Council has met all the major targets in its Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008/13. The Council demonstrates strong leadership, a commitment to prevention and a willingness to engage with partners in addressing homelessness, its causes and attendant social evils. As well as delivering its statutory duties the Council has developed a dedicated homelessness prevention team that concentrates on the needs of single people and other 'non priority' groups.

There is considerable pressure on the Council's housing stock particularly for one bed accommodation – the current waiting list for a one bed property is 1500, up by some 30% since April 2013 – and there is an expectation that the changes associated with the welfare reform agenda will combine to put further pressure on the social housing stock in Lancaster.

At the outset of the review concern was voiced by the council concerning 'inward migration': The 2007 review noted that 'there are clear links between the scale of homelessness in the District and the existence of a pool of cheap poorly managed private rented accommodation in the most deprived parts of Morecambe'. This review has found considerable empirical and anecdotal evidence to suggest that this pool of accommodation – mainly in self-contained flats and therefore not automatically subject to regulation by the Council – serves as a 'magnet' for marginalised and often transient people who migrate into the District and then put pressure on support services which are designed for local people. When these tenancies break down the Council faces pressure from third sector agencies which support individuals regardless of their origins.

Following an overall decline since 2003/4, Homelessness is now increasing again across the Country but Lancaster continues to see a reduction in both presentations and acceptances. Homelessness presentations have fallen by almost 40% from 480 in 2008 to 180 in 2013 and acceptances have also fallen by 40% from 180 in 2008 to 70 in 2013.

In 2008/9 the three main causes of homelessness were:

- End of assured short-hold tenancy 27 (30%)
- Parents, friends or relatives no longer willing to accommodate 24 (26%)
- Relationship breakdown with and without violence 15 (16%)

In 2012/13 the three main causes of homelessness were:

- End of assured short-hold tenancy 28 (40%)
- Relationship breakdown with and without violence 18 (26%)
- Parents, friends or relatives no longer willing to accommodate 9 (13%)

In 2008 the three groups most affected by homelessness were:

- Families 45 (50%)
- People vulnerable due to a physical or mental health problem 20 (22%)
- Young People aged 16 – 20 5 (4%)

In 2012/13 the three groups most affected by homelessness were still:

- Families 42 (62%)
- People vulnerable due to a physical or mental health problem 11 (6%)
- Young People aged 16 – 20 2 (3%)

The big difference between these figures is that the three groups only made up 40% of all acceptances in 2008/9 but this figure had doubled by 2012/13.

There is a strong emphasis on prevention of homelessness: the Council has a dedicated homelessness prevention service that works with all groups and there are trained mediators across a range of agencies that work with young people.

There is significant evidence of effective multi agency working: there are three multi agency panels meeting regularly and referral pathways for young people are particularly well developed.

The recent development of a 'Social Lettings Agency' is already having a positive impact in reducing homelessness and waiting times for accommodation

There have been some major changes in service provision: some projects have closed, others have opened and significant new provision is planned for the near future and Lancaster has considerable provision in terms of 'beds' available to homeless people; at the time of the review the numbers, client groups and service providers were:

- Sufficient beds for up to seven homeless families – Adactus
- Six beds for offenders – Stonham
- Six move on beds for people recovering from addiction – Inward House
- Sufficient beds for five families escaping domestic violence – Safe Net
- Twelve 'emergency' beds for young people aged 16 to 25 – Morecambe Foyer & Adactus
- Two 'Night Stop' (emergency supported lodgings) beds and three longer term beds for young people aged 16 – 25 – Barnardo's
- Four emergency beds for single (rough sleeping) adults aged over 25 – Methodist Action North West
- Twenty seven longer term (up to two years) beds for young people aged 16 – 25 – Adactus and Foyer
- Eleven semi-independent living (move on) beds for young people aged 16 – 25 Adactus

A further 23 beds will also be soon be made available under the 'Places of Change' programme.

There is at present a well-developed floating support service for people who are moving on to independent living but this is potentially threatened by imminent cuts to the Supporting People budget.

Welfare reforms – in particular the spare room subsidy (bedroom tax) and the introduction of Universal Credit – have the potential to be the factor with the single biggest impact on homelessness since the 2002 Homelessness Act came into force and the strategy will need to be updated to take account of this.

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1. Review Methodology

The review was carried out between October and November 2013 using a mixture of research techniques:

- A 'desktop' review of relevant documents
- 'Face to Face' consultations with key stakeholders
- Electronic questionnaire
- Case Studies
- S.W.O.T Analysis

1.1 Desktop Review

The following documents have been examined:

- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013
- Lancaster City Council Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2012 – 2017
- Lancaster City Council Allocations Policy 2012
- Lancaster City Council Information Bulletin Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2012
- Lancaster City Council Information Bulletin Discretionary Housing Benefits 2012
- Lancashire County Council Supporting People Commissioning Plans 2013
- Lancashire County Council 'Ambition Lancashire' – a Strategic Vision for the Future of Lancashire 2005 - 2025
- Funding bids and correspondence relating to inward migration

Relevant points from the above have been cited or quoted in the review.

1.2 Face-to-Face Consultations

The main point of contact has been with the Lancaster City Council Principal Housing Options Manager but consultations have also taken place with the following personnel:

- Adactus Housing and Support Area Manager and Project Manager
- Adullam Project Manager and Project Leader
- Barnardo's Supported Lodgings Project Manager
- Bishop of Lancaster
- Sanctuary (Carr-Gomm Society) Manager
- Christchurch Project Manager
- Citizen's Advice Bureau Manager
- D.I.S.C Floating Support Area Manager and Project Leader
- Foundation Manager
- INSPIRE Manager
- Inward House Projects Area Manager and Support Worker
- L.D.H.A.S Floating Support Manager
- Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care Manager
- Lancashire County Council Young People's Service Worker
- Lancashire Probation Trust Accommodation Manager
- Lancashire Supporting People Partnership Chief Executive
- Lancashire Youth Offending Team Manager
- Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service (L.D.H.A.S) Manager and Staff
- Lancaster City Council Choice Based Lettings Scheme Manager
- Lancaster City Council Community Safety Partnership Manager
- Lancaster City Council Empty Homes Manager

- Lancaster City Council Home Improvement Agency Manager
- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Prevention Team
- Lancaster City Council Housing Benefits Manger
- Lancaster City Council Housing Standards Manager
- Lancaster City Council Portfolio Holder for Housing
- Lancaster Job Centre Plus Manager
- Littledale Hall Project Manager
- Methodist Action North West Area Manager and Social Lettings Manager
- Morecambe Foyer Project Manager
- Revolution Project Manager
- Safe Net / Empowerment Project Managers
- Stonham Offenders Project Manager and Staff
- Walter Lyons House Project Manager
- West End Impact Project Manager

Respondents were asked to describe their organisations and comment on areas of practice they felt were working well and those that needed further development and these have been noted under the relevant sections of the review.

1.3 Email Questionnaire

An electronic questionnaire was sent to the following Registered Providers (Housing Associations) with properties in the City:

- Adactus
- Contour
- Great Places
- Guinness Northern Counties
- Impact
- Places for People

Information from the comments made has been incorporated into the review under the relevant headings.

1.4 S.W.O.T Analysis

The *Strengths* and *Weaknesses* of homelessness services in Lancaster, the *Opportunities* that present themselves and the *Threats* that may need to be faced are presented in bullet point form as Appendix 3 to the review.

These have been drawn from the body text and provide a secondary summarised version of the review.

1.5 Actions

Where the review indicates that a Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based (S.M.A.R.T) action is required, this is suggested at the end of the relevant section or sub-section. Actions in the review will be taken forward to form the action plan in the strategy. Actions may address more than one need/gap/development opportunity and may therefore be suggested more than once.

2. Achievements of the 2008 – 2013 Strategy

The key aims of the Lancaster Homelessness Strategy 2008 – 2013 were to:

- Prevent homelessness through timely intervention

This has been achieved by the development of the housing options service and the establishment of the homelessness prevention team

- Prevent homelessness by developing further the range of good quality temporary and emergency accommodation available
- Reduce homelessness among young people, those affected by domestic violence, and offenders/ rough sleepers

These have been achieved by the development of services by Adactus, new crisis provision at Morecambe Foyer and Barnardo's for young people; the Free Methodist Church for offenders, Safe Net for domestic violence victims and the planned development of a rough sleeper / emergency accommodation unit by the Council

- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and Bed and Breakfast.

The Council has met its target to reduce temporary accommodation by 2012. The target was to reduce the number of temporary accommodation units to 12, but in fact the Council has reduced the number of units to 7.

- Increase the supply of good quality affordable housing

This has been achieved by the Council under the Housing Strategy

- Ensure effective monitoring of levels of homelessness throughout the life of the strategy

This has been achieved by the Council Housing Options Team.

The 2007 review noted that 'there are clear links between the scale of homelessness in the District and the existence of a pool of cheap poorly managed private rented accommodation in the most deprived parts of Morecambe'. This review has found considerable empirical and anecdotal evidence to suggest that this pool of accommodation – mainly in self-contained flats and therefore not automatically subject to regulation by the Council – serves as a 'magnet' for marginalised and often transient people who migrate into the District and then put pressure on support services which are designed for local people. When these tenancies break down the Council faces pressure from third sector agencies which support individuals regardless of their origins.

The 2008 strategy also prioritised worklessness, and developing preventative work in schools: these have only been partly achieved.

Targets to increase the percentage of affordable housing secured through Section 106 agreements and to increase access to the private rented sector have been met.

Targets to reduce the use of B&B accommodation: 25% reduction by 2009 and 50% reduction by 2011, have been met

Action: explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including young people

Action: tender for the development of preventative work in schools and colleges

3. New Legislation, National Initiatives and Local Policy Changes

The present government's welfare reform agenda has been cited as a contributory factor in the recent increase in homelessness. Research being conducted by Heriot-Watt University and the University of York on behalf of Crisis describes evidence of the impact of these policies on homelessness as "very worrying." The Government's welfare reforms are highlighted as particularly problematic:

'It should be emphasised that almost all aspects of the Coalition Government's welfare reforms are considered to be problematic with respect to their implications for homelessness, to a greater or lesser degree.'

