

city housing partnership

report year ending December 2009



meeting housing
needs 2009



CHP ANNUAL REPORT • 2008/9



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foreword

Dear colleague

When the last City Housing Partnership (CHP) annual report (2007/8) went to press, partners were busy assessing the emerging issues from the national economic slowdown. Since then, it's unfortunate that we have all come to use the word 'recession' as part of our daily vocabulary.

The recession challenges

For housing, the recession has meant we have been tested – and continue to be tested – in difficult times. However, it is testimony to Birmingham's "Forward" motto, and the partnership's forward-thinking approach, that the pressures of the recession have actually helped to focus our commitment to supporting residents through the hardest of economic times. We could not have foreseen the impact we would have on our individual organisations and the customers they serve.

Throughout this report you will see the practical steps that we, as social landlords, and our third sector partners are taking to deliver schemes and initiatives that are making a difference to workless households. These actions are the main focus of our Working Neighbourhoods Fund Business Plan 2008–11, and they also link directly to delivering against the housing targets in the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Acknowledgement to our dedicated staff

At a time of summarising the partnership's achievements, it is also appropriate to reflect on the difficulties experienced by some of our dedicated staff. The recession has asked more of them in a time of reduced resources, and with the demand for advice and support services greatly increased. Many housing services now have a direct link to the work of colleagues in Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and other employment agencies.

Other staff have also faced changes, with the slowing down of regeneration and development programmes. The CHP Board strongly believes that we need to

work hard to ensure that their skills are retained wherever possible, for the time when economic growth returns to the housing market.

Going forward

Two key strategic achievements this year help the partnership to continue on its journey of improvement. Firstly, the successful Audit Commission inspection of the city's strategic housing function, resulting in two stars with excellent prospects for improvement; and more recently, the results of the first Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) 'One Place' in which Birmingham gained two Green Flags as examples of exceptional practice for meeting housing need and tackling climate change.



Our partnership activity was singled out for special praise for improving poor quality housing, Decent Homes activity, ensuring more housing of all tenure is being built in the city despite a challenging economic situation and making significant progress on homelessness.

Housing also made a significant contribution to the city's second green flag for tackling climate change and reducing CO₂ emissions. Our partnership with Family Housing Association to deliver the city's first Eco village is helping to make a real difference. Only two local authorities received a green flag for housing, both of which own and managed their stock.

In the year ahead the Board will continue to seek and replicate examples of best practice and we are interested in hearing from you about the best ways in which these methods can be shared and introduced across the wider CHP network. The squeeze on public resources is set to continue and the majority of local authorities are preparing for spending cuts of between 10–30 per cent over the next five years (LGC survey Oct. 09). It is therefore vital that our sector strives to embrace different ways of working to provide value for money alongside improved outcomes for residents.



“It's business as usual as we gear up for the challenges ahead”

This links to the Total Place agenda, where a whole-area approach to providing public services leads to better services at less cost. Through Be Birmingham the city is already making good progress with a number of Total Place pilots, which are looking to radically change the way public, private and voluntary organisations are jointly funding and delivering key services. The Board will follow the pilot outcomes with interest and pass on the learning as appropriate for the housing sector. Recently we were designated as one of six 'Total Capital' cities in the UK.

New council housing

In June the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) was launched. This was a significant step towards bringing council house building back to the city for the Housing and Constituencies Directorate – a CHP partner. Jointly funded by Birmingham City Council (BCC) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the BMHT is committed to a house building plan aiming to deliver 500 new council homes a year. This, along with other housing development opportunities, will make a significant contribution to the partnership's objective of providing more affordable housing for rent across the city.

Housing in later life

The Board is pleased to be able to announce the publication of a framework for addressing housing provision for older people, 'Planning for Housing in Later Life in Birmingham'. This framework has a core value of "adding quality years to life and quality of life to years" and is the first strategy that sets out how approaches and services can be developed to improve the outcomes for people in later life.

The strategy is a result of a year-long consultation, working alongside partners from the Adults and Communities Directorate, other public and voluntary service providers specialising in this field and many resident representatives. This complements the range of other strategies overseen by the CHP and supports the objectives of the Housing Plan 2008+.

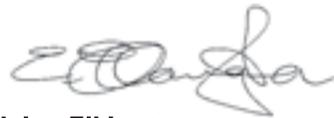
Better together

Since its 2006 launch the partnership has made positive steps to increase the profile of what the CHP stands for: that housing will provide the platform which enables people to thrive and choose to live in Birmingham. It is therefore very pleasing to see the partnership's approach being acknowledged at a national level. This has been demonstrated by the number of initiatives being shortlisted for and winning UK Housing Awards. They include the partnership work of the Supporting People Lay Assessors initiative, the Trainee Academy and the Summerfield Eco-Village.

We continue to work with our elected members through the Members' Forum. This cross-party group has addressed major issues around economic circumstances and our engagement with new regulatory bodies.

Finally, as 2009 draws to a close I am particularly pleased to be able to share the news that the City Housing Partnership has been announced as a finalist in the prestigious Community Partnerships Award 2010, with our partnership shortlisted in the Best Housing Construction Infrastructure category.

At the time of going to print we await an announcement confirming the national winner. However, regardless of the result the Board and I are very pleased that by being a finalist the CHP has once again gained national recognition of its success to date, and that we really are, as a strategic partnership working 'better together' for the community of Birmingham.



