



THE STRATEGIC HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY AND POLICIES

This document sets out South Norfolk Council's Strategic Housing Strategy and Policies for the delivery of Housing Renewal Services in the South Norfolk area.

South Norfolk Council has a pivotal role in ensuring the improvement of the housing stock across all tenures and, in particular, it has an essential role in helping the most vulnerable with their housing needs and problems.

The strategy set out in this document is recognition by the Council of its responsibilities and aims to provide a range and level of assistance which reflects the variety of needs and problems which exist within South Norfolk Council area.

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1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

South Norfolk Council recognises that poor quality housing can have an adverse impact on the health and well being of the occupants, and endorses the Central Government view that the primary responsibility to maintain a property rests with the owner.

South Norfolk Council will seek to achieve a greater degree of flexibility in responding to and dealing with housing that is in poor condition. This will be achieved directly (through the use of policy and legislation) and by partnership with others. However, it recognises that some homeowners, particularly the elderly and other vulnerable persons may not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in good repair.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 repealed the national legislative provisions relating to Housing Renewal Grants; enabling Local authorities to develop policies specific to local need.

Financial Assistance will mainly be provided through a system of loans. Grants will be restricted to Disabled Adaptations and schemes targeting particular specified vulnerable groups and/or specific strategic objectives.

The Renewal Strategy sits within the Council's Housing Strategy, which provides the framework for all housing activity in South Norfolk. This recognises that while housing is a key Council activity, housing policy exists within a broader framework focusing on:

The people of South Norfolk

- How their lives can be improved
- Which organisations can help
- How the Council's housing activity can help

It is in this context that the Renewal Strategy has been developed, informed by:

- Priorities identified within the Community Plan and linked strategies
- Working with Partner organisations
- Information from services about their experience of service need.

The Greater Norwich Sub-Region Study of Housing Need and Stock Condition 2006 (based on an in-depth survey of a sample of properties across the district) identified the following key points

- 9.3% of South Norfolk homes have a category 1 hazard
- 16.5% of housing need is due to existing homes being too difficult to maintain
- 22.3% of South Norfolk homes fail the thermal comfort standard
- 31% of South Norfolk homes fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- 52.2% of housing need is due to the condition of existing homes

Based on this, the Housing Renewal Service Objectives are

- To provide services aimed at those at most risk and in greatest need.
- The provision of healthy and safe living conditions.
- To keep the housing stock maintained.
- To make homes decent.
- To adapt the homes of people with a disability.
- To enable the vulnerable to be able to live independently
- To make homes more energy efficient.
- To achieve affordable warmth in the homes of people on low income.
- To help people make their homes secure.
- To provide for housing need by bringing empty homes into the housing
- To create new rented accommodation.
- To support local area agreements, community care and public health.
- To support strategies linked into the Community Plan.

The Corporate strategies to which the objectives make a contribution are illustrated in the following table.

	Health Improvement Action Plan	Anti poverty Strategy	Community Plan	Environment Strategy	Community Safety, Crime and Disorder Strategy	Fuel Poverty Strategy
To provide services aimed at those at most risk and in greatest need	*	*	*	*	*	*
The provision of healthy and safe living conditions	*		*	*	*	*
To keep the housing stock maintained	*	*	*	*		*
To make homes decent	*	*	*	*	*	*
To adapt the homes of people with a disability	*		*			
To enable the vulnerable to be able to live independently	*		*		*	*
To make homes more energy efficient	*	*	*	*		*
To achieve affordable warmth in the homes of people on low income	*	*	*	*		*
To help people make their homes secure	*		*		*	
To provide for housing need by bringing empty homes back into use	*		*			
To create new rented accommodation.			*	*	*	*
To support local area agreements, community care and public health	*		*		*	*
To support strategies linked into the Community Plan	*	*	*	*	*	*

The provision of Renewal Services will be built upon the services developed over the years to meet key objectives, the general aim of which is to provide inclusive gateway services based on a need and risk assessment which reflect client, strategic and partner priorities.

Partner organisations' priorities and concerns are reflected in the Housing Strategy. In the preparation of the policy document the Council used the South Norfolk Community Planning process to ensure those priorities and concerns are reflected in the policy. Part of that process included review by the Care, Fairness and Housing Policy Development Panel comprising representatives of:

- South Norfolk Council Members
- South Norfolk Tenants' Federation
- The Citizens' Advice Bureau
- The Norfolk Rural Community Council
- South Norfolk Primary Care Trust
- Registered Social Landlords
- Voluntary organisations
- Norfolk and Norwich Pensioners' Association

2. AIMS OF THE SERVICE

The Housing Renewal Service aims to offer everyone the opportunity of a decent home and therefore to improve the health, welfare, well-being and quality of life of the residents of South Norfolk.

