

Copeland Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018

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Summary and Recommendation

This report has been written to give an overview of the draft homelessness strategy 2013 – 2018. It is recommended that the strategy is approved after consideration by the Strategic Housing Panel and referred to Executive. It is also recommended that actions are monitored within the framework of the overarching housing strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to have a homelessness strategy for the purpose of coordinating activities and resources for tackling homelessness. Under Section 1 of the homelessness Act 2002 it is the responsibility of the local housing authority to formulate a homelessness strategy every five years unless it has been exempted from the requirement.
- 1.2 The strategy sets out the future actions that will be taken in Copeland to tackle homelessness. The document has been formulated using the conclusions from a review of homelessness in Copeland which was undertaken from May to July 2013. The strategy focuses on taking the recommendations from the review and turning them into a series of actions which will be acted upon during the next five years.

2.0 Aims of the Homelessness Strategy

- 2.1 The primary aim of the homelessness Strategy will be to ensure that every homeless person in Copeland is offered suitable solutions to resolve their homelessness.
- 2.2 The strategy will focus equally on tackling all forms of homelessness including:
 - Statutory homelessness
 - Homeless families
 - Single homelessness
 - Hidden homelessness
- 2.3 Partnership working is fundamental to the execution and delivery of this strategy and, as part of its work to tackle homelessness in Copeland, Copeland Council is actively seeking to improve communication and partnership working with other service providers in the region.

3.0 Objectives of the Homelessness Strategy

3.1 The principle objectives of the Homelessness Strategy are to;-

- Reduce levels of homelessness in Copeland
- Prioritise the prevention of homelessness
- Ensure sufficient accommodation is available for homeless people in Copeland
- Ensure sufficient support (information, advice and assistance) is available to tackle homelessness
- Ensure satisfactory resources are available for tackling homelessness

3.2 These objectives have been adopted to ensure that Copeland Council's actions reflect the legal requirements of a homelessness strategy.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Copeland Council as a Strategic Housing Authority, with assistance from Cumbria County Council Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and the various stakeholders involved in the provision of homelessness services in the region, has responsibility for the delivery of this strategy and action plan.

4.2 The action plan contains SMART activities that have been derived from the recommendations contained in the Homelessness Review 2013. The plan will be revised annually throughout the delivery of this strategy.

4.3 By adopting this Homelessness Strategy, Copeland Council is purposefully making a commitment to achieve the ambitions made by the UK Government to end rough sleeping and prevent homelessness.

Copeland Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018

Commissioned by Copeland Borough Council

Produced by Neil Morland Housing Consultant Ltd

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>Summary</u>	4
Legal requirements	4
Context.....	4
Current and future likely levels of homelessness.....	5
Prevention of homelessness	6
Securing accommodation	7
Providing support to homeless people.....	9
Resources	9
Consultation	10
<u>Priorities</u>	11
Aims of this Homelessness Strategy.....	11
Objectives of this Homelessness Strategy	11
Implementing this Homelessness Strategy	11
<u>Appendix - Action Plan</u>	13
1. Reduce levels of homelessness in Copeland	13
2. Prioritise the prevention of homelessness	20
3. Ensure sufficient accommodation is available for homeless people in Copeland	24
4. Ensure sufficient support (information, advice and assistance) is available to tackle homelessness.....	28
5. Ensure satisfactory resources are available for tackling homelessness.....	30

Introduction

This strategy sets out the future actions that will be taken in Copeland to tackle homelessness.

The strategy is based on the results of the recent review of homelessness in Copeland, which was undertaken from May to July 2013. The Homelessness Review document is being published simultaneously with this strategy and the two documents should be read in conjunction.

This strategy has been compiled in accordance with directions set out in law and statutory guidance. It is the third strategy to be implemented by Copeland Council, following previous ones in 2003 and 2008.

Summary

Legal requirements

This strategy sets out the future actions that will be taken in Copeland to tackle homelessness. The document has been formulated using the conclusions from a review of homelessness in Copeland, which was undertaken from May to July 2013. The Homelessness Review document should be read in conjunction with this strategy. This strategy focuses on taking the recommendations from the review and turning them into a series of actions which will be acted upon during the next five years.

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires every local authority to have a homelessness strategy for the purpose of coordinating activities and resources for tackling homelessness. Under section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002, it is the responsibility of the local housing authority to formulate a homelessness strategy every five years unless it has been exempted from the requirement.