Elaine Elkington
Chair of the City Housing Partnership,
Strategic Director for Housing and Constituencies

foreword

The City Housing Partnership's vision:

"Housing will provide the platform which enables people to thrive and choose to live in Birmingham"

This is supported by three themes:

- economic prosperity for all
- a city which values its young people
- a healthy and supported city.



introduction



This report covers the period April 2008 to December 2009 and its publication coincides with the CHP Annual Network Event at the newly-built New Oscott Retirement Village.

It summarises the core activities delivered by the partnership during a period when many partners have found it necessary to evaluate their business due to the challenging economic climate.

With the focus on reducing public spending set to continue, the CHP Board acknowledges that many of these recession-driven challenges will continue in future years. However, the CHP aims to deliver the best possible services it can within the constraints of the resources available. Throughout the report, a view is shared on how this can continue during such challenging times.

BACKGROUND

The City Housing Partnership (CHP) represents key housing stakeholders in Birmingham. It is a cross-sector partnership open to landlords and other organisations that provide housing and housing-related support services. The CHP is part of a suite of partnerships that make up Be Birmingham, the local strategic partnership.

Since its formal launch, in October 2006, the housing partnership has adopted an inclusive approach to delivering accommodation-based services. This has been made possible by a multi-agency board working collectively alongside a network of around 100 organisations and a forum for elected members.

The partnership is fully aware of the expectation around meeting housing need for those most in need of support and about meeting the aspirations of those wishing to settle and make Birmingham their permanent home.

Striving for excellence

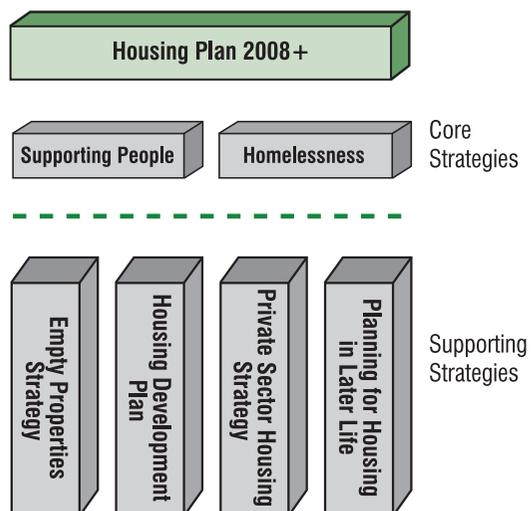
In a rapidly changing housing market, the CHP intends to maximise any opportunity to deliver quality, affordable services – a sizeable task given the scale of the city’s diverse population.

The foundation of the Board’s approach is the delivery of continuous service improvement. The partnership continues to invest in the links made with public and voluntary sector partners and will continue to actively seek out new opportunities to involve others who can make a housing-related contribution.

The strength of the partnership lies with its combined knowledge base, its ability to share resources and the championing of best practice. The success of the partnership in adopting these core values has been demonstrated at a local, regional and national level – with recent examples given throughout this annual report. The Board believes these values will not only help the city’s housing sector to weather a changing market, but will also help to sustain longer term achievements for all involved in social housing.

Despite a difficult 18 months economically the CHP continues to drive forward its actions set out in its Housing Plan 2008+. With a review currently taking place – to keep individual actions up to date – the Housing Plan remains the strategic vehicle to help shape Birmingham’s future housing provision. It also underpins the wider Be Birmingham Sustainable Communities Strategy.

The CHP is grateful for the support of its partners in helping to turn this strategic thinking into real outcomes for communities.



improved partnership working



REGULATOR RECOGNITION

In January 2009 the Audit Commission published the results of its strategic housing inspection. To date, Birmingham is the largest authority in the UK to receive an Inspection of the Strategic Housing Function and the outcome was an impressive “two stars with excellent prospects for improvement”.

The City Housing Partnership was widely referenced in the inspection report as a positive change agent for improvement:

- Partners work effectively with the council to provide joined up services for vulnerable people.
- There is a clear vision supported by a comprehensive housing plan with supporting strategies.
- Partners are fully engaged in developing and delivering priorities.

The report can be found at:
www.audit-commission.gov.uk

More partnering opportunities

The CHP Board has not been complacent on receiving this result. Board members have taken the partnership’s ethos of continuous improvement (for service delivery to tenants and residents) and extended it to appraise its own governance arrangements, with a view to looking at how best to involve the widest possible group of stakeholders on its three star journey.

Last year the Board discussed this issue fully and has made a commitment to carry out a series of actions that will result in new ways of operating. These changes will refresh the way the Board works, creating clear mechanisms for both strategic planning and actual service delivery. The improved approach to

partnership working aims to broaden the number of individuals and organisations involved across housing’s business.

A governance review has already taken place; by early 2010 new Board members and portfolio led sub-groups will report to a strategic Board who will focus on expanding the CHP portfolio within the Be Birmingham family of partnerships and beyond.

By furthering partnering opportunities, the Board is confident that the CHP will continue to deliver innovative solutions against the housing sector’s core challenges and in areas where the supply of affordable housing plays a fundamental role in driving change – such as preventing child poverty and worklessness.

There is more work to be done to tackle the range of deprivation issues faced on many of the city’s housing estates, and a united housing partnership in which stakeholders are able to be part of the delivery approach will speed the pace of change.

An expansion of our joint working has seen work with Safer Birmingham Partnership on domestic violence and the development of a new protocol for improved working with Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

A key area of work with Birmingham based housing associations has been the development of Birmingham Home Choice, the choice-based lettings scheme.

This report covers the period April 2008 to December 2009, a period during which many partners have found it necessary to evaluate their business due to the challenging economic climate.

The partnership has focused on three areas of core activity, with the aim of delivering the best possible services it can within the constraints of the resources available.

1. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2008–2011

The priorities

The set of housing indicators in the 2008–11 Local Area Agreement (LAA) reflect the priority areas for action across the housing sector and mirror the action plans relating to the Housing Plan 2008+ and the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008+. The LAA is the delivery vehicle for the city's Sustainable Communities Strategy.

National indicators

- **NI 141:** increase the number of people achieving independent living (in a planned way).
- **NI 154:** increase the number (net) of new homes.
- **NI 155:** increase the number (gross) of affordable new/converted homes.

Local indicators

- **LI 18a:** reduce the number of low energy efficient low income households (private sector).
- **LI 18b:** increase the number of high energy efficient low income households (private sector).
- **LI 19:** reduce the number of households living in overcrowding (council housing).
- **LI 20:** reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation.
- **LI 21:** achieve the 100 per cent Decent Homes Standard target (council and registered social landlord homes).

The inclusion of these national and local targets in the 2008–11 LAA is a major achievement for the sector, and indeed the CHP. The previous local area agreement did not fully reflect the importance of driving forward housing services to help achieve sustainable communities; now that the CHP Board has negotiated the inclusion of the targets, housing has a key role in shaping Birmingham's approach to delivering the Birmingham 2026 vision.

In summary

The social housing sector made notable progress on its performance to meet the Decent Homes standard by 2010. Further details are contained in this annual report.

There are still some long-standing issues that need to be tackled by the housing sector. Social landlords need to reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation and continued efforts are needed to tackle homelessness, and its causes.

These key challenges will feature prominently in the new 2008–11 LAA. It will form the delivery plan for the community strategy for Birmingham: 'Birmingham 2026 – A Global City with a Local Heart'. The overarching vision will focus on the critically important strategic priorities for the city.

Performance monitoring

The City Housing Partnership has established a robust monitoring framework for its areas of business. Performance and progress monitoring tasks are overseen by the CHP Performance Monitoring Panel (PMP), which operates independently from the Board. In October 2008 the Members Forum was introduced in order to provide a formal mechanism for elected member engagement.

Throughout the year, the panel has met at regular periods to scrutinise progress on the delivery of commitments outlined in the Housing Plan 2008+, its associated strategies and housing's Local Area Agreement targets. In addition, the PMP has overseen



the commissioning of projects that make up the programme of activities for the CHP Working Neighbourhoods Fund Business Plan 2008–11.

The performance monitoring model has been enhanced from the original arrangements put in place to deliver the successive Neighbourhood Renewal Fund programmes, and a cross-sector panel made up of housing association, third sector and council representatives provide a day to day 'check and balance' service to the main Board's more strategic role of moving the partnership forward.

The Audit Commission has determined that the partnership has an effective performance management framework, and acknowledges that high level priorities inform strategies and plans, which in turn are translated into objectives and targets. The Audit Commission also states that our monitoring and reporting "is tailored appropriately to reflect the different levels at which it takes place. As a result, staff, managers and partners understand what they need to do and there is clear accountability for performance at all levels within the service".

Current performance

The housing partnership continues to make good progress on delivering service improvements against its Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets:

Indicator	Service area	Baseline at 2007/8	Final target for 2011 year end	2008/9 target	2008/9 actual
NI 141	Move on to independent living in a planned way	71%	75%	72%	75.7%
NI 154	New homes – net completions	2,029	2,530	2,530	2,456
NI 155	Affordable housing additions	770	2,400*	600	975
LI 18a	Number of low energy efficient homes	25500	24500	25500	n/a
LI 18b	Number of high energy efficient homes	55200	58500	56300	n/a
LI 19	Severely overcrowded council tenants	541	200	450	817**
LI 20	Households in temporary accommodation	517	420	480	443**
LI 21	Decent Homes – all tenures	75%	100%	93%	92%

* Cumulative three year target. ** Latest performance at Q2 2009/10

Moving on to independent living (NI 141)

Good progress has been made to assist vulnerable residents who require specialist support – from a range of housing providers – to move and settle in to accommodation that best suits their individual needs. NI 141 measures the percentage of people achieving independent living after being moved on to such accommodation in a planned way.

The outcome for the year ending 2008/9 was almost 76 per cent which exceeded the target of 72 per cent.

During the last year an extensive commissioning process has been undertaken to determine future service providers for the wide range of housing support services under the Supporting People structure. Service specifications across the thematic 'clusters' have been tailored to reflect the need to ensure that an adequate level of provision is provided to vulnerable residents facing a journey of moving on to independent living. It is therefore anticipated that continued improvements will be made in this target area.

core activity 2008/2009



core activity 2008/2009

New homes (NI 154 and NI 155)

Despite weaknesses in the housing market, completions for **NI 154** fell just short of the 2008/9 target, hitting 2,456. However, the number of completions for the current year (2009/10) and for 2010/11 will be below target due to the lack of activity in the housing market and the low number of planning applications.

Performance against **NI 155** is particularly notable. The analysis of the 'development pipeline' suggests that the three-year target of 2,400 additional affordable homes is achievable.

Birmingham City Council and its partners have responded to opportunities brought forward by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to increase the supply of affordable housing. This is evident in initiatives such as the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust (BMHT) and the Kickstart programme.

Energy efficiency (LI 18a and LI 18b)

To accurately gauge what improvements are being made to improving energy efficiency for low income households (in the private sector), performance information needs to be collected in two parts, and hence the indicators for this area are **LI 18a** and **LI 18b**.

The partnership's intention was to measure the number of vulnerable households where the energy efficiency of their home was improved as a result of action by one of the council's affordable warmth interventions. Unfortunately it has proved prohibitively expensive to measure the number of vulnerable households whose homes have been improved to a level that takes them out of the low energy efficiency category or puts them into the high energy efficiency category. Over 9,000 households have received assistance through the affordable warmth programme.



