

Your ref:

Our ref:

Please ask for:  
Mrs K Buckle

Telephone No.  
(01384) 815242

21st February, 2014

Dear Councillor

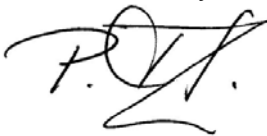
## **Revised Agenda**

### **Adult, Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee** **Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 – 6.00PM**

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Adult, Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 at **6.00pm** in Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley to consider the business set out in the agenda below.

The agenda and public reports are available on the Council's Website [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk) and follow the links to 'Councillors in Dudley' and the Committee Management Information System.

Yours sincerely



Director of Corporate Resources

## **A G E N D A**

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.

### **2. APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Declarations of Interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

4. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2013.

5. PUBLIC FORUM

To receive questions from Members of the Public.

6. NEW BRADLEY HALL-UP-DATE AND NEXT STEPS (PAGES 1 – 12)

To consider a report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services.

7. FEEDBACK FROM SITE VISITS TO QUEENS CROSS AND THE DEMENTIA GATEWAYS.

8. To receive further information in respect of the following:-

- (a)
  - The Impact of Welfare Reform on Dudley Council Housing Stock. (The Assistant Director of Housing Services – Diane Channings)
  - The Impact of Welfare Reforms on Income Collection within Dudley. (The Assistant Director of Housing Services – Diane Channings)
  - The Development of Micro Services in Dudley. (The Assistant Director of Quality and Commissioning – Matt Bowsher)

AND to invite any comments on the details submitted.

For Information Only on the following:-

- (b)
  - The Homelessness Prevention Strategy Annual Refresh 2013. (The Assistant Director of Housing Strategy and Private Sector – Ron Sims)

9. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE 11.8 (IF ANY).

**To: All Members of the Adult, Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillors Baugh, Body, Evans, Herbert, Islam, James, J. Martin, Miller, Mottram, Vickers and M.Wilson

## **DACHS Scrutiny Committee Members**

### **Impact of Welfare Reform on Dudley Housing Stock**

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update Members in respect of the impact of Welfare Reform on demand for our housing stock. This is an information only report.

#### **Background**

2. Members will recall from the report considered on 11<sup>th</sup> November that there is a mismatch between the accommodation that we have available and the accommodation that customers need.

Simply in terms of number of bedrooms, our current stock consists of

No of beds	1 (incl bedsit)	2	3	4+	Total
Stock	6284	6764	9125	603	22776
%	27.59%	29.70%	40.06%	2.65%	100%

Our current waiting list by the number of bedrooms needed (excluding transfers, and applications awaiting assessment) is

No of beds	1	2	3	4+	Total
Waiting list	1773	981	331	115	3200
%	55.41%	30.66%	10.34%	3.59%	100%

3. This mismatch is exacerbated, because households deemed to need two bedrooms are predominantly small families with one child/two children who can share, whereas of our 6764 two bedroom homes, just over half are houses (3919) whilst the other half are mainly family flats and flats reserved for single people and couples, with smaller numbers of bungalows, sheltered housing and temporary accommodation. Additionally, households deemed to need three bedrooms almost invariably want houses, but our stock of 9125 three bedroom homes includes 565 maisonettes and 57 family flats. The issues for our housing supply and demand are therefore:
  - High & competing demands for one bed stock
  - Excessive demand for two bed houses
  - Low demand for two bed flats (particularly high rise)
  - Low demand for three bed maisonettes.
4. A more detailed analysis is available in the Housing Needs Survey & Balancing Housing Markets Report 2012, which is currently being updated.
5. In previous years, we have made the best overall use of our stock by allowing families to be allocated larger houses than they immediately need. Families with two children of any age and sex are allowed three bed houses, and those with two children of opposite sexes are regarded as overcrowded in a two bed as soon as one child is eight and the other five. The bedroom standard, however, says they do not

need three bedrooms until one child is ten, (or 16 if they are of the same sex) and if they are in receipt of maximum housing benefit they will have a shortfall of 14% on a third bedroom until then.

