

Private Sector Housing Strategy

Consultation response Summary

Consultation on the Draft Private Sector Housing Strategy was carried out between 20th November and 31st December 2009

How many people responded and from which organisations?

Organisation	Number
Letting Agency	1
Landlord	3
Owner Occupier	4
Private tenant	1
Church worker	1
RSL	4
Advice agency	3
Health/PCT worker	1
Local government	2
Total	20

Ethnic Origin	Number
White	17
Other	0
No answer	3
Total	20

General

Question 1 - Are our priorities the right ones?

100% (20) = yes

Other comments:

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Landlord	Support landlords who deliver accessible, affordable homes that are well equipped and in good condition.	No action. This is reflected in the strategy with the recognition of good landlords being part of a landlord accreditation scheme (Action plan 1.3)

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Landlord	Helping elderly with repairs (organising not necessarily paying for them)	Agree – Strengthen comment in the strategy at 3. Priority (page 22) to refer to ‘financial and/or practical assistance’

Priority – Ensure existing privately rented homes are accessible and affordable

Question 2 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

95% (19) = yes

Other comments:

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Key action 1 – rent deposit scheme		
Landlord	I never use rent deposit scheme. I try not to have people on HB as the system always causes problems and they end up in arrears (for various reasons)	No action. This is a statement. Noted.
Owner occupier	Do many people know about the rent deposit scheme? Some estate agents won't take on clients who are applying for HB – even though presumably some of the landlords are happy to take those clients. Should this be better regulated?	No action. The strategy is promoting access to the private rented sector including take up of PALS. (Action plan 1.1) However the scheme is designed as an alternative to homelessness and not all people in housing need will be eligible for assistance.
Local Gov	We have found working closely with housing benefit colleagues has meant more landlords used our RDS.	No action. The strategy provides for the PALS scheme to be reviewed and housing benefit staff are already members of the PALS steering group (Action plan 1.1)

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Key action 3 working with landlords		
RSL	When working with landlords in the private sector, try to encourage them to accept tenants in receipt of HB and those who have pets.	No action. Have included closer working with landlords in the strategy (Action plan 1.3)
Local gov	But less emphasis on assistance and more on carrying out enforcement	An informal approach is advocated although an effective policy on enforcement is in place where this is ineffective. Add a comment on this - page 21.
Other		
Owner occupier	Empty homes?	No action. The need to work towards bringing empty homes back into use is addressed in the strategy. (Action plan 2.6)

Priority – Ensure existing stock is in good condition

Question 3 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

95% (19) = yes

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Key action 1 – poorest stock		
Landlord	Institute a scheme of tenant awareness to encourage tenants to look after their property and thus prevent good property deteriorating due to tenant neglect or ignorance.	Tenant leaflets on maintenance and disrepair (i.e. condensation) are available. Add to action 2.4 'raise awareness with owners, landlords and tenants the need for timely maintenance to both maintain and improve standards'

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Health/PCT worker	These are often the 'hardest to find and reach' people - need various channels and mechanisms for finding them !!	No action. Agree but consider this is covered in the strategy under formalising the annual review of grant and assistance available (Action plan 2.4) reduce the number of people in fuel poverty (Action plan 4.2) and increased public awareness of the services (Action plan 5.1)
Key action 2 – encourage proper maintenance		
Local Gov	But less emphasis on assistance and more on carrying out enforcement	An informal approach is advocated although an effective policy on enforcement is in place where this proves ineffective. Add a comment on this - page 21 (as previous comment).
Key action 3 - loans		
Owner occupier	How will the elderly afford these loans?	Add in to page 21 unsatisfactory condition a bullet 'elderly owner occupiers often have equity in their homes but no cash and therefore need to release equity to carry out maintenance and essential repairs'. Make clear in Action plan 2.5 that loans are not subject to repayments until the property is sold.
RSL	With action 3 (loans), also try to encourage downsizing if appropriate - no use doing lots of improvements if house is too large!!	No action. The loan scheme considers the appropriateness of works to the home prior to approval of the loan.
Advice Agency	Loans may not be appropriate for all, especially if on low incomes.	Need to strengthen info in strategy to stress no repayments until sold. (as above)

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Other		
Landlord	Do not prioritise 'Young Single Mums'. I see many who just say they are single to get priority and it encourages young women to have children before they have the means to support them. Many come to me for a room! and tell me they are waiting for a council flat.	No action. Noted.