Overcrowding (LI 19)

The indicator for the number of severely overcrowded council tenants (**LI 19**) shows a considerable variation from the target. However, this should be seen in the context of recent changes to the allocations policy. The revised policy gives additional priority to overcrowded households and therefore this is resulting in increased lettings to overcrowded households.

The period ending September 2009 saw, for the first time, more severely overcrowded households moved to suitable accommodation than were accepted on to the housing waiting list.

Temporary accommodation (LI 20)

There remains a high level of demand for affordable, rented accommodation and the partnership has identified that this issue will need to be addressed through a 'step change' approach to make a positive impact against the target.

Work began last year to test a robust support mechanism for vulnerable homeless people accessing temporary accommodation services. The approach looks to achieve two key objectives; firstly, to reduce the time taken to assess homeless decisions, and secondly, to reduce the average length of stay for people in temporary accommodation.

Initially the scheme focused on assisting the 16 to 25 year old age group, and to date it is showing good progress. As an example, in a quarter period of the scheme running, 150 16–25 year old singles moved to longer term, more appropriate housing. These included moving people on to supported units via registered social landlord partners, creating new mainstream tenancies and hosting mediation to house singles back with parents.

To help gauge the level of improvement during a short pilot period, we can compare the fact that during 2008/9 only 72 single 16–25 year olds are recorded as

having been moved into more appropriate accommodation.

The Housing Needs team is now rolling out the scheme across all other groups (25 years+/families), and an analysis of the whole approach will follow.

Decent Homes (LI 21)

Decent Homes is on target for 100 per cent of social housing to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the deadline of the end of 2010.

What next on performance

In October 2009 the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) provided the housing partnership with an opportunity to consider whether it wished to amend the targets that have been set for two national indicators, in the light of the sustained difficulties in the housing market. These targets were:

1. **NI 154:** net completions of new dwellings (all tenures).
2. **NI 155:** gross additions to the supply of affordable housing.

At the same time, the Board felt it appropriate to review the other housing indicators in the LAA. In response to the invitation from GOWM the CHP has, via Be Birmingham, recommended a series of revised targets to take the partnership into the last year of delivery for the 2008–11 LAA.

In summary these are:

New homes

We recommended that the target for **NI 155** (gross additions to affordable housing) should be retained, but an amendment for **NI 154** (net completions of new homes, all tenures) should be considered.

After consultation with colleagues in the Development Directorate, we have proposed a new target of 750 net completions for 2009–10. This target has been derived by assessing the pipeline for new development schemes, planning applications and forecast demolitions.

Energy efficiency

Given the difficulties in data collection for **LI 18**, the CHP has proposed to adopt the definition and methodology of **NI 187** (tackling fuel poverty). The revised indicator will measure the proportion of households receiving income-related benefits, for whom an energy assessment of their home has been carried out.

The new indicator will use the Government-recommended SAP energy rating system, measuring the proportion that: a) live in homes with a low energy efficiency rating (with a SAP rating of 0–34) and b) live in homes with a high energy efficiency rating (with a SAP rating of 65–100).

Overcrowding

The CHP has suggested that, in respect of **LI 19**, it would be more appropriate if the indicator measured the number of severely overcrowded council tenants and applicants for social housing who have been moved into suitable accommodation, or whose accommodation has been made suitable.

This would be more in keeping with the targets set by other Overcrowding Pathfinders and it will measure the positive outcomes for Birmingham residents. Given the current level of performance, a target of 800 households per annum would be challenging but potentially attainable.

Temporary accommodation

Despite continued efforts, recognised in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), this will remain a challenging issue for the sector.

core activity 2008/2009



core activity 2008/2009



Delivering the Working Neighbourhood Fund



These efforts will be assisted by a support service newly commissioned through Supporting People, due to start in 2010, which will provide the necessary support to those families in temporary accommodation.

Decent Homes

The partnership can be proud of its strategic approach to delivering Decent Homes interventions for all social housing tenants and leaseholders. As we enter the final year of the programme, core actions will remain the same – efforts will be centered on completing interventions which tackle disrepair and affordable warmth.

The Board will be encouraging the sector to look beyond 2010 and begin to use its Decent Homes achievements as a catalyst to support a neighbourhood agenda around creating decent places. It is recognised that this aspiration will be tempered by financial constraints; however, this presents partners with the opportunity to find different ways of working together to maximise outcomes.

Performance monitoring

The partnership's performance against the Local Area Agreement indicators will continue to be monitored by the CHP Performance Monitoring Panel (PMP). During the year, panel members have assessed progress against the actions set out in the series of LAA delivery plans agreed with Be Birmingham. In 2010 the plans will be reviewed to ensure that delivery against the revised targets is maximised during the final year of the LAA.

2. WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND 2008-2011

In November 2007 Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) introduced the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF). The fund replaces the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and incorporates the Department for Work and Pensions' Deprived Areas Fund (DAF).

Good progress has been made by Be Birmingham, and the thematic partnerships that make up the local strategic partnership, around tackling deprivation. However, gaps remain and long-term worklessness, in particular, continues to be a persistent issue in some of the city's communities.

The CHP will continue to work with partners to drive interventions to get people off welfare and into training and work. Birmingham's Working Neighbourhoods Fund is being used to assist the most deprived areas by directly tackling the issues that lead to households receiving unemployment benefits. For the housing partnership, this means using its WNF to accelerate actions that deliver against the housing LAA targets, and wherever possible maximise the opportunities to offer training, skills development, work placement and job opportunities to tenants. There are examples of how this work has progressed so far in this report.

