



**PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING  
BEST VALUE REVIEW  
THIRD STAGE REPORT**

**Final Revision  
20th May 2005**

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## **BEST VALUE REVIEW STAGE THREE REPORT OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SERVICES**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The best value review for Private Sector Housing Services has now reached its final stage and this report outlines the progress of the review and details of the recommendations of the Review Team.

Although the service provides a wide range of activities throughout the private sector, the Review Team recognized the need for future investment across all service areas to improve existing provision to meet the targets set locally and by Central Government.

This report describes

- The existing service provision
- Performance compared to other service providers through benchmarking indicators
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to the existing service (SWOT analysis)
- Options Appraisal
- Recommendations for inclusion in Stage 4, Improvement Plan

The key aim of the service is to ensure the maintenance, improvement and energy efficiency of housing stock across all dwellings (regardless of tenure) for the health, safety and well-being of the people of Herefordshire. This includes:

- Enforcement action (including Houses in Multiple Occupation)
- Grants and other forms of Financial Assistance
- Adaptations and the Home Improvement Agency
- Energy Efficiency

These services are provided by an “in-house” team of 13 members, in partnership with colleagues from Social Care & Strategic Housing, The Primary Care Trust and also Independent agencies including Anchor and the Energy Savings Trust. Funding is attracted from a wide range of resources, including Central Government, energy providers (Npower, Scottish Power and Energy Efficiency organizations e.g. The Energy Savings Trust).

Many of the services are prioritized towards the more vulnerable client groups to enable them to live more independently e.g. older people, or those in receipt of benefits and wards identified in the Multiple Deprivation Index as poor quality (Weobley, Belmont, City and Mortimer).

To establish if the services are providing value for money, it is crucial that they are compared against similar provisions elsewhere. To compare to other local authorities has proved difficult as there is only one National Best Value Performance Indicator (BVP162) which measures the % of properties made fit relative to the total number of unfit properties in the district, that all authorities are required to report, (although this will cease from April 2005). The disparity is due to National changes to the statute around grant assistance meaning that Housing Renewal Policies are now being individually tailored to meet local needs and priorities.

Aspects of performance within the service were compared to both unitary and district authorities across the Country. It was interesting to see that against district level authorities performance levels were high, but against unitary authorities, performance was a lot poorer.

The budget secured for various aspects of the service also varied between district and unitary authorities, showing average figures for housing repair and improvements against district authorities but highest within the unitary group.

It was difficult to identify agencies that could provide an identical service across Herefordshire, either in whole or part and therefore, there are few options available for the re-provision. However, against external agencies, the current level of staffing provided in-house, was more cost effective in comparison.

The SWOT analysis, looking at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the service, highlighted some key considerations.

- Specialist teams with expertise provides high quality services and forward thinking
- Lack of effective databases causes duplication of workload
- Lack of promotional work – in part due to staff vacancies.
- Implementation of the Housing Act 2004, provides opportunity for service development
- Whilst the ability to attract external funding is a strength and has added to the success of the team, it can be seen as a future threat with budget pressures on existing funding allocations

In conclusion, several options were considered for the future provision of the service. Either do nothing, tender the existing service to alternative providers or develop the existing service through restructure and improved partnership working.

Having considered all the stages of the Best Value Review to date, the recommendation by the Review Team is to develop the existing service by restructuring the existing teams and improving partnership working to enable continuous improvement as this was presented as being best value for money.

Therefore, an Improvement/Implementation Plan will be developed (by the Review Team) as Stage 4 of the Best Value Review, for further consideration and approval by the Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In line with published corporate guidance on the Best Value Review process, this report records the work undertaken during stages 2 and 3 of the procedure.

These stages are:

- The collection and analysis of data and performance statistics from within the service and from other providers of similar services.
- The comparison/benchmarking of the data available.
- The option appraisal of the service as a whole and of the separate parts of the service. Recommendations made during this stage will be used as a basis for the Improvement Plan in stage 4, focusing on future priorities and service delivery.

As a result of the Best Value Review Stage One Report a number of issues or information gaps were highlighted that would require addressing by the Private Sector Housing Team.

The following reports the teams progress and actions in dealing with the issues identified.

- a) A major concern within the team was how to ensure and encourage good communication and liaison between the service we provide and other Council services and organisations that are providing similar services?

It was decided that to facilitate better partnership working and communication with the Enabling and Supporting People Teams that we would exchange all Team Meeting Minutes and that where possible a member of one team will be present at the other's team meeting.

A Private Sector Housing Mailbox has therefore been set up for the Private Sector Housing Team and all minutes of all meetings are posted on the mailbox. Any issues that effect the whole of the team are also posted on its mailbox.

- b) Concerns were raised over the availability and need for officers to undertake adequate Customer Care and Disability Awareness training and how to effectively evaluate the training.

It was decided to instigate a rolling programme of training for officers in conjunction with the Staff Review and Development process. With this process the individual needs of front-line staff will also be evaluated and discussed at the time of each review.

- c) A concern was expressed over the need to encourage officers to cycle, walk, use public transport and car share for commuting and other work journeys.

Wherever possible all officers consult each other when booking visits to combine timetables and dates to avoid duplication of visits. All staff are encouraged to cycle, walk, use public transport and car-share for both commuting and other work journeys and as a result arrange "cluster" visits were possible. Members of the team regularly car-share and adhere as strictly as possible to Herefordshire Councils Staff Travel Plan which is posted on the Intranet.

A survey of the way officers travel to and from work and their car usage during working hours was recently carried out by Herefordshire Council in which Private Sector Housing participated fully. There is a Herefordshire Council Car Share Database to which reference can be made when booking and planning visits. There is also an initiative to use Council bicycles where it is convenient to do so.

- d) Concerns were raised over the information used to measure and compare performance.

On a practical daily basis the Private Sector Housing Manager attends Benchmarking meetings and all information is fed back to the team. We can access information from the ODPM web site on how well we are performing against other similar authorities. We evaluate our own performance on a quarterly basis by completing our Local Performance Indicators and the Team Manager holds regular case-load reviews with officers to assess performance.

For the purposes of the Stage Three report it was very difficult to obtain comparative data due to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 allowing each Local Authority to use its budget for private sector housing to meet local needs. Some data was collected which is tabled separately in the report under its specific headings. The team also consulted with the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) for guidance.

The underlying theme of the Best Value Review process is to ensure continuous improvement in services delivered to clear cost and quality standards in the most economic, efficient and effective way. The fundamental element that has been included, as part of the process, is the consistent application of the four 'C's', challenge, compare, consult and compete.

A thorough analysis of the service has taken place using the robust SWOT analysis technique that draws out the strengths and weaknesses that exist within the organization, and the opportunities and threats that normally exists outside.

For this stage of the Review, some of the original best value review team members were no longer available, and the best value team was re-grouped with replacement members, including a new Chairman (Appendix 1).

The four service elements considered under the SWOT analysis and the option appraisal processes were therefore as follows:

- Enforcement including Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Grants and other forms of Financial Assistance
- Adaptations and the Home Improvement Agency
- Energy efficiency

### **1.1 The Aims And Objectives Of The Service**

The key aim of the service is to ensure the maintenance, improvement and energy efficiency of housing stock across all tenures (77,190) dwellings, for the health, safety and well being of the people of Herefordshire.

