

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy

& Action Plan

2014 - 2019

Contents:	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Strategic Links	3
3. Homelessness Review	3
Homelessness Statistics	4
Bullet Point S.W.O.T Analysis	6
4. What Has Been Achieved	7
5. What Needs To Be Done	8
6. Action Plan	11

1. Introduction

Welcome to Lancaster Borough Council's third Homelessness Strategy. It builds on the successes of the first two strategies and sets out the Council's plans to address homelessness for the next five years. The strategy has been developed against a background of changing legislation and recent national, regional and local developments.

2. Strategic Links

The homelessness strategy does not exist in isolation: it is linked to a number of local, county -wide and national strategic plans.

The actions in this strategy will help to achieve desired outcomes in improved health, reduction in offending and anti-social behaviour, reduction in the harm caused by addiction and better community cohesion as well as impacting on housing and homelessness.

The main related strategies are:

- Lancaster City Council Housing Strategy
- Lancashire Supporting People Strategy
- 'Ambition Lancashire' - Lancashire County Council Strategic Vision 2005 - 2025
- Lancashire and Lancaster Reducing Re-offending Strategies
- 'Making Every Contact Count' - 'A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness' Department for Communities and Local Government

3. Lancaster Homelessness Review Summary

The review comprises an evaluation of the previous homelessness strategy, recognition of national and local 'drivers', a 'needs analysis' and '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.

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.

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.

3.1 Homelessness Statistics

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%)

Table 1 Homeless Presentations and Acceptances 2002 – 2013

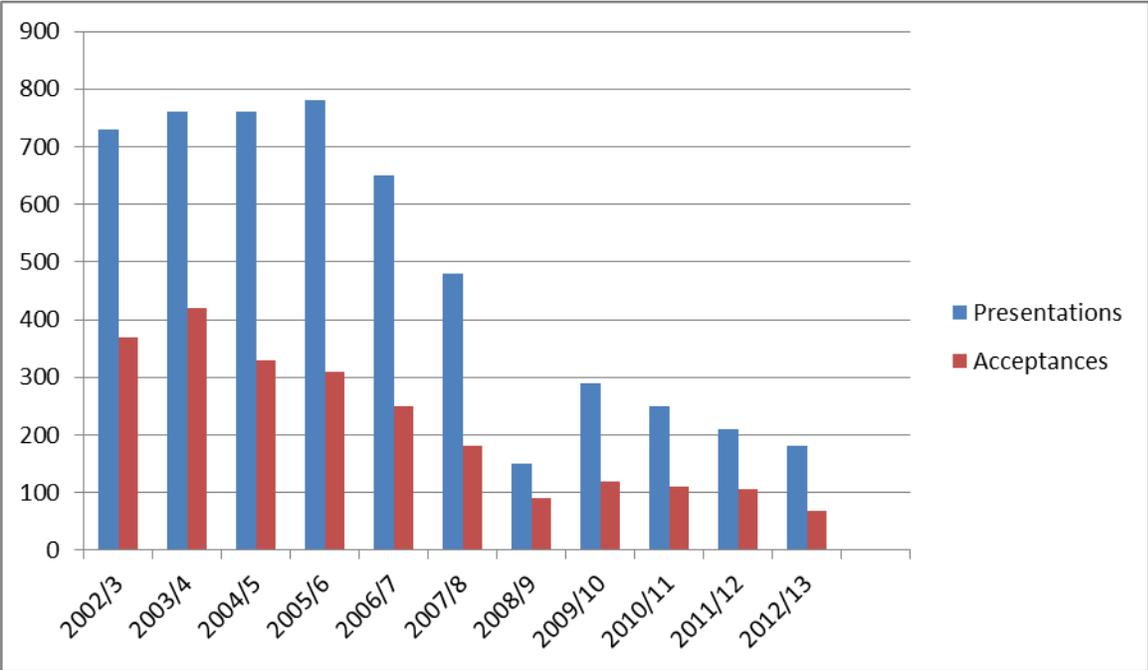
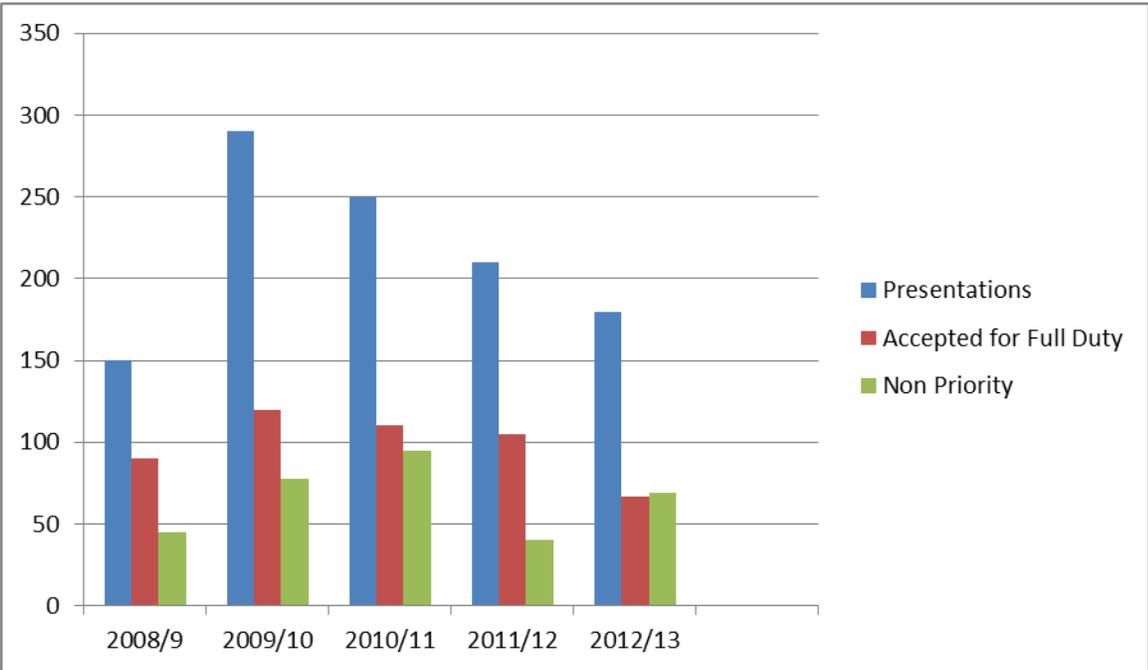


