

County Durham Housing Strategy

July 2019



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Foreword

Since becoming Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Assets, I have met with residents, landlords, tenants, housing providers and developers to understand the issues faced by our communities.

Whilst there are lots of great examples of innovation, best practice and communities investing in their areas, the task ahead of us is a difficult one. Reduced government funding; an increase in poor quality housing stock, particularly in the private rented sector; changes to benefits, increasing homelessness and a growing elderly population to name some of the key issues we need to consider.

This is why we need a strong Housing Strategy, one which identifies not just the problems but the solutions and which makes the most of our partnership working to really make a difference. This Housing Strategy has been developed to consider those issues and to set out the council's approach to delivering positive outcomes for our residents. Importantly, the Housing Strategy has been developed to be able to respond positively to future issues and opportunities as they arise and to ensure we maximise every opportunity to deliver interventions to support our communities.

The Housing Strategy sets out clear priorities for County Durham. This includes, improving standards in the private rented sector with Cabinet having agreed for work to be undertaken with the intention of submitting an application to government for a county wide selective licensing designation. In addition, priorities include providing suitable homes for the older people within our communities and delivering affordable housing to meet the needs of our residents. The Housing Strategy needs to be flexible to ensure that it can be adapted to new opportunities and also be the catalyst for change. The Strategy contains an action plan which will be delivered jointly with our partners across County Durham.

Cllr Kevin Shaw

Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Assets

Introducing the Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy sets delivery priorities for County Durham

The County Durham Housing Strategy has been developed to consider housing issues in the County and to provide a strategic framework to inform actions and investment to result in positive outcomes for housing related themes in the County. The Housing Strategy covers both the 'people' and 'place' elements of housing policy and practice in order to provide a comprehensive approach to housing issues and to support a coordinated delivery approach for housing related actions. In this context the Strategy considers issues associated with future housing needs, the existing stock in the County and support for people to keep them in their homes and to provide access to suitable accommodation.

The Housing Strategy Key Messages

The Strategy contains a series of 'key messages' which serve to articulate the council's and its partners housing delivery priorities and approach to housing issues. First and foremost, the Housing Strategy seeks to put people first and to focus on the housing needs of the residents of County Durham. It is this principle which guides the content of the Strategy.

A Strategy for County Durham

The Housing Strategy is a strategy for County Durham. In this context, it will be delivered in partnership, both through the formal Housing Forum and the Development and Support partnership groups as reflected on the Housing Strategy Partnership Framework, but also in discussion with County Durham residents, the private sector and other agencies as appropriate.

A responsive Strategy

In response to changing market and policy conditions, the council needs to have a Housing Strategy that is responsive and maintains an element of flexibility in order to respond positively to opportunities and promptly to housing market issues or changes in national policy. For this reason, the Housing Strategy Framework is designed to be able to be supplemented or amended as necessary. All future sections will be considered by relevant partnership groups and in discussion with key stakeholders.

A delivery focused Strategy

The Housing Strategy is supplemented by a strategic action plan, which reflect the Partnership Framework. This will be subject to review annually. Throughout the Strategy, the strategic approach to addressing issues and delivering outcomes is set out within an orange framed text box for ease of review and to provide a clear understanding of the direction of the Housing Strategy.

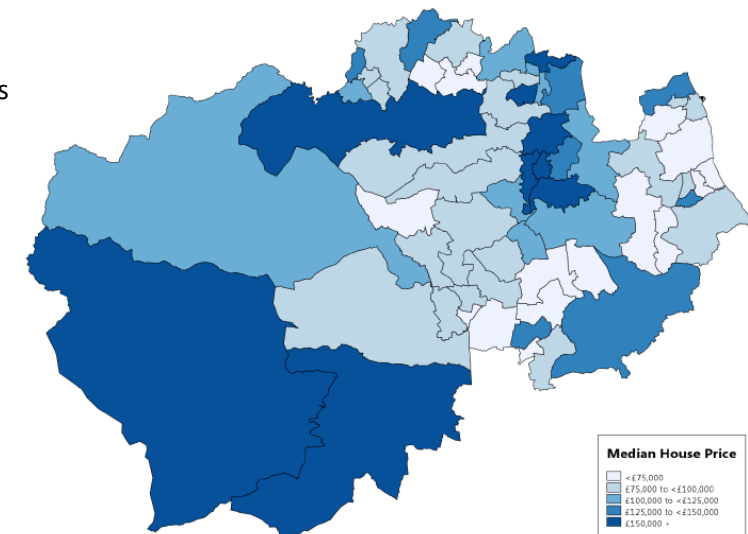
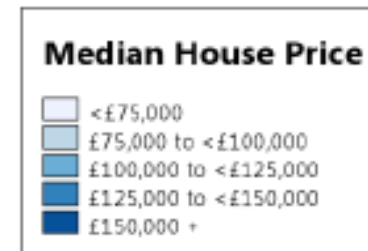
County Durham housing market data overview

Dwelling stock

- Across County Durham there are a total of 239,685 dwellings and a total of 226,322 households.
- 79.4% of properties are houses, 15.0% are bungalows, 5.0% are flats/maisonettes, and 0.4% are other property types (e.g. caravans);
- 6.0% have one bedroom/bedsit, 35.2% have two bedrooms, 43.8% have three bedrooms and 15.0% have four or more bedrooms;
- 18.2% of properties were built before 1919, a further 16.2% were built between 1919 and 1944, 21.4% between 1945 and 1964, 22.7% between 1965 and 1984, 15.1% between 1985 and 2004 and 6.3% have been built since 2005; and
- 65.86% of properties are owner-occupied, 20.20% are affordable and 13.94% are private rented.

Housing market context

- Median prices in County Durham have been consistently slightly lower than median prices for the North East, which are well below those for England as a whole.
- Overall, prices have increased from £47,500 in 2000 to £100,000 in 2015, an increase of 111%.
- Prices peaked at £107,000 in 2007 but have since fluctuated and fallen slightly.
- During 2015, median prices across County Durham were £100,000 and lower quartile prices were £62,000.
- The map sets out median house prices by ward – there is a significant variation in house prices across the County (Land Registry House Price Data Jan – Dec 15)



The following key messages set out the priorities of the County Durham Housing Strategy:

- **The Housing Strategy is a strategy for housing across County Durham - first and foremost it is a Strategy that puts people first.**
- **The council will continue to focus on raising standards in the private rented sector and will seek greater licencing powers in order to tackle poor landlords, as well continuing engagement with landlords and extending the Accredited Landlord Scheme for responsible landlords.**
- **The Housing Strategy will deliver homes for our communities, and specifically plan to meet the needs of our older people and to support people to live independently for as long as possible:**
 - **A minimum of 10% of homes specifically designed to meet the needs of older people as part of all future development sites; and**
 - **Specialist care facilities to be provided in partnership with care providers to meet the identified needs of our older people.**
- **The council will work within those communities most effected by long term empty properties. This will include working with property owners and landlords with the aim of bringing empty homes back into use where possible.**
- **The delivery of affordable housing will be maximised both, by securing developer contributions as part of new housing development but also through close partnership working with Registered Providers and Homes England. Affordable housing will be provided in line with tenants aspirations for affordable (social) rented accommodation.**
- **The council will seek to improve the quality of our existing housing stock and the wider residential environment:**
 - **Localised and targeted delivery plans will be used to outline activities to support the creation and maintenance of mixed and balanced communities**
 - **In consultation with local residents and where appropriate, the case will be made to secure funding for targeted demolition as part of the regeneration of communities.**
 - **The Housing Strategy will provide a framework to capitalise on and to maximise opportunities for investment and regeneration within our communities.**
- **As part of the Armed Forces Outreach Service, the council and its partners will provide help and support to all Forces personnel, reservists, Veterans and their families trying to secure a home.**
- **Housing development will be supported by appropriate infrastructure provision to accommodate for the impact of the development on our communities, including ensuring sufficient education and health care facilities are provided to meet community needs.**
- **New housing will be of a high quality design to meet the needs and aspirations of our families, with the right homes being delivered in the right places to support sustainable communities.**
- **In our rural areas, the council will enable sufficient housing to meet local needs and to support communities, including housing for older people.**
- **The council will introduce a strategic approach to seek to prevent homelessness in County Durham, increase the supply of accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and will work in partnership with other stakeholders to provide support those with complex needs.**
- **The council will maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need.**

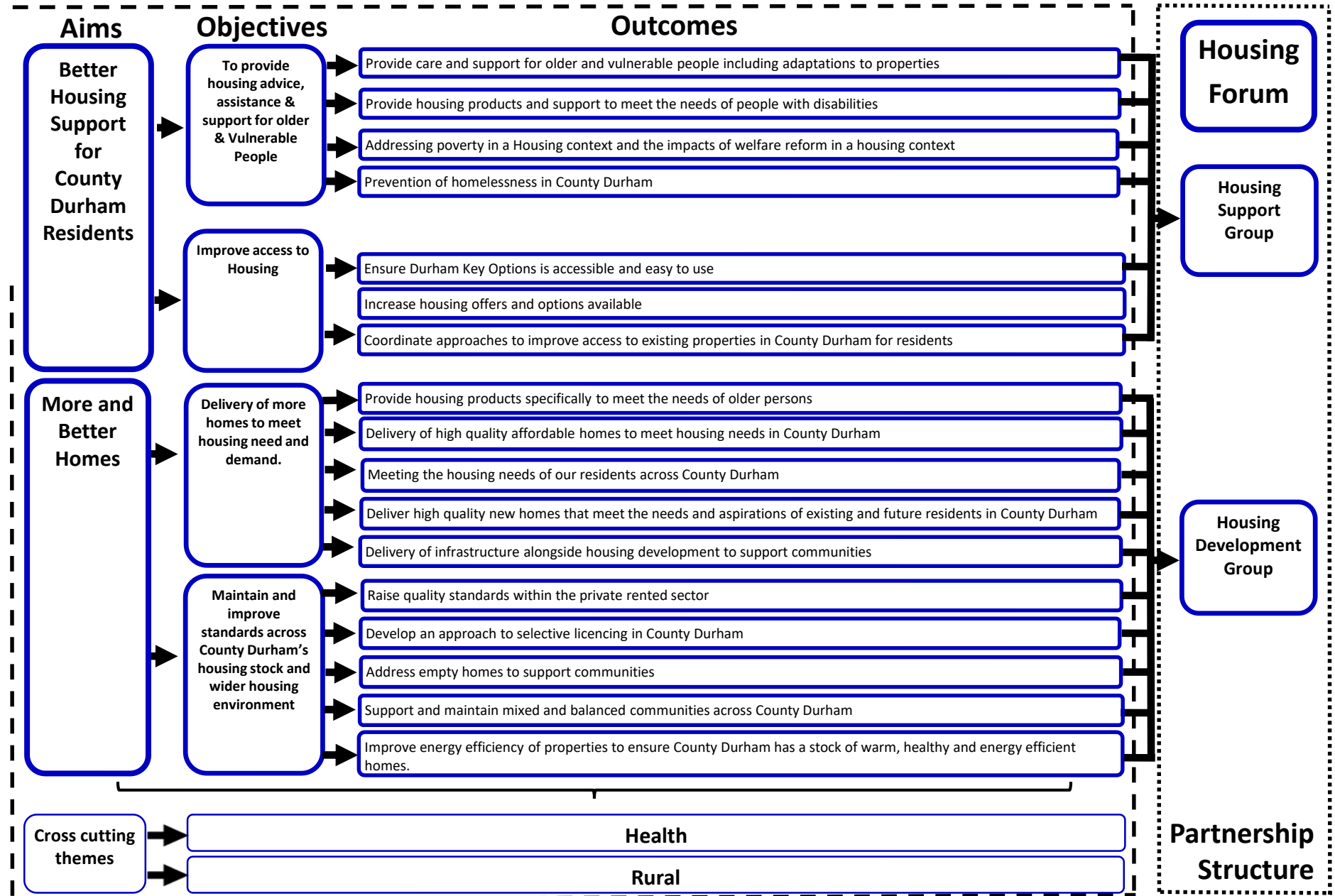
In order to support and facilitate partnership working, the Partnership Framework sets out overarching aims objectives and outcomes to provide a clear strategic context to the activities of the council and its partners in delivering the Housing Strategy.

This Framework puts people first and looks to provide appropriate support to meet needs and to improve access to housing. The Framework recognises the need for more and better homes in County Durham, both through improving our existing stock as well as delivering new high quality homes.

The Framework reflects the roles of the Housing Forum and the related Housing Development Group and Housing Support Group. The actions of these groups are informed by the Housing Strategy. The council will work in partnership in delivering the Strategy.

The aims and objectives are associated with a series of detailed outcomes. These set out what the council and its partners are seeking to achieve through the delivery of the Housing Strategy. The content of the Housing Strategy and related action plan has been developed around each of these outcomes.

Whilst this Framework demonstrates the strategic context, Housing Strategy outcomes are presented in line with the priority order as set out in the 'Key Messages'



Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standard across County Durham's housing stock and wider environment

Outcome

Raise Quality Standards within the Private Rented Sector

The council will continue to focus on raising standards in the private rented sector through continuous engagement with landlords and its extended Accredited Landlord Scheme for responsible landlords as well as potentially greater licencing in order to tackle poor landlords. Private rented accommodation is a valuable part of the housing market, providing flexibility for tenants. Whilst it is the tenure of choice for some, an increasing number of residents have no other available option than to rent in the private sector. According to the 2011 census, 14% of occupied households were in the private rented sector. Apart from the concentration of private rented housing in Durham City serving its student population, evidence, including the Strategic Housing Market Assessment notes that private rented housing tends to be concentrated in areas of relative deprivation, where the housing market is weaker. Private rented properties are often older types of housing, in poor condition and failing to meet the minimum condition standards.

The majority of private landlords who operate in the county provide good quality accommodation and are aware of their responsibilities, however a small number operate poor management practices and allow tenants to live in unsatisfactory conditions. This can have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of tenants, neighbours and the community.

Examples of past and current initiatives to improve the private rented sector

Advice and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided to landlords and tenants regarding their legal rights and responsibilities.
Selective licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are three designated areas of selective licensing in the county: Chilton West, Dean Bank in Ferryhill and Wembley in Easington Colliery. In these areas, a landlord has to obtain a licence from the council in order to rent out their property and all tenants must be referenced. Across the three designations 96% of licensable properties are currently licensed.
Targeting areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council has targeted areas across the county in a multi-agency approach. Time limited projects have been undertaken in the Dene Valley; Grange Villa; Chester-le-Street; Easington Colliery; Wheatley Hill; and Horden.
East Durham neighbourhood initiatives officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with the East Durham Trust and the AAP this officer role was introduced as a pilot project to help support the communities, specifically vulnerable tenants living in privately rented properties. The aim is to help people sustain their tenancies, including through financial advice.

The Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The private landlord accreditation scheme was launched countywide in April 2015. Landlords are encouraged to join the scheme and renew their membership on an annual basis. Encouraging landlords to be an active member of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme has benefits to landlords, tenants, the council and the local community.

Landlords are encouraged to advertise their vacant properties through Durham Key Options and homeless and prevention officers use only accredited landlords to accommodate homeless people or those threatened with homelessness. The Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and empty homes loans are only available to accredited landlords, which are an incentive for landlords to join the scheme.

To date the scheme has achieved:

- A membership of 129 landlords and 2604 properties.
- An average annual renewal rate of memberships is 45%
- Since April 2017, 121 properties have been let through Durham Key Options.
- 626 properties have been inspected.
- Landlords receive quarterly newsletters with up to date information.
- Landlords forums are held every quarter.
- A programme of free training sessions have been delivered to 64 landlords to date with a 100% positive feedback from attendees.

Future activities to raise standards

Future activities will be based around a continuation of the current and ongoing actions in this area. The council will continue to seek to expand the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme, this has seen benefits for those who have participated in the scheme.

The council will also continue current ongoing actions in this area as part of a programme of interventions. The council will make use of its evidence base, in particular in respect of stock condition, to target interventions at areas most in need.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Develop an approach to selective licencing in County Durham

In October 2018, the council's Cabinet agreed that preparatory work would be undertaken with the intention of submitting an application to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government for a county wide selective licensing designation. Cabinet would consider any application, prior to submission to government.

An overview of Selective Licensing

The Housing Act 2004 (amended 2015) gives local authorities the powers to introduce selective licensing of privately rented homes in order to tackle problems in their areas, including those that result from low housing demand and/or significant anti-social behaviour.

The Act allows local authorities to designate areas for selective licensing to support the improvement of properties in the Private Rented Sector (PRS), providing certain conditions are met. In areas designated, landlords must apply for a licence to rent out a property. This means the council can check whether they are a "fit or proper person" to be a landlord, as well as making other stipulations concerning management of the property and appropriate safety measures. Selective licensing also provides a means to intervene and enforce positive change in property management, in turn helping to reduce the volume of reactive complaints. Such licencing also supports engagement with landlords and ultimately, a greater PRS offer.

Selective Licensing in County Durham

Previously there were three designations in operation in the county:

- Dean Bank, Ferryhill;
- Chilton West, Chilton; and
- Wembley, Easington Colliery.

The Dean Bank and Chilton West designations came to an end in March 2018 and the Wembley designation is due to expire in June 2019. All three will have run for ten years and were initially designated on the grounds of low housing demand and significantly high levels of anti-social behaviour. The designations formed part of a wider activities including an element of housing renewal such as selective clearance and group repair, alongside a multi-agency approach to managing the issues in the areas. All of the localities saw an increase in the percentage of properties within the PRS within the lifetime of the designations.

Future actions and next steps

The council's approach to seeking to progress selective licensing is complimentary to other actions set out in the Housing Strategy and will be coordinated with the approaches to address homelessness, empty homes and other activities to support mixed and balanced communities. In development, key stakeholders such as the police and social services will be engaged. Partnership working would be continued through to any implementation phase.

To progress a selective license designation, the council will undertake a consultation which will include local residents, including tenants, landlords and other members of the community who live or operate businesses or provide services within the proposed designation. The representations made during the consultation will be considered before a further report is presented to Cabinet.

In order to submit an application to the Secretary of State for selective licensing, further work needs to be undertaken on the volume of premises affected to ensure the statutory requirements are met. The initial data collected shows different issues in different parts of the county, from Horden seeing a high number of PRS properties, to Shildon seeing a high number of empty properties. Further data collection will be required to provide a strong business case which will include migration, health and fire service data. A working group is in the process of collating and considering all data collected to contribute to the business case.

The following range of options, as agreed by Durham County Council Cabinet will be considered (advantages and disadvantages of each option were set out in the October 2018 Cabinet Report):

- **Option 1: Cease the current selective licensing designation in Wembley when it expires in June 19.** This option would see no selective licence designation in Durham and may see further potential decline in the areas.
- **Option 2: Consider a designation for under 20% of the geographical area of County Durham or under 20% of the PRS stock.** This option would see the designations in identified areas in the County, those causing all agencies significant issues.
- **Option 3: Consider a designation to cover all of the areas that prove a problem to the different agencies.**
- **Option 4: Consider a designation to cover 100% of the geography of Durham and 100% of all PRS stock.** This option would ensure the PRS stock in Durham would be subject to a selective licence designation.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

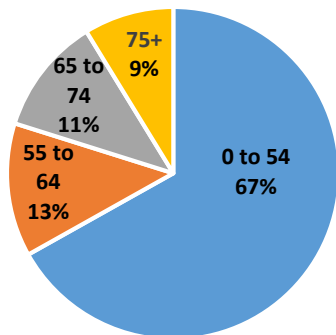
Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demands

Outcome

Provide housing products specifically to meet the needs of older persons

The council will ensure that housing is provided specifically to meet the needs of the older people within our communities. It is recognised that the population of County Durham is already ageing and over the next few decades, there will be a 'demographic shift' with the number (and proportion) of older people increasing.

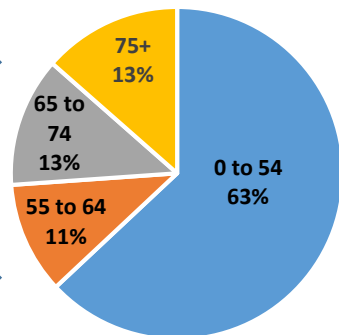
2016 – Population of County Durham **522,200**



The no. of people aged 65+ to increase from 105,200 to 146,300

The no. of people aged 75+ to increase from 45,700 to 75,700

2035 – Population of County Durham **560,200**

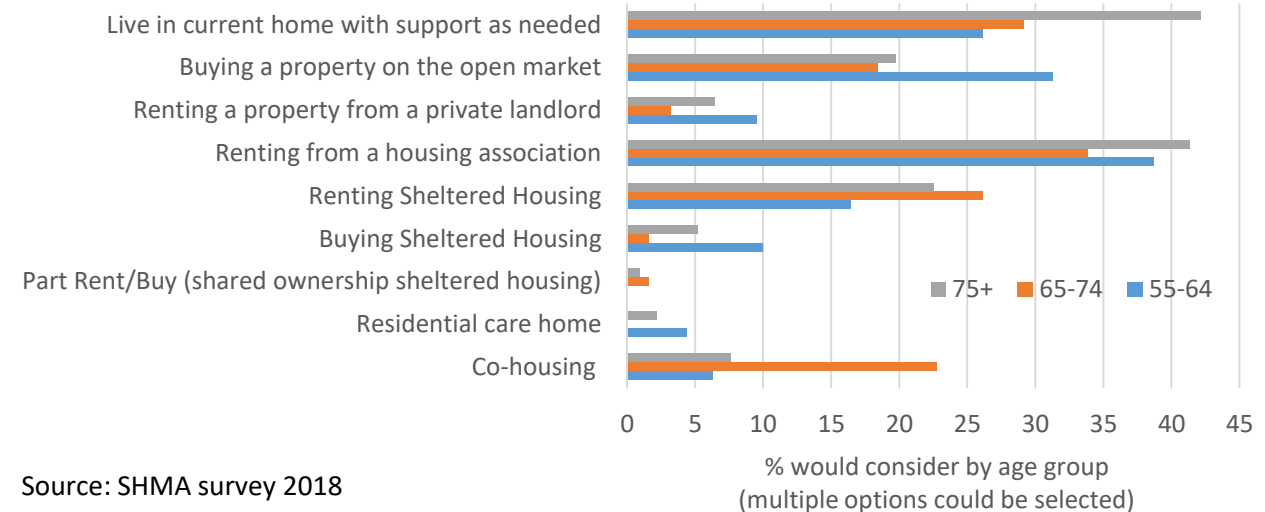


Source: Data from ONS SNPP 2014

Population projections undertaken over the County Durham Plan period, indicate that both the number and proportion of older age people will increase. Over the same period 2016 – 2035, a minimum of 90% of household growth over the Plan period will be in households aged over 65.

Older persons housing options

A survey undertaken as part of the development of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment considered the housing options of older persons. As set out in the chart overleaf, whilst a range of options were considered a notable proportion of older people were considering buying a property on the open market or renting from a housing association to meet their housing needs. This evidence suggests a need to continue to diversify the range of older persons' housing provision. Additionally, it is recognised that providing a wider range of older persons' accommodation has the potential to free-up larger family accommodation.



Meeting the housing needs of older people

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan includes a policy to meet the housing needs of older people. This policy requires that minimum of 10% of the housing on sites of over 10 units, in relation to their design and house type, serve to increase the housing options of older people. This policy will deliver over 600 homes for older people. In this regard, appropriate house types include level access flats, level access bungalows and other housing products that can be shown to meet the specific needs of a multi generational family. The policy sets out that new housing provided for older people must be built to Building Regulations Requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings).

Specialist Housing

The Plan notes that the provision of specialist housing including for older people, will be supported in appropriate locations, where it is designed to meet the particular requirements of residents.

The council is developing a 'Housing Market Position Statement' which brings together evidence from across the council's planning, health and housing services. This will identify opportunities for the market to deliver products and services in our communities to meet older peoples needs.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Delivery of More Homes to meet housing needs and demands

Outcome

Provide housing products specifically to meet the needs of older persons

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing for older people

Case Study: The Woodlands, Spennymoor– affordable housing development

The 2018 Woodlands development encompassed the design and build of an affordable housing development on the site of a former care home.

The redeveloped site provides for older persons plus 8 bungalows for the over 55 market and 7 houses for affordable rent

The £1.6 million scheme is managed by Livin

The scheme was supported by Homes England with a grant for £336,000 in funding

Design process and progress

The project has been a great success for Livin and its partner contractor Tolent Living. Early formation and good collaboration of the design team assisted both the pre-commencement and construction phases.

Design and progress meetings were held regularly, with design monitored throughout the construction to highlight any design issues and resolve issues quickly. A permanent site manager was onsite at all times with good monitoring of all subcontractors and suppliers, of which 90% were based locally.

Working with local residents ensured the development had minimum impact on the local community by undertaking regular visits to residents in the area to ensure any issues with the site were resolved as quickly as possible. Community consultation was held with local residents as part of the planning process and the feedback gathered was incorporated into the design.

Livin undertake customer satisfaction surveys on all new build developments. The development proved to be very popular with the local community with properties in high demand. All of the properties were occupied within a week of handover. The properties have all been let on affordable rents ranging from £87.39 to £108.54 per week.

Community integration

The existing access to the site was utilised to assist with the integration of the development within the local community.

The site is surrounded by mature trees and the design of the development was progressed with this in mind. A large amount of the trees were retained and supplemented with additional street planting to create a verdant residential layout within an existing landscape structure.

Dwelling designs are 21st century with feature timber style cladding to offer a semi-rural character in keeping with the site.

One bungalow was adapted to accommodate requirements of a local family who were living in accommodation that was unsuitable for their needs.



Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Delivery of More Homes to meet housing needs and demands

Outcome

Provide housing products specifically to meet the needs of older persons

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing for older people

Case Study: The Elms, Chester le Street, Extra Care facility

The Elms was Opened in early 2017 and was developed by Karbon Homes, one of the Registered Housing Providers operating in County Durham

The scheme represents an investment of £6.5m to deliver specialist accommodation and facilities to meet the needs of older people.

It contains 52 apartments for older residents, a mix of shared ownership and rented accommodation, alongside six bungalows.

Amenities

Resident's lounge	Café and meal provision	IT suite	Car parking	Laundry facilities	Cycle store
Community allotments	Community exhibition space	Landscaped gardens	Hair salon / treatment rooms	Guest rooms	Communal lounge area

Specialist features

Assisted bathing suite	Motorised wheelchair and scooter store	Lift access to all floors
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Specialist features

Security access	'Online owls' digital inclusion service	Dedicated housing team to provide quality support and advice	Financial inclusion team to provide advice on budget and savings
Overnight care services	Clubs and social activities	Scheme manager to oversee the day to day running of the site	



Aim

Better Housing Support for County Durham Residents

Objective

To provide housing advice, assistance and support for older and vulnerable people

Outcome

Provide care and support for older and vulnerable people including adaptations to properties

It is recognised that some people's housing needs can only be met through specialist housing products, adaptations to their homes or by providing support in their homes. Housing is a wider determinant of health and good quality housing which meets the needs of an individual supplemented by support services where required can promote independence and wellbeing. The Housing Act 1996 (s189) sets out groups with priority need for accommodation, the Durham County Council Housing Market Position Statement identifies groups in County Durham that require particular support.

Durham County Council Housing Market Position Statement

The council's existing Market Position Statement (2016/18) brings together information about the council's priorities and opportunities for the market to ensure existing and potential providers have the opportunity to shape their business plans in line with the council's vision for the future of local public health, social care and housing markets. This document notes the council's commitment to improving access and availability of suitable accommodation and services to support recovery for people with a range of needs.

This document is to be supplemented by a Housing Market Position Statement (HMPS) The HMPS will identify the needs of specific groups in order to inform the council's direct delivery of services but also to stimulate the market provision of care (and care related services such as community activities and advocacy, information and advice) services needed in County Durham.

In discussion with stakeholders including the council's commissioning services and based on evidence developed by the councils Housing Solutions team, the emerging HMPS has identified the following key groups for particular consideration.

HMPS Key Group: Older persons

The proportion of people needing care and support services rises with age and due to the demographics of County Durham, older people are a particular client group which have been highlighted in the HMPS. Whilst, many older people would prefer to stay in their own home for as long as possible with support as required, some older people would like to move house and live in accommodation that is better located, more accessible and easier to maintain. There has often been the lack of housing options for older people with sheltered housing or residential care often being the only choices available.

HMPS Key Group: People with mental health issues and people with learning disabilities.

The council is committed to improving access and availability of suitable accommodation and services to support people with a range of needs including learning disabilities and mental health problems to enable them to live as independently as possible in the community. This client group is anticipated to see the largest increase in numbers, coupled with the largest rise in funding requirements. Therefore from both a demand and need point of view we would expect that these groups would impact most significantly upon service provision and future requirements. The 2014 Care Act also emphasises the importance of councils working with providers to shape the market and ensure information is shared.

