Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2014-20

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Working in partnership, to create a Borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper

Affordable Housing ♦ Regeneration ♦ Building Community Capacity ♦ Safe and Clean Environment ♦ Dacorum Delivers

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Key objective 3: To ensure the borough offers a range of suitable, high quality housing options for older people, including specialist housing for those who need extra support.

Key objective 4: To allow older people to live independently in their homes for as long as they choose or it is safe to do so.

1. Introduction

1.1   The aging population presents a new challenge for housing. People are living for longer and the housing needs and aspirations of the older population continue to evolve and change. The government has recognised the need to take a new approach to housing for older people.

1.2   Housing provision for older residents in Dacorum reflects the national picture, in that it does not adequately meet the diverse needs and aspirations of the current and projected older population. A lack of adequate housing can lead to:
- Health deterioration
- Social isolation
- Disengagement from the community
- Dissatisfaction with the Council
- Residents choosing to move out of the borough

1.3   This Older Persons' Housing Strategy sets out the Council's long-term plan to ensure future provision of suitable, high quality housing options for older residents in the borough. This has been informed by an understanding of current supply, projections of need and demand, as well as an insight into older residents' aspirations. This strategy will build on the Council's current Housing Strategy adopted in 2013.

1.4   The past decade has seen a growth in innovative approaches to older persons' housing, such as extra care housing and assistive technology. Policy makers have also recognised that improving the quality of housing alone will not meet older people's aspirations for health and well-being. High quality housing will need to be provided in conjunction with good care and support services, and be connected to local facilities. Without these links older people can become detached from the communities in which they live.

1.5   The strategy has been developed using evidence gathered through a large housing needs study, which was completed by a sample of the local population aged 50 years and over, from across all housing tenures. The Council has used this age group in order to gain an understanding of how people in their 50s and over plan and act in order to meet their current and future housing needs.

2.   The national picture

2.1   Census 2011 data identified a significant growth in the population in England: from 2001 to 2011 the population increased by 3.6 million (7.2%). As well as this overall increase in the population, one in six people in England and Wales are now aged 65 or over. The proportion of the population aged 65 and over is projected to increase further, with a direct impact on housing provision and related services.

2.2   The need to improve the availability of specialist housing and support services for older people has been identified by central government. The national strategy published in 2008 on housing for an ageing society *Lifetime homes, lifetime neighbourhoods*, identified the need to increase the housing options available to older people. There have been a number of publications and innovative ideas for older peoples housing since this strategy, exploring ways to meet the current and projected needs and aspirations of the older population.

2.3   A need to improve people's perceptions of specialist housing designed for older people has been identified by both national and local policy makers. The *Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation* (HAPPI) report sought to challenge negative perceptions and explored possibilities for new, innovative designs for older persons' housing. Ten key design elements were picked out as essential considerations for developing older persons' accommodation.

2.4   *Lifetime homes, lifetime neighbourhoods* encouraged local authorities to critically assess their sheltered housing stock, most of which was built pre-1980s. Many providers have experienced hard-to-let voids across their sheltered housing stock, which in some cases are deemed no longer fit-for-purpose. Local authorities have used asset appraisals to determine whether to redevelop, remodel or decommission existing schemes.

2.5   Following a reduction in the supporting people grant in 2010 a number of social housing providers have had to evaluate the support services they provide and make a number of changes to their supported housing services. Funding for accommodation-based support associated to living in a housing type, such as sheltered housing, has become less common, with a general move to floating support services. This change has been about both cutting cost and recognising the numbers of older people in general needs stock and private housing.

2.6   The 2011 housing strategy *Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England* committed to providing older people with greater choice and support to live independently. The Government has committed 185 million to the disabled facilities grant, funding aids and adaptations for older people in their homes. The Government also invested in Firststop, which provides information and advice for older people.

3. The local picture

3.1 In line with national trends Dacorum has a high proportion of residents aged 50 and over, which can be seen from the table below showing the percentage of residents aged 50 and over in Dacorum as well as Hertfordshire and England.

Figure one: Over 50s population breakdown in Dacorum, Hertfordshire and England

Age band	Percentage of population in Dacorum	Percentage of population in Hertfordshire	Percentage of population in England
50-64	18.87% (27,327)	17.86% (199,344)	18.04% (9,569,364)
65-74	7.81% (11,310)	7.85% (87,590)	8.59% (4,552,283)
75-84	5.66% (8,198)	5.49% (61,248)	5.52% (2,928,118)
85 and over	2.33% (3,375)	2.25% (25,077)	2.22% (1,180,128)

Source: Census 2011 data

3.2 The number of older residents in the borough has increased significantly in the last decade. The graph below compares the number of people aged 65 and over in Dacorum in 2001 to 2011.

Figure two: Over 50s population increase from 2001 to 2011
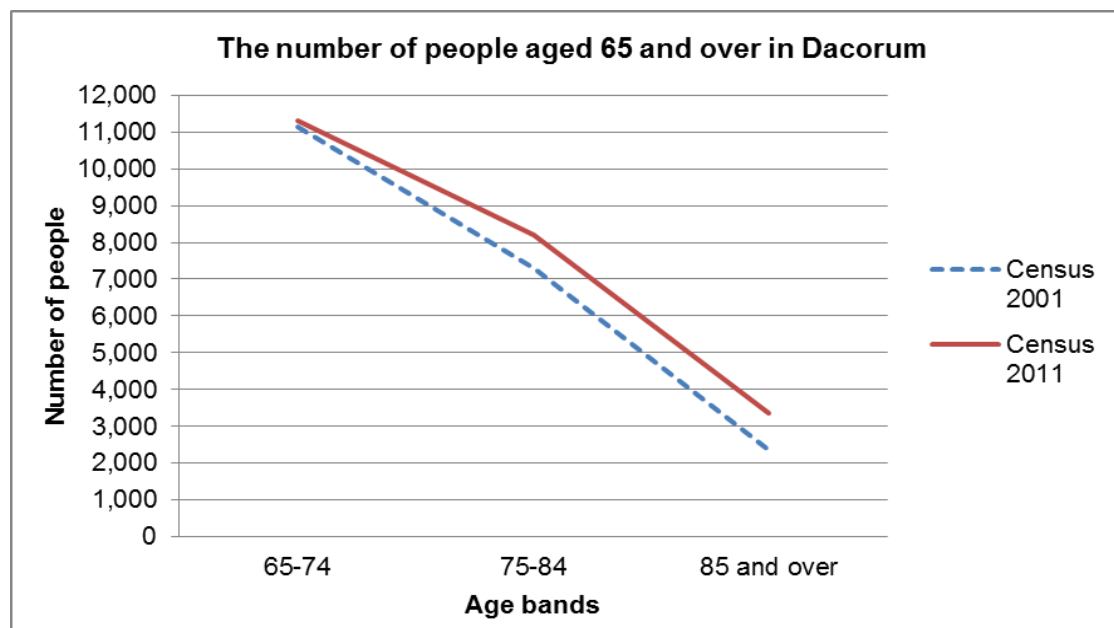
Source: Census 2001 and Census 2011 data