Context

Availability of employment is likely to continue to be an issue in Copeland as the decommissioning of Sellafield progresses which could increase the number of households requiring help to avoid homelessness.

Copeland has an ageing population with a higher than average number of retired residents so addressing the accommodation requirements of older people, such as home adaptations, is likely to become a strategic challenge for Copeland Council in the future.

The UK Government remains committed to tackling homelessness. Two strategies have been published to concentrate efforts for ending rough sleeping and preventing homelessness. A series of initiatives have been supported by a significant investment of over £400m capital and revenue funding from 2011/12 – 2014/15.

The local authorities in Cumbria are working together to provide a choice based lettings strategy and to develop a county wide approach to ending rough sleeping.

Copeland Council has implemented two previous homelessness strategies which have enabled some progress to be made in the efforts to improve the lives of homeless people in Copeland.

Current and future likely levels of homelessness

The number of decisions on homelessness applications slightly increased during the last homelessness strategy. The relatively high number of decisions shows that Copeland Council is successfully raising awareness of the application procedure so can help those in need, but also indicates a slowly increasing rate of homelessness in the region.

There has been a significant increase in the number of acceptances so that Copeland has a higher than average rate of acceptances which indicates that work is required to increase prevention of homelessness in the borough.

Copeland Council is making a higher proportion of acceptances and this trend is contrary to what has happened elsewhere. This could suggest that decisions in Copeland as to whether or not the main duty is owed may not be as stringent as they are elsewhere.

The majority of households accepted in Copeland are from a White ethnic origin, but this reflects the ethnic composition of the local population so does not suggest that the application process is inaccessible to applicants with other ethnic origins.

Most people accepted as being owed the main duty are aged 16-44 and in the last two years the highest number of acceptances were of people aged 25-44.

The most common type of household accepted as being owed the main duty is a lone female parent with dependent children, but the number of acceptances of single people has significantly increased.

The number of acceptances where the applicant has previously been accepted has increased which suggests that more needs to be done to ensure that accommodation provided to end the main duty is sustainable.

Rough sleeping is not a big problem in Copeland as the estimated level of rough sleeping has been successfully reduced to 0 in 2012.

No relief of homelessness (where positive action by Copeland Council relieves homelessness in Copeland) has been recorded since 2010 and unsuccessful attempts at relief increased until the 2012/2013 financial year. This suggests that there is a problem with

recording and providing relief from homelessness that needs investigating and targeting in this strategy.

Mortgage possession claims and orders are gradually falling which could indicate that effective methods of prevention and relief of repossession are being used to limit the numbers despite the poor economic circumstances.

Landlord possession claims and orders have decreased, although it is likely there will be a small increase recorded in 2012 when the annual figures are available. Copeland has a relatively small number of landlord possession claims which is positive given that Copeland has a higher than average number of lettings as detailed below.

There is uncertainty as to the levels of hidden homelessness which is not uncommon and is consistent with other local authority areas.

Future levels of homelessness are predicted to increase, although it is impossible to say by what extent. A combination of factors are expected to influence the levels of homelessness, primarily adverse effects of UK Government legislative reforms to welfare benefits and housing rights, but also broad housing market and economic factors.

Prevention of homelessness

The number of cases where homelessness has been successfully prevented has slightly increased since 2009, but has been very inconsistent and levels of prevention in Copeland are much lower than the national average.

The number of unsuccessful attempts at prevention has increased which suggests that existing prevention methods are not completely successful.

The majority of prevention successes are achieved by helping people to obtain alternative accommodation and there has been a decrease in the number of households helped to remain in their existing homes.

The methods of prevention that have been successfully used to enable households to remain in existing homes are not being properly used or recorded.

In the 2012/2013 financial year, there was no one reason for the loss of applicants' last homes that was significantly more prevalent than any other. Evictions by family and friends

and other reasons (such as repossession and applicants who have left local authority care) were the most likely reasons, but there have been significant increases in applicants losing homes due to the non-violent breakdown of relationships or violence.

