



PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2016

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Foreword

Good quality housing is important to individual health and well being and is also an essential component of a safe and vibrant community. Housing in Erewash is generally good but there are issues that need to be tackled if private sector housing standards are to continue to improve. Four overarching priorities have been identified that reflect the challenges facing private sector housing renewal: -

- To deliver decent, safe and healthy homes across the borough;
- To support a thriving private rented sector;
- To tackle long term empty homes;
- To help the elderly and people with disabilities reside in their own homes and retain their independence.

The actions proposed to achieve these priorities should not be seen in isolation and are intended to contribute to and complement wider Corporate priorities and objectives concerning health improvement and economic regeneration.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Having a decent and safe home is one of the most basic essentials for a happy and healthy life. The location, type and quality of the homes we occupy impacts significantly on all aspects of our lives.
- 1.2 High quality housing delivers a wide range of positive outcome for individuals and communities, some of which are listed below:-
- a) Good housing has a significant impact on health reducing the incidence of illness in the very young and the elderly and accidents;
 - b) Improving energy efficiency reduces fuel bills, improves thermal comfort and reduce CO₂ emissions;
 - c) Increasing the supply of high quality rented accommodation provides more choice for those whose needs cannot be met via owner occupation or social housing;
 - d) Adapting homes for disabled and elderly residents allows them to maintain independent living in their community and reduces care costs;
 - e) Good quality housing reduces incidents of anti social behaviour;
 - f) Communities are more cohesive, attractive and economically vibrant.

2.0 The National Agenda

- 2.1 The change in national Government in 2010 marked the beginning of a period of significant change for local authorities across all services. Following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) ring fencing of local authority budgets was largely withdrawn allowing Councils the flexibility to spend their funding allocations according to locally determined priorities. With regard to private sector housing renewal the Government has acknowledged that support for mandatory disabled facilities grants is still needed and will continue to allocate ring fenced funding for this purpose.
- 2.2 Reform of the National Health Service will see Local Authorities assuming the public health responsibilities formerly delivered through the Primary Care Trusts. In Derbyshire the public health function will rest with the County Council. District Councils will have representatives on new Health and Wellbeing Boards (two elected members supported by one Chief Executive representing the seven districts) and will be able to raise issues at bi-monthly meetings. A key feature of the new arrangements will be the emphasis on prevention rather than curing an illness once it has developed. It is hoped that the role of good housing in preventing or limiting the development of ill health will be acknowledged and viewed as a priority.

3.0 Legislative Framework

3.1 Erewash Borough Council is designated as a Local Housing Authority under Section 1 of the Housing Act 1985. This imposes a general duty to enforce the provisions of the Housing Acts. Key amongst these duties are:-

- Section 3 Housing Act 2004 – Requirement to keep housing conditions under review;
- Section 4 Housing Act 2004 – To inspect premises in specified circumstances to establish whether hazards to the health and wellbeing of the occupants exist;
- Section 5 Housing Act 2004 – To take appropriate enforcement action if category 1 hazard exists;
- Section 10 Housing Act 2004 – To consult with the fire and rescue authority before taking enforcement action;
- Section 16 Housing Act 2004 – To resolve improvement notices and prohibition orders as appropriate in specified circumstances;
- Part 2 Housing Act 2004 – To operate an appropriate licensing regime for the mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation;
- Section 24 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – Duty to approve application for disabled facilities grants.
- Providing reports setting out the energy conservation measures the authority considers practicable, cost effective and likely to result in significant improvements in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation.

Housing Standards

3.2 Historically housing standards were related to the fitness of a property for human occupation. This standard was criticised, however for failing to address many hazards present in dwellings such as fire safety, domestic energy efficiency and ergonomics. As a result the fitness standard was replaced by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) (Section 1 Housing act 2004)⁽¹⁾. This uses a whole property systematic risk based approach to determine the likelihood of an occurrence of ill health due to defects in the property and the likely severity of illness or injury.

⁽¹⁾Housing Health and Safety Rating System – Operating Guidance ODPM Feb. 2006.

3.3 The underlying principle of the HHSRS is that:-

'Any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor'. HHSRS considers twenty nine hazards and since these have differing characteristics the Rating System uses a formula to generate a numerical score which allows comparison of the full range of hazards.

Exposure to some hazards however, can be unavoidable or even necessary in that the benefit of living with the hazard will often outweigh the risk. Examples include stairs and electricity. Both are hazardous but necessary – the important issue is that good design, construction and maintenance minimises the risk and the likelihood of injury. More detail on the HHSRS is shown at Appendix 1.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

3.4 Section 254 of the Housing Act 2004 defines a house in multiple occupation as:

- A building or part of a building consisting of one or more units of living accommodation not consisting of self contained flats;
- The living accommodation is occupied by persons who do not form a single household;
- The living accommodation is occupied by those persons as their only or main residence;
- Their occupation of the living accommodation constitutes the only use of that accommodation;
- Rents are payable or other consideration is to be provided in respect of at least one of the persons' occupation of the living accommodation; and
- Two or more of the households who occupy the living accommodation share one or more basic amenities or the living accommodation lacks one or more basic amenities.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) present problems due to their mode of occupation and the fact they are often converted from large older properties. The most common issues are cleanliness, repair and maintenance of common parts and means of escape in case of fire.