3.3 The numbers of older people in Dacorum are predicted to increase further. The table below shows the projected population increases for older people in Dacorum. This shows that the number of people aged 65 and over is set to increase by over 18% in the next decade. These changes will have an impact on local services, including the provision of housing suitable for older people.

Figure three: Projected over 65s population in the borough

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030
People aged 65-69	6,000	7,600	7,000	8,000	8,900
People aged 70-74	5,100	5,500	7,000	6,500	7,400
People aged 75-79	4,600	4,600	5,100	6,400	6,000
People aged 80-84	3,600	3,800	4,000	4,400	5,700
People aged 85 and over	3,300	3,900	4,600	5,400	6,300
Total population 65 and over	22,600	25,400	27,700	30,700	34,300

Source: ONS 2009 Mid-Year Population estimates and Projecting Older People's Population Information (POPPI) System Figures are taken from Office for National Statistics (ONS) subnational population projections by sex and age

3.4 As the overall number of older people in the borough has increased, there have been related rises in the number of older people with long-term illnesses. The table below shows the number of people aged 50 and over with long term health or disability problems. As the population continues to increase the need for specialist housing and care services will also increase.

Figure four: The borough's over 50s population with long term health problems or disabilities

Age	All categories: long term health problem or disability	Day to day activities limited a lot	Day to day activities limited a limited	Day to day activities not limited
50 to 64	27,327	1,851	2,843	22,633
65 and over	22,883	5,162	5,856	11,865

Source: Census 2011 data.

3.5 The 2012 Housing Needs and Market Assessment (HMNA) carried out for the Council identified a high demand for accommodation for older people. The provision of smaller units for older people was identified as important in order to free up under-occupied two and three bedroom social rented stock.

4.   Current supply and demand in Dacorum

General needs accommodation

4.1   Many older households wish to remain in their own homes rather than moving to specialist accommodation. In the Housing Strategy the Council committed to delivering a proportion of new homes to the 'Lifetime Homes standard' (or equivalent). This commitment means that the Council will ensure homes are built that are designed to be flexible, so that alterations can easily be made to meet the changing needs of an occupant, and enable people to remain independent in their homes for longer.

4.2   The upkeep and maintenance of a home can become a challenge for many older households on a low income and living in general needs accommodation. Consequently, a number of older residents in the borough may be living in general needs properties which are damp, cold and may need repair. The Council provides a number of home improvement loans to owner occupiers, private landlords and tenants, as well as grants for people needing to adapt their homes. The aim of this is to improve the living conditions for residents in Dacorum.

4.3   The Council's Community Alarm Service known as lifeline, is available to households in all tenures in Dacorum. This service provides older residents with the peace of mind that they will be able to access support in an emergency.

4.4   In the Council's general needs stock there are around 1,830 tenants aged 60 and over. The Council provides floating support to a number of these households.

4.5   A number of older residents are under-occupying their properties. Over 63% of respondents to the over 50s housing needs survey had a spare bedroom in their property. The table below shows the number of spare bedrooms these households had. If attractive housing options were made available to these residents it would be an effective way to free up under-occupied family homes.

Figure five: A breakdown of bedrooms under-occupied by the over-50s housing needs study respondents

Number of households under-occupying by one bedroom	Number of households under-occupying by two bedrooms	Number of households under-occupying by three bedrooms
296	252	86

Source: Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) 2012

Specialist housing

4.6 The table below shows the number of supported housing units for older people in the borough.

Figure six: Supported housing units available to older residents in the borough

Housing with support					Nursing care		
Rent (Council)	Rent (housing Association)	Rent (All)	For Sale	All	Private	Voluntary	All
1328	243	1571	286	1857	182	32	214

Source: Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) 2013

4.7 Over 70% of residents aged 65 and over in borough own their own home. However, less than a quarter of housing designed specifically to meet the needs of older people is available to purchase.

4.8 The Council owns a significant proportion of supported housing units for older people. Around a quarter of the Council's housing stock is either category one or two sheltered housing, with 31 category one sheltered schemes in the borough.

4.9 Following the announcement of supporting people funding reductions from Hertfordshire County Council in 2011, the Council carried out a full review of its sheltered housing service. A number of changes followed this review, including:
- The introduction of the 'hub and spoke' model for service delivery. This model offers housing support services to the wider community as well as residents in sheltered housing schemes.
- Funding granted to Age UK to deliver both a handyperson scheme and friendship teas to residents living in sheltered housing.
- The withdrawal of the existing out-of-hours warden service.
- A reduction in the service of six frontline posts (Mobile Supported Housing Officers).

The Council is planning for the possibility of further funding reductions or even no grant funding in the future.

4.10 An asset review of the Council's sheltered housing stock was then completed in 2012, detailing the current standard and quality of much of the Council's sheltered housing. This review indicated that a number of schemes fall below current expectations for older persons' housing, including some schemes identified as not having long-term viability in terms of their cost and suitability.