Table 2: 'Non Priority' Homelessness 2008 - 2013



3.2 Bullet Point 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 & inward migration

Opportunities

- In-house delivery of private sector access scheme

Threats

- Supporting People funding cuts
- Lancaster City Council funding cuts
- Impact of Welfare Reform

4. What has been achieved?

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

The last twelve years have seen a dramatic change in the way that homelessness is addressed in Lancaster. The achievements listed below give an idea of how far we have come since 2002 when the Homelessness Act came into force:

- ✓ Housing Advice moved to Strategic Housing Services
- ✓ Advice drop in surgeries set up around the District
- ✓ Joint protocol for care leavers implemented
- ✓ Ceased using B&B for families except in an emergencies
- ✓ Dispersed housing scheme set up to provide temporary accommodation
- ✓ Funding secured for sanctuary scheme
- ✓ Homelessness Prevention team set up
- ✓ All Council housing and homelessness services co-located
- ✓ Revised 'user friendly' forms introduced
- ✓ Trained family mediators in place
- ✓ 50% reduction in use of B&B

- ✓ Reduction in repeat homelessness
- ✓ Homeless acceptances in 2012 reduced by 37% - lowest figure since 2002
- ✓ Youth homelessness reduced by 50% - two cases in 2012
- ✓ Provision of supported accommodation significantly increased:
- ✓ Sufficient beds for up to seven homeless families
- ✓ Six beds for offenders
- ✓ Six move on beds for people recovering from addiction
- ✓ Sufficient beds for five families escaping domestic violence
- ✓ Twelve 'emergency' beds for young people aged 16 to 25
- ✓ Two 'Night Stop' (emergency supported lodgings) beds and three longer term beds for young people aged 16 – 25
- ✓ Four emergency beds for single (rough sleeping) adults aged over 25
- ✓ Twenty seven longer term (up to two years) beds for young people aged 16 – 25
- ✓ Eleven semi-independent living (move on) beds for young people aged 16 – 25
- ✓ A further eighteen beds will also be soon be made available under the 'Places of Change' programme
- ✓ Increase in the percentage of affordable housing secured through Section 106 agreements
- ✓ Use of B&B accommodation reduced by 25% in 2009 and by 50% 2011

5. What still needs to be done? Priorities for the next five years

The following actions have been drawn from the review to go forward into the action plan.

