



**Stockton-on-Tees**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# Housing Strategy

2012 - 2015

*Passionate* about where you live

## Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Stockton's refreshed Housing Strategy for 2012 to 2015. For the first time the strategy is an over-arching document that encompasses our Homelessness Prevention and Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategies.

This strategy has been developed during a period of uncertainty at a local, national and global level. We know that there are significant demographic changes that will affect the borough and impact on housing and housing related services required and aspired to, particularly the impact of an ageing population that we are experiencing nationally and locally. In addition to this, like all local authorities, we are facing large reductions in funding at a time when demand for many of our services is increasing. There is also a level of uncertainty around the effects of welfare reform and the potential impact on communities and their sustainability. Difficult economic conditions mean many young people are struggling to get a foot on the housing ladder and the number of households approaching our Housing Options service with housing difficulties continues to increase. On top of this, an increasing number of homeowners are finding that they cannot afford to make the repairs and improvements to their properties that are needed.

However despite all this we remain committed to delivering our vision to 'provide access to good quality, affordable housing, with appropriate support, located within pleasant, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods' and this strategy details our priority themes and what we will do to deliver our vision.

We want to make sure that the housing available in the borough meets the needs and aspirations of current and future residents. Good quality neighbourhoods and housing can also provide significant economic, health and environmental benefits. We will build on our successful track record of delivering improvements to existing housing where homes will benefit from repairs, adaptations and energy efficiency measures. Our housing-led regeneration schemes will continue; improving local communities and providing the right mix of housing across all tenures.

It is clear that working with other organisations in the borough is key to success. The strong partnership ethos that has been cultivated over a number of years in Stockton has been evident in the development of this strategy and will continue in its delivery.

**Councillor Steven Nelson**  
**Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety**

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## Section 1: Introduction

There are many reasons why housing is of great importance, notably:

- Housing in the right place enables people to find work and maintain contact with friends and family.
- A healthy housing market benefits the local economy providing new jobs and building homes to provide for local people and attract people into the area.
- Good housing can have a positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and families.
- Housing can benefit our communities, providing safe homes and neighbourhoods for children to play and learn and for older or vulnerable people to access the support they require to maintain their independence.

Based on this we firmly believe that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a decent home in a sustainable community at a price they can afford. Local authorities are now more than ever taking an increasingly strategic role in housing, in terms of identifying local needs and enabling the development of new quality accommodation.

To ensure we can appropriately respond to the changing housing needs and aspirations of our borough we have recently reviewed our Housing, Homelessness Prevention and Private Sector Renewal strategies. Following this review we have decided to incorporate all three documents into one comprehensive strategy.

Our 2012-15 Housing Strategy centres around four key themes and details the housing priorities and the actions that we will undertake to meet local housing need and aspiration.

The key themes are: -

- Promote and sustain independence
- Prevent homelessness
- Meet the challenges of the housing market, and
- Promote sustainable communities

Innovation and partnership working is integral to the delivery of our Housing Strategy and is becoming increasingly important with the limited availability of resources to deliver our priorities. We have an impressive track record in delivering our housing priorities and we are confident that in the difficult economic climate we will continue to be successful in delivering good quality, decent and affordable homes in sustainable locations which both current and future resident choose to live in.

## Section 2: Strategic Context

### National Policy Drivers

#### Localism

The Localism Act received Royal assent in November 2011 and sets out plans to give communities and local government greater powers and freedom from Whitehall. The Act covers four key themes: -

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government,
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals,
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective,
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally,

with many of the measures contained within them becoming effective from April 2012.

There are provisions in the Localism Act which aim to make decisions concerning housing policy to be taken at a more local level. These include: -

- Giving local authorities greater freedom to set priorities and criteria for social housing waiting lists,
- Reforming tenure on social housing so that lifetime tenancy is no longer guaranteed,
- The flexibility for local authorities to meet their homelessness duty by offering private rented accommodation to homeless people, and
- The reform of council house finance, to allow councils to keep social housing rent instead of returning this to central government.

#### National Housing Policy

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has clearly outlined the Government housing ambitions: -

- Increasing the number of houses available to buy and rent, including affordable housing,
- Improving the flexibility of social housing (increasing mobility and choice) and promoting homeownership,
- Protecting the vulnerable and disadvantaged by tackling homelessness and supporting people to stay in their own homes, and
- Making sure that homes are high quality and are sustainable.

#### Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England

In 2011 the Government published its Housing Strategy for England, which sets out its intended direction of travel for housing, its role in the wider economy and its provision and its contribution to social mobility. It sets out the shape of housing provision that the government wants to see, which involve the primacy of home ownership; social housing as welfare; and an increasing role for the private rented sector.

The Strategy presents both existing initiatives and policies and introduces a range of new interventions and approaches, which are set out below: -

1. Increasing supply, more homes, stable growth which includes a new build indemnity scheme led by the Home Builders Federation and

- Council for Mortgage Lenders; and a £400 million 'Get Britain Building' investment fund,
2. Social and affordable housing reform,
  3. A thriving private rented sector,
  4. A strategy for empty homes, with a commitment to bring empty homes back into use,
  5. Quality of housing experience and support, through supporting the most vulnerable households to prevent and tackle homelessness, and
  6. Quality, sustainability and design, by encouraging the promotion of imaginative, innovative, locally distinctive, well designed new homes and neighbourhoods.

### Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act is designed to improve work incentives, simplify the benefits system and tackle administrative complexities and is expected to be enacted during the lifetime of this housing strategy. The proposed reforms include the introduction of Universal Credit, a working age credit providing a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring which will support people both in and out of work. In addition to this there are changes to housing benefit and other welfare benefits. These are the biggest changes to the welfare system for over 60 years. The Act gives the Government powers to implement housing benefit reforms outlined in the June 2010 Budget and the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, these include: -

- Introducing a bedroom size criteria to the calculation of housing benefit for social sector tenants

- Introducing a benefit cap of £500 per week for couples and £350 per week for single claimants
- Extending direct payments for housing benefit to working age tenants in the social housing sector.

Additionally from January 2012 the age at which the single room rate is applied increased from 25 to 35. This increases the age that single people can qualify for housing benefit for a self contained property.

These changes will bring significant challenges to all landlords and their tenants. All of the implications of welfare reform are not yet fully apparent. For example, in some areas in the borough, there is a significant mismatch in the sector between the size and type of housing that residents need and what affordable housing is currently available in that area. In some areas, due to low demand single person households have been housed in 2 and 3-bed properties and some of the implications, particularly around under-occupation could indirectly de-stabilise these communities.

The Council has established a Welfare Reform Project Board to identify the potential impact of welfare reform on residents and organisations within the borough. It will also co-ordinate a strategic response to the welfare reform agenda and identify actions to be taken to mitigate the impact and support households at risk. Partners on the board include the Council, representatives from the third sector, Registered Providers, the Fire Service, the Police and Job Centre Plus.

## National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework was published on 27th March 2012 and came into effect on the same day, revoking Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing, which had previously formed the basis for housing planning policy. As part of its commitment to economic growth, localism and decentralisation, the Government has used the Framework to streamline all existing national policy documents into one short Policy Framework.

The Framework stresses the need for councils to work with communities and businesses to seek opportunities for sustainable growth to rebuild the economy; helping to deliver the homes, jobs, and infrastructure needed for a growing population whilst protecting the environment. A **presumption in favour of sustainable development** means that proposals should be approved promptly unless they compromise the twelve sustainable development principles set out in the Framework.

The Framework identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The social role is defined as: *'supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations'...*<sup>1</sup> These three dimensions (or roles) are seen as mutually dependent.

## Sub Regional Context

**Tees Valley Unlimited** (TVU) is the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the Tees Valley responsible for delivering growth and economic equity and was one of the first local enterprise partnerships to gain government approval. The housing offer in the Tees Valley is one of the key priorities in TVU Statement

of Ambition, aiming to ensure it is attractive to people who invest and locate to the area.

## Local Context

Stockton Renaissance is the Local Strategic Partnership for the borough, which works with a wide range of people and organisations to ensure the needs and priorities of local people are met. As part of this, Stockton Renaissance has developed and monitors the borough's **Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2021**, which aims to ensure a better quality of life for all people living in Stockton-on-Tees, now and for our future generations to come. Improving housing and the environment is one of the key themes in fulfilling this vision and includes improving the housing market in the borough and creating mixed communities offering a range of choices as well as increasing the supply of affordable housing. Key housing and environment ambitions for the coming years are: -

- Improve our Housing,
- Help People to live independently in their own home,
- Reduce Fuel Poverty,
- Improve Waste Management,
- Create Better Open Spaces,
- Tackle Climate Change.

A number of thematic and area partnerships feed into Stockton Renaissance and the housing element of its Sustainable Community Strategy is steered by the **Housing and Neighbourhood Thematic Partnership**. The partnership is made up of a range of organisations and groups with an interest in

<sup>1</sup> CLG National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 Para 7

housing including the local authority, Registered Providers, developers, housing support providers, private landlords, community representatives and local agencies. Its aim is to 'provide access to good quality, affordable housing, with appropriate support, located within pleasant, safe and sustainable neighbourhoods'.

The **Core Strategy**, adopted in March 2010, sets out the vision and objectives that will underpin all the Council's development plan documents, and sets out the spatial strategy for meeting known and anticipated development requirements to 2024, including the number of dwellings required.

The Council will continue to work in partnership with Registered Providers and developers to meet the following targets set out in the Core Strategy: -

- The average annual target for the delivery of affordable housing is 100 affordable homes per year to 2016, 90 affordable homes per year for the period 2016 to 2021 and 80 affordable homes per year for the period 2021 to 2024,
- Affordable housing provision within a target range of 15-20% will be required on schemes of 15 dwellings or more and on development sites of 0.5 hectares or more.

Whilst current planning policy requires the mix of affordable housing to be provided with 20% intermediate and 80% social rented tenures, based on recommendations from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012 the Council is now requesting that the mix of affordable housing to be provided to be 30% intermediate and 70% rented tenures with a high priority accorded to the delivery of 2 bedroom houses and bungalows.

The Housing Strategy will align with the Council's **Vision for Adults**, a strategy for Adult Health and Care Services in the borough. Changes in needs and aspirations of people requiring health and care services and changes in the population means that the way we commission and deliver these services becomes increasingly important. Housing is an important part of this strategy, particularly in enabling people to live as independently as possible. Housing impacts on a person's health and well-being, good quality, appropriate housing in places people want to live has a positive impact on reducing deprivation and health inequalities by facilitating stable and secure family lives.

The Council and NHS Stockton-on-Tees have a statutory duty to produce a **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**. The JSNA is a systematic method for reviewing the health and wellbeing needs of a population. It is used to provide the right services in the right way to meet those needs.

The 2012 update to the JSNA has highlighted a number of housing related priorities around health and well-being. Within the JSNA housing is seen in its entirety rather than simply 'bricks and mortar', and its priorities are grouped by the themes:

- Housing investment/property condition,
- The need for appropriate housing, and
- Housing related support.

The Council will take on more responsibility for public health services from 2013 as part of the Government's health reforms. In addition to being given a statutory duty and a ring fenced budget to improve and protect the health of the local population local authorities are required to establish Health and Well Being Boards and are

responsible for high level plans for health and well being.

The Council's **Regeneration Strategy** recognises the pivotal role of place shaping in regeneration. The urban and rural fabric of the borough are its key assets in delivering a step change in opportunities for local people. By focusing development primarily in the urban areas, the Council and its partners have set in place sustainable plans that will drive the physical renaissance of the borough. Housing regeneration plays an important part in the regeneration strategy and in delivering its key ambitions, in particular delivering vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods and rural communities.

The **Stockton Town Centre Prospectus** identifies and highlights improvement projects the Council is delivering and seeks to provide an insight into projects we are working on and working towards. Housing plays an important role and features strongly in the projects the Council is working towards with key housing developments in the Northern Gateway, Northshore and Victoria estate. All of which will provide a strong living offer in Stockton town centre.