4.11 The Council has included in its service planning the upgrading of community alarms in all its enclosed sheltered housing schemes. The new systems will have greater compatibility with telecare technology. The programme for replacement commences in 2014 and will be completed by 2018.

4.12   There has been a history of low demand for sheltered accommodation. The table below shows that void times vary significantly between areas and properties. The average void period for the Council's sheltered housing is greater than that for general need stock, and in 2012/2013 was 52 days, compared to 42. There are a number of contributing factors thought to play a role in the void times including higher numbers of refusals in comparison to general needs stock. The Council's new Housing Allocations Policy introduced a new restriction, which means that all applicants, including applicants to sheltered properties, can only make three refusals before being placed on its deferred register for a minimum of six months.

Figure seven: Void periods for the Council's sheltered housing stock

Area	Number of properties advertised	Average void period (days)	Void period range (days)
Hemel Hempstead	117	54	15 to 301
Tring	18	40	25 to 55
Berkhamsted	10	63	25 to 115
Kings Langley	7	51	30 to 95
Markyate	5	46	10 to 75
Little Gaddesdon	3	34	16 to 50
Potten End	3	65	55 to 75
Bovingdon	3	50	40 to 65
Chipperfield	3	48	30 to 80
Northchurch	3	43	25 to 55
Wigginton	1	45	N.A.
Aldbury	1	80	N.A.
Flamstead	1	40	N.A.
Long Marston	1	55	N.A.
Dacorum	**176**	**52**	**N.A.**

Source: Data from the Council's Housing Register database from October 2011 to May 2013.

4.13   Analysis of the Council's housing register has found that 349 (45%) of applicants aged 50-59, and 874 (73%) of applicants aged 60 and over, state that they would consider moving to sheltered accommodation on their application. This figure would suggest that demand for sheltered accommodation is high, but that current supply does not match the needs and aspirations of those who are considering or seeking specialist accommodation.

5. Best practice

5.1   A number of local authorities have acknowledged the need to address the challenges the aging population presents and are working to ensure the housing provision in their area meets the current and future demands of older residents.

5.2   Nationally there has been a move to integrate housing with care and support services. Retirement villages are a form of accommodation that provides this. Housing in these developments tends to be of a very high quality with excellent space standards. Lovat Fields Village and Shenley Wood Village in Milton Keynes are examples of this form of accommodation. These sites consist of 258 and 300 units respectively, all one and two bedroom apartments available for purchase, shared ownership and rent. There are a range of on-site health and leisure facilities including a Café bar, fitness centre, indoor bowling green, village shop, library and restaurant.

5.3   A number of local authorities are making improvements to their existing sheltered housing schemes. St Albans District Council is working with a local housing association to redevelop and remodel all of their sheltered accommodation. The Council has recently received planning permission to redevelop one of their schemes into modern flexi-care accommodation. Flexi-care offers independent flats with onsite care provision. This form of accommodation can have a positive impact on the health of an individual with care needs and is seen as a cost effective alternative to residential care.

6. Housing and Health

6.1   Decent housing in a location that is well connected to facilities can help people live healthy, active lives. Well-designed housing can led to the following benefits:

- Reducing admittances to hospitals
- Avoiding hospital readmissions
- Reducing demands on A&E
- Preventing or delaying an individual from needing to move into residential care
- Preventing an individual's health and well-being from deteriorating
- Enabling efficient discharge of individuals from hospital.

6.2   NHS Hertfordshire spent over 20 million on hospital admissions for falls in 2010/11. It is estimated that around 15-33% of these falls could be prevented, which would save NHS Hertfordshire over £4.5 million annually in hospital admissions. Falls can be prevented by reducing environmental hazards in the home and providing the appropriate adaptations when required.

6.3   The NHS Cold Weather Plan found that the annual cost of treating winter related illness in Hertfordshire is over £18 million. Older people are at increased risk of winter related illness compared to the general population. Initiatives to help older residents with fuel poverty could improve health and save the NHS a significant amount of money.

6.4   There are statutory Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB) in every upper tier local authority. These were formed as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the aim of these boards is to improve the care and health services provided to local people. Hertfordshire's HWB started meeting in July 2011, this board provides the Council with the opportunity to provide joint up services with the NHS and social care.

7. Transport and access to services and facilities

7.1 Dacorum covers 21,248 hectares. Appendix one shows a map of the GPs, community centres and the Council's general needs and sheltered accommodation stock where tenants are aged 60 and over. This map would suggest that there is adequate provision of GPs and community centres in Hemel Hempstead. Individuals living in rural areas outside of Hemel Hempstead are shown to have a lack of both local services and appropriate transport links.

7.2 There are a number of voluntary organisations that provide a variety of support services to older residents in the borough. Age UK Dacorum provide the following schemes to older residents:
- Hospital discharge and independent living scheme;
- Friendship teas;
- Telephone club,
- Befriending;
- Active living club; and
- Handyperson scheme.

7.3 In 2011, only 16.42% of households in Dacorum did not have a car or van available for their use, lower than the national average. On average 1.40 cars or vans are available per household in Dacorum, which is greater than the national average.

Figure eight: Cars and vans availability to households in the borough

	Dacorum District	Hertfordshire	East of England	England
Percentage of households with no cars or vans	16.42	16:93	18.55	25.80
Average number of cars or vans per household	1.4	1.38	1.33	1.16

Source: Census 2011 data

7.4 Many older households without a car rely on bus services to access important services, such as GPs, hospitals and shops. In Dacorum bus services are operated by independent commercial companies and the Council has limited powers to change bus provision. Some rural routes, evening and Sunday services are run on contract to Hertfordshire County Council.

7.5 Community Action Dacorum provides a number of services which can help older residents to travel around the borough.
These services include:
- Door to Store: This scheme provides older residents with transport to local supermarkets and escorts to help with shopping. This is currently offered to older people in both Bovingdon and Kings Langley, with a view to roll out across the whole of the borough.
- Community cars: This scheme offers transport to those who have difficulty using public transport or taxis.
- Community Wheels: 12 minibuses are available to be hired by members of Community Action Dacorum.