3.5 Because of the risks this form of housing poses HMO are subject to special controls, the most important of which is mandatory licensing of larger properties (three storeys or more and five or more occupiers). Erewash currently has six licensed HMO.

Empty Homes

3.6 Long term empty homes (homes that have been empty for more than six months) represent a wasted resource and can often encourage antisocial behaviour blighting the surrounding area. A range of powers are available to deal with them:-

- Empty dwelling management orders;
- Enforced sale (only if the Council is owed money);
- Compulsory purchase orders;
- Demolition orders.

Other Legislation

3.7 Although there is specific legislation to deal with housing matters there are numerous pieces of legislation which can be applied to residential accommodation in appropriate circumstances.

Examples of this include legislation relating to drainage and pest control.

4.0 Strategic Approach to Housing in Erewash

The Private Sector Housing Strategy is part of a hierarchy of plans and strategies that provide a holistic approach for tackling a wide range of housing related issues. The Council's overarching Housing Strategy 2011-2016 identifies a number of key themes and linked objectives of which the following are relevant to private sector housing:-

Strategic Housing theme	Objectives – what we intend to achieve
Deliver quality and choice in the housing market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver affordable housing across the Borough• Increase the number of homes in the borough to provide choice and meet needs• Improve and renovate private housing sector• Improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions of homes • Tackle empty properties and bring them back into use• Address rural housing needs• Address the housing needs of people with physical disabilities
Tackle the causes of homelessness and meet vulnerable people's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tackle and prevent homelessness• Ensure vulnerable people have access to suitable housing and support
Create safe and sustainable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create safe and secure homes and neighbourhoods• Provide and sustain employment and training opportunities through housing projects• Support wider plans to create sustainable communities through housing and regeneration initiatives• Provide a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes in order to create mixed and balanced communities

5.0 The Erewash Context

5.1 87% of the housing stock in Erewash is privately owned (74% owner occupied, 13% private rented) and 41.8% was built before 1944 and nearly 61% before 1964. This age profile, together with relatively high unemployment rates and over a third of households being on low incomes, contributes to a high proportion of the housing stock not meeting the Decent Homes Standard⁽²⁾. Based on the house condition survey 11,550 properties or 26% of the private sector housing stock is classified as non decent.

5.2 In order to meet the Decent Homes Standard a property must: -

- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing ie it must not exhibit any category 1 or 2 hazards under the HHSRS;
- Be in a reasonable state of repair;
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services ie kitchen and bathroom fittings; and
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

If a property is referred to as non decent this will mean that a defect exists under one or more of the above factors.

5.2 Erewash has an annual shortfall of 357 units of affordable accommodation per year⁽³⁾. This data correlates with the unemployment and average income figures for the Borough. Generally the number of people on Council waiting lists across the region is increasing. The private rented sector is increasingly seen as having a pivotal role to play in meeting both housing need and providing choice in the market place.

5.3 Nearly 15% of households in Erewash have at least one member with a disability⁽⁴⁾, with just over 16% of the population having a limiting long-term illness⁽⁵⁾. The age profile of the Borough is broadly in line with the rest of the region with just over 20% being aged 60 or older. These factors combine to cause a high demand for disabled facilities grants placing a considerable burden on resources.

⁽²⁾Erewash Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011.

⁽³⁾Nottingham Core HMA Housing Market Needs Assessment Update 2009.

⁽⁴⁾Erewash Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011

⁽⁵⁾2001 Census.

5.4 The Council's most recent private sector house condition survey was published in July 2011. Its key findings were:

Characteristic	Owner Occupier	Private Rented	All private Stock	England
Tenure type as a proportion of total stock	37,730 74%	6,520 13%	44,250 87%	82.0%
Non-decent homes as percentage of each tenure	9,490 25%	2,060 31.7%	11,550 26%	34.4%
Vulnerable households living in decent homes	7,210 68.1%	2,210 69.1%	9,420 68.3%	60.6%
Category 1 Hazard as percentage of each tenure	5,200 13.8%	1,250 19.3%	6,450 14.6%	23.6%
In Fuel Poverty as percentage of each tenure	4,390 12.1%	840 14.1%	5,230 12.4%	15.4%
Mean SAP ⁽⁶⁾ Rating	53	52	53	50
Households in receipt of benefit as percentage of each tenure	10,590 29.0%	3,200 53.0%	13,790 33.0%	17%

⁽⁶⁾ SAP is an abbreviation for Standard Assessment Procedure, a method for measuring the energy performance of dwellings. The SAP rating is based on the energy costs associated with space heating, water heating, ventilation and lighting. It is adjusted for floor area so that it is independent of dwelling size. The SAP rating is expressed on a scale of 1 to 100 – the higher the number, the lower the running costs.

5.5 Based on current estimates 1.3% of Erewash's housing stock is long term vacant. This is slightly below the national average for England (1.5% of housing stock) but nonetheless still represents a wasted resource in terms of overall housing supply.