All residents have the right to enjoy a decent, secure and peaceful living environment, where they can enjoy their home without disturbance. The **Community Safety Plan, Anti Social Behaviour Strategy** and **Domestic Violence Strategy** set out the Councils priority actions to address the concerns of the boroughs residents in relation to crime, anti social behaviour and substance misuse related crime and domestic violence. The key priorities have been indentified in consultation with residents are: -

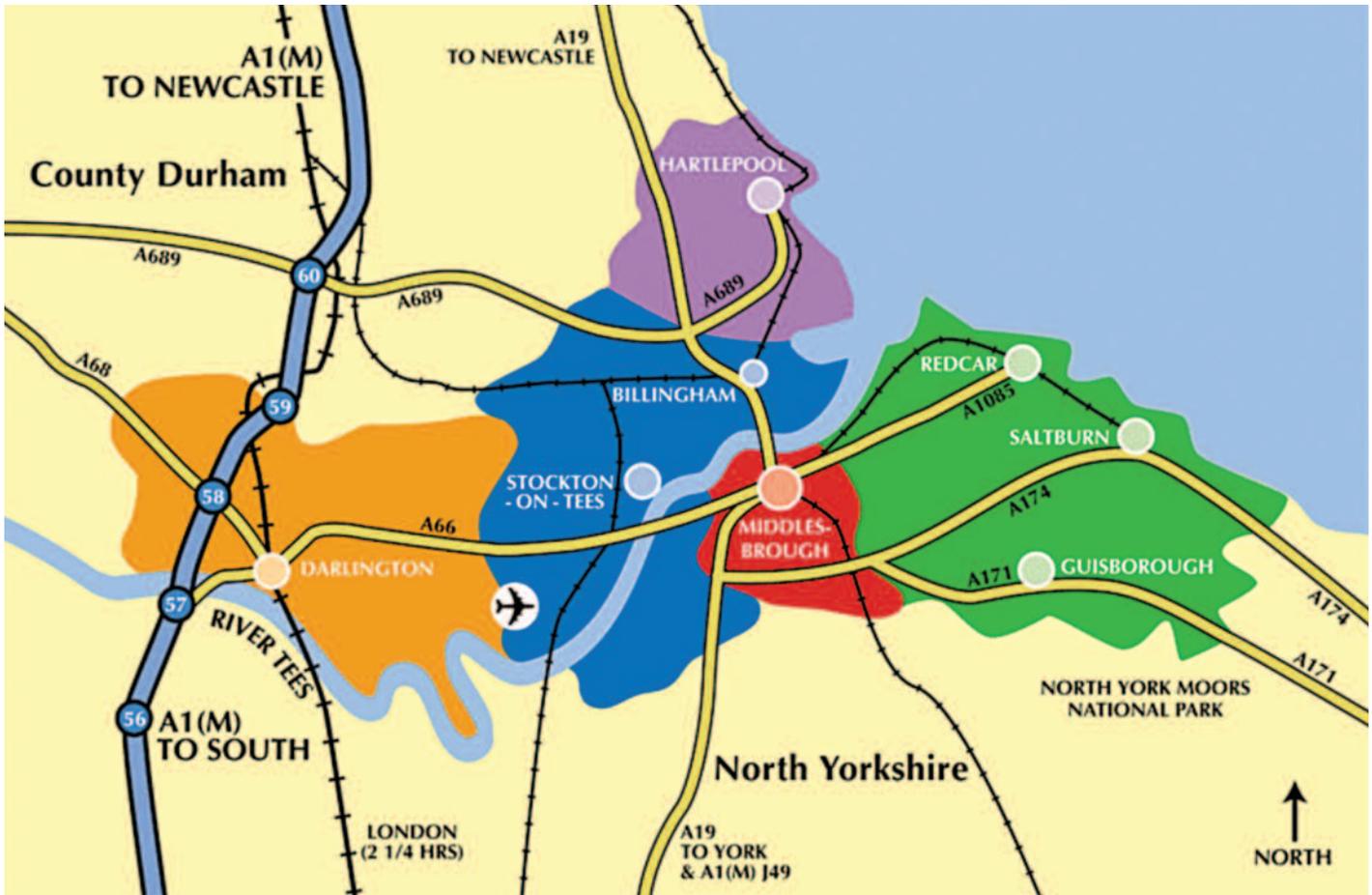
- Anti social behaviour,
- Alcohol related crime/anti social behaviour,
- Violent crime,
- Drug related offending,
- Criminal damage, and
- Domestic violence.

The Council works with its Registered Provider partners and provides a range of initiatives to address the identified priorities and make the borough a safer place to live and work.

Anti social behaviour is any behaviour that interferes with the quiet enjoyment of your home. It is usually the bad behaviour of a few individuals that can affect the quality of life in a neighbourhood. Often, anti social behaviour involves being an inconsiderate neighbour. It covers everything from noise nuisance, disputes with your neighbour, drug dealing or physical violence.

All residents have the right to enjoy a decent, secure and peaceful living environment, where they can enjoy their home without disturbance from anti social behaviour or being harassed because of their race, culture, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexuality, age and disability.

## Section 3: Setting the Scene



Stockton-on-Tees is a borough of wide contrasts; a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages, located in the heart of the Tees Valley. Our housing stock is diverse; around a quarter is terraced, one fifth is detached and almost three quarters has three or more bedrooms. 72% of the housing stock is owner occupied, 11% is in the private rented sector and 17% is socially rented.

### Housing Stock

	Stockton	Tees Valley
Terraced	26.5%	33.3%
Detached	18.3%	12.9%
Semi-detached	32.6%	31%
Bungalow	11.9%	11.3%
Flat/Other	10.7%	11.4%
1 bedroom	8.2%	8.7%
2 bedroom	22.1%	27.3%
3 bedroom	53.2%	51%
4+ bedroom	16.5%	13%

Source: District Valuer Survey 2007

The Borough has a unique social and economic mix, with areas of alarming disadvantage situated alongside areas of affluence. For example, measuring disadvantage against the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010, almost a third of the population of the Borough live in areas<sup>2</sup> that are within the worst 20% deprived areas nationally, 17% (28,440) actually live in the worst 10%. In stark contrast, 25% (47,400) fall within the top 20% of most affluent areas nationally.

The proportion of people unemployed in the Borough at March 2012 was 10.6%<sup>3</sup>, compared to a national average of 8.1% and the North East average of 10.9%. The median average annual gross income per person in the borough is £20,193, and while higher than the regional average of £19,382 it is lower than the English average of £21,648.

### The Local Housing Market

In 2012 the Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was updated and published. The SHMA provides detailed analysis of the housing market in the Tees Valley overall as well as for four of the local authorities in the Tees Valley.

It suggests that Stockton-on-Tees can be defined as a self-contained housing market in terms of migration (where people live and move to) as 77.1% of residents lived previously in the borough. The Department of Communities and Local Government suggests that a housing market is self-contained if upwards of 70% of moves (migration and travel to work) take place within a defined area.

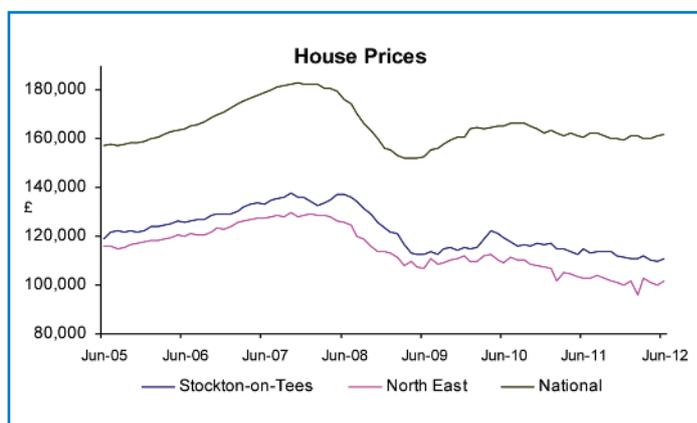
According to information collected through the SHMA, there is a shortfall of bungalows across most of Stockton-on-Tees and a shortage of 4+ bedroom and detached properties in the Inner and Outer Core areas of Stockton and in the Thornaby area and that housing markets in some areas of the borough are more balanced than others.

The 2012 Tees Valley SHMA can be viewed at [www.stockton.gov.uk/shma](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/shma)

### House Prices

House prices in Stockton-on-Tees have been consistently higher than regional average prices and overall have increased from £62,784 in June 2002 to £111,048 in June 2012, an increase of 77%. Prices peaked in October 2007 at £136,029.

### Monthly House Prices



Source: Land Registry

Prices differ within areas of the borough, with some neighbourhood lower quartile house prices being lower than £60,000 (particularly in the inner core of Stockton and parts of Thornaby) and higher than £180,000 in others (in the rural villages and settlements).

<sup>2</sup> Lower Super Output Areas.

<sup>3</sup> Source: ONS/NOMIS. Number of economically active people unemployed.

## Affordability

Open market properties in the borough are less affordable compared with the regional average. In terms of relative affordability, the income to house price ratio in the borough is at 4.75 whilst the regional average is 4.6.

### Relative affordability of lower quartile (LQ) prices by Local Authority (residence based) [lower ratio = more affordable]

Area	LQ House Price	LQ Gross Income per Week	Annual Gross Income	Income to House Price Ratio
Stockton-on-Tees	£94,93	£346	£17,992	4.75
Redcar & Cleveland	£79,66	£335	£17,441	4.57
Darlington	£82,54	£330	£17,144	4.81
Hartlepool	£70,04	£357	£18,548	3.99
Middlesbrough	£67,95	£314	£16,344	4.16
NORTH EAST	£79,66	£333	£17,316	4.6

Source: SHMA 2012 (CLG House Price Statistics Q1-3 2011; Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2011)

Overall, renting in the private sector is more expensive in Stockton-on-Tees compared with the neighbouring local authorities shown. According to the 2012 SHMA, local lettings agents and private landlords state that demand for private rented accommodation is strong. This is potentially due to conditions making it more difficult to enter homeownership and the reduced turnover of affordable housing.

## Private rents per month in the borough at Dec 11

No. Beds	Hartlepool	Middlesbrough	Redcar and Cleveland	Stockton-on-Tees	TV4 <sup>4</sup>
1	£346	£440	£505	£407	£391
2	£431	£486	£476	£550	£511
3	£569	£484	£555	£586	£556
4	£673	£689	£736	£805	£764
5	£1,300	£669	£945	£1,621	£1,319
All	£468	£490	£544	£622	£558

Source: SHMA 2012

(Internet search of private lettings agents December 2011)

The 2012 SHMA makes an estimate of the annual requirement of affordable dwellings in the borough based on the needs of existing and newly-forming households and comparing this with the supply of affordable dwellings. It estimates that the annual requirement of affordable dwellings in the borough is 560. This is by far the highest requirement in the four Tees Valley Local Authorities that took part in the 2012 SHMA.

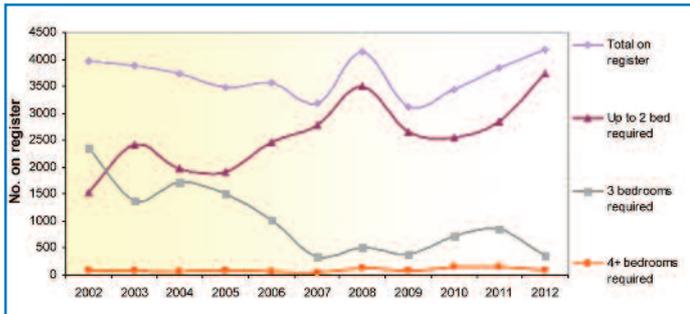
The SHMA also suggests that the Council's current planning policy on affordable provision which requires a target range of 15-20% on schemes of 15 dwellings or more and on development sites of 0.5 hectares or more remains appropriate.

## Housing Demand

Analysis of applicants on the housing register in the borough suggests that demand for affordable housing has increased in the last two years. Between January 2010 and January 2012 the number of applicants increased by 32% from 3,135 to 4,148.

<sup>4</sup> TV4 refers to the four Local Authorities that took part in the 2012 Tees Valley SHMA; Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees.