The research paper also concluded that:

'housing market conditions tend to have a more direct impact on homelessness than labour market conditions, and the last major housing market recession actually reduced statutory homelessness because it eased access to home ownership, which in turn freed up additional social and private lets. However, no such benign impact of the housing market downturn is likely in this current recession, with levels of lettings available in the social rented sector now much lower (due to the long term impact of the right to buy and continued low levels of new supply), and continuing constraints on mortgage availability also placing increasing pressures on the rented sectors.'

Recent research by Sheffield Hallam University found that local authority areas in the North will see some of the largest cuts in income due to government welfare reform.

The average loss in benefit to claiming households in Lancaster will be circa £500.00 per year against a national average of £470.00. (Source: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research).

Lancaster City Council reports that over 700 social housing tenants were be affected by welfare reform when the changes were first implemented.

3.1 Universal Credit

The introduction of Universal Credit (UC) – when and if it happens in Lancaster – and in particular, the inclusion of housing costs within the single payment made to claimants has the potential to increase homelessness as a very significant number of tenants in the City.

In January 2012 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) established a programme of Direct Payment Demonstration Projects (DPDPs) to pioneer the direct payment of Housing Benefit (HB) to social rented tenants.

Evaluation of the pilots commissioned by CLG has shown that participants were mostly unsupportive of direct payments. The policy was generally viewed as being pointless and an unnecessary burden on people on low incomes. These views were reflected in tenants' projections about how they would cope: 31 per cent of respondents thought they would cope poorly on direct payments and 38 per cent said they would find it difficult to manage their finances. According to data released by DWP in December 2012, rent collection rates are lower in all Project Areas than before the DPDPs. Some tenants who have never had rent arrears before are now in arrears.

A mechanism that automatically recovers rent arrears from universal credit payments will be introduced whereby landlords will be able to contact the Department for Work and Pensions to request benefits designed to cover housing costs are paid to them once a prescribed level of rent arrears is reached. (Currently eight weeks).

Action: update homelessness strategy annually

3.2 Spare Room Subsidy AKA 'Bedroom Tax'

From April 2013 all current and future working age tenants renting from a local authority, housing association or other registered social landlord will be subject to the spare room subsidy rule or 'bedroom tax'

The size criterion in the social rented sector will restrict housing benefit to allow for one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household, with certain exceptions.

Lancaster City Council reports approximately 328 households currently under-occupying by one or more bedrooms.

It has been recognised that the legislation may cause households currently under-occupying to downsize thus putting pressure on one bedroom properties which are already scarce in the City. More than one respondent has cited the lack of one bed accommodation as a growing problem in Lancaster and there are at present 1770 people seeking this type of property from the Council – an increase of 670 (37%) since April 2013.

Action: support bids for HCA funding in the future and bring forward new build Council housing developments to increase the supply of one bedroom accommodation

3.3 Single Room Rent Restriction

From the 1st of January 2012 the single room rent restriction has applied to single people under the age of 35. Again, the full extent of the changes are still to be felt although the ruling has been in place for almost 18 months but it is expected that this will have some impact on homeless presentations – if not duties – in 2014.

One possible outcome of the Single Room Rent restriction may be the increase in the number of single people aged 34 and under opting to share accommodation. This would help to take the pressure off one bedroom accommodation (there are many more two bedroom houses in Lancaster) as well as benefiting the tenants. The Housing Benefit manager has advised that separate agreements could be made for each sharer which would provide security for the remaining tenant if one left. Discretionary Housing Payment may also be utilised to cover short term void loss whilst the landlord seeks another tenant.

The Single Room Rent Restriction does not apply to single people aged over 25 who have spent at least twelve weeks living in designated 'hostel' accommodation.

To help ameliorate any future problems posed by the 'Bedroom Tax and the Single Room Rent Restriction, the government has provided an uplift of £140,000 for Discretionary Housing Payment to help smooth the transition between the current payment systems and the new. Lancaster City Council is making full use of this temporary funding uplift.

3.4 Council Tax Support

Under the Localism Act 2011 the government abolished the old Council Tax Benefit rules with a new scheme – Council Tax Reduction – which allows each local authority to implement its own scheme. The Lancaster scheme was formally adopted by the Council in April 2013.

3.5 Repossession Prevention Fund and Mortgage Rescue Scheme

There were 74 evictions carried out in Lancaster as a result of mortgage arrears in 2012; a decrease of three against 2011.

Homelessness acceptances as a result of re-possession fell by three in the same period from six to three.

The government has funded two national schemes to prevent homelessness caused by eviction due to mortgage arrears: the Repossession Prevention Fund and the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

3.5.1 Repossession Prevention Fund

In April 2012 the government awarded Lancaster a small amount of funding to be used to help prevent homelessness due to mortgage (and rent) arrears. The fund is administered by the Housing Options Team.

3.5.2 Mortgage Rescue Scheme

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS) is intended as a 'last resort' scheme for households facing eviction. There are two strands to the scheme: 'mortgage to rent' and 'shared equity'.

A 'Registered Provider' (RP) which is a housing association, is involved with both strands; under the mortgage to rent strand the RP buys the house and rents it back to the householder, under the shared equity strand, the householder retains partial ownership.

MRS has been an arguably cumbersome and resource intensive scheme to administer with too many restrictive criteria attached to it make it a really useful tool for preventing evictions. This is borne out by data obtained from government sources which show that referrals to MRS by Lancaster City Council fell from 33 in 2011 to nine in 2012 and successful 'rescues' fell from 12 to one over the same period.

The Government has recently (August 2013) announced that as a result of the spending review for 2015/16, no resources have been made available for the continuation of MRS. This means that the Mortgage Rescue Scheme is scheduled to close to new applicants as at the end of March 2014 (or earlier if the current resource is committed). No details are currently available as to what – if anything – is planned to replace this scheme.

3.6 Worklessness

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recently reviewed the employment support provided by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to homeless people. This review led to two main Principals and a range of recommendations. The Principals are:

Work can make a significant contribution to recovery and resettlement for homeless people

- A joined-up service delivery is required to address the barriers to employment experienced by homeless people
- The recommendations include a continuous named JCP adviser, strengthening relationships between JCP advisers and keyworkers, colocation of staff and reciprocal training.

The recommendations are underpinned by a new source of funding for agencies supporting homeless people – the Flexible Support Fund.

Jobcentre Plus District Managers have access to the devolved Flexible Support Fund (FSF), which can be used for a number of purposes, including discretionary funding of projects and services that are not duplicated elsewhere and that can help Jobcentre Plus to meet its local priorities. Examples of ways the FSF can be used include:

- Supporting effective local partnerships to develop and implement collective solutions for improving employment outcomes

- Making links between public services including health, housing, transport, employment and skills, and organisations providing related support to clients, particularly the voluntary and community sector.
- Purchasing other provision that is aligned with local priorities

Action: explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including young people

3.7 Making Every Contact Count

'Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness' was produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government in August 2012.

The document contains five commitments:

1. tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence - through interventions to turn around the lives of the most troubled families; and by promoting innovative approaches to youth homelessness
2. improve health - including improving outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs / alcohol and mental health needs; and helping to ensure medical professionals discharging patients know who to approach for help meet housing needs
3. reduce involvement in crime - through support to the new Police and Crime Commissioners; improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation; and measures to help those on short sentences retain their tenancy
4. improve skills; employment; and financial advice - through new housing demonstration projects which help claimants budget and manage rent payments; a commitment to explore a payment by results approach for those some distance from the labour market; and piloting community learning trusts
5. pioneer social funding for homelessness - through a world first Social Impact Bond for rough sleepers and support to other local commissioners to turn social investment propositions into reality

3.7.1 The Gold Standard

The Gold Standard is based on the ten 'local challenges' set out by government in the document. The targets are to:

1. adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services
2. actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme

8. have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation
10. not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

The Gold Standard application is a voluntary process which involves local authorities demonstrating that they have met each of the ten local challenges.

Lancaster City Council has either met in full or is making significant measurable progress towards meeting all of the above targets and is striving for continuous improvement in its frontline services in anticipation of future 'Gold Standard' accreditation.

Action: conduct a 'light touch' internal audit and a peer review (in partnership with Preston and another authority) to identify good practice and areas for development against the gold Standard criteria

3.7.2 No Second Night Out

No Second Night Out (NSNO) is a pledge made to people new to the streets and is part of a [Government sponsored] commitment to ending rough sleeping. It is based on four pledges:

1. No one new to the streets should spend a second night out
2. No one should make their home on the streets
3. No one should return to the streets once they have been helped off of them, and
4. Ultimately no one should arrive on the streets.

In the strategy 'Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out nationwide' (2011), the Government called on every local authority to adopt the NSNO standard. The strategy notes that communities require the right services in place so that:

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options
- They should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services, such as healthcare, if needed
- If people have come from another area or country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return. There, they will be able to access housing and recovery services, and have support from family and friends

Following a successful bid to the 'Transitions Fund', Lancaster now works in partnership with Preston, Chorley, South Ribble, Fylde and Wyre to deliver the NSNO initiative and procedures have been drawn up between the authorities. As well as re-connecting rough sleepers from their own districts, Preston can now take referrals from Chorley and South Ribble and Lancaster can take them from Fylde and Wyre. This arrangement is conditional on the receiving authorities – Preston and Lancaster – having accommodation available.

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

3.8 Lancashire Supporting People Partnership

The vast majority of support services for homeless people in Lancaster are paid for by the Lancashire County Council Supporting People (SP) programme

The programme is a partnership between Lancashire County Council, the 12 District Councils, Health, Probation and the Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Action Team. The programme funds both accommodation-based and non-accommodation based support services.

