



# Homeless Strategy

## 2007-2010

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## Amharic

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## Farsi

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## Urdu

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## Foreword

Wakefield and District Housing (WDH) believes that everyone should have a home.

Our Strategy to tackle homelessness relies on solid partnerships with statutory and voluntary agencies, it explores ways in which WDH can contribute towards the sustainable communities agenda with a focus on preventing homelessness.

We have looked at ways in which homelessness issues can be addressed by improving housing conditions, tackling overcrowding and increasing security through our Community Safety Initiatives.

Since the Right to Buy was introduced in the 1980s the supply of social rented housing has reduced, contributing towards the number of households unable to access affordable housing. WDH now has the opportunity to develop new housing and have embarked on an exciting new build programme.

WDH and Wakefield Council have agreed protocols to enable joint working aimed at reducing and preventing homelessness, through these we have implemented some new and exciting partnerships such as the Family Intervention Project (FIP) and Homespace.

Our Strategy also takes into account ways in which we can put our current housing stock to better use and how we can encourage single persons occupying family accommodation to move into more appropriate and manageable housing.

As Wakefield Council develop their Homeless Strategy, our Strategy will also adapt, ensuring that we are always collectively working towards the same aims and objectives in relation to homelessness. We will ensure that throughout our achievements together we will not become complacent, and will continuously strive to develop innovative homeless solutions.

We welcome the Housing Corporation's push for registered social landlords (RSLs) to play an important role in the development of services aimed at preventing homelessness, and look forward to working alongside the Homeless Action Team in developing our Homeless Action Plan.

**KEVIN DODD**  
Chief Executive  
Wakefield and District Housing

**KEN TAYLOR**  
Chair of Board  
Wakefield and District Housing

# Homeless Strategy

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# 1. Introduction

The Government introduced a target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. This was to recognise that people living in temporary accommodation lacked certainty over how long they will live in that accommodation, making it hard to put down roots in the community, settle children in school and contribute towards sustainable and confident communities.

Since Stock Transfer in 2005, WDH is the largest stock holding landlord in the district. Therefore, we recognise the important role that we play in working alongside Wakefield Council in meeting their statutory duties towards homelessness.

The key national documents that have influenced our strategic approach to homelessness are:

- The Homelessness Act 2002 and the associated Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.
- The Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) 8, Homelessness and Housing Needs.
- The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy.
- Independence and Opportunity – Strategy for Supporting People.
- The Government publication – Sustainable Communities; Settled Homes; Changing Lives.

In our Homeless Strategy we have set four key objectives that link with the Housing Corporation guidance, the key objectives are:

<b>WDH Corporate Objective</b>	<b>Homeless Strategy Objectives</b>
Be a landlord of choice by putting the customer first.	Prevention of homelessness.
Adopt best practice in good governance to be a well managed business.	Make better use of existing stock.
Be a positive force through leadership and influence to develop the potential of our people.	Develop successful partnerships.
Be a partner of choice to create better places to live.	Ensure sustainable and mixed communities are promoted.

In 2007 we produced our first Independent Living Strategy to promote housing opportunities and support services that enhance Independent Living, it sets out a number of priorities that will drive our Homelessness Strategy into achieving its key objectives, the priorities are:

- To provide a comfortable affordable home.
- To help people live independently.
- To promote social inclusion within the community.

We have a good partnership structure with Wakefield Council that enables joint working to promote homeless initiatives, and our Homeless Strategy will help our partnership to evolve.

## 2. Wakefield and District Housing's Corporate Vision and Values

Our **Vision** is to create **confident communities** throughout the district and beyond. People in confident communities feel safe where they live, trust the services they receive and are confident about their future prosperity and opportunities.

We have a challenging **mission** statement to achieve our vision to **inspire, transform and promote excellence**. We will **inspire** our tenants and residents, employees, partners and the housing sector to deliver a transformation of the communities we serve. To do this we are committed to delivering a three star service, ensuring excellence runs through all aspects of our work, and judging ourselves through the eyes of others.

Our values are to be **creative, inclusive and work with integrity**. Working to these **values** will help us deliver excellence and become an employer of choice.

Our Corporate **Strategic Objectives** are:

- Be a landlord of choice by putting the customer first.
- Adopt best practice in good governance to be a well managed business.
- Be a positive force through leadership and influence to develop the potential of our people.
- Be a partner of choice to create better places to live.

Our Vision recognises that we will need to **explore new ways of working** and that this will be driven by a process of **opening up ourselves to both external and internal challenge** in the way that local services are provided to ensure that local **communities receive appropriate high value services**. Our Vision sets down these expectations will be carried out **honestly with total transparency** and that our decisions will be made professionally and with integrity.