Helping people with their housing problems requires services which recognise the range of problems and needs which exist.

The problems and needs in turn demand different levels of service, whether this is advice, education, direct action, referral or multi-disciplinary working with other agencies. Specifically the Council aim to provide an inclusive person centred service that ensures clients receive the services and assistance they need.

3. CORE PRINCIPLES

a) Gateway Service

For anyone making contact with Housing Renewal Services the aim is for them to receive a "Gateway Service" to all the Council's services.

The principle of the "Gateway Service" is the commitment to ensuring that any person making contact is connected to a level of service which is appropriate to their needs and which takes into account all their circumstances.

The level of service is informed by need and ability to pay can vary from:

- General advice
- Providing information including alternative sources of help
- Linking people into other services and agencies
- Providing direct help such as:
 - Grant help;
 - Loans help or
 - Re-housing.

b) Standardised Assessments

We aim to develop standardised needs and risk assessment protocols with key partners to ensure that people are directed to service options which are appropriate to their vulnerability, needs and risk.

In general, the criteria that will be included in the assessments will be based upon:

- Client perception of their need.
- Strategic priorities found in the Community Plan and linked strategies.
- Policy objectives such as those in the Housing Strategy.
- Objectives linked to partnership working such as health improvement objectives; local area agreements and community safety objectives.
- National objectives.

The principle will be that those most at risk will get a quicker response than those who are at lower risk and will therefore have a waiting time determined by demand and resources available.

c) Partnership working

In identifying the service options, the assessments will determine the need and implications of involving other agencies to achieve a multi-disciplinary approach to resolving the person's needs.

This will involve identifying the suitable agencies and having a referral process which will link people into those agencies and monitor their progress.

d) Focus on outcomes

The Council will monitor and review the effectiveness of interventions in correctly identifying appropriate services and services providing outcomes that address and resolve people's particular needs.

Services will need to have the flexibility to change. Whether this is in the terms of:

- Creating different services
- Changing priorities
- Extra resources for existing initiatives

e) Service development

The Council will develop services to encourage homeowners to properly maintain their homes.

The adage "Prevention is better than cure" applies to many housing problems.

Services for providing advice and education on home maintenance and prevention will have to be balanced against the immediate needs of existing housing problems, particularly those experienced by the most vulnerable.

Nevertheless, the Council see that work on prevention is in the longer term the most cost effective way of resolving housing problems.

Based on the above Core Principles, Housing Renewal Services will be developed as follows:

Providing help to improve people's living conditions will be achieved through a combination of:

- Advice for individuals or sourcing help from other bodies
- Partnership working with the voluntary, private and public sectors.
- Providing support and advocacy
- Provision of a Care and Repair Service
- Providing financial help through grants and loans
- Facilitation of loan help for repairs from other agencies
- The use of regulation or enforcement powers
- Seeking and responding to opportunities to attract additional funding and resources to the area

The 2006 House Condition and Needs Survey indicated that 31.2% of the housing stock failed to meet the Decent Homes standard with an estimated cost of £44 million to remedy (at 2006 prices). The policy identifies areas where an advice-based approach would be appropriate. Early intervention would reduce the need for costly future repairs, benefiting not only the house owner, but also the Council in terms of a reduction in demand on services in the future.

South Norfolk Council will develop the following services:

i) **Home Maintenance & Advice** – independent advice about maintenance issues, sources of help and prioritising necessary work. This will help lessen the risk of property deterioration and also the risk of vulnerable persons being the victim of fraudulent surveys and the carrying out of unnecessary works. It will tie in with locally available loan/grant schemes as well as educating and advising the general public on energy efficiency issues. In addition, help will be given to allow them to budget appropriately for repair work.

ii) **Accredited Contractors** - Assistance to house owners, agencies and self help groups to locate suitable, competent and reliable contractors who would charge a fair price for works.