This is achieved through:

- The provision of a comprehensive advice service
- The provision of financial and other assistance under the Housing Renewal Policy adopted in 2003
- The enforcement of standards of fitness for human habitation under the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- The registration of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) (Housing Act 1996)

- ❑ The development and implementation of energy efficiency initiatives and energy audits in the residential sector to address targets set in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and associated legislation.
- ❑ The annual assessment of housing conditions as required by the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989)
- ❑ Ensuring the provision of an effective Home Improvement Agency in Herefordshire
- ❑ Promoting partnership working and encouraging best practice

## **2.0 RECENT CHANGES IN THE SERVICE CURRENTLY PROVIDED**

A full description of the service was included in the 1st stage report of this review, and more recent changes are included here for information.

The Private Sector Housing Team has 13 full time staff members and structurally is located within the Strategic Housing Services Division of the Social Care and Strategic Housing Directorate. The partner teams within the service area are the Enabling and Housing Needs, Supporting People, and Home Point, and there are strong partnership links with the Home Improvement Agency.

Each of the four service elements has a specialist team. These are located in a main office base in Hereford, and in two satellite offices in Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

### **2.1 Enforcement including Houses in Multiple Occupation**

The Housing Act 2004 will impact greatly on this section's activities, mainly through the introduction of mandatory licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation, and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System that replaces the 'fitness standard', a measure of housing conditions used for many decades.

This team currently regulates the conditions of Houses in Multiple Occupation throughout Herefordshire under the two HMO Registration schemes declared in 1999.

Although the adoption of HMO registration schemes has been a discretionary power for local authorities until now, Part II of the Housing Act 2004 introduces a mandatory national system of licensing for all houses in Multiple Occupation of 3 storeys or more and with 5 or more occupants. The new scheme will replace the existing Registration schemes, although properties currently registered will be passported through for a minimum 3- year period.

As the Registration schemes have been very successful in Herefordshire, it is proposed, following consultation with stakeholders, to apply to the Secretary of State to continue to license those registered properties not within the mandatory licensing criteria (i.e. less than 3 storeys with less than 5 occupants).

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System assesses the defects in a house that may present a hazard to the health and safety of the occupiers, therefore placing more emphasis on the occupant than the building. The system is complex but the ethos is that any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential visitor or occupier.

An assessment of the dwelling will involve considering 29 hazards and a risk rating process. This is linked to a scoring method for deciding the most appropriate course of action to deal with the hazards present.

New enforcement powers are also introduced in the new Act, including improvement, prohibition and informal notices. There are also specific powers to deal with emergencies. Guidance and training is awaited from the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) for these new mandatory provisions prior to the introduction of the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System in late 2005.

The retraining of all front line staff will have resource implications as the Council will have a duty to ensure that officers have the appropriate training and qualifications to implement the new legislation.

The work of this section is fundamental in striving to achieve the government's 'Decent Home' standard. A 'Decent' home is one that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities. In the private sector the standard is applied to the houses of vulnerable people (those in receipt of a means tested benefit) and forms a key driver of the Housing Renewal Policy. There is a national target that 65% of all homes occupied by vulnerable people should be 'Decent' by 2006. Herefordshire's performance against this target currently stands at 63%.

The Landlord/Tenancy Relations Service which includes advice on harassment and illegal eviction, was previously undertaken by this team, but is currently provided under an agency agreement by Herefordshire Housing, and is due for review by March 2006.

## **2.2 Grants And Other Forms Of Financial Assistance**

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 made significant changes to remove the legal confines of the previous grants system and gave local authorities greater flexibility to ensure that local priorities were considered and addressed

The Housing Renewal Policy 2003-2006, adopted in 2003 and reviewed in 2004, is based on addressing identified local needs and priorities. The aims and objectives of the policy are to ensure the maintenance, improvement and energy efficiency of housing stock across all tenures for the health, safety and well being of the residents of Herefordshire.

The key priority issues identified in the policy that impact directly on this area of the service include-

- An ageing population, which will become more dependent upon local services
- Rural isolation making it difficult for vulnerable groups to access services
- Unfitness in rural areas
- A high level of borderline unfitness, particularly in pre 1945 properties
- A high level of disrepair and a very high level of unfitness in the private rented sector
- Low incomes and rising house prices, making it difficult for young people to buy their own home and for both young and old people to maintain substandard property.
- Fuel poverty, particularly amongst the elderly and low income households who tend to occupy the worst housing
- A large disparity in the ranking of wards in Herefordshire under the Multiple Deprivation Index
- An increasing pressure on budgets to provide adaptations for disabled people through all tenures, to enable them to live independently in their own homes



The Housing Renewal Policy includes the following wide range of assistance delivered by this team to address priorities identified within an annual renewal budget of £1.2 million

- Major Works Assistance - works required to make a dwelling fit for human habitation, or reduce the risk to health and safety of occupants to an acceptable level, or remedy items of substantial disrepair.
- Professional and technical advice to help residents to maintain or improve their homes.
- Loan Products available through the Home Improvement Trust. The scheme is a tool that allows the Council to supplement other forms of assistance by incorporating additional private sector funding into the renewal process.
- Targeted Minor Works Initiatives including Special Energy Efficiency Scheme, Health Through Warmth, Rapid Response, Care Alarms.
- Landlord Assistance - available for single family rented dwellings or Houses in Multiple Occupation to meet current standards.
- Minor Works Assistance - available to remedy or prevent unfitness and disrepair in order to enable people to remain in their homes. It is available to occupiers and tenants with repairing obligations.
- Relocation Assistance - generally considered for owner-occupiers where relocation is considered the most cost effective or practical option; and where the existing home is unsuitable for improvement repair or adaptation. It covers costs including estate agent fees, solicitor fees, and stamp duty.
- List of Contractors - a list of registered contractors has been compiled by Private Sector Housing and is available to all residents in the County.

## **2.3 Adaptations and The Home Improvement Agency**

### **Adaptations:**

Despite recent major changes in grant legislation, there is still a statutory duty to provide Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, which are means tested and available to enable disabled people to live independently by providing facilities or access to their own homes.

Under the Housing Renewal Policy the team also offers discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants to further assist disabled applicants.

There is also partnership working with the Enabling team to provide longer term solutions for some disabled people by facilitating larger adaptation schemes through new development initiatives.

Nationally there is a major review being undertaken of the Disabled Facilities Grant system and Herefordshire has played an active part in the 'information gathering' process by that review team through activities within its Adaptation Benchmarking Group. The results of the review are expected in the summer (2005).

A local Best Value Review of the (Physical Disability 18-64) service has recently been undertaken and has highlighted issues relating to delays in delivery times for equipment and adaptations. There is an action plan for engagement with the Private Sector Housing team to review and improve partnership working with all organisations involved.

## **The Home Improvement Agency**

The team also monitors the activities of the Home Improvement Agency. The existing service provider is withdrawing the agency service from September 2005, and progress is being made to ensure a continuing service for the future.

