



# North West Regional Homelessness Strategy 2008



## Acknowledgements

This strategy has been developed with a large number of organisations and individuals in the region. Their involvement will continue through the Regional Homelessness Forum, on which many of the organisations listed below are represented.

Thanks go particularly to those working in services for homeless people who contributed to this strategy and the development of the good practice guide – too numerous to mention here but they represent the voluntary and community sector, housing associations and other housing providers.

### **Direction and content has been developed with the involvement of the following: -**

Care Services Improvement Partnership  
Citizens Advice  
Communities and Local Government  
Government Office North West – housing and health  
Homeless Link  
Housing Corporation  
Legal Services Commission  
Local authorities – representing homelessness, strategic housing and private sector  
Ministry of Justice  
National Housing Federation  
National Offender Management Service  
National Treatment Agency  
North West Probation  
North West Regional Assembly  
North West Regional Development Agency  
North West Regional Housing Group and Support Officers Group  
North West Supported Housing Strategy Management Group  
Shelter  
The Big Life Company  
The Prisons Service  
Youth Justice Board

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This strategy follows a considerable period of research and consultation and further supporting information from this work can be found in the following supporting documents at [www.nwra.gov.uk/housing](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/housing)

**Annex A** Links to Other Agendas

**Annex B** Household Need Profile

### **Good Practice Guide**

There is also a Delivery Plan for this strategy; this and progress reports can also be found on the website [www.nwra.gov.uk/housing](http://www.nwra.gov.uk/housing)





## Foreword

It may be that homelessness can never be totally eradicated but it is still shocking that the problem still remains, in a country as rich as ours, and in a region which is as innovative and fast developing as ours.

Action to deliver major government initiatives on homelessness over the last decade has made a considerable difference within our region, with local authorities and their partners reducing the incidence of homelessness through prevention, identifying routes into accommodation, and developing closer working arrangements between the wide range of agencies involved. Between 2005 and 2006, almost a quarter fewer households needed to seek help within the region about a lack of accommodation.

Despite this, homelessness was revealed as a key issue of concern to stakeholders consulted over the updating of the last Regional Housing Strategy. In particular, concern was expressed about rising rates of homelessness in some areas, about the incidence of rough sleeping, and about the knock-on effects of hidden homelessness on health, employment, and children's education and behaviour.

The Regional Housing Board is committed to making a difference to the lives of people in the severest form of housing need, by attacking the problem at a regional level. We believe that we can help agencies working locally and sub regionally in the North West to further reduce homelessness, and lessen the resulting human and financial costs. We intend to do this through the provision of support at regional level for the work of local agencies, through action to share successful practice across the region, through collective actions at regional level such as research and work to achieve

regional targets, and through work with other regional bodies to help them to support and strengthen this work.

To this end, the Regional Housing Board has worked with all local authorities and a range of other regional bodies to develop this strategy. We have researched carefully and consulted widely accepting that more can be learnt and more consultation could always be done. We have put new resources behind the development and implementation of the delivery plan, and hope that it will be a working document for all existing and potential partners across the region.

Above all, we hope that, as the strategy and action plan are monitored and reviewed we can recognise that it has contributed to improving the quality of life for many in our region who would otherwise be amongst the most socially excluded in our society.

*Sir Richard Leese,  
Chair of Regional Housing Group*



## Our vision

*“Organisations in the North West will work together to actively tackle the underlying causes of homelessness, to prevent homelessness, and provide excellent services to support people to access warm, secure, and affordable homes.”*

### Our aim

Our primary aim is to deliver the government’s homelessness objectives in the North West by:

- Providing a regional forum which supports the work of local authorities and their partners
- Building on the success of local homelessness strategies and enabling complementary activity
- Supporting activity which can only be taken at a regional level, and developing mechanisms throughout the sub-regions to drive the delivery of these activities
- Developing links with other organisations working to translate government policies at regional level so that activity supports wider regional objectives – including those of the Regional Housing Strategy.

Through the Regional Homelessness Forum we will monitor and manage the delivery of the strategy and take action to address barriers to achieving our targets.

### Definition of homelessness

The term ‘homeless households’ is used in this strategy to describe households who are accepted as being owed a duty by the local authority to secure housing (statutory homeless) and those households for whom there is no duty to secure housing (non-statutory homeless) but which lack secure accommodation which can reasonably be occupied.

*“Preventing all homelessness is about ending personal suffering but it also contributes to a reduced demand for health and social care services, reduced crime and increased economic activity.”*

Consultation feedback

The objective of ending personal suffering must be applied across the board to all homeless people if it is to make a difference.



## Our priorities and objectives

These are expanded upon on pages 12 - 27 and form the basis of the Delivery Plan.

### Priority one: prevent homelessness

1. **Increase early identification and intervention** to reduce the number of households who present as homeless
2. **Provide timely and high quality advice and information** that enables households to resolve their housing issues
3. **Prevent evictions and loss of existing homes** from social housing and the private sector
4. **Prevent repeat homelessness** to reduce the impact of this on individuals, families and communities
5. **Reduce the level of rough sleeping**

### Priority two: increase access to a choice of settled homes

1. **Inform activity to increase the supply of social rented stock in the region**
2. **Increase the role of the private rented sector** in providing a choice of settled and affordable homes
3. **Increase access to social housing** for homeless and vulnerable households
4. **Increase the rate of successful and sustainable move-on** from temporary accommodation (supported housing, hospital, etc)
5. **Increase the number of homeless and vulnerable people receiving basic skills training and/or entering into employment, education, and training**, addressing worklessness and increasing household income
6. **Support improvements in temporary accommodation to develop into 'places of change'**, enabling households to move into – and sustain – settled housing
7. **Offer a range of supported housing options for households** who are vulnerable to homelessness and may not have their needs met by other statutory service provision

### Priority three: develop plans and activity based on a robust understanding of homelessness and housing need

1. **Increase regional understanding of the:**
  - Causes of homelessness
  - Housing needs of homeless and vulnerable households
  - Nature of rough sleeping in the region
  - Impact of the housing market, and housing market interventions e.g. tackling overcrowding
2. **Develop an understanding of the supply of temporary and supported housing**
3. **Develop a region-wide minimum standard for collecting data about the needs of non-priority and priority homeless applicants**
4. **Develop an understanding of resources currently used to prevent homelessness and increase access to housing**
5. **Develop a regional standard for engaging service users**





## Our region - the challenges we face

The total cost of homelessness to individuals, families, and the community, although not quantified for the North West, will be considerable. Although homelessness recorded by local authorities in the North West has decreased in recent years (23% fewer homelessness decisions were taken in 2006 than in the previous year), as a result of prevention activity, it is still affecting a large number of households.

In 2006 11,580 households in the North West were accepted by local authorities as homeless and in priority need<sup>1</sup>, 15% of the 76,858 acceptances in England.