6. Some landlords (especially Housing Associations) have altered their allocation policies to fit the bedroom standard, whereas we have been allowing informed choice, where the implications of the shortfall are explained and our customers make their own choices. Our reasoning is that if we adopt the bedroom standard for allocations
  - Pressure on our one and two bed stock will be even higher
  - Working families will be unfairly excluded from three bedroom homes
  - There will be more churn in our stock as children grow (more transfers & voids)
  - Communities will consequently be less settled.
7. In November we reported that increasing numbers of our tenants were downsizing - 166 between April and September 2013, compared to 74 in the corresponding months of 2012. A further 51 have transferred between October and December 2013, bringing the total for the year to date to 217. However, 90 of these (41%) released flats and maisonettes rather than family houses, and of the 123 houses and 4 bungalows that were released, at least 69 were vacated by older people downsizing for example to bungalows and sheltered housing. Our rate of transfers is relatively high, and this has been a deliberate strategy for several years in order to meet the changing needs of our tenants and make the best use of our stock. It should be noted that a need or desire for larger or smaller accommodation may not have been the reason for moving; for example, a single person may move from a two bedroom home to a one bedroom home because it is in an area they like, or on a different floor level, or because it is within a sheltered housing scheme.
8. This policy of mobility within our stock is assisting us in responding to Welfare Reform, as evidenced by the fact that 115 tenants whose spare room subsidy was removed on 1<sup>st</sup> April moved home between April and September and a further 27 moved between October and December. Of this total of 142, 115 were already on the transfer list at 1<sup>st</sup> April, and 27 had joined since April. As at 1<sup>st</sup> January, there remain 418 tenants on the transfer list whose housing benefit has been reduced, and of these 274 had already joined the list by 1<sup>st</sup> April and 144 have joined it since. It should be noted that we had been informing tenants of the changes since July 2012, so transfers were already taking place prior to April, and contributed to the number of tenants we expected to be affected being reduced from 4071 in August 2012 to 3333 in April 2013.
9. In April 2013, there were 67 tenants of three bed maisonettes subject to the removal of the under occupation subsidy, and 65 tenants of two bed high rise flats. Of these, we have been able to transfer 30 and 19 respectively up to the end of December, and this is reflected in the increasing numbers of low demand voids.
10. Hard to let/no wait properties continue to be an area of concern. There are 220 of these as at the end of January, of which 110 are immediately available for occupation. A marketing strategy is in place, and a press release in December resulted in 118 enquiries. Since then, 60 no wait properties have been let, either to people who responded to the publicity, or to people who were already on our list. We are taking care to check all applications carefully in order not to let homes to tenants who cannot sustain them and comply with the Conditions of Tenancy.

11. Rather than assume that the current void levels amongst (in particular) two bed high rise and three bed maisonettes are due to Housing Benefit changes, we commissioned independent market research to understand the reasons for the low demand and to provide an insight into how this could be addressed, including:
- Why residents who have left in the last 6 months have given up their tenancies in these blocks
  - Why applicants who are eligible for these properties are not bidding for them
  - Whether there is a market that would create demand for these properties outside of our current waiting list and if so the reasons those who would create this demand cannot or do not access our services
  - Whether there is sufficient potential demand to support high rise Extra Care living.

The final report on this research will be available at the end of March.

### **Finance**

12. This report is for information and has no direct financial implications.

### **Law**

13. The powers and duties of housing authorities in relation to the allocation and management of Council housing are set out in the Housing Acts 1985 and 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002.

### **Equality Impact**

14. The HRA operates in line with the Council's Equality Policies, and any major changes to allocation policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

### **Recommendation**

15. It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report and if they need further information to contact Sian Evans- contact details given below.