5.6 Many empty homes are in the process of being sold or renovated and come back into use relatively quickly. However, a small minority remain vacant for longer periods and, due to their dilapidated appearance, can create problems for neighbours such as depressing local house prices and attracting criminal or antisocial behaviour. More detailed information on empty properties can be found at Appendix 2.

6.0 Implications

6.1 Number of Dwellings including Tenure

The number of owner occupied dwellings has remained fairly static with only an increase of 1,201 since the last house condition survey in 2004. However, the number of private rented properties has increased from 2121 to 6520 or nearly 200% since 2004. There are now more dwellings available on the market but low incomes may limit affordability.

6.2 Non Decent Homes

Despite the investment in decent homes grants the rate of non-decency in the owner occupied sector has increased from 20% to 25% since 2004. The situation in the private rented sector is more promising however with non-decency falling from 54% in 2004 to 32% in 2011.

6.3 Vulnerable Households Living in Decent Homes

The 2011 House Condition Survey found that 68% of vulnerable households were living in decent homes. This statistic is an important indicator of the quality of housing stock especially the older less expensive properties which, due to lower rents and/or mortgages, tend to be occupied by more vulnerable households.

6.4 Category 1 Hazards

The 2011 House Condition survey confirmed that the standard of owner occupied properties has declined whilst in the private rented sector standards have improved.

6.5 Fuel Poverty

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it spends more than 10% of its net income on heating in order to provide warmth and hot water. Not only do properties where fuel poverty exists represent dwellings with poor energy efficiency they are by definition occupied by residents with low incomes who are least likely to be able to afford improvements to increase thermal comfort. Whilst the Council is unable to directly tackle the causes of fuel poverty it can assist property owners address the structural causes of poor thermal comfort and thereby help the household reduce the income spent on heating.

There are an estimated 5230 households in fuel poverty in Erewash and whilst this figure is below the national average it still represents a significant number of residents facing difficulty keeping their homes warm and thereby increasing the likelihood of ill health. Further information on the links between fuel poverty and ill health is attached at Appendix 3.

Housing Standards and Fuel Poverty/Affordable Warmth

6.6 Both the Decent Homes Standard and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) recognise the potential adverse health effects of cold homes. The Decent Homes Standard requires that a home should 'provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort for the occupants' whilst the HHSRS considers excess cold to be a hazard towards the occupiers of houses.

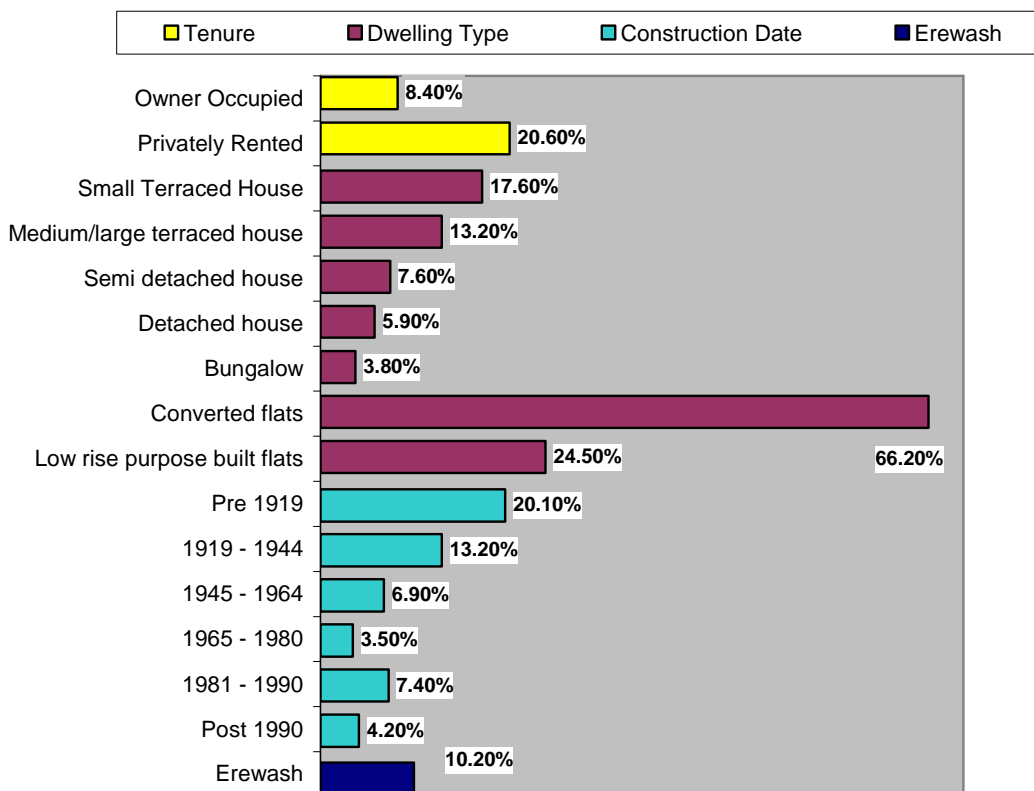
It therefore follows that both the failure to meet the thermal comfort requirement for Decent Homes and the avoidance of excess cold required by the HHSRS can be used as a proxy to identify those homes with a high probability of experiencing affordable warmth issues.

