

Edinburgh's Housing Advice and Information Strategy 2009-2012



Services for Communities
Housing and Regeneration

Edinburgh's Housing Advice and Information Strategy 2009-2012

DRAFT

Contents Page

Introduction	3
Review of Previous Strategies	5
Key challenges for the next three years	7
Strategy Objectives	9
Action Plan	11
Monitoring Progress	14

Appendices

Appendix 1 – EHAHN membership

Appendix 2 - Strategy consultation event attendees

Appendix 3 – Housing advice and the Scottish Government's national agenda

Appendix 4 - Index of related strategies

Appendix 5 - Joint Training Initiative

Appendix 6 – Commissioned Services

Introduction

Good quality, consistent housing advice and information matters and Edinburgh is a recognised leader in Scotland in its provision of good housing advice.¹

Edinburgh has a wide range of in-house council services, as well as voluntary organisations, providing housing advice and support. These services share common purposes and objectives through the Edinburgh Housing Advice and Homelessness Network (EHAHN).

As a successful and growing city it is important that housing advice evolves to fit the needs of the city and that this recognition is maintained. Access to housing is one of the essential factors involved in assisting and maintaining the growth of the city.

The main objectives of this Strategy are to ensure that:

- access to housing is increased and sustained across the tenures,
- delivery of housing advice can be accessed within all neighbourhoods throughout the city,
- advice is of a consistently high quality,
- housing advice is tailored to suit individuals' needs and refers to neighbourhoods in which they live or wish to live.

The Strategy was developed through partnership working by EHAHN who represent a wide and varied range of interest groups and are committed to ensuring quality advice in Edinburgh is accessed by all who seek it (See Appendix 1 for full EHAHN membership list). EHAHN is a mature, well established best practice network involving over 200 practitioners. This helps make this Strategy one that is based on genuine multi-agency ownership and action.

This Strategy continues to promote and further develop partnership working ensuring access to and sustaining housing remains a priority for the next three years. This Strategy applies to all advice providers (whether statutory, voluntary or commissioned) working both across and within the city's neighbourhoods.

An extensive programme of consultation included briefings Managers, EHAHN Steering Group Members and a Consultation Event, held in February 2009. The Consultation Event included representatives from the statutory and voluntary sector as well as representation from various Council Departments/Sections, including Neighbourhood Office staff (see Appendix 2 for consultation attendance list). The draft Summary Strategy was put to wider consultation via circulation and posted on the Internet.

¹ Communities Scotland – Regulation and Inspection report, Homelessness, April 2006. See especially paragraphs 3.71, 3.76

This Strategy acknowledges upcoming changes in homelessness legislation and sets out how the City of Edinburgh can best approach preventing homelessness occurring. This is now a key priority for Edinburgh as set down in the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2012.

The Strategy recognises that some groups may also face additional barriers, for example Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, those with certain disabilities and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups. The vast majority of people however, will be able to access and retain housing across the tenures, as long as the right levels of support and care provided.

This Strategy is relevant to The City of Edinburgh Council's key desired outcomes of greater access to services, sustainable neighbourhoods and efficiency. Edinburgh's Single Outcome Agreement Annual Report on Progress Report (September 2009) also recognised that '*effective housing advice is the key to preventing homelessness*'.

The SOA emphasises Edinburgh's commitment to working with the community and the voluntary sector, supporting vulnerable people and increasing service quality in neighbourhoods. The Strategy provides an excellent fit for this approach. (See Appendix 3 for a fuller outline of the relevance of housing advice and information to the Scottish Government's national agenda).

While this Strategy is closely linked to the Homelessness Strategy, it was also developed at the same time as the current ongoing Corporate Review of Advice Services. This Review concentrates on the provision of financial advice, but this Strategy shares a number of core principles and actions - getting right first time for every customer, affordability of accommodation options, focusing on outcomes that are meaningful and measurable, and the development of frameworks which will measure these outcomes. This Strategy therefore draws on and complements the excellent work carried out by this Review, particularly around good information sharing and referral arrangements between agencies.