HMPS Key Group: Single person homelessness

The council's Housing Solutions Team have seen the largest increase in its client base of single persons who are homeless or in fear of homelessness. It is evident that these persons are presenting with more and more complex support needs. Due to this, it is becoming harder to place these clients within appropriate accommodation. Issues relating to drug and alcohol dependency, coupled with mental and physical health problems has resulted in this client base becoming one of the most difficult and costly to house and support. The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 has extended the remit to look at client groups which previously afforded no duty of care. Therefore we as an Authority are in need of alternative accommodation which we have never required at such a scale. The HMPS will look at the availability and location of temporary accommodation across the County and how service users can access this. An assessment of the current voids with Registered Providers own housing supply will also be undertaken to ensure that both we as an Authority and housing associations are making their properties work for them and our client base.

Future actions

The council will continue to make use of the locate portal to highlight services which will support and assist people who are supported to live in their own home. This will include adaptations to meet specific needs and other equipment to keep which help keep people independent. The council will continue to widen wrap around support to support vulnerable people to achieve and sustain tenancies

The council will seek to better understand the specialist care needs of its residents by working with health professionals and other partners to develop a Housing Market Position Statement. This will focus on the needs of the groups highlighted in this section. However, the needs of other groups will also be considered as the HMPS develops, including considering the needs of families and children

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demands

Outcome

Provide housing products and support to meet the needs of people with disabilities

The Housing Strategy has established that one of the priorities are older persons, however it is recognised that, whilst there is some overlap, specialist support and housing requirements apply to a wider population than older people. The council will ensure that the housing needs of people with disabilities are met through the provision of support services, adaptations to properties and specialist housing products for those in need.

Support Services

There are specific support services available in County Durham for people with a disability. The County Durham Local Offer, for example sets out what is available locally for children and young people up to the age of 25 with Special Educational Needs and / or disabilities during their time in education. The locate portal includes a directory of services which will support and assist people are to live in their own home.

Adaptations to properties

Disabled facilities grants (DFG) assist people to live independently by helping to fund suitable adaptations to their properties. All applicants for DFG must undergo a financial means test, unless the grant is for a disabled child. This will indicate what, if any financial contribution must be made towards the work. Owner occupiers, tenants living in the private rented sector and housing association tenants are able to apply to be considered for DFG. Applicants will also have an assessment with an occupational therapist, as a grant is based on essential needs.

Following an assessment, any recommendations will be sent to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), who will check if the occupational therapist's recommendations are feasible, reasonable and practicable.

The HIA residents who are elderly, disabled or on low incomes to repair, maintain or adapt their homes. The HIA manages the relationship between the householder and contractors to ensure that scheduled works are value for money and meet the householder's and the council's requirements.

Specialist Housing

The Pre-Submission County Durham Plan includes a policy to meet housing need. As part of this policy the council will support the provision of specialist housing including for people with disabilities. This specialist housing will be supported in developments in appropriate locations for the needs of the client and that are designed to meet the particular requirements of residents. The plan will also support provision of satisfactory outside space, highway access, parking and servicing. 100% of this new accommodation will meet M4(2) Category 2 and a minimum of 25% of accommodation will also meet M4(3) Category 3.

The council is developing a 'Housing Market Position Statement' which brings together evidence from across the council's planning, health and housing services. This will identify opportunities for the market to deliver products and services in our communities to meet disabled peoples needs. The emerging HMPS has identified people with mental health issues and learning disabilities as a group for particular consideration

Future actions

The HIA will continue to support people to live more independently in their own homes for as long as they wish to do so. The HIA helps its customers to identify the building work required to future proof their home and helps to identify the funding sources available. Repairs and adaptations can be carried out through a persons own resources, grant and loan from the council and in some cases charitable or benevolent funding depending on circumstances.

The council will continue to make use of the locate portal to highlight services which will support and assist people to live in their own home. This will include adaptations to meet specific needs and other equipment to help keep people living more independently.

The council will seek to better understand the specialist care needs of its residents by working with health professionals and other partners to develop a Housing Market Position Statement. This will focus on the needs of the groups highlighted in this section. However, the needs of other groups will also be considered as the HMPS develops, including considering the needs of families and children

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standard across County Durham's housing stock and wider environment

Outcome

Support and maintain mixed and balanced communities across County Durham

The council will seek to improve the quality of our existing housing stock and the wider residential environment. In this context, localised and targeted delivery plans will be used to outline activities to support the creation and maintenance of mixed and balanced communities. As part of this process, in consultation with local residents and where appropriate, the case will be made to secure funding for targeted demolition as part of the regeneration of communities. The Housing Strategy will provide a framework to capitalise on and to maximise opportunities for investment and regeneration within our communities.

It is recognised that different housing tenure play a role in meeting the needs and aspirations of householders. Private rented properties, social rented properties and homes for owner occupation all meet different needs within the housing market. However, on occasion where a certain tenure or type of housing becomes dominant in an area or exceeds a proportionate level, then this can impact on the area and the residential amenity of its occupants. In extreme circumstances, an area which has become 'unbalanced' in terms of its tenure and housing type, it can be associated with higher levels of crime and antisocial behaviour, environmental decline and/or social exclusion. Such areas may also be typified by a high turnover of occupants, high numbers of void properties and low property values.

Current and past interventions to support balanced communities in County Durham

Securing a greater mix of tenures in a community can assist in preventing pockets of deprivation and social exclusion and make an area more desirable to live in. Services and facilities that meet the needs of the local residents are also an integral part of a balanced community. In supporting balanced communities across County Durham, the following interventions have been utilised:

- Acquisition and Demolition of key streets in areas of housing regeneration activity using compulsory Purchase powers where needed;
- Environmental improvement schemes;
- Group repair schemes;
- Homesteading schemes;
- Solid wall insulation schemes; and
- Facilitation of new housing development.

A combination of the above interventions has been successful in areas across County Durham such as West Chilton, Wembley, Dawdon, Dean Bank, Craghead, Wheatley Hill and South Moor.

Supporting and maintaining mixed and balanced communities in County Durham

In order to continue to support and maintain mixed and balanced communities, the council

will make use of evidence to understand, on a localised basis, the extent to which communities are 'unbalanced'. It is important to note that there is no single indicator which can be used to assess whether an area is unbalanced and issues can present themselves at different geographies. Where an issue is identified which requires intervention, the council will use a variety of housing regeneration activities, suited to the needs of the area and the community. The council will consider replicating the types of interventions which have been successful in the past. However, in addition, the council will continue to explore innovative new methods to support communities.

Registered Providers make a substantial contribution to communities across the County both as landlords and in the support provided to tenants. Following a sale of a former right to buy properties, Providers have an option to buy back their former stock and return this property to the supply of affordable homes. In practice however, this option is rarely taken and this means that homes are lost from the affordable tenure. Overtime, a number of properties can migrate to other tenures, including the private rented sector, which can result in concentrations of tenures to the detriment of the community and the Provider. In this context, Registered Providers will be encouraged to exercise their option to 'buy back' properties following a previous right to buy. Such an approach is in keeping with the Providers Neighbourhood and Community Standard and in particular, local area cooperation.

Strategic framework for future actions to improve mixed and balanced communities

The council will continue to develop and monitor evidence to understand issues associated with balance and potential decline. Where appropriate, the council will develop a localised and targeted delivery plan to consider issues and responses. These will be developed with input from key partners and the local community and will look to identify funding streams to support interventions (secured and potential). Funding sources may include government programmes or opportunities to make use of Section 106 funds to bring stock back into use.

The council will encourage Registered Providers to exercise their option to buy back former right to buy stock to assist in supporting and maintaining mixed and balanced communities.

The case studies note some examples of delivery in County Durham related to this outcome area. It is however, important to note, that government policy has moved away from such interventions and at present there is no funding support for projects of this nature. The council will however, continue to deliver improvements where possible and to explore funding opportunities as they arise.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Support and maintain mixed and balanced communities across County Durham

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing renewal and estate regeneration Wheatley Hill

Case Study: Wheatley Hill housing renewal and estate regeneration

The renewal strategy has been undertaken in line with the 2010 approved masterplan. This masterplan contained the following objectives:

- To create sustainable communities where people want to live;
- To create attractive, vibrant and successful places;
- To secure housing and economic development investment;
- To provide a basis to direct physical renewal;
- To improve the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors;
- To improve the environmental quality of the villages; and,
- To comply with wider regeneration objectives.

Delivery and investment

Demolition of 30 properties at the Peterlee Cottages site.

Small scale selective demolition on a number of smaller housing sites.

Demolition of 32 properties in Henderson Avenue & Cain Terrace.

Demolition of 8 properties in Ryan Terrace.

Landscaping of a number of demolition sites.

A 65 unit Housing Development delivered successfully by Gleeson Homes.

Investment of approximately £2.3m has led to a new medical centre development built in the centre of the village leading to the provision of improved health care facilities for residents.

Before:



Under construction:



Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Support and maintain mixed and balanced communities across County Durham

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing Regeneration – Group Repair Wembley

Case Study: Wembley, Easington Colliery

A group repair scheme encompassing external facelift works to the properties.

Group Repair was carried out across the six streets making up Wembley, over three phases:

- Thorpe and Noble Streets;
- John and Thomas Streets; and
- Hawthorn and James Streets.

Outcomes

80% of properties benefitted from improvement works

160 properties were improved

Before:



After:



More and Better Homes

Aim

Objective

Maintain and improve standard across County Durham's housing stock and wider environment

Outcome

Address empty homes to support communities

The council will work within those communities most effected by long term empty properties. This will include working with property owners and landlords with the aim of bringing empty homes back into use.

Empty homes are an inevitable part of churn in a functioning housing market. However, there is a concern when homes have been empty for a long time, as they are not contributing to meeting housing needs and they can be associated with crime and anti-social behaviour to the detriment of local residents. There are 10,134 privately owned Empty Homes in County Durham – this equates to 3.7% of all properties (03/05/19). 2.7% of these have been empty for 6 months or more and are regarded as long term empty properties.

Sub-County Overview: Settlements with higher than average levels of long term empty homes

South Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dene Valley has 203 properties empty for 6 months or more (12.2%). This is the highest number of long term empties in a postcode settlement within the County. Dene Valley incorporates Eldon, Eldon Lane, Coundon, Coundon Grange and Auckland Park. Ferryhill has 123 home empty for 6 months which is 3% of the postcode settlement area.
East Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Horden numbered streets have 121 homes that have been empty for 6 months or longer, which is 18.5% this is the highest proportion of long term empty homes in a postcode settlement in the County. Easington postcode settlement has 4% or 189 long term empty homes.
North Durham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley (incorporating South Moor, New Kyo and Quaking Houses) has 171 long term empty homes, which is 3.6% of the stock in the postcode settlement area. The Grange Villa postcode settlement has 100 long term empty homes. which is 2.2% of the area stock.

In addition, a number of smaller settlements across the County experience above average proportions of long term empty properties, but caused by a relatively small number of properties.

Working to bring empty homes back into use

The council will seek to focus on privately owned long term empty homes, those which have been empty for 6 months or more. Actions will be considered across the county but will be prioritised in areas with above the County average level of concentrations (proportion or incidence) of long term empty homes in a given geography or tenure. The county average is 2.7% (03/05/19). The council will also look at opportunities to bring empty non-residential properties into use as residential properties.

The council is involved in a range of activities to bring empty homes back in to use. This includes working with property owners to help them sell or rent properties. This can be achieved either by marketing properties through Durham Key Options for rent, or if the owner wishes to sell the property linking them with developers, investors, registered providers or landlords who are seeking to purchase properties. Partnership working is key in this policy area. In addition the council has and will continue to provide financial assistance loans and grants to potential purchasers and empty home owners of long term empty properties. This approach has been highly successful with loans being repaid and recycled to support the development of stock across the County. The council will also provide support landlords to manage their properties to a professional standard offering tenancy advice and documents through the councils private landlord accreditation scheme.

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan notes that in some circumstances, and in lieu of a affordable housing contribution, the council may consider that the most appropriate course of action is to make use of Section 106 contributions to support specific regeneration activities, including bringing viable vacant housing back into use. In this regard, the council will consider opportunities where they arise.

It is however recognised, that not all properties can be brought back into use and in these circumstances the council may consider other options where it is financially viable to do so. Some properties may be structurally unsound and should be demolished. Other properties may be in areas where housing demand is low and it is not always financially viable to bring a property back into use. The council will develop and monitor to provide an evidence base which would inform future opportunities for targeted interventions where it is considered that stock may have reached the end of its life. This evidence base will be used to inform bids to government and to identify potential future regeneration opportunities.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Bringing empty homes back into use to meet housing needs and to support communities

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing Regeneration, South Moor.

Case Study: Housing Regeneration, South Moor.

In 2012 a successful bid to the DCLG Empty Homes Fund facilitated the development of a South Moor Partnership Housing Regeneration Plan and released kick start funding for property and streetscape improvements in South Moor's oldest colliery terraces.

This initial investment was match funded with ECO funding from British Gas and Bernicia Homes for solid wall insulation on 50 properties on Pine Street.

Sustainable urban drainage scheme

Derwentside Homes and The Environment Agency funded major public realm improvements to introduce sustainable urban drainage (SUD) planting including trees and new highway surfacing and paving.

The trees, as well as improving the public realm, served to channel and retain surface water run off away from the main combined sewer. Excess runoff and rainfall from the South Moor Terraces in periods of heavy rain frequently caused sewage outfall at the overflow which discharged directly into the burn in the Memorial Park.

Heritage trail

A successful Heritage Lottery Bid with match funding from Stanley Town Council facilitated the installation of a heritage trail around the village and the siting of new signage, street trees and interpretation boards. South Moor Heritage trail is a circular walk around key eight heritage sites of South Moor and Quaking Houses that existed during or soon after the First World War. Each site is marked by an interpretation board detailing the significance and heritage of the site.

Phase 2 improvements

Phase 2 of improvements to Poplar Street commenced in March 2017 with the installation of further new SUD street trees to be followed by road resurfacing funded by the council's highways team and the installation of brick solid wall insulation on 100 properties funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the council.