Apart from the core service described the agency delivers two 'handyman' schemes:

- The Small Repairs team is the preferred contractor for the delivery of minor adaptations in the private housing sector, including those requested to facilitate hospital discharge under the Rapid Response initiative.
- The You @ Home 'Repairs on Prescription' initiative is a partnership with the Private Sector Housing team, launched in May 2004 with Kick Start Funding from the Regional Housing Board. This service carries out essential or urgent works that have been identified by health or key workers in the homes of vulnerable people. The necessary repairs are carried out quickly and efficiently, at no cost to the occupier.

The Private Sector Housing team has strong links with Social Care and the Community Occupational Therapy service, and has a role in delivering the Prevention agenda set out in the National Service Framework for Older People (2001).

The team also has representation on a number of joint working groups including the Falls Prevention Strategy Group and the Local Implementation Team for Older People. Regular multi-disciplinary meetings are held with the Head Occupational Therapist and Partnership Manager for the Integrated Community Equipment Service to improve service delivery within budgets.

### **2.4 Energy Efficiency:**

The service develops and implements initiatives, which contribute towards improvement in energy efficiency under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.

In addition, the service works within the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001, published as a requirement of the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000, which has targets for ending 'fuel poverty for vulnerable households' by 2010 and to all other households by 2016. 'Fuel poverty' is defined where a household spends more than 10% of its income to heat the home to an 'adequate' standard of warmth.

In December 2004, the team secured funding from DEFRA (Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to assist in the development of a Fuel Poverty Strategy. Working with the fuel poverty charity 'National Energy Action' (NEA), the target date for implementation of this Strategy is December 2005.

The service encourages and is actively involved in several partnership working initiatives, which result in additional funding being levered in to boost the Council's grant budget.

The Team is also responsible for:

- Processing referrals under the Health Through Warmth Initiative, which is a partnership between the Council, the Health Authority and the fuel supplier Npower
- Obtaining data for energy audits, providing energy advice, interest-free loans, bulk discounts and Government grants in conjunction with the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (under a Service Level Agreement)

- ❑ The development and maintenance of an energy database for all residential properties in Herefordshire
- ❑ The development of multi-media information and educational packages relating to energy efficiency in the residential sector.
- ❑ The development of innovative and sustainable energy efficiency initiatives to tackle specific local issues. This area often involves working with partner organisations to achieve sufficient economies of scale or funding.
- ❑ Providing advice and assistance to providers of affordable housing and to influence policies.

### **3.0 ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE AND BENCHMARKING**

In order to analyse the current performance of the Private Sector Housing Service, comparative data was sought from other providers of a similar range of services. In general these were all other local authorities, although some data was obtained from agencies specialising in providing technical and professional staff for housing activities. Responses to requests made directly to government offices for comparative data were not forthcoming.

In some areas there was a disappointing response to requests for information. As all local authorities now publish Housing Renewal Policies individually tailored to meet local needs and priorities, services and assistance offered differ significantly. This makes the benchmarking process a difficult task.

There follows short descriptions of 7 benchmarking exercises undertaken during the review process.

#### **3.1 Comparative information was sought in the first instance from a group of mainly rural district areas in Gloucestershire.**

The information obtained related to the following, incorporating many of the defined local performance indicators for Herefordshire:

- ❑ The area and total population of the district
- ❑ The elderly population and those with a long-term illness
- ❑ Budget levels for adaptation and housing renewal
- ❑ Numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and those improved in the last year
- ❑ The percentage of unfit properties made fit (BVPI62)
- ❑ Timescales from referral to approval of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Benchmarking data against this group of authorities is given in Table 1 overleaf.

## BENCHMARKING 2003 – 2004- GLOUCESTERSHIRE AUTHORITIES Table 1

	Forest Of Dean	Cheltenham	Gloucester	Cotswold	Stroud	Herefordshire
Population	79,982	110,013	109,885	80,376	107,898	176,900
Area (Hectares)	52,666	4,680	4,050	117,000	43,318	217,973
No of HMO's	393		460	300	16	367
No of Private Rented Properties	2,695		3,550	5,400	3,275	8,615 (13%)
Population over 60 years (%)	18,364 (23%)	24,126 (21.9%)	21,285 (19.4%)	20,359 (25.3%)	24,687 (22.9%)	45,300 (25.6%)
No of People with limiting long term illness	14,429 (18%)	17,115 (15.6%)	18,531 (16.9%)	12,134 (15.1%)	17,092 (15.8%)	31,800 (17.9%)
Grant Budget DFG	£333,333		£750,000	£293,333	£377,603	£470,000
Grant Budget – Private Sector Renewal	£400,000		£555,000	£1,000,000	£753,752	£1,200,000
DFG average time from referral to approval	113wks			132wks	89wks	76wks
HMO's improved in the year	3 (0.75%)	46	27 (6%)	5 (1.7%)	15 (93.75%)	30 (8.2%)
BVPI62	1.4%	12.5%	1.1% (estimated)	0.9%	1%	2.52%

Herefordshire has both the largest population and land area, and the greatest percentage of population over 60.

It also has one of the highest percentages of people with limiting long-term illness, although our budget dedicated to providing adaptation (DFGs) was the lowest per head of population in this group. However the budget for the current year is considerably higher.

Herefordshire has the highest numbers of private rented properties, not including HMOs, and more than 8% of those (HMOs) were improved during last year, which was an average figure for the group.

The national Best Value Performance Indicator 62 (BVPI62) measures the percentage of properties made fit relative to the total number of unfit properties in the district. This indicator will not be reported from April 2005 due to legislative changes that make the fitness standard redundant. Against this group Herefordshire were the second highest, but scored very low in the Unitary Authorities Group.

Herefordshire's budget (£1.2 million) made available for housing repair and improvement is average for this group.

Herefordshire shows the best performance in this group with regard to the average length of time from referral by an occupational therapist to the approval of a DFG. The main reason for this is that for non-unitary authorities the system is more complex involving consultation across services provided by both County and District Councils.

**3.2 A second data benchmarking exercise was carried out with the same data set, within a Unitary Authorities Benchmarking Club, of which Herefordshire is a member.**

Benchmarking data against this group of authorities is given in Table 2 below.

**BENCHMARKING 2003 – 2004 – UNITARY AUTHORITIES TABLE 2**

	<b>Bath &amp; NE Somerset</b>	<b>Darlington</b>	<b>East Riding of Yorkshire</b>	<b>North Somerset</b>	<b>South Gloucester</b>	<b>Isle of Wight</b>	<b>Herefordshire</b>
Population	170,936	98,210	321,253	191,400	246,810	136,252	176,900
Area (Hectares)	35,112	19,840	241,000	37,478	49,700	38,070	217,973
No of HMO's	3,000	270	800	202	600	84	367
No of Private Rented Properties	7,400	3,600	11,262	9,052	3,870	4,879	8,615
Population over 60 years (%)	22.82%	22.17%	24.20%	24.80%	19.20%	28.30%	25.6%
No of People with limiting long term illness	26,787	14,588	56,888	34,915	35,696	29,975	31,800
Grant Budget DFG	£486,700	£684,000	£102,100,000	£707,000	£850,000	£600,00	£470,000
Grant Budget – Private Sector Renewal	£284,000 SHIP Funding £190,500	£807,000	£2,428	£660,000	£225,000	£480,000	£1,200,000
DFG average time from referral to approval	Insufficient data	No data	17 weeks	No data	20 weeks	39 weeks	76 weeks
HMO's improved in the year	270	No data	52	31	18	15	30 (8.2%)
BVPI62	7.39%	5.07%	5.44%	8.10%	3.00%	2.40%	2.52%

Herefordshire is the most sparsely populated, even compared with the East Riding of Yorkshire, which has the largest land area.