City Housing Partnership Working Neighbourhoods Fund business plan

The City Housing Partnership has a Working Neighbourhoods Fund of £3 million between 2008 and 2011. To maximise outcomes, the Board has set out to build on best practice and use the learning from its successful delivery of the 2006–08 Decent Homes Floor Target Action Plan.

The positive independent evaluation of the Decent Homes Plan, together with the recent Audit Commission inspection outcome, serve as robust endorsements that the CHP should continue to replicate its "winning formula" approach.

The WNF Business Plan 2008–11 has been developed during 2008 and 2009, adapting as appropriate to local conditions for example, taking into consideration the economic climate and service provider capacity to deliver. Its content is a result of an inclusive approach, with partners outlining what contributions they are committed to deliver against the LAA priorities.

Commissioning outcomes

As well as being the vehicle to deliver the housing LAA targets, the actions set out in the WNF Business Plan complement the CHP vision – to ensure that housing will provide the platform which enables people to thrive and choose to live in Birmingham.

In this context, delivery actions have been commissioned from within the CHP network of partners. This enables projects and interventions to maximise the wealth of expertise, knowledge and joint resource available in the sector and beyond.

The Business Plan has two core elements: actions and interventions to increase the supply of larger, affordable homes, and a continuation of the housing partnership innovation programme.

Why larger, affordable homes?

The partnership's core action in the Decent Homes Plan centered on interventions which tackled disrepair and affordable warmth in the most vulnerable private sector homes. This targeted approach to delivering improvements, over the full two-year life of the plan, produced tangible, positive outcomes.

Acknowledging this, the CHP Board has gained approval from Be Birmingham to target the majority of its WNF resources at delivering interventions that support a further priority area for improvement – the need to increase the supply of larger, affordable homes in social housing stock.

Therefore the majority of the grant will be used to realise this objective. The partnership has already begun delivering a range of programmes that will make the best use of existing stock; it has also planned new social housing development to increase the supply of homes with four or more bedrooms available for rent.

The full result of the outcomes from this 'larger homes' approach will be known at the end of the WNF programme in 2010/11, but it is anticipated that in the region of 30 or more larger, affordable homes for rent will be added to Birmingham's social housing stock.

The 'larger homes' approach directly supports the reduction of performance gaps across several LAA delivery plans. Specifically, these are the national indicators to increase the number of people achieving independent living and to increase the gross number of affordable homes, plus the local indicators designed to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, address overcrowding, improve energy efficiency and provide decent homes.

Collectively the 'larger homes' actions also support wider commitments outlined in the Housing Plan 2008+, the Private Sector Housing Strategy, the Homelessness Strategy and the Overcrowding Action Plan.

Innovation

The WNF thematic allocation is an opportunity to continue delivery of the housing partnership's successful Innovation Programme, previously resourced through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).

Together with partners a series of innovative schemes will deliver strategic thinking into real outcomes for local communities. Again focused on delivering against housing's LAA targets the schemes include: the Housing and Constituencies Trainee Academy; the RIGHT project lead by the Jericho Foundation and the establishment of the Young Design Champions in partnership with colleagues from education services.

See page 20 for details about the four elements which make up Working Neighbourhoods Fund Business Plan 2008–11.

core activity
2008/2009



core activity 2008/2009



Innovation case study – Young Design Champions

At the 2007 CHP Annual Network Event, participants received the 'remembering Tony Roberts' booklet, acknowledging Tony's long and successful housing career. It was further announced that, in recognition of Tony's contributions, the partnership would establish a suitable bursary scheme to act as an effective way of bringing young talent into housing. In 2008/9 this has been achieved by setting up the Young Design Champions (YDC) initiative.

Together, Housing and Education are providing a new way of engaging young people in community and public open space regeneration.

Historically, young people have played very little part in the development and regeneration of communities. YDC is building a package of methods that engages 13–18 year olds within deprived areas undergoing major regeneration over the next 10–15 years.

Working in Holte School, Newtown, the YDC approach will capture, develop and harness the spirit and innovation of younger people through their secondary school curriculum.

YDC is a unique way of introducing and de-mystifying the many career opportunities that regeneration programmes can provide for young people, including: architecture, Urban Design, transportation and leisure facilities planning.

The skills needed to work in many of these fields are complex and access to higher education is required in many of the disciplines. YDC is an introduction to a possible longer term option for those who may not have been informed or normally encouraged to seek this type of career choice.

The CHP Board feels that the Young Design Champions approach is both a fitting and lasting tribute to Tony's past housing and regeneration work and is timely in assisting the next generation to develop sustainable careers.

3. ADDRESSING WORKLESSNESS

The recession has had a marked effect on the number of people in the region experiencing unemployment. Both prior to the onset of the economic downturn – via commitments in our Housing Plan 2008+ – and throughout the year, the housing partnership has supported Be Birmingham's agenda to tackle unemployment and the wider causes of worklessness.

In March 2009 the CHP Worklessness Group was launched, bringing together key partners to address worklessness from the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership (representing housing associations), Job Centre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council and the economic partnership.

The group is developing a model that will optimise the contribution Birmingham's social housing sector makes to reducing worklessness. In particular, advisory and signposting services for residents will be strengthened to provide more support for council and housing association households entering or returning to the job market.

Some early outcomes

Our Working Neighbourhoods Fund programme is delivering schemes to directly assist those who need the greatest levels of support. Residents are receiving help to access training and build the skills necessary to enter the world of work by giving practical experience through work-based placements. The innovation initiatives mentioned earlier, and other workstreams, are helping to give a range of vulnerable tenants opportunities previously not available through the regular job access schemes.