This Strategy also references and supports the aims of other Council Strategies (see Appendix 4). While there is a strong emphasis on the importance quality housing advice has to play in preventing homelessness, it also recognises that housing advice also has a distinct role in enabling people to improve their current living conditions through a variety of practical means, for example, advice on visiting support, energy efficiency, adaptations, neighbour disputes.

As the organisation producing this Strategy, Services for Communities seeks to ensure that its communities are both well engaged and well informed.

These are universal values that also happen to be central to best practice in housing advice and information to be delivered over the next three years.

Review of Previous Strategies

The main achievements of the first two Strategies have been:

- Homeless prevention - one in three people seeking advice from The City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) do not go on to present as homeless. This is an improvement from one in five people in 2003.
- The creation and development of the Edinburgh Housing Advice and Homelessness Network.
- To deliver a successful Joint training Initiative (JTI) which has seen over five hundred advisors trained in core subjects since 2006. The JTI is monitored through delegate evaluation forms and is a regular agenda item at the EHAIN Steering Group meetings and the Quality Action Group meetings. (Please see Appendix 5 for JTI courses delivered and attendance).
- To improve quality options advice and information for applicants by supporting advisors to work to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.
- Achieving the National Standards accreditation for Homeless Services.
- Creation of the Housing Options Guide as an online information resource for housing advisors and the general public

This Strategy seeks to build on the achievements of the previous Strategies by ensuring this quality advice is built upon and becomes the standard in Edinburgh.

While the guiding principles from the previous strategies remain the same:

- Committed to providing a customer centred service
- Ensuring housing advice is
 - comprehensive
 - accurate
 - easily accessible
 - widely available and relevant

This new strategy takes into account:

- changes to the law and the current situation in Edinburgh (for example the implementation of Section 11 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001,
- the Government's commitment to giving every unintentionally homeless household the right to a permanent home,
- the availability of housing,
- the current financial climate, and
- the importance of service delivery in Edinburgh's neighbourhoods

The previous Strategy was committed to support services and partners work towards the National Standards for Advice and Information Providers within realistic timescales. There has been limited success in services gaining accreditation.

Whilst the National Standards have value as a quality framework to ensure quality and consistency among advisors/agencies, we also recognise there is a heavy concentration on processes, rather than customer outcomes.

The new Strategy will seek to work with the Scottish Government to address these issues and as an interim measure build a quality monitoring framework, based on the National Standards, that will be more relevant and workable to advisors in Edinburgh.

Key challenges for the next three years

Edinburgh is experiencing an acute shortage of affordable housing with demand far outweighing supply. Council/Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), housing only accounts for approximately 16 per cent of the overall housing stock in the city. We must, therefore, look to other tenures to help home-seekers find suitable, realistic and sustainable housing solutions. The current economic downturn together with the credit crunch and a difficult housing market will present further challenges. It is vital, therefore, that housing advice is provided in the most joined up way possible.

The new Strategy sets out to ensure that:

- social housing cannot and should not be considered the primary housing option for everyone.
- accessing advice on the private sector is made easier (the private sector includes: the private rented sector, low cost home ownership, first time buying, Government Mortgage Rescue schemes)
- advice on these options are given wherever relevant.

This represents a substantial change in the way we provide advice and a change in culture for many advisors.

The new Strategy seeks to ensure all housing advisors in Edinburgh have the knowledge and resources to ensure every customer is provided with quality advice from first point of contact. It should be noted that 'resources' does not necessarily mean financial assistance in this context. It means supporting staff to access reference materials and training.

We will do this by offering training through the JTI and other forms of training including briefing sessions and e-learning competency course (this is currently being developed and will be introduced to Neighbourhood Offices before being rolled out to partner organisations), online reference materials, networking events and an online community for information sharing.