8. Over-50s housing need survey key findings

8.1 To inform this strategy the Council conducted an over-50s housing needs study. 1,063 questionnaires were completed by a random sample of individuals aged 50 years and over, living in Dacorum. The questionnaire was designed to gain a thorough understanding of residents' current housing situations and future housing intentions. For the full results of this survey please refer to the over-50s housing needs study report.

8.2 A low response rate was received for questions relating to future housing intentions, particularly for those aged 75-84 and 85 and over.

8.3 Barriers preventing a household from moving increase with age. Residents aged 75 and over were less likely to consider moving to a home designed to meet the needs of older people than those in the younger age groups. For these individuals the upheaval of moving was stated as the main barrier to moving.

8.4 A number of housholds stated a lack of suitable housing options as a barrier preventing them from moving. This would suggest that many households would consider moving if attractive housing options were made avaliable. The design and location of accommodation needs to be considered carefully in order to outweigh the barriers that prevent a household from moving.

8.5 Different age groups reported different housing priorities. Accommodation made available to older residents should be diverse in order to meet the range of support needs and priorities of different households.

8.6 The location of a property, in terms of how close it is to shops, services and amenities was considered as an important neighbourhood feature to a high proportion of households across all ages. When developing specialist accommodation for older people the location of the site in terms of how connected it is to facilities should be taken into careful consideration. The possibility of providing on-site facilities should also be explored.

8.7 Three features came out of this survey as key to making a property attractive for older people:
- Accommodation with garden and outdoor space.
- A home that is well insulated and easy to heat with low running costs
- Having at least one spare room and enough storage space

All of these features should be considered on a site-by-site basis, taking into account the type, location and tenure of housing being provided.

8.8 The upheaval of moving was stated by a vast majority of respondents as a barrier preventing them from moving. Flexibility at the design stage of new-build accommodation should enable older people to easily adapt their home to meet their changing needs. In addition, solutions that provide care and support facilities onsite should be considered.

8.9   The majority of households would consider buying a property outright or with a mortgage in the future, whereas an extremely low proportion would consider renting privately or low cost home-ownership schemes such as shared-ownership. Future aspirations strongly correlated with current tenure type. Future development should offer mixed tenures, providing individuals with the opportunity to purchase the accommodation if they wish.

9.   Sheltered housing focus groups: Key findings

9.1   The Council held sheltered housing focus groups in order to survey the views of current sheltered housing tenants. A common comment made by tenants was that they had not been aware of sheltered housing as an option until they had needed to move, usually due to a health trigger or loss of a partner. When an individual is no longer able to manage their property, information on suitable housing options needs to be available. In addition, residents should be made aware of their options before they are at a point of crisis.

9.2   The aspects of sheltered accommodation that current tenants described as the most attractive were the safety and security, social environment, independence, warden support and low upkeep and maintenance. These features should be promoted to older residents in the borough who are looking to move to a more manageable home.

9.3   Tenants reported a number of improvements that they felt would improve sheltered scheme accommodation. A number of tenants reported dissatisfaction with the minimal parking provision, small kitchens, lack of storage space, and location of the accommodation.

9.4   The location of a number of the sheltered schemes has resulted in residents relying on bus services, taxis, and family and friends to access local services. Some tenants stated that the location of the accommodation made them feel isolated from the wider community. This highlights the importance of carefully considering the location of a site when developing specialist housing designed for older people.

10. The strategy's objectives

10.1 The four objectives set are in accordance with national and local priorities. These objectives are ambitious in order to meet the challenges presented from an aging population. These objectives are as follows:

- To provide older people with easy-to-access high quality advice on the housing options and support available to them, so they are able to make informed decisions about their housing options.

- To make the best use of existing housing stock designed specifically for older people and adapted general needs properties.

- To ensure the borough offers a range of suitable, high quality housing options for older people, including specialist housing for those who need extra support.

- To enable older people to live independently in their homes for as long as they choose or it is safe to do so.

The Objectives

> **KEY OBJECTIVE 1**
>
> To provide older people with easy-to-access high quality advice on the housing options and support available to them so they are able to make informed decisions about their housing options.

Introduction

Planning and making decisions about retirement and later life happens throughout a person's life. It is important that information and resources about housing options and support available is made widely available so that older residents are able to make informed decisions in relation to their housing. Providing older residents with adequate information will allow them to explore the possibility of moving to more manageable accommodation or help them access the support they need to remain independent in their own homes.

To meet key objective 1 the strategy commits to:

1. **Providing up to date information on the housing options and support services available to those aged 50 and over.**

The Council will provide specific information and advice to older residents who want to make decisions about their future housing or who are no longer able to manage their home and wish to move.

The Council will launch a specialist housing advice webpage for those aged 50 and over on the Council's website. This webpage will include information on the different types of accommodation and housing related support available to older residents. The Council will also make this information available in the form of a leaflet for those who do not have access to the internet. This information will be regularly reviewed and updated.

The Council's Housing Advice and Customer Service Officers will be provided with the training and information they require to provide quality advice on housing options and support services available to residents aged 50 and over. This information will be incorporated into the scripts used by the Council's Customer Service Unit.

The Council will look to hold a retirement fair in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council. Organisations from the private, public and voluntary sector will be invited to the fair to provide information on the support services, events, aids and adaptions available to older residents and their families. Following the event an evaluation will be undertaken to consider the effectiveness and successes of the event, together with a decision on frequency of any future events.

2. Ensuring older residents are digitally included.

The Council is developing a digital inclusion strategy. This will explore how the Council can increase the availability of internet access, equipment and training to hard-to-reach groups in the community, including older people.

The Council will ensure webpages aimed at older residents are easy to navigate around and provide relevant up-to-date information. The Council uses the site *Moving with Dacorum* to advertise council and housing associations properties, including sheltered accommodation. The Council has a detailed user-guide to help individuals to navigate around the site.