Herefordshire has the second highest percentage of population over 60, surpassed only by the Isle of Wight, and is in the top quartile for numbers of people with limiting long-term illness.

The budget in Herefordshire for DFGs was the lowest in last year's figures relative to population, but this year's substantial increase brings it in line with the others in this group. This budget will need to be sustained to maintain performance levels.

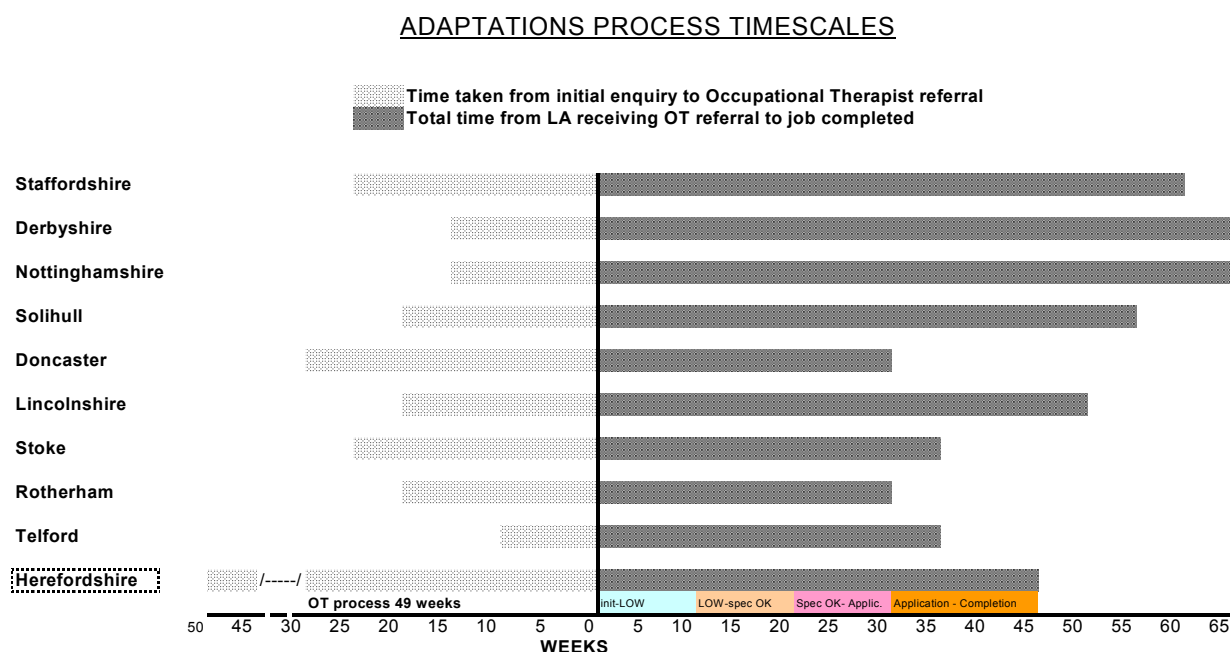
Herefordshire's budget for housing renewal is by far the highest in this group, and much of the assistance available is targeted at the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable client groups under the comprehensive Housing Renewal Policy.

The time taken for the approval of Disabled Facilities Grants from the date of referral is longest in Herefordshire compared with others in this group, and is a cause for concern.

### 3.3 A more detailed comparison of adaptation process timescales was undertaken through the Midlands and South Yorkshire Benchmarking club.

Benchmarking data for the process timescales is included in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**



In this comparison, where the range of processing times between receiving an occupational therapist's assessment and the completion of the DFG adaptation works was 31 weeks to 65 weeks, in Herefordshire the timescale was an average of 46 weeks.

However for the process timescales for clients waiting for an assessment by an OT Herefordshire with an average time of 49 weeks is by far the worst. The range for the other authorities in this section is 9 to 30 weeks.

Although many of the authorities are unitary, some are not. As previously discussed the process times within unitary authorities are normally shorter, where the occupational therapists are employed within social services departments.

However in Herefordshire this is not the case as they are located within the Primary Care Trust. This combined with a general shortage of this resource in the County impacts significantly on the timescales achieved. There has been a proposal to fund a Housing Occupational Therapist to improve performance in this area.

**3.4 This group of Energy Efficiency benchmarking exercises is with a group of local authorities who are members of the steering group for the Shropshire, Herefordshire and Stoke Energy Advice Centre**

There are 3 energy efficiency activities compared: (Table 4)

- The overall percentage improvement in domestic energy efficiency
- Private sector Housing Energy Efficiency grant activity
- The monetary value of Service Level Agreements with the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre

**TABLE 4 Overall Percentage Improvement in Domestic Energy Efficiency**

	Herefordshire	Shrewsbury & Atcham	Telford & Wrekin	Oswestry	North Shropshire	Bridgnorth
2001-02 (%)	9.7	17	15.1	7.2	10.7	9.3
2002-03 (%)	11.2	19.3	16.7	8.8	12.9	10.4
2003-04 (%)	12.7	24	19.3	10.7	14.3	11.8
<b>Private Sector Housing Energy Efficiency Grants Activity</b>						
<b>2001-02</b>						
No. of Grants	1859	N/A	12	32	20	13
LA Grant (£000's)	495	18	25	30	8	35
EEC Grant (£000's)	80	0	0	12	2	0
<b>2002-03</b>						
No. of Grants	1815	N/A	12	94	20	27
LA Grant (£000's)	447	18	25	30	8	77
EEC Grant (£000's)	201.5	0	0	100	2	0
<b>2003-04</b>						
No. of Grants	1539	N/A	12	59	20	23
LA Grant (£000's)	419	18	25	15	8	79
EEC Grant (£000's)	188	20	0	106	2	0
<b>Monetary Value of Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and Number of Home Energy Checks (HEC's)</b>						
2001-02 SLA (£000's)	3	18	N/A	3	3	18.5
No. of HEC's	282	1723	3919	2321	2075	232
2002-03 SLA (£000's)	3	18	N/A	3	3	18.5
No. of HEC's	962	1617	4082	756	886	796
2003-04 SLA (£000's)	6	18	N/A	3	3	18.5
No. of HEC's	4305	1898	5561	757	1269	1238

**Overall Percentage Improvement in Domestic Energy Efficiency**

Table 4 shows the overall percentage improvement in domestic energy efficiency for the last three years by Local Authorities in this group as required by the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA 95).

Compared to the other 5 authorities Herefordshire appears to remain in the 'just under average' position consistently over the 3 years. However it is widely recognised that some of the data supplied may not be accurate as there is no standard methodology for calculating energy efficiency improvements.