Before:



After:



Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Delivery of More Homes

Outcome

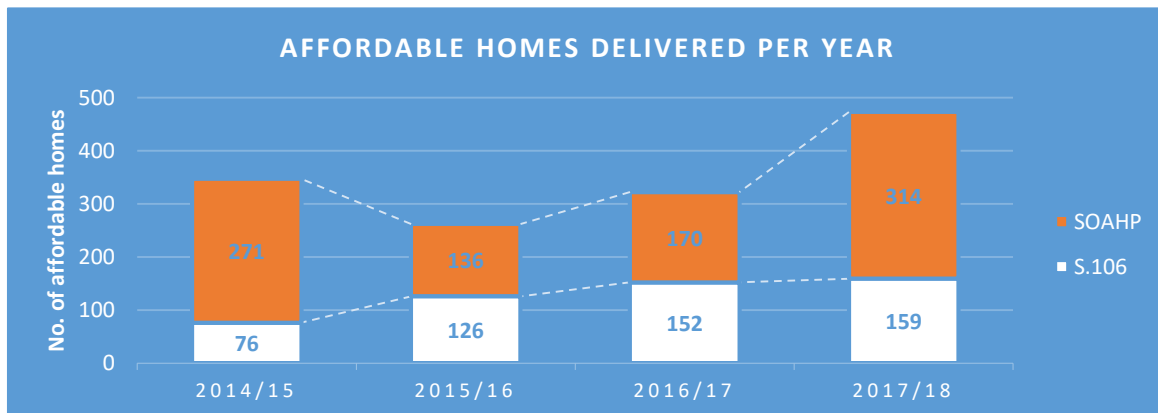
Delivery of high quality affordable homes to meet housing needs in County Durham

The delivery of affordable housing will be maximised both, by securing developer contributions as part of new housing development but also through close partnership working with Registered Providers and Homes England. Affordable housing will be provided in line with tenants aspirations for affordable (social) rented accommodation.

Affordable housing is for those people who lack their own home or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their housing needs through the market. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a definition of the types of homes which are regarded as Affordable Housing. It is this definition which is used for planning purposes and for the Housing Strategy. NPPF defines affordable housing as consisting of either affordable housing for rent, starter homes, discounted market sales housing or other affordable routes to home ownership

Past Delivery of affordable homes

Affordable housing is delivered by two main routes. As set out in the graph below, in County Durham the majority of affordable housing has been delivered by the National Affordable Homes Programme (NAHP) and Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP) administered by Homes England. Affordable housing is also delivered through planning applications through a Section 106 legal agreement. The proportion of affordable housing delivered through planning applications is determined by local plan policies and related evidence and is subject to an assessment of viability.



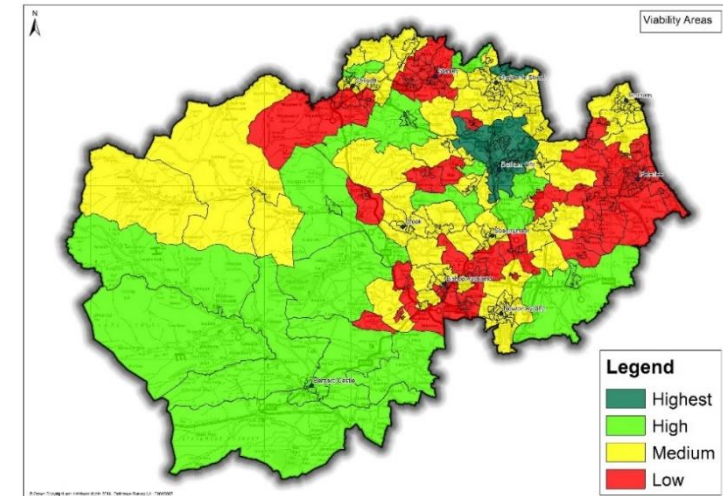
Who is in housing need in County Durham?

The council makes use of its Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to assess the need for affordable housing in County Durham. This document sets out the council's evidence base for understanding housing need in the County. The SHMA identifies a net shortfall of 836 affordable dwellings per year (2016 -35).

Delivering Affordable Homes

Affordable housing will continue to be delivered through SHOAP Grant and through S.106 legal agreement. The council will work in partnership with Registered Providers and maximise opportunities to deliver affordable homes.

Through the Pre Submission County Durham Plan and in line with evidence the following proportions of affordable housing will be sought as part of planning applications for more than 10 units: Highest 25%; High: 20%; Medium: 15% and low: 10%



Registered Providers will be encouraged to exercise their option to 'buy back' properties following a previous right to buy. At present, this option is rarely exercised, however, by exercising their 'buy back' option, Registered Providers will be supplementing the stock of affordable homes. Importantly, whilst SHOAP and S.106 provides new build affordable homes, this mechanism provides a means to provide affordable homes within existing communities and to meet housing needs.

The SHMA suggests that a tenure mix of affordable housing across the county of 70% affordable (social) rented housing and 30% intermediate housing would be appropriate. This evidence has informed the policy in the Pre Submission County Durham Plan. Other factors will also need to be taken into account, including the tenure mix in the existing settlement, local housing need, the viability of the site and the availability of related mortgage products.

The council will explore opportunities for community led housing.

Aim

More and better homes

Objective

Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demands

Outcome

Meeting the housing needs of our residents across County Durham

The council recognises that certain residents have specific housing needs as considered below:

In some circumstances, an element of market housing may be acceptable, provided that it is robustly shown to be necessary to achieve viability across the whole scheme.

Student accommodation in Durham City

Durham University is a major asset to the City, shaping the built environment, contributing to the cultural offer developing highly skilled individuals as well being a major employer and a purchaser of local goods and services. The University has published its masterplan for the period 2017 – 27 which sets out future student numbers.

Sites for travellers

County Durham has significant numbers of gypsies and travellers. Most live in housing but a sizable population live on six council sites and a number of authorised private sites across the county. County Durham has the second highest number of social pitches for gypsies and travellers of all English authorities and over a third of all pitches for gypsies and travellers in the north east. The council also provides six temporary 'stop over' areas in the county which are made available for 28 days or less each year for seasonal use, also enabling gypsies and travellers to travel to popular events like Appleby Fair. The council takes responsibility for maintaining gates, fencing, grass cutting, and the access points to these areas. Refuse collection and temporary toilets are also provided to gypsies and travellers using other areas, to enable them to travel and maintain their cultural lifestyle. The council has also recently completed a comprehensive refurbishment programme of all of our sites to modern standards and have introduced modern management regimes. Ten additional pitches were created as part of this process.

It is recognised that there can be an adverse impact on residential amenity in parts of Durham City in locations where houses in multiple occupation (HMO) are dominant. The council has introduced 'Article 4 Directions' covering parts of Durham City, Framwellgate Moor, Newton Hall and Pity Me, meaning that planning permission is required to convert a family home to a HMO. In addition the council has introduced an 'Interim Policy' to assess proposals for both Purpose Built Student Accommodation and HMOs. The Pre Submission County Durham Plan sets out an updated version of the Interim Policy.

The council's Travellers Site Needs Assessment concludes that for the ten year period to 2026 there will be need for additional pitches for five gypsy and traveller households. However, since the base date of the assessment, an additional pitch has been granted planning permission which will accommodate two households. Furthermore, the number of new private pitches granted planning permission has averaged around five per year over the last five years. It is therefore reasonable to expect that need identified will be met through continuing permissions arising from planning applications over the next few years and therefore no additional sites have been allocated in the Pre Submission County Durham Plan.

Rural exception sites

County Durham has substantial rural areas, which are characterised by villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings. There may be circumstances where affordable housing is needed in these areas but can only be delivered by permitting development in rural areas either adjacent or close to existing settlements which would normally be contrary to planning policies. Such sites are known as exception sites.

There are also three sites for travelling showpeople in the county. Travelling showpeople have specific requirements including the need for good access to the road network to travel to fairs and shows, along with space within sites to store and maintain equipment. The Travellers Site Needs Assessment considered the need for new plots and sites for travelling showpeople and concluded that no new plots and sites will be needed.

Affordable housing which is being proposed should meet local needs and reflect demand for particular sizes, types and tenures of housing. It must be justified and demonstrated by appropriate evidence, including a local needs study. Those regarded as being in local need are:

- People who need to be housed but are unable to compete in either the open market for house purchase or are unable to afford private sector rents; and
- People who are local to a village or a group of villages by birth, previous or current residence, employment or by virtue of having a close family member living in the area.

Delivering homes to meet needs

It is generally expected that any scheme proposed should consist entirely of affordable housing.

These housing needs will be met through the council's 'saved' local plan policies and evidence developed as part of the County Durham Plan.

Aim

More and better homes

Objective

Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demand

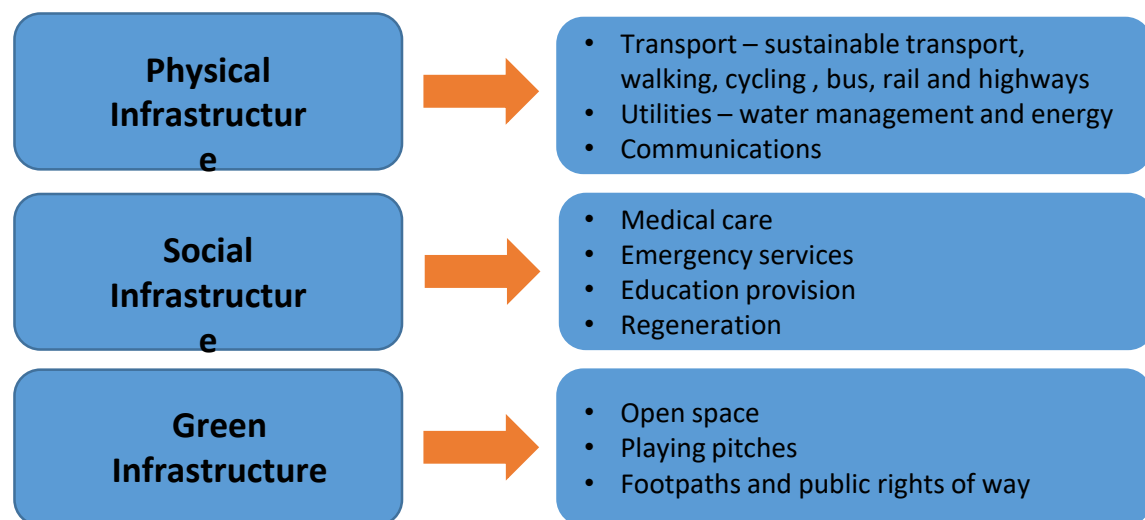
Outcome

Delivery of infrastructure alongside housing development to support communities

The council will deliver infrastructure as described in the County Durham Plan Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), through saved policies, the County Durham Plan and via s.106 contributions.

The IDP describes County Durham's infrastructure requirements to support the delivery of the County Durham Plan until 2035. The IDP has been developed in partnership with providers to identify infrastructure needs, delivery costs, and particularly seeks to identify barriers such as shortfalls in finance relating to infrastructure delivery. The IDP assists partners to make efficient decisions about their own investment programmes and has been developed in co-operation with adjoining local authorities to identify cross boundary issues. The IDP highlights some of the key development aspirations of the County Durham Plan including where future housing and jobs will be located, and identifies those places where additional infrastructure or capacity is needed in the future.

The IDP considers Infrastructure requirements in terms of physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and green infrastructure. The scope of the IDP is as follows:



The IDP contains a *report* describing the specific types of infrastructure in County Durham and highlights future investment issues and the impact of the County Durham Plan. The IDP also

contains a *schedule* which provides a financial breakdown of investment across the County. It notes where infrastructure funding is in place and where it is not. Whilst full details across a range of infrastructure types are set out in the IDP a summary example of content scope is below:

County Durham Context	IDP context	IDP Delivery approach
Education		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 269 Schools in County Durham Between 2017 and 2029, projections indicate that there will be 2,500 more primary age pupils and 2,800 secondary age pupils (11-16) These increases do not take account of future housing developments as set out in the CDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDP Notes surplus capacity will be sought to be maintained at between 5% and 10% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future capital investment in schools will reflect Government initiatives; any additional funding will be used to improve the condition and suitability of buildings and the provision of additional school places where required. S.106 contributions to support new provision linked to requirements arising as a result of the proposal.
GP Surgeries and Health Care		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Durham has an increasingly ageing population – this will result in an increase in the demand for healthcare services. Commissioners are currently assessing the impact of this level of population growth on their commissioning intentions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDP identifies areas where there is likely to be a requirement for investment in additional consulting space in general practice based on current patterns of care. The ISP assumes that each additional house will result in additional population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial information in the IDP Schedule relates only to the initial capital cost of building the extra premises and does not include the recurrent revenue costs. S.106 contributions to support new provision linked to requirements arising as a result of the proposal.

The provision of infrastructure alongside planning approvals

Through the processing of planning applications the council will seek to secure contributions for infrastructure. However, it is important to note that the council must pass strict legal tests in order to secure contributions from developers and these must be clearly linked to the proposal in question.

Aim

More and better homes

Objective

Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demand

Outcome

Deliver high quality new homes that meet the needs and aspirations of existing and future residents in County Durham

New housing will be of a high quality design to meet the needs and aspirations of our families, with the right homes being delivered in the right places to support sustainable communities. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework the Pre Submission County Durham Plan provides for objectively assessed needs for housing. Housing needs have been developed in line with the government's Planning Practice Guidance and reflect the government's technical consultation published in October 2018. The housing need for County Durham is therefore 1,308 dwellings per annum equating to 24,852 dwellings over the Plan period 2016 – 2035.

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan seeks to ensure that housing needs for the county are met. In this context, it is recognised that there are a number of sources of housing supply that can contribute to meeting this need. The gap between this contribution and the total housing need determines how much additional land needs to be allocated. In this context, the Plan considers supply side factors such as commitments, windfall, empty homes, the impact of purpose built student accommodation on the market and demolitions. Full consideration of these factors is set out within the Plan and related evidence base. In respect of commitments however, it is notable that a significant proportion of the new houses needed in County Durham are already committed either on sites under construction or sites not started with planning permission (a total of 15,946 houses as 30th September 2018). Based on an investigation into the lapse rate of planning permissions granted in the County, analysis suggests that a 10% lapse rate, applied to the existing commitments is appropriate.

Delivering the right homes in the right places to support sustainable communities

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan seeks to distribute housing in line with a 'Sustainable Communities' spatial approach. The Sustainable Communities option for the spatial strategy for the distribution of housing, which is the starting point for identifying housing allocations, is a dispersed pattern of development located in key settlements across the county and principally focused in and around the towns where the greatest opportunities for employment, services and facilities, public transport and other infrastructure such as healthcare and education exist. This will ensure there will be a balance of housing across the County taking into account the most sustainable locations, market attractiveness and the prospects for regeneration to meet our housing needs.

