

Homelessness Action Plan

Strategic Housing Panel 191213

Item 10

1. Reduce levels of homelessness in Copeland

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
a) Continue to provide annual training updates on primary legislation and new case law to local authority officers employed to undertake inquiries as to what duty, if any, is owed.	To ensure Copeland Council is fully compliant with the law and statutory guidance in relation to administering homelessness duties.	Develop a standard cyclical training module for all service staff covering: (i) knowledge-based training on homelessness legislation, landlord and tenant law including court advocacy procedures, housing benefit, income maximisation, debt advice, jobcentre plus services and recent case law; and (ii) skills-based training on interview skills and statement taking, getting the message across and customer service.	Annual programme.	Copeland Council.
b) Continue to provide training on the criteria for	To ensure that the criteria is being rigorously applied on	Develop a cyclical training module and workshop for all service staff	Annual Programme	Copeland Council.

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
establishing the duty to all local authority officers employed to decide what duty, if any, is owed.	every application so that the duty is only accepted in respect of applicants who are genuinely owed the duty.	covering the criteria for establishing the duty and how it should be applied.		
c) Ensure that all private sector accommodation offered to end the main duty is confirmed as suitable and safe.	To ensure that accommodation provided to end the main duty is sustainable and to reduce the number of applications from applicants who have previously been accepted and accommodated.	Create from the existing rent deposit checklist a suitability checklist and property inspection report that will have to be completed in respect of every property offered to end the main duty to ensure that the property is suitable and safe.	2014	CBC; Landlord forum and letting agents
d) Undertake a bi annual review of operational practices to ensure that levels of relief of homelessness are properly recorded and introduce additional tools to relieve homelessness	To improve recording of relief of homelessness. (altered this section)	(i) Carry out a survey of service staff, stakeholders involved in relief and service users on the effectiveness of existing methods of relief and what additional tools would be helpful. Following the survey, existing methods of relief should be amended if required and additional methods	2015	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
in the borough.		<p>introduced if required.</p> <p>(ii) Carry out a survey of service staff on the ease of use of existing methods of recording relief and amend existing methods or introduce new methods as required.</p>		
e) Following the review of relief, provide training to all local authority officers involved in the prevention and relief of homelessness.	To ensure Copeland Council is fully compliant with what the law and statutory guidance requires and to promote good practice within the team.	<p>(i) Develop a cyclical training module and workshop for all service staff on methods of relief and how relief is recorded.</p> <p>(ii) Introduce targets on relief into the performance reviews of service staff.</p>	Annual programme	Copeland Council.
f) Keep the current service offer for people sleeping rough under consideration.	To ensure that more provision can be made if levels of rough sleeping in the borough increase.	(i) Undertake frequent evaluations as to the levels of rough sleeping in the borough, including frequent communications with stakeholders in the region dealing with rough sleeping.	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council, Cumbria Council Adult Social Care Services and Cumbria Council

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
		<p>(ii) Re-launch publicity for the public to report rough sleeping.</p> <p>(iii) Ensure there is enough emergency accommodation for people to access directly from the streets, particularly during periods of severe weather.</p> <p>(iv) Work with the other district councils in Cumbria to make best use of the funding to adopt the Government-backed 'No Second Night Out' scheme.</p> <p>(v) Update the severe weather emergency protocol and advertise it.</p>	<p>November 2013</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>November 2013</p>	<p>Children Social Care Services.</p> <p>[Stakeholders.]</p>
<p>g) Maintain links with mortgage lenders and landlords.</p>	<p>To ensure that repossession is a last resort when someone is struggling to pay</p>	<p>(i) Target repossession funding and contribute capital funding to reach more cases, including those in</p>	<p>On an ongoing basis.</p>	<p>Copeland Council.</p> <p>[Citizens Advice</p>

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
	his or her housing costs.	negative equity. (ii) Target buy to let properties where there are mortgage difficulties to help keep tenants in the home through direct payment of rent to lenders.		Bureau.]
h) Keep the current service offer in relation to mortgage repossessions under consideration.	To ensure that more provision can be made if levels of mortgage repossessions in the borough increase.	(i) Undertake frequent evaluations as to the levels of mortgage repossessions in the borough. (ii) Make provision for capital funding to be made available if there is a sharp increase in the number of cases.	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]
i) Undertake an assessment of services for single homeless people in the borough.	To ensure that services for single homeless people are approachable and relevant for the needs of men and women.	(i) Assess existing services for single homeless people with stakeholders to consider the effectiveness of existing services and whether additional services could be useful and cost-effective.	2014 – 2015	Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership.