There are a number of benefits to having internet access. For instance, internet access allows individuals to receive quick advice and information, shop online, keep up-to-date with current affairs and keep in touch with family and friends. Due to these benefits the Council is committed to providing internet access for tenants in sheltered housing stock.

A number of older residents are not able to use a computer and are unfamiliar with related technologies. The Council will work closely with voluntary organisations to explore the possibilities of providing IT training to older residents. The Council will work with other organisations to promote training courses and ensure there is adequate provision to residents across the borough.

3. Improving links with other agencies working with older people in the borough.

There are a number of organisations within the borough that provide help and support to older residents. The Council will look to work closely with voluntary, public and private sector organisations that provide these support services to ensure there is adequate provision in the borough.

The Council will develop a directory of services, listing national and local organisations working with older residents. This directory will list the services these organisations offer, with who these services are available to and how they can be accessed. The Council hopes that in collecting this information it would also improve its partnerships with these organisations. The Council will review the directory of services annually to ensure the information stays up-to-date.

The Council works closely with Age UK Dacorum to provide a number of services to older residents in Dacorum. The Council will continue to work closely with Age UK Dacorum and continue to fund the friendship teas and handyperson scheme they deliver to older residents living in sheltered housing. The Council also has partnerships with the University of the Third Age, as well as other local lunch clubs and day centres, and will explore the possibility of working with other organisations that provide important services to older residents in Dacorum.

4. **Delivering a promotional campaign for sheltered housing and re-branding sheltered housing schemes.**

Sheltered housing can have a number of benefits to older residents, allowing people to maintain their independence, while providing care and support, which may be essential to staying active and maintaining a good quality of life. A number of households in the borough are not aware of, or do not understand, the housing support that sheltered housing schemes can offer. In order to increase the awareness of sheltered housing and change current perceptions of these schemes the Council will start a promotional campaign. This campaign will aim to increase the popularity of sheltered housing with older residents and hope to reduce voids in sheltered housing stock.

The Council will look to improve webpages providing promotional information on sheltered housing. These pages need to provide information on the type of support sheltered housing offers and the benefits of moving into this form of accommodation. These webpages should include the views of current tenants, with possibilities for regular updates and newsletters. To ensure these pages are accessible the Council will ensure the location of this information is easy to navigate to.

The Council will hold open days at sheltered housing schemes to provide older residents, their families, and carers with the opportunity to find out more about sheltered housing. The Council will also look to advertise this form of accommodation by other means, for instance, in local newspapers, the Dacorum Digest, and News and Views.

To support this promotional campaign the Council is committed to re-branding sheltered housing. A number of local authorities use different terms to describe this form of accommodation, for instance St Albans District Council has recently renamed this form of accommodation 'retirement housing'. Re-naming sheltered housing is essential in changing perceptions of sheltered housing in line with modern aspirations.

Introduction

The Council's sheltered housing stock was built between the 1950s and 1970s. The lifespan of each scheme is affected by both the changing needs and aspirations of older residents, as well as necessary repair and improvement work required to bring some schemes up to modern standards. This strategy has made use of the stock appraisal information to identify where improvements can be made to existing stock. The Council's sheltered accommodation and adapted general needs properties should be allocated to applicants who have a specific need for this type of property.

To meet key objective 2 the strategy commits to:

1. **Reviewing the effectiveness of the Housing Allocations Policy in relation to sheltered housing properties and general needs adapted properties.**

The Councils Housing Allocations Policy aims to ensure adapted properties are allocated to applicants with a specific need for that type of property. The Council is in the process of defining three levels for properties with adaptations. An applicant needing a property with adaptations will only be able to bid on properties meeting the level of adaptation required. This will allow applicants to have the same experience of choice based lettings as other applicants who do not require an adapted property. This will also ensure adapted properties are allocated to the most suitable applicant. The Council will review the effectiveness of this policy and whether the three defined levels are appropriate.

Sheltered housing is designed for people aged 60 and over. Prior to November 2013 applicants aged 50 to 59 on the housing register were able to apply for sheltered housing. Under the Council's new policy an officer or medical advisor will assess whether sheltered accommodation is suitable for a younger applicant only where a specific housing support need is identified. This policy change has been implemented to ensure sheltered accommodation is allocated to the suitable applicants. However, increasing the age limit to 60 may increase void times for sheltered housing stock by reducing the pool of potential applicants who can bid on those properties. The Council is committed to proactively addressing this issue and in the event of increased void times the Council has identified the following solutions:

1. In the first instance the Council will look to encourage applicants who are eligible for sheltered housing on the active register to bid. The Council has identified a number of applicants aged 60 and over with a high level of points who are not bidding for properties. The Council will contact these individuals to discuss their housing options and explore the reasons why they are not bidding on properties.

2. If a property becomes void for a long period of time the Council will look to offer accommodation to those aged 60 and over who have been placed on the deferred register. The Council will invite a certain number of applicants on the deferred register to an open day. Certain groups of individuals will be prioritised, for instance those who have been on the housing register for the longest. During these open days applicants will be able to look around the property and express an interest in the property. The Council will allocate the property to the individual who has expressed an interest with the highest priority.

2. **Making improvements to current sheltered housing schemes identified as suitable for older people in the future.**

The Council will use the information from the review of sheltered housing stock to identify schemes which need repair and improvement work. The recommendations made in this objective will feed into the Asset Management Strategy.

The housing needs study and sheltered housing focus groups identified property features important to older residents in the borough. These priorities will be taken into consideration when improving current stock. Based on these results the Council will look to make the following improvements:
1. Make garden and outdoor space accessible to tenants
2. Improve the energy efficiency of schemes
3. Improve the space standards and flexibility of use of living areas

The Council aims to identify sheltered schemes for remodelling over the next 5 years, and to include this in the Council's development programme. The Council will also look to carry out improvement work to the remaining schemes to bring them up to modern standards. (This objective will be subject to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan.) The Council will consult individual schemes before work is carried out as well as the sheltered housing tenants' forum.