**Our efforts as a social enterprise and our ability to raise the bar and make significant social impacts by 2020** will depend to some extent on how successful we are at delivering services for the optimum cost whilst maintaining quality and customer satisfaction.

We will look to maximise the impact of the strategy overall by working with others where appropriate, investing our resource in local innovation to develop skilled workforces for the future.

All of our Vision expectations will require some form of investment and through this Strategy we will be able direct resources and actions so that **choices for modern living are achieved**.

## 3. Background to Strategy

### 3.1 About Wakefield

The Wakefield district covers approximately 500 square miles and is located in West Yorkshire to the south of Leeds. The history of the Wakefield district is quite varied, ranging from coal mining to rhubarb to rugby league to liquorice.

The district's population of 320,900 is expected to increase in line with national averages, people over the age of 85 are going to see the largest percentage increase up to 2020. 37% of the population, at that time, will be over the age of 65. The current Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population of 3.3% is expected to increase through the influx of Eastern European migrants, disproportionately to black households, which are expected to remain static at 2.2%.

#### 3.1.1 About Us

- WDH is one of the country's largest RSLs and the largest rented housing provider in the Wakefield district, providing over 31,032 homes, representing 23% of housing in Wakefield.
  - Our homes are a mix of houses, bungalows, maisonettes and flats, some of which are high rise blocks, 60% are three bedroomed houses.
  - WDH manages 53 independent living schemes for elderly and vulnerable people, with a population of 2,187.
- WDH has been awarded the highest accolade by the Audit Commission and has been judged to be a three star organisation with excellent prospects for improvement.
- Funding of £700m will bring homes up to the Wakefield Standard, a standard higher than the Decent Homes Standard, by 2012.
- We house around 65,000 people, 19% of the population.
  - 50% of our tenants are over the age of 65.
  - 51% are single person households.
  - 33% of our tenants have a long-term illness or disability.
  - 83% of our tenants' have an average income of less than £10,399.
  - 1,500 of our tenants who do not have a bank account.
- OneCALL takes over 18,500 incoming calls a month relating to repairs, antisocial behaviour, rents and general enquiries.
- WDH employs over 1,300 people, including a multi tasked and highly skilled maintenance workforce.

## 3.2 Homelessness: The Current Picture

### 3.2.1 National Context

There has been a downward trend in homelessness that started in early 2004. The Government introduced its homeless targets of reducing numbers in temporary accommodation, preventing homelessness and reducing the number of rough sleepers. As a result the number of people who became homeless in England between 2006 and December 2007 was 18% lower than in the same period the previous year, and the lowest quarterly value since the early 1980s.

In addition, the number of households living in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2006 has fallen, with a 9% reduction compared to 31 December 2005, and figures have fallen below 90,000 for the first time in four years. There has been a 73% reduction in rough sleeping since 1998 and reductions are being sustained.<sup>1</sup>

In the Yorkshire and Humber region the number of Statutory Homelessness in priority need groups that are accepted have fluctuated over the years as the table below demonstrates, the most recent decline could be due to the emphasis being placed on prevention more so in 2005/2006 than in the latter years. The rise in homelessness between 2002 and 2004 coincides with the increase in Homeless Priority Groups, introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002.

**Table 1: Statutory Homelessness, homeless households in priority need accepted in Yorkshire and the Humber/England.<sup>2</sup>**

Year	England	Yorkshire and The Humber
2000/2001	114,670	9,320
2001/2002	116,660	10,760
2002/2003	128,540	15,300
2003/2004	135,430	16,190
2004/2005	120,860	13,430
2005/2006	93,980	9,450

### 3.2.2 Local Context

Wakefield Council has a national target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 with a base line figure of 276, however they have also set a stretch target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation to 90 or below by 2009. This has been set in conjunction with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) in order to attract more funding and as of August 2007 the target has been met. However, plans to sustain it are being developed.

At the end of the last financial year (2006/2007) there were a total of 365 placements into temporary accommodation.

Wakefield Council manage their homeless services through the Open Door Project. The service can be accessed 24 hours a day and has a drop in centre in the middle of Wakefield where free housing advice and homeless assistance can be accessed.

<sup>1</sup> [www.communities.co.uk](http://www.communities.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Source: DCLG Quarterly P1(E) returns

We know that the main reasons for homelessness within the district are due to loss of lodgings, relationship breakdown, rent arrears and loss of rented accommodation. WDH therefore works with Wakefield Council and other agencies to enable people to maintain their homes to prevent homelessness and provide a home for those in need. This Strategy shows how we will develop services further to meet this agenda.

Since 2004/2005 there has been a decline in the numbers of households presenting themselves as homeless in the Wakefield district. Prior to this there had been a trend of a year on year increase in the numbers presenting and accepted as homelessness.