This is only part of the picture; in the same year another 15,000 households approached local authorities for assistance with their housing situation, and 10,328 people were recorded by Supporting People-funded services as single homeless. It is unlikely that many of these latter households were recorded as homeless by local authorities, and very few will have been accepted as being owed a full housing duty by any local authority.

Particular features of the homelessness challenge for the North West region include:

- A high proportion of homelessness caused by family breakdown, particularly where parents expel their teenage or grown-up children, in line with national trends
- People in the North West becoming increasingly vulnerable, with a much higher proportion of homeless households affected by violence, harassment, and domestic violence than in other areas of the country, a higher proportion of homeless households accepted as homeless as a result of alcohol and drug dependency, and a higher proportion of people accepted as homeless on account of mental health needs
- A significant proportion of people living in overcrowded accommodation – two of the five pilot schemes for tackling overcrowding outside London are in the region
- Low use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation – but there are hotspots where the use of B&B has been rising, for families as well as single households
- Significant use of Homeless at Home (where households are classified as homeless but remain in the home on a very temporary basis) – the region accounts for a quarter of all households counted as Homeless at Home across the country
- A very high rate of turnover in the large temporary/supported housing sector catering for single homeless people – the North West makes extensive use of hostels to provide temporary accommodation for the homeless, more than four times the national average
- Low use of the private rented sector as a resource for homeless households
- A significant imbalance of accommodation and other resources for homeless households between urban and rural areas
- Reductions in available social rented housing, the rising cost of accessing owner- occupation (and a resulting rise in mortgage repossessions), and the need to ensure that privately rented accommodation is of an acceptable quality

<sup>1</sup> Recorded through P1E returns to Communities and Local Government (CLG)



Notwithstanding changes in the housing market in recent years, local authorities and their partners in the region have a good record of preventing homelessness and have pioneered some examples of good practice. This strategy seeks to build on these successes, and in particular to prevent people from needing to seek help as homeless in the first place. This strategy aims to take action to address that challenge.

### Key facts about homelessness in the North West region

#### *Deprivation and housing markets*

North West local authorities continue to feature in the 50 most deprived authorities in England (by rank). Liverpool remains the most deprived<sup>2</sup>, whilst both Manchester and Knowsley remain in the bottom 10 despite improving their position since 2004. Deprivation in some areas, including Pendle, Hyndburn, Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley and Blackpool, has worsened since 2004. Tackling homelessness in these areas will require a joint approach that brings together housing with other agendas including health, education and employment and community safety.

Despite recent rises in house prices across the North West values still appear low compared to the national picture and the overall figure masks a number of areas where the market is fragile.

Low value properties are often in neighbourhoods where people do not actively choose to live, where too much of the housing is obsolete, with poor environments and where tenure is dominated by low quality private renting. Housing market renewal areas are broadly consistent with some of the most deprived communities, with the most significant

concentrations of the lowest value properties across the region. There are challenges associated with this; despite the availability of affordable housing in these areas, it is not desirable or sustainable to accommodate homeless households in poor quality and insecure housing and environments.

#### *Households in priority need<sup>3</sup>*

In 2006 'households including dependent children' were the main household group recorded as in priority need (6,243 applicants). Those who were seen as vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence, pregnancy, mental illness or disability featured prominently, as did 16 and 17 year olds. People with drug or alcohol problems are not a large group amongst those in priority need, but the North West accepts more of this group as homeless than other regions.

Violence as a reason for homelessness is considerably higher in the North West than across the rest of the country: 24% compared to a national average of 17%, with the majority attributed to violence from a partner. The other two main reasons for homelessness – parental eviction and loss of a rented home – are lower than national averages, by 5-6% in each case.

An analysis of reasons for homelessness since the same period in 2005 identifies trends that the strategy should respond to.

These include:

- Continuing levels of homelessness from rented or tied accommodation
- An increase in homelessness from mortgage arrears.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2007

<sup>3</sup> Households for which the local authority has accepted a statutory duty to accommodate





*Homeless households not in priority need or not recorded by local authority returns*

There is limited information about homeless households not in priority need, other than the data recorded by P1E returns which shows that around 25% of all applicants – about 6,600 households – are not in priority need and therefore not eligible for assistance beyond advice and signposting to suitable accommodation.

In 2006/07, 10,328 people were recorded by Supporting People-funded services as 'single homeless'. It is unlikely that many of these households were recorded as homeless by local authorities, and very few will have been accepted as being owed a full housing duty by any local authority. This figure is higher than for any other region, including England.

For those who are not accessing local authority homelessness services, even less information is available, but what is available – for example the Cheshire multi-agency monitoring initiative – does provide an interesting picture. The most significant contributory factors to their housing need were family breakdown, relationship breakdown, offending, alcohol problems, and drug abuse. About a third had had some form of prison or probation involvement. Many of the households presenting as homeless or in housing need were young and single, and 11% of them had slept rough at some point. One third had previously stayed with friends or relatives, whilst 11% had previously stayed with their parents. Clearly, housing need was a sharp experience for many in this group.

*Sub-regional analysis<sup>4</sup> – decisions and acceptances*

As would be expected, local authorities in the region's major urban areas (Greater Manchester and Liverpool) are dealing with a greater number of homeless households. In 2006 54% of all decisions and 55% of all priority acceptances were in the Greater Manchester sub-region. This sub-region also records the highest proportion (89%) of households ineligible for help as homeless due to their immigration status. The Merseyside region accounts for a further 21% of homelessness priority acceptances.

East Lancashire has the lowest proportion of priority acceptances (39%) and the highest proportion found not homeless (40%). The largest proportion of non-priority acceptances is in West Lancashire. East and West Lancashire have the highest proportion of households found to be intentionally homeless (11% and 10% respectively).

Hotspots for the highest number of homelessness applications made in 2006 are dotted around the region, in places such as Ellesmere Port and Neston, Crewe and Nantwich, Barrow-in-Furness, Blackburn with Darwen, Liverpool and Blackpool, as well as Chorley, Preston, and Lancaster.

Information from Supporting People services<sup>5</sup> shows that the North West provides support to a greater proportion of homeless families and single homeless households than England. Although there is a lower proportion of rough sleepers than across the country as a whole, there is a higher proportion of service users with an alcohol or drug problem. It is particularly important to note the much higher proportion of young people receiving support.

<sup>4</sup> Based on sub-regional areas for Housing Corporation grant distribution  
<sup>5</sup> See Priority 3 for caveats attached to the use of this information



### The policy context, national and regional

**At national level**, the 2002 Homelessness Act shifted the emphasis away from crisis management to preventing homelessness. The government's 2005 Homelessness Strategy<sup>6</sup> set the challenging target of reducing the use of temporary accommodation across the country by 2010, as well as the following key areas of work:

- Preventing homelessness
- Providing support for vulnerable people
- Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness
- Helping more people move away from rough sleeping
- Providing more settled homes.

