

Directorate: Housing and Regeneration

Service: Strategic Housing

Policy / function / activity being reviewed: Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018

Supporting Directorate Support Officer:

Date completed and by whom: July 2013, Isabel Connolly, Team Leader Strategy, Policy and Private Sector Housing

Review date: July 2014

Step 1 – Identifying the Purpose / Aims

1. What type of policy, service, activity or function is this?

- Adopting a new strategy for 2013 - 2018

2. What is the aim and purpose of the policy, activity, service or function?

- To provide the strategic direction to guide investment in, and service delivery of, the Council's homelessness service. A number of other key policies and strategies will support the success of this strategy in the delivery of target outcomes.

3. Outline any proposals being considered.

- This Homelessness Strategy commits the Council to meeting four key strategic objectives.
 - To make every contact count in the primary prevention of homelessness
 - To secure suitable and affordable accommodation for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
 - To provide support to prevent repeat homelessness and improve outcomes for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
 - To tackle the root causes of homelessness through much earlier intervention and prevention through education

4. Who is the policy, activity, service or function intended to help / benefit / serve?

- The objectives have been developed to help / benefit / serve:
 - The homeless and people threatened with homelessness; and
 - People in housing need seeking a home within the Borough.

5. Does the policy, activity, service or function have any specific aims or objectives in relation to equality, social inclusion or community cohesion?

- For objective 2, providing suitable properties will require judgement of location, local community needs, access to services and proximity to a households' social and support networks, including work and education.

Step 2 – Considering existing information and what this tells you

6. Summarise any data / research or performance management information about the policy, function or activity that is available.
This could include equalities monitoring information; surveys; complaints or grievances.

Data / Information

Dacorum has a population of 144,800, which is 13% of the total population of Hertfordshire. In terms of headcount, Dacorum is the largest of the Hertfordshire districts.
There are 71,300 males (49%) and 73,500 females (51%) living in the borough.

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published July 2012

65.5% of the borough's population is of working age.

15.8% of the population is of retirement age

18.7% of the population are children

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published July 2012

Figure 1: Population breakdown by ethnicity

	Dacorum (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
White: British	86.0	85.3	80.5
White: Irish	1.3	1.0	0.9
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.2	0.1	0.1
White: Other White	3.4	4.5	4.4
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.7	0.6	0.8
Mixed: White and Black African	0.3	0.3	0.3
Mixed: White and Asian	0.7	0.6	0.6
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.5	0.5	0.5
Asian/Asian British: Indian	1.6	1.5	2.5
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	1.4	1.1	2.0
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.2	0.6	0.8
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0.5	0.6	0.7
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	0.9	1.0	1.5
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1.4	1.2	1.8
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0.5	0.6	1.1
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	0.2	0.2	0.5
Other ethnic group: Arab	0.1	0.2	0.4
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0.2	0.3	0.6

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

Figure 2: Population breakdown by religion

	Dacorum (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
Christian	58.1	59.7	59.3
Buddhist	0.4	0.4	0.4
Hindu	1.3	0.9	1.5
Jewish	0.5	0.6	0.5
Muslim	2.2	2.5	4.8
Sikh	0.1	0.3	0.8
Other religion	0.4	0.4	0.4
No religion	29.5	27.9	25.1
Religion not stated	7.5	7.3	7.2

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

There are 59,938 households in the borough

Figure 3: Household breakdown by tenure

	Dacorum (%)	Hertfordshire (%)	East of England (%)	England and Wales (%)
Owned: Owned outright	29.1	30.0	32.9	30.8
Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan	35.7	36.8	34.7	32.7
Shared ownership (part owned and part rented)	0.6	0.9	0.7	0.8
Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)	17.4	9.2	7.8	9.4
Social rented: Other	4.4	9.0	7.9	8.2
Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency	10.9	12.1	13.3	15.3
Private rented: Other	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.4
Living rent free	0.9	1.0	1.3	1.4

Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, published December 2012

Figure 4: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by reason for homelessness

Reason for homelessness	Number of acceptances
Loss of rented accommodation	
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	59
Loss of rented or tied accommodation: Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	7
Family or friends no longer able to accommodate	
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	35
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	11
Relationship breakdown	
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	11
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	8
Violence: Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	4
Rent arrears	
Rent arrears on: Private sector dwellings	5
Rent arrears on: Local authority or other public sector dwellings	1
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	4
Other violence or harassment	
Violence: Other forms of violence	1
Harassment, threats or intimidation: Other forms of harassment	5
Other	
Left hospital	1
Left HM-Forces	1
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	16

Figure 5: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by Priority Need reason

Priority Need reason	Number of acceptances
Applicant whose household includes dependent children	128
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a pregnant woman and there are no other dependent children	9
Applicant aged 16/17 years old	2
Applicant formerly in care, and aged 18 to 20 years old	1
Vulnerable due to old age	1
Vulnerable due physical disability	12
Vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap	10
Other	1
Vulnerable due to fleeing home because of domestic violence / threat of violence	5