Priority – Support vulnerable people to remain living in their own homes and improve their health outcomes

Question 4 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

100% (20) = Yes

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Key action 1&2 – prioritising and effectiveness of DFGs		
Health/PCT worker	Grants and access to them can be very confusing. It's really important that information as to who can claim, and how is really clear - many people who could qualify, don't apply, because it is a minefield!!	No action. This is covered in the action to increase uptake of HIA services (Action plan 3.4)
Local Gov	a) Also lobby government for adequate funding of DFGs. b) Emphasis on better integration of District and County-based elements of the service. ????? from a client-led process.	a) No action – funding of DFGs is covered in the strategy at page 25, Capital funding. b) Quarterly meetings and joint working is in place but not reflected in strategy. Add to page 22 3 rd bullet 'in partnership with County and Health partners'

Responder	Comment	CDC response
Key action 3 – awareness of Small Repairs Service		
Landlord:	I do not know about small repair service - very good idea but needs to be publicised	No action. This is covered in the action to increase uptake of HIA services including Small Repairs Service (Action plan 3.4)
Advice Agency	Ensure those in need of help receive excellent advice on options available.	No action. This is already in place and also covered in the action to increase public awareness of the council's housing role and the services available. (Action plan 5.1)

Priority – Improve energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty

Question 5 - Have we got the key actions right in this area?

100% (20) = Yes

Responder	Comment	CDC response
RSL	Make sure the various grants or incentives for implementing energy efficient measures are available or as effective as possible/	No action. This is included in the strategy with an annual review of grants and identification of opportunities for targeted action (Action plan 2.4 & 4.1)
Local gov	Identifying any vulnerable occupiers who fall between Warmfront and LA provision of assistance.	No action. The review and targeting of grants aims to identify vulnerable occupiers falling between services. (Action plan 4.1 & 4.2)
Advice Agency	CAB would be happy to discuss joint work around reducing fuel poverty	No action. Noted.

Promoting services:

The responses for the suggested ways of promoting the service are:

Method suggested	Number of responders	CDC response
Articles in Cherwell Link Magazine	16	Noted – this will inform future promotional events.
Articles in local press	16	
Better use of the website	14	
Market stalls in town centres	13	
Talks to Community groups	13	
Stands outside supermarkets	10	
Opens days at the Council	8	
Speakers at other events	6	

Other comments separate from main questionnaire

Responder	Comment	CDC response
OT Service	Introduction? comment on appropriate environment to enable independence whether location or home itself	Noted. Add comment to page 22 about location still being appropriate.
	Page 7 repairs for older or disabled people living their own homes not just to prevent hospital admission or allow discharge, I did find this elsewhere and agree priority for this situations but we need to encourage overall take up and this is across Oxfordshire so might light to reference take up levels.	Noted. Amend bullet points on page 7 to be clear that small repairs service is not just for this purpose. General improvement in awareness is covered in the strategy (Action plan 5.1)
	Page 9 provision of DFGs, could we add active with OTs in SS to ensure the adapted property best meets the person's longer term needs and consider all options first before progressing to DFG.	No action. This will be covered in the DFG policy (Action plan 3.1)

Responder	Comment	CDC response
	Bottom of page 10 - Child health, incidents of families with 2 disabled children again like Oxford city higher than elsewhere in the county but do we have figures to evidence?	No action. We do not have evidence to support this information and without it we do not consider it appropriate to include the reference to it.
	Page 17 - besides vulnerable should anything be added re individuals with mental ill health e.g. dementia who can afford to repair properties etc but need support to be able to do so	Noted. Amend second vulnerability bullet point to reflect that it may be financial or practical assistance that is needed not just financial.
	Page 22 - please use assistive equipment and not aids and adaptations. Can we include a comment on assistive technology - Telecare? Small repairs service does all provide for advice and information for people to consider, sign posts to other services and supports Should there also be comment on timeliness of DFG so work is completed within reasonable timescale.	Noted. Replace 'aids' with 'assistive equipment'. Do not agree that adaptations are assistive equipment. Add a reference to assistive technology. Noted. Noted. This will be part of DFG policy (Action plan 3.1)
	Page 26 - county wide specification for DFG so we can benchmark against BS and good practice, this work is nearing completion and will be available online as part 2 of OT toolkit from January 2010	Noted. Add to first bullet point a comment regarding the countywide DFG works specification.