Edinburgh has recently commissioned a range of services to increase access to the private rented sector and help people sustain their tenancies (See Appendix 6). This includes Edinburgh Housing Advice Partnership (EHAP) and Letfirst. The scope of these services will increase access and retention of private housing tenures. The commissioning of these services will allow us to build capacity (through advertising and promotion of housing advice) with the new services, supplementing our own service.

The new homeless (non-accommodation based) commissioned services came into operation on 27 April 2009. We will work closely with these services to:

- ensure advice is joined up and consistent
- ensure protocols and referral procedures are embedded in the advice provision throughout Edinburgh.

We will also help promote the services to Neighbourhood Office staff and our partners in the voluntary sector. It is essential these services are embedded in the Neighbourhoods and we will help establish strong links between advisors and services.

The private rented sector will play a major part in assisting people find a home that is suitable to them but there are also other tenures that offer viable options in some instances.

The majority housing tenure in Edinburgh is owner occupation. It is imperative that people are able to access quality advice and information on this sector, in terms of accessing the sector and remaining in the sector wherever possible. It is essential people experiencing difficulties are advised on potential remedies in plenty of time, before having to turn to the social rented for assistance. The fact that 46 per cent of elderly people on the Common Housing Register are owner occupiers (source Edindex) highlights a need for additional advice and information to those in this sector. Advice on long term affordability issues such as repairs, maintenance and possible future adaptations have a huge role to play here.

There are a variety of schemes to help people get on the property ladder, including Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes run by the Government and private builders. There are many schemes running at the same time but there is no central point to gather information. We will address both these issues by ensuring this option is built into the JTI, followed up with briefing sessions and we will work with partners to look at ways to pull all the relevant information into one central point of contact.

These issues will be addressed mainly through the JTI and e-learning programmes. We will also work closely with all our partners to ensure that there are easy links, protocols and referral procedures to ensure people are given full opportunities to stay in their own homes where ever possible. This will include keeping up to date with the various Government Mortgage Rescue Schemes that are available.

There are only a few advice agencies that are approved by the Government to advise and take forward applications for these schemes. We will ensure all advisors are aware of these agencies through training and briefing sessions. We will also work with the new commissioned services to ensure capacity is there.

Strategy Objectives

Objective 1: We will ensure access to housing advice surrounding the private sector is increased.

Edinburgh's private rented market is growing and is the most accessible tenure in terms of availability of accommodation. It is vital that people are aware of their options in this tenure and that advice is widely available. At the Consultation Event in February 2009, Housing Advisors indicated that this is an area of advice that is not as familiar to them as RSL/Council tenancies.

We aim to address this with an extensive training program delivered through JTI, regular communications, e-learning, written guidance and procedures and briefing sessions. Through training, information sharing and access to shared resources, we will equip advisors with the knowledge and confidence to advise their clients on all relevant options and/or enable them to signpost or refer to someone who can.

Objective 2: We will support housing advisors to focus on good outcomes for customers - demonstrating their knowledge and confidence while working towards relevant competencies in the National Standards.

The National Standards are the quality framework that helps to ensure quality and consistency among advisors/agencies is in place. Edinburgh is committed to the National Standards and believes all services should continue to work towards them. The Strategy will support relevant partners to seek accreditation under the new regime by offering free advice and assistance to those wishing to apply for accreditation.

We will look to build a new Edinburgh specific monitoring framework that concentrates on customer outcomes within the life of this Strategy.

Objective 3: We will ensure housing advice is widely available and accessible to all and that advice given is properly recorded.

This is a multi agency Strategy and therefore more likely to provide the quality advice our clients deserve. This aim will be achieved through the Action Plan, training guidance and robust referrals between agencies. This will ensure consistency of advice is achieved and that customers will be able to access the same quality advice, wherever they choose to.

We will work with our partners to align our recording mechanisms where ever possible. This will ensure we are recording the same things and therefore be able to monitor and evaluate the quality of all advice given.

Objective 4: We will work with Neighbourhood Offices to support the provision of housing advice in non traditional advice settings.

