

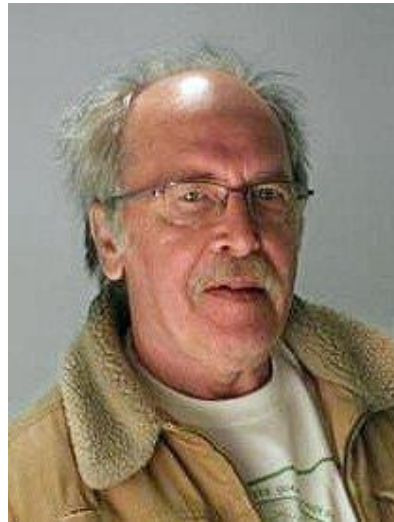


**West Dorset District Council and
Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention
Strategy 2014-19**

Foreword



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We are very pleased to introduce this new joint Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy. We have developed this in conjunction with our new Housing Strategy and it is designed to deliver an effective approach to prevent and where necessary, deal with homelessness.

These are difficult times for local authorities, but we have fully recognised our commitment to address local housing needs in the most proactive manner. We have looked for innovative solutions and developed effective partnerships. We believe that this is the right approach for our two areas.

We commend it to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T.P. Farmer".

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray Novak".

Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-19

Executive Summary

Despite 40 years of legislation directed at addressing and managing the impact of homelessness, it remains a key challenge in most local authority areas. There is often a stereotype of the 'sort' of people that become homeless, but in reality it can affect virtually anyone in our communities. Social evils such as domestic violence, relationship breakdown and unemployment can change stable situations into cases of potential homelessness virtually overnight. In many cases, individuals do cope and find suitable accommodation using their own resources or those of close family networks. Others unfortunately lack the resources or support to tackle their immediate challenges - for example, enough money for a deposit or because they suffer more underlying problems such as an addiction or mental health problem, which makes it harder for them to deal with their situation.

There are few people who would voluntarily seek to go through the trauma of homelessness. It can involve being uprooted from localities of choice, social networks, employment and schools and potentially spending extended periods of time in temporary housing. Some people do precipitate homelessness themselves, either by doing or failing to do something that may have alleviated the circumstances threatening their home. Through our approach to developing and delivering homelessness services, we will seek to mitigate trauma where we are able, providing support and advice to ensure the most appropriate outcomes. In only a few unfortunate instances will we deem intentionally homeless those who are considered to have engineered their situation.

Most importantly, the two key themes that underpin our strategy are those of partnership and prevention. The former mirrors the approach adopted in our recently adopted Housing Strategy 2014 - 2019, which recognises that we can only deliver services effectively in working with and through partners, agencies and external sources. We also recognise that the prevention of homelessness is a better outcome all round. It is cheaper, more sustainable and offers a better experience for those threatened with losing their homes.

Unfortunately, homelessness is an enduring problem within both WDDC and WPBC despite the recognition of housing as a high priority by officers and elected members. This is largely explained by the physical constraints of the localities we cover and also the socio-economic characteristics of our communities.

Key local factors include:

- 25% of households across the two Council areas cannot afford housing at current market prices/rents without the need for some form of subsidy. Households in Weymouth and Portland were least likely to be able to afford housing, as were certain household groups such as lone parents and single non-pensioner households (SHMA Update 2011)
- Housing prices in WDDC are relatively high. From a 2013 survey of estate and lettings agents across the area, the entry level cost of purchasing a home ranged from £89,000 for a 1-bedroom flat to £271,000 for a 4-bedroom house. This compares to £85,000 and £227,000 in WPBC. This makes access to housing difficult for a significant minority.
- Entry-level rents in the private sector range from £450 per month in Weymouth to £525 in Sherborne, while three-bed properties range from £625 in Portland to £725 in Dorchester.
- In WDDC, 64% of the workforce have attained an educational standard of NVQ level 3 and above, while in WPBC this dropped to 49%, with a national average of 55%. Lower level educational attainment can limit employment opportunities to all but low paid and seasonal work.
- In WPBC the average gross weekly pay is £449.10 compared to a regional average of £476.50 and a national average of £508. Over 6,000 people were claiming out-of-work benefits at November 2012,

over half of which were Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and incapacity benefits. Over 6,000 households in each authority are also in receipt of Housing Benefit.

- The benefit cap, set at £26,000 p.a., has affected 18 households in WDDC and 38 in WPBC, with an average weekly benefit reduction of £50, and a maximum loss in Weymouth of £195 per week. Some applicants have been removed from Housing Benefit altogether.
- The bedroom subsidy reductions have been applied to almost 900 households across the two Council areas evenly spread across both WDDC and WPBC. Of these, 84 households in WDDC and 61 in WPBC have experienced a 25% reduction in their benefits. This has led to increasing arrears which may threaten homelessness.
- We have received an increase in the level of funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) from £53,978 in 2012/13 to £119,046 in 2013/4 in WDDC and £82,043 in 2012/3 to £150,321 2013/14 which have enabled additional temporary payments to be made where circumstances warrant it. Although this may mitigate some of the Housing Benefit reductions, DHP is only a short-term expedient.
- Domestic violence and abuse continues to be a significant reason for homelessness in all six Dorset Borough and District Councils. Homelessness acceptances over the last 4 years (2008-12) resulting from domestic violence and abuse numbered 15 in West Dorset and 5 in Weymouth and Portland. We work with victims of domestic violence and abuse through our support for, and partnerships with, the integrated domestic violence and abuse service, run by the You Trust, the refuges, and the Hamlet (a refuge move-on accommodation project).
- A countywide Domestic Violence Housing Delivery Plan, co-ordinated by DCC but with input from our authorities and a wide range of other stakeholders, was finalised in 2013. This is based on partners taking a co-ordinated approach, and includes: MARAC, refuges, move-on, outreach and floating support, sanctuary schemes, rent deposits, housing advice, and other support (e.g. from financial support to target hardening, including Victim Support, the CAB and the Safe Partnership). The SP contracts for the provision of refuge and floating support /outreach services are being brought together as one service, and this new contracted service starts in April 2014.
- Dorset County Council (DCC) has a Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Service that works with both authorities to provide permanent and transit sites. A site already exists in West Dorset, and Dorset councils' planning departments are working together to produce a Site Allocations Joint Development Plan Document to enhance provision of authorised sites.
- Our two councils have commissioned a Rough Sleeper Assertive Outreach service to work with people who are street homeless or rough sleeping, many of whom do not engage with other services or are excluded from them. This relationship currently ensures that the number of rough sleepers in both Council areas does not normally exceed 3 or 4 at any given time.
- One area which has failed to operate effectively is in relation to young people aged 16/17 who present themselves as homeless or having a housing need. The protocol between the County, Borough and District authorities in Dorset to reinforce a commitment that young people should not be passed between services, has not been applied effectively locally, and a review of this protocol is underway to ensure more effective working

Our aim through this Homelessness Strategy is to create and maintain the position where we keep to a minimum the number of households having to pursue homelessness applications, limit the use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation to essential situations and pursue pathways and outcomes that reflect the circumstances, needs and capacity of those requiring our help.

Chapter 1: Strategic Context

National context

Nationally, following a reduction in numbers in recent years, homelessness acceptances are increasing. In 2011/12 there were 50,290 acceptances and in 2012/13 there were 53,540. This increase is also reflected in the use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation.

Since the last Homelessness Strategy in 2008 there has been a change in both central government and the economic climate. Homelessness prevention remains a national priority. However, the economic climate remains challenging. Local government has been hit hard by the reductions in public sector funding, which are likely to continue for a number of years.