In order to achieve successful places, an appropriate level of new housing is identified in settlements to ensure they can be sustained and become vibrant places to live.

Building the right type and mix of homes to complement our stock and to meet needs and aspirations

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan seeks to secure an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, taking account of existing imbalances in the housing stock, site characteristics, viability and market considerations. It is recognised that the county has an imbalanced housing stock in relation to type and mix, with for example a higher proportion of terraced housing compared with the national average. This is largely a result of the industrial legacy. The council has started to improve its economy and to maximise the opportunities for growth across the county. In order to support these economic ambitions and expectations of residents we need a complimentary housing offer with better homes in the right locations. Our housing need therefore goes beyond increasing the supply of housing and this has been reflected as far as possible in the delivery strategy underpinning the Plan.

In terms of the type and mix of housing, it is recognised that there are parts of County Durham, particularly in the east and south of the county, that are associated with low demand for housing. In such instances it will be important to ensure that development does not perpetuate low demand, for example through the delivery of entry-level properties. We therefore need to ensure an appropriate choice and mix to meet the requirements of a range of household sizes, ages and incomes.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides information on dwelling stock profile and household preferences. The SHMA can help to inform an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes on new housing developments.

The Pre Submission County Durham Plan also notes the opportunity to facilitate self build or custom build schemes in line with the council's statutory obligations in this regard, noting that at present the council has sufficient planning consents in place to meet the demand evidenced by our self build register.

Delivering homes to meet housing needs

Housing needs will be met through the council's 'saved' local plan policies and evidence developed as part of the County Durham Plan.

Aim

Better housing support for County Durham residents

Objective

To provide advice, assistance and support for older and vulnerable people

Outcome

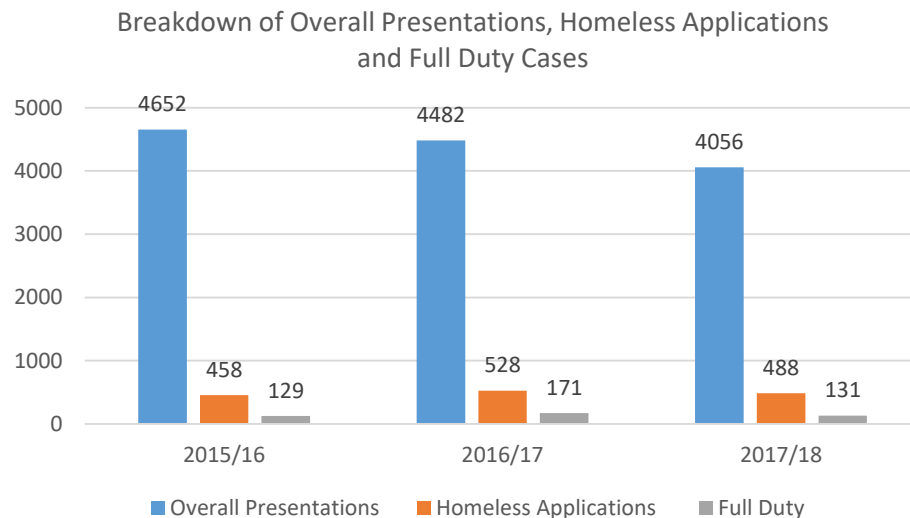
Prevention of homelessness in County Durham

The council will introduce a strategic approach to seek to prevent homelessness in County Durham, increase the supply of accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and will work in partnership with other stakeholders to provide support those with complex needs.

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires each local authority to review homelessness in their area, publish the results of the review and produce a homelessness strategy.

Headline statistics

In 2016/17 4482 households approached the council's Housing Solutions Advice Line, 528 went on to complete a homeless application form and 171 were found to be homeless in line with the legislation. The below graph shows the breakdown of these figures for the last three financial years.



In 2016/2017 the main reason for households requiring advice was in relation to financial difficulty. For those households accepted as homeless the main reason was loss of assured short hold tenancy.

Strategic approach

The council is developing a separate Homelessness Strategy to set out its approach to addressing homelessness. This document includes an action plan for preventing homelessness, this has been the approach in County Durham for a number of years and is reflected in the existing strategy. In light of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 a new code of guidance has been published and the existing strategy is being updated.

The strategy includes three overall aims and an action plan will be produced for each aim. Some examples of actions are listed.

- **Aim one: To prevent homelessness through early intervention**
 - Ensure the provision of advice is available.
 - A range of prevention tools are available to offer people.
- **Aim Two: To increase access to and the supply of accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness**
 - Increase the existing supply of accommodation.
 - Develop a proposal for a buy to lease scheme.
- **Aim Three: To provide a range of support services to reduce the risk of households becoming homeless**
 - Ensure monitoring systems are in place to understand need.
 - Work in partnership with agencies to access support services.

Monitoring

A number of indicators have been developed as part of a performance management framework to ensure the strategy is being delivered and is effective. Some examples of these are;

- Number of people claiming homelessness
- Number of people provided with advice and assistance
- Total number of cases where homelessness has been prevented
- Number of additional properties to assist homeless people

Aim

Better housing support for County Durham residents

Objective

To provide housing advice, assistance and support for older vulnerable people

Outcome

Prevention of homelessness in County Durham

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing and support for rough sleepers**Case Study: Rough Sleeper Strategy Group**

In 2017/18 there was a slight increase in visible rough sleeping in Durham City. The needs of rough sleepers and the impact of rough sleeping on local communities and businesses prompted the council's Housing Solutions team to co-ordinate a partnership strategy to tackle the issue. One of the initiatives introduced an outreach worker to provide assertive outreach to Rough Sleepers in Durham. A wrap around package of support is offered to help find suitable alternative accommodation, address health needs, prevent repeat homelessness, to motivate and build positive relationships to make better lifestyle choice.

Existing accommodation from local partners has been utilised to offer emergency temporary accommodation to those rough sleeping who want to engage with the service.

The Rough Sleeper Strategy Group enable the delivery of an action plan which is included in the Homelessness Strategy for County Durham. The action plan covers four aims: Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a communications plan.

Durham County Council have led a on a regional Rough Sleeper Initiative bid and secured Government funding to address Rough Sleeping across the region. The funding will be utilised to employ specific specialist workers and co-ordinate an approach to address the needs of Rough Sleepers.

Communication around Homelessness and Rough Sleeping is an issue in County Durham and this is included as an overall aim in the Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan. A communications campaign will be used to educate a wide range of target audience around Rough Sleeping and Homelessness.

Outreach worker offer

Worker does weekly sweeps of Durham City to identify Rough Sleepers

Addresses their health and wellbeing needs

Signposts to local services

Helps to find alternative accommodation

Provides financial support and assists with Universal Credit claims

Provides a drop in at Sanctuary 21



Aim

Better housing support for County Durham residents

Objective

To provide housing advice, assistance and support for older vulnerable people

Outcome

Prevention of homelessness in County Durham

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing for single females at risk of homelessness

Case Study: Single females accommodation

Analysis of data indicated an increase in single females at risk of homelessness contacting the council's Housing Solutions service. In response to this increase, a project was developed to provide accommodation for single females..

The facility was opened 23rd October 2017 and was developed by Changing Lives, a registered charity operating in County Durham

Housing Solutions contributed to the development of the provision by way of grant funding to assist in meeting the needs of homeless single females.

The provision contains 6 single furnished bedrooms with shared kitchen and bathing facilities.

The facility includes a safe room which caters for those in need of emergency temporary accommodation.

Amenities

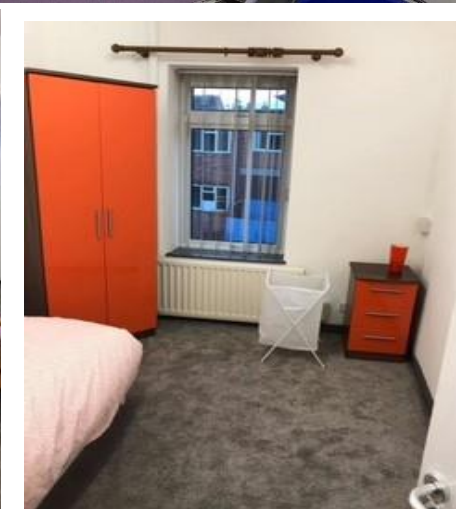
Communal lounge area	Private rear garden area	Cooking facilities	IT facilities	Bathing facilities	Laundry facilities	On going resident support
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Specialist features

On site 24 hour support	Asset coach – targeted support for future tenancy sustainment	GAP girls are proud
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Specialist features

Out of hours 24 hr access to provision	Dedicated housing staff to provide quality support and advice	Opportunities to engage in employment and volunteering schemes	Financial inclusion team to provide advice on budget and savings
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Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Improve energy efficiency of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm, healthy and energy efficient homes.

The council will maximise the opportunities available to address fuel poverty through combining advice schemes and heating improvements and targeting interventions at those most in need. Good quality housing is essential in supporting economic growth in the County as well as being a key determinant for people's health and wellbeing. Making improvements to homes to address fuel poverty also has wider environmental benefits.

Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty is measured using the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator. A household is considered to be fuel poor if they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level) and were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Three elements in determining whether a household is fuel poor:

Household income

Household energy requirements

Fuel Prices

Under the Warm and Healthy Homes Act 2000 the government is required to ensure all housing achieves a minimum Energy Performance Rating of Band C by 2030. Our evidence indicates that 14% of households in County Durham are fuel poor compared to 13.8% in the north east region. Evidence has determined that proportions of people in fuel poverty varies across County Durham. The evidence noted that the lower super output areas (LSOA) with the highest proportion of fuel poor households are in the West Durham Local Plan Monitoring Area. The St John Chapel LSOA has 33.9% of households in fuel poverty, the Middleton in Teesdale LSOA has 33.8% and the Barningham and Greta LSOA has 33.5% of households in fuel poverty. This can often be a symptom of households in the west of Durham not having access to the main gas network therefore, making use of more expensive alternative heating systems.

Past and current interventions in County Durham in relation to fuel poverty

As part of the council's Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan, the council has undertaken a series of fuel poverty interventions in the past, including the Warm Front and Warm up North Programmes which provided grants for central heating and insulation measures. The council is currently delivering the Energy Company Obligation programme to provide energy efficiency improvements to homes and the Warm & Healthy Homes programme to support the implementation

of energy efficiency measures for homeowners in fuel poverty or having a cold related illness.

Future interventions to address fuel poverty

In terms of future actions, it is recognised that current interventions will continue in line with the Affordable Warmth Action Plan (2015-20). However, it is recognised that the benefits of existing schemes are sometimes limited by behavioural and knowledge barriers which reduces the effectiveness of interventions. It is considered that this may be overcome through area based promoting and by ensuring integration between current energy and heating advice schemes with those which provide insulation and heating improvements. Evidence on fuel poverty by location provides a means to target interventions at those in most need. There is an opportunity to continue the joint working with the Clinical Commissioning Groups and Macmillian cancer support to assist households with cold related illness who are in fuel poverty including reviewing the impact of the Silverdale fuel poverty and health initiative pilot.

Stock condition

The Stock Condition Survey (2012) used a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to evaluate properties. This survey takes account of a range of hazards in order to assist the council in identifying and protecting against potential risks from deficiencies identified in dwellings. In County Durham 13.6% of properties had housing safety hazards.

Past and current interventions to address issues associated with stock condition

A range of interventions have been undertaken across County Durham to improve property conditions. There have also been focused group repair interventions in specific locations and in response to identified issues. Interventions have included inspections of private rented properties and providing financial assistance to properties owners to improve properties to bring them back into use.

Future interventions to address stock condition

It is recognised that localised schemes which focus resources can have a positive impact in the targeted areas. Given the constrained funding environment, a geographically focused approach based evidence of those locations with high concentrations of HHSRS issues, is considered appropriate. Interventions will also be informed by evidence on empty homes.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Improve energy efficiency of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm, healthy and energy efficient homes

Case study

Delivery in action: Housing regeneration and energy efficiency- Craghead Stanley

Case Study: Craghead, Stanley - Housing Regeneration and Energy efficiency.

This project included repair works and measures to improve the energy efficiency rating of groups of properties as well as the creation of off street parking and a new landscaped open space.

Delivery

Funding was secured through the national Strategic Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) in 2007 and a 3.5M improvement programme commenced in 2008 with the selective demolition of 18 properties in central Craghead.

Phase 2 of the housing regeneration scheme was taken forward by Durham County Council in 2010 through the delivery of environmental improvements, group repair, off street parking and boundary wall improvements benefiting three streets in central Craghead.

Further investment from British Gas and SSE through the CESP, FIT and ECO programmes enabled 100 solar PV units and 250 further brick finish solid wall insulation installs to be delivered.

100% of landlords and property owners signed up for the scheme contributing up to 25% of the cost of the works.

To access property improvement grants, landlords within the repair areas were required to use the council's tenant referencing scheme which has resulted in more responsible lettings.

Energy Efficiency

A particular problem for Craghead was that 75% of homes had solid walls with very low energy efficiency ratings. The council pioneered a brick effect insulated render system to address this. Together with the installation of new doors and windows, these properties now achieve a significantly improved energy rating.

Benefits and outcomes

The project has had a significant impact on improving property and management standards. 154 properties have been improved so far and 89 properties have had solar PV panels fitted privately.

These housing renewal improvements encouraged a private developer to acquire the derelict primary school site in central Craghead to build 20 new 2 and 3 bed roomed houses for sale.

House prices have also improved with average house prices rising from £30,000 to £60,000 in Railway Street.

Before:



After:



Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Improve energy efficiency of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm, healthy and energy efficient homes

Case study

Delivery in action: The Warm Homes Campaign

Case Study: Warm Homes Campaign

The council's award winning Warm Homes Campaign co-ordinates delivery of the County Durham Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan by raising awareness, uptake and delivery of all local and national energy efficiency and fuel poverty programs to residents in County Durham. The Campaign has over 900 local community partners who help to generate referrals to the Warm Homes Team.

Delivery of the Warm Homes Campaign

The Campaign is delivered in partnership to promote the uptake of fuel poverty grant programmes to residents and to provide advice and support to access boiler replacement and home insulation grants and lower energy tariffs. The Warm Homes Campaign is a one-stop referral system for owner occupiers in County Durham to help residents have a warmer home and lower energy bills.