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**Diane Channings**  
**Assistant Director - Housing Services**

Contact Officer: Sian Evans, Head of Service – Housing Options  
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## Report for DACHS Scrutiny Members

### Report from the Assistant Director - Housing Services

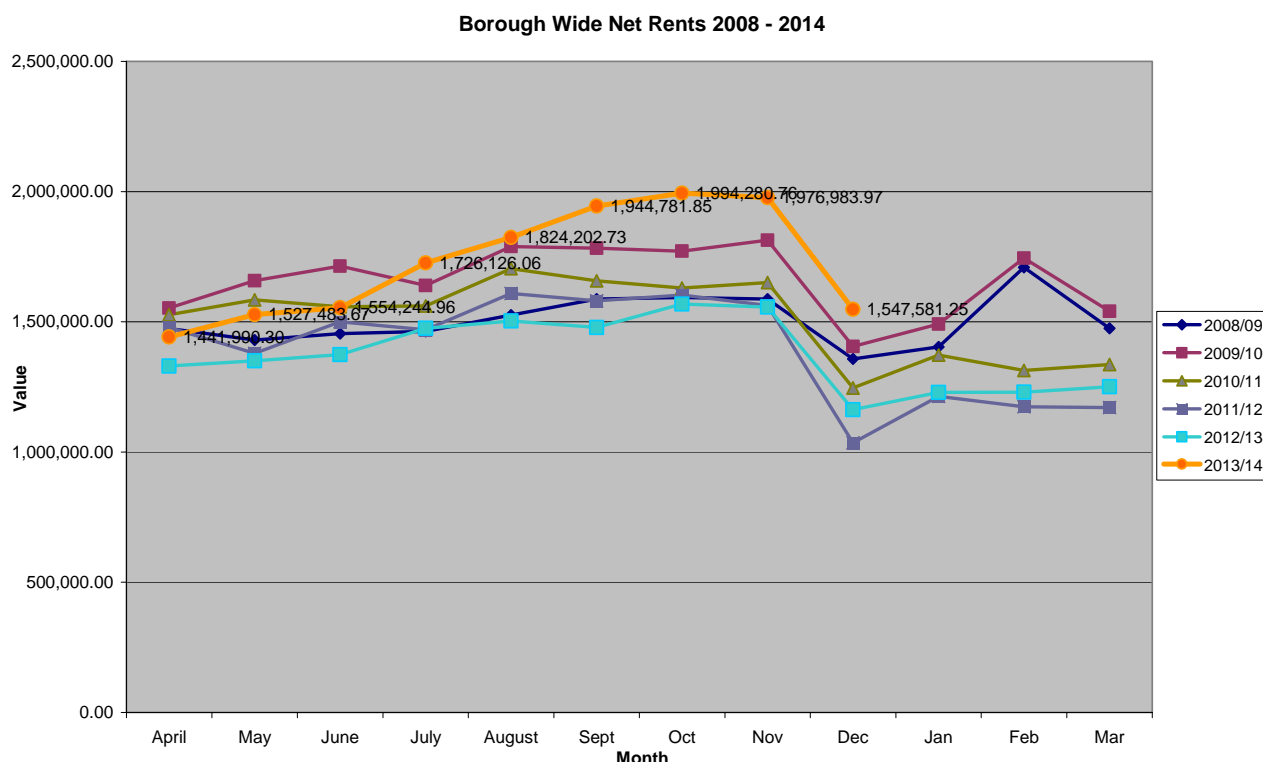
#### Impact of Welfare Reforms on Income Collection within Dudley

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide a further update to Scrutiny Committee on the impact of welfare reforms on income collection within Dudley. This is an information only report.