Last year potentially homeless people made 2,609 approaches to the Council's Open Door Project, of which 2,129 cases were prevented from becoming homeless.

Since Stock Transfer in 2005, WDH has worked with Wakefield Council to prevent homelessness. Through our collaborative and proactive approach to homelessness, we are able to report the following successes:

- Between 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 there was a 73% reduction in homeless applications.
- During 2004/2005 and 2006/2007 there was a 49% reduction in the number of people accepted as homeless.
- Since 2004/2005 to 2006/2007 there has been a 47% reduction of the number of new placements into temporary accommodation.

The Choice Based Lettings Service for Wakefield was launched in February 2007, and is known as Homesearch.

Homesearch is a joint allocations scheme devised in partnership by Wakefield Council and WDH, and since its launch, registered applicants have increased from 20,226 to 23,165. On average 2,000 tenancies are allocated each year and WDH void figures represent only 1.4% of our stock.

The Transfer Agreement between Wakefield Council and WDH stipulates that 75% of all vacancies should be made available for nominations from Wakefield Council. However, as the allocations scheme was developed in partnership with Wakefield Council and has been accepted by them as its scheme of allocations it regards all allocations from the scheme as nominations.

Tackling homelessness and homeless prevention are at the heart of the scheme. Joint procedures are in place with Wakefield Council to identify applicants facing homelessness and offer them additional priority within the scheme before they require temporary accommodation.

## 4. What have we Learned?

### 4.1 Strategy Objective 1: Prevention of Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 emphasised the Homeless Prevention Agenda. It placed a statutory requirement on Local Authorities to develop Homeless Strategies that promoted prevention activities.

Homelessness prevention is defined by the Government as an 'activity that enables a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or that provides options to enable a planned and timely move and help to sustain independent living'.

There are three stages to homeless prevention that the Government have identified as appropriate:

- Early intervention; identifying those at risk of homelessness and providing services to support the person before problems or disputes escalate beyond recovery.
- Pre crisis intervention; which takes the form of advice services, mediation, negotiations with landlords, all aiming to avoid imminent loss of a home.
- Preventing recurring homelessness; promoting tenancy sustainment, where rehousing alone does not resolve all problems faced by the household.

Preventing homelessness is a priority for WDH and is embedded in the architecture of our allocations scheme. This is reflected in our corporate priorities outlined in Vision 2020, to create better neighbourhoods where people wish to live and to promote choices.

### 4.2 Strategy Objective 2: Making Better use of Existing Stock

The supply of affordable housing will start to increase now that WDH are able to build new schemes, however, it will only be a small percentage of the total existing social housing stock. Therefore, it is important that WDH make the best possible use of its existing stock, by reducing under occupation, keeping void levels to a minimum, tackling overcrowding and converting temporary tenancies into settled homes.

### 4.3 Strategy Objective 3: Develop Successful Partnerships

Wakefield Council's duties and responsibilities in relation to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness include:

- To assess people who are homeless, to decide whether a statutory duty is owed to them by the Council under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
- To provide temporary accommodation under the duties and powers set out in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
- To proactively help people who are homeless or potentially homeless to find and keep accommodation.
- To manage temporary accommodation and work with partners to increase the supply of accommodation available to people who are homeless.

- To provide support to people who are or who have been homeless, or who may be vulnerable to homelessness, to help them live independently and keep their accommodation.
- To work with partners to prevent homelessness.
- To help excluded groups to integrate successfully into the community.

An effective partnership between Wakefield Council and WDH is critical to tackling homelessness successfully, and since stock transfer we have developed our partnership working to include effective operational arrangements for the majority of cases and new and exciting homeless initiatives to be introduced.

Wakefield Council have been awarded the title of Regional Champions in delivering services for homelessness and actively promote good practice with other local authorities, sharing examples of our successful partnership working. WDH support Wakefield Council in this process and Wakefield Council ended its year as Regional Champions by hosting a conference in July 2007 to disseminate good practice.

At WDH we ensure that our Corporate Priorities and strategic direction impact upon tackling homelessness issues as set out in our Vision to 2020.

#### 4.4 Strategy Objective 4: Ensure Sustainable and Mixed Communities are Promoted

This objective aims to achieve sustainable, cohesive and mixed communities, where people want to live.

In order to successfully tackle homelessness, balanced communities are required, communities that promote equality and avoid concentrations of deprivation.

The Government's National Strategy to develop sustainable communities, require organisations to develop homes where they are needed, sustain home ownership and revive housing markets.

## 5. Objectives of the Homeless Strategy

### 5.1 Strategy Objective 1: Prevention of Homelessness

#### What we currently do:

##### Homesearch

The Homesearch Policy allows for potentially homeless applicants to be awarded additional priority within the scheme based upon a recommendation from employees within Wakefield Council's Open Door Project. This is aimed at preventing applicants becoming homeless and needing temporary accommodation by offering a greater opportunity to secure accommodation prior to their circumstances becoming so acute that Wakefield Council is required to intervene.