As part of the Campaign, for all enquiries received, eligibility for a broad range of services will be considered including:

- Energy Company Obligation (ECO) grants for boiler and heating replacements & wall and loft insulation measures;
- Support with energy bills, access to low cost energy tariffs and switching energy companies; accessing the Warm Homes Discount, fuel debt write off support and advice;
- Energy saving advice;
- Benefit checks (from the Welfare Rights Team); fire safety checks (from Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service);
- Help for those living in a cold home with a cold related illness.

Other services provided as part of the initiative includes:

- Targeted interventions such as the joint working with Clinical Commissioning Groups to assist residents with a cold related illness or respiratory disease access grants; and joint working with Macmillan cancer support service - Joining the Dots, to support vulnerable clients with warm home applications.
- Training for partner organisations;
- Signposting to other services.



Overview: Uptake of fuel poverty and efficiency grant programmes in County Durham as promoted by the council's Warm Homes Campaign

The Campaign assists with delivery of the County Durham Fuel Poverty Strategy to assist low income and fuel poor households to have a warm and healthy indoor environment and lower energy bills by delivering grant programmes for energy efficient boilers, central heating, wall and loft insulation measures and accessing cheaper energy tariffs.

The Warm Homes Campaign has drawn down over £8.9m of external funding into County Durham from the Energy Companies and central government to assist over 3,942 households to have warmer healthier home. These initiatives also contribute to the opportunities to maximising health improvements for vulnerable residents and minimise health harms.

The Campaign has received several regional and national awards in recognition of the assistance provided to fuel poor households in County Durham.

Aim

More and Better Homes

Objective

Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment

Outcome

Improve energy efficiency of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm, healthy and energy efficient homes

Case study

Delivery in action: The Managing Money Better Initiative

Case Study: Managing Money Better Initiative

The council's Managing Money Better Service provides free and impartial advice to save money on energy bills and to keep residents homes warm.

This service aims to reduce energy bills through finding a more competitive tariff and switching supplier, as well as offering fuel debt advice. This service is undertaken in partnership with the Prince Bishops Community Bank

Services include

A free home energy assessment, which includes:

- Assessment of fuel bills to see if savings can be made by switching suppliers;
- Guidance and advice on existing installed heating systems and controls; and
- Providing energy efficiency advice and arrange practical support, if needed, such as insulation, draught excluders and bleeding radiators.

Other advice provided as part of the initiative includes:

- Providing advice on benefit entitlements;
- Helping with money management, including budgeting and how to set up a bank / savings account with the Prince Bishop Community Bank; and
- Referrals to other relevant services that can help with finances, debt and home improvements if necessary.

Case study

This case study involves an elderly owner-occupier couple living in a large end terraced stone built property in Stanley, County Durham.

The couple had an energy debt of over £4,100 and contacted Managing Money Better (MMB) having been unable to convince their energy supplier that they were being overcharged on their energy usage.

During the MMB home visit a commercial electricity meter was found to be installed instead of a domestic meter. A meter inspection was arranged by MMB which found the meter was over 126% inaccurate.

A new domestic meter was installed and MMB asked the energy company to review all of the energy bills over the period the incorrect electric meter had been installed.

The energy company eventually admitted inaccurate billing had taken place and consequently wrote off all of the £4,150 of energy debt. In addition, the account was found to be in credit and the clients received a cheque for £940 from the energy company.

Money to burn?



Help is at hand to reduce your energy bills and keep your home warm.

Book a **free** visit with our home energy advisor.

We offer **free**, impartial advice to help you:

- Save money on your energy bills
- Move to the cheapest and best tariff for you
- Find out if you're entitled to a home energy grant

For more information, contact our Managing Money Better home energy advisor:

✉ warmhomes@durham.gov.uk
☎ 03000 268 000



Funded by



Aim

Better Housing support for County Durham Residents

Objective

To provide advice, assistance and support for older and vulnerable people

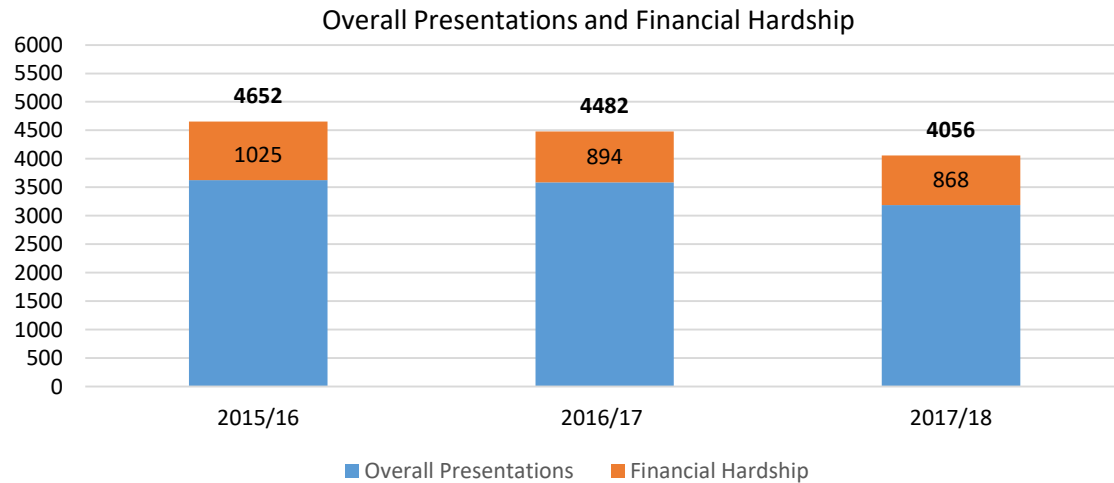
Outcomes

Addressing poverty, in a housing context, and the impacts of welfare reform in a housing context

There are increasing pressures on low income families following welfare reform. The various changes limit the amount of housing benefit payable towards housing costs. Families and single people have been affected by this and their housing options have become more limited. The introduction of universal credit has resulted in people falling into rent arrears whilst waiting for their first payment.

In terms of headline statistics:

- The unemployment rate in County Durham is improving but is still significantly below the national level
- The Gross Disposable Income has increased since 2013 (£15.040) but is still below the North East average.
- 20, 875 (23.9%) of children under 16 are classed as living in poverty.
- The main reason for clients contacting the council's Housing Solutions for housing advice is due to financial difficulties. This trend has been consistent for the last three years.



In response to welfare reform and the challenges in County Durham in relation to poverty, a Poverty Action Steering Group was established in 2013. The group developed an action plan covering five themes and continue to meet to discuss progress and agree additional actions.

The five key themes cover;

- Attitudes to poverty and raising the profile
- Focus on child poverty
- Credit and debt
- Understanding further welfare and benefit changes
- Work and personal wellbeing, sense of worth

In addition, a Housing Support Group for County Durham meet regularly to discuss the Housing Strategy and priorities for County Durham. Poverty has been prioritised as a key theme in line with the council's overall plan. The group is a partnership with all agencies and housing providers in County Durham and have agreed a number of actions over the next two years.

A number of interventions have been introduced to assist clients who are struggling financially. These interventions will be maintained to address needs as necessary. Some examples of interventions are:

- The introduction of a welfare assistance scheme
- A review of the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, 8,500 awards were made from April 2013 to March 2018.
- The introduction of a triage approach to assist clients, this considers employment, debt and housing and is a partnership with the housing providers operating in County Durham. Over 10,000 clients have been assessed since April 2013
- Close partnership working with Department of Work and Pensions in advance of the introduction of universal credit.
- A networking event with housing providers and other councils to discuss universal credit and share ideas on how assistance can be provided

In terms of further actions, the council's Housing Solutions continue to work closely with housing providers across County Durham to understand the welfare changes and the potential impact and to coordinate a joined up approach. An action plan is in place for the next two years and includes;

- A review and option appraisal of the triage to assist clients in financial difficulties who are struggling to meet their rent payments
- A review of the council's Financial Assistance Policy to consider if low interest loans or other financial products could be made available
- Review the existing performance information in relation to rent arrears, housing demand and empty properties.

Aim

Better housing support for County Durham residents

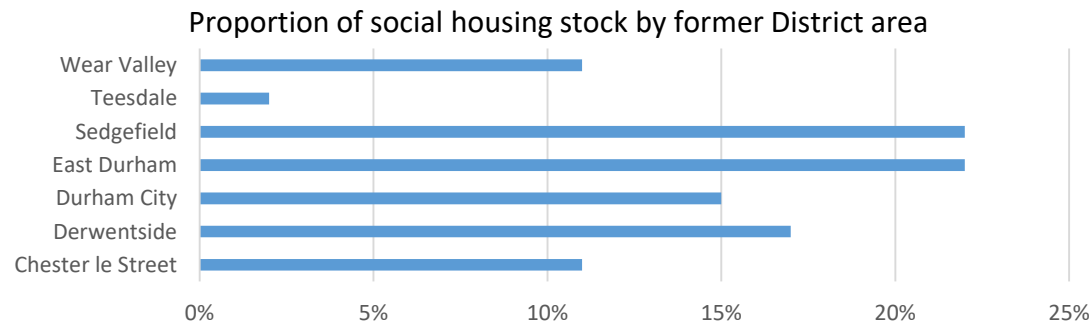
Objective

Improve Access to Housing

Outcome

Ensure Durham Key Options is accessible and easy to use

The Durham Key Options (DKO) choice-based letting (CBL) scheme is used to let properties to people who are eligible for and qualify to join the local authority housing register, in partnership with the following Registered Housing Providers, believe housing (formerly Dale & Valley Homes, Durham City Homes and East Durham Homes), Karbon Homes, Livin, and North Star Housing. The partnership is committed to enabling applicants to be active in choosing where to live and letting homes to people in greatest need. The full landlord partners make up around 39,000 homes of the 45,000 social homes in County Durham (based on the 2011 census). A further 14 registered providers are signed to a nomination agreement with Durham County Council to allocate 50% of their homes through Durham Key Options.



The main aims and objectives of DKO are:

- to provide a housing letting system which is easily understood and accessible to all;
- to increase mobility across all tenures, to ensure a more effective use of housing across County Durham; providing a mixed, cohesive and sustainable communities;
- to improve information for strategic planning; increasing the supply of properties and helping authorities to meet their statutory housing duties - preventing homelessness and helping vulnerable people; and
- to build effective partnerships across all the region's housing sectors – statutory, voluntary and private

Allocating Social Housing

Approaching 40,000 allocations of social housing have been made through DKO since it was created in 2008-2009 (East Durham Homes piloting the CBL system in its first year). 35,000 of these allocations were made by former council stock partners. Around 45% of all allocations are made to those in significant to urgent housing need. DKO has undergone two major policy changes since its creation. The first in 2013 to tackle welfare reform and associated issues, incorporating new housing needs into its banding assessments and the second in 2017 to assist partner landlords with demand issues, sustainability and void turnover. The second policy change in 2017 also allowed the partnership to simplify assessment of need and tackle issues of affordability. Over 10,000 registrations are made to DKO each year. Although welfare reform led to a significant rise in void loss and turnover for all landlord partners in 2013-14, both have now decreased each year for the last five years running.

Future delivery approach of DKO

The aim of the council and its Partners is to attract more customers to DKO, whilst ensuring those in the greatest need are housed. In this context, the partnership wish to raise awareness of the scheme, their properties available and the benefits of being a social tenant, whilst improving accessibility to homes and competing successfully within the housing market.

Through the Housing Support Group, (created by Durham County Council in partnership with Registered Providers in County Durham) the following actions have been designed to make DKO more accessible and to create greater demand for social housing in County Durham:

- Use evidence to confirm areas of lower demand for social housing and analyse, determine cause and seek to scope and implement interventions with registered providers;
- Review the DKO application process;
- Investigate affordability for social housing in County Durham; and
- Improve the appearance and functionality of the customer website (including mobile site) to support access and ease of use for prospective tenants.

There were 3,831 allocations made for social housing in 2018-19, a slight decrease of 4% from the previous year, indicating improved sustainability of existing tenancies. However, the partnership wish to improve accessibility to new tenancies in County Durham and make best use of their stock.

Aim**Better housing support for County Durham Residents****Objective****Improve access to housing****Issue****Increase housing offers and options available in County Durham**

The council has identified a gap in the housing market in order to discharge its homeless duties more effectively and for individuals without a history of proving to be a good tenant; with 1,600 households currently excluded from the Housing Register. Following support and assistance this is a barrier to people getting back on to the housing ladder often meaning they find themselves homeless and are unable to move on.

Private rented sector accommodation in Durham is becoming increasingly difficult to access for local people in housing need. Many low-income households report problems securing accommodation due to the level deposits and rent in advance charged by letting agents and landlords. There is a national reluctance by some social and private landlords to let to those in receipt of universal credit

The Government are encouraging Local Authorities to open a Local Letting Agency (LLA) to provide alternate housing options and are making funds available to establish LLAs.

Durham County Council has researched various options to provide good quality, affordable housing and tenancy support and is exploring the centralisation of housing products through a LLA as an option.

What is a Local Lettings Agency?

A LLA is a general term applied to schemes that secure access to decent, affordable private rental accommodation for households in need and on low incomes who would previously have been likely to access social housing. They also generate income to cover operational costs. The growth of LLAs has been a consequence of:

- the falling supply of social housing;
- growth in the private rented sector;
- expansion of 'housing options' approaches since the Homelessness Act 2002; and
- discharge of homeless duties in the private rented sector since the Localism Act 2011.

Durham County Council intend to develop a LLA. Through this LLA the council intend to meet the needs of those identified in the Homeless Strategy; vulnerable adults who are homeless, on low incomes and cannot for varying reasons access the Housing Register. The LLA will increase the supply of properties for homeless prevention, a new duty brought in under the Homeless Reduction Act 2017.

The council's LLA will aim through grant funding and redirection of section 106 monies to:

- Bring empty homes back into use;
- Rent properties from private landlords through a leasehold scheme; and
- Contribute to the regeneration key estates and areas of County Durham by the development of necessary housing stock.

This will enable Durham County Council to house individuals that are refused access to housing by other landlords; providing they are willing to accept support and move on with their lives. Tenancy help via Housing Management Officers will be given to assist in ensuring tenancy sustainment.

Next steps in the development of a Local Lettings Agency

- A report on establishing a Local Lettings Agency will be considered by Durham County council Cabinet in Summer 2019.
- The Local Lettings Agency will be established in line with government funding.
- An allocations board to allocate properties in association with partner agencies where necessary will be established .
- Applications will be made for capital funds when necessary.