The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011 identified that:

- 4520 houses failed the decent homes thermal comfort standard
- 3670 dwellings were found to have the HHSRS hazard 'excess cold'.

This data may be broken down to show the age profile of the homes and their distribution across the Borough. This data is shown in Figure [1] and Figure [2].

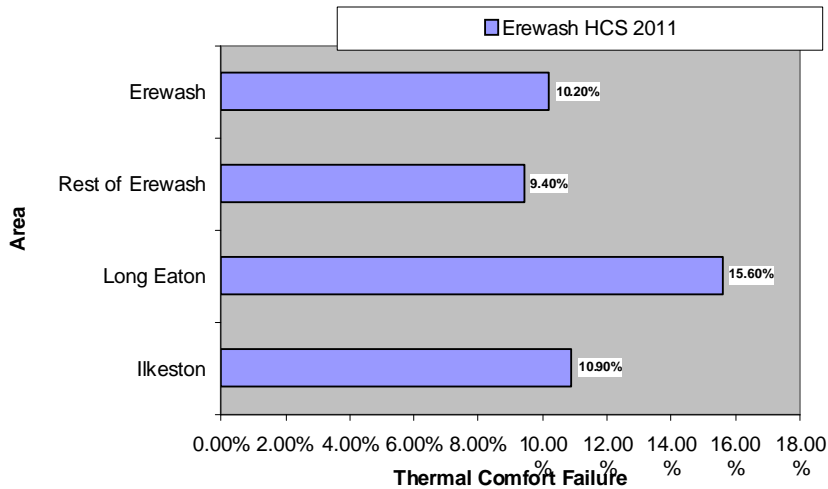
Figure 1: Thermal comfort failure by general characteristics



Source: 2011 House Condition Survey

From this data it can be seen that the typical 'cold' house is a private rented, terraced property built before 1919. Distribution across the Borough is fairly uniform with a concentration in Long Eaton and similar but smaller concentration in Ilkeston. (Converted flats are not such a high priority because they represent only 2.5% of the housing stock that is 1100 properties across the Borough).

Figure 2 - Average thermal comfort failure by sub-area



Source: 2011 House Condition Survey

Fuel poverty remains one of the most important issues associated with the private sector housing stock due to its potential to cause severe health problems for susceptible individuals. It is difficult to quantify the scale of the problem in Erewash but it is likely that at any one time 10 to 15% of the population will suffer fuel poverty. Erewash has worked with Warm Front and has facilitated the delivery of schemes to provide subsidised loft and cavity wall insulation to vulnerable households. These schemes are due to be replaced in 2013 with the Government's Green Deal programme.

7.0 Housing and Health

- 7.1 The link between housing and health was first identified by Edwin Chadwick in 1842. The poor housing conditions Chadwick witnessed thankfully no longer occur but more recent studies have highlighted the fact that defects such as cold homes, damp and mould growth and other factors such as poor design or standards of repair can have a dramatic effect on health⁽⁷⁾.
- 7.2 Statistics on housing related illness were used in the development of The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)⁽⁸⁾. This system replaced the fitness standard as the justification for enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004. Using the statistical data underpinning HHSRS it is a relatively simple matter to calculate the costs associated with treating ill health arising from poor housing conditions and by inference ascribe a cost to poor housing.
- 7.3 The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) in association with the Building Research Establishment (BRE) have devised a 'cost calculator'⁽⁹⁾ which uses the data from HHSRS, health service treatment records and the local housing stock condition survey to estimate the number of illnesses which poor housing conditions may cause, their cost to the NHS and the cost to remove the hazard by repairing or improving the home.

⁽⁷⁾Good Housing Leads to Good Health – *Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and BRE September 2008.* ⁽⁸⁾ Housing Health and Safety Rating system Guidance (Version 2) *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister November 2004.* ⁽⁹⁾ Housing Health Cost Calculator BRE 2012

7.4 Applying the cost calculator to Erewash's housing stock leads to the following outputs:

Total Housing Stock 50,862 Private Sector 44,250 Registered Social Landlord 6,612

"Illness"	Annual cost to NHS £	Cost of remedial works £	Ratio work/NHS costs
Level Falls	709,900	108,598	0.15
Stair Falls	352,400	53,742	0.15
Excess Cold	2,697,700	793,887	0.29
Crowding and Spacing	104,900	132,184	1.26
Entry by Intruders	700,000	1,662,094	2.37
Damp	21,600	996,750	46.15

Note: *Ratio work/NHS Costs – numbers less than one indicate a pay-back period of less than 1 year. The cost of remedial works has been calculated from 2005/06 English House Condition Survey.*

7.4 The reorganisation of the National Health Service (NHS) offers an opportunity to highlight the health impacts of sub-standard housing. A key feature of the reorganisation has been to place responsibility for public health with single tier authorities or County Councils. Management of this role will be via a Health and Wellbeing Board that will lead and advise on work to improve public health.