## **Floating Support Services**

As part of a joint protocol between Wakefield Council and WDH, a range of vulnerable tenants living in properties across the district are able to access housing related support services by Wakefield Council. The protocol allows for a minimum of 180 people living in WDH accommodation to be provided with support to increase their ability to sustain their tenancies.

## **WDH Service Access Points (SAPs)**

As part of the agreed Homelessness and Housing Advice Protocol, SAPs ensure that employees are able to sign post any relevant customers to the Housing Solutions Team and/or the Homeless Prevention Team at the Open Door Project. Help and advice about rent arrears is available to tenants at the SAPs. This is in order to avert the possibility of eviction and resultant homelessness caused by escalating arrears.

Joint training has been carried out with the Open Door Project and SAPs to raise awareness of homelessness, eligibility and immigration and understand the extent of both roles within the joint protocol.

## **Debt Management**

In any instance of Housing Debt, WDH see eviction as a last resort. In order to minimise rent arrears and repossessions due to rent arrears WDH have introduced a Debt Strategy. Funding provided through the LAA has also enabled a centralised Debt Team to be established at Wakefield Council promoting debt advice, and WDH tenants experiencing rent arrears as a serious problem are signposted to this service.

WDH's new website ask:ted, meaning tackling exclusion and debt, has been launched which offers free advice on avoiding and reducing debt and on bank accounts, borrowing and budgeting.

We also aim to minimise financial exclusion by working with other local partners such as the Credit Union, ensuring that their services are promoted.

## **Family Intervention Project**

This is a new and exciting homeless initiative developed between Wakefield Council and WDH. Family Intervention Projects have been developed to stop the antisocial behaviour of families and restore safety to their homes and to the wider community. The projects tackle the causes of poor behaviour, such as drug and alcohol misuse, poor health, domestic abuse, worklessness and debt. They therefore deliver the objectives of preventing homelessness by enabling families to sustain tenancies. The project in Wakefield was developed using a multi agency approach to ensure that all necessary support services were available to households. We have received £430,000 for over two years from the Government's Respect Task Force and WDH have contributed an additional £50,000 in total. It offers three different types of support, outreach, dispersed and core. The core is offered in one particular house in the district whereby 24 hour intensive support is provided to the household.

## **Youth Inclusion and Support Programme (YISP)**

The Wakefield YISP was established with the Wakefield Youth Offending Team (WYOT) in 2004 where it began delivering services to families and vulnerable young people. As an active member of the Wakefield District Community Safety Partnership, WDH acknowledge that the work of the YISP can have a positive impact in challenging the social and individual risk factors that make a young person more likely to be drawn into criminal or antisocial behaviour and help strengthen family relationships where there is a real risk of breakdown.

WDH is currently working closely with the WYOT to develop a pilot senior YISP on the Lupset Estate in Wakefield, for young people within the age range of 14 to 17. WDH are also involved in a multi agency approach to develop support and activity plans for young people aged between 10 and 13 that are referred to the junior YISP within Wakefield.

## **WDH Community Safety Strategy**

In many ways the WDH Community Safety Strategy contributes towards reducing and preventing homelessness. An initiative in relation to domestic violence assists victims to stay within their own homes, mediation services prevent simple disputes escalating into antisocial behaviour, and crime prevention initiatives bring stability to households on estates.

## **Community Leadership Programme**

WDH launched the 'Community Leadership Programme' in 2006. The programme will engage up to 180 young people each year over the next five years in a Personal Development Programme using local neighbourhood facilities. The programme heavily relies on successful partnerships with the local schools and WDH has met the target of engaging 18 schooling establishments.

The aim is to help young people find their hidden skills and strengths and develop their potential by taking part in a life changing personal development experience. This includes a one a day activity course followed by two day residential using local facilities throughout the district. From an initial 180 young people, it is expected that up to 60 will go on to complete a five day residential programme out of the district.

Young people who engage in the programme may ultimately achieve the offer of an apprenticeship, further training and employment opportunities or participate in local community impact initiatives.

The project will assist towards preventing young people from becoming homeless in later life by providing them with the confidence and life skills to ensure a positive future.

## 5.2 Strategic Objective 2: Making Better use of Existing Stock

### What we currently do:

#### Addressing Overcrowding

In some areas of our district overcrowding is a problem for particularly large families, understanding their housing need has enabled WDH to plan and commence development for new houses that will accommodate these families.