Health and rural issues have been identified as cross cutting themes in the Housing Strategy. It is recognised that housing has an important role to play in supporting wider health and wellbeing objectives and that health requirements inform differing housing needs. Many housing issues have a rural dimension and it is important to ensure rural housing related issues are addressed and opportunities in a rural context are realised.

To support the development of the Housing Strategy a Health Impact Assessment (HIA), and Rural Proofing exercise were undertaken. Actions resulting from both the HIA and Rural Proofing sections have been mainstreamed within the respective outcome area and reflected the Action Plan as appropriate.

Health Impact Assessment

A HIA was led by the council's public health specialists who following a scoping exercise identified the following objectives and related outcomes for specific attention:

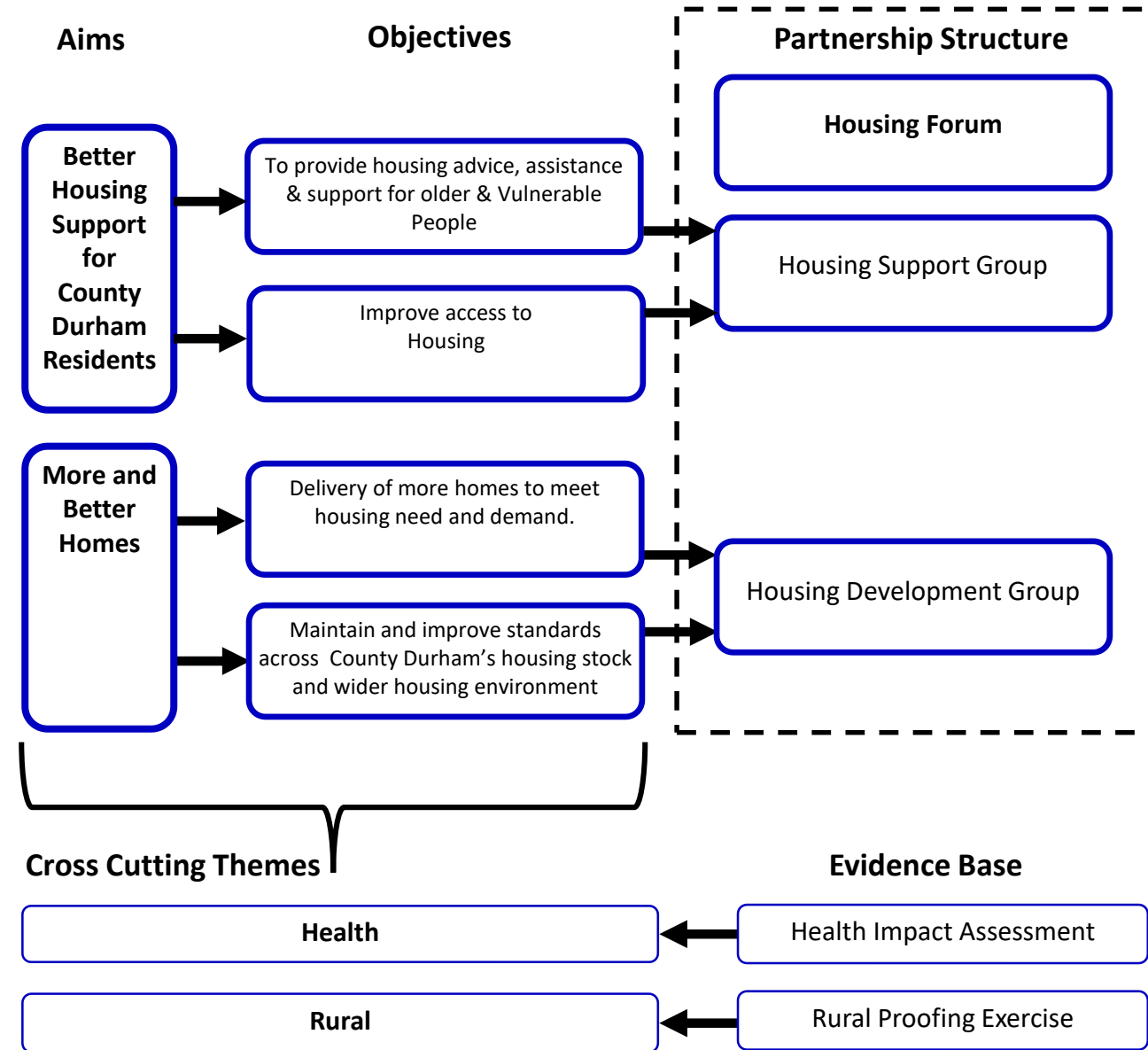
- To provide housing advice, assistance & support for older & Vulnerable People.
- Improve access to Housing.
- Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment.

The HIA process considered the potential positive and negative implications of the Housing Strategy on health and specific populations in County Durham. The HIA process resulted in a series of recommendations for the Strategy to support health and wellbeing objectives through the County's housing policy and practice. The HIA noted the positive work already underway and identified areas for development.

Rural Proofing

County Durham extends over 862 square miles from the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Beauty in the west to the Durham Heritage Coast in the east. Rural proofing aims to ensure that the needs of and issues affecting those living in rural areas is considered as part of strategy development.

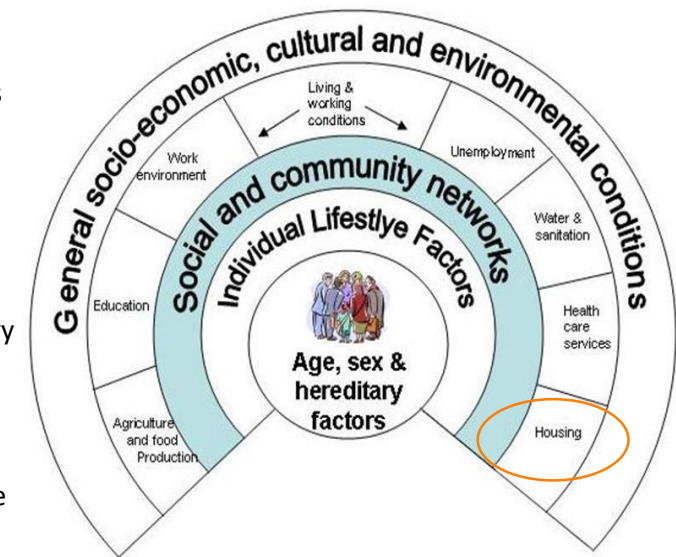
To undertake the rural proofing exercise the objectives, aims, outcomes and actions of the Housing Strategy were examined to recognise the differing needs of residents in rural areas and also the opportunities and advantages of rural areas in the county. The Rural Proofing exercise has provided a means to understand how the Housing Strategy identifies rural needs.



Health is a cross cutting theme of our Housing Strategy because we know that the homes and the places in which people live is a key determinant of their overall health and wellbeing - impacting their risk of illnesses, quality of life and access to appropriate support services. The 'social determinants of health' model, opposite, sets out that housing plays an integral part in the health of individuals and the general population. Whether people have a long term condition, are experiencing social or health inequalities or simply have changing needs as they get older, it is important that all homes in County Durham provide a safe, inclusive and secure environment for people to live and grow within their local community.

Working with partners from housing, health and social care, a Health Impact Assessment of this Strategy has been conducted in order to embed measures that can improve equity of access to quality housing, mitigate against financial barriers to having a secure home and prevent against accidents or injuries. This includes specific actions such as: supporting households to become smoke free, via delivery of activities such as Making Every Contact Count (MECC) to signpost residents to relevant and available services (detailed overleaf); enabling wider access to existing energy efficiency schemes; enhancing the accessibility of social housing; and upskilling housing staff to make the most of health improvement opportunities.

Through joint working with the Health and Wellbeing Group and Housing Support Group, in collaboration with our health and social services, the Housing Strategy aims to specifically support older and vulnerable people through adaptations and better integrated planning, promote independence and security, as well as preventing illnesses associated with poor housing. The Public Health England (PHE) Housing and Health Memorandum of Understanding sets out some features of the right home environment, and examples of our approach to address these are outlined below:



Key Features of the right environment

Housing Strategy delivery approach

It is warm and affordable to heat and has adequate ventilation to support good air quality and thermal comfort in extreme conditions.

The council has delivered energy efficient homes in areas such as Craghead Stanley. It is delivering the Warm Homes Campaign throughout County Durham, and working with health colleagues to support those with a variety of conditions such as respiratory diseases that can be improved by Warm Homes intervention. The Managing Money Better Service provides advice to save money on energy bills helping to reduce fuel poverty. The Housing Strategy will continue to drive energy efficient improvements of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm healthy and energy efficient homes.

It is free from hazards, safe from harm and promotes sense of security.

The Stock Condition Survey (2012) uses the HHSRS to evaluate properties and take into account hazards to enable the council to guard against potential risks. The Housing Strategy outlines the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme and Selective Licensing to raise standards in the private sector, including regarding hazards, harm and security measures. This work contributes to the reduction of and protects against health harms. Examples include slips, trips and falls in the home (elderly), accidents in the home (children) and the Home Environment Assessment Tool (Safeguarding).

It enables movement around the home and is accessible, including to visitors

New housing provision will include appropriate housing for older and vulnerable people, which includes specific needs such as accessibility, multi-generational family. New housing for disabled people and older people will be accessible and adaptable, according to Building Regulation Requirements M4(2)

Support from others if needed

Wider support to groups is provided through advice and guidance, sign-posting services and interventions to assist housing clients struggling financially. Support Packages to meet the needs of older and vulnerable people or are also being considered. Alongside the Housing Strategy, The Homelessness Strategy will provide support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through an extended offer of early intervention, supply of accommodation and support services.

Tenure that is stable and secure

The council has recently refurbished to modern (Quality Homes) standards and introduced modern management regimes across all traveller sites in County Durham, with ten additional pitches created as part of the process.

Case studies

Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

Home Environment Assessment Tool

Case Study: Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

The role of housing is recognised in policy and funding provision as an important factor in relieving pressures on the NHS and adult social care and enable older people and people with a disability to live in their own homes.

MECC has been delivered as an approach to support workforce connectivity with the health and wellbeing agenda, with a focus on the well-being of older people specifically self management/care, reducing isolation and improving mental health as key related themes.

Development: to promote better coordination and integration of services between health and housing organisations

The council's Policy Team with input from Public Health and Registered Providers (RPs) devised a survey to determine what community based health projects RPs were engaged in. Main Points were:

- Lifestyle interventions did not feature in core community activities.
- Each organisation has different monitoring and evaluation tools.
- Most activities continue to be developed and supported by Registered Providers core budget
- There is cross over between services, thus there is an opportunity to use this in referral services.

Results assisted the identification of further opportunities to engage and future joint working.

Delivery of MECC initial pilot

As part of MECC, an initial pilot offered training to upskill staff to encourage residents to consider making changes to their lifestyle of other aspects of their lives. Main points arising from this work:

- A good uptake from the training with 126 staff from four organisations participating.
- Positive participant feedback immediately after the training.
- Referrals where a client completed a six-week intervention supported by a Health Trainer reported post intervention self-efficacy scores in line with a Durham University evaluation.

Wider Workforce Development: Routes out of poverty

A series of training events were delivered in 2017 targeting the council's Housing, Children and Young Persons, Adult Health Services and NHS to understand roles work on solutions to case studies.

A clear joint strategic focus has now emerged through the refreshed Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Housing Strategy to acknowledge the strong links between housing and health.

Case Study: Home Environment Assessment Tool

Following on from MECC training other areas have developed, housing staff have contributed to and use the Home Environment Assessment Tool as a measure of a safe home environment.

The assessment tool has been developed with input from a wide range of multi-agency practitioners. It is designed to identify and support families where there may be early signs of neglect so that swift action can be taken to address and support families to improve home conditions for their children.

Contribution: Housing staff undertake assessments that contribute to multi agency support and intervention with vulnerable families

Housing staff who are involved in Team Around the Family (TAF) interventions carry out home visits as part of their practice with families. They may complete or contribute to the assessment to identify

- Safe home environment clear of hazards
- Home in good state of repair, home is warm and well ventilated
- Home free from rubbish / clutter / hoarding which is likely to pose a safety risk
- Adequate basic amenities including services to kitchen and bathroom

Results assist in opportunities for housing staff to engage in multi-agency support for families

Changes to physical housing

Housing staff and other practitioners work with the family on agreed actions in a family plan. Housing staff will focus on improvements to the home conditions in the knowledge it improves the wider social determinants of health. Actions include:

- Handyman / standard works / adaptations / home improvements
- Warm Homes initiatives / Warm homes discount / reduction in fuel poverty
- Housing support to reduce the risk of eviction or homelessness

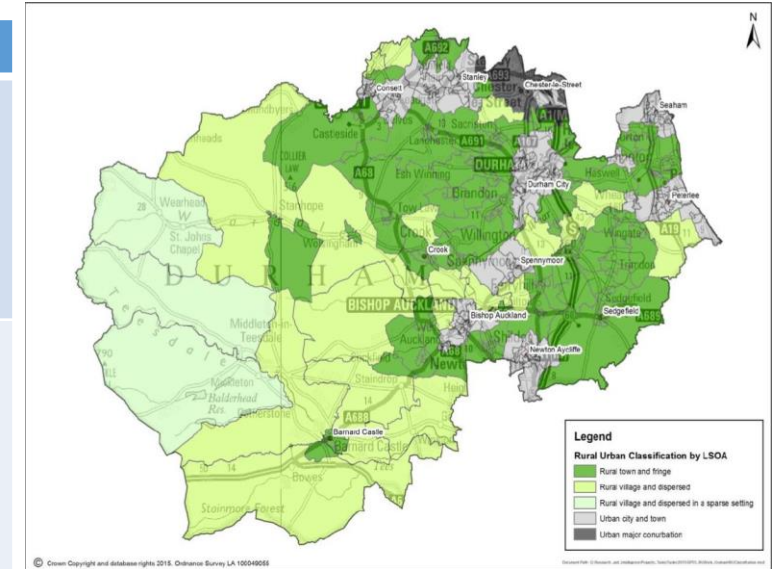
Links to wider housing and health themes

We know poor housing is linked to a variety of conditions such as respiratory diseases; infections and allergies; depression and anxiety; and physical injury from accidents.

In addition, it can have a huge impact upon a child development and the ability of individuals to achieve their potential, unsupported the effect of poor housing adds to health inequalities.