## Applicants on the Housing Register in Stockton-on-Tees

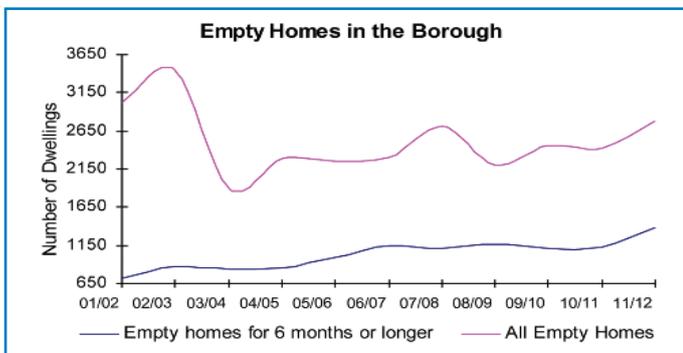


Source: Compass, Choice Based Lettings in the Tees Valley

It should be noted that the large reduction in the number of applicants on the register in 2009 was due to a major data-cleansing exercise carried out prior to the introduction of choice based lettings. Almost three quarters of applicants want a 1 or 2 bed property. This is also reflected in data on bids made for housing through the Choice Based Lettings system in the Tees Valley in the second half of 2011/12, which shows that 75% of all bids were for 1 and 2 bed properties.

## Empty Properties

The overall number of empty homes in the borough has reduced over the past 10 years from just over 3,000 at March 2002 to 2,781 at March 2012.



The graph above shows that that whilst the overall number of empty properties has been reducing, the

number of homes empty for 6 months or longer has steadily shown an increase from 712 in March 2002 to 1382 in March 2012.

## Population Projections

Stockton has a population of 192,400 which is projected to rise to 212,400 by 2031.

The proportion of older people (65 years old and over) in the borough is projected to increase from 16% in 2011 to 23% in 2031. This would be an increase of around 18,000 older people. More noticeably the proportion of age 90+ residents is set to increase by 300% over the same period from 1,000 to 4,000. The increase in older people will have a significant impact on services provided by the Council and its partners and is detailed further in chapter 4 (Theme 1).

According to research carried out to inform the 2012 SHMA which surveyed 8,704 households in the Tees Valley, the majority of older people taking part in the survey (78.4%) want to stay in their own home with help and support when needed. The assessment also identified a degree of interest in a variety of older persons' accommodation (shown below).

Type of accommodation	% of older people interested
Renting sheltered accommodation	22.4%
Renting extra care accommodation	18.9%
Renting from a housing association	17.7%
Buying sheltered accommodation	9%

Source: 2012 SHMA

## Health

Housing has an important impact on a person's health and well-being: good quality, appropriate housing in places people want to live has a positive impact on reducing deprivation and health inequalities by facilitating stable/secure family lives. This in turn helps to improve social, environmental, personal and economic well-being. Conversely, living in housing which is in poor condition, overcrowded or unsuitable will adversely affect the health and well-being of individuals and families.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) defines a decent home as 'a home that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities'. Failure to adequately address the investment needs of poor housing conditions will have a detrimental impact on the occupiers' health and well-being.

According to the 2001 Census, 19.9% of the borough identified themselves as having a disability or limiting long term illness. This is slightly higher than the national average of 17.9%. In 4 wards this proportion is over twice as high as the national average.

## People with Learning Disabilities

In Stockton, there are currently around 600 people receiving services from the Council's health and social care service. 161 people live in residential care and 61 are in out of borough placements. An additional 76 people with learning disabilities have a potential future housing need as they are currently living with older carers.

Due to the ageing population there is expected to be an increase in the number of older people in the borough with learning disabilities.

Research indicates that when given a choice most people with learning disabilities would choose to live independently with support, either in their own home or living within the parental home.

## Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities

5.2% of the borough's population are estimated to be from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The largest ethnic minority groups are Pakistani (2,800) and Indian (1,600) residents. The BME community, while only 10,000 of the total population has increased by 7,200 people since the 1991 Census<sup>6</sup>. This increase to some extent can be attributed to the number of asylum seekers who once given a positive determination to remain in the country, choose to remain in the borough. It is anticipated that results from the 2011 Census will show that the local BME population has further increased and diversified as different communities settle in the area. The areas in the borough with a higher concentration of BME households are the Inner Core Area of Stockton and Thornaby.

In addition to the established BME community, there are a number of people seeking asylum in accommodation in the borough overseen by the Government's UK Border Agency (UKBA).

## Gypsies and Travellers

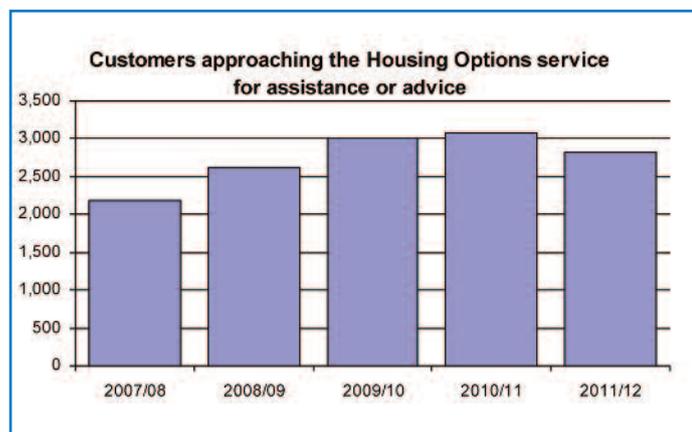
The Council manages 1 traveller site in the borough. It has 28 pitches and 100% occupancy almost all the time. In addition to this there are 14 private authorised pitches and an estimated 38 households in bricks and mortar housing that would identify themselves as Gypsies and Travellers.

<sup>6</sup> 2010 Mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics.

The Tees Valley Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, published in 2009, identified a requirement between 2007-2012 for an additional 17 pitches in the borough. The assessment of future pitches required has recently been updated for 2012 to 2017 which identified a requirement of 9 pitches. The Council is currently developing a Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document (DPD) which will seek to identify and allocate land that would be suitable for future additional Gypsy and Traveller sites in the borough.

### Homelessness

Although there has been a slight decrease in 2011/12, the number of customers accessing the Council's Housing Options service for either housing advice or because they have been threatened with homelessness has increased over the last five years. This is predicted to remain high due to the current economic climate.



Source: Housing Options

Despite the increasing number of approaches to the Housing Options service, the number of households accepted as homeless under homelessness legislation has decreased over the previous four years. This is due to a major shift in

emphasis to the provision of a more pro-active, preventative service for customers.

Affordability is now one of the top three reasons for approaches to the Housing Options service, the others are being asked to leave and domestic violence. Local intelligence suggests that issues linked to affordability contribute to relationship breakdown and can be a contributing factor in cases of domestic abuse.

### Homeless Acceptances in the borough

2008/09	419
2009/10	107
2010/11	69
2011/12	84

Source: Housing Options

### House Conditions in the Private Sector

In 2009, the Council undertook a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey. The key findings were:

- 10,700 private homes in the borough (over 15%) are non-decent. 6,520 of these are occupied by vulnerable households.
- 6,006 dwellings failed the decent homes standard due to Category 1 hazards for excess cold and inadequate thermal comfort.
- The cost to remedy non-decent homes in the borough is estimated to be £42 million.
- The cost to remedy Category 1 hazards is estimated to be £16 million.

The 2009 survey also estimated that the proportion of households in the private sector that earn less



than £15,000 per year is significantly higher than the national average. 51% of private sector residents in the borough have an income of less than £15,000 a year whereas nationally this is 35%. This potentially makes affordability a significant issue affecting repair and improvement in the private sector dwelling stock.

## Section 4: Key Themes

### Theme 1: Promote and Sustain Independence

People can be vulnerable for a variety of reasons including age or disability and inappropriate housing conditions can detrimentally affect a person's ability to maintain their independence in their own home.

#### The current situation in the borough

Across the borough there is a requirement to provide housing solutions to assist residents to live independently. The recently updated Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in 2012 identified that 8.1% (6,327) of households in the area said that they required care or support to enable them to stay in their current home. The 2001 Census identified 35,504 residents in the borough (19.9%) who stated they had a disability or limiting long term illness.

The needs and aspirations of older people are changing and many wish to maintain their independence in later life. According to the SHMA the preference of 78.4% of older people in the Tees Valley is to live in their current home with support when needed compared with 4.6% that would consider residential care.

The emphasis on homeless prevention means the Council and its partners must assist households and individuals to sustain an independent lifestyle. The second theme of this strategy focuses on homeless prevention and more detail can be found there.

#### Our current approach

It is important to help residents maintain their independence and quality of life in their own home and community should they wish to. The Council and

its partners deliver services to enable some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the borough to live independently in their own home.

There are a number of issues that particularly influence this and these are detailed below.

#### Older People

The borough now has 3 extra care schemes for older people. Extra care is a form of housing that means older people have their own self-contained home and can give them access to care and other services, which can help maintain their independence. In addition to these we are working in partnership to secure additional units of extra care housing for a range of client groups.

#### Disabled Adaptations

In 2011/12 the Council carried out 380 adaptations for households in the private sector to the value of £1.4m. In addition to this, Registered Providers in the area carry out adaptations on their stock including, for example, as part of the stock transfer agreement, Tristar Homes (part of the Vela Group) have a budget of £1 million a year available for adaptations required in their tenants' homes.

In recent years the types of adaptations completed reflect the increasing number of older people and the need for adaptations that prevent trips and falls such as stairlifts and ramps. Stairlifts make up 53% of adaptations completed and ramps 11%. Level entry showers account for 26%. This also reflects the preventative agenda within housing and health that seeks to help older people maintain their independence in their home and to prevent serious trips and falls that can have a detrimental impact on an individual. The average waiting time for a disabled adaptation is approximately 6 months.

As previously stated, the majority of older people (78.4%)<sup>7</sup> in the borough want to continue to live in their own homes with support when needed and the vast majority of these are homeowners. The most frequently mentioned adaptations that would help them to remain in their own homes are; bathroom adaptations (15.6%), better heating (12%), and internal handrails (9.8%).

### Equipment Loan Scheme

The Council was the first authority in the Tees Valley to make use of greater flexibility and freedoms around Disabled Facilities Grant funding, an example of this being the Equipment Loan scheme which means that the Council can now loan stairlifts and access ramps to clients. In doing so waiting times for these adaptations have reduced from 6 months to 12 weeks. When the equipment is no longer required it is returned, refurbished and reused thus reducing average installation costs.

### Procurement of adaptations

The Council has also made efficiency savings through the use of effective procurement of contracts for some types of adaptations. This has also included joint procurement of contracts with other local authorities in the Tees Valley. This effective procurement has resulted in savings in excess of £222,000 which has been invested in further adaptations.

### Housing Occupational Therapist Service

The Housing Options Service is piloting an occupational therapist service specifically for their customers. It is expected that significant outcomes will be realised by the pilot, which will demonstrate its 'spend to save' capacity in respect of: -

- Maximising the use of adapted property and disabled adaptations budgets,
- Improving the quality of advice and support to people seeking alternative accommodation due to its unsuitability because of their medical condition,
- Improving the health and well being of people living in accommodation that is unsuitable due to the medical condition of the occupant(s),
- Providing quality assessments of medical need in accordance with the Choice Based Lettings Policy, and
- Reducing hospital admission and/or serious harm of people living in accommodation that is unsuitable due to their medical condition.

### Single Gateway scheme

The Gateway Scheme aims to ensure households who have experienced homelessness or housing difficulties are assisted to live independently with support. This scheme aims to address social exclusion and prevent repeat homelessness. The service liaises between support agencies and housing providers to identify accommodation and a tailored support package to vulnerable service users who would otherwise struggle to maintain their own tenancy. Offering support and accommodation hand in hand enables the service user to have the best possible chance of maintaining a tenancy once they are re-housed. This approach also ensures that all relevant support agencies or professionals are involved.

### Telecare Services

Telecare services can help people live more independently and safely in their own homes whilst

<sup>7</sup> Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012.

also helping people avoid a hospital stay or moving into a residential care home.

As at January 2012, 838 people in the borough were benefitting from the Council's Telecare service. The service can benefit vulnerable and older people as well as people with disabilities. It uses a series of sensors to monitor for potentially dangerous situations such as floods, fire, gas leaks, falls, and intruders. The range of equipment can include bed and chair sensors, epilepsy sensors, fall detectors and property exit sensors. Telecare partners the social alarm infrastructure Care Call within the borough and it uses the Care Call Service to monitor calls and react to any calls that come through. The response given depends on the type of assistance required i.e. contacting a relative, contacting a key holder, attendance by Care Call staff or the emergency services. Telecare can also result in significant savings through reducing the need for services such as 1-1 support and homecare and residential care. The service can be accessed in a variety of ways including referrals from health professionals and self-referral. A bespoke package of Telecare is then developed for the person.