#### Addressing Under Occupation

In other areas of the district there are under occupation issues, with single older people choosing to stay in their own homes, that are sometimes three to four bedroom properties, WDH will consider ways in which new housing will attract older people to free up essential family accommodation which can then potentially be made available to homeless families. WDH's Independent Living Strategy explores this issue in more detail.

The current Allocations Policy offers additional priority to WDH residents who are looking to downsize their current home with the objective of increasing the supply of family accommodation.

Initial discussions have taken place with Wakefield Council around an incentive scheme that is aimed at encouraging older residents to release valuable family type properties for use by homeless households.

#### Providing Dispersed Accommodation

WDH provides accommodation to a number of agencies in order to help house homeless and potentially homeless people to avoid the use of hostel placements. The table below shows the current number of properties that WDH provides, however the Asylum Seekers properties are not provided to prevent or reduce homelessness:

External Agency	Number of WDH Properties
Open Door	119
Asylum Seekers	134
Education Department	10
Social Care and Health	4
English Churches	2
Chevin Housing Group	2
Community Health Team	2
Health Authority	2
Foundation Housing	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>

## 5.3 Strategy Objective 3: Develop Successful Partnerships

### What we currently do:

#### **Homelessness and Housing Advice Protocol**

Wakefield Council and WDH implemented the Protocol at point of transfer in 2005. It sets out how the two organisations will work together to meet the needs of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It established working arrangements and demonstrates good practice to facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery. Since the original agreement was formulated operational working arrangements have developed. The protocol aims to prevent homelessness and to provide support to those who experience it.

#### **The Local Strategic Partnership for Wakefield**

Since its formation in 2001 the partnership has taken the lead on directing the work of all key agencies. It established a LAA within which the concept of total family support is promoted. This concept attempts to break the cycle of abuse, deprivation and low aspirations. The LAA also focuses on neighbourhoods, piloting neighbourhood management in the most deprived areas of the district. A further priority within the LAA is to promote Safer Stronger Communities, an aim of this priority is to reduce homelessness. WDH leads on this part of the LAA, and in doing so have introduced different homelessness initiatives such as HomeSpace and Family Intervention, in partnership with Wakefield Council. These are outlined in Objective Three.

#### **Neighbourhood Partnerships (Airedale)**

A key part of this project is to provide chaotic families with a 'gateway' to resources delivered by the Primary Care Trust and Wakefield Council, Family Services as part of the Total Family Support Package. Such families are supported by Neighbourhood Officers and guided to appropriate support providers who will work with a limited number of families to ensure that clear behavioural changes happen. A consequence of the changes in behaviour will be to reduce the risk of repossession of the property for tenancy breaches and the potential for homelessness.

To reduce poverty and debt and prevent homelessness as a result, WDH provides support to families who have multiple debt problems through access to debt advice workers. A partnership with White Rose Credit Union means that access to a basic bank account and controlled credit might also be made possible.

#### **The Homeless Strategy Implementation Group**

Chaired by Wakefield Council this group is responsible for overseeing the progress of all homeless initiatives in the district. It is also the lead partnership for reviewing and developing the Wakefield Homeless Strategy, keeping abreast of the numbers of households presenting as homeless and placements into temporary accommodation. WDH is an active partner of the group and have consulted the group in relation to the development of this Homeless Strategy ensuring that it will be in line with Wakefield Council's revised strategy due for implementation in July 2008.

## **The Housing Needs Panel**

Wakefield Council and WDH address the requirements of people in housing need through the Homesearch joint Allocation Policy. The multi agency Housing Needs Panel is in place to ensure priority is awarded to those that are in the most urgent need of rehousing. The joint panel aims to improve outcomes for vulnerable people by working in partnership to provide coordinated response to housing and support needs. Helping to prevent admission into temporary accommodation and prevent the supply of temporary accommodation within the district reducing due to stagnant cases.

## **Synergy Respect Partnership**

WDH, together with Chevin Housing Association, leads the Synergy Respect Partnership, this is made up of regional RSLs, to develop benchmarking of services and promote joint learning in relation to improving community safety, tackling antisocial behaviour and reducing the effects of crime.

In terms of reducing and preventing homelessness, the emphasis is on sustaining tenancies and reducing tenancy breakdown.

## **Community Safety Partnership**

WDH has a team of five Police Officers seconded from West Yorkshire Police. The officers form our Tenancy Support Team (TST), and are part funded by WDH and West Yorkshire Police. Liaison with West Yorkshire Police is much more effective thanks to this partnership and WDH is now able to respond more quickly to situations that may result in homelessness.

WDH works in close partnership to tackle all forms of antisocial behaviour and pursue a preventative approach through the work of the TST. Eviction for nuisance behaviour is seen as a last resort and all efforts are made to seek early and effective remedies to sustain tenancies.