We will work with Neighbourhood Offices and Commissioned Services to support the provision of housing advice in non traditional advice settings (for example GP surgeries) and seek to build capacity by training non-traditional housing advisors (such as health visitors, solicitor) to recognise indicators that may lead to homelessness.

Objective 5: We will continue to prevent homelessness by ensuring advice is accessed at the earliest possible time.

The need for a revised city-wide strategy is firmly embedded in the Edinburgh Homelessness Strategy (2008-2012) Vision Statement, 'To end homelessness in Edinburgh by 2012'. The Vision is to be met by achieving four aims:

Aim 1: Preventing Homelessness - Anyone who is having difficulty keeping their home will have access to services and support that can help them to avoid becoming homeless.

Aim 2: Access to Housing - Anyone who needs a home can get help to access one that meets their needs.

Aim 3: Access to Housing - People get access to temporary accommodation when they need it.

Aim 4: Sustainability - People who have been homeless can get the services and support so that they don't become homeless again.

Quality housing advice is essential to achieving all four of these aims.

We will achieve our fifth objective by ensuring all partner agencies and The City of Edinburgh Council Neighbourhood Office staff are kept well informed, well trained and able to access training and information resources.

The Strategy will ensure a holistic approach is taken to ensure people's circumstances are matched to the relevant advice. By building on the strength of our networks and partnerships, we have now opportunity to create seamless service and effective outcomes for our customers.

HOUSING ADVICE & INFORMATION STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	SUBJECT	ACTION	WHEN	OUTCOMES
Ensure advice on the private rented sector is increased	Accessing the Private Rented Sector Housing Options	-JTI courses -Briefing sessions -E-learning module	2009 onwards	Increase in customers accessing housing in the private rented sector
Ensure housing advice is available on buying, including low cost homeownership	Housing Options in Edinburgh	-JTI courses -Briefing sessions -E-learning module	2009 onwards	Increase in customers accessing housing advice on buying
Ensure advice is available on Mortgage Rescue Schemes	Housing Options in Edinburgh	-JTI courses -Briefing Sessions -E-Learning module	2009 Onwards	Increase in customers accessing advice about buying
Ensure advice is given on a local level	Tailored training to suit individual Neighbourhoods (CEC staff and locally based advice providers)	Ensure easy links to on line resources	January 2010 and throughout the life of the Strategy	Increase knowledge to suit demands and housing needs of Neighbourhood area

OBJECTIVE	SUBJECT	ACTION	WHEN	OUTCOMES
Develop and maintain a communication plan	Well informed practitioners network	Create and distribute a Newsletters Regular emails Briefings	Ongoing from 2009	
Evaluate current resources and information tools available	Comprehensive toolkit	Consult with EHahn members and QAGS to identify any gaps in provision.	June 2010	Ensure all relevant resources are available to advisors Identify resources that are required but not available and assist to put these in place.
Advertise advice services	Well engaged communities	Work with corporate Communications to look at ways to best advertise housing advice within the city.	By June 2010	Increase access to advice services
Define role of housing options within Neighbourhood	Well informed SfC staff	Assist Neighbourhoods to include housing options in job remits where relevant. Ensure housing advice is incorporated into induction programmes. Work with Neighbourhoods to ensure housing options is included in appraisals and one to ones	Ongoing through life of Strategy	Increase advise on all housing tenures

OBJECTIVE	SUBJECT	ACTION	WHEN	OUTCOMES
Work with the Scottish Government to look at developing the standards	National Standards	Meet with the Government to discuss standards in relation to smaller organisations.	2009 onwards	More buy in from partner agencies
Develop a monitoring framework (designed on the National Standards)	Quality Assurance	Work with our partners to develop a framework to measure advice based on quality and outcomes	By August 2010	Improve consistency of advice across the city
Work with Neighbourhoods to identify non traditional housing advice venues	Well engaged Communities	Work to develop advice surgeries within Neighbourhood venues other than Neighbourhood Offices	2009 onwards	Increase access provide local services
Develop an outreach programme to include non housing professionals	Partnership working	Work with Neighbourhoods to identify other professionals and provide training/briefings on general housing advice/signposting	2010 onwards	Increase Capacity and reach more clients.
Ensure joined up approach to housing advice	Partnership working	Help Neighbourhoods and partner agencies establish links and referral procedures with new commissioned services and other relevant agencies/departments	2009 onwards	Improve consistency of advice across the city