### Background

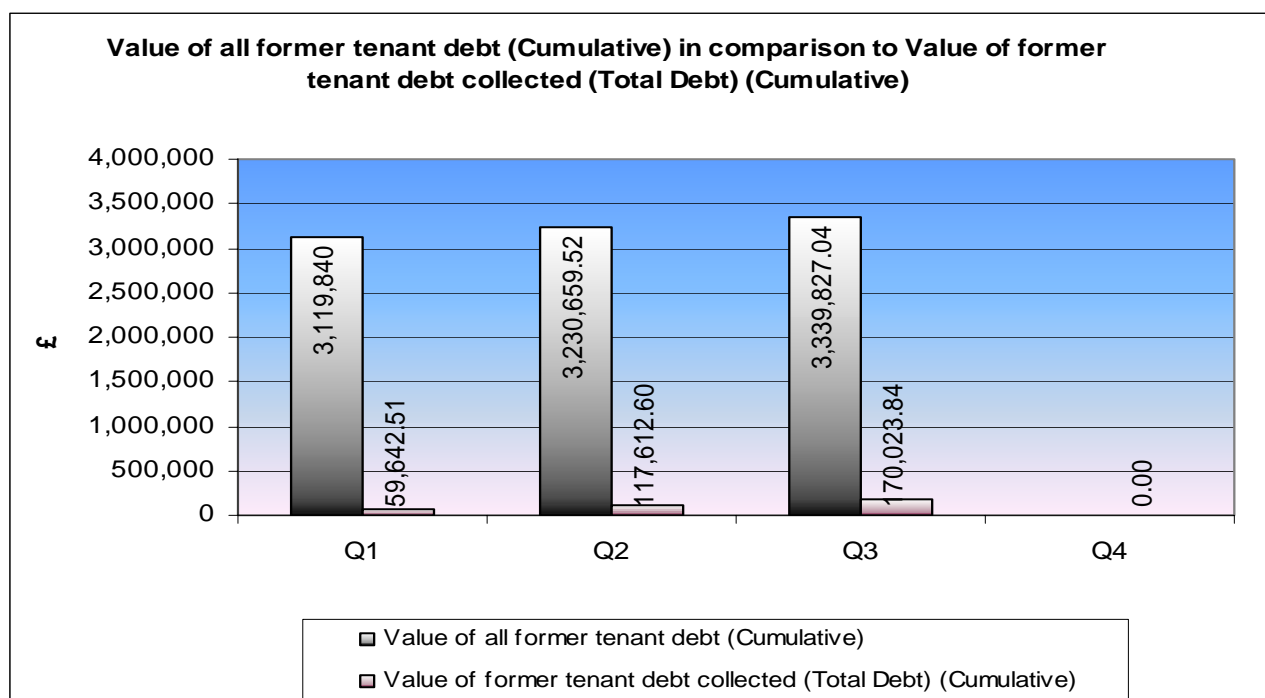
2. Members received a report at its November 2013 meeting entitled 'Impact of the Benefit Cap and the removal of the spare room subsidy on the income collection within Dudley. The information contained in that report related to Quarter 2. This report provides information for Q3 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.
3. The arrears position becomes more complex in Quarter 3 as it is distorted by the inclusion of two rent free weeks. Members will note on the graph below a downward trend for all years shown for this period. To more accurately evaluate the arrears, the table below shows a comparison of rent arrears month by month for 2012/13 and 2013/14. Since the benefit changes were introduced in April 2013 there has been a growing and significant increase in rent arrears. Based on the percentage increase of 33% in December it is projected that the arrears at the end of the year will be £1.7 million. This would indicate an annual increase of 15.3% compared with a decrease of 5.96% in 2012/13.