The Council will explore sources of discounted materials which can be offered as part of our grant and loan assistance schemes. A 'Use and Re-use Scheme' will be investigated whereby discounted materials are made available to the community.

iii) **Care & Repair** - The proportion of pensioner households in South Norfolk is above the national average and the Council recognises that it must engage with this sector both to ensure their housing needs are met and that the stock is maintained and approved. The South Norfolk Care & Repair Service was set up in 1990 and is a home improvement agency mainly aimed at the elderly to enable them to remain in their own homes. Part funded by fee income and Supporting People, the service delivers bespoke advice and support, linking clients to independent advice and financial help to deal with repairs, improvement and adaptation needs. It also links them to other forms of help from partner agencies and the third sector.

iv) **Empty Homes** - Advice and assistance will be provided to help to bring long-term properties back into use in a cost effective manner. Properties that are having an adverse effect on the surrounding neighbourhood and those that can make the most effective contribution to meeting housing need will be prioritised. The Council will proactively seek out such properties and, in addition to advice and assistance will use statutory powers if necessary (*see appendix 3*)

- v) **Financial Assistance, Grants & Loans** - The Council will provide financial assistance where appropriate through a system of loans and grants. The use of loans will enable resources to be "re-invested", securing finance for the future and the opportunity to re-invest the monies paid back from loans into housing renewal.

The two parallel aims of this type of assistance are:

- to remove people from hazards that present an immediate risk to their health
- to improve the quality of the housing stock

To achieve these aims we will where practicable use loans and grants in conjunction with each other. Access to grant may be restricted or refused in cases where, with the assistance of both measures the property can be improved to the Decent Homes Standard but the owner refuses to carry out the works.

More detailed information on the Loans and Grants can be found in Appendix 1

The failure of people to maintain their homes arises not only from the lack of understanding of maintenance issues and insecurity about getting contractors; but also about how to finance repairs.

The Council will provide information about sources of financial advice. This will include working with

- The Local Credit Union
- Independent Financial Advisers

- vi) **Regulation** - some of the poorest housing conditions are in the private rented sector. The owners of such housing have a clear responsibility to ensure the condition of their properties does not pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the occupants.

The Housing Act 2004 imposes a duty on the Council in respect of Category 1 hazards and specific powers in respect of Category 2 hazards. An explanation of the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme is appended in *Appendix 2*.

The Enforcement Policy including powers and options available to the Council in exercising its responsibilities as regards the Housing Act 2004 are appended in *Appendix 3*.

As well as exercising enforcement and regulatory powers, the Council will seek to work in partnership with landlords and tenants, in particular to work with such bodies as The Eastern Landlords Association to establish Landlord accreditation schemes to improve standards.

- vii) Partnerships** - the strategy will seek to link people into the range of help they need through working with other agencies to achieve multi-disciplinary care and help. This includes working with the public, voluntary and private sectors to maximise the benefits to client.

South Norfolk Council recognises that for partnership working to be effective, there needs to be:

- A common understanding of priorities
- A recognition of how we can support one another in fulfilling aims
- A good interdisciplinary understanding and knowledge of the services each provide
- An effective inter-agency referral system
- Shared assessment processes and procedures
- Linked assessment processes
- Commitment to cross-boundary working and the sharing of resources.

And will seek to work with partners to develop the necessary protocols to put those measures in place.

The Council currently has Partnership working agreements with:

- Supporting People – part funding of the Care & Repair Service.
- Broadland District Council – part funding of the Care & Repair Service and the Energy Team
- North Norfolk Council - part funding the Care & Repair Service
- Norfolk County Council – Partnership for Older Persons Services
- Norfolk Safe and Secure - This is run in conjunction with Partners against Crime Task Force. The Council provides financial help for the installation of security and fire safety measures into the homes of the vulnerable.
- Social Services - agreed protocols to secure adaptations in the homes of people with disability.
- Norwich and Norfolk Volunteer Service - a referral system to provide additional forms of assistance for vulnerable clients.
- Warm Front - to access Government funding and for heating and insulation for those on low income.
- Charities - Our Care and Repair Service is effective in putting people in touch with charities to help them get additional funds.
- The Greater Norwich Housing Partnership – a partnership with Broadland Council and City of Norwich to share expertise and develop effective and efficient means of delivering housing services

South Norfolk Council will continue seeking to develop partnerships to achieve the service objectives. In particular the Council will work with Health and Social Services to establish common referral and assessment procedures to ensure an effective multi-disciplinary approach.

4. KEY OUTCOMES

The Council undertake to address the key objectives identified in the Housing Strategy. It has identified the measures that can be used to monitor its progress on each of these objectives.