Monitoring Progress

The EHAHN Steering Group will oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

EHAHN partners will participate an annual review of progress and a yearly update report will be produced and circulated to the Network.

Appendix 1

EHAHN membership

EHAHN members from email mailing list	
Agency/group	No. of individuals/mail boxes
Aberlour	2
Access to Industry	1
Action Group	3
The City of Edinburgh Council	141
Allelon	1
Advocard	3
Ark Trust	6
Barnardos	1
Barony Housing Association	3
Bethany Christian Trust	14
Black Community Development Project	1
Blue Triangle Housing Association	2
Community One Stop Shop	1
Canongate Youth Project	2
Capability Scotland	2
Castle Cliff Hostel	1
Café 6VT	1
Cairn Housing Association	1
Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association	4
Craigmillar Ability Network	1
Crew 2000	1
Crossreach	4
Crossreach Rankeillor Initiative	2
CHAI	9
Changeworks	2
Chinese Information Centre	1
Churches Housing	1
Citizens Advice Bureau	3
Convent of Mercy Homeless	1
Cranston Street Hostel	1
Cunningham House	1
Cyrenians	14
Dean & Cauvin - Aftercare	1
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	10
Dunedin Harbour Hostel	1
Edinburgh City Mission	2
Edinburgh Community Mediation Service	1
Edinburgh Homelink Partnership	5
Edinburgh Interfaith Network	1

Education Department	1
Edinburgh Tenants Federation	1
Edinburgh University Students Association	2
Edinburgh Woman's Aid	3
Edinburgh Crisis Centre	2
Edinburgh Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	3
EHAP	2
Fairadvice	2
Fairbride	2
Families Outside	1
Family Mediation Lothian	1
Forthsector	1
Foursquare	19
Fresh Start	4
Garvald Edinburgh	2
Girls Work Resource Centre	2
Granton Information Centre	2
Grapevine ICIL	1
Grassmarket Mission	1
Hanover Scotland Housing Association	1
Harmony Employment	1
Health in Mind	2
Hillcrest Housing Association	16
Homelink befriending	1
Home Scotland Housing Association	2
Hunters Hall	1
HOP	1
Includem	1
Jericho House	1
Keymoves	1
LGBT Youth	1
Lifecare - Edinburgh	1
Link Housing Group	16
Lister Housing co-op	1
Lothian CJS (SACRO)	5
Mainliners	2
Manor Estates	1
Mid Point – Turning Point Scotland	1
Milan	2
MECOPP	2
Moveon	2
Muirhouse Housing Association	1
Napier University	1
NCH/Action for Children	1
NEDAC	2
NHS Lothian	4
One Parent Families Scotland	3

Orchard and Shipman	1
Ownership Options in Scotland	2
Pakistan Society	1
Partners in Advocacy	1
Penumbra	10
Polish Volunteers	1
Port of Leith Housing Association	1
Prospect Housing Association	1
Redbraes Residents Association	1
Rock Trust	10
Rowan Alba	6
SACRO	1
Salvation Army	11
SAMH	2
Save the Children	1
Scot-pep	3
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	5
Scottish Refugee Council	6
Shakti	3
Shelter	7
Sikh Sanjog	1
Space 44	1
Street work	26
Supporting People	1
Telford College	1
Tenants First	1
The Wise Group	1
Trust Housing Association	3
Turning Point Scotland	1
Turning Point Leith	1
Saheliya	1
Volunteer Edinburgh	4
Viewpoint Housing Association	1
Visualise	1
West Granton Housing co-op	1
Westerhailes Multicultural Welfare Project	1
Working for Families	1
WSW	1
YMCA	5
Random – people who have given their personal email address (so we don't know which agency/project they represent)	14
Total	127 520