7.5 The new arrangements do not come into force until April 2013 but a Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board has been appointed to oversee the transition. This Board has produced a strategy containing high level priorities for Derbyshire. These priorities have been identified based on evidence from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

Derbyshire's priorities are to:-

- **Improve health and wellbeing in early years** – because giving our children the best start in life will help them achieve their full potential and benefit them throughout their lives;
- **Promote health lifestyles** – because individuals and communities need the right support in order to make the best choices for their health;
- **Improve emotional and mental health** – because good emotional and mental health is everyone's business and a fundamental building block for individual and community wellbeing;
- **Promote the independence of people living with long term conditions and their carers** – because helping people to manage their condition better can significantly improve quality of life and reduce the need for hospital or emergency care;
- **Improve health and wellbeing of older people** – because giving older people the right support in the right environment will help them enjoy good quality, active, healthy and fulfilling lives.

8.0 Strategic Priorities

- 8.1 The strategic priorities for private sector housing have been developed using intelligence gathered through the Erewash Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011, regional and local housing needs by recognising the clear link that exists between poor housing conditions and health and wellbeing, the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the withdrawal of decent homes funding.

The priorities of the Private Sector Housing Strategy are:-

1. **To deliver decent, safe and healthy homes across the Borough;**
2. **To support a thriving private rented sector;**
3. **To tackle long term empty homes, and**
4. **To help the elderly and people with disabilities reside in their own homes and retain their independence.**

In this strategy each priority is considered in turn, identifying relevant achievements to date, the challenges now faced and the options to tackle them. An action plan then identifies how each action will be delivered to support the overarching priority.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the identified priorities and actions remain relevant to the condition of Erewash's private sector housing stock across all tenures.

8.2 Priority 1 – To deliver decent, safe and healthy homes across the Borough

Achievements

A total of £2.7m has been invested in making homes decent over the past 7 years. This has resulted in the renovation/improvement of 381 homes in Erewash.

Home Energy Efficiency

A total of £4.2m of Warm Front funding has been spent in Erewash over the last seven years.

Challenges

- 32% of properties in the private rented sector and 25% of owner occupied properties continue to fail to meet the decent homes standard;
- 15% of properties (6450 dwellings) in the private sector exhibit Category 1 hazards and these need to be treated as a priority in view of the Council's mandatory duty to act to eliminate these hazards;
- 21% of vulnerable households are living in non-decent homes;
- 12% of residents are living in fuel poverty;
- External grant funding has been withdrawn;
- CERT funding and Warm Front will both come to an end in December 2012 but implementation of the replacement "The Green Deal" is uncertain.

Actions

- Provide advice, information and guidance to owner occupiers, tenants and landlords on housing matters;
- Explore alternative funding streams to encourage improvement of the private sector housing stock;
- Inspect dwellings to determine whether enforcement action is required;
- Take enforcement action to improve standards if necessary (but only when all other avenues have been exhausted);
- Operate a Home Improvement Agency and Handy Van Service in partnership with others.

8.3 Priority 2 – To support a thriving private rented sector

Achievements

- Erewash Borough Council became a member of Decent and Safe Homes (DASH) in 2005;
- Erewash operates a Landlords Forum, sends out regular newsletters and stages a Landlords Conference once a year;
- Erewash is a member of the DASH East Midlands Landlords Accreditation Scheme (EMLAS) and all private sector landlords are eligible to join;
- The Housing Renewal Team supports the Housing Options Team by inspecting lease properties:

Challenges

- The number of private rented homes is increasing;
- Standards of accommodation in the private rented sector in Erewash have improved but nearly 32% are classed as non-decent and over 19% have Category 1 hazards;
- The private rented sector is playing an increasingly important role in meeting housing need. It is therefore important that:-
 - Private sector homes are free from Category 1 hazards and meet the decent homes standards;
 - The forms of tenancy agreements offered by landlords meet the needs of tenants.
- The impact of the welfare reforms on housing benefit and how this may influence the housing market, particularly the demand for bedsits;
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) – This sector continues to grow steadily and further growth may be unduly influenced by welfare changes. In addition, management of HMO properties can be difficult, particularly with reference to common parts and the consequences of poor management can be very serious.

Actions

- Provide advice and guidance to landlords and agents on property management, understanding their rights and responsibilities;
- Promote good practice in the private rented sector. Encouraging landlords to join the East Midlands Landlords Accreditation Scheme or similar;

- Liaise with local lettings agents;
- Provide advice and guidance to tenants;
- Continue to hold landlords forums and conference and circulate newsletters on topical issues to landlords;
- Maintain a register of known HMO and inspect in accordance with risk rating. Liaise with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue on fire safety issues.
- Erewash Borough Council will explore alternative funding opportunities to support landlords following the withdrawal of decent homes grants by the Government.

8.4 **Priority 3 – To Tackle Long Term Empty Homes**

Achievements

- 86 long term empty homes have been brought back into use in the last 7 years.

Challenges

- Erewash has a total of 642 long term empty homes out of a total private sector stock of 50,680 (as at 31 July 2012);
- Long Term empty homes are the cause of blight and encourage antisocial behaviour;
- Tracing owners can be very difficult;
- Enforcement action to remedy defects or bring properties back into use is very time consuming and may require financial input;
- Given the current financial situation access to finance is difficult for all parties concerned.