As part of the national strategy, a number of initiatives have been developed with other government departments, including:

- Tackling housing issues for offenders and drug users
- Addressing social exclusion and homelessness amongst families
- Preventing homelessness amongst ex-services personnel, and people leaving hospital
- Prevention of homelessness amongst private tenants and refugees
- Promoting physical health, and training and employment opportunities for homeless people
- Working closely with housing associations to promote better access to settled housing.

Joint working is required to deliver these agendas – and capacity – at local level. Regional and sub-regional working provides an opportunity to work across the whole range of government departments and agencies, and with bodies such as the Strategic Health Authority, Care Service Improvement Partnership, North West Development Agency, National Treatment Agency, and the area office of the Prison Service, to meet not only the government's homelessness ambitions, but a range of other objectives to improve the lives of socially excluded people across the region. The Board will enable this regional joint work.

**At regional level**, the primary focus of the Regional Housing Strategy (2005) has been to deliver urban renaissance and increase the supply of affordable and decent homes. Meeting the needs of communities and providing support for those who need it is the strategy's fourth priority; the Board has supported this through decisions taken on funding in relation to other priorities, eg, through the provision of supported housing in regeneration areas. The lack of affordable housing places much greater pressure on homelessness and support services, and does not enable prevention activity or the smooth transition of homeless or vulnerable households into settled accommodation. The process of developing the new Regional Housing Strategy will enable further discussion on how future investment should be targeted to meet the most acute need for housing – homelessness – whilst contributing to other regional objectives.

The implementation of this Homelessness Strategy relies on a close relationship with the process of developing regional strategy, including the North West Supported Housing Initiative. However, there are other key areas of regional policy and strategy – such as the Regional Spatial Strategy,

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable communities: settled homes; changing lives, a strategy for tackling homelessness





the Economic Strategy, Rural Delivery Framework, Reducing Re-offending Action Plan, and the Investment Plan for Health that either already identify plans that will contribute to tackling homelessness, or that need to be developed further to support this strategy. However the context for strategy development in the region is changing, and it will be important that the Regional Homelessness Forum influences the development of a single regional strategy.

The development of this strategy has taken into consideration the relationship between homelessness and other agendas; management and delivery arrangements for this strategy will ensure that links are made with relevant forums to manage potential implications and seek shared outcomes that this strategy can contribute to.

**At a sub-regional level**, it is recognised that many sub-regional forums seek to translate national and regional policy in a way that reflects the diversity of the region. Sub-regional strategies are also supported by CLG; consultation on this strategy has identified local support for this and the Board will support their development to ensure it is delivered in way that meets local and sub-regional needs. At the same time, it is hoped that the similarities between areas of the region – for example, between some of the rural areas such as Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire, as well as between the urban centres such as Liverpool, Manchester, and parts of Lancashire and Cheshire – will enable authorities and agencies to build on examples of best practice which have tackled significant problems they face in common.

Of particular relevance to the delivery of the strategy are sub-regional homelessness, strategic housing and housing support forums and their plans. These groups have identified issues which were common to each

of the counties and have initiated actions to meet needs and develop services across authority boundaries. The Board will work with and encourage forums such as these, to enable delivery and to identify appropriate sub-regional responses to the strategy.

**At the local level** (and to some extent, the sub-regional level), local authorities are currently researching and writing their Homelessness Strategies for 2008-2013, and are developing Local Area Agreements to address the key priorities in each area. It is now generally agreed that the solutions to homelessness are not limited to the supply of housing and delivery of housing services, and that homelessness can only be tackled effectively through joint actions taken across the range of agendas.

Although further work needs to be undertaken to understand the triggers for homelessness, it is clear that longer term solutions need an approach that combines activity from others - for example, activity aimed at increasing income levels will enable access to a wider choice of housing, as well as reducing the chances of people becoming or remaining homeless.

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs) provide an ideal opportunity to bring together partners with different agendas to agree shared outcomes, and plan action to deliver these, and there are already examples of this approach making strides to address the needs of homeless people and to prevent homelessness across the region.

The Board will strive to bring together all relevant bodies and agendas, at regional level in particular, and will strongly support this approach being taken at sub-regional and at local level.





## Our priorities in detail

### Priority one: prevent homelessness

Our objectives	Our action
<p><b>1. Increase early identification and intervention to reduce the number of households who present as homeless</b></p>	<p>Develop protocols that enable access to housing for a number of household groups who are vulnerable to homelessness, for example offenders, young and older people, and people leaving hospital including those with mental health problems, etc.</p> <p>Develop standards and guidance for joint work between local authorities, other statutory services including Children's Trusts, Youth Offending Team, Adult Services etc. and partnerships, eg, domestic violence forums</p>
<p><b>2. Provide timely and high quality advice and information</b> that enables households to resolve their housing issues</p>	<p>Develop a regional directory of services</p>
<p><b>3. Prevent evictions and loss of existing homes</b> from social housing and the private sector</p>	<p>Disseminate good practice guidance to social landlords, private landlords and strategic housing authorities, to support early identification of vulnerability and early intervention amongst existing tenants</p>
<p><b>4. Prevent repeat homelessness</b> to reduce the impact of this on individuals, families and communities</p>	<p>Support and enable activity that links homelessness and housing services with opportunities for education, training and employment.</p>
<p><b>5. Reduce the level of rough sleeping</b></p>	<p>Develop and support approaches to understanding and tackling rough sleeping</p>

### The challenges

#### Need

*Loss of rented or tied accommodation is a major cause of homelessness* in the region, accounting for 15% of all reasons reported by households accepted as homeless. Within this, although around two-thirds of this is due to loss of assured shorthold tenancy, there has been a recent rise in the number of households reporting 'other reasons'. Reported homelessness from the private sector is likely to be significantly underestimated<sup>7</sup>.

#### Loss of social housing

Although homelessness due to mortgage arrears accounts for a small proportion of homeless acceptances by local authorities, there is an indication that it is on the increase. This is not unexpected given the surge in home ownership from government policy in the 1980s, coupled with increases in interest rates and increases in costs to maintain older houses. Research elsewhere<sup>8</sup> has identified that home owners are the least aware of where advice is available to them.

<sup>7</sup> The tenant's dilemma: warning – your home is at risk if you dare complain, CAB, June 2007

<sup>8</sup> Newcastle City Council; mapping and audit of advice provision 2006



### *Repeat homelessness*

Some households become homeless for a second time (or more), often because they do not have the skills to manage a tenancy. There is increasing use of pre-tenancy training for young people and those leaving institutions, and this approach needs to be widened to prevent homelessness amongst other groups. Early warning systems (see below) are an important tool for landlords to prevent repeat homelessness.

### *There are particular challenges for some households that preventative activity could address:*

*Families* who suffer from multiple or complex problems can find themselves at risk of homelessness as a result of anti-social behaviour. A number of family intervention projects have been established in the region, with some of these shown to be a success. However, funding for the development of family intervention projects is time limited. These projects also rely heavily on Supporting People and will need support from all partners should they continue in the future.