Neither is there a formal recording mechanism for energy efficiency measures undertaken directly by householders nor any reporting obligation placed on contractors who carry out such improvements.

## Private Sector Housing Energy Efficiency Grants Activity

Table 4 shows the numbers and values of domestic energy efficiency grants awarded in the last three years within the same group of authorities. Herefordshire has been consistent in its lead position for processing many more grants and providing more budget for energy efficiency than the other Local Authorities in this group for a number of years.

However this level of commitment is not reflected in the improvement in energy efficiency reported annually for Herefordshire compared with other authorities in this group.

This clearly illustrates the difficulties experienced in reporting reliable data within the HECA reporting system, that truly reflect the extent of activity and commitment to make significant progress towards the target set.

### Monetary Value of Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and Number of Home Energy Checks (HEC's)

Table 4 demonstrates that Herefordshire Council's Service Level Agreement with the local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) has been providing very good value for money since 2002 compared to the level of activity undertaken when benchmarked against other local authorities in the group.

This is in sharp contrast to the figures reported for 2001/2 where value for money was poor prior to a renegotiation of the Service Level Agreement by the HECA officer. Activity in this context is measured by counting the number of Home Energy Checks completed. This is used as an indicator of the number of enquiries taken by the agency on behalf of the local authority.

In 2003/4, Herefordshire Council's SLA with the EEAC was £6,000 and the agency generated 4,305 home reports, representing a cost of £1.39/report. This can be compared with an SLA with the agency of £18,500 for Bridgnorth DC where 1238 home reports were completed, at a cost of £14.94/report.

This position is almost certainly due to the fact that Herefordshire has a dedicated HECA officer who works closely with the agency to promote partnerships and innovative ways of marketing the services they provide, thus achieving good value for money.

### 3.5 Grant Satisfaction Survey

Benchmarking data for grant satisfaction is included in Table 5 below.

#### FOR ALL GRANTS COMPLETED

Local Authority	Approx. No Satisfaction Surveys issued 2004-2005	Approx. No. returned	% satisfied
Herefordshire Council	200	132	98%
Gloucester City Council	134	81	99%
South Shropshire	50	24	100%
Stroud District Council	Unable to advise as the S.S covers entire Environmental Health Service. One S.S. issued in every 3 grants given.		83%
Worcester City Council	105	57	100%



In Herefordshire questionnaires are sent to all grant applicants when the grant works have been completed, requesting feedback from grant recipients on the level of satisfaction they feel with the service provided.

Of the local authorities in the group for this exercise Herefordshire issued the highest number of satisfaction surveys, and also received the highest percentage of responses (66%). Although Herefordshire shows a high satisfaction rate of 98%, it is ranked only in fourth position out of five. However, the two authorities recording 100% satisfaction from the forms returned, reported only 45% and 54% response-rates.

### 3.6 Comparison of Housing Renewal Policies

Benchmarking data for Renewal Policies is included in Table 6 below.

	Herefordshire	Forest of Dean	Milton Keynes	South Gloucester	East Riding of Yorkshire	Telford & Wrekin
Advice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Loans	✓			✓		
Major Works Assistance:						
• <b>Owner/Occupiers</b>	✓		✓			✓
• Landlords	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Minor Works Assistance:						
• <b>General</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Energy Efficiency	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
• Health Through Warmth	✓					
• Hosp Discharge Scheme	✓					
Disabled Facilities Grants:						
• <b>Mandatory</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
• Discretionary	✓		✓			✓
Relocation	✓					
Special Grants/Initiatives;						
• Repairs on Prescription Service	✓					
• Overcrowding grant	✓					
Handyperson Assistance	✓					
Contractors' List	✓					
Empty Properties Grant	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Almost all of the authorities in the group offer general Minor Works Grants / Assistance and Energy Efficiency Grants, but Herefordshire also offers Minor Works Assistance for special initiatives (Health Through Warmth, Rapid Response Hospital Discharge Scheme).

Although Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are mandatory, half of the authorities, including Herefordshire, also provide discretionary DFGs to assist with the costs of larger adaptation schemes.

Most authorities offer a comprehensive advice service, but Herefordshire is one of only two authorities assisting with the provision of loans (through a third party organisation), to assist those who may not be eligible for grant assistance, or who may require additional funding for building works.

All of these authorities offer Major Works Assistance, but only half (including Herefordshire) offer to both landlords and owner-occupiers.

Herefordshire is unique in this group in that it also offers Relocation Grants, Special Grants (Repairs on Prescription Service, Overcrowding Grant), Handyperson Materials funding, and access to a Registered Contractors list. All of these are designed to assist a wide range of client groups, in particular those vulnerable groups requiring assistance to enable them to remain in their own homes.

This comparative exercise illustrates the comprehensive range of assistance available within Herefordshire's Housing Renewal Policy compared to the other authorities in the group.

### **3.7 The last benchmarking exercise undertaken for this stage of the review looks at staff costs to provide the service.**

Comparative costs are given in Table 7 below

	<b>Herefordshire Council</b>	<b>M.S.R.</b>	<b>Osborne Richardson</b>
Environmental Health Officer (EHO)	£18.98 per hr	£30.55 per hr	£30.26 per hr
Technical Officer	£14.35 per hr	£30.55 per hr	£24.67 per hr
HMO Inspection cost (assuming 7.5 hours per report)	£142.35 (report by EHO)	£230.00	£240.88

#### **All costs are exclusive of car user rates.**

Within the Private Sector Housing function there are currently very few alternative providers other than other housing authorities, due to the statutory requirement of some parts of the service.

As a Job Evaluation exercise has recently been completed in Herefordshire, it has been assumed that staffing costs are now at a reasonably economic level, and certainly more competitive than those within neighbouring authorities who have not yet undertaken the process.

The team looked at direct comparisons with the limited private sector market and consultant/agency services. Comparative staff costs were sought from three providers in the private sector, two of whom responded and the results are as shown.

A review of the costings provided shows that the evaluated staff salaries plus 40% "on costs" (these cover all costs associated with employing staff in Herefordshire including all central support costs) are lower than those charged by service providers in the private sector.

Staff agency services traditionally offer only a limited service, for example short-term contracts in this area of specialised work such as House Condition Surveys, and are not normally interested in the day-to-day provision of a holistic service working with stakeholders.

Evidence from other local authorities indicates that the provision of agency staff to fill long-term vacancies has caused many difficulties particularly to service-users, associated with a lack of continuity due to the short-term nature of their contracts.

## 4.0 SWOT ANALYSIS

This is an acronym for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” and focuses on the existing service. It seeks to investigate the strengths and weaknesses that exist within the organisation, and the opportunities and threats that normally originate externally.

The following is a summary of the main issues discussed during the SWOT exercises undertaken across the service as a whole, and individually across the four component parts of the service. Where issues have been highlighted in specialist areas the relevant workshop is indicated.