EHAHN members registered on online community of practice – the new way to communicate and share information to members, created October 2009

Agency/group	No. of individuals
The Action Group	1
Advocard	2
Barony Housing Association	1
Bethany Christian Trust	7
The City of Edinburgh Council	33
Changeworks	1
Civil Legal Assistance Office Edinburgh	1
Crossreach	1
Canongate Youth Project	2
Cyrenians	10
CHAI	1
Dunedin Canmore Housing Association	3
EHAP	3
Edinburgh Crisis Centre	1
Edinburgh Women's Aid	2
Edinburgh Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre	2
Edinburgh University Students Association	1
Four Square	3
Fresh Start	1
Gowrie Care	3
Grassmarket Mission/Greyfriars Community	1
Harmony Employment Agency	2
Hillcrest	2
Home Scotland	1
Homelessness and Employability Network	1
Knowledge Management	1
Lister Housing co-op	1
Mainliners	1
Manor Estates Housing Association	1
Napier University	1
Move on	1
One Parent Families Scotland	1
Ownership Options Scotland	1
Penumbra	1
Rock Trust	5
Rowan Alba	3
Salvation Army	1

Scottish Churches Housing Association	1
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	3
Scottish Refugee Council	1
SACRO	1
Shakti	1
Shelter Scotland	3
Spectrum	1
Streetwork	2
Sunflower Garden	1
Turning Point Scotland	1
Volunteer Centre Edinburgh	1
YMCA	2
Total	49
	122

Appendix 2

Consultation Event attendance:

Partner Agencies attendees

Adrian Curry	Bethany Christian Church
Andy Baker	Cannongate Youth Project
Angela MacLaughlin	Orchard and Shipman
Amy Hutton	Cyrenians
David Gardener	EHAHP
David Gibb	Shelter
Derek Anderson	Portlee Resource Centre
Ella Simpson	Rock Trust
Fran Jones	Orchard and Shipman
Kathy Hoyle	Cyrenians
Lesley Reid	NHS Lothian
Margaret Campbell	Four Square
Melanie Robertson	Hillcrest
Murdul Wadhwa	Shakti
Phillip Preston	Salvation Army
Robert Jahoda	Ownership Options
Robert Keightly	LEEP
Sarah Cowing	Dunedin Canmore
Seamus Spencer	Passport
Sheila Collins	Dunedin Canmore
Susan Carmichael	Waverly Care
Susie Fitton	Capability Scotland

Susan Laing	Hillcrest
Roddy Samson	Granton Information Centre
Vicky Phillips	Cyrenians

The City of Edinburgh Council attendees

Andy Shearer	Young Person Service/Neighbourhood Support Team
Ann Stein	South Neighbourhood Office
Audrey Cain	East Neighbourhood Office
Avril Campbell	East Neighbourhood Office
Caroline Johnson	Advice Shop
Catherine Hogarth	East Neighbourhood Office
Christine Dodds	South Neighbourhood Office
Darren Oughton	Service Support Unit
Francis Marsden	Assessment and Advice
George Norvel	East Neighbourhood Office
Jan Robertson	Young Persons Service
Katrina Love	Assessment and Advice
Kelly Bonar	South Neighbourhood Office
Kirsteen Wishart	Housing Options Team
Libby Strong	West Neighbourhood Office
Lorraine Tilbrooke	Housing Options Team
Margaret Zawiza	Advice Shop
Marion Dickson	Assessment and Advice
Mark Rodgers	North Neighbourhood Office
Maryann Stanton	East Neighbourhood Office