Homelessness amongst *young people* is often as a result of familial breakdown – but this can be related to financial issues, behaviour etc. Mediation has been adopted by many authorities in the region with varying success. Current national housing policy does not support pathways for young people unless they are labelled as vulnerable.

Some *young offenders* enter custody because of a lack of accommodation. There is a need for more widespread development and use of protocols to prevent homelessness for young people leaving custody and care, particularly for those accommodated outside their home area.

More work needs to be done to identify those at risk of homelessness, and to provide better education about housing options for all groups of young people, including teenage parents, both single mothers and two-parent families.

Identifying people at risk of homelessness, and particularly *people leaving the forces, people leaving prison or hospital, care leavers, and people leaving drug or alcohol rehabilitation* would do much to prevent *rough sleeping*, along with research into ways of reducing exclusion or eviction from temporary accommodation.

There is little information on the scale of homelessness amongst *older people* in the region, but research<sup>9</sup> indicates that vast majority of older homeless people are invisible because they are often trapped in unsuitable temporary accommodation or living with family and friends. Services must enable older people to feel confident that they can seek help to prevent and address homelessness.

A key issue for *offenders* is the danger of losing accommodation on admission to prison. A number of protocols in place around the region focus on tackling this issue as well as on identifying appropriate accommodation on release. More work is needed to build on the experience of those parts of the region with such protocols in place.

*Mental health problems* are experienced by many *single homeless* people, and the incidence is particularly high among people who are sleeping rough. Prevention work is needed for people leaving psychiatric hospital, and to help landlords to identify ways of preventing homelessness amongst tenants with mental health problems.

<sup>9</sup> UK Coalition on Older Homelessness





The incidence of *domestic violence* is high in the region, and much investment has been put into efforts to both reduce the incidence and prevent homelessness as a result. Sanctuary schemes are commonly used across the region, helping women to protect themselves in their home rather than move to avoid injury or harassment. Where floating support and outreach work is allied to such schemes, more households may be helped to stay in their homes and to sustain tenancies for the long term.

*Black and minority ethnic, new and emerging communities, and gypsies and travellers* may face particular challenges in accessing appropriate services due to language and cultural differences. There is a greater reliance of community organisations for support.

### Supply

There is *no consistent understanding of the services or resources* available in the region to prevent and respond to homelessness. An initial review of available information identified:

- £3.5m and £4m grant is received from the government by local authorities in homelessness grant (between 2005 and 2008)
- £6m (gross) was spent on administration, welfare and prevention by local authorities in 2005/06
- £282m Supporting People grant was available for housing-related support services in 2007/08.

A recent survey by CLG<sup>10</sup> identified *variable provision of prevention services by local authorities in the North West*. For example, 55% of responding authorities combine homelessness prevention with assessment,

compared to a national average of 60%, and 82% in the North East. The use of protocols is low compared to other regions, and there is the lowest use of a frontline homelessness prevention fund in the North West.

*Early warning systems* that lead to early and effective intervention can prevent homelessness for many vulnerable people. Good practice guidance is now available and many social landlords already identify tenants who may be vulnerable from the outset, as recommended by the Housing Corporation and London Housing Federation<sup>11</sup>. There is, however, patchy use of such systems, and there needs to be greater awareness of the value of developing preventative approaches amongst all landlords.

*Little is known about the provision of advice* in the region; timely advice provision to landlords and tenants, and in relation to managing personal finances, is part of the solution to increasing sustainability of tenancies and the quality of accommodation.

*The capacity and approach taken, to deliver preventative and homelessness services* across the region varies. This applies both to local authorities and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The latter contributes considerably to advice and other homelessness service provision but relies on time and geographically limited funding to survive. The VCS is particularly important in supporting black and minority ethnic communities, where the first port of call tends not to be statutory service provision.

<sup>10</sup> Local authority survey of homelessness prevention (Policy Briefing 19), CLG June 2007

<sup>11</sup> Housing Corporation and London Housing Federation: Coming home: reducing the use of temporary housing and tackling homelessness, 2007





*Housing-related support* plays a large part in homelessness prevention, enabling access to a wide range of services and settled accommodation. It also contributes to a range of other agendas including crime and disorder, health and education and employment. Although we know the proportion of units available to households who are homeless (9% of 134,000 at December 2006), we do not know enough about the need for, and supply of support, in prevention.

*Changes to non-housing specific service provision* has the potential to impact on our ability to prevent homelessness. For example, changes in the legal aid system have resulted in fewer solicitors and legal practices taking on housing cases. Decisions taken by housing providers on their service provision to tenants may also unknowingly impact on owner-occupiers who have exercised their right to buy but continue to access advice services.

There are difficulties in the region in achieving *effective joint work* at a local level between bodies working with particular household groups, for example young vulnerable people, including work with young care leavers who have to move across local authority boundaries.

### **What's already happening in the region to address this?**

The 2007 survey by CLG identified many local authorities in the region *developing protocols for people* leaving hospital and for extending the work with housing providers to develop early warning systems to prevent evictions. Several local authorities also said they were planning to develop protocols for people leaving prison, to add to those developed fairly recently in the region (Cheshire, Cumbria, Merseyside, and parts of Lancashire).

Consultation feedback to the draft Homelessness Strategy identified support for region-wide protocols, including protocols for prison-leavers, hospital discharge, and working with housing associations. The Housing Corporation template for a protocol for closer working between local authorities and housing associations<sup>12</sup> is being implemented across the country, with Blackburn and Blackpool as the pilots for the region, and a plan to develop a protocol in Liverpool, and sub-regional agreement across Greater Manchester. Other Housing Corporation initiatives to tackle homelessness are also being implemented currently, and will be built into many work plans across the region<sup>13</sup>.

*To address issues of capacity*, sub-regional forums are seeking to share practice and develop consistent approaches. The work of the Regional Homelessness Champions<sup>14</sup> (Macclesfield and Vale Royal in 2007/08) will promote good practice sharing and develop capacity, whilst regional work to develop capacity in the local authority strategic housing function should also have a positive impact.

*The role of floating support* in preventing homelessness and enabling access to settled homes will form part of the work of the Regional Supported Housing Initiative. Established in 2007 and funded by local authorities, the Housing Corporation and Regional Assembly, the initiative is managed by a regional group and will include an assessment of need and supply of support and develop a strategy to address gaps for the region in 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Working together in the delivery and management of affordable homes

<sup>13</sup> See reports at: <http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.12838>

<sup>14</sup> Regional Homelessness Champions <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/publicationsabout/homelessness/information/local/regionalchampions/>



The government has recently announced a programme, to be run with the Department of Work and Pensions, of five pilot areas over the next three years to develop a new *approach to promote wide-ranging advice on housing options alongside employment and training advice*. Regionally, alongside physical improvements in temporary accommodation (see next chapter), local authorities and providers are supporting homeless people to gain confidence and skills to be able to move forward into work and a settled home; activity includes supporting people to get into work or training.