These measures sit within the following key local indicators, namely:

- The help given to vulnerable people to remain in their own homes.
- The number of homes made decent
- The number of properties adapted to meet the needs of disabled occupants
- The number of homes where energy efficiency has been improved.
- The number of empty homes brought back into use.

The key outcomes are set out in *Appendix 5* and will be reviewed annually to ensure they are relevant.

Table (i) shown in Appendix 5 sets out the key outcomes to be achieved by each form of assistance, and will be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant for work with the private sector. Table (ii) shows other outcomes that are linked to quantifiable outputs and could form the basis for future performance information.

5. RESOURCES

The Council will allocate a capital budget to support the Renewal Strategy in respect of Mandatory Disabled Facility Grants, Safe & Warm Grants, Loans and contributions to partners. The Council will regularly review its budgets and decide on revisions depending on

- The response to the Council's policy
- Changing demand for different kinds of assistance
- The need to change the thrust of initiatives and policies.

The Council will charge fees where appropriate for its services.

A fee of 12.5% (up to a maximum of £250), based on the cost of the works arranged on behalf of the client, is currently charged for the users of the Care & Repair Service. The Council will consider introducing charges to offset the cost of other services such as obtaining loan help, home maintenance advice services and home surveys etc. as the services become available.

6. ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Council's Housing Renewal Policy on access to assistance will be based on the "Core Principles" outlined in this document.

The "Gateway Services" and "Needs and Risk Assessment" principle aims to offer direct help to the most vulnerable whether through Council's services or referral to other agencies. At the same time it aims to help people to realise their own home maintenance responsibilities and where they can access appropriate advice, information and services.

Service requests can be made in person, by telephone, by e-mail, and in the future by the Council's website. Closer working with partner organisations will enable more effective referrals of clients between the organisations.

A summary of the Council's Renewal Policy will be provided on request and will be available through partner organisations, and through Council's web-site and through Parish Council information points.

The process for accessing services from initial request is illustrated in Appendix 6. Requests, assessments, service referrals, actions and progress will be recorded and monitored using a computer database.

7. LOAN CONDITIONS

Loans offered by the Council will be registered as a legal land charge on the property.

In addition to the cost of eligible work the loan can cover costs including:

- legal and administration charges
- agency fees
- planning and building regulation charges
- architectural services
- land registration charges

However, the cost of these charges may be supported with a Safe and Warm Grant, where there is an application for a South Norfolk Loan.

The loan and compound interest must be repaid in full when either:

- the property is sold or
- there is a transfer of ownership or
- nomination rights are withdrawn
- the property is let as a holiday home or
- the property is vacant for 6 months or more.

The loan can be repaid by instalments, but the Council will restrict the number of instalments per year to a maximum of two. Additional instalments can be made but will be subject to a £35 administration surcharge.

8. LOAN INTEREST CHARGES

Interest will be added to the outstanding loan on the last day of the Council's financial year (31st. March) and will be calculated on the balance outstanding at the beginning of the financial year (1st. April) or in the first year that interest becomes chargeable either the date of the advance or anniversary of the date of the advance as appropriate.

During the first year and the last year of the loan a part year's interest will be calculated with reference to the number of days the loan has been outstanding divided by 365.

The interest rate used will be actual bank base rate calculated on a daily basis over the year *plus rate to be agreed*

The Council will give advice about its loans and their financial implications and long-term costs.

The Council will give information about sources of independent advice, including local as well as internet sources.

The Council also aims to work in partnership with other agencies, which can offer independent advice as well as sourcing financial help, for those people who fall outside eligibility for the scheme of loans offered by the Council.

9. SERVICE STANDARDS

The Strategic Housing Service aims to provide an effective efficient service and has published a number of targets for key areas of the service it provides that it aims to achieve in 90% of cases. A copy of the standards will be made available on request.

10. COMPLAINTS

The Council has a published corporate a scheme which deals with the investigation and the resolving of complaints.

Any complaints about Housing Renewal services will be directed into this scheme which has a standardised procedure.

Complaints can be made in person, in writing or by e-mail.

Appeals against any decisions made following the investigation of a complaint will be directed to the Council's Licensing and Appeals Committee.