### 4.1 Strengths

- Strong financial commitment from the Council to achieve key ambitions within the Herefordshire Plan,
- Specialist teams and staff expertise, and ability to provide a high-quality service.
- Accessible services, with offices in 3 locations (Hereford, Leominster, Ross-on-Wye), ensuring even access across the county. Services are also accessible by telephone, fax, e-mail and via the website.
- The Registered Contractors List, developed and maintained by the team is proving to be a popular and successful service.
- Close links with Health, Social Care and other organisations ensure joint working to common agendas.
- E-government, reduces paperwork by allowing electronic access to documents and information documents.
- Bidding for external funding, the team has achieved some notable successes in attracting additional funding  
*(Adaptations and Energy Efficiency Workshops)*
- Houses in Multiple Occupation Registration Schemes, a successful initiative that has improved housing conditions in this important tenure over the last 5 years.  
*(Enforcement Workshop)*
- Political commitment to support innovation and maintain budget levels.  
*(Grants and Energy Efficiency Workshops)*

### 4.2 Weaknesses

- Lack of integrated databases, both corporately and within the team, resulting in a duplication of workload and some communication problems. (Although this is a current weakness there is a new integrated software/GIS system to be installed in the near future)
- No promotion of the service, causing confusion to service users.
- History of vacant posts within the team, impacting on the ability of other members of staff to deliver all the services efficiently.
- Customer confusion, when several agencies are involved in providing the same or similar services both locally and nationally e.g. energy initiatives promoted by fuel supply companies.  
*(Adaptations & the Home Improvement Agency(HIA) and Energy Efficiency Workshops)*

- Excessive paperwork, particularly involving grant processes where a clear audit trail for eligibility and payments is essential, and prescribed forms are still in use. This is exacerbated when other agencies are involved (where they may have their own additional paperwork and systems)  
*(Adaptations & HIA and Grant/Assistance Workshops)*
- Lapsed consultation/close-working arrangements with the Fire Authority. This has been due to internal restructuring, and a change of priorities within the Fire Service, and requires positive re-engagement.  
*(Enforcement including HMOs Workshop)*
- Insufficient numbers of specialist contractors, particularly to undertake energy efficiency and adaptation works.  
*(Adaptations & HIA and Energy Efficiency Workshops)*

### **4.3 Opportunities**

- The team currently offers a wide range of assistance and advice on Private Sector Housing matters. With an annual renewal budget of £1.2 million, the service could be actively promoted to ensure those in greatest need can benefit from it.
- Investigate the funding opportunities for an in-house Occupational Therapist post to support the team across all service areas, provide professional liaison with health and social care colleagues, and ensure greater efficiency in the adaptation process.
- New legislation, for example the Housing Act 2004 may provide some opportunities for further development of the service.
- Meeting the challenges of structural changes at directorate and team level.
- Develop a directory of adapted properties through all tenures to ensure the Disabled Facilities Grant budget is being maximised, and avoid some of the existing delays for providing adaptations for those needing them.  
*(Adaptations & HIA Workshop)*
- Re-launch the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and develop tenant groups. There is a clear opportunity to engage with both landlords and tenants to promote the improvement of housing conditions.  
*(Enforcement including HMOs Workshop)*
- Develop new partnerships, to ensure added value through partnership working.  
*(Grants/Assistance Workshop)*
- Promote and support renewable energy and new technologies as they are developed.  
*(Energy Efficiency Workshop)*

### **4.4 Threats**

- Privatisation of the non-statutory services could lead to staff losses, demotivation, a less-efficient service and more confusion for vulnerable service-users.
- Reduced capital budgets, this would have a serious impact on the team's ability to:
  - reduce private sector unfitness and disrepair
  - increase energy efficiency
  - reduce the fear of crime, and
  - generally contribute to the key ambitions of the Herefordshire Plan

- Budget pressure, with increased demand for adaptations across all tenures, due to the mandatory requirement to provide Disabled Facilities Grants, and the increasing numbers of disabled people requiring these works in their homes.  
*(Adaptations & HIA Workshop)*
- Reducing income. The national mandatory licensing of HMOs will reduce the current income levels provided by the HMO Registration Schemes, because only larger HMOs will need to be licensed.  
*(Enforcement including HMOs Workshop)*
- Closure of satellite offices to provide centralised facilities, would impact on service delivery in the north and south of the County.  
*(Grants & Assistance Workshop)*
- The significant impact that climate change will have on budgets for the future.  
*(Energy Efficiency Workshop)*

## 5.0 OPTION APPRAISAL OF THE WHOLE SERVICE

An option appraisal was first considered for the service as a whole using the following range of options:

- Do nothing
- Develop the existing service
- Someone else to deliver the service
- Restructure the team
- Restructure the team including the Home Improvement Agency
- Cease the service.

There follows a summary of the discussion around those options.

### **Do nothing:**

This was not considered a viable option for the team as it would not address issues that had been highlighted during the Best Value Review process, and would conflict with the housing ambitions of the Herefordshire Plan. This course of action would also lead to reduced funding, and result in a failure to meet the government's 'Decent Homes' targets.

### **Develop the existing Service:**

The members of the review team recognised the need to build on the 'solid foundations' within the current service. It was noted that there is scope to be even more innovative, to respond to concerns of stakeholders, and to embrace legislative and technological changes.

### **Someone else to deliver the Service:**

There are difficulties associated with another organization delivery statutory services. Some discretionary elements could be undertaken by specialist providers. Because of the wide range of specialist services delivered this would lead to an unacceptable fragmented approach for service users, and would not strengthen important links with health and social care agendas.

### **Restructure the Team:**

The team recognised the need to respond to changing legislation and technological changes that may result in altering the current structure of the team.

## Restructure Team and Home Improvement Agency:

With the current provider withdrawing the service in the near future this option is the subject of a separate report. This option was therefore subject to limited discussion only.

## Ceasing the Service:

The duties placed upon the Council in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Enforcement and reports under the Home Energy Conservation Act work cannot be ceased. Whilst discretionary services can be ceased it would seriously impair progress towards national and local indicators of improvement in the private sector housing stock. This would subsequently cause a deterioration in residents' health, safety and welfare.

### 5.1 Option Appraisals of Service Areas Using Numerical Scoring:

To complement the initial option appraisal exercise team members each completed a score matrix (See Table 8) for each of the 4 service elements – Enforcement, Grants, Adaptation and Energy Efficiency. The exercise involved scoring each option against the following criteria:

- Acceptability (to stakeholders/users)
- Accessibility (of the service)
- Added Value – Partnership impact
- Value for Money
- Performance Management Impact

**Option Appraisal Scoring – TABLE 8**

OPTIONS	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5	OPTION 6
Appraisal Benefits	Do Nothing	Develop Existing Service	Someone else to deliver the service	Re-structure the Team	Re-structure the Service + Agency	Cease the Service
Acceptability with Stakeholders/ Users						
Accessibility						
Added Value Partnerships						
Value for Money						
Performance Management Impact						
<b>Totals</b>						

**KEY:** The maximum points for the 5 sections **Acceptability etc.** is 20 points. For example if you score each section at 20, your total score would be 100 for each option in each of the service elements.

Some of the options could not be applied to the statutory services delivered only by the housing authority, e.g. ceasing the service. A numerical summary of all the sheets is given in Table 9.