New legislation, in the form of the Localism Act 2011 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012, has been introduced recently, which will have implications for homelessness.

In terms of homelessness, the most significant change introduced by the Localism Act is the way in which local authorities can use the private sector to house households assessed as statutorily homeless. Local authorities are now able to discharge their duty by securing a good quality, well managed, affordable private rented home, provided the tenancy offered is available for a minimum of twelve months. Previously, local authorities could only discharge the homelessness duty in the private rented sector with the household's agreement.

Welfare reform is a major plank of the government's agenda. The government's aim is to reduce welfare spending, particularly the ever-increasing cost of Housing Benefit. The resultant changes are likely to impact on homelessness, both in terms of the resources available to tackle homelessness and the demands placed on the services provided by local authorities and other organisations involved in homelessness.

Some welfare reforms have already been introduced, and others, such as the roll out of Universal Credit, which replaces many existing benefits, begins to be phased in from October 2013, through to 2017. Under Universal Credit payment of benefits to claimants will be made monthly in arrears, with any support for housing costs included. Some claimants used to managing money on a weekly basis and having their Housing Benefit paid direct to their landlord may find monthly budgeting more difficult and be at greater risk of homelessness.

The government's continuing commitment to homelessness prevention is outlined in "Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness", published in August 2012, which emphasises the need for joint working by local authorities and local agencies, and sets housing authorities ten local challenges to prevent homelessness, which constitute the "Gold Standard".

Dorset context

In line with the national picture, homelessness in Dorset is increasing. In West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland we have focussed heavily on homelessness prevention, and encouraging people to increasingly seek contact with us and our partner agencies at an early stage when a Housing Options interview, or Housing Advice can mean necessary actions are taken to avert even the risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity. This has enabled us to stabilise our number s of homelessness presentations and prevention activity at an albeit significant level, but without yet seeing this yet translate into significantly higher levels of homelessness.

Locally, the funding picture has changed. In April 2013, the Social Fund, a national scheme of crisis loans and community care grants administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), ended. In keeping with localism, the funding has been devolved to councils, with funding for 2013/4 roughly equal to the current annual cost of the loans and grants in each local area. In Dorset, the County Council is now responsible for the scheme, with £500,000 being available annually. There are no rules on how the money is spent and

funding is not guaranteed beyond April 2015. Access to the funding through this scheme is more restrictive than that previously available through the DWP scheme.

DCC also receives government funding through the non-ring fenced Supporting People (SP) pot for housing-related support services. These services play a key role in preventing homelessness and enabling homeless people to access and retain accommodation. In February 2011, as part of the Meeting Future Challenges programme, the DCC Cabinet agreed a £1.9 million savings requirement for the Supporting People budget over the period 2011 – 2014. Savings of £510,000 need to be found in 2013/4. In the short term, the challenge for commissioners is to achieve the savings required while mitigating any potentially adverse impacts. The longer term challenge is to develop new approaches to housing and support commissioning.

DCC also has the primary responsibility for accommodating young homeless people aged 16/17 and supporting young people leaving care. In response to a landmark judgement (*R(G) v LB Southwark 2009*) all local authorities were encouraged to develop a protocol to address the housing needs of 16/17 year olds. The local authorities and DCC developed a protocol in 2010, which is continuously reviewed to ensure young people access the services they need.

Funding changes have also occurred at a local authority level. The government has given one-off funding totalling £20 million to groups of local authorities for work to prevent homelessness amongst single people. The Dorset authorities together with the unitary authorities of Bournemouth and Poole, were allocated £299,000. The aim is to ensure that all single homeless people approaching an authority for assistance receive consistent, tailored advice and assistance to address or resolve their homelessness or rough sleeping.

To help households affected by the benefit cap and other benefit changes such as spare bedroom subsidy, the government has increased the funding given to local authorities for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). DHP can be claimed if a household needs extra help in addition to their Housing Benefit. The amount of money available nationally in 2013/4 is £165 million, and in 2014/15 is £135 million. In 2013/14, the Dorset authorities received £584,800. However, DHP is not a long term solution to situations where the claimant has to contribute to their rent and the funding is insufficient to help all who are affected.

The Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) funding which the Department of Communities and Local Government provide to local authorities is not guaranteed after 2015/6. The total amount available to the Dorset authorities is £482,800. Our HPG programme is detailed in chapter 2.

Weymouth & Portland and West Dorset

Following the bringing together of the teams in 2012 to provide joint services for both Councils, we have looked at the characteristics of homelessness across our two authorities (see chapter 2). Despite its smaller population, there is greater volume of homelessness activity for our team in the Weymouth & Portland area. This reflects its urban nature, with a higher proportion and turnover of private sector tenancies.

Our local approach

As outlined above, there are a number of national and Dorset-wide impacts and initiatives. The Dorset authorities have agreed to work together to address these, and produce a countywide Homelessness Strategy, following the success of the previous 2008-2013 Dorset Homelessness Strategy. A new Dorset Homelessness Strategy is being developed in tandem with this WPBC/WDDC Strategy.

Because of the very local impact of homelessness and the differences that exist between the Dorset districts, we have developed a WPBC/WDDC-specific strategy to complement the Dorset Homelessness Strategy. Particular issues we will be looking to address locally include:

- Reviewing the type, use and provision of temporary accommodation
- Developing and improving services to young people
- Developing and improving local partnership working

- Developing our engagement with the private rented sector to increase good quality affordable housing options

It is anticipated that the *Dorset Homelessness Strategy* and the *Joint Weymouth & Portland and West Dorset Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-19* will deliver a range of complementary solutions to this important area of our work.

Chapter 2: Homelessness Review

In developing this strategy, we have started from a position of reviewing existing levels of provision and activity. This has been conducted alongside a wider exercise of reviewing and updating our Housing Strategy. Homelessness prevention was identified as one of five key themes of this overarching strategy and was the subject of a series of meetings and consultation processes with key partners and service users. Full details of the theme group meetings are contained in Appendix 1.

In addition, the review process has included:

- Consultation with key local agencies to update the current action plan and, where actions are still to be progressed, to determine whether or not they are still relevant
- Reviewing changes in the policy context at the national, regional and local level and identifying how they will impact upon service delivery to homeless and potentially homeless households
- Consultation with key stakeholders about key issues and priorities for the future
- Carrying out an updated needs analysis and summary of the services available to homeless people/vulnerable groups
- Identifying gaps in current service provision and making recommendations for the new strategy and action plan

1.1 Where we are now?

The focus on homelessness prevention in our previous strategies has meant that the number of homeless households accepted as homeless and living in temporary accommodation has reduced and been held at much lower levels than historically. This is despite the economic challenges faced by families, and the volatility in the housing market.

West Dorset DC	Weymouth & Portland BC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness 2012/13 (11/12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness 2012/13 (2011/12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations – 95 (108) • Acceptances – 40 (54) • Prevented – 184 (252) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations – 61 (73) • Acceptances – 29 (38) • Prevented – 298 (314)

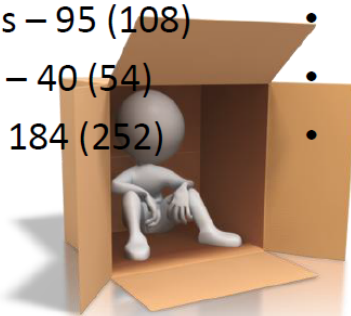


Table 1: Homelessness Statistics for WDDC and WPBC 2011-2013

The nature of homelessness is similar across both authorities, but there are some notable differences. The principal cause of homelessness in WDDC is parental exclusion, while in WPBC it is the ending of assured shorthold tenancies (AST). This reflects the higher level of private rented housing in Weymouth. In WDDC, there is a greater difficulty in accessing support and services due to the dispersed geographical area. To address this, we have appointed an outreach advisor through our Homelessness Prevention Grant (see below).