Appendix 1a

SAFE AND WARM GRANT	
Purpose of assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist the vulnerable in the maintenance of a safe, decent and warm home. • To improve the quality of the housing stock and reduce the burden on providing new housing. • To prevent admission to, and aid discharge from hospital
Maximum Grant Minimum cost of works	£3000 in any 3 year period £50
Eligible Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner Occupiers in receipt of a recognised means tested benefit • Tenants with a repairing responsibility in receipt of a recognised means tested benefit • Groups specifically identified for inclusion under strategic initiatives, currently including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Over 60 Energy Efficiency scheme ○ Victims of bogus callers or at identified risk of burglary ○ Victims of domestic violence
Eligible Properties	A permanent and legal residence including dwellings, mobile homes and houseboats.
Eligible Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential repairs to remedy category one hazards • Essential minor improvements and adaptations • Home Safety and Security • Energy Efficiency measures where alternative home energy assistance is unavailable • Works required to meet the Decent Home standard • Provision of permanently fixed equipment • Works to prevent unreasonable delay to the release of a patient from primary care • Works to prevent a relevant person being admitted to primary care • Fees for professional services in connection with works and south Norfolk loans
Common parts or group repair	The reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicants liability
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have lived in the relevant property for 12 months at the time of the initial enquiry and intend to remain in occupation for 5 years • The grant will not be used to effect repairs/works that are the responsibility of a private or social landlord

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upon completion of the works the dwelling should meet the Decent Homes standard.
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Appendix 1b

DECENT HOME LOAN	
Purpose of assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the quality of the housing stock and reduce the burden on providing new housing. To assist the vulnerable to access a decent home
Maximum Loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £25,000, Owner Occupiers - loan accrues annually compound interest at bank rate. Landlords - loan accrues annually compound interest, charged at bank rate +1.0%
Minimum cost of works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £3,000
Eligible Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner Occupiers – applicants must be in receipt of a means tested benefit or have an assessed contribution of less than £10,000. Landlords
Eligible Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A permanent and legal residence that falls within local Council Tax band A, B, C, D as assessed before any discount or reduction. The property must fail to meet the Decent Home Standard; and/or If an empty property, must have been empty for 12 months; and/or If for relocation of a disabled person, must have been assessed as being suitable for adaptation.
Eligible Expense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of works required to meet the Decent Home standard Cost of essential improvements and adaptations Cost of works to prevent a relevant person being admitted to primary care Fees for professional services in connection with the scheme
Overcrowding	Where no other reasonable course of action is available a loan may be considered to extend or adapt an existing dwelling that is considered overcrowded having regard to the legislation at time being in force.
Common parts or group repair	The reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicants liability

<p>Applicant Contribution</p>	<p>Owner Occupiers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner Occupiers will be assessed for their ability to contribute to the scheme, the test of resources will be that as applied to the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant rules as set out under the Housing Renewal Grant Regulations 1998 (as amended). • Applicants with savings of £16,000 or more will be expected to contribute the value of savings above this figure to the scheme. <p>Landlords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of the cost of the eligible work upto a maximum loan of £25,000
<p>Conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon completion of the works the dwelling must meet the Decent Homes standard. • The dwelling must be made wholly suitable for occupation • The property must remain occupied by the applicant or a nominated tenant for a period of no less than 5 years from satisfactory completion of the relevant works. • In the event of the property being vacated within the five year period the loan will be required to be repaid. The interest charged in such circumstances will be at a rate of 1% above the bank base rate for the period of the loan. • In the case of a tenanted property the landlord shall agree to the Council having tenancy nomination rights for a period not exceeding 5 years from the date of completion at a rent no higher than the Local Market Housing allowance for the time being set for the area. • Charge on the property until loan paid off • Loan to be repaid on sale or transfer ownership • Loan to be repaid if property becomes a holiday let or vacant for more than 6 months • Loan can be repaid by no more than 2 instalments per year

DISABLED FACILITY GRANT	
Purpose of assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide specialist adaptations to enable a person with a disability to live safely in their own home.
Maximum Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £25,000 The grant will be the difference between the applicants assessed contribution and the cost of the eligible costs. For grant calculation purposes the eligible costs in excess of £25,000 will be disregarded.
Eligible Persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any disabled person, as described by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 s. 100, applicants can be property owners or tenants, some landlords may apply on behalf of tenants
Eligible Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A permanent and legal residence including dwellings, mobile homes or caravans and houseboats.
Eligible Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works that are essential for access, personal care, bedroom, kitchen, safety and services, as described in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 s. 23 Works must be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person; and Reasonable and practicable to carry out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building. Fees for costs and professional services in connection with the scheme
Relevant Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will only consider funding an extension to a dwelling if the assessed need cannot be met by the provision of equipment and/or alterations to the property. The Council will only consider funding the provision of equipment and/or alterations to a dwelling if the assessed need cannot be met by re-organising the existing living space available in the property.
Common parts or group repair	The reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicants liability
Top Up	The Council may provide, at their discretion, additional assistance in the form of a Decent Home Loan, if there is no practical alternative course of action and the applicant can prove the need for the additional resources.

