

Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People: Objective 3:

Supporting a Healthy Thriving Community

Chapter Outline

The Council believes that a strong and sustainable community benefits from the inclusion, and responds to the needs of all its members, including those who are vulnerable. It recognises that vulnerability is not necessarily permanent and therefore provides for a range of general needs and specialist support services, regardless of age. It also intends to ensure individuals can access housing to the minimum Decent Homes Standard (PSA 7 - see glossary) to remain independent in housing for as long as possible.

The Council has a range of issues including health, disabilities, lifestyles and social circumstances and it must be responsive to individual needs and choices. It must work in partnership with other service providers on which vulnerable people and groups may depend to ensure our strategy is effective.

This chapter will:

- detail the Council's plans to meet the needs of vulnerable people and groups in the Borough
- present key information of vulnerable people and groups in the Borough and
- explain the mechanisms of how it will support independent living, particularly through our Homelessness Strategy and Supporting People Programme.



Aim 6 – Promoting Healthy Housing

Introduction

Poor Housing can lead to a wide range of physical and mental health problems. Actions relating to housing have the potential to produce significant benefits in the health of individuals and the wider community, and generate savings in public and private expenditure on health, housing and other social services. Improving the physical quality of housing can help to provide warm, safe and healthy homes, which not only prevents health problems, but also can help reduce deaths due to cold, damp and unsafe housing. By increasing security measures it can be possible to increase people's sense of security and therefore their mental health.

There are a number of client groups for whom there is a clear need to plan housing provision across a range of disciplines including Health, Social Care, Supporting People and Housing. Such groups include older people with support needs, young parents, people with disabilities and people with drug and alcohol problems.

Issues facing the Borough:

- **The growth in the population of the over 65-age group increases by 43.5% 10,000 individuals over the forecast period**
- **The 'older' retirement group, those 80 and over, who are much more likely to have care and support needs, grows by 46%, 2,700 more people by 2016**
- **18% of households within the Borough contain somebody with a disability. Of households with a disability, some 28% (1,703) have outstanding support/care needs**
- **There are 13 people in Charnwood with learning difficulties who wish to move now and a further 40 who wish to move later, just under half of these live with their parents and a further quarter in residential accommodation**
- **Lack of specialist supported housing**
- **Insufficient rehabilitation services for people with substance/misuse problems**

Health and Housing Risk Assessment Tool

The Department of Health has recently produced "Health Risks and Health Inequalities in Housing: An Assessment Tool." This takes as its starting point the link between health and housing and expands upon the Health and Safety Rating system, which is the replacement of the traditional fitness standards for housing. In partnership with the local PCT the Council will investigate opportunities for piloting the system to maximise the suitability of housing for households needs.

Health and Well-being

The Charnwood Community Safety Partnership is helping to create a safer Borough by promoting good citizenship and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and disorder. The Council will continue to build on current best practice and seek opportunities to develop the promotion of safety and reduction of crime within the community.

Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities

The delivery of services for residents of Charnwood with disabilities is undertaken from within a joint Housing, Social Services and Health Team of Officers.

In 2004/05, 817 homes across the Borough were adapted to enable people to live independently in their own homes. During this period the Council were able to meet demand for this service. The current target is six weeks from assessment to completion of works and in 2005/06 the aim is to achieve four weeks from referral to completion of works.

Meeting the Needs of People with Learning Disabilities

The Leicestershire Learning Disability Housing Strategy has identified housing options across the county for those with learning disabilities, this has been updated by the Leicestershire Learning Disability Housing Needs Survey produced in 2005. To address the housing issues facing people with learning disabilities within the borough the Council facilitates the housing sub-group of the Charnwood Action Group who monitor services in Charnwood for people with learning disabilities.

Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People

OBJECTIVE 3 – Supporting a healthy Thriving Community

Aim 6 – Promoting Healthy Housing

Meeting the Needs of People with Mental Health Issues

There are 33 units of accommodation-based support within the Borough and a further 7 of specialist floating support for people with mental health issues as well as a number of generic support services, which can provide lower level support.