Actions

- Liaise with owners to bring properties back into use;
- Explore potential funding streams;
- Agree enforcement strategy for tackling empty properties;
- Work with Three Valleys Housing on purchase, lease and repair of empty properties;
- Explore partnerships with private sector.

8.5 **Priority 4 – To help the elderly and people with disabilities reside in their own homes and retain their independence.**

Achievements

- 881 disabled facilities grants were approved during the period 2005 to 2012;
- 110 adaptations were completed in 2011/2012;
- Over £4.6m has been spent on disabled facilities grants in the period 2005 to 2012;
- Derbyshire Handy Van scheme was established in partnership with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue and Derbyshire County Council.

Challenges

- Demand for disabled facilities grants continues to outstrip funding;
- 15% of households in Erewash have at least one member with a disability;
- Total funding for disabled facilities grants has reduced due to the impact of the comprehensive spending review;
- Waiting times for disabled facilities grants to be approved can be considerable.

Actions

- Extend housing options service to disabled clients;
- Work with Three Valleys Housing on joint funding arrangements;
- Work with local commissioning bodies to ensure patients can return home quickly if adaptation is required;
- Explore alternative funding streams;
- Work with service providers to reduce costs of adaptations.

9.0 Action Plan

	ACTION	OUTCOME	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	RESOURCES	TARGET	LEAD
Priority 1 – To Deliver Decent, Safe and Healthy Homes Across the Borough.						
1.	Provide advice/guidance to residents on home energy efficiency matters	Improve householder's knowledge about energy efficiency matters and allow them to make informed choices about possible works to improve the energy efficiency of their home.	Advice delivered in a timely manner.	Existing.	First response to 95% of requests for service within 3 working days.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
2.	Inspect dwellings to determine whether enforcement action is required	Identification of housing defects which can have a detrimental effect on the health of the occupants.	Housing defects identified as a consequence of inspection, rectified in a timely manner.	Existing.	Statutory action implemented within two weeks following identification of defects.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
3	Maintain register of known HMO and carry out regular inspections	Facilitate programmed inspections of premises.	A reduction in the incidence of "unknown" premises.	Existing.	Carry out 100% of programmed inspections each year.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
4.	Take enforcement action in appropriate circumstances	Resolution of hazards.	Lack of successful appeals against notice.	Existing.	100% of statutory notices actioned within specified time periods.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
5.	Develop a Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy	Adopted by Council Executive	Raised standards of management and maintenance in the private rented sector resulting in a reduction in complaints.	Existing	Enforcement Policy implemented by 31 March 2014.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)

Priority 2 – To Support a Thriving Private Rented Sector.						
6.	Explore alternative funding streams to encourage improvement of the private sector stock	Provision of finance to home owners/landlords will stimulate repair/improvement of the private sector. This will improve living conditions for residents, reduce CO ₂ emissions and stimulate the local economy.	The Council is able to intervene to raise housing standards in the private sector and to increase the proportion of homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard.	Existing.	Ensure bids are submitted for all appropriate funding streams identified (subject to CMT approval)	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
7.	Provide advice and guidance to landlords and agents	Improve the knowledge of landlords/agents reducing conflicts with tenants and need for formal action by Erewash Borough Council	Increase attendance at forums. Reduce need for formal action. Reduce the number of complaints from tenants.	Existing.	i) Increase attendance at Landlords Forums ii) Issue a minimum of 2 Landlords Newsletters each year	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
8.	Promoting good practice in the private rented sector	Improving the private sector experience for tenants.	Reduced number of complaints from tenants.	Existing.	Reduce number of complaints from private sector tenants by 5% using 2012 baseline.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
9.	Improving liaison with local letting agents	Facilitate cooperation with letting agents to provide a better service to tenants.	Reduced number of complaints from tenants regarding their letting agent.	Existing.	Issue a minimum of two landlords/agents newsletters per year	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)

10.	Providing advice/guidance to tenants	Facilitate the early resolution of disputes between tenant and landlords.	Overall we would expect to see a reduction in formal complaints.	Existing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Produce advice leaflets for tenants by 31/03/2014. ii) Issue 2 newsletters to landlords/agents per year on topical issues. 	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
11.	Stage landlord forums and conference. Issue newsletters on topical issues	Improve the communication between landlords/agents and the Council.	Increased attendance at events.	Existing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Stage a landlords conference each year ii) Issue a minimum of two landlords newsletters per year iii) Issue specific newsletters on topical issues when necessary. 	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
Priority 3 – To Tackle Long Term Empty Homes.						
12.	Liaise with owners of long term empty homes	A more co-operative relationship with owners developed. Owners more informed regarding the availability of funding and/or opportunities to sell or lease properties.	An increase in the number of homes brought back into use.	Existing.	Write to all owners of properties which have been empty for over 12 months (3 times/year) and review responses/options by 31 March 2014.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
13.	Explore potential funding streams to bring long term empty homes back into use	An increase in the number of homes brought back into use.	An increase in the level of funding available.	Existing.	Bid for 100% of funding opportunities identified (subject to CMT approval)	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)