We have used a number of tools to prevent homelessness, including a homelessness prevention fund to keep a household in its home, and a bond/deposit/rent in advance loan scheme to secure private sector accommodation (see below). This work has led to the development of better relationships with landlords and lettings agents resulting in better outcomes for all parties. Since 2007 we have issued over 750 bonds, 350 deposits and 261 rent in advance payments in WPBC, with an accumulated investment of £249,000 in continuing arrangements. The average bond/deposit payment is approximately £640, which is broadly the same as the cost of keeping a family of four in bed and breakfast accommodation for a week. The evidence since 2007 is that these arrangements create sustainable medium-term outcomes rather than short-term fixes, which represents much better value for both Councils and better outcomes for the households concerned.

We have also actively engaged in government mortgage rescue schemes to prevent homelessness, when homes may otherwise have been repossessed. The overall result of this activity has been a significant shift from homelessness acceptance to prevention, with the latter accounting for the majority of our activity (see table 1).

We have a low and managed usage of bed and breakfast accommodation, and we prefer to use our own temporary accommodation where such a facility is required. We have 35 units in WDDC, which we operate in partnership with Registered Providers (RP). In WPBC, we have 30 units that we manage directly, and 18 units which are managed through Synergy Housing Association. These units tend to have a lower turnover and provide a more supportive resource. We have a commitment to review our approach to the provision and management of temporary accommodation over the coming year.

Our receipt of Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) has been critical in enabling us to commission services which have prevented and resolved homelessness. The programme of supported projects for 2013/4 is contained in Table 11 (on page 13). We have been notified that HPG will be provided at least until the end of 2015/16, but if it were to be withdrawn or significantly reduced, our ability to effectively manage homelessness would be seriously affected.

1.2 Housing advice and assistance

We have recognised that a key requirement to ensuring that people get access to appropriate housing, support and services is to provide good quality advice and information, available in easily accessible formats.

Our advice services are based on the following principles:

- To give timely advice and support to enable customers to access housing opportunities and/or to **prevent/resolve homelessness;**
- To make customers aware of available options and constraints to **enable realistic choices to be made;**
- To represent the views and needs of customers to ensure they **receive a fair and consistent service;**
- To ensure that all customers receive **equal access to services and opportunities** irrespective of their circumstances or characteristics.

2. Who is approaching the service?

Table 2: Ethnicity of homeless applicants for whom a decision made, October 2012-Sept 2013

	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Not known	Total
WDDC	92	0	1	0	1	8	102
WPBC	74	1	0	0	0	1	76
Totals	166	1	1	0	1	9	178

This profile is consistent to the ethnic composition of both Councils, where white households represent 98% of the community.

Table 3: Age of applicants accepted as homeless, October 2012-Sept 2013

	WDDC	WPBC	Total
Age:			
16-24	17	14	31
25-44	16	20	36
45-59	4	6	10
60-64	0	0	0
66-74	1	1	2
75+	0	0	0
Total	38	41	79

Almost four out of ten of our acceptances are young people under the age of 25. This reflects the high cost of housing in WDDC and the higher than normal levels of enhanced needs among young people in WPBC.

3. How are we performing?

3.1 Homeless applications and decisions

Homeless prevention and assisting clients to find solutions to their housing problems are key to the work we do, and we are often able to work with our clients to resolve their housing problems before they become homeless. However, we also receive homeless presentations which require written decisions. The following table shows:

- The number of homeless decisions made by our Councils for the past 3 years;
- The number of applications where a full housing duty is accepted;
- The number of applications accepted as a % per 1000 households in each area.

Table 4: Homeless applications and decisions 2010-2013

	2010/11			2011/12			2012/13		
	Decisions	Accepted	% accepted per 1000 households	Decisions	Accepted	% accepted per 1000 households	Decisions	Accepted	% accepted per 1000 households
WDDC	83	28	0.65	108	54	1.26	95	40	0.82
WPBC	47	23	0.82	73	38	1.36	61	29	0.94
Totals	130	51		181	92		156	69	

A recent study has shown that nationally, homelessness has risen by over 25 per cent in three years, with 53,540 families and individuals classed as homeless in 2012/13 and 50,290 in 2011/12, up from 40,020 in 2009/10.

3.2 Homeless prevention performance

We record the number of cases where we prevent homelessness or where homelessness has been relieved. Figures are set out in the table below. In all cases, we aim to prevent homelessness, which can involve substantial case work. The number of applicants approaching us with housing issues is showing a slight reduction in the last two years. However, the complexity of those cases we are dealing with is increasing, and we are having to work harder and more imaginatively to help households find solutions to their problems. Many applicants are presenting with multiple issues and are requiring a multi-agency response.

Table 5: Homelessness prevention performance 2011-2013

	Prevented 2011/12	Relieved 2011/12	Total 2011/12	Prevented 2012/13	Relieved 2012/13	Total 2012/13
WDDC	96	156	252	126	58	184
WPBC	244	70	314	188	110	298
Totals	340	226	566	314	168	482

3.3 Top three causes of homelessness

The main causes of homelessness in our districts have remained fairly consistent for the last three years, but whilst parental evictions is the main reason in WDDC, ending of assured shorthold tenancies (AST) is the main reason in WPBC.

Table 6: Main causes of homelessness 2010-2013

	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
WDDC	1)Parental evictions 2)End of AST 3)Friends/relatives can't accommodate	1)Parental evictions 2)End of AST 3)Non-violent relationship/breakdown	1)Parental evictions 2)Non-violent relationship/breakdown 3)End of AST
WPBC	1)End of AST 2)Other reason 3)Rent arrears private sector	1)End of AST 2)Parental evictions 3)Other reason	1)End of AST 2)Parental evictions 3)Other reason for loss of rented accommodation

4. How have we responded to customer needs?

4.1 Use of temporary accommodation

As a housing authority, we have a duty to provide temporary accommodation where an applicant has been accepted as being subject to a full housing duty and also where a homeless application is being processed and the applicant is thought to have a 'priority need' but has no suitable accommodation.

We provide this in a number of ways, including leased accommodation, hostels, directly with private providers, in bed and breakfast, hotels etc. The use of B&B is closely monitored, and we recognise that it should only be used in situations where such a placement is appropriate and where the length of stay is closely controlled. We ensure that the quality of any hotel we use complies with appropriate standards, and these are regularly checked and inspected.

We also have access to approximately 60 units of temporary accommodation, equally distributed between the two authorities. In WDDC, these are managed on our behalf by RPs, while in WPBC most are managed directly. These are good quality single family housing units.

The table below shows the total number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the past three financial years and the number of households placed into B&B accommodation within those years.