Matt McGlone	East Neighbourhood Office
Morag McNab	Letwise
Nigel Heggs	Castlecliff Hostel
Pat Robbins	Assessment and Advice
Paul Cartwright	Choice/Edindex
Pauline Lowrie	South West Neighbourhood Office
Phil Chalke	Edindex
Rachel Fleming	Letwise
Rachael Nwokoye	Assessment and Advice
Ralph MacGillivray	South West Neighbourhood Office
Rhona Coates	South Neighbourhood Office
Rona Cameron	Assessment and Advice
Stan Brown	The Access Point
Steve Martin	Edindex
Sue Willens	Advice Shop
Susy McCartney	Service Support Unit
Yvonne McWhirr	Housing Support Inclusion Service

Appendix 3

Housing Advice - The National Agenda and Edinburgh's response

Housing advice does, and must continue to, reference the Scottish government's national agenda.

The government has established five Strategic Objectives and 15 National Outcomes. Each National Outcome helps set out purpose and means by which outcomes are delivered.

One of the 15 National Outcomes is to:

“Tackle the significant inequalities in Scottish society”

And unequal outcomes affect *“ those who have least access to....good housing”*

The Scottish Government has also established a number of National Indicators that help measure progress towards both Objectives and Outcomes

Four of the Government's National Indicators are important here: -

“All unintentionally homeless households will be entitled to settled accommodation by 2012”

The Scottish considers the following to be key influences on outcomes:

- Effectiveness of Councils' prevention activity
- Flexibility to offer tenure solutions tailored to the needs of homeless applicants
- Provision of ongoing housing and wider support to help the most vulnerable stay in settled accommodation

Edinburgh's Homelessness Strategy 2008 -12 comments on the 2012 obligation:

*“It is important to note that it is increasingly unlikely that the Council will have the ability to rehouse those to whom it has a duty to find permanent accommodation. The Council estimates that 12,000 new affordable homes are needed over the next 10 years. At current investment levels, it can deliver 5,000 in the timeframe. **The Council will not be able to meet the 2012 obligation without a significant increase in supply**”*

“We live in well designed, sustainable places we are able to access the amenities and services we need”

Edinburgh's citizens live, or aspire to live, in these kind of places, with access to these kinds of services.

“Improve people’s perceptions of the quality of public services delivered”

All Scotland public services, including housing advice and information, need to be high quality, efficient, continually improving and responsive to the needs of local people. Both customer satisfaction and quality of service can be assessed in a number of ways.

“Improve public sector efficiency through the generation of cash releasing savings”

The relevant activity under this indicator includes – best value through commissioning, focusing staff time on activities which make a difference to people’s lives, and valuing efficient ways of working.

Regulation and Inspection

The Scottish Housing Regulator is the national agency charged to:

- protect the interests of current and future tenants, and other service users
- ensure the continuing provision of good quality social housing in terms of decent homes, good services, value for money and financial viability; and
- maintain the confidence of funders.

In July 2009, the Regulator produced a key report **Social Landlords in Scotland: Shaping up for improvement**. Drawing on the experience of inspection of landlords covering 240 registered social landlord and 26 local authority landlords, the Regulator found that one of the key areas in which landlords could improve was:

- *“improving the quality of housing options advice and information.....”*

In **Shaping up for improvement**, SHR also comments that *“.....local authorities are becoming more focused on preventing homelessness,and we have seen improved partnership working to provide a range of support and advice services to homeless people”*.

Edinburgh’s Response

Edinburgh’s own Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2008 - 11 sets out the local outcomes sought to meet each of the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes. The agreement sets out the expectations of a growing population that emphasise the importance of this particular strategy.

- A growth of 8 per cent or 38,000 people in the 10 years to 2016.
- An increase in 13,000 in single persons households
- Significant increase of 13 per cent in over 65 year olds, and 31 per cent in over 35 year olds

Against this, Edinburgh's SOA indicates significant shortages in affordable housing to rent or buy. Consequently, a danger exists that the Council will fail to meet its duty to homeless households. In this context, the provision of effective, customer focused, 'right first time' housing advice in the next three years will be ever more critical.