14.	In appropriate situations use available enforcement powers to bring long term empty homes back into use	Empty homes brought back into use.	Enforcement action successful.	Existing.	100% of enforcement action successful each year.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
15.	Work with Three Valleys Housing on purchase, lease and repair of long term empty homes.	External funding provided for renovation.	A reduction in the number of long term empty homes. An increase in the number of homes available.	Existing.	Agreement reached with Three Valleys Housing on a joint strategy to tackle empty properties by 31/03/2014.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
16.	Explore partnerships with private sector to bring long term empty homes back into use	Provision of external funding will encourage more owners to bring empty homes back into use.	Increase in the number of homes brought back into use.	Existing.	Bring a minimum of 10 properties back into use (subject to funding being available) per year.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
Priority 4 – To Enable the Elderly and People with Disabilities to Retain their Independence.						
17.	Extend housing options service to disabled clients to provide an alternative to adaptation	Providing an alternative to adaptation.	An increase in clients moving home rather than adapting their existing home.	Existing.	Ensure service is in place. Take up of service will be dependent on client wishes	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
18.	Work with Three Valleys Housing on joint funding of adaptations to properties they own	Reduced expenditure.	An overall reduction in the amount of grant funding expended on adapting Three Valleys Housing properties.	Existing.	Agree service level agreement with Three Valleys Housing by 30 June 2013.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)

19.	Work with local commissioning bodies to improve hospital discharge time	Patients are discharged from hospital as soon as they are well enough.	A reduction in the number of patients whose discharge is delayed while they wait for adaptations.	Existing.	No patient discharged delayed.	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
20.	Explore alternative funding streams	Enable a more flexible approach to renovation to be adopted.	Increase in level of funding available.	Existing.	Provide a range of funding alternatives for clients (if available) by 31 October 2013	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
21.	Work with service providers to reduce costs of adaptations	This is an ongoing process designed to make sure resources go further and deliver value for money.	Overall reduction in average costs of works.	Existing.	Strategy agreed with DCC and other stakeholders by 31 March 2014	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)
22.	Work with Metropolitan Care and Repair to provide Home Improvement Agency services throughout the Borough.	Provision of a greater range of services to clients.	An increase in the number of clients who receive services which would not normally be provided by the Housing Renewal Team.	Existing.	Record the number of clients accessing the service and determine whether the benefits outweigh the costs. The future of the Home Improvement Agency is closely tied to funding provided by Derbyshire County Council and this action may need to be revised if the form of service provision changes in the future	Environmental Health Manager (Public Realm and Housing)

THE HOUSING HEALTH AND SAFETY RATING SYSTEM (HHSRS)

HHSRS considers 29 individual hazards:-

1. Damp and mould growth
2. Excess cold
3. Excess heat
4. Asbestos (and MMF)
5. Biocides
6. Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion products
7. Lead
8. Radiation
9. Uncombusted fuel gas
10. Volatile organic compounds
11. Crowding and space
12. Entry by intruders
13. Lighting
14. Noise
15. Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
16. Food safety
17. Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
18. Water supply
19. Falls associated with baths
20. Falling on level surfaces
21. Falling on stairs
22. Falls between levels
23. Electrical hazards
24. Fire
25. Flames, hot surfaces
26. Collision and entrapment
27. Explosions
28. Position and operability of amenities
29. Structural collapse and falling elements

Having inspected the dwelling the inspector then generates a score for each hazard which is of concern. The score is a combination of a weighting related to the severity of the injury/illness, the likelihood of the illness/injury occurring and a factor which indicates the range of injury/illness could be expected. Scores can range from 9 or less up to 5,000 or more. The numerical Hazard Scores are divided into ten hazard bands ranging from Band A (most hazardous) to Bank J (least hazardous) as shown below.

Band	Hazard Score Range
A	5000 or more
B	2000 to 4990
C	1000 to 1999
D	500 to 999
E	200 to 499
F	100 to 199
G	50 to 99
H	20 to 49
I	10 to 19
J	9 or less

The hazard band is important as it is the major factor in determining what action, if any, will be taken to remove the hazard. Section 2 of the Housing Act 2004 defines hazards falling within hazard bands A, B and C as Category 1 hazards and hazards falling within bands D, E, F, G, H, I and J as Category 2 hazards. Section 5 of the same act requires the authority to take appropriate enforcement action in respect of Category 1 hazards, action in respect of Category 2 hazards is at the discretion of the authority.

Empty Properties

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Empty properties, both residential and commercial represent a wasted resource. They often attract antisocial behaviour, vandalism, graffiti and fly tipping which can contribute to the continuing decline of the local area, affecting the viability of local business, the general appearance of the area and reducing property values.