Table 7: Households in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast 2010-2013

	H'holds in TA as at 31/3/11	H'holds in TA as at 31/3/12	H'holds in TA as at 31/3/13	% change 2011-2013	H'holds placed in B&B during 2010/11	H'holds placed in B&B during 2011/12	H'holds placed in B&B during 2012/13	% change 2011-2013
WDDC	19	18	24	17% increase	6	21	25	417% increase
WPBC	50	54	52	4% increase	69	70	78	13% increase
Total	69	72	76	9% increase	75	91	103	37% increase

4.2 Dorset Supporting People

Supporting People (SP) is a national program that funds housing support services, to help people live as independently as possible within the wider community. This programme has greatly assisted clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The services are delivered in two distinct ways: either in a specific housing scheme designed to meet the particular needs of the clients; or via a floating support service, where support is provided to people whose housing is not directly linked to a particular support service.

Dorset SP is a partnership between DCC, all the Dorset District and Borough Councils, Dorset Probation Service and the Dorset Health University Foundation Trust. Dorset SP commissions and manages the contracts of a wide variety of housing-related support services for specific client groups.

The Dorset SP Strategy 2012-15 aims to significantly re-shape the provision of housing-related support services. This includes the introduction of a county-wide floating support service able to support vulnerable individuals in their own home, regardless of any client group "label" attached to them, and the introduction of a new domestic violence and abuse outreach service across the whole county. This is in addition to the accommodation-based services for vulnerable young people and for socially excluded clients (e.g. young single homeless, and those with drug/alcohol abuse issues).

These achievements have been in the context of a steady decline in the funding available from central government, from £10.5 million in 2003/4 to £9.4 in 2010/11. In addition, severe budget pressures at DCC have required that savings of a further £1.9m must be found from SP expenditure by 2013/14. This will reduce the core budget to £7.5 million.

The table below shows the available budget for different client groups in 2013/14. It should be noted that due to assessed need and to some extent the historic pattern of services that have been developed over many years, over 50% of the SP budget is spent in our two Council areas.

Table 8: Dorset Supporting People budget

Client Group	Total Available in 2013/2014
Learning Disability	£2,558,177
Mental Health	£803,805
Older People	£2,046,053
Physical Disability	£10,406

Domestic Violence	£372,176
Generic	£526,996
Social Exclusion	£550,622
Young People	£1,346,159
Total	£8,214,394*
* NB includes contributions from other partners	

4.3 Rent deposit/rent in advance/rent bond

This scheme has been developed to enable eligible applicants, either homeless or threatened with homelessness, who otherwise could not afford to secure and move into private rented assured shorthold tenancies, to do so. The scheme includes:

- Rent in Advance (RIA)
- Rent Deposits (RD)
- Rent Bonds (RB)
- Pet Bonds (PB)

If this approach were not utilised, the alternative would in many cases be a duty of homelessness that the Councils would owe these households, including a potential requirement to provide temporary accommodation.

Table 9: Use of the **Rent deposit/rent in advance/rent bond** scheme in WDDC and WPBC 2011 -2013

West Dorset DC	2011/2012	2012/2013	Number housed within LA area	Number housed out of area
Number of rent deposits issued	0	0	0	0
Total value	£0	£0	-	-
Number of rent in advance issued	35	37	2011/12:- 20 2012/13:- 25	2011/12:- 15 2012/13:- 12
Total value	£20,178	£21,739		
Number of rent bonds agreed	68	57	2011/12:- 47 2012/13:- 42	2011/12:- 21 2012/13:- 15
Total value	£46,904	£37,996		

Weymouth & Portland BC	2011/2012	2012/2013	Number housed within LA area	Number housed out of area
Number of rent deposits issued	27	28	2011/12:- 25 2012/13:- 26	2011/12:- 2 2012/13:- 2

Total value	£21,100	£23,092		
Number of rent in advance issued	71	68	2011/12:- 71 2012/13:- 68	2011/12:- 0 2012/13:- 0
Total value	£41,002	£39,398		
Number of rent bonds agreed	78	67	2011/12:- 78 2012/13:- 66	2011/12:- 0 2012/13:- 1
Total value	£52,113	£42,881		

These figures show that a significant number of households using this scheme in West Dorset are housed outside of West Dorset. Due to the nature of the private rented sector in West Dorset, there is greater availability of rented accommodation in neighbouring authorities, in particular Weymouth and Portland, and to a lesser extent South Somerset.

4.4 Mortgage Rescue Scheme

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme is designed to support vulnerable owner-occupiers at risk of repossession, who meet certain criteria, to remain in their home. Nationally, government funding of almost £200m for 2011-15 is available through the Homes and Communities Agency to RPs, who will also contribute their own resources. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme option used locally has been for Mortgage to Rent, where the household becomes a tenant of the provider. The property is purchased by a RP and let to the household on, in most cases, a 3-year Assured Shorthold Tenancy with rent charged at up to 80% of market rent.

The table below shows numbers locally for the last two years. The scheme has made a significant contribution to preventing family homelessness, particularly in Weymouth and Portland. Our Councils continue to support eligible households to pursue this option, in appropriate cases.

Table 10: Use of Mortgage Rescue Scheme in WDDC and WPBC 2011-2013

	2011/2012		2012/2013	
	WDDC	WPBC	WDDC	WPBC
Number of Mortgage Rescue applications received	1	9	1	4
Number passed to agent	1	9	1	4
Number refused onto scheme by agent	0	2	0	0
Number accepted onto scheme by agent	1	7	1	2
Number completed	1	7	1	2*(?)

**plus 2 still pending at end of year).*

4.5 Homelessness Prevention Grant

Table 11: Use of Homelessness prevention Grant in WDDC and WPBC 2013/14

West Dorset Projects [Grant £97,517]:		Weymouth and Portland Projects [Grant £143,158]:	
	£		£
Housing Advisor post (half)	12000	Research Social Lettings Agency viability	15000
Mears Crisis Support for Older People	9000	PRS staff secondment	15000
EDP Street H'lessness Outreach Project	29000	Mears Crisis Support for Older People	9000
CAB D'chester Debt and Budgeting advice	24000	EDP Street H'lessness Outreach Project	29000
Bridport CAB Home Visiting service	5000	Housing Advisor post (half)	12000
Synergy PSLs	5000	Shelter ongoing court desk support	18000
First Dorset Credit Union non-priority homeless funding	7200	Discretionary H'lessness funding	20000
Discretionary Homelessness funding	10000	Weymouth CAB Debt Advice	10000
		Property Management Contingency Fund	5000
		Tenant Ready Scheme	5000
		Welfare Benefit Contingency	5000

We have received CLG grant for the purpose of preventing homelessness for a number of years. As the only grant specifically identified for a purpose, this has been respected as a dedicated source of homelessness funding and used as such. This represents a significant resource of almost £250,000 across both of our Council areas. Of this, approximately £150,000 has been used to fund external organisations to deliver specialist prevention measures based on their specific expertise.

Two other key themes for project funding are £58,000 for a rough sleeper outreach project and almost £42,000 for projects involved with engaging with the private rented sector.

4.6 Additional CLG homeless prevention grant funding awards for Dorset authorities.

An additional, one-off CLG homeless prevention grant of around £3000,000 was awarded for Dorset authorities in 2012 (including Poole and Bournemouth) to help address the needs of non-priority homeless households, mainly single homeless people. This initiative is administered on behalf of Dorset authorities by Poole Borough Council.

4.6.1 Some elements of its usage are still in development, but it is being used for the following initiatives:

- Rent deposit scheme for non-priority homeless clients via a Credit Union;
- A Dorset-wide reconnection policy;
- A standard advice and assistance letter for Dorset;
- 'No Second Night Out' scheme;
- Severe weather provision;
- Streetlink, a national telephone number to report rough sleeping;
- Pre- eviction protocols with providers;

- Hospital discharge protocols.