The following briefly summarises the results of this option appraisal exercise:

**Option Appraisals of Service Areas using numerical scoring – TABLE 9**

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>OPTION 1</b>	<b>OPTION 2</b>	<b>OPTION 3</b>	<b>OPTION 4</b>	<b>OPTION 5</b>	<b>OPTION 6</b>
<b>Appraisal Benefits</b>	<b>Do Nothing</b>	<b>Develop Existing Service</b>	<b>Someone else to deliver the service</b>	<b>Re-structure the Team</b>	<b>Re-structure the Service + Agency</b>	<b>Cease the Service</b>
Grants	48.5	<b>65.8</b>	32.6	46.6	<b>59.6</b>	4.8
Adaptation	47.6	<b>58.5</b>	25.6	34.6	<b>59.0</b>	Statutory Service
Enforcement	45.2	<b>63.3</b>	33.1	49.2	Not relevant	Statutory Service
Energy Efficiency	51.0	<b>68.5</b>	41.3	49.7	50.4	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>192.3</b>	<b>256.1</b>	<b>132.6</b>	<b>180.1</b>	<b>169.0</b>	<b>4.8</b>

**KEY:** Each option appraisal has a possible maximum score of 400 points

For all elements of the service the team scoring exercise indicated that the option to develop the service was the preferred one.

In addition in the Adaptations and Home Improvement Agency Workshop the option to re-structure the Private Sector Housing Team in conjunction with the Home Improvement Agency scored very highly.

## 5.2 Option Appraisal using 3 Options

Following this initial appraisal exercise for the service components, the team met for further workshops to explore the options in more detail, e.g. how the service might be developed, particularly as this was an option that had scored highly for all the services.

For the next set of option appraisals, the number of options was halved to 3 to make the process more manageable. The options were:

- Cease the service
- Reduce the service
- Develop the service.

### 5.21 Cease the service

Much of the work undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team is statutory and therefore cannot be ceased. This includes:

- Enforcement work that could possibly be contracted out to another Local Authority or consultants, providing statutory notices were issued in the name of Herefordshire Council

- The processing and delivery of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants following relevant referral from the Occupational Therapy Service
- The duty to report annually on progress made in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004 introduces a statutory duty on all Housing Authorities to license certain Houses in Multiple Occupation (a discretionary function will remain to extend licensing to smaller properties including those currently registered under the existing local schemes).

All other work areas are discretionary and could be ceased. The removal of the ability to give discretionary financial aid in the form of assistance, whilst saving the Council money, and allowing resources to be fully or partly diverted to another service, would not be in the interest of the elderly, disabled or other vulnerable groups on low income.

The levels of unfit housing would rise if discretionary assistance was ceased and progress towards local and national performance targets such as the Decent Homes Standard would be halted. This would also have a direct impact on health services as a result of vulnerable residents occupying cold and unfit homes.

This would also mean that little progress would be made towards the key objectives of the Housing Ambition Group within the Herefordshire Plan, 'meeting Herefordshire's accommodation needs by improving the conditions of public and private housing' and to 'provide housing that is more energy efficient'.

The private Sector Housing Renewal Budget alone cannot be relied upon to reach the targets set out under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and the Warm Homes Act 2000 and the Decent Homes Standard. This commitment requires the input of a budget and a dedicated energy team to continue to attract external funding through strong partnership working.

Herefordshire Council, Supporting People funding currently supports the local Home Improvement Agency, which provides an invaluable service in assisting elderly and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes, including accessing local authority grants and assistance.

Since this option appraisal was undertaken Anchor Trust has given notice of withdrawal of its Staying Put Agency from the County, and options for the future provision of a Home Improvement Agency service in Herefordshire are being explored.

Any proposal to cease all the discretionary elements of Private Sector Housing work would indeed have cost benefits. These are however greatly outweighed by the disadvantages discussed and the impact this option would have on service users and stakeholders.

## **5.22 Reduce the Service**

Many of the team's duties are statutory and cannot be reduced, as discussed under the previous option "Ceasing the Service".

Discretionary parts of the service could be reduced to a greater or lesser degree and a system of priorities would need to be developed to minimize the impact on service users and other stakeholders.

The service could be reduced by ceasing some work areas or by a scaling down of service for example reducing capital budget levels used to provide financial assistance.



Either of these options would significantly impact on:

- The health and safety of some of the most vulnerable members of the community;
- The condition of the private housing stock;
- Progress towards national, regional and local ambitions, priorities and targets;
- The burden on health and social care services, supporting those with housing-related illness and those unable to sustain independent living as a result of poor or inappropriate housing conditions.

Any reduction in budget levels could be managed by:

- Reducing the range of financial assistance available under the Housing Renewal Policy
- Creating a priority waiting system for financial assistance
- Reducing the maximum level of grant or assistance on individual applications

The advantages of reducing the service would have a cost saving, but not necessarily provide “value for money”. This is particularly applicable with partnership working where the integration of funding streams or match-funding can produce significant added value.

### **5.23 Develop the Service**

The service already has links and partnerships with many other organisations, and there was a consensus that these should be built on and strengthened under any proposals for development.

The introduction of the Housing Act 2004 provides an opportunity to consider additional duties and powers within service development. These include:

- the introduction of mandatory licensing for Houses in Multiple Occupation, that will impact on the existing HMO Registration Schemes,
- the Housing Health and Safety Rating System that will significantly change the way in which all property inspections and surveys are undertaken, and
- a new enforcement system including a new set of statutory notices.

All of the above will require specialist training programmes and involve a development of the service to incorporate the new duties.

There was a good deal of discussion around the lack of promotion of Private Sector Housing services generally. All work areas also reported concerns that:

- relevant information was not always readily-accessible in a variety of formats including the Council website, and
- members of the public were often not aware of the range of services offered by the team.

There was recognition that the team should develop services to address the prevention agenda in housing, thereby reducing some of the re-active demand on the service, and ensuring a better use of funding. Some developments discussed were:

- to provide home maintenance information in a variety of formats
- to provide advisory house surveys and reports
- to promote responsible home ownership
- to re-launch the Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- to hold advice surgeries and training events, and
- to promote home safety and security.

The annual review of the Housing Renewal Policy document provides an on-going opportunity to develop and amend services to address changing priorities, and ensure that they are targetted at the most vulnerable sections of the community.

In view of the high priority given to the provision of adaptations to enable independent living, and difficulties experienced with delays in Occupational Therapy assessments and Disabled Facilities Grants processes, there was discussion around the advantages of the employment or secondment of a dedicated Housing Occupational Therapist. This post would:

- Assist the team in referring and processing Disabled Facilities Grants
- Develop a directory of adapted properties and recyclable equipment (in conjunction with health colleagues and other agencies)
- Report on policy developments within the Health and Primary Care Trusts (e.g. the Falls Strategy), and
- Liaise with Health and Social Care colleagues on common agendas, e.g. enabling hospital discharge.

Other opportunities to develop the service included those relating to new technologies, especially those related to energy efficiency, where early promotion would result in maximum benefit to residents.

The team discussed the advantages of a project officer post to manage special initiatives. This would maximise future bidding opportunities and avoid expensive consultant costs.

The development of an in-house Energy Efficiency Advice Centre was considered, as an alternative to the existing arrangement (a service level agreement with the Shropshire, Herefordshire and Stoke Energy Advice Centre). However the advantages of the existing contract are:

- excellent value for money,
- a link with an established network of national agencies, and
- access to financial support from the Energy Saving Trust.