2.0 National Perspective

- 2.1 It is estimated that there are over 700,000 empty homes in England with some 300,000 being empty for over 6 months. The reasons homes are left empty are complex and include inheritance, the cost of financing repairs, inability to achieve desired sale or rental price or as a long term investment.
- 2.2 Many empty homes are being sold or renovated and come back into use relatively quickly, but a small minority remain vacant for longer periods and these can create problems for neighbours depressing house prices and attracting criminal or antisocial behaviour.
- 2.3 Recognising that empty homes represent a wasted resource, government has provided the following incentives, powers and tools for use by local authorities:-
- Empty homes brought back into use will qualify for New Homes Bonus.
 - Empty Homes Toolkit – This resource provides advice and information on all the important aspects of returning empty homes to use.
 - £100 million of capital funding within the Affordable Homes Programme to tackle problematic empty homes. This funding which will be administered by the Homes and Communities Agency, will be available from 2012 to 2015.
 - Empty Dwellings Management Orders (EDMO's). These allow local authorities to take control of the management of an empty house. The government is considering modifying these powers restricting their use to circumstances where the detrimental effects of the property on the local community can be clearly demonstrated and for situations where a property has been vacant for a minimum of 2 years.

Fuel Poverty/Affordable Warmth

1. Introduction

1.1 Why do cold homes matter?

Statistics collected by the Office for National Statistics show that there are an average of 27,000 additional deaths in England and Wales during the winter as compared with the summer months. The actual number of extra deaths occurring depends on temperatures, the level of disease (particularly influenza) and other factors; but the fact remains that winter weather kills people and the number of deaths occurring in this country is proportionally far greater than in other colder countries in Europe.

Although excess winter deaths occur in both warm and cold homes the incidents in cold homes is almost three times as high as in warm homes (*The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty – Marmot Review Team May 2011*).

Very few people die of hypothermia; most deaths are caused by heart attack and strokes (40%) or respiratory illness (33%). Following the onset of cold weather deaths from heart attacks will reach a peak after two days, stroke deaths peak after 5 days and respiratory deaths after 12 days. It can be more than a month after the end of the cold spell before the death rate returns to normal.

2.0 At what temperature do health effects become evident?

The Department of Health recommend a minimum temperature for rooms occupied in the day of 21°C (70°F) and a minimum of 18°C (65°F) for night time in bedrooms (though occupants may still feel cold at this temperature). Temperatures lower than this may cause illness in susceptible individuals. Indoor temperatures of 12°C or lower cause blood vessels to constrict increasing blood pressure and the risk of blood clots forming which can lead to heart attack or stroke. Each 1°C reduction in temperature may increase an older persons blood pressure by 1.3 mm Hg. Low temperatures also increase susceptibility to key infections by suppressing the bodies immune system constricting the airways and stimulating mucous production. These factors can all lend to an increased risk of bronchitis and pneumonia. It has been estimated that G.P. visits increase by 10% for every 1°C drop in temperatures below 5°C. Cold houses may also have mould growth which can be a factor in asthma. Improving heating systems has been show to reduce the incidences of asthma and reoccurrence of respiratory infections.

In addition to causing physical illness cold homes are also associated with mental health issues including depression and anxiety. Living in cold homes can also affect peoples daily lives. Some become isolated as they are reluctant to invite friends to a cold home whilst others seek refuge elsewhere as an alterative to staying in. Cold homes also affect emotional well being and have been shown to have an effect on students homework and study.

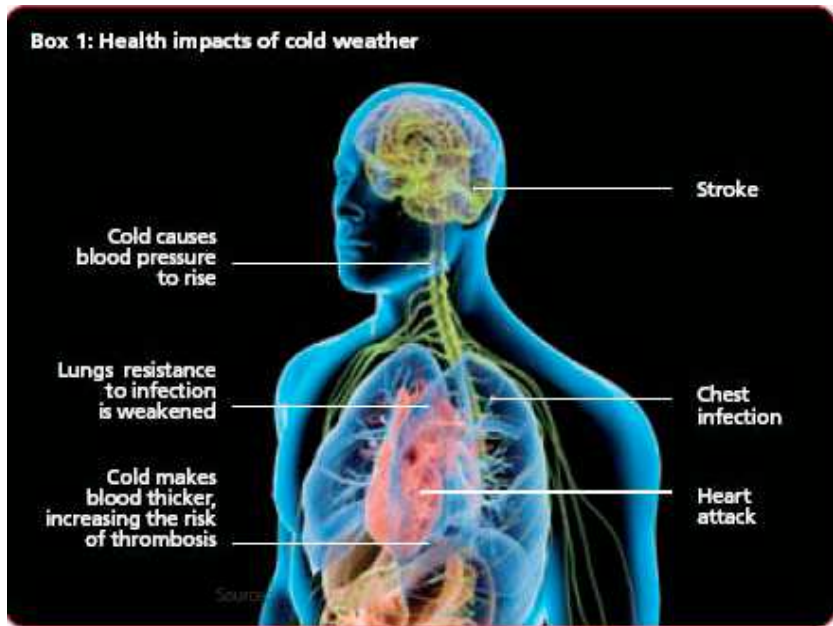


Figure 1 – “Health impacts of Cold Weather – NHS Cold Weather Plan for England”.

3.0 Energy Efficiency

Similarly to Decent Homes and HHSRS energy efficiency is a good proxy for fuel poverty/affordable warmth since it follows that homes with low energy efficiency will cost more to heat. The energy efficiency of homes is expressed as a SAP number which stands for Standard Assessment Procedure. Expressed on a scale from 0 – 100 it is a standardised rating which can be used to compare the estimated energy costs of two very different properties.