4.6.2 Spending has been focused on:

- Training
- Rent deposit for non-priority cases via Credit Union
- Reconnection policy and severe weather and
- Each LA to receive £5,000 (except those served by joint staff teams, who each get £2,500)

4.6.3 Progress as at October 2013:

- Streetlink was launched in September 2013 with media uptake being very positive on BBC Radio Solent and South Today;
- Pre-eviction protocols are now a compulsory requirement for all newly-commissioned services across the county;
- The first round of Drug and Alcohol Training took place October 2013. This was very well received (3 advisors from WPBC/WDDC attended) and the second round was delivered later the same month.
- The other items such as reconnections, severe weather provisions, 'No Second Night Out' and the advice and assistance letter have now been given to the relevant Dorset housing leads for consultation with staff teams and implementation.

5. How have we succeeded in addressing homelessness?

It is reasonable to say that we had mixed success in addressing homelessness over the life of our previous strategy. The major success has been the move away from placing significant numbers of households presenting as homeless into bed and breakfast for long periods of time. We have now moved to a position where bed and breakfast is rarely used and the majority of households that approach us have their issues resolved prior to homelessness occurring.

We have also been effective in a number of other ways:

- We have been effective in innovating to address demands. Our bond/rent deposit/rent in advance schemes have had a major impact on controlling homelessness and delivering improved outcomes for households;
- We have used outreach surgeries to get to those households disadvantaged by rural isolation, particularly in WDDC;
- We have used our homeless grant from the government creatively to extend specialist advice and support through a range of local agencies;
- We have developed very good relationships with many private landlords and have provided a range of services to ensure that rented properties are offered to people from our housing register;
- We have developed an effective approach to addressing the needs of rough sleepers through a contract with Exeter Drugs Project (EDP). Through this, we have commissioned an assertive outreach service and the provision of emergency accommodation in cold weather. This service engages with a significant number of clients each week. This includes working with existing and new cases to challenge their rough sleeping lifestyle, help clients to secure settled accommodation, assist them to engage with other services (e.g. drug, alcohol, mental health) and reconnect clients to their area of origin. This has resulted in relatively low numbers of street homeless cases identified when annual street homelessness counts are carried out.

However, we have had limited success in addressing the underlying causes of homelessness in both Council area. Housing costs are a major challenge in both areas. In WDDC, there is a strong and buoyant housing market, which often excludes those on low incomes. In WPBC, incomes are on the whole lower than WDDC and there is a stronger reliance on the private rented sector, where standards are often lower and prices fluctuate.

6. Main challenges arising from the review

Having reviewed the data set out above and taken into account the views of key partners and related agencies, we have identified the issues below as key challenges for the future.

6.1 Tenure changes in social housing – fewer properties at social rents

The changing regime for social housing nationally has led to a consistent reduction in social housing grant at both a national and local level. The impact of this has been to reduce the financial viability of many schemes and to force up social rents from 'target rents' (typically 50% of market rents) to an 'Affordable Rent' level, i.e. up to 80% of market rents. The outcome has been fewer new homes, let at higher rent levels. We are projecting a marked reduction in the number of new homes delivered across our two Council areas over the life of this strategy. The implication of this is that we will have fewer available options with which to resolve homelessness, and households will potentially spend longer periods in temporary accommodation because of the lack of accommodation to move on to.

6.2 Welfare Reforms

We operate across a high housing cost area in WDDC and a low-wage economy in WPBC. As a result, increasing levels of poverty and increased difficulty in affording market housing is a major issue. Providing appropriate levels of advice and support to enable struggling households to manage their debts and prioritise expenditure is therefore essential.

This is particularly true for working-age households affected by the recent welfare benefit reforms. Currently 12,104 households receive Housing Benefit across the two Council areas. Of these, 3,474 in WDDC are of working age and 4,384 in WPBC. The cap to the total amount of benefits receivable, set at £26,000 p.a., has affected 18 households in WDDC and 38 in WPBC, with an average weekly reduction of £50, and a maximum loss in Weymouth of £195 per week. Some applicants have been removed from Housing Benefit altogether. Reductions as a result of the spare bedroom subsidy have affected almost 900 households locally, evenly spread across both WDDC and WPBC. Of these, 84 households in WDDC and 61 in WPBC have experienced a 25% reduction in their benefits.

There is growing evidence that many of these households are accruing significant levels of rent arrears. These represent a substantial homelessness risk for the future. In addition, the proposal to pay the new Universal Credit direct to claimants also presents a major risk to landlords in both the social and private sectors. This has the potential to generate a considerable increase in homelessness through rent arrears. Further to this, the indication of a future removal of benefit entitlement to under-25s would signal a major potential cause of increased homelessness.

6.3 Reducing local authority and other agency budgets

Financial settlements for both WDDC and WPBC have been significantly reduced within recent years. In the period 2010–15, our level of grant support from central government will have reduced by 60%. This places considerable pressure on our ability to maintain services and meet the needs of local households and communities. This general situation applies to all public sector agencies, resulting in a major programme of service cuts and rationalisation. This has come at a time when as a result of recession, customers tend increasingly to have multiple issues proving more difficult to resolve.

We are increasingly dependent on the homelessness grant we receive, which to date has been preserved in its entirety. We have used this to fund external agencies to provide extended accessing to advice and assistance; however we recognise that we may still not be reaching all groups, such as the hidden homeless.

6.4 Supporting People funding post-2014

One of the continuing challenges in addressing homelessness is the facility to provide appropriate levels of support for those unable to live fully independently. Such support, where housing-related, is in many cases provided through services funded by SP grant. These resources are often focused on the most vulnerable households, without which they might struggle to obtain and retain housing. We are aware that the SP budget is a reducing resource and that only the most urgent needs are likely to be addressed. This will inevitably mean that some households and individuals will find it harder to be housed as a result of their specific needs.

6.5 CLG ‘making every contact count’ paper – ten local challenges’

We recognise the need to deliver a strong and professional range of services to households in our areas. We support the development of the Gold Standard as a response to *Making Every Contact Count*. We have already signed the pledge for both authorities to seek continuous improvement and will look to achieve Gold Standard within an appropriate timeframe. We believe that we already have significant strengths across a number of the areas required, but full commitment to the process will inevitably be impacted by future resource rationalisation across the partnership, where we have a requirement to cut expenditure by £4 million over the next three years.

6.6 Localism Act – new powers to discharge homeless duties and prioritise housing register applications

The reduction in new build homes in the future will require an increasing use of the private rented sector as a solution to local housing needs, including discharge of homelessness responsibilities. We recognise the need to expand the opportunities for private rented housing, particularly for those households in receipt of benefits.

Chapter 3: Strategic Objectives

The development of this strategy has formed part of a much wider process of developing our overarching Housing Strategy. As such, the targets and commitments approved in the Housing Strategy are reflected here. Our strategic priorities are to:

- Provide the maximum opportunity to access and support the provision of new affordable homes;
- Prevent and resolve homelessness;
- Work closer with the private rented sector in maintaining standards and extending housing opportunities;
- Improve energy efficiency and address fuel poverty;
- Provide housing and support for younger and older people and other vulnerable groups
- Provide effective and efficient housing services appropriate to users' needs.