County Durham is regarded as predominantly rural. Although ninety percent of the population lives east of the A68 in 40% per cent of the geographical area of the County, around 43% of the population are based in rural areas (Census 2011). The character of the rural areas in the county also greatly differ, from more remote rural locations in the Pennine Dales to larger villages in former coal field communities in the centre and the east of the County. Residents in rural areas can have differing housing needs to those in non-rural areas according to their differing contexts and this is reflected in the Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy as undergone a rural proofing exercise to ensure the differing needs and issues affecting residents of rural areas are taken into account. The table below sets out how the Housing Strategy considers the rural context across its four objectives.

Objectives	How the Housing Strategy addresses rural needs
To provide housing advice, assistance & support for older & Vulnerable People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the council's Housing Market Position Statement will identify specialist housing provision to be provided across the county adaptations to existing homes will in particular benefit older persons in rural areas ensuring they can stay within their homes and their communities for longer. This would alleviate concerns regarding being displaced to another area as a result of lack of care and support available to them. The council's Housing Solutions Team will continue to work closely with housing providers across the County to understand the potential impact of welfare changes, including in a rural context. In respect of homelessness, monitoring processes will identify any localities that require any further investigations and support.
Improve access to Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durham Key Options (DKO) contains properties from across the county. The aim of the council is to continue to promote DKO raise awareness of the scheme and attract more customers to DKO whilst improving accessibility to homes. To support accessibility, services offered include: telephone applications; home visits; and appointments at various access points, (North Star for example have recently opened an access point in Barnard Castle). Online applications can be submitted by all clients or by advocates or support workers. For those who do not have access to online bidding, they can be added to an auto-bid facility on the system based on their preferences. These features are available to all and based on vulnerabilities as opposed to where applicants live, and can serve to support those in rural areas to access suitable accommodation. The proposed Local Letting Agency (LLA) will further improve access to existing properties that are decent and affordable for households on low-incomes.
Delivery of more homes to meet housing need and demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In reflecting the Pre Submission Draft County Durham Plan in designated rural areas (see map) the council will seek to secure a contribution towards the delivery affordable housing for schemes of between 6 and 10 units. As set out in the Housing Strategy, the Pre Submission Draft County Durham Plan provides for rural housing exception sites, with any affordable housing being proposed required to meet local needs and reflect demand for particular sizes, types and tenures of housing. Those regarded as being in local need are: People who need to be housed but are unable to compete in either the open market for house purchase or are unable to afford private sector rents; and People who are local to a village or a group of villages by birth, previous or current residence, employment or by virtue of having a close family member living in the area. The strategy will work with Registered Housing Providers to maximise opportunities to deliver affordable homes across the county. Registered Housing Providers will be encouraged to 'buy back' previous right to buy housing stock, which could support the provision of affordable housing stock within existing communities, including rural areas.
Maintain and improve standards across County Durham's housing stock and wider housing environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing selective licencing in rural areas would be of benefit to increasing standards. Multiple actions are involved in bringing empty homes back into occupation. S.106 contributions to support regeneration activities such as bringing existing properties back into use for the community in lieu of affordable housing contribution could also further benefit rural areas. The council will continue to develop and monitor evidence to understand the issues associated with balance and potential decline of rural areas and, where appropriate, localised and targeted delivery plans will be developed to consider issues and responses; developed with key partners and local communities. The Housing Strategy incorporates a range of measures to improve the energy efficiency of properties via a combination of advice and guidance schemes, heating improvements and targeted interventions to those in most need. These include the Managing Money Better Initiative, and the Warm Homes Campaign, which co-ordinates the County Durham Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan. It is a one-stop referral system for owner occupiers in County Durham to have warmer homes and lower energy bills. Other further actions relevant to rural areas have been bids by the council to fit external cladding to insulate dwelling without cavity walls. Traditionally, such schemes have been of particular benefit to improving stock condition in rural areas.



The Housing Strategy sets out the council's approach to a range of issues to seek to deliver positive outcomes for County Durham residents up to 2025.

As a strategic document, the Housing Strategy reflects other documents, including the County Durham Plan and the Homelessness Strategy. The Housing Strategy Strategic Action Plan therefore both sets out actions unique to the Housing Strategy but also consolidates and coordinates actions from other plans programmes and documents to present a complete overview of housing related actions.

Whilst this Strategy runs to 2025, some of the actions linked to other plans, will cover a longer time horizon for delivery. However, the Housing Strategy splits actions into short, medium and long term. Further detail on timescales will be set out at a project level.

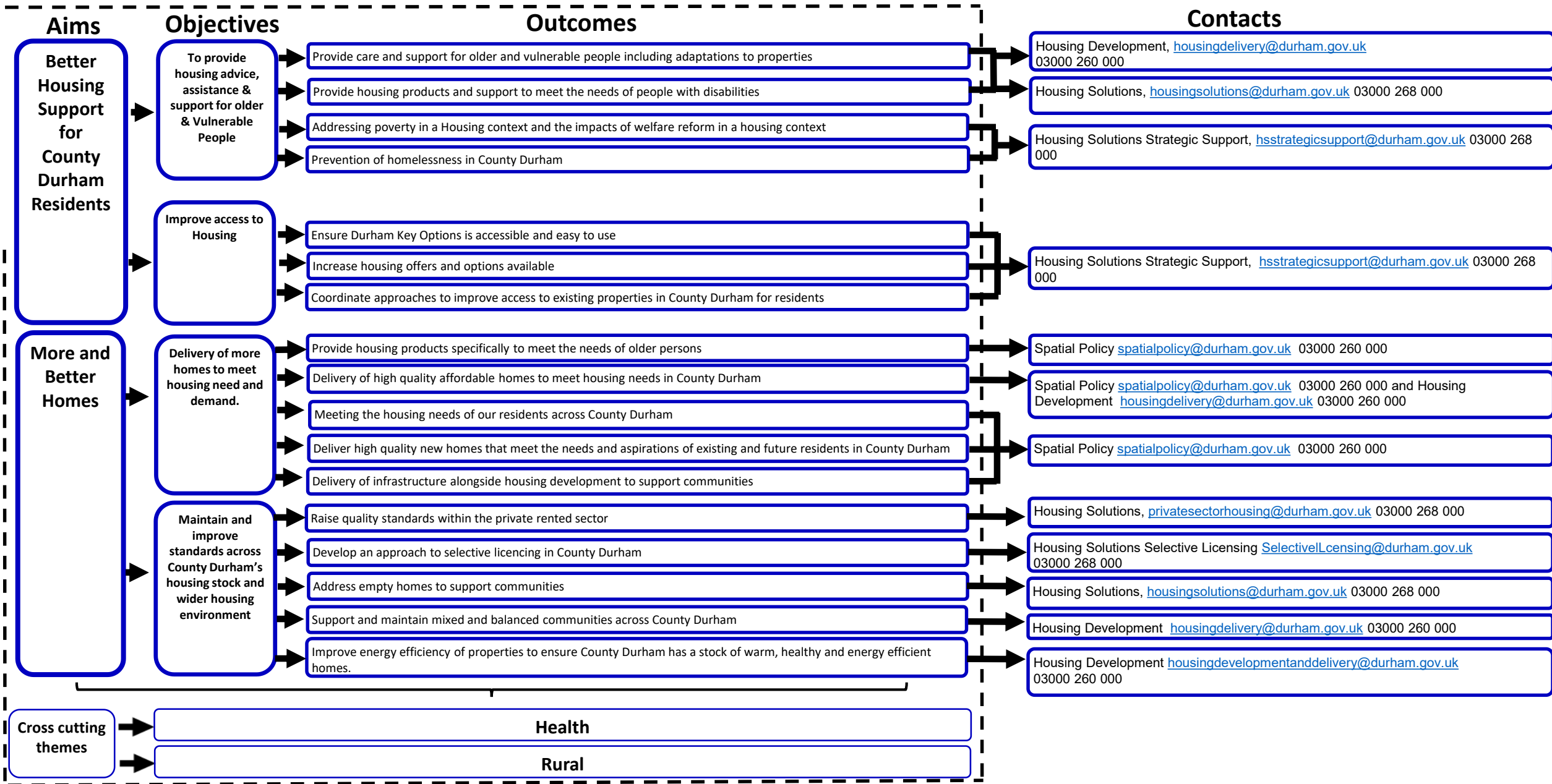
Ref	What	Timescale	Lead (and Partners)	Reporting / monitoring
Provide care and support for older and vulnerable people				
1.1	Develop a Housing Market Position Statement to consider the specific needs of the following groups and the geographical locations where services / specialist facilities are required: a) older persons; b) people with physical disabilities, mental health issues and people with learning difficulties; and c) single person homelessness	Medium to long term	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Head of Commissioning, Registered Housing providers	Housing Forum Housing Support Group and Housing Development Group, Joint information Sharing Group
1.2	Consider requirement for support packages to meet needs in County Durham	Short – medium	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Head of Commissioning, Registered Housing providers	Housing Support Group, Group Joint information Sharing Group
1.3	Continue to widen wrap around support to support vulnerable people to achieve and sustain tenancies.			
Addressing poverty in a Housing context and the impacts of welfare reform in a housing context				
2.1	Enable delivery of the Council's Poverty Plan and Child Poverty Plan, within a housing context	Short	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Head of Transformation and Partnerships and Childrens' Services	Housing Support Group, Housing Forum, Poverty Action Steering Group, Child Poverty Action Group
2.2	Work with landlords to enable greater understanding of the impact of poverty	Short		
2.3	Review and extend and raise awareness of the FAP	Short - medium		

Ref	What	Timescale	Lead (and Partners)	Reporting / monitoring
Prevention of homelessness in County Durham				
3.1	Prevent homelessness through early intervention	Medium – Long term	DCC Housing Solutions	Housing Support Group
3.2	Increase access to and Supply of accommodation for those who are homeless or at threat of homelessness	Medium- Long-term	DCC Housing Solutions	Housing Support Group
3.3	Provide a range a range of support services to reduce the risk of households becoming homeless	Medium- Long-term	DCC Housing Solutions	Housing Support Group
Ensure Durham Key Options Choice Based Lettings is accessible and easy to use				
4.1	Raise awareness of what DKO is and the services it provides	Short	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Social Housing Providers, Durham Key Options (Housing Support Group)	DKO Partnership Board / Housing Support Group
4.2	Use evidence to understand demand for social housing and analyse, determine cause and seek to scope and implement interventions with registered providers.	Medium		
4.3	Review the DKO application process	Short		
4.4	Review the allocations policy in relation to affordability for social housing in County Durham	Medium		
4.5	Improve the appearance and functionality of the customer website (including mobile site) to support access and ease of use for prospective tenants.	Short		
Increase housing offers and options available in County Durham				
5.1	Provide a range of alternative rental accommodation/ housing solutions, such as the Local Letting Agency.	Medium	DCC Head of Development and Housing	Housing Forum, Local Lettings Agency Board
Provide housing products specifically to meet the needs of older persons				
6.1	Ensure 10% of homes delivered in relation to design and house type to meet the needs of older people (600+ over CDP plan period)	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Head of Commissioning	CDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)
6.2	Deliver specialist housing products to meet the particular needs of older people in line with the Housing Market position Statement	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Head of Commissioning	Housing Forum

Ref	What	Timescale	Lead (and Partners)	Reporting / monitoring
	Delivery of high quality affordable homes to meet housing needs in County Durham			
7.1	Delivery of sufficient affordable homes to meet affordable housing needs in County Durham	Long	Head of Development and Housing	CDP AMR
7.2	Ensure the majority of affordable homes are delivered as affordable (social) rented in line with the aspirations of County Durham residents	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Registered Housing providers	CDP AMR
7.3	Work with Registered Providers to encourage use of the 'buy back' option to increase the supply of affordable homes.	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Registered Housing providers	Housing Forum Housing Development Group
7.4	Maximisation of grant funding programmes and capitalised recycled grant	Longer Term	Registered providers, Homes England	Housing Forum Housing Development Group
	Deliver high quality new homes that meet the needs and aspirations of existing and future residents in County Durham			
8.1	Deliver sufficient homes to meet housing needs.	Long		CDP AMR
	Delivery of infrastructure alongside housing development to support communities			
9.1	Deliver infrastructure to support communities in accommodating for housing development in line with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing	CDP / Planning Applications s.106
	Raise standards within the private rented sector			
10.1	Develop a business case for Selective Licensing across County Durham	Medium	DCC Head of Development and Housing	TBC
10.2	Develop private sector housing policy	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Head Of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection, Head Of Environment, Durham Partnership	TBC

Ref	What	Timescale	Lead (and Partners)	Reporting / monitoring
	Address empty homes to support communities			
11.1	Develop an Empty Homes policy statement	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, Head Of Environment, Health & Consumer Protection, Head Of Environment, Durham Partnership, Head Of Finance & Transactional Services	Housing Forum
11.2	Develop the evidence base to inform circumstances where Section 106 contributions could be to support specific regeneration activities, including bringing viable vacant housing back into use in lieu of provision of affordable housing	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Spatial Policy	CDP, AMR
	Support and maintain mixed and balanced communities across County Durham			
12.1	Develop and monitor an evidence base which would inform future opportunities for targeted demolition.	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing, DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board (Housing Development Group and Housing Forum)
12.2	Monitor, update and develop evidence at a localised level to understand stock condition, demand and supply and associated issues.	Medium- Long	DCC Spatial Policy/ DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board (Housing Development Group and Housing Forum)
12.3	Develop localised and targeted delivery plan that consider housing and environmental issues and explore potential responses as appropriate.	Medium- Long	DCC Spatial Policy/ DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board (Housing Development Group and Housing Forum)
12.4	Work with Registered Providers to encourage use of their 'buy back' option to bring former right to buy stock back into the market as affordable housing and to assist in supporting and maintaining mixed and balanced communities, where appropriate.	Long	DCC Housing Regeneration	TBC

Ref	What	Timescale	Lead (and Partners)	Reporting / monitoring
	Improve energy efficiency of properties to ensure County Durham has a stock of warm, healthy and energy efficient homes.			
13.1	Ensure delivery of the Affordable Warmth Action Plan (2015-20).	Long	DCC Housing Regeneration	Energy and Fuel Poverty Partnership
13.2	Ensure integration between various advice schemes and programmes.	Long	DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board
13.3	Review the impact of the Silverdale fuel poverty and health initiative pilot.	Long	DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board
13.4	Update evidence base to inform interventions, for example UNO data.	Short - Medium	DCC Spatial Policy/ DCC Housing Regeneration	DCC Housing Board (Housing Development Group and Housing Forum)
13.5	Raise awareness for warm homes campaign using area based promoting.	Long	DCC Head of Development and Housing	Energy and Fuel Poverty Partnership, DCC Housing Board





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