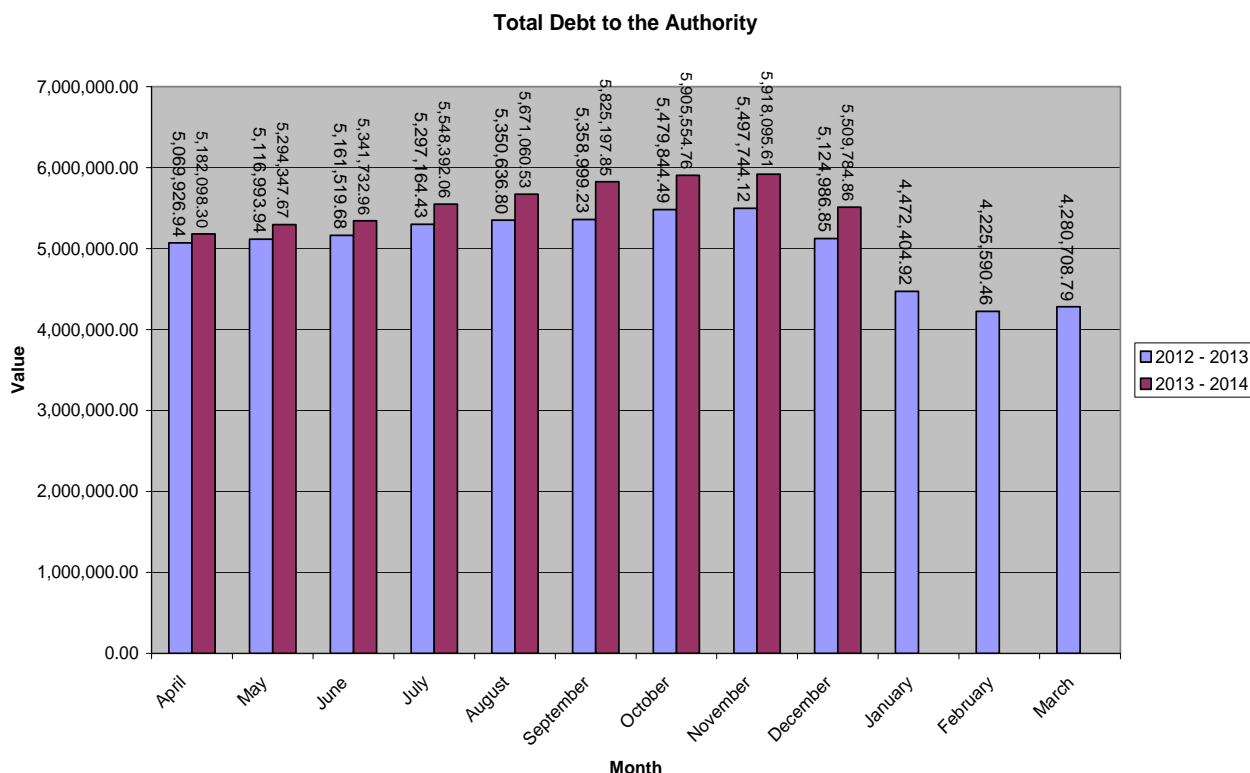
## Arrears balances at the end of month 2012/13 compared with 2013/14

Month	2012/13	2013/14	% increase
April	£1,329,818.94	£1,441,990.30	8.44%
May	£1,350,129.94	£1,527,483.67	13.14%
June	£1,374,031.68	£1,554,244.96	13.12%
July	£1,474,898.43	£1,726,126.06	17.03%
August	£1,503,779.00	£1,824,202.73	21.31%
September	£1,478,583.23	£1,944,781.85	31.53%
October	£1,568,570.49	£1,994,280.76	27.14%
November	£1,556,632.48	£1,976,983.97	27.00%
December	£1,163,173.24	£1,547,581.25	33.00%
January	£1,229,720.26	Forecast (£1,635,527.94)	33% forecast
February	£1,229,496.46	Forecast (£1,635,230.29)	33% forecast
March	£1,250,474.75	Forecast (£1,663,131.42)	33% forecast
% Decrease/ increase	-5.96%	Forecast 15.3%	

4. Former tenant arrears continue to increase. It should be noted that former tenant arrears are managed either through an established repayment plan, through a debt collection agency or via civil action. Dudley does not currently use civil action through the courts but this is to be evaluated to determine its potential. See graph below which provides detail on the total value of debt and the former tenant arrears recovered in the same year. There will also be changes to the level of former tenant debt outstanding due to write offs during the year (annual occurrence).