These priorities are underpinned by a series of strategic targets or outcomes. The strategic outcomes with direct relevance to homelessness are as follows:

- **Reduced numbers of households becoming homeless;**
 - Reduced number of households in temporary accommodation;
 - Household members able to remain as a family unit where appropriate;
 - Households able to remain independently in their homes where appropriate;
 - Reduced waiting times for appropriate suitable housing;
- **Extended levels of housing choice**
 - Increased levels of access into private rented housing;
 - Easy access to advice and support services;
 - Delivering planned homes as projected in the Local Plan;
 - Investing in existing homes – improving the private rented sector and bringing empty properties back into use;
- **Improved indicators of financial, social and digital inclusion;**
 - Increased numbers of members of 'deprived' households working;
 - Reduced levels of benefit dependence;
 - Improved indicators of educational attainment;
 - Creating new local jobs in the construction industry through housebuilding.

Within the overall context of our Housing Strategy, the strategic approach for the future of our homelessness services is based heavily around the government's favoured model set out in ***Making Every Contact Count (CLG, 2012)***. This is predicated on the development of a housing options approach rather than a purely homelessness response service. This is now encapsulated in the Gold Standard, which is a nationally recognised standard designed to deliver maximum levels of homelessness prevention. This has been developed by the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS), which is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and partnered by the National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) as a service set up to support local authorities to deliver improving early intervention and prevention housing options services.

We have already made a commitment in the WDDC and WPBC Corporate Plans to deliver the Gold Standard (GS) and have signed up to the GS commitment for continual improvement towards the 10-point plan.

The 'Gold Standard' approach

Our strategic model is based on the following 10 points:

- As strategic lead on homelessness in WDDC/WPBC, to adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy-in across all local authority services;

- Partners across the statutory and voluntary sectors work effectively together to prevent and address homelessness, including education, employment and training needs;
- To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients, including giving written advice;
- To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative;
- To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support;
- To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord;
- To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions, including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme;
- To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs;
- To avoid placing any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- To not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency, and for no longer than 6 weeks

Strategic Objectives

Through the development of our Housing Strategy, we have identified **5 Strategic Objectives** for our Homelessness and Homeless Prevention Strategy. These are outlined below along with our proposed actions to address them.

1. Prevent homelessness through early intervention and targeted housing advice

Our focus will continue to remain on the prevention and relief of homelessness in every possible circumstance. We will seek to achieve this in the following ways:

- The development and distribution of good quality and easily understood advice and information materials in a range of media. This will include translated materials where required;
- Involvement with schools, youth clubs and other environments where we can engage with young people to ensure they are aware of their housing options;
- Delivery of advice and support through surgeries and outreach work, particularly in WDDC;
- Extended partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector to ensure the maximum availability of housing options and specialist advice;
- Improved and extended partnership working with other statutory agencies within Dorset;
- Extended liaison with private sector landlords to ensure well managed private tenancies;
- Continued investment in rent deposits/rent in advance and bonds to facilitate access to housing options;
- Review the potential to develop a social lettings agency to extend private sector housing options.

2. Review and improve the type and use of temporary accommodation for homeless households

We are relatively infrequent users of B&B, preferring instead to use temporary accommodation (T/A) where such a facility is required. We know that we have a reliance on T/A, particularly in WPBC, with average stays much longer than the average for other local authorities in the south west. However, to some degree, this reflects the exceptionally high levels of complex housing need that exists in the area.

We are committed to conduct a full review of our use of T/A during 2013/4. As part of this we will examine:

- The extent and nature of our T/A units;
- The model of T/A most appropriate to our needs – currently we manage directly in WPBC and through RPs in WDDC;
- Our criteria for placement into T/A and for moving on;
- The location of our T/A units;
- Potential alternatives to traditional T/A provision;

Our intention through this review is that we deliver the most cost-effective and fit-for-purpose T/A provision, which reflects the needs of homeless households and local circumstances.

3. Develop and improve services to homeless households and households facing homelessness, with an emphasis on safeguarding young people and the most vulnerable.

We are committed to offering good quality services that are cost-effective and fit-for-purpose. In particular, we wish to ensure that access to our services is available to all households that need them, regardless of their mental or physical capacity or other personal characteristics. We will work to achieve this through:

- Committing to continuous improvement through engaging with the Gold Standard and peer reviews;
- Monitoring and benchmarking our performance on a regular basis;
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our provision through the collection of customer satisfaction data and the monitoring of achieved outcomes;
- Regular dialogue with partners and agencies involved with homelessness;
- Engaging with local, county-wide and regional forums relating to homelessness.

4. Develop and improve partnership working to maximise benefits to homeless households

We are committed to a model of partnership working. We recognise that we are unable to fully address the issues of homelessness by ourselves. We already have many good relationships in place and we will look to consolidate and extend them further. However, we know that we can do more and there are potential partnerships that we need to improve and others that we need to initiate. Particular focus in this regard is:

- Further develop our relationship with private landlords – through the Tenant Ready Scheme, for prospective tenants; extending services such as management and inventories; considering a Social Lettings Agency;
- Improving working relationships with DCC, particularly in regard to Childrens Services and 16/17 year olds.
- Developing better partnerships with health professionals.
- Improve data-sharing protocols with internal and external colleagues involved with housing and homelessness, e.g. Revenues and Benefits, Police, DCC.
- Examining new opportunities within the voluntary sector for attracting additional funding and delivering services.

5. Increase the supply of and access to appropriate, good quality affordable housing options

We recognise that there is a direct correlation between the availability and cost of housing options and homelessness. As such, in addition to seeking to prevent and relieve homelessness, we will also seek to extend housing options as far as we can. We will do this through the following means:

- Aim to deliver between 70 and 100 affordable homes a year in West Dorset and between 50 and 65 per annum in Weymouth & Portland during the next five years, depending on external grant availability;
- Adopt a new Local Plan, with new housing development land allocations for the next twenty years, and revised affordable housing policies aimed at maximising supply in the current financial climate;
- Aim to maximise affordable housing provision through negotiations with developers on Section 106 agreements ;
- Work with the Homes & Communities Agency and local RPs in order to lobby for the maximum potential grant for future schemes in West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland
- Make advice and assistance for owners of empty properties widely available by the adoption of an effective Communications Plan;
- Develop effective liaison with landlord groups, letting agents, councillors and community workers to address empty properties in every community;
- Review long term empty properties on Council Tax records to develop a reliable database for the Councils' Empty Homes Officer;
- Support innovative methods of delivery, such as self-build, kit homes and Community Land Trusts;
- Review the options for developing a Social Lettings Agency, with a view to creating additional access to private rented homes.

Chapter 4: Resources

We recognise that in order to deliver on the commitments in this strategy we need to be able to resource them. We are not in a position to guarantee this, and like all local authorities we recognise the need to prioritise our spending where it is most needed or has the greatest effect. This is also one of the reasons that we stress the need for partnership in delivering these outcomes, because collectively our resources will go further. However, the resources we currently have available include:

Supporting People Funding

SP funding is not passed to the Councils to spend but is distributed to service providers operating within our areas. The table below details the level of funding spent in each of our areas over the past three years. For 2009/10 this represented 58% of the total SP budget, for 2010/11 52% and for 2011/12 53%.

Table 12: SP funds for services in WDDC and WPBC 2009-2012

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
WDDC	£1,935,534.06	£1,829,108.34	£1,740,083.16
WPBC:	£5,634,557.86	£4,888,456.89	£4,578,786.12

However, we are aware of the reducing level of the SP budget and the need to find future savings. We are committed to working closely with the SP team to ensure that any future budget reductions take account, where possible, of the needs of WDDC/WPBC residents.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

This is a direct funding stream from CLG. We have been awarded £143,158 in WPBC and £97,517 in WDDC for 2013/4 and similar sums for the following two years. This funds the prevention programmes detailed in Chapter 2.