The Council will continue to make the local improvement grant available to sheltered housing tenants. This grant can be used to make improvement to the communal areas in schemes within the borough. Through this grant a scheme can receive funding up to the value of £1,000 to make improvements to the communal areas, such as the garden.

3. **Identifying a sheltered housing scheme to redevelop on its existing site.**

The Council will look to use the information from the sheltered housing stock review to identify a scheme that is deemed as capable of redevelopment on its current site. This objective will be subject to the HRA business plan which will be reviewed in January 2014. The Council has identified that certain schemes do not have long-term viability, as in these cases the short to medium term repairs, maintenance, and void costs, will outweigh the rental income.

When redeveloping an existing scheme the Council will take into consideration the priorities set in this strategy, taking into consideration both the results of the over 50s housing needs study and other best practice standards. In the event of redeveloping an existing scheme the Council would implement the housing decant policy.

4. Developing a partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.

The Council will need to develop a strong partnership with Hertfordshire County Council in order to explore possibilities for providing on-site care facilities in any of the borough's sheltered housing schemes, or developing new accommodation as flexi-care. On-site care facilities allow individuals with personal care and support needs to remain independent in their properties, while being part of a community of older residents. Good practice reports have found that these schemes have an impact positively on individuals' health and well-being, and prevent or delay individuals from needing to move to residential care. When redeveloping an existing scheme or building a new scheme in the borough the Council will consider the benefits of providing on-site care facilities. This option would be explored in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure the accommodation is suitable. The Council would consult Hertfordshire's HWB when considering this option, and explore opportunities that may come out of joined-up work and commissioning of projects.

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KEY OBJECTIVE 3

To ensure the borough offers a range of suitable, high quality housing options for older people, including specialist housing for those who need extra support.

</div>

Introduction

The Council needs to provide a range of housing options for older residents to enable them to have adequate choice if they wish to consider moving. If attractive housing options are made available many older residents would welcome the opportunity to move to a more manageable property, requiring less upkeep and expense. The housing priorities and housing needs of older households vary significantly, therefore specialist housing needs to be diverse to enable older people greater choice and flexibility.

This objective is important because if the borough can offer a range of appropriate housing options for older people then not only would health and community benefits be achieved for the older population, but this would also free up larger family units and consequently increase the turnover of smaller general needs properties available to single applicants or couples, as families transfer into two and three bedroom homes.

To meet key objective 3 the strategy commits to:

1. **Developing new housing to meet the needs of older people through the Council's new build programme.**

The Council's new Housing Development Strategy 2013-2020 stated the following:

This new strategy will give regard to the Older Persons Housing Strategy being drafted in 2013/14 when considering the product delivered by its new-build programme in phases two and three and beyond.

This strategy has identified the need to increase the provision of housing suitable for older people to meet the needs of the projected population. In phases two and three of the Council's new-build programme this strategy recommends that every site identified for development should be considered for specialist accommodation for older people.

The Council should consider developing clusters of homes which are suitable to meet the needs of older people. The provision of smaller units specifically available for older people will be important in freeing up under-occupied two and three bedroom social rented stock. The type of accommodation which is developed will be dependent on the size and location of the site. The Council is committed to considering sites for both the development of individual units specifically for older people or units provided as part of a housing scheme.

The Council has committed to delivering a proportion of new homes to the 'Lifetime Homes standard' (or equivalent) in the Housing Strategy 2013-2018. These homes are considered as suitable for older residents as they are designed to be flexible to meet the changing needs of an occupant, allowing an individual to remain independent in their homes for longer. Accommodation designed for older people will be built to these standards.

2.   Using the results of the over-50's housing needs study to inform future development, including the Council's new build programme.

The Council will use the results of the over-50s housing needs study alongside other data to inform future development of older persons' accommodation. This will ensure future development meets the needs and aspirations of older residents. The over-50s housing need study identified the property and neighbourhood features most important to households with occupants aged 50 and over in Dacorum. It is important that the Council takes these features into consideration when developing future housing for older people in order to ensure that attractive housing options are available to older households.

A high proportion of respondents to the over-50s housing needs study stated that a spare bedroom would attract them to move. The majority of the Council's existing sheltered housing units consist of one bedroom properties and do not allow older residents the flexibility of an extra bedroom. When developing specialist accommodation for older residents the Council will commit to providing a mixture of one and two bedroom properties and exploring design solutions that provide flexible use of living space.

The results of the over-50s housing needs study would suggest that garden and outdoor space are important design features for older residents. When building specialist accommodation for older people the Council should ensure garden and outdoor space is accessible to older residents. Therefore; the Council may need to consider building a lower number of units than usual on a new site, in order to provide accommodation with excellent space standards, including gardens and outdoor space. This will need value for money judgements and viability assessments to be made on a site by site basis. Specialist accommodation for older people should be designed to be adaptable to meet the diverse needs of older residents during later life.

The Council should look into the possibility of providing on-site care facilities on new and existing sites to support individuals with personal care needs. This will prevent or delay an older resident from needing to move into residential care at increased cost to social services and health providers.

The location of a site must be well connected to facilities such as shops, services and transport links. Generally Hemel Hempstead is well connected to these facilities. The access to accommodation should be flat and bus services should be available near-by.

The findings of this study will be made available to registered providers and private developers who are looking to develop specialist accommodation for older residents in the borough. These organisations should look into the possibility of providing a mixture of tenures as a number of older residents would only consider purchasing a property in the future.

3. Using external standards set by HAPPI to inform future development.

The Council will take into consideration the 10 key design elements for older persons' accommodation identified in the HAPPI report 2009.

These are as follows:
- Space and flexibility
- Daylight in the home and in shared spaces
- Balconies and outdoor space
- Adaptability and 'care ready' design
- Positive use of circulation space
- Shared facilities and 'hubs'
- Plants, trees, and the natural environment
- Energy efficiency and sustainable design
- Storage for belongings
- External shared surfaces and 'home zones'.