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
		(ii) Develop a series of initiatives to help single homeless people gain skills for work and secure employment.	2015 - 2016	[Stakeholders.] Skills and work partnership
j) Carry out research to understand the levels and needs of the hidden homeless in Copeland.	To try to gain better knowledge about the levels of hidden homelessness in the borough and ensure that homelessness services are accessible to everyone.	Carry out an assessment with service staff, stakeholders, service users and members of the public about experiences of hidden homelessness.	2014 - 2015	Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership
k) Continue to ensure welfare rights and money advice services form an essential part of the broad housing options service.	To offer with partners a more effective service to service users as welfare reforms and economic policies are likely to result in more people being at risk of homelessness due to money related matters.	(i) Consider an integrated package with partners to include co-location or merger of these services on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. (ii) Provide debt advice action planning with service users to reduce debt and offer negotiation with	2013 – 2014	Copeland Council. Citizens Advice Bureau; Housing providers; family advice centres and other voluntary

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		<p>creditors.</p> <p>(iii) Use court advocacy services to prevent homelessness from housing debt cases.</p> <p>(iv) Offer in-house debt, finance and budgeting surgeries with emergency appointments.</p> <p>(v) Continue funding Citizens Advice Bureau provision.</p>	2014 – 2015	agencies
l) Increase links with services that can help homeless people gain skills for work and secure employment.	To expand the range of housing options available to homeless people due to increased levels of income and because people in employment are less likely to become homeless.	<p>(i) Commence Jobcentre Plus 'surgeries' at housing options service centres.</p> <p>(ii) Frontline staff to spend a day at a local Jobcentre Plus, Inspira and PEC. (iii) Provide through partners free internet access to search job vacancies.</p> <p>(iv) Consider the co-location of</p>	2014 - 2015	Copeland work and skills partnership.

Objective	Impact	Actions	When	Responsible Partner
		<p>housing and Jobcentre Plus services. (which are already in same building, albeit with separate entrances and reception areas)</p> <p>(v) All housing options to include analysis of impact on worklessness and encouragement into training and employment.</p>		
<p>m) Increase partnership working with other organisations working against homelessness in the region.</p>	<p>To share knowledge, improve communications, ensure best use of resources and expand the range of services available to homeless people.</p>	<p>(i) Reinvigorate the local and countywide homelessness forum.</p> <p>(ii) Consider co-location of services on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>(iii) Mutual promotion of relevant services.</p> <p>(iv) Use of housing partnership to deliver task and finish on issues.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Copeland Council and partners</p>

2. Prioritise the prevention of homelessness

What	Why	How	When	Whom
<p>a) Review the range of prevention tools used by Copeland Council and introduce additional tools. All tools need to be available locally.</p>	<p>To ascertain and improve levels of prevention in Copeland against the national average and to ensure that prevention tools are fit for purpose</p>	<p>(i) Assess existing methods of prevention by carrying out a survey of service staff, stakeholders involved in prevention and service users on the effectiveness of existing methods of prevention and what additional tools would be helpful. Following the survey, existing methods of prevention should be amended if required and additional methods introduced if required.</p> <p>(ii) Introduce targets on prevention into the performance reviews of service staff.</p> <p>(iii) Carry out a survey of service staff on the ease of use of existing methods of recording prevention and amend existing methods or introduce new methods as required.</p>	<p>2014 - 2015</p>	<p>Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
b) Following the review, provide training to all local authority officers involved in the prevention of homelessness on the new and existing tools available.	To ensure Copeland Council is fully compliant with what the law and statutory guidance requires and to promote good practice within the team.	Develop a training module and workshop for all service staff on methods of prevention available in the borough.	Annual Programme	Copeland Council.
c) Keep annual figures for unsuccessful attempts at prevention under review.	To ensure that prevention tools are effective and can be altered if levels of unsuccessful prevention in the borough increase.	Undertake frequent evaluations as to the success and effectiveness of methods of prevention in the borough, including frequent communications with stakeholders in the region assisting with prevention.	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]
d) Co-ordinate home visits with partner agencies as appropriate to deliver integrated support	To help people threatened with homelessness maintain their existing accommodation and tackle the main reasons for loss of last settled accommodation.	(i) Establish a clear criteria for identifying when home visits are appropriate (e.g. for identified 'hard to engage' clients or individuals who are unable to access advice via another route). (ii) Establish a protocol for good	2014 - 2015	Copeland Council; Supporting People team and partners.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>practice in home visiting.</p> <p>(iii) Use wifi technology to enable 'better off in work' calculations to be undertaken, housing options information accessed and bids made via the Cumbria Choice website.</p>		
<p>e) Continue to review annually the use of the prevention fund and make more use of discretionary housing payments (DHP).</p>	<p>To help people threatened with homelessness to be able to maintain their existing accommodation.</p>	<p>(i) Review annually criteria for what prevention money and DHP can be used to fund.</p> <p>(ii) Create innovative ways of using prevention fund money (e.g. tackling worklessness).</p> <p>(iii) Increase access to prevention fund money to local authority partners working to prevent homelessness.</p>	<p>Annual Process</p>	<p>Copeland Council.</p>
<p>f) Undertake a review of current floating support services.</p>	<p>To ascertain if current services are sufficient and being put to best use so that floating support can be</p>	<p>Assess existing floating support services with stakeholders to consider the effectiveness of existing services and whether additional services could</p>	<p>Ongoing annual process</p>	<p>Copeland Council; Supporting</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
	maximised as it is a proven way of enabling people to maintain independent living.	be useful and cost-effective. Agree action plan to improve use and take up in support.		People and Copeland Housing Partnership