- The **Trainee Academy** has given 90 young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) the chance to develop a work ethic in a supported working environment and to receive complementary peer mentoring. The academy currently provides opportunities for individuals to

develop their skills in neighbourhood management roles, but the long-term intention is to extend the approach into other public service areas.

- The **RIGHT** project – Restoring Independence through Gardening, Horticulture and Training – provides employment support, vocational training and work experience to residents living in supported accommodation. This programme enables vulnerable individuals to progress towards employment and independent living. RIGHT is also testing the demand for affordable horticultural services among local residents, with a view to exploring setting up a sustainable social enterprise that can offer the graduate trainees longer term employment.
 - In November 2009 the **Supporting People Lay Assessors** received a prestigious UK Housing Award for their work to meet the needs of vulnerable people. A number of service users have successfully completed Lay Assessor training and have been recruited to act as ‘critical friends’ of the Supporting People service. Working Neighbourhoods Fund has provided three individuals with work placements within the Supporting People team, resulting in more opportunities to accommodate those in need of practical work experience.
 - Housing Association partners are busy developing the **Open Door** initiative. The adult advancement and careers service will be universal, embracing those in work and the higher skilled as well as those out of work and the lower skilled. It will provide access to information and advice with more intensive support for those that need it most.
- This model is being tested and prototype contracts are happening across the UK. Pilots are looking at the approach to service delivery in the run up to the launch of the universal Adult Advancement and Careers Service in 2010. A contract was awarded to a group of West Midlands based partners.

Offering a ‘no wrong door’ approach, Open Door will ensure that individuals quickly access advisory services on career paths, jobs, skills, housing and health which can act as barriers to progressing earning potential and developing other important aspects of enjoying a high quality of life.

The Birmingham social housing landlords leading this collective work are Black Country Housing Group, Mercian Housing Association, Castle Vale Community Housing Association, Midland Heart and Family Housing Association. Initial outcomes six months into the project are good: 226 people have been engaged and of those, 37 have been helped into employment, 35 have been assisted into training and 29 have been assisted into volunteer placements.

- In late 2009 Be Birmingham made a successful bid to the Government to secure the **Future Jobs Fund (FJF)**. This will be used alongside the WNF and mainstream resource to help 2,000 young unemployed people into work.

The CHP worked to coordinate a number of offers from across its network of housing association and third sector partners to set up opportunities for young people to access. In total, the Future Jobs Fund will provide 1,000 placements for 18 to 24-year-olds who have been claiming benefits for a year or more, and a further 1,000 placements for long-term benefit claimants over 25 in unemployment hotspots citywide. Placements will run for six months with the possibility of extensions funded through WNF.

The CHP Worklessness Group will track the outcomes from the FJF approach and monitor best practice. The Group will work to ensure that successful housing-led schemes explore opportunities to extend the access of placements to past participants, and others who can benefit.

core activity 2008/2009



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the partnership
evidence base

The Partnership's evidence base was recognised as a strength by the Audit Commission, but we know that we need to build on this by continuing to improve the quality of information held on housing in the city to inform strategy development and decision making. It is increasingly important within a context of reduced future resources for housing that we use intelligence to direct investment for maximum impact.

Our work in developing the Housing in Later Life Strategy was based upon a sound evidence base drawn from existing data and also from new research to understand the preferences and opinions of older residents in the city.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment provided key evidence for the city demonstrating the clear need for larger family homes. This has been translated into policy and action over the year, most notably through the development of new homes by the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust.

The decision to commit a large proportion of our thematic Working Neighbourhoods Fund allocation to increase the supply of larger homes was a result of both evidence from the SHMA and from an understanding of the drivers of overcrowding and of difficulties in moving households from temporary accommodation. In both of these cases it is recognised that a fundamental lack of supply of larger affordable homes lies is a root cause.

Increasing the supply of larger homes will therefore make a significant contribution to achieving our LAA targets and more importantly in providing residents in the city with homes in which they can build a future.

We are currently undertaking a series of Local Housing Market Assessments to provide better information on housing requirements at a local level for key housing growth areas within the city. A new Private Sector Stock Condition Survey will be carried out to provide an up-to-date picture of the state of

repair of privately owned property in the city. This will help us to plan investment to support vulnerable homeowners to maintain and improve their homes and to tackle fuel poverty and climate change.



CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES – A REALITY CHECK

The 2008/9 business year has seen a number of changes for housing service providers, including the predicted reductions in public finances, regulatory reforms and the increased importance for addressing the worklessness agenda. It is important to reflect on these changes, and the possible impacts of them, in the context of what the partnership is doing to address them.

Further constraints on public sector spending will follow, and in addition to a proposed freeze on RSL rents, this means cross-sector resources will need to be maximised. In the past the Retail Price Index (RPI) could be predicted as increasing over time, but in the current economic climate a decrease is also a possibility. This could have a major impact on future cost projections and business plans.

Another area that the Board is watching with interest is that of the HCA proposal to attract private finance and institutional investment into areas such as the Private Rented Sector. This may result in an opportunity to deliver elements of the Private Sector Housing Strategy 2008+ ahead of schedule.

The availability of private finance has led to a decrease in the number of properties built and fewer Section 106 planning agreements are taking place; clearly this has a major impact on the provision of additional homes and much-needed affordable housing. In addition, with resources being scarce, neighbourhood development may be affected.