Total debt to the authority (current and former tenant arrears) are shown below, this will include all accounts where there is either a payment plan in place, money recovered via debt collection agency and any debt written off in the year.



### Removal of the spare room subsidy rent arrears

5. There are 2673 tenants as at 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 that are subject to the removal of the spare room subsidy. 1666 tenants are in arrears and 1007 have clear rent accounts. Members will have heard that a legal expert found a loophole in the benefit legislation and the implication is that a number of tenants, subject to specified criteria, should not have been subject to the removal of the spare room subsidy. In Dudley there are 71 cases where the housing benefit service is currently considering exemption and backdating to the rent account. It should be noted that it is the Government's intention to close this loophole.

As at 1<sup>st</sup> April, 3330 Council households were affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy (14%) as compared with the figure at 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 of 2673 (11.6%). The numbers are constantly changing for a variety of reasons, households will fall in and out of the spare room charge if, for example, a new baby in household, tenant takes in a lodger or tenancy ended and therefore no longer subject to the removal of the spare room subsidy.

There are currently 16 cases which are being listed for court action in March 2014. This is significantly less than the original 35 cases due to the hard work of income recovery and housing support staff providing advice and guidance to tenants in terms of payment plans, DHP applications and income maximisation. We are confident that with the 16 cases we have exhausted every avenue to engage with and help the customer.



## **Benefit Cap**

6. The latest information on the benefit cap is as at 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 there were 68 accounts subject to the benefit cap. The total arrears balances for these accounts stood at £15,758.28, (50 accounts in arrears, 3 with a nil balance and 15 in credit). This shows an increase from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 when there were 52 accounts subject to the benefit cap and the total balance across all accounts stood at £10,833.28. This shows an increase from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 to 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 of 45.5%.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of tenants in arrears &amp; subject to the benefit cap</b>	<b>Value of arrears on above accounts – benefit cap arrears</b>
September 13	41	£10,833
January 13	50	£15,758
% Increase	21.9	45.5

## **Finance**

7. Expenditure on managing, improving and maintaining Council dwellings is funded within the Housing Revenue Account (rental income from tenants) which is ring-fenced for income and expenditure on Council landlord services. Any additional resources will be funded from reserves within the HRA, which have been set aside to mitigate the risks of Welfare Reform.

## **Law**

8. The powers and duties of Housing Authorities in relation to the allocation and management of Council housing are set out in the Housing Acts 1985 and 1996.

## **Equality Impact**

9. The HRA operates in line with the Council's Equality Policies and the impact of these changes is subject to an equality impact assessment.

## **Recommendation**

10. Members are asked to note the contents of this report and if they have questions or need clarification on any issues to email Diane Channings on [diane.channings@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:diane.channings@dudley.gov.uk).



.....  
**Diane Channings**  
**Assistant Director - Housing Services**

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Email: [yvonne.steele@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:yvonne.steele@dudley.gov.uk)

### **List of Background Papers**

None.

**Adult Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee – 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services**

**Development of Micro Services in Dudley**

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to inform members about the development of micro services in Dudley since 2010 and how small external providers of social care services have shaped the market in line with the personalisation agenda. Background information will be provided on the growth of micro service in the borough; the diverse range of micro services available; the support available for micro providers; the outcomes achieved for people who use services; and the links to the “*Making it Real-markers for progress*” and the local “*Making it Real*” Action plan. The report will also highlight how micro providers offer quality and value for money and create efficiency savings for the local authority.