Applicant Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants will be assessed for their ability to contribute to the scheme, the test of resources will be that as applied to the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant rules as set out under the Housing Renewal Grant Regulations 1998 (as amended).
Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council shall in all cases consult the Norfolk County Council Social Services Authority (or other agency appointed for that purpose) for the purposes of determining grant eligibility.• The Council shall only entertain applications accompanied by the relevant certificates of owner or tenant occupation.• The Council shall only entertain applications accompanied by proof of ownership and/or owner's permission

Appendix 2

The Housing Health And Safety Rating System

The housing fitness standard set out in the Housing Act 1985 has been replaced with an evidence based risk assessment procedure, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) set out in Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004

The purpose of the HHSRS is not to set a standard but to generate objective information in order to inform and determine enforcement decisions.

HHSRS assesses (29) twenty nine categories of housing hazard and provides a rating for each hazard. It does not provide a single rating for the dwelling as a whole or, in the case of multiply occupied dwellings, for the building as a whole.

The 29 hazard types are as follows:	
Physiological Requirements	Protection against infection
Damp & mould growth etc	Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
Excessive cold	Food safety
Excessive heat	Personal hygiene, sanitation & drainage
Asbestos (and MMF)	Water supply
Biocides	
CO & Fuel combustion products	Protection against Accidents
Lead	Falls associated with baths
Radiation	Falling on level surfaces
Uncombusted fuel gas	Falling on stairs, steps etc.
Volatile organic compounds	Falling between levels
	Electrical hazards
Psychological Requirements	Fire
Crowding and space	Flames and hot surfaces
Lighting	Collision and entrapment
Entry by intruders	Explosions
	Position and operability of amenities, etc
	Structural collapse and falling elements

The HHSRS scoring system considers the likelihood that a harmful occurrence (e.g. an accident or an illness) will occur as a consequence of a deficiency such as a fault in a dwelling whether due to disrepair or design fault. It also looks at the spread of harm outcomes that can be anticipated should the harmful occurrence take place. If a harmful occurrence is very likely to occur and the outcome is likely to be extreme or severe then the score will be very high.

The hazard rating is expressed through a numerical score which falls into one of ten bands. Scores in Bands A to C (score 1,000 or above) are Category 1 hazards. Scores in Bands D to J (score below 1,000) are Category 2 hazards.

The HHSRS assessment is based on the risk to the potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard. For example, stairs constitute a greater risk to the elderly, so for assessing hazards relating to stairs they are considered the most vulnerable. The very young as well as the elderly are susceptible to low temperatures. A dwelling that is safe for those most vulnerable to a hazard is safe for all.

Enforcement Policy

Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Exercise of Statutory/ Duties Powers by South Norfolk Council

South Norfolk Council (hereinafter referred to as the Council) has a duty to act when Category 1 type hazards are found. The Council has a discretionary power to act in respect of a Category 2 hazard.

The action taken by the Council will be informed by a three stage consideration:

- The hazard rating determined under HHSRS; and
- Whether the Council has a duty or power to act, determined by the presence of a hazard above or below a threshold prescribed by Regulations at the time (Category 1 and Category 2 hazards); and
- The Council's judgement as to the most appropriate course of action to deal with the hazard.

The courses of action available to the Council are to:

1. Serve an Improvement Notice requiring remedial works;
2. Make a Prohibition Order, which closes the whole or part of the dwelling or restricts the number or class of permitted occupants;
3. Suspend the above;
4. Serve a Hazard Awareness Notice;
5. Take Emergency Remedial Action;
6. Serve an Emergency Prohibition Order;
7. Make a Demolition Order;
8. Declare a Clearance Area.

Except that courses of action 5, 6, 7, & 8 are only in respect of Category 1 hazards.

While the HHSRS hazard rating is based on the most vulnerable potential occupant, the Council will be able to take into account the circumstances of the actual occupant in deciding the most appropriate course of action.

