

LEEDS PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING STRATEGY 2009-2012 : ACTION PLAN

	Action	Agency	Lead	Timescale	Progress update
A. Promoting and supporting the private rented sector to meet needs and provide choice					
A1	<p>Development and implementation of a private rented housing strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategy signed off - Action plan developed - Monitoring of implementation of strategy 	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group and re'new	AB AB/HJ AB	July 2009 June 2009 Quarterly	<p>A Private Rented Housing Strategy has been produced by LCC Environment and Neighbourhoods and the Leeds Housing Partnership, and approved by LCC Executive Board in November 2009.</p> <p>Subsequently, this Action Plan has been developed. Action points will be monitored quarterly by the Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group.</p>
A2	<p>Ensuring maintenance of a good relationship between landlord, tenant and community representatives and the Council.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group		Ongoing	<p>Good relationships continue to be maintained through the Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group, Landlords Consultative Group and the Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme Network. Partnership working between HEAS and Leeds Housing Options Service also now ensures access to advice for tenants and landlords.</p>
A3	<p>Ensuring various Departments work closely together to co-ordinate actions/decisions in relation to the private rented sector.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group		Ongoing	<p>Coordination of the contributions of various Directorates (including LCC's Environment and Neighbourhoods, Leeds Benefits Service, Planning and Adult Social Care) has been delivered through the Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group.</p>
A4	<p>Highlighting the key place of private rented housing in the revised Leeds Housing Strategy and within major regeneration and renaissance programmes.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	RM	Ongoing	<p>The revised strategy highlights the importance of utilising the private rented sector in the city through the development of the Housing Options Private Lettings Scheme.</p> <p>The strategy includes a specific action within the 'affordable housing supply'</p>

					<p>strategic theme to use the Private Sector Lettings Scheme as an option for bringing empty properties into use.</p> <p>The strategy recognises the role of the private rented sector in preventing homelessness and, specifically, how securing additional units of accommodation through the Private Lettings Scheme increases the range of housing options available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Future investment and regeneration plans include consideration of the contribution of PRS in meeting future housing need, as detailed in the Leeds Investment Plan.</p>
A5	<p>Developing and expanding partnerships with private landlords to provide further housing options for households who are homeless or with other priority needs, or general needs applicants on the waiting list unable to access social housing.</p>	<p>LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods</p> <p>LRF</p>	<p>MB / LS / RM / BE</p>	Ongoing	<p>Regular information is provided to Leeds Landlords Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) members and access to advertising in Leeds Homes. Email alerts issued to all LLAS members at relevant request of colleagues and other partners.</p> <p>A housing options target of a minimum of 840 lettings has been set for 2010/11. Private rented lettings now exceed the number of lettings made to homeless households by the Leeds ALMOs.</p> <p>534 properties have been let through the scheme since the beginning of April 2010.</p>
A6	<p>Ensuring that routes into private rented housing are prominent within the Housing Solutions approach being developed by Leeds City Council, in particular developing intermediate housing options either through private landlords or housing associations.</p>	<p>LCC Housing Options Service</p> <p>LRF</p> <p>re'new</p>	<p>BE / RM</p>	Ongoing	<p>A 'Property Shop' model is being developed at Leeds Housing Options (LHO) Service, with details of available private rented homes advertised on laptop screens. Officers primarily working on private sector solutions will staff a desk situated in the reception area at LHO, to promote awareness of the private rented options available.</p> <p>All staff at LHO have details of available private rented properties and property lists are sent to all relevant Supporting People</p>

					<p>commissioned services via the Housing Strategy and Solutions team.</p> <p>A homeless prevention fund has been established which can be used to cover bonds/rent in advance payments for people who find their own private rented accommodation but cannot cover these initial costs.</p>
A7	Engaging landlords in the implementation of interventions outlined in the Back-to-Back Housing Strategy and in group repair or other physical and environmental improvement programmes.	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group re'new	AB/HJ	Ongoing	<p>LCC and the Leeds Housing Partnership have been lobbying central Government and the Leeds City Region on the need for enhanced investment to help deliver the interventions outlined in the strategy, but this is at a time of significant budget pressures and potential cuts in future capital programmes. Following the CSR, no specific funding has been identified to support future private sector regeneration.</p> <p>PRS properties are receiving assistance in the Cross Green group repair scheme which commenced on site in October 2010, and city-wide energy efficiency initiatives are also being developed.</p>
A8	Identifying future investment options for council housing using 'redundant PRS' stock, including use of Management Orders, PRS leasing scheme and long-term empty properties in PRS for ALMO stock.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB/RM	Ongoing	<p>A procurement process has now been completed and a contract awarded to two successful bidders to provide services in the event of Management Orders being served.</p> <p>Discussions are underway to explore the possibility of expanding the private sector lettings scheme in partnership with local landlords and landlord organisations.</p>
A9	Consider and respond to the findings of the Government's review of the Use Classes Order.	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group	JC / LP	April 2010	<p>Response provided, since which legislative changes affecting planning legislation have been introduced with effect from July 2010. LCC is currently finalising proposals for an Article 4 Direction in N/W Leeds.</p>