**Background – What is a micro service?**

2. The Dudley micro services project was set up in March 2010 to support the growth of more local flexible and innovative social care related services in the borough. The Project aims to provide targeted and individualised support to new and existing providers. The project has supported people to create employment opportunities and regenerated local communities who have been able to utilise vacant and unused buildings.
3. Micro enterprises are small organisations that employ 5 or fewer full time equivalent workers. Some are set up by ex-front line workers, others by disabled or older people themselves, often with help from families or the local community. They rely on customers who use personal budgets, their own money or grants to pay for the services.
4. Since March 2010 there have been 222 enquiries from existing providers and people wishing to set up their own service. As of 17<sup>th</sup> February 2014 there are approximately 68 micro providers known to the project.
5. National figures indicate that 50% of new start ups fail within 12 months, with 90% no longer trading after five years. The implementation of the Dudley micro services project in contrast has seen an average failure rate of 5-10% for new start ups within the first year, with at least 95% of services still trading after 3 years.

**Range of micro services**

6. The project has supported people to be more creative and provide real alternatives to traditional social care models. Some examples of the range of services include a local farm project for people with Learning disabilities, autism and mental health; a care contingency service providing cover for personal assistants and care workers if

they are sick or on leave; a therapeutic bread service - therapy through making bread; fitness services for older people; Healthy lifestyles services; Beauty/hairdressing services; Gardening services; traditional, flexible “home help” services – (from help with cleaning, shopping, meal preparation to companionship and befriending).

### **Supporting the growth of micro providers**

7. The Project coordinator works with various agencies to support the growth of micro providers and has a close working relationship with partner agencies including; Dudley Voluntary Sector Council, Black Country Partnership for Care, Skills for Care, Black Country Chamber of Commerce, Access to Business, as well as various User led organisations.
8. The Dudley Innovation Fund (DIF) was introduced in 2013 to further support the growth of innovative micro enterprises. The DIF consists of two elements; kick-start and progression funding. The kick start element offers grants of between £500 and £2000 and will enable applicants to access professional support from intermediaries such as solicitors and accountant's business support providers alongside support from Dudley Council for Voluntary Services and the Building Blocks programme to develop a full business plan. The progression element offers grants up to £10k and progression funding is intended to get a project up and running and providing services and support for local people. A further round of the DIF has re-launched early this year.
9. In September 2013 events over a 3 day period called “*Your Care, Your Support, Your Way*” were held at various locations across the borough to capture the views, thoughts and ideas from people who use services to establish what services they wanted to see delivered to enable them to have a better quality of life. As well as the engagement and consultation with people who used services, developing and existing micro providers were invited to showcase their range of services to potential customers. Graphic illustrators were appointed to capture the ideas of people in a more innovative way. The events proved successful and information gathered was used to shape the re-launch of this years DIF and will also be used to contribute to market position statements.

### **What Outcomes are delivered – Quality Mark Scheme**

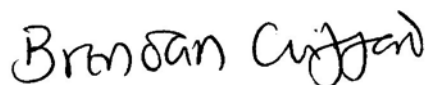
10. Outcomes for people who use micro services have been measured and monitored through the current Quality Mark scheme, a quality assurance scheme for micro providers. The outcomes are benchmarked against the “*Making it Real – Markers for progress*” and “*Quality of life outcomes*”. Feedback gained from people who use and access micro services has demonstrated some of the following outcomes:
  - a. Employment opportunities (mainly people with learning disabilities and mental health)
  - b. Weight loss – better health outcomes
  - c. Confidence building
  - d. Reduction in isolation
  - e. Prevented admissions to hospital and residential care
  - f. Inclusion and participation in the community
  - g. Choice and control on how service has been delivered – tailored to meet needs

## **Feedback from the people of Dudley**

11. Carers have highlighted the advantages have having small, local community based services available for their loved ones. It has enabled them to have a break from their caring roles, which has in turn given them a better quality of life and better health outcomes long term. Carers have also stated that micro providers keep them informed and many of them feel like they are part of an extended family.
12. People who use services have commended micro providers for their ability to be flexible and person centred. Micro providers that provide more traditional care (such as domiciliary care), have moved away from “15 minute” calls to a more flexible and holistic way of working to ensure that individual needs are met at all levels.
13. Both Carers and people who use service have also commented that micro service offer great value for money as they often have lower overheads and provide support in their local area.