The lack of specialist appropriate supported housing is a key 'identified' issue. The Council is monitoring the situation relating to funding for supported accommodation as the Housing Corporation reviews its approach to supported housing provision.

Meeting the Needs of People with Substance/Misuse Problems

The Council and its partners recognise that there is a need to provide co-ordinated housing services for people with substance misuse problems.

People with substance misuse problems often exhibit chaotic behaviour patterns. Their ability to access and maintain mainstream housing can be limited. To address this, the Council has developed housing related support services in partnership with Shelter Housing Aid and Research Project (SHARP) for people with substance misuse problems.

Health and Family Support

The Sure Start programme provides childcare and health support to families in deprived areas, targeting the link between poor housing, other indices of deprivation and health inequalities.

There are a number of Sure Start schemes within the Borough:

- Cobden Street Children's Centre and Shelthorpe Children's Centre provide integrated education, care, family support and health services
- the Loughborough East Sure Start programme provides a range of services to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children through integrated services including family support, advice on nurturing, health services and early learning

Meeting the Health Needs of Homeless People

There are clear links between homelessness and health, for example, the anxiety and mental health problems that come about as a result of the uncertainty as well as the difficulties in maintaining a balanced diet or regular sleep patterns.

The Homelessness Review and Strategy (2003) has already highlighted the difficulty for homeless people in accessing health services, particularly amongst some of the harder to reach groups, such as rough sleepers and gypsies and travellers, and is working towards ways of addressing this through the Charnwood Health Forum.

Housing Priorities:	Strategy	Action Plan:
Improving health using control interventions and policies	community development	Action 16
Addressing inequalities and targeting specific groups (e.g.) older people, teenage parents, the homeless, Gypsies and Travellers (refer to chapter 4, aim 9)	health targeting	Action 17
Health checks for neighbourhoods using pilot money from the ODPM	checks for using	Action 18

Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People

OBJECTIVE 3 – Supporting a Healthy Thriving Community

Aim 7 – Protecting the Community

Introduction

To facilitate community safety there are a range of initiatives that the Council is promoting including crime reduction initiatives, dealing with perpetrators of crime and designing it out in areas considered problematic. Recently, the three estate based Neighbourhood Wardens were involved in promoting the Smart Water burglary reduction scheme on the Ashby Road Estate within Loughborough. This has proved to be successful in reducing overall perceptions about the ‘fear of crime’.

Issues facing the Borough:

- Many incidents of domestic violence are not reported and therefore its true extent within the Borough is not known
- It is acknowledged that a small proportion of racial harassment and other racial incidents are reported, therefore, the true extent of the problem within Charnwood is unknown
- Even though overall crime rates are down people’s perceptions have risen and continuous work needs to be carried out to decrease people’s fear of crime

Charnwood Community Safety Partnership

The performance of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships/Community Safety Partnerships is at the heart of the Government’s improvement agenda. Partnerships have a crucial role in supporting delivery of the Home Office Crime Reduction Strategy agendas.

Charnwood has had a Community Safety Partnership in place since 1992 with a good record of co-operative working. The initial strategy for 1999-2002 has been the foundation for reducing most categories of crime and disorder and forms the basis of the Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002-2005.

The previous three-year strategy resulted in a number of successful projects and operations in reducing crime figures, including:

- formation of Charnwood Community Against Drugs Partnership
- “Alive not kicking” – project to raise awareness and issues surrounding violence
- “Time Out – a project run to provide support for young carers

- PRIDE – project aimed at making homes of the elderly and vulnerable more secure
- “Bogus Callers” and “Distraction Burglary Roadshow” – work and video campaign Leicestershire Constabulary, aimed at older and vulnerable people to raise awareness and distraction burglary
- Handy Van Scheme Leicestershire to enhance security measures to make elderly and vulnerable peoples homes more safe and secure

Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-2008

As a result of considering the audit and consultation results¹¹, the Partnership identifies four themed areas for reducing Crime and Disorder in Charnwood in 2005-2008:

- reduce violent crime
- reduce acquisitive crime and drugs misuse
- reduce the incidents of anti-social behaviour
- protect and reassure the community

Our strategy for housing and the plans and actions have been greatly influenced by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. As a consequence housing has made a significant contribution to the achievements of the Strategy to date including:

- the Burglary Reduction Initiative (BRI) co-ordinated by the Community Safety Partnership. The Burglary Reduction Action Plan set the target of reducing dwelling burglaries by 23% over the period 2002-05. The BRI has seen the delivery of a number of property security schemes throughout the Borough as well as security measures for people who have been victims of crime, including:
 - regular police involvement in raising awareness and promoting initiatives on estates and at residents surgeries across the Borough
 - installation of CCTV and improved lighting in high risk areas
 - the introduction of a budget for security measures for tenants who have been a victim of crime and
 - a pilot scheme to replace secure door entry systems to blocks of flats

¹¹ *The Crime and Disorder Audit 2001*

Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People

OBJECTIVE 3 – Supporting a Healthy Thriving Community

Aim 7 – Protecting the Community

- using a mixture of funds and contributions from housing resources three estate-based Neighbourhood Warden Schemes have been set up and the wardens have been involved in a range of activities including estate based 'clean ups', liaison with community groups and reporting incidences of anti-social behaviour.

We will continue to work in partnership to deliver the following actions identified below:

Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy 2005-8

Strategic Aims	Action
To reduce violent crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to support campaigns raising awareness around the issues of Domestic Violence and promote the Domestic Violence Common Monitoring Project
To reduce acquisitive crime and tackle drug misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to support the work of the Leicestershire Safe at Home – Handy Van Scheme which helps prevent burglaries and repeat victimisation • To tackle the problem of prolific and priority offender through the countywide multi-agency approach MAPPOM (Multi-Agency Public Protection Offender Management) • To run crime prevention campaigns throughout the Borough
To reduce the incidences of anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with relevant agencies to promote the prevention of anti-social behaviour throughout the Borough • To promote relevant interventions through the Partnership to reduce the incidence of criminal damage • To work with relevant agencies to reduce incidents of abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, graffiti, etc • To work with relevant agencies and projects to promote the reporting of Racist incidents and Hate crime •
To protect and reassure the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To contribute to multi-agency initiatives to promote community cohesion in the Borough • Together with other interested parties the Council will seek to use the Buzz Bus to engage with young people and provide drug and alcohol information • To work with relevant agencies to ensure the delivery of the Partnership's Action Plan

Housing Priorities:	Strategy	Action Plan:
Appropriate intervention to anti-social behaviour		Action 19
Designing out crime in the physical environment		Action 20
Community development and engagement		Action 21

Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People

OBJECTIVE 3 – Supporting a Healthy Thriving Community

Aim 8 – Tackling Homelessness

Introduction

The Council has a statutory duty to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the Borough, however, this duty only requires the Council to provide accommodation for certain groups of homeless people considered to be in 'priority need'¹². In July 2003 the Council produced a Homelessness Review and Strategy, which set out the improvements that would be made to help address the needs of all homeless people, irrespective of whether or not they are 'statutorily homeless'. This strategy links in with the actions identified within the Homelessness Strategy to reduce and prevent homelessness within the Borough and improves the services available to those who are threatened with homelessness or become homeless.

Issues facing the Borough:

- **Continued demand for homelessness services**
- **Need for suitable temporary accommodation for single people and childless couples**
- **The majority of households in priority need continue to be those with children**
- **The main reasons for homelessness are: parental, family and friend eviction and relationship breakdown**
- **The supply of social rented housing is under pressure – there is a mismatch between demand and the type of accommodation available**

A Strategy to Tackle Single Homelessness (2001)

In the last five years, partnership and interagency working to deal with homelessness issues in Charnwood has moved forward significantly. The production of 'A Strategy to Tackle Homelessness Amongst Single People in Charnwood' (2001), which a variety of organisations helped to develop and progress, provided a firm basis from which to

develop a new comprehensive homelessness strategy.