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B. Ensuring good standards of housing and management					
B1	Leeds City Council to work with landlord representatives to explore the value and feasibility of self-accreditation by landlords.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods LRPF	ARB / MB / LS	Ongoing	Subject to the outcome of negotiations, new arrangements should be in place with effect from summer 2011.
B2	Continuing to enhance and spread landlord accreditation to improve standards in the private rented sector through : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging non-accredited landlords into accreditation while tackling landlords appropriately who are operating 'wilfully' outside the law; • increasing resources to accreditation through promoting more resources to the LLAS to complement those input by Unipol; • establishing routine and enhanced inspection levels; • increasing the spread of landlord accreditation in areas outside of Inner North West Leeds. 	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods LRPF UNIPOL	MB / LS	Ongoing.	Membership – currently 480 landlords covering 20,348 bedspaces. Promotion of the LLAS is continuing and quarterly forums continue to be held and newsletters produced. LCC Environmental Action staff work closely with colleagues in Housing Options to attract landlords in targeted areas of the city outside of North West Leeds. Property Improvement Plans and compliance inspections continue to be undertaken. A target has been set to increase bedspace coverage in identified postcodes to at least 10% per annum. Since 01.04.10, increase in bedspace coverage in LS7 (1%), LS8 (2.47%), LS9 (5.21%), LS11 (2.98%) and LS12 (11.71%).
B3	Seeking to build on developing initiatives to bring managing agents under the umbrella of accreditation and finding resources for such initiatives.	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group UNIPOL LRPF	MB / LS	Ongoing	Initial discussions were held with managing agent groups in 2008 – further discussions were then held in December 2009 that identified a number of areas which required further development and consideration from both parties regarding details and resource implications. Due to the uncertain national picture, local differences in priorities and the current lack of resources due to the financial situation, these proposals are currently on hold. The situation will continue to be monitored.

B4	Increasing the coverage of HMO licensing outside Inner North West Leeds by identifying and licensing relevant properties in other areas of the city.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / DT	Ongoing	<p>Further proactive projects planned for 2010/11 to target specific areas alongside ongoing awareness campaigns.</p> <p>Ongoing partnership work with landlord groups to maintain profile of HMO requirements.</p>
B5	Implementing and evaluating the introduction of selective licensing in the target area.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS	Ongoing	<p>Policy, procedures and guidance to implement the scheme were introduced from 01/10/09.</p> <p>A number of targets have been set including issuing at least 300 selective licences and undertaking at least 100 licence compliance inspections before 31/03/11. Currently, 518 applications received, 439 draft licences issued, 319 final licences issued. Compliance inspections delayed by number of prosecutions taken, and the numbers of licences received are already in excess of the 400 anticipated.</p> <p>Effective monitoring criteria have been developed in accordance with CLG requirements and landlord consultation. The effective display of these is still being developed.</p>
B6	Keep under review all the regulatory tools which the Housing Act 2004 makes available (including Additional Licensing) and deploy as appropriate.	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group	ARB / MB	Ongoing	<p>Ongoing enforcement activity is being undertaken in line with enforcement protocol.</p> <p>Regular meetings are continuing to be held with the Landlord Consultative Group.</p> <p>Comprehensive co-ordinated enforcement action has been agreed with other enforcement agencies.</p> <p>A review of other discretionary licensing powers will be undertaken as appropriate and in the light of identified priorities and available resources, and a review of the effectiveness of Mandatory HMO Licensing in Leeds has now been completed and endorsed by the PRS Strategic Working Group.</p>