Figure 6: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by household type

Household type	Number of acceptances
Couple with dependent children or member pregnant	58
Lone parent household with dependent children or member pregnant	80
One person households	24
All other household types	7

Figure 7: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by number of dependents

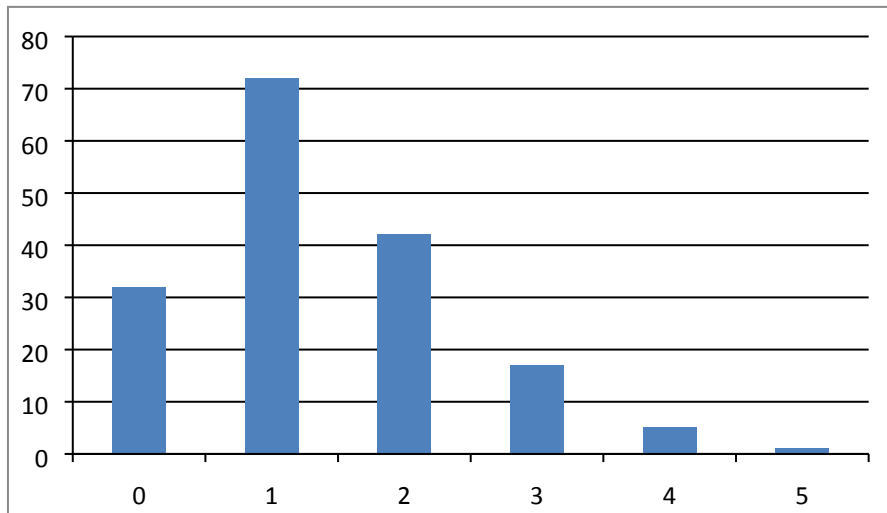
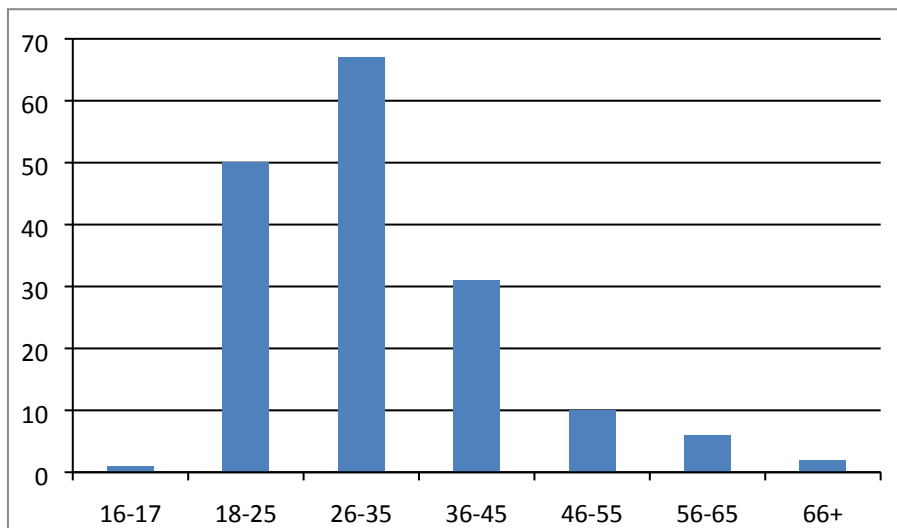


Figure 8: Breakdown of homelessness acceptances in Dacorum 2012/13 by age



The Council's housing register has seen the number of active applications increase rapidly and steadily over the last five years. In June 2013 the housing register had 5802 home-seekers, 1599 transfer applicants, and 77 homeless applicants.

7. Is there any evidence of negative differential impact on any of the following? (Some equality categories may be more relevant than others)

Age; Disability; Race or ethnicity; Religion or belief / faith communities; Gender and transgender; Sexual orientation

Gender

- Women are disproportionately represented among the priority need groups that the Council has a statutory duty towards to provide settled housing. Women are over-represented among homelessness acceptances and more likely to depend on statutory provision.
- Applicants at risk of domestic violence, likely to be women, are a group with specific needs. There is a focus on the prevention of domestic violence joint working through the MARAC, a multi-disciplinary group that meets monthly to discuss cases.
- Men in general are under-represented amongst homelessness acceptances and less likely to benefit from statutory provision.

Age

- Young people are at a risk of parental exclusion, the second most common reason for homelessness.
- Former care leavers are also at increased risk of homelessness.
- There is lack of awareness amongst young people about homelessness services the Council provides.
- Older people are highly vulnerable to the effects of homelessness and therefore have priority need under the statutory framework.
- While few older people use homelessness services, a significant number of older people are likely to be living in unsuitable housing, and may be receiving inadequate support for their needs. The aging population in the Borough will impact on the suitability of present housing stock for future needs.