Lancaster City Council and its partners will:

1. Develop private sector accommodation, shared accommodation for households utilising the 'Single Homelessness Initiative' funding stream
2. Tender for the provision of preventative work in schools and colleges
3. Consider a joint funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households
4. Carry out research into 'good tenant' schemes operated by other local authorities with a view to developing the Lancaster scheme
5. Forge stronger links between Housing Standards and C.A.B to provide support for households in sub-standard private sector properties and those facing homelessness caused by mortgage or rent arrears
6. Continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure including the facilitation of better links between projects and the Homelessness Prevention Team
7. Conduct follow up surveys to determine the number of tenancies that are being maintained and the condition of the properties used by the TLC scheme and by offenders housed under the D.I.S.C private sector access project

8. Explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people
9. 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
10. Ensure Lancaster is included in all initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness on release from prison and YOI
11. Examine case files – 'priority need' acceptance due to vulnerability caused by poor health' to better understand local causes of homelessness
12. Appoint a Young People's advocate
13. Update the strategy annually

6. Action Plan

The action plan constitutes the 'tactics' that will enable the Council and its partners to deliver against the strategic objectives that have been identified by the review.

It will set out Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound (S.M.A.R.T) actions 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

Each action has been prioritised according to the urgency of the need and a realistic appraisal of how long the action may take to deliver: short term actions are intended to be completed within one year from the publication of the strategy; medium term actions should be complete within three years and long term actions are due for completion within the five year 'life span' of the strategy.

The 13 actions in the action plan are grouped under the following headings:

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

Key

The Action Plan is divided into seven columns:

Baseline Position – This column summarises the current situation regarding a particular issue

What Will We Do – This column describes the proposed action

When Will We Do It By – This column shows the timescale for the action

Who Will Do It (Lead in Bold) – Most actions in the Homelessness Strategy are multi agency but must have leadership to be effective

Performance Measures – This column must contain a measurable outcome that may be a 'milestone' on the way to achieving a complex action

Resources– Most, but not all, actions will require some financial input to be achievable: some require staff time to be allocated. This Column therefore identifies the kind of resource needed and where it is likely to be found

Progress – The action plan is a 'living document' and needs to be updated at least annually to demonstrate to stakeholders and the public how the strategy is progressing

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness and Developing the Private Rented Sector

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
We need to develop private sector accommodation, shared accommodation for priority and non-priority homeless households	Tender for the supply of an accommodation finding, tenant 'matching' and pre tenancy training project	April 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer	Project in operation Number of new tenancies created Number of tenancies maintained at six, 12 and 24 months	DCLG Single Homelessness Initiative	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
Preventative work in schools and colleges was not delivered under the last homelessness strategy	Tender for the provision of preventative work in schools and colleges	April 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer Provider TBC	Provision in place	DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness, Facilitating Multi-Agency Working and Developing the Private Rented Sector

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
Savings and increased efficiency may be achieved by bringing together the various bond schemes in operation	Consider a joint funding bid to support bid to provide enhanced bonds for vulnerable households	February 2015	Community Safety Partnership Manager Principle Housing Options Officer Revolution Project Manager LHDAS Manager DISC Manager External Bid Writer	Funding Bid Submitted Funding Obtained Scheme Operational Number of Enhanced Bonds Issued Number of Tenancies Created and Maintained at six, 12 and 24 Months	Grant Making Trust(s)	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Developing the Private Rented Sector

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
There is no 'Good Tenant' Scheme in the District	Carry out research into 'good tenant' schemes operated by other local authorities with a view to developing the Lancaster scheme	June 2014	Housing Standards Officer	Research Complete Lancaster 'Good Tenant' Scheme in Operation	Existing Capacity	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness, Facilitating Multi-Agency Working and Developing the Private Rented Sector