The total SP budget for Lancashire in the period 2011/12 was £27.5M, and of this, Lancaster received £3,217,500 to fund its projects. However, the budget has since been subject to cuts and will almost certainly be subject to further, possibly very deep, cuts in the near future. Lancashire is faced with making savings of £300 million by 2018 and the removal of the 'ring fence' from the SP allowance means that this 'pot' is very vulnerable. Cuts in the SP budget will inevitably put pressure on services and may in some instances lead to a significant reduction or even some closures of current accommodation based services and a significant reduction in the number of floating support hours available.

The County Council is considering the options and a budget statement is expected before March 2014. Proposals will be developed in 2013 with implementation during 2014/2015 and/or 2015/16 depending on available funding.

All SP funded agencies reported anxiety over the forthcoming announcement of the revised budget and, as these agencies are currently housing and supporting circa 50 people at any one time there are potentially serious consequences for the District should there be major reductions in funding.

Action: update review and strategy annually

3.9 Lancashire Single Homeless Initiative

Lancashire has been awarded government funding to develop housing options for 'non priority' homeless people and this may be another possible means of ameliorating the effects of welfare reform on potential homelessness.

A steering group has been meeting to discuss viable options and has decided that the funding will be used to deliver a private sector access, shared accommodation finding and pre-tenancy training scheme in Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre and this will shortly be put out to tender.

The Council is potentially well placed to bid for the provision of this service as it already delivering highly effective homelessness prevention services for 'non priority' groups and could easily develop this to work across district boundaries.

Action: tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching, and pre-tenancy training project

3.10 Lancashire Improving Futures

The Lancashire Improving Futures programme (LIF) has recently been announced by the County Council. It is a 'whole system change' programme that is sponsored jointly by Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust Board and Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board. The programme will deliver a changed approach to working with families and is underpinned by five key transformational principles: *shared locations, shared information, shared ownership, shared pathways* and *shared commissioning/delivery*.

The programme entirely subsumes the Working Together With Families (WTWF), which is 'designed to reduce the number of services working with families and so reduce the duplication, cost and long term dependence on services. The focus is on services working smarter together alongside families - doing *with* and *not to* or *for* families - to increase resilience'.

The overall aim of WTWF is to secure:

- Improved intelligence about families at risk
- Earlier support where issues are identified
- Better information sharing across organisations
- Fewer professionals involved with families
- Reduced number of families 'not coping' or 'just coping'
- Culture change within and across organisations about working *with* families

The Council has a nominated professional responsible for targeted work with troubled families but this post is funded by the County Council and will cease to exist after March 2014.

3.11 Young People

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) made funding available in 2012 to Lancashire authorities to develop existing provision for young people. At present this funding stream is being used to train family mediators across a range of agencies as a homelessness prevention measure. A group representing the Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre local authorities has met to discuss further options and agree a service delivery plan. Precise details of the proposed service are not as yet available.

A joint protocol between the Council and Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care covering duties owed to homeless 16 and 17 year olds was agreed in 2011 which outlined the duties of each organisation when a 16 or 17 year old presented as homeless. The protocol will be reviewed at County level early in 2014.

The council will also be creating a new post of 'Young People's Advocacy Worker' to ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds who are threatened with homelessness receive the best and most appropriate service from the Council and Children's Social Care.

Preventative work in schools will also be commissioned early in 2014.

3.12 Lancaster City Council Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy was published in 2012 and states that 'The Council, as both an enabler and provider, plays a fundamental role in meeting the needs of vulnerable people that live within our community'. The term "vulnerable" or "socially excluded" describes groups that are likely to have additional housing needs and will experience poorer outcomes if these needs are not met. These groups include':

- Homeless households
- Young people
- People suffering domestic abuse
- People with a history of substance misuse/dependency
- People with a history of offending behaviour
- People from BME/Gypsy and Traveler communities

3.13 Lancaster City Council Allocation Policy

The Council allocates social housing using the Choice Based Lettings (CBL), system. The scheme is called "Ideal Choice Homes" and came into effect in October 2011. It aims to increase choice and improve mobility for social housing tenants both through bidding for properties, having one central point of access for mutual exchanges, and increasing housing options by including private sector vacancies and intermediate housing products. The Allocation contains five 'bands' ranging from emergency to very low. The needs of homeless people and those occupying supported accommodation are recognised by the policy and are placed in the band most relevant to their needs and status. At present, people in supported accommodation and deemed 'ready to move' by the appropriate panel can be placed in 'Band B' which affords them 'reasonable priority'. This arrangement is made on an informal basis. The policy is being reviewed.

Action: support bids for HCA funding in the future and bring forward new build Council housing developments to increase the supply of one bedroom accommodation

4. Needs Analysis - Housing and Homelessness Statistics

4.1 Background – National Homelessness Statistics

A recent (December 2013) House of Commons Social Policy Report notes that: 'The financial year 2009/10 saw an increase in homelessness acceptances by local authorities of 10%, representing the first financial year increase since 2003/04. The 2012 calendar year also saw a 10% increase in homelessness acceptances compared with 2011 while the financial year 2012/13 saw a 6% increase in homeless acceptances over 2011/12'.

Contemporary data from CRISIS (The Homelessness Monitor) also indicates that cases of homelessness are rising again after falling steadily for the past 10 years. The report states: 'After falling sharply for six years, the number of statutory homelessness acceptances has risen substantially (by 34%) over the past three years'. 'There are sharply rising numbers being made homeless by the loss of private sector tenancies, accounting for 22% of all homelessness acceptances at national level in 2012/13.

The report noted significant concern being expressed by single and youth homelessness service providers about the 'ratcheting up' of the sanctions regime for Jobseekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance claimants, which 'seems to be impacting disproportionately on their clients.

Homeless Link published two guidance documents in 2013 that emphasise the relationship between homelessness and worklessness and make concrete proposals for joint working between the Jobcentre Plus and local homelessness services using the Flexible Support Fund as a mechanism to deliver a service for homeless and vulnerably housed individuals to access specialised support for mutual clients.

Action: explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people including young people

4.2 Background – Housing and Homelessness in Lancaster

The District of Lancaster has a total housing stock of 61,570 dwellings. Some 78% of the stock is owner-occupied, 4% is owned and managed by Registered Providers, 6% is owned by the Local Authority and 13% is privately rented.

The vast majority of affordable housing stock is social rented accommodation, although in recent years, some Registered Providers have moved towards providing shared ownership,

in order to balance the housing market and improve access to housing for those households who would traditionally not qualify for social rented accommodation (source: Lancaster Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2012)

4.3 Presentations and Acceptances

Presentations to the Housing Options team, and the number found to be 'homeless and in priority need' have fluctuated in the last five years. There was a pronounced drop in 2008/9 followed by a rise in 2009/10 and a steady decrease since then. Presentations are significantly lower than the levels prior to the adoption of the 2008 strategy.

Acceptances as a percentage of the total presentations have also fluctuated but have been reduced on average by nearly two thirds since the last strategy was published. Until 2012/13 acceptances remained around the 100 per year mark; some 50% of presentations but in the last year the number of acceptances fell to 67 which was the lowest number since 2002 and at 37%, the lowest percentage as well.

4.3.1 Causes of Homelessness

In 2008/9 the three main causes of homelessness were:

- End of assured short-hold tenancy 27 (30%)
- Parents, friends or relatives no longer willing to accommodate 24 (26%)
- Relationship breakdown with and without violence 15 (16%)

In 2012/13 the three main causes of homelessness were:

- End of assured short-hold tenancy 28 (40%)
- Relationship breakdown with and without violence 18 (26%)
- Parents, friends or relatives no longer willing to accommodate 9 (13%)

The most notable changes have been the percentage increase in 'End of Assured Short-hold Tenancy' and the numerical and the percentage decrease in 'Parents Relatives and Friends no longer willing to Accommodate', as causes of homelessness.

The ending of an assured short-hold tenancy has remained the main cause of homelessness since the last strategy. These statistics are unsurprising given the increased reliance on the private rented sector and may also have been affected by changes to benefit levels. It is noteworthy that the percentage is almost double the national average of 22%.

4.3.2 Groups Most Affected by Homelessness

In 2008/9 the three groups most affected by homelessness were:

- Families 45 (50%)
- People vulnerable due to a physical or mental health problem 20 (22%)
- Young People aged 16 – 20 5 (4%)

These three groups together made up almost 40% of all accepted households

In 2012/13 the three groups most affected by homelessness were:

- Families 42 (62%)
- People vulnerable due to a physical or mental health problem 11 (6%)
- Young People aged 16 – 20 2 (3%)

These three groups together made up almost 80% of acceptances

The review has also found that the following groups are also experiencing homelessness

- Rough sleepers –and ‘entrenched’ people with complex needs
- Offenders

4.3.2.1 Families

Given that the ending of a private sector tenancy has been the main cause of homelessness over the last five years and that families have remained the group most affected, it may be safe to assume that these two factors are linked and that a high number of families are made homeless due to the ending of an assured short-hold tenancy.

It is also possible that welfare reform changes may be leading to homelessness where sanctions are applied to households that do not comply with benefit regulations and are sanctioned thus leading to non-payment of rent.

4.3.2.2 People vulnerable due to poor physical or mental health

The number of households given a full homelessness duty due to ‘vulnerability’ caused by poor physical or mental health has declined numerically by almost 50% since 2008/9 and as percentage by almost 66%.

Nonetheless the numbers are significant and may warrant further research into individual cases to determine whether or not there may be a causal link with external factors such as welfare reform and a cycle of repeat presentations.

4.3.2.3 Young people

Although the third highest group numerically, the numbers of young people accepted as homeless by the Council has remained very low and has in fact decreased over the past five years. This is demonstrably due to the strong emphasis on homelessness prevention adopted by the Council and its partners and the development of very effective multi agency working.