Core housing services

In delivering its statutory and related housing duties, both Councils support a core staffing function. This has been reviewed in recent years as part of the process of developing the Joint Partnership. Further reviews will be undertaken in the light of the strategic direction adopted in this strategy, future financial settlements for both Councils and the change agenda outlined in relation to service integration. Other core housing funding also supports the delivery of rent bonds, deposits and rent in advance schemes.

Housing Initiatives Grant

Both councils have previously reserved capital budgets for grant funding to help enable the provision of new affordable housing. At the time of preparing this strategy, the remaining Weymouth & Portland budget was fully allocated. The majority of the West Dorset budget was also reserved for particular schemes (including the potential extra-care scheme in Dorchester), but some support funding is also being provided towards the setting up of Community Land Trusts.

HCA investment

Government funding towards new affordable housing provision in the area is distributed by the HCA to the RPs developing the schemes. Funding has currently been allocated up to 2015, and the government has recently announced the next round of funding, which provides a total of £220 million to help deliver a further 14,000 new affordable homes across the country.

Registered Provider investment

As detailed in chapter 2, RPs make a significant contribution to the local economy. They also invest significant sums of their own resources in new homes, repair and refurbishment of existing stock and community initiatives in the areas in which they operate. Each of these investment streams will contribute to the delivery of Housing Strategy outcomes.

Community Infrastructure Levy

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will in future be collected from all new housing developments, other than affordable housing. It will be a standard charge, agreed through a process of evidence gathering, public consultation and a public examination. This is currently in progress, with the dates for public examination by the Planning Inspectorate currently (as at January 2014) unknown as it is linked to the Local Plan inquiry which is yet to take place. The Councils can't adopt CIL until there is an up to date local plan. The levy will go towards the provision of local infrastructure to help meet the needs generated by new development. This will include a range of infrastructure investment, including coastal defences, highway works and community facilities.

Until the adoption of the CIL, developer contributions towards local infrastructure will continue to be sought through Section 106 planning agreements with site developers. These agreements will also continue to be used to agree the provision of affordable housing on development sites (as CIL cannot be used for this purpose). Under the emerging local plan policy, it is also proposed to seek financial contributions towards affordable housing provision in association with the development of smaller sites on which on-site provision is not feasible. This will provide an additional source of funding to be ring-fenced for spending on affordable housing provision.

Chapter 5: Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and monitoring

WPBC Delivery Plan

Outcomes	Key Partners	Actions/ Outputs	Lead Officer	Timescale	Milestones	Resource Implication	Projected Output(s)
• Reduced number of households accepted as homeless	VS, RPs, PRS, R&B,	Review impact of welfare reform on homelessness and housing need	HoHS	2014		WEB = Within Existing Budget	Report to Management Team
• Reduced number of households in temporary accommodation	RP, PRS, HS	Review use of temporary accommodation	HoHS	Sept 2014	Review scoping – July 2013	WEB	Review report – strategic and VFM approach to temporary accommodation
• Extended levels of housing choice	RP, HS, LA	Work with RPs to develop consistent and strategic shared approach to tackling homelessness.	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	
• Reduced waiting times for appropriate suitable housing	RP, PRS, DCC, LA, HS, VS	Eliminate the use of B&B for 16/ 17 year olds	HoHS			WEB for option appraisal Potential resource implication for chosen option(s)	Protocol and plan for eliminating use of B&B for 16/17 year olds.
• Increased levels of access into private rented sector (PRS) homes	PRS, HS, HI, LA	Develop Tenant-Ready Scheme	HoHS	2014		WEB	Accredited scheme jointly agreed with PRS
	PRS, HS, HI, LA	Review potential for Social Lettings Agency	HoHS	2014		HPG= Homelessness Prevention Grant	Viability report on possible establishment of SLA
	PRS, HS,	Review incentives	HHI	2014/15	Consult with	WEB	Improved range of incentives for landlords/owners to offer

	HI, LA, DFS	to landlords- including use of Landlord Accreditation Scheme			partners and review options – November		homes for rent through the housing register
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access to advice and support services 	HS, CAB	Explore the introduction and delivery of a money advice service	HoHS	2014		HPG	Easy access to high quality money advice for WPBC customers. Evaluation of VFM, numbers seen and outcomes to be monitored quarterly
	HS, LA, EDP	Minimise rough sleeper levels by maintaining assertive outreach service	HoHS	Annual Review	EDP Contract review 2015	HPG	Maintain low levels (max 3) rough sleepers in WPBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective information and services to reflect the diversity of local communities 		Appraise Homelessness Prevention funding – carry out options appraisal if funding ends	HoHS	2015		WEB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled, and customer-focused staff 	WPBC	Focused training and professional development programme	HSM	Annual Review	Training needs analysis through 1-2-1s and appraisals	Potential impact on training budget	High level of customer satisfaction and peer recognition
	WPBC	Attain Gold Standard for Homeless service	HoHS	2014-2019	Toolkit Self assessment – Aug 2013	WEB	Peer- assessed nationally recognised accreditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of customer satisfaction 	WPBC	Review customer satisfaction data collection and analysis	HRPO	Annual Review	Corporate review of data collection methods	WEB	Annual analysis of customer satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household members able to remain as a family unit where appropriate 	SC, RP, HS	Interventions to support household cohesion within	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	Case reviews ensuring effective partnerships, communications and support delivery

		suitable housing					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households able to remain independently in their homes where appropriate 	VS, RPs, PRS, HS	Use of homelessness prevention methods, including bonds, rent in advance, etc	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved health and wellbeing indicators 	DCC, NHs, CS, HI	Review outcome of Health Impact Assessment	HHI	2014	Common Health / Housing priorities established. HIA to influence JSNA.	WEB	Links and partnership working with GPs, health visitors, OTs, etc to address local health issues related to housing Informed Health and Wellbeing Board leading to potential health funded/ partnership housing initiatives.
<p><i>The following indicators are not directly within the remit of the housing strategy. However they are central to the long term delivery of key outcomes. Tenant and community profiles will be significant sources of information to plot progress.</i></p>							
Strong and vibrant communities	RP, PRS,	Using homelessness prevention and housing register (including local lettings policies) to sustain communities	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	
Services and support reflecting diverse households and communities							
Thriving local networks	VS, RPs,	Encourage and	HoCPD/	2015/6	Review		Reduced numbers of homelessness presentations in

	WDDC, DCA	support the development of strong local information networks to enable housing choices and avoid homelessness	HoHS		possible approaches 2014		medium/long term
Innovative and sustainable solutions							