Charnwood Homelessness Review & Strategy (2003)

The 2003 Homelessness Strategy was developed from a review of the homelessness and advice services, including the work already progressed through the Single Homelessness Strategy Steering Group. The review identified key issues, assessed options and confirmed priorities for action in consultation with partners and customers. The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group made up of representatives from the Voluntary Sector, Social Services, Primary Care Trust and the Council monitors the implementation of the strategy and reviews it on a quarterly basis.

Changes in the housing market and the addition of new priority need categories by the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002¹³ have led to pressure on the supply of social rented accommodation and the Council is now faced with a number of challenges. This achieves the Government requirement to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 and the statutory requirement to ensure that households with dependant children or expectant mothers are only placed in bed and breakfast accommodation in an emergency and then for no more than six weeks. Despite this, much progress has been made against the original aims and objectives of the Homelessness Strategy, including a detailed appraisal of options with partners to:

- Implement a range of preventative initiatives to prevent and reduce homelessness within the Borough
- enhance the availability of alternative forms of suitable temporary accommodation

¹² The Housing Act 1999 (as amended)

¹³ Statutory Instrument 2002 No. 2051

Aim 8 – Tackling Homelessness

- develop partnerships with housing providers across all tenures to enable permanent accommodation to be secured for homeless families and
- reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for all groups

The ongoing review of the Homelessness Strategy will enable the Council and its partners to continually reassess the impact of the changes in demand for services and develop appropriate strategic priorities for the future.

Key actions and achievements can be found in the Charnwood Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003 available at www.charnwood.gov.uk

Housing Priorities:	Strategy	Action Plan:
Increased resources for prevention		Action 22
Direct access accommodation	emergency	Action 23
Improved working and resources	inter-agency working with common aims	Action 24

Aim 9 – Supporting Vulnerable People

Introduction

There are a number of supported housing and floating tenancy support schemes available for residents within the Borough, many funded by Supporting People. It is important that these schemes develop and adapt to continue to meet the needs of the Borough and its residents.

Issues facing the Borough:

- **The number of older people in the Borough is projected to increase, as are the number of frail older people**
- **There is a mismatch in the type of accommodation which is needed**
- **1509 incidences of Domestic violence were recorded in Charnwood in 2003/04. The Home Office estimate that only 12% of all incidents are reported, so a reasonable assessment of the number of incidents on an annual basis is in excess of 12,500**
- **Tightening of the funding in the Supporting People regime**

The Supporting People Programme is central to the Government's Social Inclusion Policy and its homelessness preventative agenda. The Council and its partners have taken the opportunities presented by the Supporting People regime to provide additional support services to vulnerable people within the Borough. The Leicestershire Supporting People Five Year Strategy 2005-2010 describes the aspirations of the seven District Councils, Leicestershire County Council, Probation and the four PCTs in relation to a wide range of client groups.

Decisions on Supporting People priorities lie with the Supporting People Commissioning Body which has informed the five year Supporting People Strategy. The Supporting People Allocation for Leicestershire is £7,148,920.36 this is the second lowest grant per capita in England and a fifth of the level received by Leicester City Council. This funds 6312 units of support that meet housing related supported needs across the county.

Increasingly services meeting the needs of vulnerable people in Charnwood are developed and managed through a multi-agency approach. Examples include:

- Learning Disabilities Partnership Board
- Leicestershire Teenage Pregnancy Forum
- Charnwood Floating Support Network Group
- Charnwood Health Forum
- Community Safety Partnership

The Council will continue the development and review of both housing strategies for vulnerable people and housing related elements of existing strategies. Key pieces of work identified for completion during 2005 - 2010 are:

- Older Persons Housing Strategy (Ongoing)
- BME Strategy (2005/06)
- review of the Supporting People Strategy (2010)
- review of Homelessness Strategy (2008)

Work to date has identified the need to provide a number of new housing developments for vulnerable people. The Council and its partners are currently exploring ways of providing additional supported accommodation within Loughborough for vulnerable groups by harnessing resources donated via the voluntary sector.