4.3.2.4 Complex Needs – Rough Sleepers and Entrenched Homeless

The last Rough Sleeper Count carried out by the Council in November 2013 found five people sleeping rough which is an increase of one against the 2012 figure.

Lancaster has a higher number of rough sleepers than other Lancashire authorities which may arguably be due to the ‘inward migration’ factor mentioned elsewhere in this review: the availability of food, shelter and clothing to homeless people without a local connection leads to these people coming into the district to avail themselves of this support.

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

4.3.2.5 Offenders

There is an on-going need for accommodation for offenders in the District there is good provision and evidence of good partnership working between providers.

Lancaster is looking at partnership working with Preston to implement a localised version of the ‘HARP Protocol’, which was developed in the North-East, as a means of addressing this issue.

4.3.3 Non Priority Homelessness

The number of presentations made by 'non-priority' homeless people, to whom the Council owes no statutory duty, has fluctuated since 2008 but could be described as being representative of an overall upward trend.

The tables below show the total number of presentations and acceptances over the last ten years and the number of non-priority homelessness cases since the last strategy.

Table1. Homeless Presentations and Acceptances 2002 – 2013

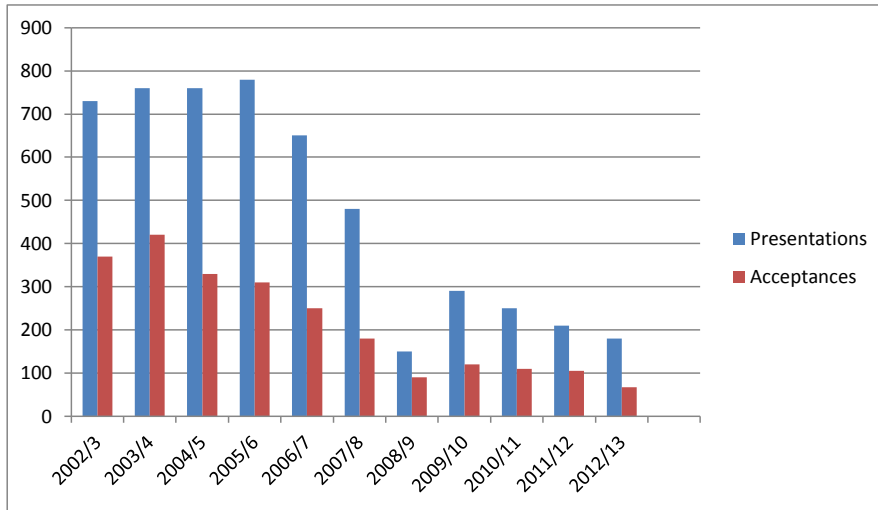
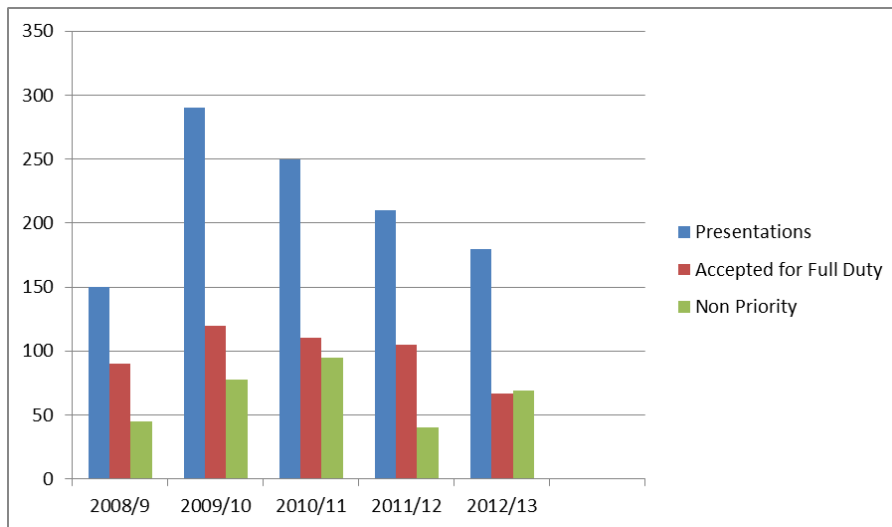


Table 2. 'Non Priority' Homelessness 2008 - 2013



4.4 Inward Migration

At the outset of the review a potential concern was voiced by the council concerning 'inward migration' – homeless people from other areas of the Country being drawn to Lancaster because of the services available from the third sector. The review has confirmed that this does appear to be the case.

It appears that there are a number of reasons for this:

- 1 External funding being made available for projects that do not meet the Council's strategic priorities
- 2 The relative ease with which transient people can access food, clothing and shelter in Lancaster and Morecambe
- 3 Commissioning of services on a county/national rather than a district basis – there are two residential treatment centres for people with addictions in Lancaster and a night shelter which lack re-connection policies of sufficient robustness to ensure re-connection
- 4 The past reluctance of some agencies to fully embrace the 'no second night' re-location criterion
- 5 A recent private sector access project which housed a significant number of people with no local connection

Some grant making trusts seem not to require 'strategic fit' when assessing applications and this means that agencies can access funds for projects that sit outside and in some cases may be detrimental to, the local authority's strategic vision.

It is possible to access free food, clothing and, from November to March, free overnight shelter in Lancaster without having to prove any local connection to the district. This will inevitably lead to an influx of transient homeless people.

The Christ Church project, which provides shelter for up to ten people each night from November to March, does not require people to prove any local connection with Lancaster.

People from outside Lancaster can access some services funded by Supporting People as this is a county wide service but the review has not found any significant evidence of people from with no local connexion 'migrating' into Lancaster to receive these services, apart from one local service.

Consultations with the two rehabilitation units located within the District have confirmed that a significant number of beneficiaries do originate from outside of the District and indeed from outside the County: more detail is given under Section 5 below. Two case studies have also been chosen to illustrate this issue and are provided as appendices to the review.

There is an over-supply of very poor quality private sector accommodation, particularly in the West End of Morecambe. The TLC Project, which was funded by CRISIS and delivered by Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service, brokered accommodation for 70 single homeless people over its two year life. There is considerable anecdotal (and some significant statistical) information to suggest that over 50% of those housed by this project did not originate from Lancaster. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that some of the properties used fell far short of an acceptable standard. The vast majority of the tenancies created were in the West End of Morecambe where there is a considerable stock of sub-standard private sector accommodation. There are at present however no follow up data available to support claims that the project was successful in terms of creating sustainable tenancies.

The Council joined with four other local authorities – Preston, South Ribble, Fylde and Wyre – to implement the ‘no second night’ initiative and a re-connection protocol is in place with these authorities.

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

Action: obtain monitoring and evaluation reports from CRISIS

5. Service Map - Organisation and Agency Profiles

Lancaster has a well-developed response to homelessness. This section of the review provides details of the services provided by the Council and its partner agencies.

As well as a very strong prevention service there is considerable provision in terms of ‘beds’ for those who do find themselves without accommodation. At present there are:

- Sufficient beds for up to seven homeless families – Adactus
- Six beds for offenders – Stonham
- Six move on beds for people recovering from addiction – Inward House
- Sufficient beds for five families escaping domestic violence – Safe Net
- Twelve ‘emergency’ beds for young people aged 16 to 25 – Morecambe Foyer & Adactus
- Two ‘Night Stop’ (emergency supported lodgings) beds and three longer term beds for young people aged 16 – 25 – Barnardo’s
- Four emergency beds for single (rough sleeping) adults aged over 25 – Methodist Action North West
- Twenty seven longer term (up to two years) beds for young people aged 16 – 25 – Adactus and Foyer
- Eleven semi-independent living (move on) beds for young people aged 16 – 25 Adactus

A further 23 beds will also be soon be made available following the successful bid made by the Council and Adactus Housing to the government for capital funding under the ‘Places of Change’ programme.

5.1 Lancaster City Council

The Council has a legal duty to administer procedures under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002; besides these legally prescribed duties, the council provides a range of discretionary services.

Lancaster City Council demonstrates strong leadership and a clear commitment to partnership working to address homelessness and its attendant social evils. The Portfolio holder for housing strongly endorses the approach taken by the current staff teams.

Of particular note is the decision taken by the Council to maintain the ‘ring fence’ on the government homelessness grant and to co-locate its housing related services within Morecambe Town Hall. The former means there will be some guaranteed resources available to fund new and existing initiatives and the second means immediate communication between relevant sections and individual officers can take place leading to

quicker decisions being made and a much more responsive service being provided. All officers interviewed commend this approach. The co-located services are:

- Housing Options
- Homelessness Prevention
- Choice Based Lettings
- Housing Standards
- Home Improvement Agency
- Housing Benefits
- Community Safety Partnership
- Empty Homes

5.1.1 Housing Options

The Council has restructured its homelessness and housing needs teams to create a larger Housing Options Service which carries out housing options interviews, homelessness enquiries and other procedures for dealing with homelessness contained in the Acts.

All presentations are now dealt with under the new system introduced under the previous strategy and no homelessness enquiries are made until a thorough housing options interview has taken place. This saves time and ensures that prevention measures can be taken at the earliest opportunity.

The principal officer attends the Lancaster Homelessness Forum, represents Lancaster on the Lancashire Homelessness Forum and the Lancashire Supporting People commissioning group and sits on all relevant local committees. The housing options service is well publicised on the Council website.

The Housing Options team also administers a scheme which is part funded by the DCLC 'Homelessness Grant' and the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allowance and designed to help people secure rented accommodation in the private sector whether via letting agents or private landlords in circumstances where they cannot afford to pay a bond.

5.1.2 Places for Change Project

Following the successful bid made by the Council to the government for capital funding under the 'Places of Change' programme, the securing of revenue funding by the Council from the Lancashire Supporting People Partnership and the successful planning application, a new hostel is to be built on the site of the former Dolly Blue Tavern by Adactus. The present building will be demolished and a new unit built to enable the delivery of a fully holistic service. This will compose six emergency beds (for rough sleepers), 12 move-on beds and five self-contained semi-independent units.