The economic situation has led to a rise in household redundancies, with the effect on the West Midlands being proportionally worse than in many parts of the country. This may have a 'knock on' effect on: the numbers of homeless presentations; an increased demand for social rented housing, as owner occupation or private renting become increasingly unaffordable; levels of remortgaging of properties and an increase in antisocial behaviour.

In addition it is increasingly difficult for young people to access the housing and labour market, coupled with student debt rising for those leaving higher education.

There have been a range of government policies introduced to address the economic downturn, including more resources being directed to house builders. This report also gives a summary of some early outcomes from the CHP's approach to tackling worklessness.

The effect on the housing market in the short term could include a slow down in the number of new build schemes, difficulty in achieving affordable housing targets and a fall in house prices. In the long term, a lack of availability of credit may mean a change in housing aspirations as potential owner occupiers begin to consider the private rented sector.

To help to address the range of issues above, housing association and council landlord representatives have joined forces with colleagues on the Financial Inclusion Partnership. Together, they are looking at ensuring that 'front end' housing management services are doing all that they can to assist new and existing tenants and owner occupiers experiencing difficulty with financial inclusion advice and support.

Maximising opportunities with new agencies

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) was formed on 1 December 2008 along with the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the regulatory body for Registered Social Landlords. The HCA is the national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England and its role is to create thriving communities and affordable homes. The TSA is the new regulator for affordable housing. Its goal is to raise the standards of services for tenants in the social housing sector.

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changing circumstances



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changing circumstances

The full impact of the TSA is not yet fully clear as it progresses through the initial consultation stages regarding its new regulatory role of all social housing. Proposals indicate measures that will adopt a single approach for registered social landlords and councils, impacting on service standards. There will be a learning curve for all social housing providers as they adjust to the new single regulator. A greater emphasis will be placed on the role of the customer and how tenants are both consulted and involved in service delivery. The CHP welcomes this approach and looks forward to continuing its engagement with this new agency.

Changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), enabling local authorities to build new social rented homes, will also have a major impact on future housing services. This follows announcements to reform the system of council housing finance. Nationally, other policy developments of importance include: the Heat and Energy Saving Strategy, the social care and health personalisation agenda; tighter building regulations; the Rugg review and the Government's revision of the Decent Homes Standard with a particular focus on thermal comfort.



In summary the challenges that face the board and the wider partnership are:

- steering the housing sector business to provide quality housing services at a time of public sector funding constraints
- maximising any opportunities which may arise through the HCA and other regulatory bodies
- continuing the forward thinking approach to unemployment and the wider causes of worklessness, particularly for vulnerable households
- co-ordinating better the provision of support around financial inclusion services
- capitalising on all new opportunities presented in national, regional and local housing policy

Total Place is an ambitious and challenging programme. By mapping the total public expenditure in an area, the programme aims to identify significant efficiencies and savings and answer the simple question: “can we do better for less?”

Total Place aims to achieve three things:

1. Create service transformations that can improve the experience of local residents and deliver better value.
2. Deliver early efficiencies to validate the work.
3. Develop a body of knowledge about how more effective cross-agency working delivers the above.

Birmingham has been named as a Total Place pilot area and the initial areas of focus around service delivery are:

- Services for people with learning difficulties
- Services for people with mental health issues
- Early intervention (children and young people)
- Drugs and alcohol misuse (including the impact on families)
- Guns and gangs
- Poolway: a demonstration project designed to deliver a whole community approach.

This agenda provides the CHP with an exciting opportunity to expand its successful track record of partnership working.

The Board will be examining different ways of planning and delivering future services, both within the sector and with other agencies, modelled on the Total Place approach.

If you would like to follow the progress of the Total Place pilots detail can be found at the Be Birmingham website
www.bebirmingham.org.uk

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total place



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the board



ELAINE ELKINGTON

POSITION ON BOARD

Chair and responsible for the council's strategic housing enabling role

DAY JOB

Strategic Director,
Housing and Constituencies,
Birmingham City Council



TIM SEWELL

POSITION ON BOARD

Vice Chair and Birmingham Social Housing Partnership representative

DAY JOB

Chief Executive, *Family Housing Association* (Birmingham)



JONATHAN DRIFFILL

POSITION ON BOARD

Chair of the CHP Performance Monitoring Panel

DAY JOB

Managing Director,
Friendship Housing and Care



JEAN TEMPLETON

POSITION ON BOARD

Voluntary Sector Representative

DAY JOB

Chief Executive,
St Basils



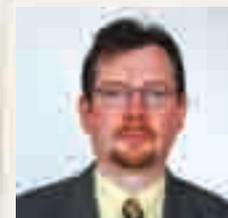
JULIE HAYCOCK

POSITION ON BOARD

Representing the Government Office West Midlands

DAY JOB

Birmingham Place Manager
Government Office West Midlands



PETER JONES

POSITION ON BOARD

Homes and Communities Agency Representative

DAY JOB

Head of Investment,
Homes and Communities Agency



GEORGE MARSH

POSITION ON BOARD

To provide perspective of private sector developer and constructor of affordable housing

DAY JOB

Chairman, *Bullock Construction*

cityhousing
PARTNERSHIP

the performance monitoring panel



SHEILA ESPIN

DAY JOB

Head of Service Improvement,
Housing and Constituencies,
Birmingham City Council



JOY WARMINGTON

DAY JOB

Chief Executive Officer,
brap



PETER RICHMOND

DAY JOB

Chief Executive,
Castle Vale Community
Housing Association



JEAN TEMPLETON

DAY JOB

Chief Executive,
St Basils



JONATHAN DRIFFILL

DAY JOB

Managing Director,
Friendship Housing and Care



ANNE-MARIE POWELL

DAY JOB

Head of Strategy and
Commissioning,
Housing and Constituencies,
Birmingham City Council

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a view from
Tim Sewell

“The first four years of the CHP were challenging, demanding, occasionally difficult, but above all productive for people who choose to live in Birmingham. For my part they were four years very well spent and it was a privilege to work with every member of the Board in that time, supported of course by all of the network partners and the indefatigable Partnerships Team in the Housing Department. I have no doubt that the CHP will move on to even greater and better things.”