Meeting the Needs of Older People

Progress has already been made in recognising and enhancing the supply of appropriate accommodation and support for older people in Charnwood, with achievements such as:

- a survey of all sheltered housing tenants during 2004, culminating in a re-organisation of sheltered housing wardens in 2004. The revised working arrangements have resulted in improved service delivery
- an improved Care on Call community alarm service resulting in greater involvement of the Council's call centre in the provision of support for elderly and vulnerable people

Chapter 4 – Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People

OBJECTIVE 3 – Supporting a Healthy Thriving Community

Aim 9 – Supporting Vulnerable People

- the re-modelling of Gray's Court (category 2 scheme) in partnership with Touchstone Housing Association; the refurbishment of bedsit accommodation at Sorrell Court and Dudley Court to provide 1-2 bed flats, including adaptations for disabled access
- development of the Countywide Sheltered Housing Providers Group; a cross tenure group of providers, reviewing the future needs for older people, the future role of Wardens and the utilization of Community Alarm Centres. Future priorities include the development of extra care housing and the development of a countywide control centre
- the establishment of a Handy Van Scheme. The Council will continue to work in partnership to enhance security measures for elderly and vulnerable people

Meeting the Needs of Young People

Charnwood has 40 units of specialist accommodation with support for young people funded through Supporting People. The ODPM also part fund a specialist resettlement worker and mediation worker through the Homelessness Grant Programme. The Specialist Resettlement Worker assists young people who have been excluded from accessing social housing by helping resolve outstanding issues to enable them to once more access appropriate housing. The Mediation Worker post was specifically developed to address the growing number of young people being excluded from the family home. The aim of the post is to act as an impartial third party to help people to talk and find the best way forward for the individual. Mediation can achieve a number of positive outcomes, including returning the young person home where appropriate.

Developing solutions to the problems of youth homelessness is a key priority for the Council and its partners. Key actions to date include:

- enhancement of the provision of floating support for young people, funded by Supporting People

- continuing development of a joint housing and social services protocol for vulnerable 16 & 17 year olds
- funding for a mediator, based at the Charnwood Shelter Project, working with estranged young homeless people in helping them to their family home
- the development of a countywide inter-agency Steering Group on Homeless 16 & 17 year olds
- education work in schools.

Meeting the Needs of Lone Teenage Parents

The Council has always supported in a very practical and positive way the Government's objective that all 16-17 year old lone parents, who cannot reside with their own parents or partner, and who require accommodation, should be offered appropriate housing with support. Charnwood decided against purpose-built hostel-type accommodation and established instead a post of Housing Support Worker specifically for this client group, funded by Supporting People and based at The Bridge Independent Housing Advice Agency. This post is recognised in the Regional Teenage Pregnancy Strategy as a model of good practice within the region.

The Council also supports the main strategic objectives of the Regional Project (Housing & Teenage Pregnancy) April 2005, including the greater involvement of RSLs in assisting this client group and the development of a regional training pack for front-line Housing Officers to challenge attitudes and support pregnant teenagers and teenage parents with their transition into independent tenancies.

Meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers

The Government is advocating a holistic approach to the issues surrounding the travelling population, including land use planning, housing and environmental health and education. Draft Government guidance on managing unauthorised camping places the emphasis on Councils to identify suitable sites.