5.1.3 Homelessness Prevention Team

Since July 2012, the Council has been building on the work previously undertaken by Lancaster YMCA to prevent homelessness particularly amongst non-priority groups such as single people.

Two dedicated Homeless Prevention Officers are engaged on contracts until 2015. They are based in Morecambe but provide an outreach service across the district.

Referrals to the team are made from the Housing Options and Housing Management teams and also from external agencies; at any one time the prevention team will be carrying an active caseload of around 20 and a non-active caseload of 50.

An outreach service is an integral part of the Homelessness Prevention team's duties and 'surgeries' are held at: West End Impact and Probation, the team also work with L.D.H.A.S and D.I.S.C.

The team work directly with clients and attempt to broker appropriate solutions to problems. They have housed 100% of the single people with a local connection who have been referred and maintain contact with clients into their tenancies. The team also work closely with partner agencies and have formed close links with drug and alcohol services to enable clients to be 'fast tracked' into these services. The team also enjoys good links with the D.I.S.C floating support service and can also help with employment, training and education opportunities.

The team reports some difficulty in accessing support for clients with mental health problems and confirms that the lack of sufficient good quality one bed properties and bond monies does hamper their work.

Action: tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching and pre-tenancy training project

5.1.4 Housing Benefits

The Housing Benefits (HB) service is jointly delivered with Preston City Council; the Lancaster team is located in Lancaster Town Hall.

There is a named contact within the team for all supported housing projects and any new projects / developments requiring an input from HB.

A member of the HB team attends all relevant multi-agency forums in the District and the manager attends all the Council's strategic housing forums.

The team plays an active role in homelessness prevention. It makes full use of the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) allowance from central government to provide short term help with rent payments, deposits and to facilitate moves to more affordable accommodation where this is appropriate.

The impact of the welfare reform agenda – in particular the change from Council Tax Benefit (CTB) to Council Tax Support and the implementation of the Spare Room Subsidy – has not yet been fully felt in Lancaster but the HB team has carried out a number of measures to ensure that any adverse effects are mitigated.

The Spare Room Subsidy (Bedroom Tax) affects Lancaster City Council tenants more so than those of the housing associations with 328 tenants currently under occupying by one or more bedrooms.

Every tenant who will be affected by the cessation of CTB and the introduction of the Spare Room subsidy has been contacted by the HB team and staff members have attended all local consultation events organised by the council and partner housing associations. Home visits have been made to all Council tenants who face a shortfall of £12.00 or more to offer support in both financial terms using DHP and by signposting to advice services such as C.A.B. Home visits have also been made to all of the 30 households occupying Council stock who are affected by the overall benefit cap.

The HB service is to be reviewed early in the new financial year.

Action: update strategy annually

5.1.5 Choice Based Lettings

The Lancaster Choice Based Lettings (CBL), scheme is managed from Morecambe Town Hall. It is currently being reviewed / updated.

All the Council's social housing stock is let under the scheme and the following partner Registered Providers (housing associations), let a percentage of their stock under the scheme.

The percentages are:

- Places for People 50%
- Adactus 50%
- Guinness Northern Counties 50%
- Great Places 100%
- Two Castles 100%
- Contour 50%

The providers letting all their stock through the Council's scheme are the two with the fewest properties in the District. The providers letting 50% of their stock through the scheme also maintain their own waiting lists with different eligibility criteria.

Under the ideal Choice homes scheme, homeless people and those in approved supported housing are awarded priority according to their status and are placed in appropriate 'bands' to reflect this. In summary:

- People who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need are placed in the emergency band
- People who have completed a stay in approved supported accommodation and are assessed as being 'ready to move' are placed in the high band
- People who have been assessed as homeless but not in priority need are placed in the medium band.
- Intentionally homeless people are placed in the low band

As mentioned above, there is an acute shortage of one bedroom accommodation – there are 1770 people registered to bid for one bed properties – 61% of the total number registered to bid – and a small oversupply (in some areas) of two bed property. It may be possible to develop accommodation for single homeless people using this stock but tenancies would (in most cases) have to be shared and the issue of under occupation and the resultant charge would have to be addressed. The creation of separate tenancies would ameliorate this problem and provide a solution to both single homelessness and the loss of rent due to the property being empty.

Action: tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching and pre-tenancy training project

5.1.6 Housing Standards Team

Lancaster has a very large private rented sector due in part to the presence of two major universities within the city and the corresponding need for large amounts of student housing.

The Council has a statutory duty to regulate certain areas of private sector housing such as safety in and licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and enforcement of repairs where tenant safety is compromised. These duties are the responsibility of the Housing

Standards Team which is located in Morecambe Town Hall. All partnership work with private sector landlords is also the responsibility of the team

The team responds to an average of 700 complaints each year but a recent bid for funding from DCLG to deal with rogue landlords was unsuccessful.

The team has been depleted by 50% (2 housing technicians) for a considerable period. The first new recruit commenced work on 2nd December 2013 and the second one will start at the beginning of February 2014. Both technicians have been recruited on a permanent basis.

As well as reacting to complaints the team employs 'pro-active' measures in by identifying properties that present potential safety risks and in some cases carries out joint inspections with the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

The team inspects private sector properties prior to a bond being issued, responds to anti-social behaviour complaints by liaising with landlords where the ASB is centred on an HMO and gets involved where a suspected 'retaliatory' or illegal eviction is threatened. In the latter case the Housing standards team will undertake a thorough investigation, often in partnership with the Homelessness Prevention team, and may prosecute where clear evidence exists to suggest that an illegal eviction has taken place.

The Council has a long established Private Sector Landlords Forum, with meetings taking place on a periodic basis. The forum provides a platform for discussion and enables the Council to support and promote responsible renting.

An Accredited Landlord Scheme operates in Lancaster which offers responsible landlords a number of incentives. The Council is working closely with both universities and all student accommodation is accredited. Within the general lettings sector there are more accredited landlords in the City area than in Morecambe. The scheme is scheduled for a review.

There is, as yet, no selective licensing scheme in Lancaster but this is being considered, particularly for the West End of Morecambe and a report is being prepared for submission to Cabinet.

The Housing Standards Team is often the first point of contact for the public where an empty property is affecting the condition and safety of neighbouring homes. In these cases the team works closely with the Empty Homes Manager and his team (see below).

Some relevant statistics are given below; by the end of the third quarter of the financial year 2013/14:

- 183 private rented properties had been improved via the Affordable Warmth scheme
- 44 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) had been licensed/re-licensed
- Category 1 Hazards had been removed from 91 properties
- Category 2 Hazards had been removed from 124 properties.

Action: support selective licensing

5.1.7 Homes Improvement Agency

The Homes Improvement Agency (HIA) delivers a number of schemes to assist people to remain in their homes. The two schemes of particular relevance to the Homelessness Strategy are the 'Haven' and 'Sanctuary' schemes which are currently funded by the DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant.

These services provide practical assistance to vulnerable residents experiencing and anti - social behaviour and domestic violence, enabling them to remain in their own home and feel

safe. The HIA provides and installs security measures free of charge to qualifying resident's properties. Measures can include anti-arson letter boxes, CCTV/ intercom systems, security lighting and improved window and door security.

Caseworkers offer advocacy advice and practical support services to help clients remain in their own home or to move to alternative accommodation. The caseworkers can also offer advice and assistance to obtain the necessary finance required for the client's housing needs.

All referrals to the HIA are followed by a visit by a Caseworker to the client's property. This visit is normally completed within 3 days of the referral. The Caseworker is able to offer advocacy advice and practical support services to help clients remain in their own home. A property inspection is undertaken to determine the extent of any works required, whilst also taking into account the clients and the referrers concerns. The initial visit is then followed in most cases by a referral to the HIA Handyperson to complete the required works. On completion of the work the Caseworker advises the referrer of the outcome and the extent of the work completed. All clients are provided with a customer satisfaction questionnaire on completion of the work. Customer satisfaction over the period of this report highlighted a 100% satisfaction from clients with the HIA service. A total of 55 Sanctuary and Haven cases were completed between April and September 2013.

The Homes Improvement Agency also oversees adaptations to properties occupied by disabled people under the Disability Facilities Grant (DFG) programme. By the end of the third quarter of the financial year 2013/14 a total of £592,555 had been spent on 140 properties (average grant amount - £4,232). The 2014/15 DFG programme has already been allocated £673,344 already allocated by the government.

The DFG allocation for 2015/16 will be delivered via the Better Care Fund (administered by the Department of Health) will be £783,000 (an approximate 16% increase). However, Lancashire County Council will have the final say on actual amounts allocated to District Councils. As Lancaster has the only HIA that incorporates the delivery of DFG's it is hoped that an uplift of funding will follow.

Continued funding for 2014/15 has secured from the Lancashire Supporting People Partnership and Adult and Community Services. All contracts for externally funded staff have subsequently been extended until 31 March 2015.

To date a total of 1549 properties have been improved through the numerous schemes and initiatives in operation.

5.1.8 Empty Homes

There are approximately 1,000 empty homes in Lancaster. These properties are not concentrated in any one area but spread across the District with a significant number in rural and semi-rural areas.

Bringing back empty properties into use is an agreed Cabinet priority, and a key aim of the Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan will be to develop an empty properties strategy early in the Action Plan period.

A total of 70 previously empty properties have been brought back into use since July 2013 and there are plans to increase this number significantly in the immediate and near future.

This is expected to have a positive impact on homelessness prevention as the homes brought back into use can be used to house both priority and non-priority homeless people.

5.1.9 Family Intervention Project

The Lancaster Family Intervention Project will cease to exist as a separate entity on 31st March 2014.

5.2 Multi Agency Working

Lancaster has a well-developed ethos of multi-agency working. Led by the Council Housing Options Team, they are underpinned by a commitment from the vast majority of agencies who have a remit to work with homeless and vulnerably housed people to work together towards common goals.