The Council's initial Telecare strategy ran from 2006 to 2008, in line with available pilot funding, and will be picked up in the refresh of the Independent Living strategy in the context of assistive technology as a whole. The Council will continue to promote and develop Telecare services to ensure more vulnerable people, older people and people with disabilities will benefit from our services.

### **Home Improvement Agency (HIA)**

The borough's Home Improvement Agency was set up in 2008. It assists older, disabled and vulnerable

people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish to do so. It offers practical solutions to housing related problems through helping clients to repair, adapt and maintain their homes.

A Housing Association delivers the service on behalf of the Council. There are significant savings to the NHS through the improvements made through the HIA. With a hip fracture costing the NHS approximately £28,000 to treat, investment of £217,000 per year to prevent falls could save the NHS approximately £1,600,000 per annum with a payback period of less than a month.

In 2011/12 1,801 households received advice and assistance from the HIA.

A handyman service has also been introduced and is aimed specifically at vulnerable adults aged 60 or over who have a chronic illness, have a disability or have sensory loss or other problems that restricts their ability to function on a day to day basis. The handyman will undertake small non-skilled tasks such as replacing light bulbs, changing plugs and fuses or small decorating or gardening jobs.

The Home Improvement Agency service has been reviewed and will be tendered for during the financial year 2012/13. This will secure the future of the service.

### **Warm Homes, Healthy People Fund**

In partnership with NHS Stockton-on-Tees, the Council has secured £153,000 through the Department of Health's Warm Homes, Healthy People fund, which aims to reduce the number of excess winter deaths. The fund was developed as part of the government's Cold Weather Plan for

England, which aims to reduce winter deaths by raising public awareness and triggering actions to support vulnerable people who have health, housing or economic circumstances that increase their risk. It is also intended to mobilise communities and civil society to help their neighbours, friends and relatives to protect against avoidable harm to health in winter.

There are on average 106 excess winter deaths (EWDs) per year in Stockton-on-Tees with over 800 related emergency admissions. Evidence suggests that a large number of these deaths and admissions are preventable. The project will work with 9 partners and co-ordinate targeted and tailored interventions, increase the range of interventions, develop local champions and raise awareness with front line staff to ensure that everyone that comes into contact with households at risk can be supported.

Since the launch of the project in February 2012, the project has delivered 646 measures. There were:

- 25 boilers repaired/serviced,
- 28 people requesting help with fuel debt and fuel switching,
- 150 people given full entitlement checks identifying £75,000 in unclaimed welfare benefits,
- 61 people helped by the fire brigade (e.g. electric blankets, emergency heating), and
- 113 people signed up for healthy initiatives such as chair bound exercise and zumba classes.

The scheme has been very successful and the benefits of the project will carry on well into the future through the development of local champions within social care, community nursing teams and the voluntary community sector organisations and through raised awareness of frontline staff. An additional £100,000 has been made available through the NHS Stockton-on-Tees to continue the scheme into 2012/13.

### People with Learning Disabilities

There are currently around 600 people with learning disabilities receiving services from the Council's Health and Social Care services and we work jointly with Registered Providers, support and care providers and other partners to develop new supported living dwellings in the borough. Developments over recent years have included 5 single storey supported living dwellings in Billingham, 4 independent living units in Thornaby and 8 bungalows at Meadow Rise.

The Council has carried out a large scale review of mental health and learning disability services. Recommendations from the learning disability element of the review are anticipated to be published in Autumn 2012 and it is anticipated that it will result in new housing solutions for this client group.

### Lifetimes Homes Standard

By 2013 all new homes in the borough have to be built to Lifetime Homes standard. This standard is a set of 16 criteria that provide a model for building accessible homes that can be adapted as the occupier's needs change. Lifetime Homes are particularly beneficial for people coping with illness and for dealing with reduced mobility in later life.

## Independent Living Strategy

In 2012/13 the council will be reviewing its Independent Living Strategy as a result of a major review into Independent Living services and Carers. This strategy will set out our approach to independent living programmes such as Housing Related Support and Personalisation which both seek to ensure that high quality and cost effective housing support services are provided to vulnerable households. Housing related support services (including services previously funded through Supporting People) continue to be commissioned by the Council's Adult Strategy Team. This includes housing related support services for clients such as homeless people, older people, people affected by domestic abuse, ex-offenders, people who misuse alcohol and other substances, young people at risk and people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and people with physical disabilities.

## Domestic Violence

Tackling domestic violence was identified by Stockton's Community Safety Partnership as one of its top 6 priorities for 2011-2014. In Stockton, Harbour provide refuge services and a number of outreach services to provide advice and support to those affected by domestic violence.

Harbour Stockton Refuge offers accommodation and support to women and children who are fleeing domestic violence. It includes seven self-contained units with refuge support workers providing a system of tailored support based on the needs and priorities of each woman and her children. The accommodation is constantly occupied and demand exceeds the places available.

Harbour Adult Outreach services work with men and women who have or who are still experiencing domestic abuse, developing tailored support plans which meet specific needs. The Children's Outreach service provides therapeutic support in the form of one to one or group work for children who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse.

Safe at Home is a target hardening scheme run by the Council and the Police to improve the choices available to victims of domestic violence by helping them to remain in their own homes where it is safe for them to do so.

## Smarter Homes for the Future

The Smarter Homes for the Future project will help to improve the quality of life for people with dementia who live at home, and their carers. It will use dementia-friendly design including the use of technology devices in people's own homes such as:

- Changing the colour of toilet seats, towels or bedding to make them more identifiable,
- Swapping wooden cupboard doors for glass in the kitchen so that people with
- dementia can make sense of identical-looking cupboards, and
- A wrist watch that also acts as a mobile emergency alert system.

Early indications from this project show there is a positive impact on all of those involved including an improvement in the emotional wellbeing of the people with dementia and carers feeling more supported. The project has been funded by the Dementia Innovation Fund, via the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

## Achievements

We have:-

- Worked with partners to deliver the 'Smarter Homes for the Future' project which aims to improve outcomes for people with dementia and their carers to enable them to remain in their own homes.
- Provided intensive assistance through an allocation of £100,000 re-ablement funding to help people regain their independence and prevent ill health.
- Provided 1,112 adaptations since April 2009 to enable vulnerable people to remain in their homes and live independently.
- Supported the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in providing services for older and vulnerable people by carrying out minor repairs to their homes and providing advice and support on living independently. 4,736 households were assisted through the HIA between 2009 and 2012.
- Introduced a handyman service as part of the HIA which is aimed specifically at vulnerable adults aged 60 or over who have a chronic illness, a disability or have sensory loss or other problems that restricts their ability to function on a day to day basis.
- Helped 88 vulnerable clients through the Single Gateway Scheme meet their accommodation needs.
- Secured £153,000 through the Department of Health's Warm Homes Healthy People fund to co-ordinate and deliver interventions to reduce excess winter deaths.
- Developed specialist accommodation to promote independent living including:
  - Learning disabilities accommodation at Billingham and Thornaby (a total investment of £1.76m),
  - Older persons accommodation at Eden House, Billingham (£6m),
  - A £1.4m young persons scheme at Parkfield Hall, Stockton, and
  - Older persons extra care accommodation at Meadowfield House, Thornaby investing £5.7m into the community.
- Introduced an equipment loan scheme to reduce the waiting times for stairlifts and ramps from 6 months to 12 weeks.
- Procurement savings for disabled adaptations of £222,000 which have been reinvested into the service.

## Future Challenges

We expect to be faced with a number of challenges over the coming 3 years; these include:

- A continued pressure on both the Council and its partners **to meet the growing needs and demand for services to enable people to maintain their independence.** For example, a growing elderly population, coupled with changing aspirations and the predicted rise in the number of elderly owner occupiers will undoubtedly impact on service demands (including Disabled Facilities Grants, the Home Improvement Agency and other independent living services) and future service delivery. Support options to help older and vulnerable

people remain at home (if they wish and it is safe for them to do so) need to be available and need to develop around their requirements.

As a means of responding to increasing service demands we are progressing 'invest to save' opportunities in services that assist people to maintain their independence in their own home. This can prevent or delay more costly forms of care or hospital services and can in some circumstances improve people's health and well-being. These include for example, telecare services, tackling hazards such as excess cold in vulnerable household's homes and continuation of the Home Improvement Agency.

A range of housing options for older people need to be in place and available, such as sheltered housing, extra care housing, residential care and retirement housing. In addition to this, a range of tenures should be available including social and affordable rent, private rent and owner occupation.

- **Demand for disabled adaptations** such as stairlifts and level-entry showers continues to increase. Despite the Council continuing to fund adaptations at £1.4m per year (including an additional £300,000 over 3 years from Children, Education and Social Care) and bidding for additional external resources at every opportunity, at March 2012 there were 152 people (equating to a shortfall in funding of £587,000) on the Council's waiting list for a disabled adaptation. If budgets remain the same there will be an estimated 688 on the waiting list by March 2016 equating to a shortfall in funding for adaptations of almost £2.5m.

This pressure is also reflected in social housing, for example as detailed earlier, Tristar Homes (part of the Vela Group), the largest social landlord in the borough, has an annual budget of £1million for adaptations however this does not meet the demand that they experience from their customers.

The Council will carry out a review of its approach to disabled adaptations in 2012/13 in the light of changing needs of current and future customers.

- Research<sup>8</sup> indicates that when given a choice most people with learning disabilities would **choose to live independently with support**, either in their own home or living within the parental home. This general preference for more independent living options, the closure of (out of area) accommodation and the subsequent resettlement of long stay residents back into Stockton-on-Tees will result in more people with a learning disability requiring specialist accommodation and support in the borough. It will also mean targeting independent living training to those individuals that are intending to move into the community. As people with learning disabilities achieve greater life expectancy, the number living with older parents or carers also will provide significant challenges. There are currently 54 carers for people with learning disabilities that are over the age of 70. The review around people with learning disabilities will carry out work to understand the needs of these carers to help control the number of emergency admissions to residential provision (which can be both distressing for the client and financially expensive).

<sup>8</sup> Mencap Housing Survey (2011) identified that 43% of people with learning disabilities want to live by themselves and a further 30% want to share a home with friends.

## Key Actions

We will: -

- Ensure the housing needs of vulnerable and/or elderly households are considered in the development of all new housing schemes.
- Work with Registered Providers to explore alternative funding methods to deliver additional units of extra care housing.
- Manage the demand for adaptations for older people and people with disabilities through the development of new initiatives.
- Review the Council's approach to disabled adaptations in the light of changing needs of current and future customers.
- Reduce the number of avoidable excess winter deaths through the removal of category one hazards and the continued funding of the Warm Homes, Healthy People project.
- Work in partnership with NHS Stockton-on-Tees to develop and implement a 'Reducing Seasonal Excess Deaths' strategy.
- Implement the recommendations from the Council's affordable warmth scrutiny review taking place in 2012/13.
- Complete the review of services for vulnerable people such as people with learning disabilities and mental health services to ensure their care, support and housing needs are met.
- Deliver accommodation and support solutions to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities.
- Review the allocation of accommodation available to victims of domestic abuse to ensure the Harbour Women's Refuge is maximised as a resource and consider the use of the Gateway Scheme and pathway planning options for the delivery of support solutions.
- Further develop the Gateway scheme to ensure customers with supported needs are accommodated within the most suitable supported housing provider.
- Work in partnership with the current and shadow PCT/Health Commissioning to secure additional PCT/Reablement funding.
- Evaluate the Housing Occupational Therapist Service pilot to identify future options.
- Continue to deliver the Smarter Homes for the Future project for people with dementia.

## Theme 2: Prevent Homelessness

Lack of appropriate accommodation or being threatened with homelessness has an important impact on a person's health and well being: good quality and appropriate housing can reduce deprivation and health inequalities by facilitating secure and stable family lives. This in turn helps to improve social, environmental, personal and economic well being.