B7	Keep under review all opportunities under RRO to provide financial support for landlords to bring about property improvements, linked to collaborative working arrangements, nomination rights or other partnership initiatives.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / MI	Ongoing	Future investment potential has been included in the Leeds Investment Programme.
B8	Increasing the supply of private homes that meet the decency standard through reviewing LLAS to include decency and the use of property improvement plans under LLAS; publicising what is required and support available, working with landlords co-operatively to enable them to use the EPCs which they have to obtain for their rental portfolios to address excess cold.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS	Ongoing	LLAS conditions are being reviewed to consider moving towards the decency standard. The number of property inspections and use of Property Improvement Plans are being increased to improve standards. Actions will contribute towards the target of 600 properties made decent in 2010/11. A focus on addressing excess cold, particularly in 'hard-to-treat' homes, will be a priority for action in 2010/11.
B9	Ensuring enforcement of HHSRS and using targeted and proactive enforcement (utilising Leeds House Condition Survey (LHCS) information) and 'worst case first enforcement'.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB	Ongoing	Compliance with agreed enforcement protocol is in place and all targets were exceeded in 2009/10. For 2010/11, targets include : Removal of at least 150 category 1 hazards and 500 combined hazards per annum. At least 450 HMO compliance inspections. Currently : 195 category 1 hazards reversed. 460 combined hazards reversed. 461 HMO compliance inspections completed.
B10	Seeking means of bringing empty private-rented housing into use.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	E&N / JH	Ongoing	The Leeds private sector lettings scheme is making an important contribution to the objective of bringing empty homes back into use. Since April 2010, of the 320 lettings that have been achieved from previously empty property, 121 were properties which had been empty for 6 months or longer.
B11	Tackling issues of poor repair in private rented back-to-backs while seeking to re-establish private rented back-to-backs as good quality 'starter housing'.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / MB/ MI	Ongoing	Inspection regime and enforcement activity is in place to take action against categories 1 and 2 hazards as necessary.

B12	Seeking to improve the standard of accommodation offered to homeless households and asylum seekers through a pre-inspection regime to monitor contracts and standards and closer working with all Council departments.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods LCC Asylum Seekers team	RM /DF/ MB	Summer 2010 and ongoing	Partnership working between HEAS and Housing Options staff is underway to ensure good quality of inspections. Referral system developed to ensure that poor properties identified are subject to appropriate enforcement. A procurement process is underway to award a new temporary accommodation contract for the provision of housing to a variety of vulnerable people. The contract will contain strict criteria regarding the quality and management of the housing provided.
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C. Effective advice, information and support:					
C1	Continuing and maintaining constructive partnership working between Leeds City Council and all professional landlord organisations that operate within Leeds.	LHP / Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group	ARB / MB	Ongoing	Partnership to be maintained and strengthened through the Private Rented Sector Strategic Working Group. Consultation being continued with landlord groups via the Landlord Consultative Group.
C2	Providing advice and assistance to landlords currently experiencing financial difficulties, especially small buy-to-let investors.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	LCC	Ongoing	The ability and capacity of LCC provision of assistance to landlords in financial difficulties is severely limited due to current financial pressures.
C3	Providing support and advice to landlords and tenants to promote and ensure compliance with landlord and tenant law.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	RM / MB	Ongoing	Being achieved through effective partnership working between LCC Housing Regulation and Housing Strategy and Solutions Service (HS&S). Training, by the Housing Regulation Team, has been provided to LHO/HS&S staff undertaking property inspections for the

					<p>private sector letting scheme, covering issues of fire safety requirements for residential accommodation within a variety of property types, amenity standards within single and multiply occupied dwellings, overcrowding standards for converted houses into self-contained flats or houses in multiple occupation.</p> <p>Direct officer contact details for landlords published on website to provide advice and help resolve tenancy issues. Landlord and tenant email box published on website for prospective tenants to indicate interest in scheme or seek assistance.</p> <p>Advice and assistance given at local seminar and workshop events such as Yorkshire Landlords Day and a Landlords Fair.</p> <p>HS&S officers send property details to the Housing Regulation Team where a property does not comply with the minimum standards required for the private sector letting scheme, for further investigation and necessary enforcement of private rented housing standards. During the period April-December 2010, there have been 77 referrals, the majority of which have been resolved informally by liaison with the landlord either by officers from the Housing Regulation Team or HS&S. Of the 77 properties, 11 properties have resulted in an inspection and three were in such poor condition, requiring formal enforcement action in the form of one improvement notice to undertake extensive works to the flat and two prohibition orders preventing occupation of undersized letting rooms in each of these multiply occupied houses.</p>
C4	Encouraging landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS / AJ	Ongoing	Advice and information on thermal efficiency measures is being provided to landlords.