Ethnicity/race

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities can face barriers to access, including cultural and language barriers, which can delay provision in decisions and services.
- Members of gypsy and travelling communities may be reluctant to approach the Council for help due to suspicion of official organisations. A lack of understanding of homelessness in gypsy and traveller communities means that this group may not be adequately planned for.

Religion

- The Council has limited evidence on the possible impact of religion or belief on people's ability to access services, or on the quality of services they receive. More information about the needs of faith groups may be needed.

Disability

- The Strategy exists within the statutory framework and promotes positive outcomes for people who are vulnerable due to disability.
- The Strategy acknowledges that early referral to appropriate services has the potential to prevent homelessness.

Sexual orientation

- The lesbian, gay, transsexual and transgender (LBGT) community may face specific barriers not currently considered, and it may be that more information about this client group is needed.

Step 3 – Assessing the Impact

8. Is there any evidence of higher or lower take-up of the service, facility or opportunity by any group /community and if so, is there an explanation for this?

- Women are disproportionately represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework and are vulnerable to homelessness through domestic violence.
- Men are under-represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework, and are less likely to benefit from statutory provision.
- BME communities have specific needs and may face barriers to accessing services, including cultural and language barriers.
- The needs of gypsy and traveller communities are not well understood, which may be linked to the relative reluctance of this community to engage with services, which may limit positive outcomes for this client group.
- Young people are over-represented in homelessness acceptances under the statutory framework.
- The aging population will affect the housing needs of elderly population of the Borough.

9. Could any of the associated rules, requirements or regulations of the function, activity or policy affect the accessibility of the service/ activity to any groups or communities?

There are priority need groups within the statutory framework to which the Council has a statutory duty to provide settled housing.

The 1996 Housing Act refined and expanded the definition of a household in 'priority need' in England (and Wales) so as to include:

- a pregnant woman
- dependent children
- someone vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason
- someone homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster

This was expanded further still in England by the *2002 Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order* to include those:

- aged 16 and 17 years old
- aged under 21 years old who were in local authority care between the ages of 16 and 18
- aged 21 and over who are vulnerable as a result of leaving local authority care
- vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces
- vulnerable as a result of leaving prisoner
- fleeing domestic violence or the threat of domestic violence

The Council partners provide a range of specialised accommodation and services to non-priority need groups.

10. If the impact or effects are adverse for any community or group, can they be defended i.e. in order to provide equality for another community under legislation or policy?

Please see answer to question 9.

Step 4 – Dealing with adverse or unlawful impact

11. What can be done to improve the policy, service, function or any proposals in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or effects identified?

NB: Please note that this section does not seek to replicate the actions that have already been outlined in the strategy action plan 2013-2018, but to add to it.

- Monitor the BME and gypsy and traveller communities to identify whether there is a need for specialist services.
- Monitor the needs of disabled people to ensure suitable provision of accommodation.
- Feed into the Older Persons Housing Strategy to ensure the changing needs of an aging population are met in the future.
- Consider ways to engage the LGBT community to identify whether they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.
- Consider ways to engage different faith groups to identify if they are facing any particular problems in relation to housing.

12. What would be needed to be able to do this? Are the resources available?

- Regular, meaningful analysis of national and local demographic, household and homelessness data.
- Communication with local communities.
- Officer training on the needs of particular groups

Step 5 – Consultation and Feedback

13. Outline your proposals to consult with those affected on proposed changes.

Consultation on the Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018 is due to commence in July 2013 for a twelve week period, and will include:

- Public consultation including website portal
- Homeless Forum
- Landlord Forum
- Tenants and Leaseholders Conference

Step 6 – The decision

14. What needs to be done?

Complete the consultation process and consider all feedback.

Adoption of the strategy in November 2013.

Step 7 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

15. What monitoring and review mechanisms are in place or will be developed?

The strategy is to be reviewed on an annual basis.

Step 8 – The service plan

16. What needs to be included in the Service Development Plan?

The strategy and a project to improve accessibility of services are both incorporated into the Housing Service's Service Development Plan

17. Does an Action Plan need to be put together to ensure everything is actioned?

No. The strategy already contains an action plan that will drive the service to meet key strategic objectives. The additional actions identified by this assessment will be incorporated into the review process.

Step 9 – Publishing the Results

The EqIA will be published on the Council's website; therefore as the author of the document it is your responsibility to ensure that it is written in an understandable way, free from Council jargon.

In order for the EqIA form to be published it must be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Head of Service. It is the service manager's responsibility to ensure that this is done.

Once the form this has been completed an electronic copy should be sent to Anne Stunell / Emma Harvey – Human Resources, ext. 2089 / 2258