Taking these 10 design elements into consideration when developing specialist accommodation will ensure the accommodation is suitable for older residents during their later life-course. This will prevent these properties from becoming hard-to-let in the future. The Council will work closely with Hertfordshire County Council when building this form of accommodation to ensure accommodation is suitable for older residents.

A number of the design features identified in the HAPPI report are similar to those identified in the over-50s housing needs study. The similarities found between the two studies reinforce the importance of these elements in building accommodation which meets the needs and aspirations of older residents.

4. Encouraging private development of specialist accommodation designed specifically for older people.

The Council must work closely with registered providers and private developers to ensure there is adequate provision of specialist accommodation for older people in the borough. This objective is also important as it ensures that there is a range of accommodation to meet the diverse needs of older people.

The Council will provide private developers with information on the demand for specialist accommodation designed for older people. This will be achieved by making the HNMA and the over-50's housing needs study results available to developers. The Council will be responsive to private developer requests regarding building specialist housing in the area. The Council aims for an extra 100 new units of older person's accommodation to be built in the borough by 2020.

The principle core strategy policies which relate to meeting the needs of older people in the borough are CS8, CS9, CS23 and CS34. These policies should be taken into consideration by private developers. This will ensure accommodation built has excellent transport links and access to facilities.

Introduction

General needs housing may be the most appropriate housing option for many older people. In order for older people to remain healthy in their homes, they may need assistance to keep their homes in a good state of repair, suitable for their needs and warm. Aids and adaptations can be provided in a home to improve an individual's ability to move around the house and use household appliances. Residents can also receive help from visiting care and support agencies.

To meet key objective 4 the strategy commits to:

1. **Proving and supporting initiatives to prevent fuel poverty.**

Fuel poverty is one of the factors leading to older people living in cold homes. Cold and damp homes that are poorly heated have been linked to ill health and early deaths among older people. The Council promotes initiatives to prevent fuel poverty including Hertfordshire County Council's Keep Warm Stay Well scheme. This scheme offers support to residents who are struggling with the cold and who are unable to pay their fuel bills. The Council will continue to support this campaign and advertise the scheme to residents across the borough.

The Council works closely with the private sector to improve the energy efficiency of stock. The Council will bid for any funding which becomes available to make improvements to the energy efficiency of private sector stock and continue to promote energy efficiency measures. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is used by the Council to identify if there are any hazards in a home. Excessive cold through increased heat loss is identified as a hazard through the HHSRS. Private sector housing enforcement allows the Council to ensure that private landlords carry out improvement work to prevent excessive cold in their homes. The Council will continue to enforce improvement work and work closely with the private rented sector.

2. **Working closely with other agencies and support services working with older people in the borough.**

In the borough 71.1% of households aged 65 and over are home owners and may be experiencing limited social contact. There are a number of factors which can lead to social isolation, and this can have a negative impact on the quality of life, health and well-being of an individual. The Council's new Vulnerable Persons' Strategy, being drafted in 2014, will take into consideration the needs of older people.

In order to prevent social isolation among older people within Dacorum the Council is committed to working closely with organisations that provide social support to older people. Age UK Dacorum provides a number of support services ranging from friendship teas, telephone club and befriending. Social interaction through these schemes can improve an individual's quality of life. The Council will continue to work closely with Age UK Dacorum to promote these services. The Council will also look to identify similar services offered by voluntary organisations in the borough and work with these organisations to promote these schemes.

The Council will link up with health campaigns for older people and raise the awareness of simple and affordable solutions that are available to support older people to remain in their own home. Raising the awareness of schemes such as the HandyPerson scheme will provide residents with the support they need to carry out simple repairs to the home. The Council will work closely with other organisations to promote safe use of the kitchen and falls prevention. The Council will inform residents of the aids and adaptations which are available to reduce environmental hazards and support them in their homes. The Council will invite appropriate organisations to a retirement fair to promote health campaigns and provide information on support available.

The Council will explore opportunities for providing joined-up services to older residents with the NHS and social care through the work of Hertfordshire's HWB. The Council is committed to its strategic development and transformation work, which has already facilitated a partnership with the HWB, and through this the Council can further investigate ways of working in partnership to provide better services to older residents.