## **5.4 Strategy Objective 4: Ensure Sustainable and Mixed Communities are Promoted**

### **What we currently do:**

#### **Homesearch**

WDH utilises Local Lettings Strategies within each of its management districts. Local lettings strategies are devised with Wakefield Council to ensure that the needs of vulnerable applicants are met within an overall lettings framework that actively contributes to the development of viable, sustainable communities.

WDH and Wakefield Council are currently in talks with other RSLs within the district to extend the Homesearch scheme to other providers. The objective is to provide a single access portal that will offer a range of landlords and tenures to applicants.

## Housing Development

WDH is committed to creating sustainable communities and is developing a Regeneration Strategy for this purpose. We have received Approved Development Programme funding from the Housing Corporation for 2006/2008, this is a remarkable achievement in our first year as a Housing Association. Plans are now in place to deliver 98 units of rented accommodation including units of shared ownership accommodation and 15 properties for outright sale. In addition the Housing Corporation have produced their Forward Allocation Programme 2008/2009 for which WDH will produce 25 units of accommodation.

In February 2008 WDH had completed 40 properties for rent and 18 properties for shared ownership. By increasing the range of affordable housing and access to essential services across the district, regeneration will contribute towards the decline in homelessness.

## HomeSpace

The HomeSpace project is a new and exciting homeless initiative developed in partnership between Wakefield Council and WDH. The project aims to increase the supply of affordable housing across the district on multi tenure estates, in order to prevent homelessness and address housing need. WDH purchases the main equity stake in the property, with a contribution from Wakefield Council in order to keep rent levels below the benefit threshold. The properties will be used to rehouse, households who find themselves homeless or in a potentially homeless situation, for a maximum of two years. After two years a housing options interview will take place and the possibility of an assured tenancy be offered. Alternatively the option of the tenant to purchase an equity stake in the property will be given. In the first year of the project we are on target to purchase 20 properties and the project overall will deliver an additional 80 properties.

## 6. Plans for Change

### 6.1 Strategic Objective 1: Prevention of Homelessness

#### What we will do:

- Continue to develop homeless prevention initiatives such as the FIP, alongside Wakefield Council.
- Develop effective monitoring for cases of homelessness prevention initiatives.
- Address financial exclusion as part of our debt management strategy to maximise income and to work with partners in the community to raise awareness of debt issues.
- Ensure that homeless prevention is embedded in WDH corporate priorities.
- Follow good practice models that promote the prevention of homelessness.
- Develop relationships with the Youth Justice Services and Education to help develop younger people in order to prevent homelessness.
- Develop supported housing projects with partners, for people with learning disabilities, mental health issues, and ex offenders.

## 6.2 Strategic Objective 2: Making Better use of Existing Stock

### What we will do:

- Continuously develop effective housing management procedures to maintain low relet times and reduce voids levels.
- Consider the needs of larger family units when developing new affordable housing.
- Develop attractive incentives to reduce under occupation.
- Continue to provide dispersed accommodation to agencies in order to assist with the reduction and prevention of homelessness.
- Explore opportunities to work with Wakefield Council to manage properties that have been acquired through Empty Dwelling Orders under the 2004 Housing Act.
- Work with Wakefield Council to improve the nature of hostel accommodation through the Government's Hostels Capital Investment Programme.

## 6.3 Strategic Objective 3: Develop Successful Partnerships

### What we will do:

- Actively work with Wakefield Council at both strategic and operational levels to assist with their statutory homeless duties.
- Maintain membership of the Homeless Strategy Implementation Group to assist Wakefield Council to develop homeless initiatives and its Homeless Strategy.
- Regularly review our joint protocols in relation to homelessness ensuring that they contribute towards the delivery of sustainable communities and addressing local needs.
- Establish a Homeless Action Plan, with our partners, using Housing Corporation guidance, to ensure that plans to tackle homelessness are clearly set out.
- Identify a Homeless Champion at a senior level within WDH who will promote the delivery of homeless action plans throughout the organisation.
- Initiate partnerships with black and minority ethnic (BME) associations to ensure the needs of these homeless households are taken into account.
- Regularly report our performance on homelessness to Wakefield Council through their scrutiny panels or other such mechanisms.
- Liaise with the Housing Corporation's Homelessness Action Team to ensure that we keep abreast of good practice.
- Develop partnerships with the voluntary sector where appropriate.

## 6.4 Strategic Objective 4: Ensure Sustainable and Mixed Communities are Promoted

### What we will do:

- Continue to promote sustainable and mixed communities in all regeneration plans and new initiatives.
- Extend the remit of Homesearch to include other associations and private landlords.
- Assist younger tenants in successfully sustaining tenancies from the out set, by exploring opportunities to offer tenancy training packages and the provision of furnished tenancies.
- Monitor and report on tenancy sustainment as part of the Homesearch performance indicators.
- Develop opportunities for home ownership through the use of shared equity schemes, such as HomeSpace.