Securing accommodation

The majority of households for whom a duty is owed are not secured accommodation by the Council (also known as homeless at home). The number of such households has more than doubled during the period of the last homelessness strategy; the Council has the fifth highest levels of such arrangement. This could indicate that there is insufficient temporary accommodation to house accepted households, although the reduction in the use of bed and breakfast hotels to accommodate homeless households does not support this argument. Therefore consideration needs to be given to how thoroughly inquires as whether a household is homeless as described in law and consequently what, if any, is owed. Using powers to bring the duty to by securing suitable private rented sector accommodation will reduce the number of households for whom a duty is owed are not secured accommodation by the Council (also known as homeless at home).

No households are immediately rehoused by way of a private rented sector offer which suggests there could be opportunities for Copeland Council to make greater use of private rented sector accommodation. However, use of private rented sector accommodation without a landlord incentive scheme is the most successful method of prevention in which alternative accommodation is found so it should be possible to use it more for households who have been accepted as being owed the main duty.

The methods of prevention that have been successfully used to help households find alternative accommodation are not being properly used or recorded which could in part be due to a lack of available accommodation.

The number of households in temporary accommodation has doubled since the start of the previous homelessness strategy, but Copeland's use of temporary accommodation is lower than the national average. This could indicate that Copeland Council is successfully minimising the use of temporary accommodation. Equally because many households remain in existing accommodation once accepted it appears that many households maybe aware that they benefit from being declared statutory homeless as this advances their priority for re-housing to somewhere near the top of the housing register. This effectively reduces the time they have to wait for re-housing. Therefore consideration needs to be given to how thoroughly inquires as whether a household is homeless as described in law and

consequently what, if any, is owed. Using powers to bring the duty to by securing suitable private rented sector accommodation will reduce the number of households for whom a duty is owed are not secured accommodation by the Council (also known as homeless at home).

Local authority and housing association stock and bed and breakfast accommodation are the most commonly used forms of temporary accommodation, but hostels and private sector leases are not used at all.

The most common type of household in temporary accommodation is single people, evenly spread between men and women.

The majority of households accommodated in temporary accommodation or temporarily staying in existing accommodation are there for less than six months, but there have been increases in the number of households remaining in existing accommodation for up to 2 years and more than 2 years. This will be due to, partially, the high demand for social rented housing and low supply of dwellings available to re-let. This dynamic is also reflected in the broader housing market, with affordability also being a problem in other tenures

The rate of households on the housing waiting list is significantly lower in Copeland than in the North West and England. This has increased during 2012/13.

The number of lettings where the tenant was statutorily homeless before the letting has increased along with the proportion of all lettings which are lettings to statutorily homeless households. Copeland has a higher rate of lettings to statutorily homeless households than other regions. This is a result of good partnership working with private registered providers of social housing. It will also be due to the distinctly higher than average number of homeless household for whom a duty is owed but are not secured accommodation by the Council.

There is a long-established dedicated service available to help people obtain private rented sector accommodation, however the tenure is not being utilised to its full potential.

The introduction of a central access point for housing support services is positive. The provision of floating and short-term accommodation commissioned by the County Council is lower than what is available in other areas. Service users take longer to secure support via the central access point in Copeland than compared to all other areas.

Providing support to homeless people

The most common vulnerability in accepted households is dependent children, suggesting that support services need to include a reasonable provision for such households.

There is a good number and range of community-based services for statutory homeless people in Copeland. A reasonable number are actually based in Copeland, although most of those are in Whitehaven.

There are a reasonable number of accommodation-based services available to homeless people in Copeland, but very few are actually in Copeland's borough and many of them are some distance from the largest centre in the borough at Whitehaven. In particular, there is a lack of accommodation for people aged over 25 in Copeland's borough and there are no accommodation-based services accessible for women only.

There are limited services specifically targeting rough sleepers in the borough, but rough sleeping is not a significant problem in Copeland with current estimates showing no rough sleepers in Copeland.

There is excellent provision for single homeless people, but few services targeting homeless families.

Resources

The total amount spent by Copeland Council on administering its homelessness functions was £267,000 in 2012/13, rising to £289,000 for 2013/14. Half of the annual budget is spent on staffing and the costs associated with providing temporary accommodation accounts for one-fifth of all expenditure. Additionally, Copeland Council awards funding to Copeland Citizens Advice Bureau and Cumbria Law Centre, which for the 2013/14 financial year amounts to £322,000 of which three-quarters is awarded to the former organisation and one-quarter is awarded to the latter organisation. A contribution is also made to Cumbria Rural Housing Trust who undertakes rural housing enabling work and support the council to raise awareness and find solutions to issues, which threaten community sustainability.