### The current situation in the borough

The number of customers accessing the Council's Housing Options Service for housing advice or have been threatened with homelessness has increased considerably over the last five years, and in 2011/12 we provided housing options advice to 2,818 clients (this is an annual increase of 29% from 2007/08). Demand for services is predicted to continue to rise due to the current economic climate, as previously evidenced in the 'Setting the Scene' chapter. Offering advice and information on a range of housing issues we aim to intervene at an early stage and make every effort to prevent homelessness. However our experience now tells us that many clients approach the service as a last resort once they have exhausted a number of solutions themselves and as a result the prevention of homelessness becomes increasingly difficult as the number of available solutions and possible interventions decrease.

In addition to the increasing number of approaches made to the Housing Options service, cases are also increasing in complexity. For example many clients approaching the service suffer health related issues as a result of their housing situation. This coupled with the reduction in the number of available housing solutions (due to issues such as affordability, money management and a reduced

turnover in properties), has led to cases taking an increasing time to resolve with many cases now taking in excess of 3 months to resolve.

In Stockton, like many areas of the country the availability of the private rented sector is also becoming increasingly stretched due to the number of customers seeking this as a housing option, for example many households who may have previously been first time buyers are now entering the private rented sector. Nationally people renting homes in the private sector has nearly doubled in the last ten years and it is predicted that private rented accommodation could reach one in five households by 2016, which would require an additional 1.1 million rental homes<sup>9</sup>. Whilst private renting may resolve a potential housing problem customers will need to be aware of the challenges they may face when entering the private rented sector due to the Welfare Reform Act and the impact on Local Housing Allowance. Some of these challenges were previously highlighted in this strategy in Chapter 2.

### Our current approach

We are committed to preventing and tackling homelessness across all tenures and age groups. In responding positively to preventing homelessness we aim to look at the "whole person approach" as providing a home as a solution does not always prevent or deter homelessness. As a result of this, along with our partners, we have developed services and initiatives specifically aimed at maintaining independence and sustaining accommodation in the long term. These include: -

#### Specialist Homeownership Officer

This is a unique service offered to homeowners who are at risk of losing their home. This service

<sup>9</sup> Rental Britain – report by Savills and Rightmove, released March 2012.

assists a wide range of homeowners with maximising income, reducing outgoings and dealing with their mortgage lender to negotiate a suitable outcome where their home is at risk of repossession. Mortgage lenders are required to notify local authorities that possession proceedings have commenced; on those occasions we contact homeowners to offer our assistance. The uptake of this service is low in comparison to the contact made with homeowners – over 22 months we received 400 notifications and only 50 of these households responded to us.

However, of these 50 who accessed our service **84%** had a positive outcome – with either

- Suspension of possession orders
- Evictions suspended
- Court hearing adjournments
- Successful Mortgage Rescue Scheme applications
- Successful negotiations with mortgage lenders.

Positive outcomes increase a household's stability and security and positively affect their health and well being.

### **Mortgage Rescue Scheme**

Administered by the Council's Time2Buy team, this national scheme is available for homeowners across Durham and the Tees Valley region who are unable to meet their mortgage payments and are at risk of homelessness because they face repossession. Cases are referred to Time2Buy after they have been assessed as such by the local authority's specialist homeownership officer.

Eligible households can be helped either by: -

- Shared equity - where a Registered Provider (RP) pays off a proportion of the mortgage immediately and in return receives a 'share' of the property. As the homeowner has a smaller mortgage, the monthly repayments are affordable.
- Government mortgage to rent option – where an RP buys the home and the household stays as a tenant and rents the home they live in.

### **Bond Guarantee Scheme**

Homeless households and those at risk of homelessness may apply to the Bond Guarantee Scheme to secure private rented accommodation if they have a local connection. The Housing Options service provides the landlord with a guarantee in the form of a written agreement instead of a cash bond. The guarantee will last for a minimum of six months and a maximum of two years from the start of the tenancy. The accommodation must be with a landlord accredited as part of the Council's private landlord accreditation scheme.

### **The substance misuse service**

This service has worked with 232 customers from January 2011 to January 2012 and provides information and advice to customers who have substance or alcohol misuse issues and are engaging with Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) services and following a prescribed treatment programme. The service seeks suitable housing options which assist the customer in reducing offending and in continuing with their treatment programme.

## Discretionary Housing Benefit

The Housing Options service and the Benefits Service jointly manage and allocate the Discretionary Housing Benefit budget which can be paid to households seeking accommodation due to issues around affordability for an interim period to allow a planned response for a more affordable housing solution and therefore avoid a crisis situation.

## Housing and Support 'tools'

Our homelessness prevention tools also include the provision of support through a variety of options which assist people into and maintain independent living. Options include:

- The Gateway Scheme which (as detailed in the previous chapter) aims to ensure households who have experienced homelessness or housing difficulties are assisted to live independently with support,
  - Purpose built supported accommodation providing support to care leavers and children in need who are felt ready and willing to prepare for independent living,
  - Supported lodgings project offers young people accommodation and support in people homes,
  - Trainer flats with intensive floating support which provide ex-offenders who are engaging with rehabilitation services the opportunity to build up the skills required to secure and maintain a tenancy of their own,
  - Mediation and counselling support service aimed at preventing family breakdown or reducing the incidence of young people running away from home, and
- Crash Pad availability, providing an emergency bed for a night for young people.

## Joint working with Private Sector Housing Service

To secure more access to private rented sector accommodation and increase the number of available housing solutions the Housing Option service works closely with the Private Sector Housing service. Work includes the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, the Landlords Forum and bringing empty homes back into use. Details of which can be found in Theme 4 of this document.

## Future Service Delivery

To ensure we respond appropriately as the complexity of our caseload increases we are currently working with our partners and will introduce a number of new initiatives during 2012. These include for example: -

- Specialist Citizens Advice Bureau worker who will work in the Housing Options service. This service has been secured for a three year period, and will specialise in assisting substance mis-users and ex-offenders who want to re-integrate into the community and will support clients in addressing their housing needs and financial exclusion and debt issues, and
- The Housing Options service has successfully secured Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) funding for an officer to be seconded for 12 months to work in Holme House Prison to up skill the teams already working with offenders who have substance misuse issues on the housing options and effective solutions available for offenders leaving prison. The officer will also identify and implement

housing pathways with the relevant support agencies.

## Achievements

We have: -

- Provided housing advice to 2818 customers during 2011/12.
- Prevented 585 households from becoming homeless in 2010/11 and 840 households in 2011/12 through Housing Options assistance.
- Reduced homeless acceptances to 84 in 2011/12 from 107 in 2009/10.
- Offered a specialist advice service to 113 homeowners at risk of losing their home.
- Assisted 15 struggling homeowners in Stockton through the Government backed Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Made 250 placements into temporary accommodation on emergency homeless grounds, in 2011/2012.
- Worked in a multi agency arena to ensure vulnerable children, families and adults secure suitable housing.
- Offer a scheme to guarantee bonds in the private rented sector for homeless households and households at risk of losing their home, which has assisted 40 households.
- Assisted 88 households to live independently with support through the Single Gateway Scheme in 2011/12
- Offered a specialised housing service to 84 customers with an alcohol or substance misuse

issue to ensure they secure suitable accommodation in 2011/12.

- Provided 46 customers the opportunity to access the 18 fully furnished trainer flats in 2011/12
- Worked with RP to provide specialist supported accommodation for young people.
- Secured £76,331 through the Government's Preventing Repossessions Fund, announced in February 2012.

## Future Challenges

Like many local authorities and housing providers we expect to be faced with a number of key challenges over the coming years. These include: -

- The introduction of the **single room rate** limiting claims for under 35 year olds to the single room rate in a shared house, effective from January 2012, is expected to lead to an increase in advice cases as this client group face issues of affordability, a lack of suitable accommodation and a reduction in housing solutions. From our local intelligence and along with many other local authorities and housing providers we anticipate that this may lead to an increase in bed and breakfast establishments which will meet the growing demand for single person solutions as bed and breakfast proprietors seek to increase their accommodation portfolio. Any increase in these type of establishments will impact on the private sector housing team as they inspect the properties, licence where necessary and ensure the property is of an acceptable standard. There may also be challenges around housing benefit as government subsidy may

not cover the housing benefit costs of clients placed in B&B accommodation by the local authority, which may result in a cost to the Council.

Our local knowledge also tells us that as in many other local authority areas, there has been an increase in the number of private landlords who are not willing to let to this age group. This further restricts the supply of suitable affordable accommodation and the number of housing solutions available for the under 35's.

- Plans to introduce a **size criteria for housing** benefit claims in social housing will come into force for working age claimants from April 2013. Households classed as under occupying their home by an extra bedroom would lose 14% of their housing benefit, which is on average £12 per week and those with two or more would lose 25%, on average £22 per week. While this is aimed at targeting high level under occupancy it will have implications for households who are already struggling with housing costs and the cost of living and may find themselves threatened with homelessness as they can no longer afford the property they currently occupy. This problem is further exacerbated by the lack of affordable smaller accommodation, in particular one bedroom accommodation. Local intelligence gained from working with Tristar Homes (part of the Vela Group), the largest Registered Provider in the borough highlights that in excess of 50% of their working age tenants are under-occupying their current home. Tristar Homes is actively visiting those households who will be affected by the change to ensure

they are aware of the implications. In addition the Tees Valley Choice Based Lettings policy has been amended in order for under occupying households to receive additional preference to assist them move into smaller accommodation. Other Registered Providers are also producing publicity information to advice households of the potential implications of welfare reform and the options available to them.

- The introduction of fixed term (flexible) tenancies forms part of the coalition Governments broader reforms of social housing which are aimed at reducing housing waiting lists, making more efficient use of social housing stock and help increase social mobility. Registered Providers can now offer tenancies lasting a minimum of five years. At a local level we have some concerns that this may lead to an increase in demand for our Housing Options service as households seek alternative housing solutions when their fixed term tenancy comes to an end. To pre-empt this, we are currently developing a Tees Valley wide protocol with the aim of ensuring any of our partner Registered Providers who decide to operate fixed term tenancies offer appropriate and timely advice and support when the tenancy comes to an end. In order to track the impact of fixed term tenancies we are also asking those Registered Providers who decide to use a fixed term tenancy, to notify us of why this decision has been made, the length of term and the number of properties this decision relates to. This will be used to forecast and plan for future demand for our Housing Options service.

- The **lack of long term funding** for the Enhanced Housing Options service may see some vulnerable households no longer being assisted in the same way as they currently are should funding come to an end.
- With planned homelessness prevention becoming less possible due to the shortage of available housing solutions, restricted access to the private rented sector and an increasing number of owner occupiers approaching at crisis point we anticipate **the demand for households requiring temporary accommodation to increase.**

## Key Actions

We will: -

- Strive to offer a wide range of solutions to address homelessness and housing need.
- Develop new initiatives to address homelessness and housing need.
- Continue to analyse the reasons for homelessness and work towards identifying solutions to address emerging issues, where identified.
- Continue to assist struggling homeowners who are threatened with homelessness and maximise the take up of the national Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Identify affordable and long term housing solutions for single people aged 18 – 35 years including increasing the amount of suitable accommodation available and working with Registered Providers to re-model existing accommodation to accommodate this client group.
- Explore additional means of support for young vulnerable people through the voluntary and independent sector providers.
- Publicise the service through a variety of medias to raise awareness of the service and encourage early contact from households experiencing housing difficulties or in housing need.
- Continue to work in partnership both internally and externally to prevent homelessness.
- Where possible bid for and secure resources to address homelessness and housing need as opportunities arise.
- Continue to deliver the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- Develop a Tees Valley wide Strategic Tenancy Policy which our Registered Provider partners must give regard to when determining whether to operate a flexible tenancy policy.

## Theme 3: Meet the Challenges of the Housing Market

A vibrant private sector housing market is crucial to the wider economic growth of the Borough, whether this be new build housing or improving the condition of existing stock.

### The current situation

As described earlier Stockton on Tees is a borough of wide contrasts, made up of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. The housing stock is equally diverse ranging from back to pavement terraces to large executive detached residences. House prices continue to be lower than the national average and range from £35,000 for terraced properties in town centres to in excess of £1 million for executive properties in affluent areas of the borough and in rural locations.