## 7. Expected Outcomes

With the implementation of this Homeless Strategy we would expect the following outcomes to be evident.

- Reduction in the number of household's temporary accommodation.
- Reduction in the number of people presenting as homelessness.
- Reduction in antisocial behaviour.
- Increased tenancy sustainability.
- Increased housing choices.

### Value For Money

Developing partnerships and joint working encourages efficient use of resources. It is difficult to completely quantify savings in relation to the work on homelessness at WDH.

According to Housing Corporation statistics, every tenancy that WDH successfully sustains saves the organisation approximately £5,000. As this only equates to Housing Management costs, further savings will be made in reduced health care due to the prevention of the depression that affects many homeless households, policing costs will be reduced through our community safety work, and Family Services costs similarly reduced through our use of supported tenancies and work with younger people.

An independent evaluation of FIPs has been carried out across the UK, the evaluation found that 92% of families engaging in the project were found to be at a reduced risk or at no risk to the local communities. The research found the approach to be of 'excellent value for money' as in some areas a saving of £213,420 for a single family was evident, compared to the cost of the service for housing management, criminal justice, policing, education and health.

WDH will work to identify ways in which its approach to homelessness represents best value for money.

## **8. Equality and Diversity**

WDH will ensure that in delivering services we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all tenants and residents to be involved regardless of age, ability and background and will provide the support needed to enable this.

We aim to be effective in encouraging wider involvement and, to achieve this we will research the needs of communities within the district so that we can tailor our services to meet their diverse needs.

We will ensure that information is available in a variety of formats, including different languages, on audio cassette and large print, by newsletter, leaflets, information in SAPs and the website. This will help all tenants and residents have access to up to date information.

WDH has a separate strategy for Equality and Diversity 2006–2010.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

The action plan contained within the strategy will be used to monitor progress of developments and periodic joint review meetings with Wakefield Council's Open Door Project will provide scrutiny of service delivery and performance against associated targets.

We will continue to support Wakefield Council by working with them to achieve their statutory temporary accommodation target and LAA stretch targets and we will agree joint targets for the projects that we develop together.

## 10. Homeless Strategy Action Plan

### Strategic Objective 1: Prevention of Homelessness

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to Date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S27	Develop homeless prevention initiatives	Introduce four homeless prevention initiatives.	<p>Prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Reduce antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>Reduce home loss through eviction.</p> <p>Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation to 90 or below by 2009 and by 50% by 2010.</p>	Assistant Director Customer Contact	<p>Homespace – WDH fund 80% per property and Wakefield Council 20%.</p> <p>FIP - £60,000 per annum + Core Unit and office at 18 Ferrybridge Road.</p>	L	M	March 2010	<p>Complete</p> <p>At April 2008, Homespace has 20 properties.</p> <p>At April 2008 FIP has 17 properties.</p> <p>YISP supporting 13 young people.</p> <p>KeyRing Housing Support Project for people with learning disabilities agreed.</p> <p><a href="#">Safe@Home</a> Scheme implemented with partners.</p>

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to Date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S27	Develop homeless prevention monitoring for partnership initiatives.	Evaluation and impact assessments to be agreed with Wakefield Council on a scheme by scheme basis.	Prevent and reduce homelessness. Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour. Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation to 90 or below by 2009 and by 50% by 2010.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	Contained within projects costs.	L	M	December 2008	FIP evaluation due for 2007/2008
P37	Debt Management Strategy to address financial exclusion.	GNP 134: Arrears as % of debit – 2008/2009 3.5%. GNP 128: Annual net rental income for general needs housing collected – 2008/2009 99.5%. WDH 303: % Tenancies failing in first 12 months – 2008/2009 0.4%.	Reduction in social and financial exclusion that debt brings. Reduction in WDH debt.	Assistant Director Neighbourhoods	Contained within Debt Management Strategy.	L	H	2007/2008	Complete

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to Date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S27 S28 S33	Develop supported housing projects.	Homespace – secure 80 properties. FIP – support up to 20 families. YISP – Engage with up to 13 young people in Lupset. Increase school attendance by 75%. Keyring Project – support up to nine people with learning disabilities.	Reduction in antisocial behaviour. Reduction in school truancy and improvement of school attendance/attainment. Reduce and prevent homelessness. Reduction in home loss through eviction Improve independence for vulnerable people to live in the community.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	Homespace – WDH fund 80% per property and Wakefield Council 20%. FIP - £60,000 per annum + Core Unit and office at 18 Ferrybridge Road. YISP - £30,000 per annum. Keyring – up to nine properties.	L	M	March 2010	At April 2008, Homespace has 20 properties. FIP has 17 properties. YISP supporting 13 young people. KeyRing Housing Support Project for people with learning disabilities agreed. <a href="#">Safe@Home</a> Scheme implemented with partners.