5.2.1 Multi Agency Panels

As well as a number of internal and multi-agency strategic level meetings that take place in the District, there are regular operational level meetings taking place to discuss the needs and plan services for three groups affected by homelessness: Young People, People with Complex Needs and Offenders. The housing needs of offenders are considered by two panels:

The Young People's Panel meets fortnightly and is made up of representatives from:

- Lancaster City Council Housing Options
- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Prevention
- Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care
- Lancashire County Council Leaving Care Service
- Lancashire County Council Young People's service
- Adactus housing and Support
- Morecambe Foyer
- Barnardo's Supported lodgings
- Lancashire YOT (when appropriate)
- Other relevant agencies as appropriate

It assesses the presenting needs of individual young people and makes recommendations for appropriate housing and support.

Young people can only access supported housing in Lancaster via the panel and can only move through the system with panel agreement

The Complex Needs Panel meets on a monthly basis and comprises representatives from:

- Lancaster City Council Housing Options
- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Prevention
- Lancashire Constabulary
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Lancaster and District Homeless Action
- Inspire Drug and Alcohol Service
- Other relevant agencies as appropriate

It assesses the presenting needs of individuals and makes recommendations for appropriate housing and support or re-connection where this is appropriate.

The (Revolution) Offender Pathway Panel meets fortnightly and comprises:

- Lancaster City Council Housing Options

- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Prevention
- Lancashire Constabulary
- Lancashire Youth Offending Team
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service
- Lancashire Probation Trust
- Lancaster and District Homeless Action
- Inspire Drug and Alcohol Service
- Other relevant agencies as appropriate

The panel considers the housing and support needs of individual offenders and reports directly to the Lancaster Reducing Re-Offending Board which in turn reports to the County Board.

The (Stonham) Offender Pathway Panel meets quarterly and comprises:

- Lancaster City Council Housing Options
- Lancaster City Council Homelessness Prevention
- Lancaster City Council Choice Based Lettings
- Lancashire Probation Service
- Stonham
- Other relevant agencies as appropriate

The panel considers the housing and support needs of individual offenders currently being referred to and housed by Stonham and their prospects for accessing independent accommodation.

5.2.2 Community Safety Partnership

Although not directly concerned with homelessness, the Lancaster Community Safety Partnership (CSP), does become involved in multi-agency working around the housing needs of offenders and those at risk of offending.

The CSP administers a funding 'pot' that is used to provide emergency support to offenders chiefly in the form of bonds to secure private sector accommodation, but it can also be used to provide other forms of financial support where the Offender Pathway Panel considers it to be appropriate.

Action: consider a funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households

5.3 Partner Agencies

The Council works with many partner agencies to deliver its strategic vision. The activities of these agencies are summarised below under headings relating to the various client groups they serve.

5.3.1 Domestic Violence

Empowerment, Safe Net

Two new partnerships are providing accommodation and support to victims of domestic violence and their families: 'Safe Net' and 'Empowerment'.

Safe Net is the name given to the new women's refuge provision in Lancaster: it has been open since April 2013 and is delivered by the Safe Net partnership formed by East Lancashire Women's Refuge Association and Calico Enterprises Ltd.

Safe Net provides safe – short term – accommodation for up to five families fleeing domestic violence. The accommodation has up to date security measures and a member of staff is present at all times.

The Housing Options team is notified daily of any vacancies, occupancy rates are close to 100% at all times and 16 families have been helped since the opening.

Households fleeing violence are placed in the 'Emergency' band under the Council's allocation policy but so far, all the families helped have been re-housed in the private rented sector. Discussions are underway with Housing Options regarding a re-housing protocol that may lead to an increase in social lettings

Empowerment is the name given to the partnership between Lancaster and District Women's Aid and the Blackpool Advocacy Service.

Empowerment provides two 'outreach' services: an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA), who works with high risk cases, and tenancy related support to re-housed DV victims under a sub-contract from D.I.S.C. The tenancy support service also works with women and children in the transition from refuge to independent accommodation.

Most move-ons are to private sector properties and the staff team has built up good working relationships with some landlords who can provide good quality accommodation but there is still a shortfall especially in the Morecambe area.

Referrals to Empowerment are either made through the D.I.S.C 'Gateway' or direct to the team. Empowerment maintains a presence in children's centres and provides a drop in service at Lancaster Women's Centre.

The manager reports good joint working with the Housing Options team and Home Improvement Agency. Empowerment has also developed a presence in Lancaster University and has been working with students on a fundraising project

Funding has been secured to employ a part time volunteer co-ordinator who now manages an average cohort of ten volunteers. Empowerment is also developing preventative work in schools.

Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership has set aside funding to enhance the current Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service, which provides high risk victims of domestic abuse with support for themselves and their families in addition to support through the criminal justice system. The IDVA service is also expected to receive funding from the Lancashire Community Safety Partnership in 2014. Safe Net has also secured funding to provide a 'parallel' IDVA service in Lancaster.

The tenancy support service is funded by Supporting People until March 2014 pending the outcome of the budget review.

Action: consider a funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households

Action: tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching and pre-tenancy training project

5.3.2 Drugs and Alcohol

Lancaster is unique in the County in that it has two residential treatment units in the District whereas the majority of local authorities do not have any such provision. This is a contributory factor to the 'inward migration' phenomenon that is a central theme of this review.

Inward House Projects

Inward House provides supported housing for six adults who have completed residential rehabilitation treatment programmes and are now abstinent.

The project receives revenue funding (secure until March 2014), from Supporting People and referrals are mainly from Littledale Hall and Walter Lyon House.

Average length of stay is six months and all residents are expected to engage fully with the rehabilitation programme that includes relapse prevention and engagement with employment, education and training opportunities; indeed, engagement with these external opportunities is a requirement of occupancy on the project. Residents are also subject to random drug/alcohol testing to ensure they are complying with the regime.

Move-ons are exclusively to the private sector; Inward House used to be part of a referral pathway that offered some residents the opportunity to access social housing but this procedure is no longer in place.

The manager also reports that the lack of bond monies is hampering effective move-ons as some landlords are reluctant to let to Inward clients without an 'enhanced' bond being in place.

The staff team confirm that not all their referrals from the residential establishments originate from Lancaster and that the majority of clients successfully completing the programme at Inward House will want to stay in Lancaster but argue that these people are abstinent clients who have completed a treatment regime and are therefore deemed unlikely to become a burden on Lancaster services. Furthermore, by completing a programme at a residential treatment centre – which may be up to two years in length – and completing the Inward House programme, these people have established a local connection. The solution to this may be in the development of an enhanced bond scheme.

Littledale Hall

Littledale Hall is a privately run residential rehabilitation centre for people recovering from addiction located in a rural part of Lancaster. It has 31 beds and is open to male and female adults.

The project is a 'commissioned service' that is it provides treatment that is paid for by local authorities from adult social care, health or Drug and Alcohol Action Team budgets or a mixture of these. Littledale Hall does not receive funding from the Lancashire Supporting People Partnership.

Most residents are funded by their local authority for six to twelve months and the average length of stay is between six and nine months.

There is also a four bed 'move on' house adjacent to the main building where some residents remain on a three month license basis.

The majority of residents do not originate from the Lancaster area and this is recognised as a potential issue by the staff team as most residents do express a desire to remain in the District post treatment.

Some residents move on to the Inward House project in Aldcliffe House or St James' House in Accrington and some do successfully access private sector accommodation in Lancaster. All residents are encouraged to save for a deposit as it is recognised that the private sector is the most appropriate for ex-residents who wish to remain in Lancaster. The project does not have any formal links with major landlords or lettings agents and relies on an ad-hoc service.

Where a resident with no Lancaster connection fails to complete his or her treatment programme, a staff member will accompany him or her to the railway station and purchase a ticket for him or her to return to his or her place of origin. This is recognised as less than ideal but does conform to the ethos of the re-connect policy.

Walter Lyons House

Walter Lyons House is the name of Lancaster's other residential rehabilitation project; it has been open since June 2011 and is located within the City.

It is operated by a private company –TTP which is a national organisation offering residential rehabilitation to adults who are either funded by their local authorities or from their own means.

Residents usually come from detoxification – stage one – and stay for circa nine months at Walter Lyons House. They then either return to their homes or move on to stage three housing either in Lancaster – where TTP have 15 beds – or to other locations. TTP has its own move-on housing stock provided through an organisation called New Start Homes.

TTP offers a 'step up – step down' model whereby a resident who is disengaging with the treatment regime is offered the opportunity to re-enter detoxification or move to a second stage treatment service in another area. The agency states that it does not 'evict' a resident for non-compliance with the treatment regime. In some cases however, a resident who has successfully completed a programme of rehabilitation does 'relapse' whilst in the community and may therefore present as homeless to the housing options team.

INSPIRE North Lancashire

INSPIRE is the name of the current drugs and alcohol service which is delivered by a charity called CRI.

Inspire North Lancashire provides:

- A range of structured one-to-one and group psychosocial interventions
- Recovery-focused groups and workshops
- A range of brief and extended interventions for alcohol users
- Community detox for drugs and alcohol with full support and aftercare
- Access to shared care available at GP surgeries
- Referral to inpatient detox or rehabilitation
- A needle and syringe programme

The agency does not at present provide any specific housing related support.

Action: consider a funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

Action: tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching and pre-tenancy training project

5.3.3 Entrenched Homeless including Rough Sleepers

Lancaster and District Homeless Action Service (Day Centre and Floating Support Service)

L.D.H.A.S provides food, showers and emergency clothing as well as support and a signposting service to other agencies.

There is a staff team of 11 working with a cohort of around 15 clients the majority of whom are deemed to be 'street homeless'. The agency reports a significant number of ex service personnel amongst its clients.