Where action is taken and the property owner does not comply, the Council retains the power to:

- act in default;
- carry out the works themselves;
- recover the cost of the works;
- recover the cost of the enforcement action;
- recover the cost of charges for the enforcement action; and/or
- prosecute

In determining the appropriate course of action, the Council will take into account factors such as the following:

- Extent, severity and location of the hazard
- Proportionality – cost and practicability of the remedial works
- Multiple hazards
- The extent of the control an occupier has over the works to the dwelling
- Vulnerability of current occupiers
- Likelihood of occupancy changing
- Social exclusion
- The views of the current occupiers

Use of Discretionary Powers

Having regard to the statutory guidance and to the provisions of the Enforcement Concordat which the Council has adopted, in addition to the Council's duty to take action where a Category 1 hazard exists, the Council will generally exercise its discretion to take the most appropriate course of action where a Category 2 hazard exists in the following situations:

A. Band D Hazards

There will be a general presumption that where a Band D hazard exists, Officers will consider action under the Housing Act 2004 unless that would not be the most appropriate course of action.

B. Multiple Hazards

Where a number of hazards at Band D or below appear, when looked at together, to create a more serious situation, or where the property appears to be in a dilapidated condition, the Housing Renewal Manager or the Head of Strategic Housing may authorise the most appropriate course of action to be taken.

C. Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances where A & B above are not applicable, the Housing Renewal Manager or the Head of Strategic Housing may authorise the most appropriate course of action to be taken.

Level To Which Hazards Are To Be Improved

The Housing act 2004 requires only that the works specified when taking the most appropriate course reduce a Category 1 hazard to a Category 2 hazard.

SNC will generally seek to specify works which, whilst not necessarily achieving the ideal, achieve a significant reduction in the hazard level and in particular will be to a standard that should ensure no further intervention should be required for a minimum period of twelve months.

Tenure

In considering the most appropriate course of action, the Council will have regard to the extent of control that an occupier has over the works required to the dwelling. In most circumstances, this will mean taking the most appropriate course of action against a landlord and in most cases this will involve requiring works to be carried out.

With owner occupiers, in most cases they will not be required to carry out works to their own home and the requirement to take the most appropriate course of action will be satisfied by the service of a Hazard Awareness Notice.

However, in respect of an owner occupied dwelling, the Council may, in certain circumstances:

- require works to be carried out;
- use Emergency Remedial Action; or
- serve an Emergency Prohibition Order

This is likely to be where there is an imminent risk of harm to the occupiers themselves or to others outside the household, or where the condition of the dwelling is such that it may adversely affect the health and safety of others outside the household. This may be because of a serious, dangerous deficiency at the property.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders

The Council has discretionary powers under Housing Act 2004 to take enforcement action to take over the management of long term empty dwellings. These powers will be used appropriately where other options of advice and assistance have failed to resolve the problem. Enforcement action will be an option for properties that are having an adverse affect on the surrounding neighbourhood and where occupation of the property can make a positive contribution to meeting housing need.

Enforcement Concordat

The Council has adopted the Enforcement Concordat and observes it principles.

With specific regard to Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, the principles of the Enforcement Concordat mean that the Council will take an informal approach to the Act. However, this will not be appropriate where:

- There is a risk to health and safety from a hazard of a nature which requires prompt formal action; or
- There is evidence of previous non compliance with statutory provisions made under the Housing Acts or other housing related legislation.

Charging For Notices

In accordance with sections 49 & 50 of the Housing Act 2004, the Council reserves the right to charge and recover the reasonable costs incurred in taking the most appropriate course of action.

The Council is likely to only charge where:

- A formal notice is required to remove a serious threat to health and safety unless the threat arose because of circumstances outside the control of the person receiving the notice, order or action; and/or
- There is evidence of previous non compliance with statutory provisions made under the Housing Acts or other housing related legislation; and/or
- No adequate action has been taken in response to informal requests from the council to take action or do works.

DEFINITIONS

Assists – includes the various individual ways in which clients can be assisted to remain in and maintain their homes. Includes financial help, advice, provision of equipment, referral to other services etc.