## Strategic Objective 2: Making better use of existing stock

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S9 07/08 S33	Consider the needs of larger family units when developing new affordable housing.	98 new build properties built 2006/2008.	Increased housing choices and affordability.	Assistant Director Regeneration	£10 million for 2006/2008.	L	H	April 2010	58 properties completed of which 18 are shared ownership.
P24	Reduce under occupation by introducing an incentive scheme.	Introduce a pilot scheme.	Releases stock for families requiring housing.	Assistant Director Neighbourhoods	Home Relocator - £5,000 per annum.	L	H	March 2010	Investigating options to increase take up of Home Relocator.  Incentive Schemes to be explored.
S33	Assist Wakefield Council to acquire private properties acquired through Empty Dwelling Orders.	Act as managing agent for 10 properties.	Increased housing choices.	Assistant Director Neighbourhoods	WDH management fee will be negotiated.	M	L	March 2009	

### Strategic Objective 3: Develop Successful Partnerships

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S27	Hold regular reviews of Joint Protocols.	Twelve monthly operational meetings per year with WMDC Open Door Project.	Local housing needs are met in relation to homelessness and allocations.  Reduce and prevent homelessness.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	No resource issues.	L	H	March 2010	Complete.  Regular joint review meetings are held.  Leasing agreement currently under review.
S27	Establish Homeless Action Plan with the Housing Corporation.	To have an action plan agreed with Housing Corporation.	WDH are proactive partners in tackling homelessness.  Action Plan in accordance with Housing Corporation guidance.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	No resource issues.	L	M	March 2008	Complete.
S27	Identify a Homeless Champion.	Recruit one Homelessness Champion.	Promotion of the Homeless Strategy and Action Plan throughout WDH and with partners.	Director of Operations	Vulnerable Services Manager.	L	L	March 2008	Complete.
P17 S20 P23 S9 07/08	Provide advice and guidance to Wakefield Council to enable them to meet BME homelessness housing need.	Twelve monthly operational meetings per year with Wakefield Council Open Door Project.	Local needs are addressed in relation to BME homelessness.  BME access to housing is improved.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	Existing front line staff teams deliver the requirements of the joint protocol with Wakefield Council.	L	M	March 2009	Complete.

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S27	Assess impact of partnership through regular homeless performance reporting to Wakefield Council.	Four quarterly reports provided to Wakefield Council each year.	Establish effectiveness of joint protocol to prevent and reduce homelessness.  Improved partnership working.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	No resource issues.	L	M	2007	Discussions with Wakefield Council on format.

#### Strategic Objective 4: Ensure Sustainable and Mixed Communities are Promoted

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
P23	Extend the remit of Homesearch to include other associations and private landlords.	100% of RSLs in Wakefield district participate in Homesearch.	Participation by all RSLs will deliver extension of choice across a range of landlords to homeless/potentially homeless households.	Assistant Director Customer Contact	Nil cost – income generation will reduce overall cost of the scheme.	L	M	March 2010	Presentations delivered to other RSLs.  Three RSLs, Chevin, Bowlee Park and Leeds Federated now signed up.  Wakefield Council encouraging others to participate.
S27	Introduce initial support through furnished tenancies.	To carry out pilot scheme for three months in Castleford, Airedale and Normanton Area during 2008/2009 to assess take up.  Initial target – 10 properties.	Younger and vulnerable tenants successfully sustain tenancies.	Assistant Director Neighbourhoods	Cost per property to be recouped from service charges.	M	L	December 2008	Visited Your Homes, Newcastle.

Specific		Measurable		Resources		Risk		Date	Progress to date
Reference	Action (What and How)	Target	Outcome	Who	Cost (£)	Probability	Impact	(When)	
S20 S9 07/08 S33	Introduce shared equity schemes.	29 Shared Ownership properties to be produced as part of new build development 2006/2008.	Sustainable Communities. Improve housing choice and affordability.	Assistant Director Regeneration	Homespace – WDH fund 80% per property and Wakefield Council 20%.  £10 million for new build for 2006/2008.	M	H	March 2020	Homespace implemented and 20 properties bought by March 2008, offering the opportunity after two years of a shared equity stake in the property.  Completed eight new build shared ownership properties at Chiltern Avenue, Castleford and 10 at Wentcliffe, Ferrybridge Phase 1. Eleven properties on target to be completed in Wentcliffe Phase 2 in June/July 2008, bringing the total to 29.



## **Vision**

to create confident communities

## **Mission**

to inspire, transform and promote excellence

## **Values**

to be creative, inclusive and work with integrity

**delivering promises, improving lives**