3. **Increasing the availability of assistive technology and floating support.**

Floating support services are designed to help an individual manage and maintain their home. This type of support differs from accommodation-based support and allows the support provided to be adapted to meet the needs of an individual. The introduction of the 'hub and spoke' model for the Council's service delivery in 2011 meant that the Council now provides floating support to a number of tenants in general needs properties. In order to improve this service the Council will include these households on its online database system, which holds the housing support plans of sheltered housing tenants. This system allows the Council to store important information about households receiving housing related support and easily construct tailored packages to meet individual needs.
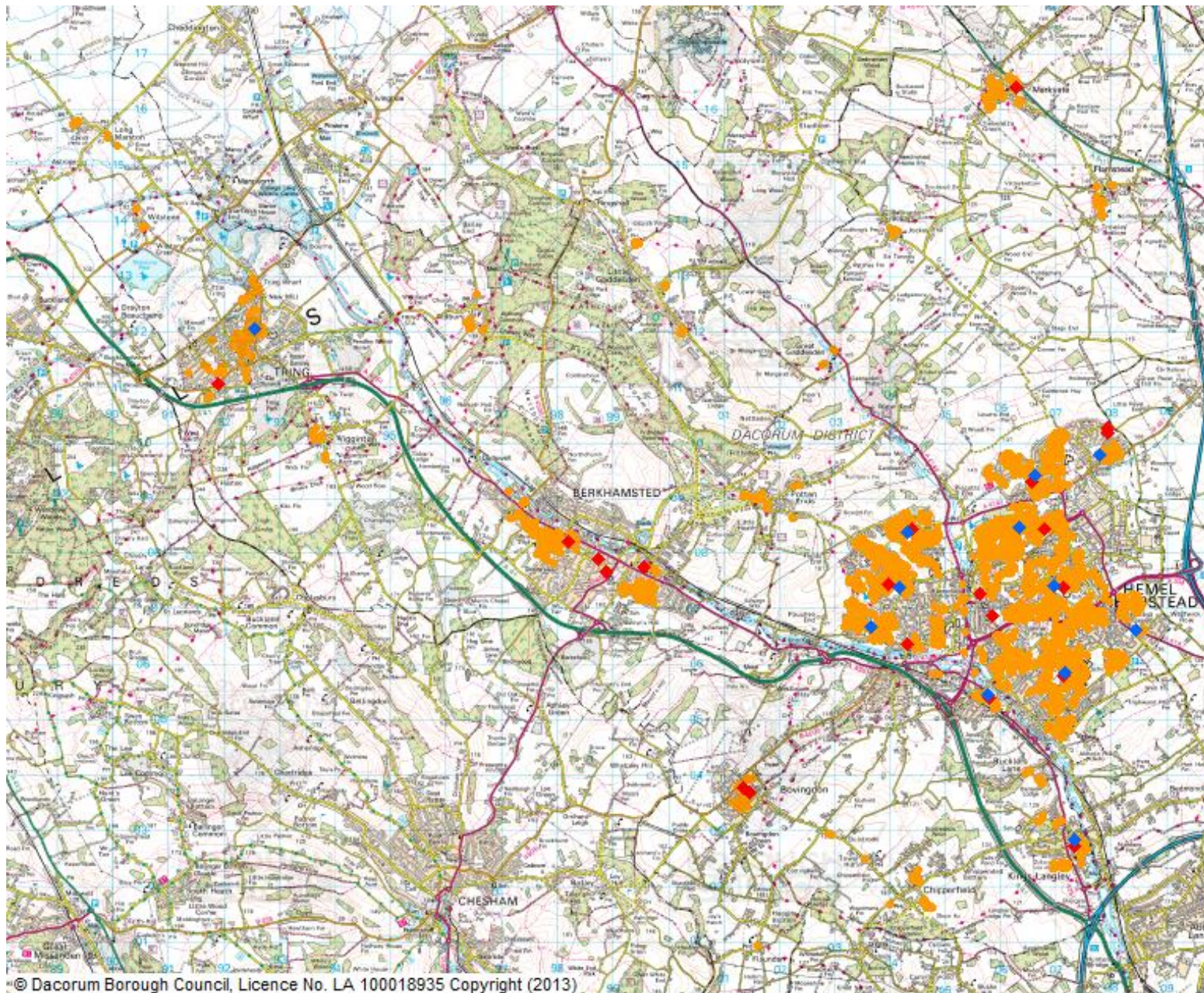
Floating support services can be accompanied by assistive technology. The Council offers the emergency community alarm service known as 'lifeline' to residents in the borough. The lifeline unit is available to residents in all tenures. The Council will look to increase the awareness of lifeline units and their benefits.

4. Making grants available to older residents who require adaptations to be made to their homes.

Aids and adaptations are crucial to help people stay independent at home for as long as possible and can prevent or delay an individual from needing to move into residential care. The Government is supporting people to adapt their homes through the Disabled Facilities Grant. The Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy sets out the loans and grants that are available, including the Disabled Facilities Grant. The Council will continue to work closely with Hertfordshire County Council to ensure that people receive the adaptations they need through grant funding. Applications received by the Council for grant funding will be assessed in a timely manner. The Council will continue to work closely with other services to ensure the most appropriate adaptations are provided to residents.

For adaptations needed in Council stock, the Council's services involved will monitor timeframes for both occupational therapist visits and the time taken to complete works. Resources will be kept under review with the aim of keeping delays to a minimum.

Appendix one: GPs, community centres and the Council's general needs and sheltered accommodation stock where tenants are aged 60 and over.

🟠	Over 60's in council owned stock
🔴	GPs
🔷	Community centres

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Older persons' housing strategy 2014-20

Appendix two: The Action Plan

Key objective	Action	Team Resources	Financial Resources	Timeframes	Officer responsible
KO1	Launch a specialist housing advice webpage for those aged 50 and over.	Strategy and Policy Officer	No budget impact	To be completed by April 2014	Sarah Pickering
KO1	Update existing webpages advertising sheltered housing.	Cross-department working group	No budget impact	To be completed by April 2014	Dharini Chandarana
KO1	Incorporate specialist housing advice for those aged 50 and over into the CSU scripts.	Strategy and Policy Officer	No budget impact	To be completed by April 2014	Isabel Connolly
KO1	Re-brand sheltered housing.	Cross-department working group	No budget impact	To be completed by 2016	Dharini Chandarana
KO1	Hold a retirement fair.	Cross-department working group	Within existing budget	To be implemented by December 2014	Sarah Pickering
KO1	Develop a directory of services, listing national and local organisations working with older people.	Cross-department working group	No budget impact	To be completed by April 2014	Sarah Pickering
KO1	Set up open days at sheltered housing schemes.	Cross-department working group - Property and Allocations Team and supported housing services	Within existing budget	To be implemented by September 2014	Isabel Connolly

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KO2	Implement and review the three defined levels for properties with adaptations.	Strategic Housing Team Leader (Property)	No budget impact	To be completed by November 2014	Isabel Connolly
KO2	Implement a procedure for making contact with applicants on the active housing register aged 60 and above who are not bidding on properties.	Property and Allocations Team and Housing Advice and Options Team	No budget impact	To be implemented by May 2014	Isabel Connolly
KO2	Identify investment through the HRA business plan for the new development of housing for older people.	Housing Development team	Subject to the HRA business plan	To be completed by 2020 with annual review as part of the HRA business plan	Jack Burnham
KO2	Identify sheltered schemes for remodeling.	Cross-department working group	No budget impact	To be completed by 2020 with annual review as part of the HRA business plan	Jack Burnham and Dharini Chandarana
KO3	To make the findings of the over 50s housing needs study available on the Council's website.	Strategy and Policy Officer	No budget impact	To be completed by March 2014	Sarah Pickering
KO4	Include households receiving floating support in general needs properties on the Council's online database system holding housing support plans.	Supported Housing Services	No budget impact	To be completed in 2014/15	Dharini Chandarana

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