3. Ensure sufficient accommodation is available for homeless people in Copeland

What	Why	How	When	Whom
a) Undertake a review of operational practices and available private rented sector accommodation in the borough.	To ensure that private rented sector accommodation is being used effectively at all stages of the application process.	Assess the availability and range of private rented sector accommodation in the borough to consider the opportunities for greater use of such accommodation in accommodating homeless people.	2014 - 2015	Copeland Council. Copeland Landlord Forum. [Stakeholders]
b) Establish a procedure to use the power to end the main duty with an offer of private rented sector accommodation.	To ensure that best use is made of the new power given that the private rented sector is the fastest growing tenure.	(i) Create a policy and procedure which allows officers to use the power to accommodate applicants whenever appropriate. (ii) Provide training to all service staff	Early 2014	Copeland Council. Copeland Landlord Forum.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>on the new policy and procedure.</p> <p>(iii) Set targets so that households in temporary accommodation are moved into private rented sector accommodation under the new procedure within six months of entering temporary accommodation.</p>		
<p>c) Review the suite of incentives offered to private rented sector landlords.</p>	<p>To ensure existing incentives are still relevant and attractive as landlords now have a greater choice of tenants.</p>	<p>(i) Establish flat-share projects.</p> <p>(ii) Create a matching service for private rented sector accommodation and clients.</p> <p>(iii) Continue to provide rent guarantees and deposits</p> <p>(iv) Create a private rented sector rent arrears service hotline.</p>	<p>2014 - 2015</p>	<p>Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership. [Stakeholders.]</p>
<p>d) Review the range of prevention tools used by Copeland Council to help</p>	<p>To ensure that all available accommodation is used effectively to prevent</p>	<p>Assess existing methods of prevention by carrying out a survey of service staff, stakeholders involved in</p>	<p>2014 - 2015</p>	<p>Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
households find alternative accommodation.	homelessness and prevention tools are fit for purpose	prevention and service users on the effectiveness of existing methods of prevention and what additional tools would be helpful. Following the survey, existing methods of prevention should be amended if required and additional methods introduced if required.		Copeland Housing Partnership.
e) Following the review, provide training to all local authority officers involved in the housing of homeless households on the range of accommodation available and how to access it.	To ensure that all available accommodation is used effectively.	Continue to provide training to service staff on the methods of prevention and the range of accommodation available in the borough and how to access it.	Annual Programme	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]
f) Undertake a study of why households are remaining in existing accommodation after being accepted as being	To establish true accommodation requirements and provide for them.	Carry out an assessment with service staff, stakeholders, service users and members of the public about experiences of remaining in existing accommodation after being accepted	2014 - 2015	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
owed the main duty.		as being owed the main duty.		
g) Provide new hostel accommodation.	To provide an additional source of temporary accommodation as no hostel accommodation is used at present.	Assess the availability and range of hostel accommodation in the borough to consider the opportunities for greater use of such accommodation in accommodating homeless people. Provide enabling support to ensure the development of the new foyer is successfully completed.	2015 - 2016	[Stakeholders.]