The current economic conditions have affected the potential for securing a mortgage and impacted on households entering into owner occupation. This has had a knock on effect in the house building sector which has experienced a considerable downturn and has led to a number of market sites stalling and progress on others being slow. There has however recently been positive progress on some housing sites in the borough. The impact of these factors will require ongoing monitoring to fully understand the future shaping of the housing market across Stockton.

With homeownership becoming less achievable due, to the high level of deposits required, there is an increased demand for affordable housing solutions and the government has introduced a number of products aimed at increasing affordable homeownership, which in turn helps keep the house building industry moving. **Homebuy** has two different schemes to assist households into

homeownership through equity loans and shared ownership, both of which are available on a range of market sites throughout the borough. **Newbuy** is a new scheme introduced in 2012 which assists households bridge the deposit gap for a newly built home with a mortgage for 95% of the purchase price. This scheme is operated by the home building industry and mortgage lenders in partnership with the government.

As detailed in the 'Setting the Scene' chapter 82% of the boroughs housing stock is in the private sector. In terms of property conditions in the private sector, the most recent stock condition survey identified that there are 10,700 private homes which are of a non decent standard. It is estimated that the cost to remedy this in Stockton is £42m. Improving the condition of private sector stock is an ongoing challenge in the current economic climate as homeowners have less available income to invest in the up keep and maintenance of their property.

### Our current approach

The Council is committed to enabling households to live in accommodation appropriate to their needs and aspirations and to offer the right mix of housing in the right locations. We aim to achieve this through the following:-

#### 1. Understanding the Housing Market Strategic Housing Market Assessment

In 2012 the Council published its updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment. This research reviewed the housing market and general market requirements across the borough and provided an assessment of housing needs and affordable requirements. The key findings from the research

can be found in the 'Setting the scene' chapter and will be used to ensure the borough offers the right mix of housing in the right place. We are working to provide housing of the right size, tenure and within locations that are sustainable.

The research will also be used to inform the visioning and master planning exercises which are underway in the Swainby Road area and Victoria Estate in Stockton and will ensure that the replacement housing for these regeneration schemes is appropriate for the community and the current housing needs and future housing aspirations. Further information on these and other regeneration schemes can be found in following chapter (Theme 4).

## 2. Providing and Accessing Accommodation

### Affordable Homes Programme

We have a strong track record of securing resources into the borough and recently through successful partnership working with Registered Providers secured £4,231,471 from the HCA Affordable Homes Programme 2011 – 2015. This will enable Registered Providers to deliver 215 new affordable homes across the borough over the life of the programme. This will allow for the continuation of regeneration schemes at Hardwick, Parkfield and Mandale and new developments on a range of sites across the borough. All new affordable homes funded by the HCA are required to meet Secured by Design standards, which design out crime through physical security and processes, which in turn fosters safe and sustainable neighbourhoods.

### Affordable housing development sites

The Council undertook a large scale voluntary stock transfer in December 2010. Following this an

exercise was undertaken to assess the pieces of housing land which remained in Council ownership in order to determine their suitability as sites for the development of affordable housing. This work will continue as additional council owned sites become available in the future and will assist in the delivery of much needed new affordable homes in the borough.

### Choice Based Lettings

Compass is the Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) for the Tees Valley sub region. Along with the Council Compass is made up of the following partner organisations:

- Accent Group,
- Coast & Country,
- Darlington Borough Council,
- Erimus Housing,
- Hartlepool Borough Council,
- Home,
- Housing Hartlepool,
- Middlesbrough Council,
- Redcar & Cleveland Council,
- Tees Valley Housing Limited, and
- Tristar Homes.

The scheme aims to help households find an affordable home in the Tees Valley and to give more choice in deciding where they would like to live. The scheme offers advice on a range of available housing options such as local authority and Registered Provider accommodation and low

cost homeownership and private rented accommodation.

Operating a common housing register and a common allocation policy the scheme means that applicants need only apply to one register to be considered for affordable rented properties across the sub region. The partner organisations advertise their vacancies through an advertising cycle and applicants are invited to bid (express an interest) for the properties they would like to live in. Having a say in where an applicant would like to live is important, as applicants choosing where they want to live is likely to result in them wanting to stay there in the long term making communities more stable.

In response to the revised code of guidance from the CLG in regard to how social housing providers allocate their properties, Compass are reviewing areas within the common allocation policy which need amending to ensure it is fit for purpose. Areas include additional preference for ex service personnel. The review will also take into account the views of housing applicants, tenants, service users, stakeholders and supporting agencies. It is anticipated that any amendments to the policy following the conclusion of this review will be introduced in April 2013.

### **Time2Buy**

Time2Buy is the Homebuy Agent for Durham and the Tees Valley sub regions. It is a consortium consisting of Stockton Borough Council, Fabrick Housing Group, Housing Hartlepool and Endeavour Housing Association, which bring together a wide range of experience and skills in delivering affordable housing to enable people to get a foot on the ladder or buy a home appropriate for their needs.

Time2Buy was awarded the Government's HomeBuy Agency contract back in 2009 and is the first point of contact for anyone who cannot afford to buy a home on the open market.

The following initiatives are available on a number of market sites in the borough: -

- **FirstBuy** which offers up to 20% assistance towards the purchase price of a new home, and
- **Shared Ownership** which allows buyers to purchase a share of between 25% and 75% in new home.

In Stockton 214 households have been assisted into homeownership through the various HomeBuy schemes since 2009 and we anticipate a further 45 households to be assisted up in 2012/13.

When the HomeBuy Agency contract comes to an end Time2Buy will be left with a legacy fund. The Time2Buy consortium is currently carrying out research and exploring options to determine how this fund will be utilised. Possible options include assisting first time buyers who can not afford to get on the property ladder and those who have already accessed Rent to Buy schemes who are looking to purchase their home.

### **Securing affordable housing through planning policy**

Affordable housing can also be secured through planning conditions and Section 106 agreements. For any housing development of over 15 dwellings, the Council will ask the developer for 15% - 20% of the properties to be affordable housing. The tenure mix of affordable dwellings secured through planning policy is requested to be 70% rented tenures and 30% intermediate tenures and is based

on the findings of the SHMA 2012. A high priority is given to two bedroom houses and bungalows. Since 2006 we have successfully secured 192 affordable units on market sites.

In addition off site provision and commuted sums may be considered by the Council. However at present these alternatives are only accepted in place of provision of affordable housing on site in exceptional circumstances. If it is agreed by the Council that affordable housing should not be provided on the site the developer will normally be expected to identify and acquire an alternative site in close proximity to their main development, on which the affordable housing must be provided. Alternatively the developer might acquire suitable residential dwellings in close proximity to their main development in order to provide the affordable housing. If it is agreed that none of these options are possible, only then will a commuted sum be negotiated. Commuted sums accepted by the Council in lieu of affordable housing will be spent according to the terms set down in the S106 agreement for that site and used to address strategic housing priorities.

### **Affordable Home Ownership Register**

Affordable properties secured through planning permissions are made available through the Councils Affordable Home Ownership Register, which has been developed for households who are unable to secure accommodation on the open market. The register will assist in ensuring that affordable homes built for sale by developers are offered to local people who cannot afford to buy on the open market and matches households wanting to buy with suitable properties in locations they have specified.

The Register is aimed at:

- Households with a local connection who, due to affordability issues are unable to enter the housing market,
- Households in redevelopment areas ,
- Households releasing a socially rented home in the borough, and
- Homeless households.

The Council matches the details of prospective purchasers from the Affordable Homeownership Register to suitable developments but does not become involved in the sales process.

An example of this in practice can be seen at the Whitewater Glade market development site in Stockton. The planning permission conditioned 56 units on the site as affordable housing to be sold at market discount. Construction on the site is now underway and in April 2012 a number of properties which are due for completion were reserved for applicants who qualify via the Affordable Home Ownership Register.

### **3. Property conditions and improvement**

#### **Helping Hands Loan Scheme**

The Private Sector Stock Condition survey (2009) identified that 10,700 private homes in the borough were of a non decent standard. The cost to remedy this is estimated to be £42 million. To help in addressing this, the Council currently operates the Helping Hands Loans scheme to help homeowners make improvements to their homes. The scheme offers practical support, advice and financial assistance to vulnerable homeowners who are struggling to afford essential repairs. Repairs

such as the removal of category 1 hazards can have a significant positive impact on the physical health and well-being of a household as well as on reducing health and social care budgets.

The financial assistance options available to homeowners vary depending on their personal financial circumstances and include: -

- A low interest repayment loan which can be tailored up to a maximum of 15 years to make sure repayments are affordable,
- A loan that uses equity in the homeowners home and needs no repayments until the homeowner chooses to sell their property or when the property is inherited
- An interest free loan that needs no repayments until the home is sold or inherited

### Raising Standards in the Private Rented Sector

Our Private Sector Housing Conditions and Improvement teams seek to raise standards in the private rented sector through: -

- Assisting private sector tenants living in sub standard or dangerous conditions.
- Identifying, inspecting and improving sub standard Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs, bedsits, flats, bed & breakfasts).
- Licensing houses in multiple occupation.
- Accrediting landlords.
- Dealing with statutory nuisance associated with poor housing conditions.
- Securing and returning to use empty properties, reducing the risk of deliberate fires

and statutory nuisance associated with empty properties. Further details on our empty property work can be found in the following chapter.

- Improving housing conditions through the provision of financial assistance.
- Reducing the number of non decent homes within the borough.

### Achievements

- Completed a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in 2012 to inform future housing and planning decisions.
- Secured 192 units of affordable accommodation through planning obligations on market sites since 2006.
- Worked with partners to secure £4,231,471 of funding for affordable homes through the Affordable Homes Programme 2011 – 2015 which will deliver over 200 new affordable homes.
- Worked with Registered Providers to deliver 328 affordable new homes through HCA funding since 2008.
- Assisted 214 households into owner occupation through the Time2Buy scheme since 2009.
- Hosted a successful Durham and Tees Valley Affordable Homes Show event in February 2012.
- Assisted 41 homeowners to improve their property through the Helping Hands Loan Scheme.

## Future Challenges

The Council expects to face a number of challenges in the coming years as the current economic climate continues to impact on the housing market.

- The **delivery of market sites** is expected to continue to be slow. The lack of mortgage availability will continue to impact on sales and households who are struggling to enter the housing market. Some stalled sites are however beginning to pick up as developers introduce products to assist households into home ownership which may in turn ensure a continued supply of new housing coming forward.
- The **general reduction in available housing funding across all tenures** will continue to provide challenges both in the delivery of new affordable homes and of private sector housing services. Nationally investment in new affordable housing is to be met through capital investment (of up to £2.5bn) with the balance raised through new Affordable Rent tenancies offered to new social rented tenants at 80% of market rents. Where this combination of higher rent and lower grant is insufficient to make new schemes viable, Registered Providers will be expected to convert existing social rent tenancies to affordable rent (or intermediate tenure for sale) when properties are vacated to cross-subsidise new provision.
- **Ensuring the housing stock matches demand in the social rented sector.** The welfare reform act and changes to housing benefit may see an increased demand for smaller properties as households with surplus bedrooms may look to downsize if their current properties are unaffordable and also for shared accommodation for the under 35's, as previously detailed in Theme 2.
- **HomeBuy Agent Role Post 2013:** There are currently 15 HomeBuy Agents operating across England. All contracts currently end on 31st March 2013. The Homes & Communities Agency is in the process of making a decision on the structure of HomeBuy Agents after this time. Although we expect that HomeBuy Agents will still be in existence after this time, it seems likely that the number will be reduced. Time2Buy will be looking to tender for any contract that may be available in the North East region.
- **Mortgage Rescue Scheme Funding:** Time2Buy is currently waiting for confirmation of the Mortgage Rescue funding for 2012/13. Whilst the amount of funding available from the Homes & Communities Agency is vital in determining the level of properties which can be rescued, the availability of funding from the Registered Providers (which purchase the homes) is equally important. Once funding is announced work will be required to calculate how many cases each Local Authority can refer to Time2Buy.