Aim 9 – Supporting Vulnerable People

In Leicestershire the number of Gypsy caravans exceeds the number of authorised places where they can stop. The provision of suitable accommodation, therefore, is seen as a vital approach to deal with unauthorised camping. To address this, the Council has signed up to the Code of Practice, an agreement between Councils in Leicestershire and Rutland and Leicestershire Constabulary aimed at managing unauthorised encampments by travellers. The countywide joint working party for the provision of transit and stopping place sites for gypsies and other travellers meets on a regular basis to progress this initiative.

Meeting the Needs of BME Communities

The Council is committed to meeting the needs of all minority groups within the Borough. When addressing the needs of communities the Council will ensure that these are fully inclusive and the whole community is consulted and involved.

The Council is positive in its approach to good race relations via its Corporate Equalities Plan. The Housing Department uses their policies to support victims of racial harassment and to take action against perpetrators in line with the Commission for Racial Equality guidance. The Housing Department feeds its ethnic monitoring data and harassment findings into the Corporate Community Safety Partnership to enable a complete picture of issues to be built up.

Meeting the Needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees

The Council is the only District Council in the East Midlands to provide Council accommodation to Refugee Housing Association to house Asylum Seekers dispersed by NASS (National Asylum Support Service).

Along with the three cities of Leicester, Derby and Nottingham Charnwood has provided accommodation since 2001 and the current contract commits the authority until April 2006. The Authority is also an active participant in the Leicester and Leicestershire Asylum Seeker and Refugees Multi-Agency Forum.

Charnwood Racial Equality Council provides support and undertakes immigration casework for asylum seekers and is registered with Offices of Immigration Services Commission (OISC) as well as holding a full quality mark for Community Legal Services.

Refugee Housing Association provides a floating support service to refugees living in tenancies on newly allocated properties. The aim is to promote social inclusion to enable integration into British systems and institutions, sustain tenancies and integrate into the community. Support is provided during and following the move to a new address. The support is tailored to the needs of individuals recognising their special needs as a vulnerable client group.

Meeting the Needs of Victims of Domestic Violence

The Council has part funded the provision of a Domestic Violence Outreach Worker based at Loughborough Women's Aid. Domestic Violence is one of the local main causes of homelessness and nationally is recognised as a main cause of repeat homeless applications. The aim of this service is to provide information and support to women living in Charnwood, who are currently experiencing, or have experienced, any kind of domestic violence or abuse. The Outreach Worker is also available to give short awareness-raising sessions to any local organisations who would like to find out more about domestic violence and the options and support available. Loughborough Women's Aid manages the scheme.

Because of the complex needs of victims of domestic violence it is essential to take a multi-agency approach when providing services for victims. The Housing Department has been actively involved in the Charnwood Domestic Violence Forum. As part of the homelessness prevention agenda the Housing Department is currently developing, in co-operation with Leicestershire Police, a Sanctuary Scheme to provide increased security measures for those who wish to remain in their own homes but require extra peace of mind.

Aim 9 – Supporting Vulnerable People

Meeting the Needs of Ex-Offenders

Responsibility for providing housing assistance for ex-offenders is shared between the Council and Probation service.

There is no specialist provision for ex-offenders within the Borough, however, some projects for single homeless people have high numbers of clients who are ex-offenders. Seven people were accepted as homeless and were in priority need as a result of having been in custody or on remand in 2004/5. However, as priority need is not automatically given to people leaving custody but only those deemed to be vulnerable as a result, numbers within this group will be higher.

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland have agreed to a centralised process, drawing together the required specialisms into a One Stop Shop approach to prolific and priority offenders. Because of the very clear accepted link between housing status and the risk of re-offending Housing is part of a multi-agency approach along with Police, Probation, drugs and victim workers, working in a holistic approach to managing the offender's behaviour, concentrating on control and rehabilitation support.

The Council has been working in partnership with the Prison Service to develop a countywide protocol between prisons and local authorities in Leicestershire. This will look at various housing issues including the successful resettlement of ex-offenders.

Housing Strategy Priorities:	Action Plan:
Individually tailored support	Action 25
Supported accommodation for different needs	Action 26
More effective joint working	Action 27