L.D.H.A.S has recently secured significant funding from the National Lottery to deliver an intensive support project for its most vulnerable clients; the purpose of which is to work with these people over a long term to help them prepare for eventual independent living.

L.D.H.A.S operates its own paper bond scheme to help its clients to access private rented sector accommodation and provides transitional support to clients whilst in the process of moving and immediately afterwards before referring to the appropriate floating support service.

L.D.H.A.S recently delivered a private sector access scheme which was funded by CRISIS and known as 'TLC'. The scheme brokered some 70 tenancies across the District but mainly in the West End of Morecambe. Analysis of the data provided indicates that a significant number (over 50%) of these tenancies were created for people with no local connection which runs counter to the strategic vision of the Council to prioritise local people.

The staff team acknowledge that in the past they have not fully embraced the 'no second night' initiative in respect of presentations by transient homeless people with no connection to Lancaster – there have been 18 such presentations since January 2013 – but confirm their future willingness to engage with the Council in re-connecting people who originate from other districts and areas.

Estimates as to the number of people actually sleeping rough in Lancaster District vary and there is no totally reliable data to support any one estimate. As an example, L.D.H.A.S claim to be working with nine rough sleepers yet the last formal count found five people actually sleeping out.

West End Impact

This 'day centre' service has been operating in the West End of Morecambe for eleven years and provides a range of services from hot meals and food parcels to a mother and toddler group and an evening youth club. There is also a community café which is currently open on Tuesdays.

There are two paid staff members, a large volunteer cohort and a number of agencies operate 'surgeries' at the centre including the Housing Prevention team.

West End impact was closely involved with the TLC project delivered by L.D.H.A.S (see above) and asserts that the majority of tenancies created are being sustained.

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

Action: obtain monitoring and evaluation reports from CRISIS

5.3.4 Generic

Citizen's Advice Bureau

The C.A.B has 'shop front' offices in Lancaster and Morecambe. The agency holds a contract from the Legal Services Commission to deliver housing related advice services. In particular the C.A.B provides legal representation in the Lancaster County Court for households threatened with eviction either by a private landlord or mortgage company.

The majority of private sector rental eviction cases occur in Morecambe and Lancaster sees more mortgage arrears cases; referrals come from households and agencies and C.A.B can become involved at any stage from first notice of an intention to evict to a court appearance. C.A.B defends between five and eight cases each month and is well respected by the local judiciary. In many cases adjournment to an eviction proceeding is obtained to permit a housing options / homelessness prevention intervention to be made.

C.A.B can only defend households which qualify for legal aid and this is seen as a potential route into homeless for these households. The agency would also like to strengthen its already good working relationship with the Council by developing an early intervention partnership.

Comment was also expressed on the possible negative effects of the welfare reform changes particularly the perceived emphasis on moving claimants with mental health problems from Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

It was felt by the C.A.B that in some case people who in receipt of ESA due to poor mental health were being moved to JSA inappropriately and were finding it very difficult to comply with the far stricter requirements of this benefit. In consequence of this they were being sanctioned by the Job Centre Plus and consequently falling behind with their rent which may be precipitating homelessness.

C.A.B Lancaster is also the lead agency for the 'Can Help' advice service partnership funded by the Transitions Advice Fund.

Can Help brings together the advice agencies in Lancaster with the overall aim to ensure there is readily available information about the advice services in the District and to that use that information to improve access and plan service delivery.

Current services are being mapped, including type of advice, location, opening hours and specialisms and this mapping will feed into both the Needs Assessment aspect of the project and a Gap Analysis Plan.

The Can Help website will be launched in April 2014 to provide 'self-help' advice, search facilities to find advice agencies and news updates.

Action: maintain and develop links between Housing Standards and C.A.B to provide mutual support for members of the public facing illegal eviction

Action: maintain and develop links between Housing Standards and the C.A.B to provide support for households living in sub-standard PRS properties

D.I.S.C Floating Support

D.I.S.C (Developing Initiatives Supporting Communities) holds the main contract from Lancashire Supporting People to deliver floating support services in seven Lancashire districts including Lancaster.

The service is 'tenure blind' that is it is not confined to people living in rented accommodation in the social sector but is open to those in the private rented sector as well as some home

owners. D.I.S.C is also able to support a small cohort of people who do not, as yet, actually have accommodation but are moving towards a tenancy.

The model is different to that followed in the east of the County in that in the east a wholly generic service is provided whilst the model followed in Lancaster involves D.I.S.C acting as a gateway and triage agency with the support being provided by specialist agencies under sub-contract from D.I.S.C.

Methodist Action North West

Methodist Action North West (MANW) provides crisis accommodation in Lancaster and is also the main delivery partner in the Council's Social Lettings Agency and the Empty-Homes strategy.

MANW have a four bed emergency accommodation unit in the City to provide emergency accommodation for adults referred through the Housing Options team. This is an interim measure however that will be replaced by the 'Places of Change' emergency/short stay accommodation unit.

The main sphere of operation for MANW is the delivery of the Social Lettings Agency in Lancaster district and in helping the Council deliver its Empty Homes Strategy and thereby addressing homelessness.

The Council supported MANW to make a sub-regional bid for funding along with Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The bid was successful, and this has provided an opportunity to bring up to 20 properties back into use in the Lancaster District. Up to £12K (depending upon the dwelling size) capital funding can be spent on properties that have been vacant for a minimum period of 6 months, and in return, MANW will lease the property from the owner for a 10 year lease period through a social lettings agency, with nominations being provided through the Council's Housing Options Team. The HCA have announced further funding for empty homes which includes commercial properties, and given the good progress made so far with this partnership, MANW has secured a further award of funding to bring up to 37 properties back into use in the Lancaster district.

A variety of properties will be made available but MANW are focusing on developing one bed accommodation due to the acute shortage of this type of property in the District

Adactus

Adactus manages the Council's temporary accommodation for up to seven homeless families

5.3.5 Offenders

Foundation

[The Foundation project provides floating support for offenders and people at risk of offending under a sub-contract from D.I.S.C. The service is funded by Supporting People and is secure until September 2014.](#)

[The contract requires Foundation to support up to 20 offenders subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements \(MAPPA\) and six Prolific and Priority Offenders \(PPOs\) across Lancashire but the majority of these people are actually located in Lancaster and Wyre.](#)

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[The project worker reports excellent joint working arrangements with the Council – Housing Options, Housing Benefits and lettings – the police and probation services and Methodist Action North West.](#)

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Adullam Project

Adullam is the name given to a new accommodation based service for offenders being delivered by the Free Methodist Church charity.

Following a successful bid for revenue funding and the development of a partnership with a 'bricks and mortar' provider, the charity will be offering supported accommodation for up to six service users at any one time. A full programme of support will be delivered including intensive support to address the underlying causes of offending including addictive behaviour – residents must be abstinent on arrival at the project and will be tested at random throughout their stay – using a recognised 'recovery' model. Residents will also sign a contract committing them to engage in voluntary work for up to 16 hours per week

Referrals will mainly be from local prisons – HMP's Kirkham, Preston and Wymott - and first priority will be given to applicants with a strong local connection. The agency recognises that there needs to be a good link with the Council's re-connection policy and the Lancaster Reducing re-offending Board has endorsed this approach.

Lancaster Probation Trust

The Probation Service in Lancaster reports very good joint working around the needs of 'high risk' offenders and those subject to Multi Agency Public Protection arrangements (MAPPA), but comments on the relative lack of housing related provision for lower risk individuals who are not automatically afforded a priority need status under homelessness legislation.

The Probation service cites a lack of suitable accommodation – especially one bedroom properties in Lancaster City– and the pressure being put on one bed properties by the university and the high fees charged by lettings agencies as the Principal reasons for this.

There is affordable and accessible accommodation in the West End of Morecambe but this is often in areas of poor quality housing and a high rate of drug use which can confound the efforts of Probation and other agencies to assist in rehabilitation.

The development of an enhanced bond scheme for offenders is seen as one possible measure that could be taken to ameliorate this situation.

Action: support bid for joint funding to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households

Action: continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure

Youth Offending Team

The Lancaster Youth Offending Team (YOT) reports good joint working with the Council but also some occasional frustration when clients are evicted from supported accommodation projects.

It was acknowledged that the assessment document prepared by the YOT was very long (26 pages on average) and that not all supported accommodation staff would have time to read it in its entirety. Consequently some evictions may have taken place that could have been avoided if supported housing staff members had been in possession of all the facts concerning an individual.

Action: arrange a management level meeting between: Housing Options, YOT, Adactus and Foyer to agree referral and communication protocols

Action: YOT staff to précis full assessment to include only relevant points before forwarding to supported housing projects

Revolution Project

The Revolution Project is a partnership between the Lancashire Constabulary, The Probation Service and INSPIRE. The main office is situated in Lancaster Police Station.

Revolution manages a cohort of between 90 and 100 'high risk' offenders – those whose criminal activity poses a significant threat to others and themselves – and seeks to provide a holistic service that not only addresses the presenting problem of criminal activity but also attempts to address the causes such as substance misuse, educational under achievement and poor housing.

The project manager reports that whilst housing is a perennial problem for its clients the concerted efforts of the agencies involved have been largely successful in ensuring that clients are adequately housed and that homelessness is therefore not a significant issue.

Revolution makes extensive use of accommodation provided by Foundations and, through them and the Homelessness Prevention Team. Revolution is also working closely with the Adullam Project which is helping to ensure that this service prioritises offenders who originate from Lancaster. Where necessary, Revolution can access small amounts of funding from the Community Safety Partnership to provide bonds.

Revolution reports very well developed working partnerships with the Housing Options Service and homelessness Prevention Team.

Stonham Project

Stonham currently provides supported accommodation to six, male, adult ex-offenders in Lancaster City.

Referrals are made by the Offender Multi-Agency Panel and are mainly considered to be 'low to medium risk' but the service will, on occasion, accept higher risk individuals where appropriate support and supervision is available.