The government has recognised that homelessness is a particular issue for some household groups and has launched national initiatives to address these, for example the *national youth homelessness scheme*<sup>15</sup> that will support local authorities and their partners to meet the target of ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people. The government also funds the *National Homelessness Advice Service*<sup>16</sup>, a joint service between Shelter and the Citizen's Advice Bureau; NHAS is seeking to support local authorities in the region.

*There are many examples of positive and proactive work in the region in relation to specific household groups, but these are not widespread. They include:*

- Agreements between agencies to try to prevent homelessness for people leaving prison
- Action to address rough sleeping, for example the Chester Assessment and Resettlement Team (CART)
- Education initiatives in local schools, including peer support programmes, to inform young people about the reality of homelessness and housing options.

- The SUNRISE (Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services) pilot project in Manchester, supporting the integration of refugees into the community

There are a number of *regional and sector specific working groups* who would like to work together to prevent homelessness, for example the Youth Justice Board and the Private Sector Housing Network.

<sup>15</sup> National Youth Homelessness Scheme <http://www.communities.gov.uk/youthhomelessness/aboutus/>

<sup>16</sup> National Homelessness Advice Service <http://www.nhas.org.uk/>



## Priority two: increase access to a choice of settled homes

Our objectives	Our action
<p><b>1. Inform activity to increase the supply of social rented stock in the region</b></p>	<p>Through the Regional Homelessness Forum, we will regularly review and consider issues in relation to homelessness and take these into account in our decision-making</p>
<p><b>2. Increase the role of the private rented sector</b> in providing a choice of settled and affordable homes</p>	<p>Develop mechanisms to increase access to the private rented sector for settled, affordable housing</p>
<p><b>3. Increase access to social housing</b> for homeless and vulnerable households</p>	<p>Research current approaches, and support local authorities to develop allocation policies, choice- based lettings schemes and referral arrangements that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable increased access to affordable housing by homeless and vulnerable households, including move on from supported housing</li> <li>• Support mobility and choice by households</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Increase the rate of successful and sustainable move-on</b> from temporary accommodation (supported housing, hospital, etc)</p>	<p>Work with the Regional Supported Housing Initiative to develop and introduce move-on plans, and take action to address gaps in move-on accommodation</p>
<p><b>5. Increase the number of homeless and vulnerable people receiving basic skills training and/or entering into employment, education, and training,</b> addressing worklessness and increasing household income</p>	<p>Support and enable activity that links homelessness and housing services with opportunities for education, training and employment.</p>
<p><b>6. Support improvements in temporary accommodation to develop into ‘places of change’,</b> enabling households to move into – and sustain – settled housing</p>	<p>Support local authorities to develop temporary accommodation for all households that breaks the cycle of homelessness and can be called a ‘place of change’</p>
<p><b>7. Offer a range of supported housing options for households</b> who are vulnerable to homelessness and may not have their needs met by other statutory service provision</p>	<p>Support services and appropriate accommodation (supported and general needs) for vulnerable households groups including young people. This work will be in conjunction with the Regional Supported Housing initiative</p>





## The challenges

### Need

Lack of affordable housing has increasingly become an issue for the region, as house prices, even in previously low demand areas, have risen dramatically. This impacts on all households with a low income.

Low income limits choice and access to settled housing. There is considerable disparity in some parts of the region between income levels and household costs. This issue is not limited to the more affluent parts of the region, for example Cheshire; some areas of East Lancashire have an average household income of less than £15,000 but average house prices are £60,000.

It is clear that there is an issue of outstanding need, both in scale and types of provision to meet particular needs, across the region for temporary accommodation and supported housing for homeless households.

A key issue identified in consultation responses is movement between local authority areas in order to find temporary and supported accommodation. This particularly affects regional centres with high volumes of provision, such as Liverpool, Manchester, Warrington, and Chester. Reasons for this can be numerous but are not widely understood.

There is a mismatch between need and supply of move-on accommodation, in terms of both second stage supported housing, and access to settled housing. A survey of local authorities undertaken in 2007 as part of the process of developing this strategy identified that this was a particular issue for single people and larger families.

*There are particular challenges for some households that activity to increase access to a choice of settled homes could address:*

*Young people, including young offenders, face a number of difficulties securing ordinary housing. Social landlords can be cautious about taking on very young people as tenants; in their first tenancies, some are likely to be pretty vulnerable and in need of support, particularly since losing the tenancy could greatly affect their chances of getting housing in the future. Increasing the use of local lettings policies to designate social housing stock for adults over a particular age is in some areas significantly reducing available stock for under-25s, adding to an already limited range of options because of the Housing Benefit rules for this age group.*

*Single people face difficulty in accessing affordable settled housing, with many local authorities reporting that there is a lack of move on accommodation from supported and temporary housing. Movement between temporary accommodation is also a common feature of single homelessness in the region.*

*Offenders and substance misusers can find it particularly difficult to access social housing where they have histories of rent arrears and anti-social behaviour; in some cases, policies and practices may act to keep people out of social housing even where they are trying to change their behaviour or make efforts to repay old debts.*

Regional research has identified unmet need for sites from *Gypsies and Travellers*; local authorities are required to make adequate provision of pitches to meet the needs of gypsies and travelers within their areas.



*Black and minority ethnic* households are more than six times as likely to live in overcrowded accommodation. Housing in poor conditions and disrepair and exploitation by private sector landlords were also identified as problems faced by BME communities in Shelter<sup>17</sup> research. There also face particular challenges in accessing settled housing; there is a lack of larger family accommodation, choice of housing may centre on access to cultural and religious amenities and there may be some consideration to the welcome extended by existing communities.

Many *A2 and A8 nationals and migrant workers* live in tied accommodation provided with their work, but this is often of poor quality, overcrowded, insecure (tenancy) and expensive. Recent research<sup>18</sup> has identified that the private sector is the main tenure; households are more vulnerable to homelessness from this sector.

**Supply**

There is **no consistent understanding of temporary or supported accommodation** available in the region to respond to homelessness or support households to access settled housing and independent living. An initial review of available information identified:

- £23m (gross) was spent on hostel, bed and breakfast and leasehold accommodation by local authorities in 2005/06
- £5.2m hostel capital improvement programme was invested in 2005/06
- £282m Supporting People grant was available for housing-related support services in 2007/08.

In terms of **access to settled housing**, an initial resource review identified

- £1.5bn Housing Benefit payments in 2004/05
- £1.8m Discretionary Housing Payments made by local authorities in 2005/06 (86% of what was available)
- £32.5m capital investment in supported housing by the Housing Corporation between 2006 and 2008.

**Temporary and supported accommodation issues**

The North West makes extensive use of hostels to provide temporary accommodation for the homeless, more than four times the national average. Considerably less use is made of private sector leasing compared to elsewhere in England.