Grant funding provided to Copeland by the UK Government for tackling homelessness is lower than levels awarded elsewhere.

Copeland's third sector service providers haven't received any £62.5m money from the primary Government funding programmes (e.g. £42.5m Homeless Change Programme

administered by Homes and Communities Agency, £10m the Homeless Transition Fund administered by Homeless Link, £10m the Private Rented Sector Development Programme administered by Crisis). However it is important to note that Age UK have secured £50,000 funding from Care and Repair to provide housing options advice for older persons, which is as growing demographic in the borough. It is unclear if this is due to service providers not bidding for these monies, or alternatively because bids have been made but they've been unsuccessful.

The Housing Options workforce is fairly stable, but an on-going programme of training is necessary to equip the team with the skills necessary to meet the continuing demands of the service.

There are some information materials available, although the range and content is not always coordinated between the Council and other providers.

Better use and investment in ICT software and hardware could enable the service to become more efficient.

The temporary accommodation portfolio is within easy reach of the housing options service and is generally affordable for most people, the majority of whom pay using housing benefit.

Consultation

Stakeholders hold a substantial range of anecdotal evidence that complements the statistical evidence collected by Copeland Council and other public and voluntary bodies.

Stakeholders generally agree that preventing homelessness is a sufficient priority in Copeland and that there is a satisfactory provision of support services, but better communication and partnership between stakeholders would strengthen the provision and help prevent future homelessness.

Service users are less likely to approach the local authority for assistance when they are threatened with homelessness. Many people sought assistance from family, friends or voluntary organisations before they sought help from public bodies.

Priorities

Aims of this Homelessness Strategy

The primary aim of this Homelessness Strategy will be to ensure that every homeless person in Copeland is offered suitable solutions to resolve their homelessness.

This strategy will focus equally on tackling all forms of homelessness, including:

- statutory homelessness;
- homeless families;
- single homelessness; and
- hidden homelessness.

Partnership working is fundamental to the execution and delivery of this strategy and, as part of its work to tackle homelessness in Copeland, Copeland Council is actively seeking to improve communication and partnership working with other service providers in the region.

Objectives of this Homelessness Strategy

The principle objectives of this Homelessness Strategy are to:

1. **reduce levels of homelessness in Copeland;**
2. **prioritise the prevention of homelessness;**
3. **ensure sufficient accommodation is available for homeless people in Copeland;**
4. **ensure sufficient support (information, advice and assistance) is available to tackle homelessness; and**
5. **ensure satisfactory resources are available for tackling homelessness.**

These objectives have been adopted to ensure that Copeland Council's actions reflect the legal requirements of a homelessness strategy.

Implementing this Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Forum already established in Copeland will oversee the implementation of this Homelessness Strategy. Membership of the forum will include people with decision-making powers, commissioning responsibilities and statutory responsibilities for tackling homelessness.

Copeland Council as a Strategic Housing Authority, with assistance from Cumbria County Council Adult Social Care Services, Cumbria County Council Children Social Care Services and the various stakeholders involved in the provision of homelessness services in the region, has responsibility for the delivery of this strategy and the action plan.

The action plan appended to this strategy contains SMART activities that have been derived from the recommendations contained in the Homelessness Review 2013. It is intended that these actions will be completed during the lifetime of this strategy from 2013 to 2018. The plan will be revised annually throughout the delivery of this strategy.

An annual event will be held with stakeholders and service users where they can share their views on the help available for people in Copeland who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Copeland Council is committed to continuing joint working with neighbouring local authorities across Cumbria. Efforts will be made to extend existing collaborations and introduce alliances for preventing homelessness across the region.

By adopting this Homelessness Strategy, Copeland Council is purposefully making a commitment to achieve the ambitions made by the UK Government to end rough sleeping and prevent homelessness. In future, tackling homelessness will form a key part of any local plans for the social, economic and physical regeneration of Copeland. Copeland Council recognises that only through partnership working can we deliver actions.