Decent Homes Standard – to meet this standard the property needs to meet four broad criteria

- be above the legal minimum standard for housing
- be in a reasonable state of repair
- have reasonably modern facilities (e.g. kitchens and bathrooms) and services
- provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (i.e. effective insulation and efficient heating)

Vulnerable Households – those in receipt of certain specified means tested benefits, currently includes Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Income based job seekers allowance, Attendance Allowance, Disabled living allowance, Industrial injuries disablement benefit, War disablement pension, Pension credit, Working tax credit (with disability element)[total income <£15,500] & Child tax credit [total income <£15,500]

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Appendix 5 Table (i) existing measures		
Outcome (consequence)	Target/output Per year	Data Collection
The help given to vulnerable people to remain in their own homes	1500 assists a year	Care and Repair Grant/loan Advice Advocacy Enforcement Partnership services
The number of homes made decent	106 per year	Care and Repair Grant/loan Advice Advocacy Enforcement Partnership services
The number of properties adapted to meet the needs of disabled occupants	120 per year	Care and Repair Grant/loan Advice Advocacy Partnership services
The number of homes where energy efficiency has been improved	200 per year	Care and Repair Grant/loan Advice Enforcement Partnership services
The number of empty properties brought back into use	17 per year	Grant/loan Advice Enforcement Partnership services

Appendix 5 Table (ii) possible future measures		
Outcome (consequence)	Target/output (amount produced)	Data Collection
Improvement in quality of accommodation occupied by vulnerable households improvement of stock condition	Number of properties inspected Number of grant/loan applications processed Number of dwellings improved following Council intervention Landlords covered by accreditation scheme as % of total	Visit records Post intervention inspections Number and type of grants/loans Accreditation records
Improvement in quality of local property management	Number of landlords attending training & information events (and number of events held) Landlords covered by accreditation scheme as % of total Number of landlords becoming members of local landlords associations	Landlord registration for attendance at events Accreditation records Eastern Landlords Association records
Increase access to/reduce exclusion from private rented sector property	Number of tenancy deposits issued % on housing benefit	RADS's deposit data Housing Benefit data

**Flow Chart
Housing Services**

Enquiry

1

Single Point Service Access

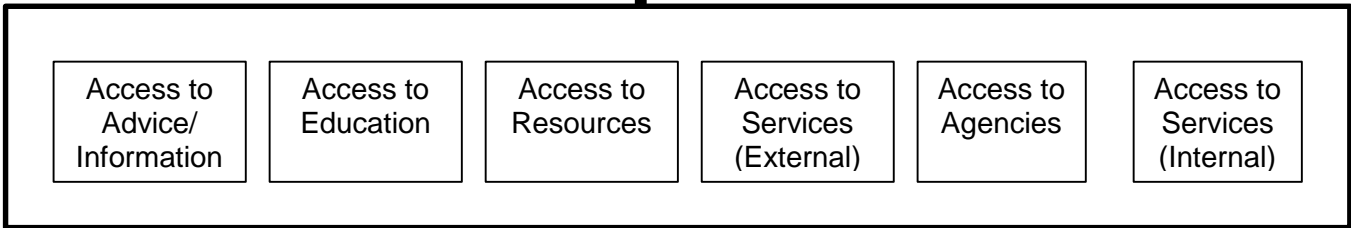
2

Assessment to Determine Requirements
Determined from Needs and Risk Assessments

(needs and risk criteria based on strategic priorities)
(single form for all enquiries into Housing Services)

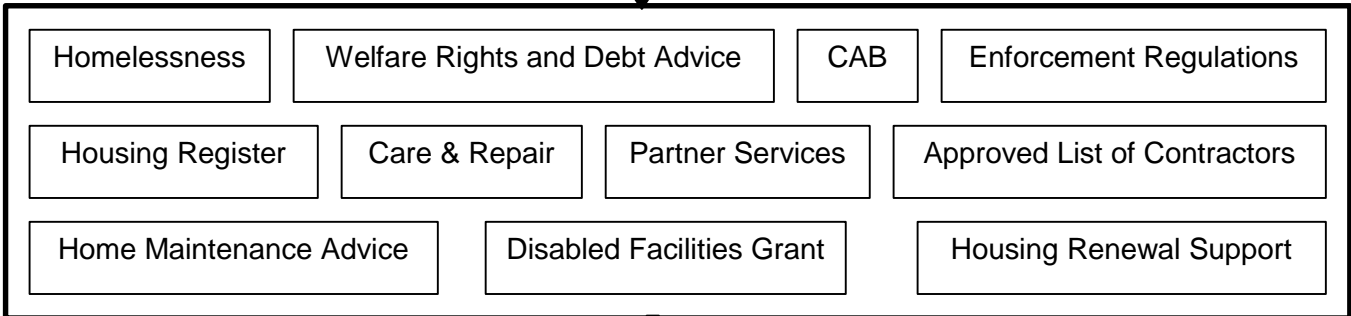
3

Identification of
Service Requirements



4

Service Options



5

Service Assessments

6

Service Outcomes

Service Outcomes
Monitored Against
Strategic Priorities