					A working group is currently working towards production of detailed advice for landlords to improve thermal efficiency, particularly regarding 'hard-to-treat' properties.
C5	Providing support and advice to landlords and tenants to promote and enhance security measures to assist in reducing the incidence of domestic burglary and opportunistic crime.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / RK	Ongoing	<p>Advice given to landlords and tenants when properties inspected under HHSRS criteria. Appropriate enforcement action taken where justified and referrals also made to CASAC where necessary.</p> <p>Ongoing partnership working with the universities and student unions to promote security awareness through their Knowledge campaign, and Safer Leeds initiatives.</p> <p>Burglary rate to the end of December (from 1st April 2010) was 6,505, with our current forecast to March 2011 being around 8,500; this will be an overall reduction from 2009/10 of around 900.</p> <p>Funding for target-hardening was allocated (£30,000) to deliver a service in the Aviary's and Little Scotland area of Armley to help reduce the increased levels of burglary. This is still ongoing.</p> <p>A second HMIC inspection was undertaken early-December to see what progress LCC and WYP have achieved in addressing burglary in Leeds, with a focus on housing and partners. The previous inspection had resulted in Leeds being 'red flagged'. Early feedback indicates that there has been improvement and a full report will be issued within the next few months.</p> <p>A key project commenced in November 2009, with further promotion in September/October 2010, offering, free of charge to students, a tracking software package called 'comptrace'. Overall reduction</p>

					achieved of 50% of theft of laptops in student areas over the year, reducing from 791 (2009) down to 397 (2010), a reduction of 394. Also, some stolen laptops have been recovered using this technology.
C6	Helping landlords to contribute to improving and developing disadvantaged neighbourhoods within LLAS service plan postcode targets.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS	Ongoing	Particular work is being undertaken relating to the selective licensing area in Cross Green / East End Park, operative since 1 st October 2009.
C7	Supporting local tenant referencing and considering the potential to support a tenant referencing scheme across West Yorkshire and how to develop collective action on anti-social behaviour and joint working with a range of partners and agencies.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	LS	Ongoing	Support for a regional scheme has not been forthcoming and the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership has now ended. Opportunities from regional partnership working will continue to be explored through the Leeds City Region and officer forums, wherever possible.
C8	Providing incentives to landlords to achieve decency in PRS, including grants/loans and high profile landlord awards scheme, e.g. Green Landlord Award.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / MB / LS	Ongoing	Many incentives already in place and general agreement for further incentives to be considered, such as access to Leeds Homes to landlords, who are compliant with licensing in the selective licensing area, to advertise their properties free of charge. Further discussions are planned regarding details and likely resource implications.
C9	Improving the long-term sustainability of private rented housing stock through supporting landlord and tenants via an enhanced Leeds City Council tenancy relation service.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	BE		The private sector lettings scheme developed at Housing Strategy and Solutions to ensure that private rented properties advertised through the private lettings scheme meet requisite standards. The scheme is property based – all properties offered to the scheme are inspected by officers. Landlords who regularly offer properties to the scheme are familiar with requirements and often carry out improvements prior to an inspection by LCC. Following inspection, where minor works are identified, landlords can confirm completion by emailing to that effect. Where more significant work is required, officers re-inspect the property. Since June 2010, 105 properties have been uplifted in

					<p>this way and accepted onto the scheme following works specified at the initial inspection stage.</p> <p>Advice, including mediation, is offered to both tenants and landlords through the scheme. All tenants on the scheme are offered tenancy support through Foundation Housing.</p>
C10	<p>Continuing to engage with central Government on key concerns arising from the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), including links to stock condition, direct payments to landlords, LHA rates and definitions of vulnerability.</p> <p>LCC to provide advice and support to all private sector tenants who request it, to enable them to access good quality accommodation at a reasonable rent, and to manage their tenancies (including payment of rent) in a responsible manner</p>	<p>Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service.</p> <p>LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>JMcM</p> <p>BE / RM</p>	Ongoing	<p>Engagement with central Government is continuing. Local briefings on the implications of changes to Housing Benefit have been, and continue to be, provided. Advice and support provided to private-sector tenants through the Housing Options private lettings scheme, including rent and Local Housing Allowance negotiation with landlords. Housing-related support is made available to tenants who secure a property through the scheme which can be provided by Foundation Housing's TEAS/Resettlement service.</p>
C11	<p>Providing advice/information that is accessible to tenants, particularly those vulnerable or hard to reach, about disrepair and other issues of health and well being.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB	Ongoing	<p>A drop-in weekly surgery in the selective licensing area, to provide advice and assistance to landlords and local tenants, was provided through the summer but has now ceased due to lack of interest.</p> <p>PRS advisory leaflets have been developed and have now been distributed.</p> <p>Ways of improving information for tenants and landlords on the LCC website are being explored.</p> <p>Leeds Tenants Federation and re'new working to consider means of engagement of private tenants in existing tenant and resident groups.</p>
C12	<p>Developing a Central Landlord Service (One-Stop Shop).</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB/LS /RM	Ongoing	<p>Consideration of issues and feasibility of provision will be assessed, under new organisational arrangements.</p>