## Key Actions

We will: -

- Maintain a robust evidence and research base which will inform our policy and decision
- Monitor the housing market to identify the current and future level of open market,

affordable and specialist/supported housing required across the borough.

- Work in partnership with Registered Providers and Developers to increase the affordable housing supply in the borough which meets the needs of demographic changes, such as reducing average household size.
- Through Time2Buy continue to operate the Governments' HomeBuy scheme across Durham and the Tees Valley to offer a range of affordable options to anyone who cannot afford to buy a home on the open market.
- Continue to work with developers to secure affordable accommodation on market sites through the use of Section 106 agreements.
- Promote and develop the Homeownership Register to match applicants unable to buy on the open market to affordable homes secured through planning permissions on market sites.
- Continue to operate the Helping Hands Loan Scheme to support vulnerable homeowners make improvements to their home and remove category 1 hazards.
- Work in partnership with NHS Stockton-on-Tees to secure additional funding for the Helping Hands Loan Scheme and work with the Five Lamps organisation with a view to developing a north east social investment bond to assist vulnerable people in improving their properties.
- Continue to work with private sector landlords to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector.

## Theme 4: Promote Sustainable Communities

Sustainable communities are places that meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, their children and other users. They are inclusive and diverse and there is fair access to jobs and services. There is also an opportunity to get engaged in and make a difference to a community in which people want to live and work both now and in the future.

### The current situation in the borough

Like many areas in the North, there are communities in our borough which have over the past decade suffered from low demand housing and market failure. Consequently they no longer meet the housing aspirations of residents of the borough.

In response to this, the Council has embarked on an ambitious programme of housing led regeneration in a number of areas in the borough. Some of these schemes started in the early 2000s through engagement with local communities and partners to determine the future of these neighbourhoods.

Where necessary we are re-modelling neighbourhoods through demolition, rebuild and refurbishment. With our partners we are aiming to create mixed communities where residents have a choice from a range of high quality housing products such as market housing for sale, affordable rent, starter homes or intermediate housing (such as shared equity). Stockton has a positive track record of delivering housing led regeneration and many of the achievements of these schemes are detailed in this chapter.

Fuel poverty is an issue facing many households and communities in our borough. A household is fuel poor if it needs to spend 10% of their overall household income or more to keep warm.

Although there has been a number of very successful initiatives in the borough to tackle fuel poverty (the most successful being Warm Zone which improved the energy efficiency of 15,000 properties and reduced fuel poverty in over 6,000 homes), rising fuel costs and lower income levels have increased the number of homes in fuel poverty. Nationally in 1996 there were 5.1m homes in fuel poverty, this reduced to 1.2m in 2003 but rose to 4.1m in 2011 (approximately 21% of the population). Further energy price rises without substantial investment in energy efficiency or with a rise in income levels will mean that this situation will continue. In Stockton around 21%<sup>10</sup> of households in the borough are considered to be in fuel poverty.

Stockton's continued partnership with Go Warm ensures qualifying residents are offered energy efficiency advice, free and low cost insulation measures to householders and this has resulted in a reduction of the number of very energy inefficient houses. However there are still a large number of solid walled, hard to heat homes in the borough that will require significant investment to improve.

Empty homes are a wasted resource and in certain areas the number of empty and boarded homes can be indications of low demand and area decline. Whilst the overall number of empty homes in the borough has reduced over the last 10 years, the number of properties empty for over 6 months has been steadily increasing.

Communities should also be places where people can play their part regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability, faith or sexual orientation. Approximately 5.2% (around 10,000 people) of the population of the borough are from Black and Minority Ethnic communities<sup>11</sup>. This is lower than

<sup>10</sup> Department of Energy and Climate Change.

<sup>11</sup> 2009 Mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics.

the proportion of the population in England from BME communities which is estimated at 12.5%. According to the 2012 Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment 13.1% of BME households in the Tees Valley are in housing need compared with 7.8% of all households. BME households are also more likely to be dissatisfied with the state of repair of their homes.

### Our current approach

The Council and its partners are working together to improve the quality of life for local people through engaging with local communities, improving the local built and natural environment across the borough.

### New housing developments

New housing developments are vital if we are to provide the type of housing choice in the borough that will maintain sustainable, mixed communities. In recent years, the difficult economic climate has meant that some of these developments have either not commenced or have stalled however government schemes such as Kickstart have assisted in seeing housing developed on these sites. More recently the Get Britain Building fund has been announced as part of the government's Housing Strategy for England. It aims to unlock stalled housing sites with planning permission to support consultation activity and re-start building. £570 million is available nationally and at the time of publishing this strategy, 3 housing sites in the borough had been shortlisted to benefit from the fund which would deliver an additional 96 homes. The three shortlisted sites are: Meadow Rise, Kingsmoor and North Shore Home Zone. A more detailed assessment will be undertaken before a final announcement on successful sites is made.

### Housing Regeneration

Despite challenging housing market conditions and significant reductions in traditional sources of housing renewal funding, housing regeneration schemes have continued to progress at Hardwick, Mandale, Parkfield and Swainby Road (and will commence next year on the Victoria estate). Our vision is to rejuvenate local communities by providing sustainable homes which meet the needs and aspirations of a changing and diverse population.

#### Parkfield

##### Phase 1

In partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency and Fabrick Housing Group, phase 1 of Parkfield (Nursery Gardens) has seen the demolition of 186 properties and the re-provision of 110 properties for rent, sale and intermediate tenure.

##### Phase 2

The economic climate and the reductions in public sector funding have had a big impact on the Parkfield phase 2 regeneration area. The scheme was thrown into jeopardy with the unexpected cessation of Housing Market Renewal (HMR) funding in 2010. In response to this the Council reviewed its proposal for the area and reduced the number of properties proposed for demolition. These 'retained' properties will benefit from property improvements to be delivered by the GoWarm, Community Energy Savings Programme.

Following a successful bid to the Housing Market Renewal Transition fund the Council secured £1.52 million of resources, this will be matched by the Council's own resources to buy up outstanding

properties within phase 2 of the scheme and complete outstanding property acquisitions and demolitions. The redevelopment of phase 2 will be guided by an updated masterplan (2011) which will include infrastructure and 'greening' improvements. Our partner Fabrick has been successful in securing £0.5m through the HCA's Affordable Housing Programme to develop 20 affordable homes to be delivered as part of the regeneration of the local area.

### **Mandale**

Mandale Park continues to be a success story; the scheme has proved popular with both existing residents and in attracting new households to the area. The key to its success has been excellent partnership working with the developers Keepmoat Homes and Barratt Homes, ISOS Housing Group and Tristar Homes.

The scheme started in 2003 and since then over 440 homes have been demolished to make way for new attractive, high quality homes. In total 868 new homes will be constructed, of which 256 will be affordable. Priority for the new affordable housing has been given to the existing residents. In addition to the new homes wider benefits have included the provision of the £1million Linear Park (and football pitches) and engagement and initiatives with local schools.

### **Hardwick**

More than 600 homes have been demolished on Hardwick to make way for a multi million pound development that will see the construction of more than 700 new homes for sale and rent. In addition to these new homes a successful Extra Care Scheme at Aspen Gardens together with 20 bungalows and

flatted accommodation has been built to provide much needed quality accommodation for the over 55's, and those with physical and learning disabilities. Hardwick Primary School has also moved into a brand new £4million state of the art community facility. Wider improvements to the estate include a multi use games area, a full size football pitch, improved cycleway and footpaths and environmental improvements to Hardwick Dene.

The scheme, recently rebranded as Meadow Rise, continues to be a success despite the difficult economic climate.

### **Swainby Road**

To date 132 properties have been demolished and the remaining decanting and demolition is scheduled for completion by the end of March 2013. The majority of the dwellings are owned by Tristar Homes however once cleared the site will return to Council ownership. The Council has been acquiring a number of private and commercial interests on the Norton Road frontage to the scheme. A funding agreement has been secured with the Homes and Communities Agency which will enable the acquisition of properties on the Norton Road frontage.

A developer partner will be procured in the near future. The new development will include a minimum 15% rented accommodation which will be provided by the Vela Group (the parent group of Tristar Homes) and managed by Tristar Homes.

### **Victoria**

The Victoria estate comprises of 254 dwellings, 222 properties are occupied by Tristar Homes tenants and 32 are leaseholders (acquired under right to

buy arrangements). In order to inform our future regeneration plans we have commissioned an estate masterplan, the purpose of this exercise is to inform our vision for the future. We anticipate decanting the first residents off the estate in Spring 2013.

This site is of particular significance due to the close proximity of the estate to the town centre, as regeneration here will compliment the Councils wider town centre investment ambitions.

### Empty Properties

We are working with our partners to bring back into use or demolish empty homes and our Empty Property team particularly aims to reduce the number of long term private empty homes in the borough and use a proactive approach to achieve this, for example, they offer informal advice, information and financial assistance. Where property owners fail to work with the Council, there are a range of enforcement powers that the Council will use to bring the empty properties back into use.

The effects on communities of empty properties are negative and wide ranging. In response to this the Council has developed a corporate toolkit to deal with empty properties. This means that services within the Council work together and co-ordinate their response to tackling empty dwellings.

In March 2012 a consortium within the Tees Valley (made up of local authorities and Registered Providers secured) £2.9m from the Government to refurbish 205 empty properties. £1m will be spent in Stockton, which will refurbish 99 empty properties. This funding will be recycled over the next 8 years and will return a further 100 properties back into use. The scheme will also

provide training to those seeking construction work experience by working with a number of social enterprises that support and train young unemployed people, such as Community Campus, East Cleveland Youth Housing Trust and Opening Doors.

### Working with the private rented sector

The private rented sector is a vital and key market for a variety of residents. To improve and maintain good and acceptable conditions, a toolkit for improving standards is in place and consists of a mixture of formal and informal actions the Council can use when working with property owners.

Included in the toolkit is:

- Mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), for HMOs comprising of three or more storeys and occupied by five or more people who form more than one household. At March 2012 75 HMOs had been licensed and the Council is continuing to identify further HMOs that might require a licence.
- A Landlord Accreditation Scheme, which encourages local landlords with a voluntary code of good practice which will improve property standards and management conditions in the sector.
- A Landlord forum and newsletter, which aims to provide channels for communication between private landlords and the Council. The forum has now been widened to become a Tees Valley wide landlords forum and helps to keep landlords fully informed and up to date with new private sector housing initiatives, legislation and good practice.

The Council will continue to use this toolkit to improve standards in the private rented sector as well as identifying and appraising new initiatives to put in place.

### Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

The Council and its partners will continue to work to eradicate fuel poverty through area based initiatives, e.g. Community Energy Saving Programme, Green Deal – delivering energy efficiency measures to households and the Affordable Warmth Strategy to secure a co-ordinated approach using a variety of agencies and resources. The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) in the Parkfield area (known as GoWarm Parkfield) will improve 600 properties through a package of measures free of charge to households in the identified area. Measures include external wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, new heating systems, boiler replacements, heating controls, energy efficiency and benefits advice. Funding of £3.85m for the improvements is through Eggborough Power, as part of its obligations under the CESP. In addition to this the Council has provided its own resources to the scheme for any necessary unfunded remedial work. Funding has also been secured from the same energy supplier by Go Warm to extend the programme into other areas of the borough that could benefit from these types of improvements. The programme is also being delivered to 151 properties in the Coleshill area of Billingham by Frank Haslam Milan.

### Green Infrastructure Strategy

Green infrastructure provides places for play and exercise, spaces to grow food, attractive environments to live and work, 'green routes' for

walking and cycling, areas for wildlife and much more. Green infrastructure helps to provide us with clean air and water, and in the future it will play an essential role in helping us adapt to climate change, for example, by cooling our towns and reducing the risk of flooding.

A Stockton-on-Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy has been prepared with input from a wide range of partners, and a rolling 3-year action plan is beginning to set out future priorities. In addition a number of projects have already been implemented to create new and improved green infrastructure in many parts of the borough including at the Mandale Park and Meadow Rise housing regeneration schemes. This presents opportunities for integration of green infrastructure into new developments, supporting and enabling the active participation of local communities in the management and improvement of the borough's green infrastructure and raising awareness and understanding of the benefits of green infrastructure.