**WHERE DO THE HOMELESS GO? (as at 30/9/2006)**

Temporary accommodation	North West	England
B&B	10%	5%
Hostels	42%	9%
LA/HA stock	31%	21%
Private leasing	3%	54%
Other	14%	11%
Total	100%	100%

<sup>17</sup> Shelter January 2007 'The Advice Gap: A study of barriers to housing advice for people from black and minority ethnic communities'  
<sup>18</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2007, studies on cohesion and migrant workers





### P1E Returns

The government requires local authorities to reduce the dependence on temporary accommodation (TA) for households in priority need, with a target of halving the use of TA by 2010. Many authorities are already well on the way to achieving that target (indeed some have already reached it) but for some, the target will prove to be a significant challenge unless there is further progress made in preventing homelessness amongst the priority groups.

Maintaining the earlier target of ending bed and breakfast for families with children is proving to be a challenge in some parts of the region. The further target of ending bed and breakfast use for under-18s by 2010 will also require persistent work in some areas.

*There are particular gaps in the supply of temporary/supported housing options for some households:*

- Provision for young homeless people, particularly for those with complex needs or challenging behaviour, including supported lodgings and emergency and longer term supported accommodation, and including those who are considered to be in priority need such as under-18s
- Provision for younger parents, particularly where the father wishes to remain with the family
- Specialist provision for people with substance misuse problems, for people needing to stabilise before accessing treatment, and those trying to maintain abstinence or to reduce the harm from drug/alcohol use
- Longer-term supported housing for groups such as older homeless people who cannot yet make the move into

independence

- Specialist supported housing for groups of people with particular mental health problems, for whom a small resource might be developed between several local authorities working together
- Provision for families that allows separate sleeping arrangements for teenage children, and particularly male children
- Quality of provision for families, and provision of support to ease the path into settled housing and to prevent repeat homelessness.

### Settled accommodation issues

#### *Access to affordable social housing*

Access to affordable social housing in the region is increasingly difficult for all households as stock and lettings decrease.



### HSSA/CORE returns

Within this picture, there has been a proportionate increase in the number of lettings made to homeless households by both local authorities and housing associations, from 14.9% of lets in 2003/04 to 22.6% in 2005/06<sup>19</sup>. Performance in local authority areas varies and relates to stock ownership and recording in addition to relationships between the local authority and providers.

<sup>19</sup> HSSA/CORE return data





The use of nominations agreements is standard practice to ensure access to social housing for households, although the robustness of these and their subsequent monitoring and management varies.

The use of local connection criteria by authorities impacts on access to accommodation, particularly for people who need to move to break connections with people who supplied them with drugs or who supported a criminal way of life.

Exclusions are known to exist in the housing registration process, the allocation and nominations process and in routes to accessing supported housing.

#### *Access to affordable and sustainable private sector housing*

There are areas in the North West where there are concentrations of privately rented stock, especially in some of the older urban areas, and where homelessness is at its highest. Transience has an impact on the sustainability of the neighbourhood; high quality, secure and sustainable tenancies are needed.

Most of the privately rented sector in the North West is owned by small landlords. Nearly 73% of the stock is run as a sideline by people with other jobs. It is difficult to engage with these landlords, needing capacity that some smaller local authorities can not afford.

There are two particular issues for private landlords in accommodating homeless or more vulnerable households: -

1. Vulnerable households are often in receipt of housing benefit, with payment subject to the performance of the local authority; performance in the prompt and accurate payment of housing benefit in the region is variable but is improving.

2. There is a perception that more vulnerable households are unable to maintain the property to the required standard, with reports of tenants causing considerable and costly damage. Tenant referencing and support initiatives in the region have proven successful in addressing this misperception, but these are often developed using time- and geographically-limited funding.

The majority of local authorities in the region have developed a rent deposit/ bond guarantee scheme for homeless households, but these do not all enable access by non-priority household groups.

Current legislation available to improve house conditions and quality of management of the private sector falls short of enabling a consistent approach in the region. For example selective licensing will address issues of poor management practice and anti-social behaviour, making neighbourhoods and the tenure more attractive, but the selective nature is in danger of reducing accessibility of the sector to more vulnerable household groups.

There is other activity to address issues in the private sector that has the potential to affect homelessness, for example:

- The sanction of Housing Benefit in relation to anti-social behaviour (there are four pilots in the region). Outcomes from these must be monitored for the potential impact on homelessness.
- The Local Housing Allowance; although intended to enable households to access a greater choice of housing, may prove challenging for households who lack skills in managing their personal finances and/or have other priorities, for example a low income household with a number of children



## Activity in the region now

### **Temporary and supported accommodation**

The Hostels Capital Improvement Programme is delivering improvements in temporary accommodation, and particularly to deliver the government's Places for Change agenda. This has stimulated action across the country to refurbish and replace hostels which were not fit for purpose, many of them for single homeless households. The North West region is benefiting from capital investment of around £8.3m.

Homeless Link, with support from CLG, has developed the Move-on Plans Protocol (MOPP)<sup>20</sup> toolkit. It aims to strengthen partnerships between agencies (voluntary, statutory and private sector), assess the need for move-on from temporary and supported accommodation, and develop plans to address gaps. Regional work to address move-on issues is being developed in conjunction with the Regional Supported Housing Initiative.

The role of floating support in preventing homelessness and enabling access to settled homes will form part of the work of the Regional Supported Housing Initiative. Established in 2007 and funded by local authorities, the Housing Corporation and Regional Assembly, the initiative is managed by a regional group and will include an assessment of need and supply of support and develop a strategy to address gaps for the region in 2008.

Private sector agencies have been exploring with local authorities the opportunities for further use of the private rented sector for temporary accommodation in the North.

There are many examples of positive and proactive work in the region in relation to specific household groups but this is not widespread. It includes:

- Accommodating families and young people such as young offenders in the private sector, using information on local services, eg, schools, and the lack of availability of suitable sized accommodation to inform the choice to accept a qualifying offer
- Tenant referencing combined with support to encourage landlords to offer tenancies that are longer than six months.

## Settled housing

### **Access and choice**

A number of recent policy statements from the government recognise the need to increase income levels and tackle worklessness, including the recent announcement of five national pilots to link housing options to services that will support households into training and employment. There is considerable work in the region that can be developed further to support this agenda, ranging from services in hostel accommodation to initiatives managed by housing associations and the voluntary and community sector.

There is a national target for all areas to have a choice-based lettings scheme by 2010. Shelter<sup>21</sup> and other organisations representing homeless and vulnerable households have worked to draw attention to how schemes need to consider the needs of these households, both in policy and practice (see exclusions above).

<sup>21</sup> A question of choice: good practice and issues in choice-based letting, Shelter 2006





A number of local authorities and housing associations in the North West have implemented individual choice-based lettings, with some now well established. The government is supporting the development of sub-regional schemes both to enable mobility and to achieve efficiencies in delivery, and there are two pilots – Greater Manchester and Cheshire – in development, with Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside in the early stages of considering schemes.