In this case it was agreed that the advantages of the existing arrangement were greater than the 'local knowledge' aspect of developing an in-house service.

There are opportunities to develop the service both with new statutory duties and through a range of positive discretionary activities, many in partnership with other organisations to ensure added value.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the comprehensive Options Appraisal Process undertaken by the Review Team, a number of service improvements and good practice processes were identified and are given here as recommendations for change:

- To work to improve housing conditions in accordance with national 'Decent Homes' targets and local performance indicators.
- To proactively inspect properties with vulnerable occupants identified through the Signposting system, and similar routes. These inspections will be undertaken using the new Housing Health and Safety Rating System criteria.
- To investigate the provision of a new service of advisory inspections and home maintenance information to home-owners to assist in preventing unfit and disrepair and possibly avoiding future intervention by the authority.
- To manage the transition from the current HMO Registration schemes to national mandatory licensing and ensure all relevant HMO's are licensed.
- To re-launch and effectively manage the Landlords Accreditation Scheme.
- To proactively publicise and promote understanding of the Housing Act 2004 to facilitate all of the above programmes. This will be done in conjunction with promoting the whole of the Private Sector Housing service using a variety of media including the Council's Web Site, posters, leaflets, specific forums and surgeries.
- To develop better partnership working between the Private Sector Housing team and Health Practitioners. This will be further facilitated with better promotion of the service and the help it can give to all vulnerable sectors of the community.
- To investigate the provision of a service that may contribute towards the house condition survey report within the Home Sellers Pack from January 2007.
- To further develop the existing list of registered contractors to include those specializing specifically in adaptations work.
- To develop a standard specification with scheduled price rates for commonly requested adaptation works.
- To provide adapted properties information into an existing property register or develop a separate directory of adapted properties across all tenures.
- To explore the feasibility of employing a dedicated Project Officer to project manage Private Sector Housing initiatives.
- To continue to generate additional funding for new projects through the Energy Savings Trust's Innovations programme and other funding sources.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Following a final consultation on this Report with the main Best Value Review team it was decided that the best way forward for Private Sector Housing to continue to serve the people of Herefordshire is for the in-house service to be further developed to meet future challenges and priorities.

\* A full list of Consultees is given in Appendix 2.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING BEST VALUE REVIEW TEAM
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Andrew Hasler	<b>Chair</b> (Performance Improvement Manager)
Cllr. Polly Andrews	(Elected member – Urban)
Cllr. Keith Grumbley	(Elected member – Rural)
Denise Bradley-Lloyd	(Private Sector Housing Manager & Lead Officer for the Review)
Tim Rosser	(Critical friend to the Best Value Review Team)
Paul Cobb	Landlord
Greg Warwick	(Lead Officer for Enforcement and HMO Registration)
Mark Banks	(Lead Officer for Grants, Adaptations and monitoring of the Home Improvement Agency)
Mr. Crispin Rowantree	Tenant (HMO)
Stuart Davies	(Lead Officer for HECA responsibilities (energy efficiency))
Jo Hart	(Partnership Manager, Community Equipment Service)
Tess Govett	(Private Sector Housing Administrator and Minutes for Best Value Team)
Ashley Owens	(Managing Agent)
Dave Carr	(Manager for the Anchor Staying-Put Home Improvement Agency)
Jane Thomas	(Enabling Manager – Herefordshire)
Claire Keetch	(Citizens Advice Bureau)
Jason Cotton	(Strategic Housing Finance Officer)
John Card	(Managing Director Domestic & General)

## List of Consultees

### Herefordshire Council:

Richard Gabb –	Head of Strategic Housing Services
Leslie Libetta –	Operational Project Manager, (Adults Social Care)
Kay Hughes –	Performance Improvement Officer
John Wyton –	Private Sector Housing Adviser
Adrian Soble -	Private Sector Housing Adviser
John Burnett –	Public Relations Officer, Herefordshire Council
Trish Marsh –	Environmental Sustainability

### Stakeholders

Claire Keetch –	District Manager Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureaux
Brent Williams –	Age Concern Leominster
Dave Carr –	Anchor Staying Put Agency
Margy Fowler –	PCT Professional Head of Occupational Therapy
Samantha Mills –	You @ Home Co-ordinator
Station Officer Neil Piggott -	Hereford & Worcester Combined Fire Authority

### Energy Efficiency Stakeholders:

Richard Davies –	Marches Energy Agency
Angie Nicholls –	EAGA
Heather Watts –	Scottish Power
Keith Bennett –	Hestia
Peter Massey -	Energy Consultant
Testa Teres -	Insulation Contractor

### Contractors

Nick Oxford  
Godfrey Hankin  
TPG Disable Aids

### Service Users:

Ms. J. Mathevosian -	DFG
Mrs Bailey -	You @ Home
Mrs Young -	You @ Home
Mrs Cooke -	DFG

### Landlords and Agents:

Mrs G. Holt -	
Ms Jane Young –	Accommodation Officer Hereford College of Technology
Mr Norman Revill -	Landlord/Agent
Mr Mark Chapman -	Landlord
Mr Mike Wingfield –	Landlord
Mrs Melanie Lloyd -	Hergest Estate Office – Landlord
Mr & Mrs Lewis -	Landlords

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Private Sector Housing Team wishes to express thanks to the following for their assistance during the Best Value Review Process.

- Professional Head of Occupational Therapy (PCT Hereford)
- Manager of Anchor Staying Put Home Improvement Agency (Hereford)
- Supporting People (Social Care & Strategic Housing)
- Home Point (Choice Based Letting Agency – Hereford)
- Bath and North East Somerset District Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Darlington Borough Council
- North Somerset District Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Metropolitan Borough of Solihull
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Isle of Wight Council
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Milton Keynes Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Staffordshire County Council
- Derbyshire County Council
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
- Oswestry Borough Council
- North Shropshire District Council
- South Shrophire District Council
- Bridgenorth District Council
- Worcester City Council
- MRA (UK) Ltd MRA Associates
- Osbourne Richardson

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

<b>DEFRA</b>	Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs
<b>DFG</b>	Disabled Facilities Grant
<b>EAGA</b>	Energy Action Grant Agency
<b>EEAC</b>	Energy Efficiency Advice Centre
<b>HEC</b>	Home Energy Check
<b>HECA</b>	Home Energy Conservation Act
<b>HMO</b>	House in Multiple Occupation
<b>NEA</b>	National Energy Action
<b>NHER</b>	National Home Energy Rating
<b>ODPM</b>	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
<b>SLA</b>	Service Level Agreement

The current definition of '**fuel poverty**' is a household, which needs to spend more than 10% of its income to heat the home to an 'adequate' standard of warmth.

An '**adequate**' standard of warmth as currently set by the World Health Organisation is 21 degrees C in the living room and 18 degrees C in other occupied rooms.

The current definition of '**vulnerable**' (when associated with the "Decent Homes Standard") is those persons that are in receipt of a means tested benefit.

A "**decent**" home is one that is warm, weatherproof and has reasonably modern facilities.