WDDC Delivery Plan

Outcomes	Key Partners	Actions/ Outputs	Lead Officer	Timescale	Milestones	Resource Implication	Projected Output(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced number of households accepted as homeless 	VS, RPs, PRS, R&B,	Review impact of welfare reform on homelessness and housing need	HoHS	2014		WEB = Within Existing Budget	Report to Management Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced number of households in temporary accommodation 	RP, PRS, HS	Review use of temporary accommodation	HoHS	Sept 2014	Review scoping – July 2013	WEB	Review report – strategic and VFM approach to temporary accommodation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended levels of housing choice 	RP, HS, LA	Work with RPs to develop consistent and strategic shared approach to tackling homelessness.	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced waiting times for appropriate suitable housing 	RP, PRS, DCC, LA, HS, VS	Eliminate the use of B&B for 16/ 17 year olds	HoHS			WEB for option appraisal Potential resource implication for chosen option(s)	Protocol and plan for eliminating use of B&B for 16/17 year olds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased levels of access into PRS 	PRS, HS, HI, LA	Develop Tenant-Ready Scheme	HoHS	2014		WEB	Accredited scheme jointly agreed with PRS
	PRS, HS, HI, LA	Review potential for Social Lettings Agency	HoHS	2014		HPG = Homelessness Prevention Grant	Viability report on possible establishment of SLA
	PRS, HS, HI, LA	Review incentives to landlords-including use of Landlord Accreditation	HHI	2014/15	Consult with partners and review options –	WEB	Improved range of incentives for landlords/owners to offer homes for rent through the housing register

		Scheme			November 2013		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy access to advice and support services 	HS, CAB	Explore the introduction and delivery of a money advice service	HoHS	2014		HPG	Easy access to high quality money advice for WDDC customers. Evaluation of VFM, numbers seen and outcomes to be monitored quarterly
	HS, LA, EDP	Minimise rough sleeper levels by maintaining assertive outreach service	HoHS	Annual Review		HPG	Maintain low levels (max 3) rough sleepers in WDDC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective information and services to reflect the diversity of local communities 		Appraise Homelessness Prevention funding – carry out options appraisal if funding ends	HoHS	2015		WEB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled, and customer-focused staff 	WDDC	Focused training and professional development programme	HSM	Annual Review	Training needs analysis through 1-2-1s and appraisals	Potential impact on training budget	High level of customer satisfaction and peer recognition
	WDDC	Attain Gold Standard for Homeless service	HoHS	2014-2019	Toolkit Self assessment – Aug 2013	WEB	Peer- assessed nationally recognised accreditation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High levels of customer satisfaction 	WDDC	Review customer satisfaction data collection and analysis	HRPO	Annual Review	Corporate review of data collection methods	WEB	Annual analysis of customer satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household members able to remain as a family unit where appropriate 			HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	Case reviews ensuring effective partnerships, communications and support delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households able to remain 	VS, RPs,	Use of	HoHS	Annual		WEB	

independently in their homes where appropriate	PRS, HS	homelessness prevention methods, including bonds, rent in advance, etc		Review			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved health and wellbeing indicators 			HHI	2014	Common Health / Housing priorities established. HIA to influence JSNA.	WEB	<p>Links and partnership working with GPs, health visitors, OTs, etc to address local health issues related to housing</p> <p>Informed Health and Wellbeing Board leading to potential health funded/ partnership housing initiatives.</p>
<p>The following indicators are not directly within the remit of the housing strategy. However they are central to the long term delivery of key outcomes. Tenant and community profiles will be significant sources of information to plot progress.</p>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and vibrant communities 	RP, PRS,	Using homelessness prevention and housing register (including local lettings policies) to sustain communities	HoHS	Annual Review		WEB	Reduced numbers of homelessness presentations in medium/long term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and support reflecting diverse households and communities 							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thriving local networks 	VS, RPs, WDDC,	Encourage and support the	HoCPD/	2015/6	Review possible		

	DCA	development of strong local information networks to enable housing choices and avoid homelessness	HoHS		approaches 2014		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative and sustainable solutions 							

Appendix 1: Theme Group Activity

Homelessness Prevention theme Group – 3 meetings

1st meeting - 11 Attendees - 6 Council officers, 2 CAB staff, 1 Registered Provider, 1 Voluntary sector organisation, 1 Shelter representative

2nd meeting – 10 attendees, 3 WDDC councillors, 2 WPBC councillors, Dorchester CAB, Shelter and 3 staff

3rd meeting - 9 attendees – 2 Councillors, 2 Voluntary Sector, 1 Shelter, 1 CAB, 3 Council Officers

Examples of issues discussed include:

- Reducing homelessness
- Promoting financial literacy and welfare reform.
- Emphasis on the importance of partnerships (especially increasing the involvement of health), making sure that holistic advice is available, accessing social and PRS tenancies and providing appropriate tenancy-related support.
- Size, type and location of temporary accommodation
- Do people have a realistic choice over their housing and how far is choice out of their control?
- Private rented properties can be a very good choice, is a flexible option and can be more secure than people think, but we need to promote them as an option, and not as “second best”. We also need willing landlords with good, affordable, properties
- Provision of new homes is important, and the planners have a major role. We could do more to promote sustainability in villages by promoting low impact, local need development, and continuing to explore CLTs.
- Is the housing register a register of need, or does it promote false hope?
- How much choice is there for people who need supported housing?
- We should promote low cost home ownership for those who can afford it, including exploiting any new legislation that comes along and not forgetting older people who want to buy.

Older and Vulnerable Households Theme Group - 3 meetings

1st meeting (older people) 8 Attendees - 3 councillors, fire service, RP care services manager, 2 HIA , 1 Council officer

2nd meeting (young people) 8 Attendees - 3 councillors, fire service, DCC early intervention team manager, 2 Council officers

3rd meeting (other vulnerable groups) 13 Attendees – 6 councillors, 2 Registered Providers, 2 Mears, 1 DCC (SP), 1 Voluntary Sector, 1 Council Officer

Examples of issues discussed include:

- Improve access to information to inform choices, highlight options, awareness of services available. Single point of contact?
- Develop and co-ordinate referral routes: e.g. SAIL, POPP Wayfinders, CAB, HIAs
- Develop awareness and delivery of Fire Safety home visits.
- Develop single assessment process but note that data protection protocol needed as there is resistance to share info from some agencies

- Overcome issues about housing engagement with health
- Improve access for young people to the private rented sector - consider tenant accreditation and tenant ready certificates
- Raise awareness of housing options e.g. in schools, colleges, YP advice centres/agencies
- Consider potential for co-locating staff/services and hold joint appointments/interviews
- Ensure support packages happen and then continue in place after immediate housing issue has been resolved
- Support plans,
- Review how services delivered e.g. pool staff and budgets,
- Spend to save,
- Consider developing use of SAIL by all agencies as a standard process,
- Choice,
- Consistent service delivery across diverse geographies.

Affordable Housing Theme Group - 2 meetings

1st meeting - 11 Attendees – 4 Councillors, 2 Council officers, 2 Private developers, 1 Registered Provider, 1 Private landlord, 1 Voluntary sector

2nd meeting – 12 Attendees – 5 Councillors, 2 Registered Providers, 1 Voluntary Sector, 2 Private Sector, 1 Council Officer

Examples of issues discussed include:

- Need for some affordable housing to be adapted to those with special needs
- Strong links to health and wellbeing issues – quality of housing improves health and wellbeing
- Affordability not just about traditional social housing – need to try and keep young people in area
- Importance of mixed communities
- Increased levels of new housing reserved as affordable housing? But has to be viable to develop.
- Local connections are important in allocating affordable housing
- Shared ownership/intermediate housing is important for encouraging young families and working people.
- Role of private rented sector – agreed that this will be meeting the needs of many of those who can't afford to buy. Too expensive? Is there enough of it?
- Role of local plan, and difficulty of allocating development land due to strength of local objection.
- Some sites allocated but not coming forward – financial/economic issues – need to try to make sure proposals are achievable and encourage them to come forward.
- Intermediate market housing
- Importance of allocating enough land for housing in local plan.
- Empty homes – around 500? Initiative currently to work with owners and try to get them back into use

Glossary