4. Ensure sufficient support (information, advice and assistance) is available to tackle homelessness

What	Why	How	When	Whom
a) Commission more accommodation-based services in Copeland, especially for homeless families, women only and people aged over 25.	To ensure that accommodation-based services are accessible in Copeland and better reflect the demographics of the local population	(i) An equality impact assessment should be undertaken on the current men only scheme (located in Carlisle, but accessible from Copeland) to ensure it is not unfairly excluding women. (ii) Within the context of welfare	2015 - 2016	Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>reforms to the shared room rate, services should be categorised into new and more relevant age bands, with young persons services covering 16 to 21 years of age (mirroring the ages whereby Children Services may owe a duty to a young adult).</p> <p>(iii) Develop a local voluntary initiative for all supported housing to work towards the standards set out in 'Places for Change' for buildings, support, management and engagement (where capital is not achievable for buildings, organisations can still aim to reach the standard in management, support and engagement).</p> <p>(v) Review SP contracts to make sure that the services commissioned do not exclude certain groups, making it hard for Copeland Council to place those</p>		

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		groups anywhere.		
b) Continue to monitor levels of rough sleeping in Copeland.	To ensure that specific services targeting rough sleeping can be commissioned if there is a rise in the levels of rough sleeping.	Undertake frequent evaluations as to the levels of rough sleeping in the borough, including frequent communications with stakeholders in the region dealing with rough sleeping.	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

5. Ensure satisfactory resources are available for tackling homelessness

What	Why	How	When	Whom
a) Commit the equal value of the current annual preventing homelessness grant awarded by the UK Government for the lifetime of the next homelessness strategy for the financial years 2014/15 – 2018/19.	To maintain the excellent value for money that has been achieved as result of the grant funding provided to Copeland by the UK Government for tackling homelessness.	(i) Make a commitment by Executive as to the levels of expenditure over the lifetime of this strategy to ensure there are suitable base-line resources available to deliver the strategy and allow for medium-long-term investment plans to be made. (ii) Identify potential match funding streams for EHO work (e.g. DAT, PCT, decent homes, JCP, HCA,	Annual Process 2014 – 2015	Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>WNF, national lottery).</p> <p>(iii) Develop joint working agreements with RPs to capture RP/other funding for specific work.</p>	2014 - 2015	
<p>b) Carry out an annual review of available sources of funding and establish procedures so that all opportunities for funding can be pursued.</p>	<p>To maximise funding for homelessness services in Copeland.</p>	<p>(i) Create a policy and procedure for identifying and applying for funding.</p> <p>(ii) Introduce targets on identifying sources of funding into the performance reviews of management staff.</p> <p>(iii) Identify potential match funding streams for EHO work (e.g. DAT, PCT, decent homes, JCP, HCA, WNF, national lottery).</p> <p>(iii) Develop joint working agreements with RPs to capture RP funding for specific work.</p>	<p>On an ongoing basis.</p> <p>2014 – 2015 and annually</p>	<p>Copeland Council.</p>
<p>c) Work with partners to</p>	<p>To bring together updated</p>	<p>(i) Build on existing information</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Cumbria Council</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
maintain a co-ordinated and updated directory of services	information about what help is available for homeless people.	(ii) Ensure local agencies and services are included and updated.		Copeland Housing Partnership
d) Upgrade ICT software	To enable more customers to access online self-service modules to prevent homelessness. To automate general operational process of the housing options team. To make use of video-telephony technology for reaching customers in rural areas or who are unable to access the service.	(i) Determine a specification of what a future ICT product must offer. (ii) Carry out market testing of products available. (iii) Undertake a tender exercise to procure ICT software.	2013 - 2014	Copeland Council.
e) Review the temporary accommodation dwellings portfolio in light of the ongoing and forthcoming reforms being made by the Department for Work and Pensions.	To provide for the significant reforms being made by the Department for Work and Pensions to the Temporary Accommodation Subsidy regime.	(i) Undertake a modelling exercise to assess demand for temporary accommodation, taking into account the impact of prevention activities. (ii) Assess the impact of private rented sector offers on length of stay in	2014 - 2016	Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>temporary accommodation.</p> <p>(iii) Establish which dwellings will be affected by social housing size criteria</p> <p>(iv) Agree actions to recover rental charges once Benefit Cap and Universal Credit has been rolled-out.</p>		
<p>f) Ensure elected members have sufficient knowledge of homelessness in the borough and what action is being taken to find solutions to peoples housing problems</p>	<p>To enable them to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources and be assured that the local authority is satisfactorily fulfilling its statutory duties.</p>	<p>(i) Appoint an elected member to champion the issue of homelessness across all aspects of the local authority business.</p> <p>(ii) Provide a regular performance update and annual report to appropriate committee</p> <p>(iii) Provide training to all elected members as they take-up office, and also enable exist serving elected members to receive annual updates.</p>	<p>Annual Programme</p>	<p>Councillor Lena Hogg, Copeland Council</p> <p>Copeland Council</p> <p>Copeland Council</p>
<p>Review the Action Plan annually</p>	<p>To stay abreast of continuous policy and legislative change</p>	<p>Through the Copeland Housing Partnership and Strategic Housing</p>	<p>October each year</p>	<p>Copeland Council Copeland</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
	and public sector pressures	Panel.		Housing Partnership