A commitment to tackling homelessness is can be evidenced by the Council's commitment to achieve the UK Governments' 'Gold Standard benchmark for ending rough sleeping and preventing homelessness. Achieving this high bar will ensure the very best support is available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Appendix - Action Plan

1. Reduce levels of homelessness in Copeland

What	Why	How	When	Whom
a) 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) Provide training on the criteria for establishing the duty to all local authority officers	To ensure that the criteria is being rigorously applied on every application so that the duty is only accepted in	Develop a cyclical training module and workshop for all service staff covering the criteria for establishing	Annual Programme	Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
employed to decide what duty, if any, is owed.	respect of applicants who are genuinely owed the duty.	the duty and how it should be applied.		
c) Ensure that all 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.		CBC; Landlord forum; RP's 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 in the borough.	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 introduced if required. (ii) Carry out a survey of service staff		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		on the ease of use of existing methods of recording relief and amend existing methods or introduce new methods as required.		
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.	(i) Develop a cyclical training module and workshop for all service staff on methods of relief and how relief is recorded. (ii) Introduce targets on relief into the performance reviews of service staff.	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. (ii) Re-launch publicity for the public to report rough sleeping. (iii) Ensure there is enough	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council, Cumbria Council Adult Social Care Services and Cumbria Council Children Social Care Services. [Stakeholders.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<p>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>		
g) Maintain links with mortgage lenders and landlords.	To ensure that repossession is a last resort when someone is struggling to pay his or her housing costs.	<p>(i) Target repossession funding and contribute capital funding to reach more cases, including those in negative equity.</p> <p>(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.</p>	On an ongoing basis.	<p>Copeland Council.</p> <p>[Citizens Advice Bureau.]</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
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. (ii) Develop a series of initiatives to help single homeless people gain skills for work and secure employment.		Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership. [Stakeholders.]
j) Carry out research to understand the levels and	To try to gain better knowledge about the levels of	Carry out an assessment with service staff, stakeholders, service users and		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
needs of the hidden homeless in Copeland.	hidden homelessness in the borough and ensure that homelessness services are accessible to everyone.	members of the public about experiences of hidden homelessness.		Copeland Housing Partnership
k) 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.	<p>(i) Consider an integrated package with partners to include co-location or merger of these services on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>(ii) Provide debt advice action planning with service users to reduce debt and offer negotiation with 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>		Copeland Council. [Citizens Advice Bureau.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		(v) Continue funding Citizens Advice Bureau provision.		
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 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>Copeland Council.</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus.</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
m) Increase partnership working with other organisations working against homelessness in the region.	To share knowledge, improve communications, ensure best use of resources and expand the range of services available to homeless people.	(i) Reinvigorate the local and countywide homelessness forum. (ii) Consider co-location of services on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness. (iii) Mutual promotion of relevant services. (iv) Use of housing partnership to deliver task and finish on issues.		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

2. Prioritise the prevention of homelessness

What	Why	How	When	Whom
a) Review the range of prevention tools used by Copeland Council and introduce additional tools. All tools need to be	To ascertain and improve levels of prevention in Copeland against the national average and to ensure that prevention tools	(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		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.] Copeland Housing

What	Why	How	When	Whom
available locally.	are fit for purpose	<p>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>		Partnership
b) Following the review, provide training to all local authority officers involved in the prevention of homelessness on the new and existing tools	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.		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
available.				
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) Undertake 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.	<p>(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).</p> <p>(ii) Establish a protocol for good 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</p>		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		via the Cumbria Choice website.		
e) Review the use of the prevention fund and make more use of discretionary housing payments (DHP).	To help people threatened with homelessness to be able to maintain their existing accommodation.	<p>(i) Develop clear criteria for what prevention money 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>(v) Introduce simple application forms for DHP.</p> <p>(vi) Top-up DHP payments to prevent homelessness.</p>		Copeland Council.
f) Undertake a review of current floating support services.	To ascertain if current services are sufficient and being put to best use so that floating support can be maximised as it is a proven	Assess existing floating support services with stakeholders to consider the effectiveness of existing services and whether additional services could be useful and cost-effective.		<p>Copeland Council.</p> <p>[Stakeholders.]</p> <p>Copeland Housing</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
	way of enabling people to maintain independent living.	Agree action plan to improve use and take up in support.		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.		Copeland Council. Copeland Landlord Forum. [Stakeholders]
b) Establish a procedure to use the power to end the main duty with an offer of	To ensure that best use is made of the new power given that the private rented sector	(i) Create a policy and procedure which allows officers to use the power to accommodate applicants whenever		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
private rented sector accommodation.	is the fastest growing tenure.	appropriate. (ii) Provide training to all service staff on the new policy and procedure. (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.		Copeland Landlord Forum.
c) Review the suite of incentives offered to private rented sector landlords.	To ensure existing incentives are still relevant and attractive as landlords now have a greater choice of tenants.	(i) Establish flat-share projects. (ii) Create a matching service for private rented sector accommodation and clients. (iii) Continue to provide rent guarantees and deposits (iv) Create a private rented sector rent arrears service hotline.		Copeland Council. Copeland Housing Partnership. [Stakeholders.]
d) Review the range of prevention tools used by	To ensure that all available accommodation is used	Assess existing methods of prevention by carrying out a survey of		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
Copeland Council to help households find alternative accommodation.	effectively to prevent homelessness and prevention tools are fit for purpose	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.		[Stakeholders.] 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.	Provide training to service staff on the methods of prevention and the range of accommodation available in the borough and how to access it.		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]
f) Undertake a study of why so many households are remaining in existing	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		Copeland Council. [Stakeholders.]