Tim Sewell

A VIEW FROM OUTGOING BOARD MEMBER TIM SEWELL – Chief Executive of Family Housing Association

I think it was early in 2006 when, representing the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership (BSHP), I attended what turned out to be the last meeting of the Housing Strategic Partnership (HSP).

The meeting was, as usual, interesting and informative but followed a well-worn path of not actually contributing to the social housing agenda in the city, in practical terms. The meeting was also notable in that private sector developers had long given up hope and left the table, leaving the meeting heavily populated by representatives from Birmingham City Council. In short, there was little in the way of strategic direction and, whilst the council, housing associations and the private sector were all delivering projects, the ‘joined up’ nature of delivery was questionable.

Elaine Elkington had recently returned to the city and the last meeting of the HSP was her first. She quickly weighed up that the HSP was unlikely to deliver in a strategic manner. In double-quick time, representatives from the council’s housing department, the BSHP, Government Office West Midlands and the Housing Corporation were invited to participate in planning for the creation of a new body to replace the HSP – and the City Housing Partnership (CHP) was born.

As Vice Chair of BSHP, I was nominated to serve on the first CHP Board. Nearly four years on I step down from the Board as the CHP moves into the next decade on the back of four years of significant achievement, entirely justifying the 2006 change of direction.

As with any position on a board, the role is challenging, fighting the corner for your sector whilst owing allegiance to the overall picture. Yet the CHP Board has brought many different sectors and organisations together to deliver a clear strategic direction for housing in the city – not just social

housing but all housing, and not just housing but also incorporating all of the thematic partnerships of Be Birmingham.

The CHP has delivered, in every sense of the word. Who would have thought that the Housing Plan for the largest local authority in Europe would be entrusted to a myriad of Expert Reference Groups, heavily populated and led by partner organisations, rather than the council? Or that delivery of the plan would be further entrusted to similarly diverse Task and Finish Groups, and that the CHP model would be adopted as a model for other Be Birmingham thematic partnerships?

There are many examples of success and not all of them can be covered here, but please remember that the Audit Commission inspection of Birmingham’s strategic housing function formally identified the CHP as representing good practice. I would also like to think that the CHP and all of its members played a major part in helping to deliver one of only two CAA Green Flags in the country for Birmingham’s Housing Needs Service.

CHP WNF BUSINESS PLAN

The housing partnership's Working Neighbourhoods Fund Business Plan is made up of four elements:

Element	Budget
<p>■ Commissioning to support delivery of LAA Delivery Plans:</p> <p>A number of projects have been identified in the LAA Delivery Plans which require WNF to aid delivery and these include interventions to: develop the lay assessor approach; carry out a set of Housing Market Assessments; take actions to tackle fuel poverty and a programme to reduce the use of temporary accommodation.</p>	£478,556
<p>■ Larger Homes initiative:</p> <p>The core element of the WNF plan is a programme to increase the supply of larger, affordable homes (4 bedroom+). Options currently under appraisal include: 1) Top-up grant for approved affordable housing development schemes to build larger homes; 2) Addressing large high cost voids; 3) De-conversions and 4) Conversions/extensions/making space.</p>	£1,301,444
<p>■ Innovation programme:</p> <p>This builds on the success of the partnership's previous NRF innovations and will help to meet the housing LAA targets and to deliver against the wider CHP vision.</p> <p>CHP network members were asked to submit proposals to deliver outcomes against the LAA targets and the CHP vision. These proposals were independently assessed by Be Birmingham WNF assessment panels.</p> <p>The successful commissions include: the trainee academy; the RIGHT project; Young Design Champions; the Refugee settlement programme and further initiatives to address fuel poverty like Birmingham Warm Zones and the High Street Energy Advice services.</p>	£920,000
<p>■ Partnership costs:</p> <p>To cover the Partnership's infrastructure costs and any WNF programme management costs during 2008 to 2011 each thematic partnership has received a 10 per cent allocation (£100k per annum) approved by Be Birmingham.</p>	£300,000
Total allocation 2008–2011	£3,000,000

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Working Neighbourhoods Fund Business Plan 2008–11





glossary

BCC	Birmingham City Council
Be Birmingham	the city's local strategic partnership
BMHT	Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust
BSHP	Birmingham Social Housing Partnership
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CHP	City Housing Partnership
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DAF	Deprived Areas Fund
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
FJF	Future Jobs Fund
GOWM	Government Office West Midlands
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency
HRA	Housing Revenue Account
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGC	Local Government Chronicle
NEET	not in education, employment or training
NRF	Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
PMP	Performance Monitoring Panel
RPI	Retail Price Index
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
TSA	Tenant Services Authority
WNF	Working Neighbourhoods Fund
YDC	Young Design Champions

Finally

If you would like to contact us about the work featured in this report, or other issues you feel the CHP needs to consider, we welcome your views.

Email: partnershipsteam@birmingham.gov.uk

CHP ANNUAL REPORT 2008/9

www.birmingham.gov.uk/housing

**If you would like this information in Braille, large print or on audio CD,
please contact your local neighbourhood office or housing team.**