## **Supporting Making it Real**

14. The Making it Real agenda is a significant part of the development of micro providers. The progress markers support the measurement of outcomes for the individuals that access the service. The micro provider project sits within the “Workforce Development” Work stream and is part of the local making it real action plan. The aim in Dudley is to build upon our existing development with micro enterprises, in parallel with market position statements, to continue to increase the number of micro providers in the borough. Moving to a default position on direct payments will support increased business and sustainability to such providers.



Brendan Clifford

## **Assistant Director Adult Social Care**

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[microservices.achs@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:microservices.achs@dudley.gov.uk)

## **List of Background Papers**

*This section should include a list of those documents, which disclose facts or matters on which the report is based and which have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report. Published works or documents containing exempt or confidential information must not be included in this list.*

**Adult, Community and Housing Services Scrutiny Committee 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services**

**Homeless Prevention Strategy Annual Refresh 2013**

**Purpose of Report**

1. This report is to inform the Committee of the work undertaken to update the Homeless Prevention Strategy. This activity is carried out on an annual basis.

**Background**

2. The strategy and action plan has been developed in partnership with the multi-agency Homelessness Review Group. It has been subject to wider consultation via the Community Engagement Database. The document has been approved by the DACHS Senior Management Team and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
3. The majority of the data used to develop the strategy is taken from the Homelessness Annual Report 2012/13. The data relates to the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.
4. The aim of the strategy is to prevent homelessness from occurring, where possible, by offering timely advice and assistance to households who are at risk of becoming homeless. The number of enquiries to the Dudley MBC Homeless Prevention and Response service has remained relatively stable over recent years at around 2,200 enquiries per year. Most households are provided with advice and assistance and/or take their own actions that prevents them from becoming homeless. During the 2012/13 financial year 171 households were accepted as full duty homeless<sup>1</sup> which is an increase from 158 in the previous year. The most frequent cause of homelessness within the Borough was the termination of assured shorthold tenancy (private rented sector).
5. The strategy will impact on the following corporate issues:
  - Human Rights – The right to enjoy your property peacefully
  - Asset Management – to make the best use of housing stock and return empty homes to use
  - Crime and Disorder – to reduce rough sleeping and any associated anti-social behaviour/fear of crime
  - Health Implications/Inequalities – people who are homeless are at greater risk of health issues and are less likely to be able to access health services
  - Environmental Impact and Sustainability – good quality, affordable homes help to provide a good environment where people want to live

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<sup>1</sup> Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

- *Neighbourhood Management – by preventing homelessness and providing good quality housing there can be less ‘churn’ in neighbourhoods – empty homes/tenancy failure/abandoned properties*

## **Finance**

6. The majority of the functions will be delivered by utilising the existing budgets and resources of the organisations identified within the action plan. This position will be reviewed annually in line with the budgets that are set. One action that had been identified in the action plan was reliant upon a successful grant funding application (dealing with Rogue Landlords – Department for Communities and Local Government). We have subsequently been informed that this bid was unsuccessful so other opportunities will be explored to try to achieve this objective.

## **Law**

7. The Council's powers and duties relating to homelessness are contained within the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 and the Council may do anything incidental to, conducive to, or which facilitates the discharge of its functions under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Equality Impact**

8. An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced in relation to this strategy.

## **Recommendation**

9. It is recommended that:-
  - The contents of the Strategy are noted by the Scrutiny Committee.



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**Andrea Pope-Smith**  
**Director of Adult Community and Housing Services**

Contact Officer: Ron Sims  
 Telephone: 01384 815003  
 Email: ron.sims@dudley.gov.uk

## **List of Background Papers**



Homelessness  
Prevention Strategy



EIA Homelessness  
Prevention Strategy