What	Why	How	When	Whom
accommodation after being accepted as being owed the main duty.		experiences of remaining in existing accommodation after being accepted 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.		[Stakeholders.]
h) Provide information to the public and training to all local authority officers involved in the housing of homeless households on the HCA's empty homes toolkit.	To ensure that existing housing stock is used most effectively.	Provide training to service staff on the availability and use of the toolkit and refer members of the public to the website to access the toolkit.		Copeland Council. [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	<p>(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.</p> <p>(ii) Within the context of welfare 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>		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		<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 groups anywhere.</p>		
b) 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	Undertake frequent evaluations as to the levels of rough sleeping in the borough, including frequent communications with stakeholders in the region dealing with rough	On an ongoing basis.	<p>Copeland Council.</p> <p>Cumbria Council.</p> <p>[Stakeholders.]</p>

What	Why	How	When	Whom
	sleeping.	sleeping.		

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.	<p>(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.</p> <p>(ii) 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/other funding for specific work.</p>	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
b) Carry out an annual review of available sources of funding and establish procedures so that all opportunities for funding can be pursued.	To maximise funding for homelessness services in Copeland.	<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>	On an ongoing basis.	Copeland Council.
c) Bolster the skills, knowledge and experience of the housing options team	Recruit a senior housing options caseworker with experience of prevention and working with private rented sector landlords.	<p>(i) Review best practice on dedicated PRS officers posts embedded in housing options teams.</p> <p>(ii) Devise job description based on what works best.</p> <p>(iii) Undertake recruitment exercise as</p>		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		per standard procedures.		
d) Produce a directory of services	To bring together information about what help is available for homeless people.	<p>(i) Identify what format the directory should be in, e.g. printed or online.</p> <p>(ii) Produce a standard template for each provider to complete that concisely summarises the information, advice, assistance and support they provide.</p> <p>(iii) Identify which providers will be targeted for inclusion in the directory.</p> <p>(iv) Circulate the template to service providers.</p> <p>(v) Collect and collate the completed templates.</p> <p>(vi) Produce directory following consultation with stakeholders and service users.</p>		
e) Upgrade ICT software	To enable more customers to access online self-service	(i) Determine a specification of what a		Copeland

What	Why	How	When	Whom
	modules to prevent homelessness for themselves. 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.	future ICT product must offer. (ii) Carry out market testing of products available. (iii) Undertake a tender exercise to procure ICT software.		Council.
f) 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 temporary accommodation. (iii) Establish which dwellings will be affected by social housing size criteria (iv) Agree actions to recover rental		Copeland Council.

What	Why	How	When	Whom
		charges once Benefit Cap and Universal Credit has been rolled-out.		
g) Ensure elected members have sufficient knowledge of homelessness in the borough and what action is being taken to find solutions to peoples housing problems	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.	(i) Appoint an elected member to champion the issue of homelessness across all aspects of the local authority business. (ii) Provide a regular performance update and annual report to appropriate committee (iii) Provide training to all elected members as they take-up office, and also enable exist serving elected members to receive annual updates.		Copeland Council.