The importance of Housing Advice is directly recognised by the SOA. One required SOA action that directly addresses the National Objective that "*We live in well-designed, sustainable places...*" is to:

- "*implement a new homelessness strategy with partners to prevent homelessness and widen the range of housing options available for people*"

Edinburgh's SOA Annual Report on Progress Report (September 2009) identified a marked projected increase in the lack of affordable housing in just one year, reporting that "*effective housing advice is the key to preventing homelessness*"

Appendix 4

The Joint Training Initiative

The courses below have been delivered by the JTI since 2006.

2006-2009

Housing Advice Tools and Options
Intro to EdIndex and HOG
Intro to National Standards and Information Resources
Housing Options in the Private Rented Sector
National Standards: Community Profiling
Private Renting and Tenancy Law
Homelessness
Housing Options: Staying Where You Are
Rent Arrears and Eviction
Money/Debt Advice
Safe Housing of Sex Offenders
Tackling Antisocial Behaviour
Accessing and Sustaining a Private Rented Tenancy

There have been 78 training courses on the above subjects with a total of around 510 delegates in attendance.

Appendix 5

Index of other relevant Strategies

Homelessness Strategy 2008-2012

City Housing Strategy

Affordable Warmth Strategy

Live Well in Later life 2008 – 2018

Edinburgh's Single Outcome Agreement 2008 - 11

SfC Service Plan 2009-2012

Rent Collection Strategy 2008 – 11

Appendix 6

Commissioned Services from 27 April 2009

Advice and Information Outreach Service

Edinburgh Housing Advice Partnership
Contact: David Gardner, 0131 453 6410 (*interim*)

Establishing a Home (including furniture)

Bethany Christian Trust
Contact: Paul Drury, 0131 625 5305

People in Crisis

Streetwork, Kate Polson
Contact: 0131 556 9756 (up to 26th April)
0131 557 6055 (from 27th April)

Securing Private Sector Housing

Orchard and Shipman
Contact: Nicola McQueenie, 0131 553 9321

Visiting Support Services from 27 April 2009

Early Intervention Housing Support

Edinburgh Cyrenians
Contact: Amy Hutton, 0131 475 2439

Visiting Support for People in Crisis

Bethany Christian Trust
Contact: Paul Drury, 0131 625 5305

FourSquare – Follow Up, 0131 225 4256

Streetwork, Claire Gibson, 0131 556 9756

Midpoint, Dave Crosbie, 0131 226 0830

Visiting Support for People with Multiple Needs in Recurring Housing Crisis

Gowrie
Contact: Graeme Brown, 0131 558 5491

Visiting Support for People with Multiple Needs in Recurring Housing Crisis

CEC Housing Support and Inclusion Service
Contact: 0131 469 5150 (from 27 April)

Service overview

Advice and Information Outreach

Advice and information provision in neighbourhoods to prevent homelessness occurring. 3,000 households will be helped annually. The service will also work with prisoners, people in hospital, care and school leavers. The service will be available Monday to Saturday plus one evening each week.

Establish a Home

Help people settle into their new homes and neighbourhood. The service will provide:

- something to cook on, sleep on, sit on, as well as starter packs and other furniture;
- support with utilities and landlord issues;
- employment and training opportunities;
- 110 households with home decoration.

People in Crisis

Reach out to people in accommodation crisis and help them secure accommodation quickly. The service will:

- provide street outreach every day;
- phase out the night service to be replaced by access to overnight accommodation;
- provide a new “nightstop” project to divert young people from normal homelessness routes (this includes placement with host families);
- incentivised training and employment support.

Secure Private Sector Housing

Help people faced with or experiencing homelessness to secure private housing. The service will find accommodation for 1,000 households over three years. Customers may be able to access accommodation without a deposit.

Visiting Housing Support

Three types of housing support will be provided: preventative (working closely with the Advice and Information Outreach service in neighbourhoods to prevent homelessness), short term general support housing and support for people with complex needs. Support will be provided across a range of tenures including temporary accommodation.