The majority of residents are referred from the probation service but some do come direct from prison – usually HMP Preston.

The service is currently funded by the Lancashire Supporting People Partnership and this is secure until March 2014. Occupancy is always around 100%.

Average stay is between four and eight months and the majority of residents are re-housed by Registered Social Landlords and Lancaster City Council with the remainder going into the private rented sector.

Stonham is fully supportive of the Council's re-connection policy and will only accept an out of borough referral if there is no-one with a local connection on the waiting list and if the referring local authority undertakes to re-house the resident at the end of his stay in the project.

D.I.S.C

A CRISIS funded private sector access project was delivered by D.I.S.C and housed 60 single homeless, low risk offenders in private sector accommodation in Lancaster and Wyre. The project worker reports that the majority of tenancies created are still being maintained.

D.I.S.C also holds some residual funding from the CRISIS PRS scheme that can be used to provide future bonds for clients seeking to access the private rented sector.

Action: obtain monitoring and evaluation reports from CRISIS

Action: support bid for funding to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households

5.3.6 Young People

As mentioned in Section 4 above, Lancaster, Fylde and Wyre districts have been awarded a budget to develop homelessness prevention work with young people. There are at present no precise details available as to how this money will be spent.

Provision for this group has developed significantly since the publication of the last strategy and services are provided across the district by the Council and the following partner agencies.

Adactus Housing and Support

Adactus is one of two major players in the provision of supported accommodation for young people and delivers two projects in the City.

The New Road Crisis Accommodation Project provides short term supported accommodation for up to seven young people.

All referrals are made via the Young people's Panel and if there is a vacancy – the Housing options team is notified of vacancies on a daily basis – accommodation can be arranged within 24 hours of referral. A full assessment is then carried out.

Accommodation is usually provided for up to 30 days; a referral is made during this time either to the Adactus longer term accommodation project or to Morecambe Foyer.

The 'second stage' Adactus project, which is located on High Street Lancaster, provides seven beds and accommodation can be for up to two years.

Move-ons can either be to the Adactus supported housing project at Mariner's View in Lancaster or to independent living in either the social or private rented sector. A further move-on pathway exists between Mariner's View and the Adactus general needs housing project at City Heights.

Adactus support staff provide 'transitional support' to facilitate smooth moves between projects.

The project manager reports twelve young people moving from Adactus supported housing into its general needs scheme in 2012 with a 100% sustainment rate after six months.

Both projects currently receive revenue funding from Supporting People but this like all SP funding is only guaranteed until March 2014.

Two areas for development were identified by the project manager: the need for a protocol covering young people aged 16 or 17 who are being supported by Children's Social Care under the joint protocol (see 6.2.4 below) and who disengage with the support service and young people who show reluctance to move to the Morecambe Foyer preferring to remain in the City.

Barnardo's Supported Lodgings

Barnardo's provides a supported lodgings service in Lancaster placing young people aged 16 – 25 with two 'host' families.

The service consists of an emergency 'Night Stop' provision which is funded on a temporary basis by the Council and is used as a 'stop gap' whilst the Young People's Panel is considering options and a longer stay service of up to two years duration which is currently funded until March 2014 by the Lancashire Supporting people partnership.

Morecambe Foyer

Morecambe Foyer – part of the national Foyer federation – provides supported housing for 25 young people aged 16 – 25.

The service consists of five 'emergency' and 20 longer term beds located in the centre of Morecambe.

Morecambe Foyer is currently funded by the Lancashire Supporting People Partnership and this funding is secure until March 2014.

The foyer utilises a holistic model and all residents must participate in a programme of employment, education and training for 16 hours per week. There are also inputs relating to life skills which are delivered in the evenings.

Residents can stay for up to two years but the average length of stay is nine months after which they can access either further supported accommodation such as that provided by Adactus or independent living which is usually in the social sector as Single Room Rent restrictions often stymie attempts to access the private sector.

The Foyer has developed two move-on flats comprising two bedrooms each.

Lancashire County Council Young People's Service

This is a statutory service that provides advice and assistance to young people rather than 'bricks and mortar'.

The Young People's Service (YPS) is closely involved with the delivery of the joint protocol for 16 and 17 year olds that has been developed between Lancaster City Council and the County Council Children's social Care Directorate. YPS provides an advocacy service for young people affected by the protocol and reports some successes with outcomes but considers that there is still a lack of information and support for young people who are considering their best options. In particular the lack of support for a young person at the interview stage has been cited as a reason for the relatively small number of 16 and 17 year olds 'accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1980.

The YPS representative interviewed also considered that there was a lack of service user involvement in the process.

Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care

Children's Social Care Service is a statutory service provided by Lancashire County Council. The service has two main statutory duties to young people experiencing homelessness.

All young people aged 16 and 17 who find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness are entitled to an assessment of their needs under Section 17 of the Children Act 1980. The assessment is undertaken to determine whether the young person is a 'child in need' under the terms of the Act. If this is found to be the case then the young person is 'accommodated' – effectively entering into a voluntary care agreement – by CSC and this agency becomes responsible for finding suitable accommodation and financially liable for the costs.

The second group owed a duty by CSC are young people who have been 'looked after' (in care) for prescribed periods before becoming homeless.

A joint protocol between the Council and Lancashire County Council Children's Social Care covering duties owed to homeless 16 and 17 year olds was agreed in 2011 which outlined the duties of each organisation when a 16 or 17 year old presented as homeless.

The CSC manager states that, in the main, there is very good joint working between the statutory partners – CSC, Housing Options and the Young People's Service – and the voluntary sector. The protocol does need to be refreshed however and there is also need for ongoing training for front line staff.

The CSC manager meets bi-monthly with the Principal Housing Options Officer and relevant staff members attend the Young People's Panel meetings.

CSC provides a small amount of funding for the emergency accommodation provided by Adactus helping to avoid the use of B&B or short term fostering and Government funding is being utilised to train family mediators as a prevention measure.

There is a designated social worker who acts as the 'gateway' to services and this helps to ensure a consistency of approach. A Leaving Care worker is also employed to work with young people in, and moving on from, temporary accommodation.

Although still in its infancy, the 'Family Conferencing' initiative – part of the overall 'Working With Troubled Families' initiative – is being utilised as a means of homelessness prevention where young people are concerned.

The gap in provision as identified by CSC is for young people with very high support needs who should, in theory at least, qualify as 'Children in Need' under Section 17 of the Children Act and become 'accommodated' under Section 20 of the same Act.

Action: tender for the provision of preventative work in schools and colleges

Action: appoint a young person's advocate to ensure all homeless young people receive the best service

Action: increase the number of trained family mediators

Action: develop a joint working protocol with the Y.O.T

5.3.7 Mental Health

Sanctuary

The Sanctuary Supported Housing Project was formally known as the Carr-Gomm Society.

It operates an eight bed unit in a shared house and four one-bedroom flats in an adjacent building.

Funding is from Supporting People and is secure until March 2014.

The project is currently staffed on a nine to five basis but negotiations are underway with the aim of developing a 'concierge' service and a change in staff working patterns that will enable the project to provide support at night and at weekends.

The service currently accepts tenants with 'mild to moderate' mental health problems but this could be extended to those with more severe problems if the concierge service is funded.

Sanctuary is also developing a nomination agreement with the Council.

6. S.W.O.T Analysis

The bullet point analysis presented below attempts to summarise the strengths and weaknesses of homelessness services in Lancaster District, the opportunities for development and threats to current services.

Strengths

- Strong Council leadership
- Co-location of Council services in one building:
 - Housing Options
 - Homelessness Prevention
 - Housing Standards
 - Choice Based Lettings
 - Housing Benefit
 - Private Sector Liaison
 - Empty Homes
- Named officer in HB team for supported housing and new developments
- Effective multi agency working and referral pathways:
 - Young People's Panel
 - Complex Needs Panel
 - Offender Pathway Panel
 - 'Can Help' Advice Partnership
- Vacancy notification system for supported accommodation
- Good 'bricks and mortar' provision for most groups - 74 beds
- Well-developed relationships with private sector landlords

Weaknesses

- Lack of disengagement protocols – drugs and young people
- Factors outside the Council's control – funding streams
- Factors outside the Council's control – inward migration

Opportunities

- Delivery of private sector access scheme

Threats

- Acute pressure on supply of one bedroom social housing units
- Supporting People funding cuts
- Lancaster City Council funding cuts
- Impact of Welfare Reform

7. Action Plan

The 13 actions in the action plan have been 'condensed' from the review. They are grouped under the following headings:

- Preventing Homelessness
- Developing the Council's Services
- Facilitating Effective Multi-Agency Working
- Developing the Private Rented Sector
- Addressing 'Inward Migration'
- Monitoring Performance and Keeping Abreast of Changes in Legislation and Policy

Lancaster City Council and its partners will:

1. Tender for the provision of preventative work in schools and colleges
2. Increase the number of accredited family mediators
3. Tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant matching and pre-tenancy training project
4. Develop discharge protocols for general and psychiatric hospitals
5. Consider a joint funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households
6. Hold a management level meeting with the YOT and supported accommodation providers to agree referral and eviction protocols
7. Forge stronger links between Housing Standards and C.A.B to provide support for households in sub-standard private sector properties and those facing illegal eviction
8. Support selective licensing and landlord accreditation
9. Continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connection policy
10. Obtain evaluation reports for recent PRS access schemes
11. Explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people

12. Conduct a 'light touch' internal audit and a peer review (in partnership with Preston and another Local Authority) to identify good practice and areas for development against the gold Standard criteria
13. Continue to increase the supply of affordable housing through HCA funding and S106 as well as bringing forward new building council housing development to tackle welfare reform and the historic under-supply of one bedroom accommodation
14. Appoint a Young People's advocate to ensure all young people who are threatened with homelessness receive the best service
15. Update the strategy annually to take account of local and national policy changes and fiscal drivers