The government is revising the local connection rules so that people leaving the forces can move more easily into settled housing in the area where they have lived throughout their service, and where they have built up networks and connections.

A survey of local authorities in the region undertaken as part of this strategy indicated that 43% (out of 28) had plans to tackle exclusions from social housing. A number of local authorities in the region are working to develop plans in relation to particular household groups, for example young people.

### **Social housing**

The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy seeks to increase access to social housing, alongside prevention activity by housing associations. It encourages housing associations to work more closely with local authorities to tackle homelessness. This initiative is supported in the region by the National Housing Federation and work will take place over the next year to encourage housing associations further, building on the research findings, protocols, and toolkits published at the end of 2007, through joint work to develop better systems for sharing information, negotiate new targets for rehousing homeless applicants, and work together on prevention activities.

The government has introduced new targets and provided resources to increase the supply of housing and particularly affordable housing. The Regional Housing Board and support groups will be reviewing the Regional Housing Strategy in 2008; this will incorporate plans to increase housing supply. It will be important for new supply to respond to identified housing need.

The government has launched a national Overcrowding Action Plan to tackle overcrowding in the social and private rented sectors. The plan identifies Liverpool and Manchester as two areas outside of London where there is severe overcrowding; funding is being made available to pilot housing options and advice services targeting overcrowded households. There is an emphasis on making better use of housing through transfers and under-occupation schemes.





**Private sector housing**

The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Action Team will be working with housing associations to support them to work with the private sector to increase the supply of affordable housing. They have commissioned work to look at how associations and private landlords work together, and at the barriers to closer working; findings from the report and 'toolkit' to help associations and private landlords work together will be disseminated and developed in the region.

There are regional landlord forums that represent a good number of landlords (although still a small proportion). There is also a regional Private Sector Housing Group, bringing together officers from local authorities.

A national independent review of the private rented sector was announced in December 2007, the findings of which will be used to seek improvements in the sector.

**Gypsy and traveller site provision**

The Government has announced funding to address unmet need for sites. The Housing and Regeneration Bill also proposes changes that will require local authorities to revise their approach to planning and managing provision for Gypsies and Travellers.



**Priority three:** develop plans and activity based on a robust understanding of homelessness and housing need

Our objectives	Our action
<p><b>1. Increase regional understanding of the</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Causes of homelessness</li> <li>• Housing needs of homeless and vulnerable households</li> <li>• Impact of the housing market, eg, repossessions, and housing market interventions, eg, tackling overcrowding</li> <li>• Nature of rough sleeping in the region</li> </ul>	<p>Regional and sub-regional information research, collection and analysis – this will include identifying regional variation and supporting local authorities to develop consistent and good practice approaches e.g. to the use of ‘homeless at home’</p> <p>Research single homelessness, and homelessness amongst black and minority households, new and emerging communities, and offenders</p>
<p><b>2. Develop an understanding of the supply of temporary and supported housing</b></p>	<p>Research to understand the need for supported housing by vulnerable households. This work will be conjunction with the Regional Supported Housing Initiative</p>
<p><b>3. Develop a region-wide minimum standard for collecting data about the needs of non-priority and priority homeless applicants</b></p>	<p>Introduce a consistent approach to recording and monitoring non-statutory homelessness</p>
<p><b>4. Develop an understanding of resources currently used to prevent homelessness and increase access to housing and take action to maximise investment</b></p>	<p>Support the development of more effective relationships with, and capacity in, the voluntary and community sector</p> <p>Hold and support training and capacity events for all involved in tackling homelessness in the region</p> <p>Develop mechanisms to measure the cost of homelessness and resources available to tackle it – with a view to securing better outcomes for households and value for money</p>
<p><b>5. Develop a regional standard for engaging service users</b></p>	<p>Increase service user and community involvement in service provision and feedback; this will primarily be through activity by our regional service user involvement champion, Bolton MBC</p>



### The challenges

Our knowledge of homelessness, housing need and vulnerability to homelessness is limited. Information on statutory homelessness is recorded by local authorities, while information on other households is recorded in a number of formats by different organisations in different areas – it is inconsistent and incomplete.

One source of information is that recorded by housing-related support providers (in receipt of Supporting People funding) on new service users. Although there are caveats attached to the use of this information<sup>22</sup> it is also known that not all providers regularly provide returns and that those that are returned late do not necessarily get included i.e. the figures presented here could be higher. Finally, the records record only new users; therefore the actual figure supported by providers in a year is higher – this depends on move-on more than on actual demand for the service.

Activity to address issues in the housing market has the potential to impact on homelessness, for example plans to address private sector housing issues e.g. licensing houses in multiple occupation could reduce access to accommodation for single and vulnerable households.

There is evidence of need, but no specific research has been undertaken to support this or understand the reasons why, for a number of household groups, including:

- Single people and couples, particularly those with problems relating to substance misuse, offending, mental health problems, etc
- Black and minority ethnic, new and emerging communities – although

some work has been undertaken at a local level, this varies in quality and there is limited evidence that it is used to inform housing or housing service development

- Households with complex or multiple needs, including families at risk of homelessness from anti-social behaviour.

As described in previous chapters, little is known about the cost of homelessness in the region and the supply of services available to tackle it. Without this information we are unable to assess if there is value for money and whether there are more effective ways to tackle the problem.

### Activity in the region now

There are several multi-agency monitoring (MAM) initiatives in the region, with varying levels of commitment and resources. Shelter's initiative in Cheshire (including Halton and Warrington) looks beyond statutory homeless households in priority need, and affords a separate analysis of those with accommodation difficulties. A similar scheme was in operation in parts of Merseyside but funding has not been continued in most of this sub-region.

In most other parts of the North West region, the lack of detailed data on the needs of non-priority homeless households means that homelessness reviews are reliant on the somewhat inadequate data about housing need from other sources such as the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System, Probation Offender Assessment System, and Supporting People. As a result, homelessness strategies must be built on what is only partial information on the causes and scale of homelessness amongst non-priority groups.

<sup>22</sup> Information should take into consideration the supply of support in the region (this is discussed in chapter 5) compared to England, and that support providers have the ability to record a service user under a number of headings (for example a service user may be homeless, have an alcohol and mental health need – the service provider will decide how to record the need)





Many local authorities have undertaken housing needs surveys of black and minority ethnic communities, but with varying levels of detail and analysis.

The *Regional Supported Housing Initiative* has commissioned research into the need for and supply of support services – this research includes a number of household groups who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness or in greatest housing need. Local authorities are in the process of undertaking *strategic housing market assessments* to inform future housing plans; these assessments will not necessarily identify the need for housing from households vulnerable to homelessness, for example young people and single people – these are ‘hidden’ households. The introduction of the new National Indicator Set, as part of reform to local government, will reduce the amount of performance information reported to central government. This includes a reduction in the number of indicators in relation to homelessness. It will be important that local authorities maintain a certain level of performance information in order to inform decisions and compare with others – CLG is supporting this. It is likely the returns to government – the P1E return – will be modified to incorporate information that is relevant to the current homelessness agenda e.g. youth homelessness.

Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council has been nominated by CLG as a national champion for service user involvement; their programme of work involves developing toolkits, increasing capacity and sharing best practice between organisations working with vulnerable households.



## How we will manage the delivery of this strategy

This strategy is owned by the Regional Housing Board, and managed and monitored on its behalf by the Regional Housing Group and Regional Homelessness Forum.

**The Regional Housing Board** and Group have responsibility for the Regional Housing Strategy; they will receive information from the Forum on homelessness and strategy performance and consider this in strategy development and investment decisions. They will also raise the profile of homelessness in the region and nationally, particularly to secure resources and address other barriers to tackling it.

**A Regional Homelessness Forum** has been established. The Forum is attended by representatives of local authorities, Government Office North West, the Regional Assembly, the Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation, the National Offender Management Service and the Youth Justice Board. Other organisations such as Homeless Link, The Big Life Company and Shelter also attend.

### **The role of the Forum is to:**

- Develop the delivery plan to accompany this document, identify resources and develop relationships, oversee action taken to implement the strategy and monitor its performance (targets to be developed).
- Inform the Regional Housing Board and provide a perspective on the impact of national and regional policy on homelessness, for example plans to address overcrowding.
- Support local authorities in their work to tackle homelessness, to share best practice and enable joint working. It will also support authorities to identify local

performance issues through regional benchmarking and to address significant challenges, for example flooding.

- Lead on work where it is more appropriate to take action at a regional level, and to influence regional and national partners and policy.
- Work with the five sub-regional homelessness forums operating in the region to make sure regional activity recognises the diverse nature of the North West and to develop capacity to respond to this.

Forum members have a role to play in leading and contributing to the delivery of actions in the strategy, and making the links between tackling homelessness and other agendas. The Forum will be supported by a regional homelessness coordinator.

Local authorities and their strategic partners also have a role to play in delivering this strategy.

### **The role of local authorities will be to:**

- Provide information on levels of homelessness and performance via existing recording mechanisms, including through the Regional Housing Board monitoring
- Bring issues that have the potential to impact on homelessness in the region to the attention of the sub-region and therefore the Regional Homelessness Forum
- Develop their approach to involving the community and service users in the shape of local services that prevent and address homelessness, and support this with indicators of customer and community satisfaction.



**The role of local strategic partnerships will be to:**

- Recognise that tackling homelessness contributes to many other agendas including those for children and young people, health and social care, training, employment and the economy, and community safety. This should be reflected in the sustainable community strategy
- Include relevant targets in the Local Area Agreement where there is evidence of the need for services to enable vulnerable people to live independently as a local priority
- Manage the sustainable community strategy and local area agreement so that the impact of decisions on the provision of services to the most vulnerable and socially excluded households is managed; this is particularly important given the inclusion of Supporting People in the local area agreement grant in 2009, and potential for the Homelessness Grant to be included in the grant in the future.





### Target setting

This strategy does not seek to impose additional regional targets that will add to the burden of local performance management – particularly when this is being addressed at a national level through the recently introduced national performance framework.

All proposed targets will be based on information that is already recorded by local authorities and housing associations. Although some of this is no longer required by government, Communities and Local

Government (CLG) is encouraging local authorities to continue recording information as local performance indicators – this will enable benchmarking.

It may be felt appropriate over time for new regional targets or measures of performance to be introduced, for example as part of the new Regional Housing Strategy or in response to emerging national work, for example initiatives to tackle worklessness and the role this can play in increasing access to housing. There will be consultation on this.

National targets	Baseline 2007	Target
Reduce the level of households in temporary accommodation by 50% (from December 2004 levels – 2,760 households) by 2010	2,373	1,371
Not accommodating 16-and-17-year-old homeless young people in bed and breakfast by 2010 (measurable by local authorities from September 2007)	N/A	To be established
Ensure rough sleeping remains below two-thirds of 1998 levels (181)	36	To be established
Ensure that homeless families with children are not placed in bed and breakfast accommodation unless it is an emergency	To be established	To be established

Regional targets	Baseline	Target
Actual targets to be finalised in consultation with the sub-regional forums and other partners e.g. the Housing Corporation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families and friends not accommodating</li> <li>Violence</li> <li>Loss of private rented or tied accommodation</li> </ul>	1264 Jan – Mar 05 815 Jan – Mar 06 787 Jan – Mar 07 610 Jan – Mar 05 649 Jan – Mar 06 905 Jan – Mar 07 774 Jan – Mar 05 424 Jan – Mar 07 404 Jan – Mar 07	To be established in 2008 by the Regional Homelessness Forum in agreement with the sub-regions and partners.
Reduce the number of evictions/tenancy failure from social housing	To be established	
Increase general needs housing association lets to homeless households to at least the same proportion of total lettings as local authority lettings to these households in the region	To be established	
Reduce repeat homelessness	36	
Increase in the number of households who considered themselves homeless, who approached the local authority's housing service for advice, and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation	To be established	



## Glossary

Title or abbreviation	What it means
A2 and A8 nationals	2A8 countries became part of the European Union (EU) in May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator – measures of performance
CLG	Communities and Local Government - Government department responsible for homelessness policy and funding
Floating support	Support provided to an individual in their own home, rather than support received only if the person lives in a particular place
Homeless At Home	Homeless households allowed to stay temporarily with the people asking them to leave, rather than going into temporary accommodation
Hostels Capital Improvement Programme	A national pot of money for improving homeless hostels, and transforming them into places where people can change their lives. In Round One, a pot of £90m was given out. Round Two has a pot of £70m, and is now called the Places of Change Programme.
LAAs & MAAs	Local Area Agreements and Multi Area Agreements – LAAs are decided by Local Strategic Partnerships in each area, and set out local priorities. MAAs are agreements between several LSPs, covering more than one local area. A new set of LAAs will be agreed by all local authority areas by June 2008.
Leasehold accommodation (PSL)	Private sector leasing: accommodation owned by a private landlord rented to a local authority for homeless people.
Local Housing Allowance	Housing Benefit system for private tenants starting in April 2008. Benefits are based on the rent levels for the area in which a person lives and how many people live with them.
Move-On Plans Protocol	A toolkit for assessing what move-on accommodation is needed for homeless people wanting to move on from temporary supported housing into their own independent accommodation, and any blockages, and good practice guidance, developed by the national homelessness charity, Homeless Link
P1E	Homelessness statistical reports sent by each local authority to the CLG every 3 months
SP	Supporting People programme – funding and quality assurance for accommodation and floating support to enable independent living
TA	Temporary accommodation: short term accommodation for homeless people.
VCS	Voluntary and community sector agencies - organisations with voluntary committees and paid workers, or run by local residents.



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