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
There is a significant some sub-standard PRS Properties in the District and a mortgage re-possession is a route into homelessness	Forge stronger links between Housing Standards and C.A.B to provide support for households in sub-standard private sector properties and those facing homelessness caused by mortgage or rent arrears	July 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer C.A.B Manager	Protocols Agreed Mortgage Re-possession Scheme in Operation Number of Sub-standard PRS Properties Reduced Number of Mortgage Re-possession claims Reduced	Existing Capacity	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Addressing Inward Migration

Short, Medium and Long Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
Inward Migration is a recognised issue in the District	Continue to implement the No Second Night Initiative and local re-connect procedure including the facilitation of better links between projects and the Homelessness Prevention Team	Life of the Strategy	Principle Housing Options Officer Homelessness Prevention Team LDHAS Manager Littledale Hall and Walter Lyons House Managers Adullam Project Manager Revolution Project Manager	Full Implementation of the 'No Second Night Out' Initiative Demonstrable Re-connection Protocol in place		

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Developing the Private Rented Sector and Addressing Inward Migration

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
<p>Approximately 70 PRS tenancies were 'brokered' by the TLC and DISC projects funded by CRISIS over the last two years but there are no robust outcome data</p>	<p>Conduct follow up surveys to determine the number of tenancies that are being maintained and the condition of the properties used by the TLC scheme and by offenders housed under the D.I.S.C private sector access project</p>	<p>September 2014</p>	<p>External Researcher TBC West End Impact Manager DISC Manager</p>	<p>Research Undertaken Findings Report Produced</p>	<p>DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant</p>	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Addressing Worklessness and Facilitating Multi Agency Working

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
A response to worklessness amongst homeless people still needs to be developed	Explore possibilities for developing a local response to worklessness amongst homeless people	September 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer Jobcentre Plus Manager External Consultant Delivery Partner(s) TBC	Proposal agreed Funding Bid Submitted Funding Obtained Scheme in Place Number of Homeless People in Work	Flexible Support Fund	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Developing the Council's Services and Monitoring Performance

Medium Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
We need to be working towards the 'Gold Standard'	Conduct a 'light touch' internal audit and a peer review to identify good practice and areas for development against the gold Standard criteria	February 2015	Principle Housing Options Officer (Lancaster) Principle Housing Options Officer (Preston) Principle Housing Options Officer (TBC)	Audit Complete Recommendations Made Recommendations Acted On	Existing Capacity	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness, Facilitating Multi Agency Working and Addressing Inward Migration

Medium Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
There is considerable anecdotal, and some empirical, evidence to suggest that some people are homeless on release from prison or YOI	Ensure Lancaster is included in all initiatives aimed at preventing homelessness on release from prison and YOI	December 2014	External Consultant Principle Housing Options Officer Resettlement Managers (HMP's) Revolution Project Manager Probation Service Manager	Lancaster represented in any future development	Grant Making Trust(s) Housing Benefits	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness and Developing the Council’s Services

Short Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
Vulnerability due to poor physical or mental health is a major cause of homelessness in the District	Examine case files – ‘priority need’ acceptance due to vulnerability caused by poor health’ to better understand local causes of homelessness	December 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer External Researcher	Case Files Examined Report Produced Appropriate Action Taken	Existing Capacity DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Preventing Homelessness and Facilitating Multi – Agency Working

Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
The Joint Protocol for homeless young people needs a robust underpinning	Appoint a Young People's Advocate to ensure all potentially homeless young people receive an appropriate service	August 2014	Principle Housing Options Officer	Advocate in Post Demonstrable Improvement in Service	DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant	

Lancaster Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan February 2014

Monitoring Performance and Responding to Changes in Legislation and Policy

Term Priority

Baseline Position	What we will do	When we will do it by	Who will deliver Lead in bold	Performance Measures	Resources	Progress
National and Local 'Drivers' will have a significant impact on the delivery of the strategy	Update the strategy to take account of national and local annually	Annually as a minimum but responses will need to take account of legislative and policy changes as they occur	Principle Housing Options Officer External Consultant TBC	Strategy Updated as Necessary	Existing Capacity DCLG Homelessness Prevention Grant	