### Achievements

- Continued to deliver major housing led regeneration schemes in the light of the current economic climate which has seen the demolition of over 1,500 obsolete properties and the development of over 1,000 new homes.
- Secured £1.52m through the Housing Market Renewal Transition Fund to acquire the remaining properties, complete necessary demolition and site remediation work at Parkfield.
- Secured £1m for the borough as part of the Tees Valley Empty Homes funding to refurbish

and bring back into use 99 properties in the borough.

- Between 2008 and 2011, brought back into use 166 empty homes in the borough through early intervention and pro-active working with owners and as a last resort, using enforcement powers available.
- Developed an empty homes delivery plan to tackle empty properties in the borough.
- Work in partnership with landlords to provide, improve and maintain good standards of accommodation in the private rented sector and improved 194 properties through the Private Rented Sector Toolkit.
- Licensed 75 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) as part of a mandatory scheme to March 2012 (note: Due to revoked and expired licenses there are currently 41 licensed HMOs).
- Accredited 732 landlords between 2008 and 2012 as part of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme.
- Secured £3.85m through the Community Energy Savings Programme to carry out energy efficiency improvements to 600 properties in the Parkfield area.

## Future Challenges

We anticipate a number of challenges in promoting sustainable communities over the next few years:

- Housing market conditions have been adversely affected by the current economic climate and this will continue to have a bearing on the housing led regeneration schemes in the borough. These schemes will

require constant review to ensure that we respond appropriately and in a timely manner to changing market conditions. A number of sites have also seen a significant reduction in available public funding as described earlier in this chapter.

- Conditions in the housing market will also affect the number of empty homes in the borough, as owners find it more difficult to sell properties or delay selling until market conditions improve. In response to this it will be important for the Council to prioritise those empty homes that are most problematic.
- Increasing energy prices since 2004 have far outweighed rising incomes and improvements in energy efficiency. According to the Hills review of Fuel Poverty<sup>12</sup> commissioned by the Department of Energy and Climate Change, fuel poverty can be a significant contributor to not only excess winter deaths but also to a large number of incidents of ill-health, demands on the NHS, problems of social isolation and even on young people's education. Any future projections of households in fuel poverty have to consider the sensitivities of future incomes and energy prices. However the Hills review estimated that the number of households nationally in fuel poverty is likely to continue increasing to 2016. This will have an impact on demand for energy efficiency advice and assistance and also on services that can assist households receive the right benefits to help heat their homes.
- An increase in **demand for homes in the private rented sector** as a result of difficulties in accessing homeownership and a reduced

<sup>12</sup> Getting the measure of Fuel Poverty, Fuel Poverty Review, John Hills, March 2012.

turnover in the social sector stock will increase the pressure on Council services responsible for improving conditions and standards in the sector. More households are expected to rent for longer in the private sector. The 2012 Savills and Rightmove<sup>13</sup> research estimated that nationally £48 billion was paid in private rents in 2011 and by 2016 this will rise to £70 billion as rents and the number of renters rise.

## Key Actions

We will: -

- Continue to deliver major housing regeneration schemes in the borough.
- Use the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Preferred Partner Framework to appoint a private sector partner to regenerate the Swainby Road area.
- Deliver ongoing pro-active enforcement work to bring empty properties back into use to prevent decline in neighbourhoods.
- Work with partners to deliver the Empty Homes initiatives in the Tees Valley with funding secured through the HCA.
- Implement the recommendations of the Council's Empty Homes Scrutiny Review taking place in 2012/13.
- Contribute to the energy efficiency agenda through improvements to housing stock in the borough.
- Drive up standards in the private rented sector through implementing the Private Rented Sector Toolkit through both informal action and formal enforcement action.

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<sup>13</sup> Rental Britain: A Report into the UK rental market combining research from Savills and Rightmove, March 2012.

## Section 5: Delivery of the Housing Strategy

All successful organisations need a clear vision of where they are going, what their goals are and how they will be achieved.

To assist in this process all actions contained within this strategy are embedded in the Housing Service Improvement Plan and the Business Unit Plans of the Council's housing teams. Both plans contain: -

- All the actions that will be taken in order to deliver the strategic objectives and service priorities detailed within the Housing Strategy;
- Timescales for completion,
- Identification of lead officer and partners to deliver each priority action,
- Resource implications,
- Targets, and
- Anticipated outcomes.

Within the Council, there is a mature, well-established culture of 'planning, monitoring and review', which ensures this Housing Strategy remains a living document.

### Monitoring our Housing Strategy

Delivery of this strategy is measured against a number of key indicators which are contained within our Service Improvement Plan and Business Unit Plans. These plans are monitored on a quarterly basis by both the Housing Service and the Corporate Performance Team and an annual progress update will be provided to the Housing & Neighbourhood Partnership. Copies of the plans are available on request.

### Reviewing our Housing Strategy

The Strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that the strategic objectives remain appropriate. This review process involves a number of steps including a review of our priorities and key actions against: -

- Government objectives and any new national regulatory requirements,
- Changing regional and sub regional priorities and policies,
- Changing and emerging housing needs of the borough,
- How housing can and will contribute to new or revised corporate objectives or those determined by Renaissance (our Local Strategic Partnership), and
- Partner and service user views. These are gained on an ongoing basis through numerous consultation and discussion forums, including: the Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership, the Private Landlord Forum, the Teesside Landlords Association, Viewpoint and resident groups and focus groups.

## Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing (or sub-market housing)	Includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.
Affordable Homes Programme	The government funded Affordable Homes Programme supports the delivery of new affordable homes through a mixture of new investment and greater flexibility for social housing providers to make the best use of existing and future assets.
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)	Term for describing anyone who would not categorise his or her ethnicity as White British.
Category 1 Hazard	Serious hazards with a high score as assessed by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) e.g. excess cold, falls of the level, falls on the stairs. Local Authorities are required to take action where a Category 1 Hazard has been identified.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	Scheme for the allocation of social housing designed to offer more choice and involvement for customers in selecting a new home. Social rented housing is advertised allowing customers to 'bid' (register an interest) in those homes.
Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP)	The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) has been created as part of the government's Home Energy Saving Programme. It requires gas and electricity suppliers and electricity generators to deliver energy saving measures to domestic consumers in specific low income areas of Great Britain. CESP has been designed to promote a 'whole house' approach and to treat as many properties as possible in defined areas.
Core Strategy	The Core Strategy sets out the vision and objectives that will underpin all the Council's development plan documents, and sets out the spatial strategy for meeting known and anticipated development requirements to 2024, including the number of dwellings required. It includes a limited range of strategic policies to guide the preparation of more detailed policies in subsequent plans.
Decent Homes	Homes which meet or exceed specified minimum standards and state of repair.
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Communities and Local Government is a government department which sets UK policy on local government, housing, urban regeneration, planning and fire and rescue. They have responsibility for all race equality and community cohesion related issues across Great Britain and for building regulations, fire safety and some housing issues in England and Wales.
Disabled Facilities Grant	Government funding to local housing authorities to provide and improve adaptation services to disabled people enabling them to continue to stay in their own homes.

Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)	The Drug and Alcohol Team are responsible for commissioning and co-ordinating high quality substance misuse services across Stockton by working in partnership with all those concerned in reducing the harm caused by substance misuse to individuals, their families and communities.
Empty Homes	There is no single definition used, but generally the Government is concerned to ensure that problematic empty properties i.e. those that are not subject to a transactional process – are brought back to occupation.
Excess Winter Deaths (EWDs)	The difference between the number of deaths which occurred in winter (December to March) and the average number of deaths during the preceding four months (August to November) and the subsequent four months (April to July).
Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	The national housing and regeneration agency for England. A non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It provides funding for affordable housing and is the social housing regulator.
House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)	Property in which more than one household shares basic amenities, such as kitchens and bathrooms (e.g. bedsits). Regulations exist to control the repair standards and provision of amenities in these properties.
Home Improvement Agency (HIA)	Not-for-profit, local organisations that assist and support elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes for as long as they wish to do so. They achieve this by providing practical solutions to housing related problems, mainly by helping vulnerable clients repair, maintain or adapt their homes.
Housing and Neighbourhood Partnership	The housing related sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership for the borough.
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	A tool for identifying areas of deprivation. Separate Indices are provided for each of the seven domains of deprivation: (Income, Employment, Health deprivation and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Services, Crime and the Living Environment).
Intermediate Housing	Housing at prices and rents above those of social rent, but below market price or rents, and which meet the criteria set out above. These can include shared equity products (e.g. HomeBuy), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	The process that identifies current and future health and wellbeing needs in light of existing services, and informs future service planning taking into account evidence of effectiveness.
Lifetime Homes Standard	Homes fit for a lifetime by virtue of design, enabling easy adaptation as required.
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	A partnership between local authorities and businesses formed in 2011 to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within its local area.
Market Housing	Private housing for rent or sale, where the price is set in the open market.
Registered Providers (RP)	Also known as Housing Associations or Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). They are not for profit organisations that provide social housing and are regulated through Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
Section 106 Agreement	Planning obligations are currently negotiated in the context of a planning application between a local authority and persons with an interest in land. Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken. In relation to affordable housing provided in part through social housing grant.
Social Rented Housing	Affordable housing provided for rent at, or close rents to below market levels to eligible groups on housing waiting lists. Provided and managed by local authorities, Registered Social Landlords or other bodies.
Stockton Renaissance	The Local Strategic Partnership for the borough. Local Strategic Partnerships promote and foster positive relationships across sectors. Stockton Renaissance also develops and monitors the Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out the key priorities and ambitions for the borough.
Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)	The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is an important piece of work that reviews the overall picture of housing in an area. It assists local authorities and their partners in developing their understanding of how the housing market works and assists with strategic decision making.
Sustainable Communities	Sustainable communities are communities planned, built, or modified to promote sustainable living. They tend to focus on environmental sustainability (including development and agriculture) and economic sustainability. Sustainable communities can focus on sustainable urban infrastructure and/or sustainable municipal infrastructure.

Sustainable Community Strategy	The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the targets to be achieved through effective partnership working between public and private sector organisations, voluntary and community sector groups, local businesses and the residents of the borough.
Tenure	The nature of the structure by which people own or rent their home. Categories are usually broken down as follows: Owner Occupied, Private Rented, Registered Social Landlord or Council Rented.
Time2Buy	Delivers the Governments Homebuy scheme across Durham and the Tees Valley from 2009 - 2013.
Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU)	The local enterprise partnership for the Tees Valley, responsible for delivering growth and economic equity.
Warm Homes, Healthy People Fund	A fund to support local authorities in England to reduce the levels of death and morbidity due to cold housing in the coming winter in partnership with their local community and voluntary sector and statutory organisations.
Welfare Reform Act (2012)	This Act introduces a wide range of reforms that will deliver the commitment made in the Coalition Agreement and the Queen's Speech to make the benefits and tax credits systems fairer and simpler by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creating the right incentives to get more people into work by ensuring work always pays</li> <li>• protecting the most vulnerable in our society</li> <li>• delivering fairness to those claiming benefit and to the taxpayer.</li> </ul>

If you would like this information in any other language or format, for example large print or audio, please contact the Housing Strategy and Development Team on 01642 526683:

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✉ [housing.strategy@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:housing.strategy@stockton.gov.uk)

#### Arabic

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيم' [Housing Strategy] على هاتف رقم 01642 526683

#### Mandarin

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電 01642 526683 接洽 '多元化隊' (Housing Strategy)

#### Farsi

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی (گوناگونی) [Housing Strategy] با شما ره 01642 526683 به تماس شوید

#### French

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe "Housing Strategy" au n° 01642 526683

#### Kurdish

ئەگەر هەرت لێ یە ئەم زانیاریە بە دەستت بکەویت بە زمانەکانی تر یان بە شێوەیەکی تر بۆ نمونە چاچی گەورە/یان بە تێپی تۆمارکراو نکایە پەڕۆندی بکە بە 'تیمی داڤفرستی' [Housing Strategy] له سەر ژمارەى تەلەفۆن 01642 526683

#### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਥੱਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Housing Strategy' ਨੂੰ 01642 526683 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

#### Urdu

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو ڈاؤن لوڈ کریں، (Housing Strategy) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 526683

The Housing Strategy can also be accessed on the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council website on [www.stockton.gov.uk/housing](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/housing)