C13	Seek to actively develop and resource a Tenant Referencing Scheme, with associated tenancy training for those who do not qualify due to past behaviour, etc, and would otherwise remain impossible to re-house.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / LS	September 2009	<p>Initial pilot scheme undertaken regarding pre-tenancy training, with a report due July 2009 to consider and support, if appropriate, and resources available.</p> <p>WYHP explored the feasibility of a regional tenant referencing scheme but have reported a lack of resources and little appetite amongst other local authorities at this present time. Officers are liaising with partners locally, including the landlord associations, to explore current good practice and possible local solutions but this will also depend upon available resources.</p>
C14	Provision of deposit guarantees for landlords working collaboratively with LCC on a range of initiatives.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / MB	Ongoing	<p>Two options are available through the Private Sector Solutions service at Housing Strategy and Solutions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The Private Sector Letting Scheme guarantees to underwrite any loss or damage incurred by a tenancy arranged through the scheme – up to the equivalent of 4-weeks rent during the initial AST agreement period. All landlords that are engaged with through the scheme are requested to consider becoming members of the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme. All properties are inspected and inspection reports retained by officers. Scheme requirements mean that many properties are improved in order to participate in the scheme – 105 since June 2010. ii) The Prevention Fund facilitates payments of up-front bonds (which must be placed with a nationally recognised tenancy deposit scheme) which are considered on a case-by-case / cost-effectiveness basis. Any remaining bond must be returned to

					<p>the Council at the end of the tenancy. A structure has been put in place to ensure participating landlords register LCC's interest in the bond to a national tenancy deposit scheme. Structure includes steps to take where LCC's mechanism created for bonds to be returned at the end of tenancies and bond repayments have begun to be received.</p>
C15	<p>Providing advice and assistance to landlords on energy-saving measures, including financing measures, design issues and technical advice.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS	Ongoing	<p>Advice and information on thermal efficiency measures is being provided to landlords. More detailed information is planned to be provided for owners and landlords following the outcome of multi-disciplinary working group looking at energy efficiency measures suitable for hard-to-heat older housing stock in Leeds and links to the Exemplar Project being run in Leeds by the BRE.</p> <p>Referral for appropriate grant aid where possible.</p> <p>Proposals for a city-wide free energy efficiency initiative are currently being explored, which would offer improvements to all householders irrespective of tenure.</p>
C16	<p>Explore opportunities for accredited landlord incentives, such as providing car parking permits for landlords/tradesmen in residential areas, subject to Residential Parking Zones, or waste disposal charges exemptions.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	ARB / LS	Ongoing	<p>Continuing liaison between Departments and Council members to increase concession rights for LLAS members.</p> <p>Parking permits scheme already produced.</p>
C17	<p>Supporting and maintaining help lines for residents in areas with a large private rented sector.</p>	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods	MB / LS	Ongoing	<p>Support and advice given on private rented housing to the student welfare groups in the University and Higher Education sectors. Further discussions are planned to promote the advice lines with tenants across the city and to discuss resource implications.</p>

C18	Developing outreach and support to BME households and vulnerable people living in private rented housing.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods / Leeds Tenants Federation / Leeds Voice	MB	Ongoing	Two advisory leaflets have been developed and have been widely circulated but with priority given to targeting the most vulnerable people.
C19	Exploring ways of engaging private tenants in local tenant and resident associations and mechanisms, to facilitate customer feedback on perception, experience, and suggestions for improvement in PRS accommodation and local service delivery, from a tenant's perspective.	LCC Environment & Neighbourhoods / Leeds Tenants Federation / Leeds Voice	MB / LS / BE	June 2010	Work continues to explore ways of improving customer contact with tenant groups and organisations.

Key to Progress Colour Bar

red
amber
green

Alert – unlikely to meet target

Warning – further progress required to meet target

Progress on target to meet objective

blue

Priority themes