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Introduction
<p>The neighbourhood that someone lives in, the type of house that they inhabit and the condition of that home all have a huge impact on the inhabitants' health and well being, and to the sustainability of the area. Poor housing conditions are associated with households in social and economic disadvantage. The decent home standard measures the quality of dwellings. The decent homes standard should be considered as a minimum standard rather than an aspiration target.</p> <p>A dwelling is judged against four criteria to meet the decent homes standard. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing; • it is in a reasonable state of repair; • it has reasonably modern facilities and services; • it provides a degree of thermal comfort <p>The current statutory minimum standard for housing was introduced in the 2004 Housing Act. It is a risk assessment approach known as the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The key principle of the system is that a dwelling, including the structure and associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or other amenity space, and means of access, should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and, by implication, for any visitors. The inspection process is a risk based assessment and considers the effect of any 'hazards' in the property. Hazards are rated according to how serious they are and the effect they are having, or could have, on the occupants. There are 29 identifiable hazards under the HHSRS such as falls, damp and mould, security, fire, overcrowding. Each hazard is assessed separately, and if judged to be 'serious', with a 'high score', is deemed to be a Category 1 hazard. All other hazards are Category 2 hazards. Where a hazard is designated as particularly relevant to people in a vulnerable group, hazards are assessed according to their likely impact on that group. 'Vulnerable' here usually means children and the elderly. For example, widely spaced balusters (spindles) on a staircase could be a hazard for a child who could squeeze through and fall down the stairs. Similarly a winding staircase with no handrail could be a hazard for an elderly person.</p>

Significantly high numbers of hazards can instigate consideration of closure or demolition of individual premises or on a wider scale the possibility of area renewal intervention.

Key issues and gaps

Since late 2007 – early 2008, there have been a number of significant financial and socio-economic changes at national and local level. Nationally, the current economic recession has had a powerful impact on all organisations, whether public or private sector, statutory or non-statutory, to reflect whether their strategies are fit for purpose to deliver their objectives. Within the housing sector in particular, the position of major funders and their inertia regarding funding and risk has created the need for more radical and innovative thinking in the way housing provision and services are delivered and existing stock is brought up to standard.

Changes to the funding and regulation of housing

There is now a new, major government agency set up to deliver new housing and regeneration, the Homes and Communities Agency. The HCA wishes to conduct its relationship with local areas via a comprehensive 'single conversation' with local authorities and their partners and to have an improved dialogue with communities to deliver a broad range of physical and non-physical outcomes via continuous engagement. The expectation is that in order to secure funding councils will need to develop and secure local agreement to robust, well informed strategies and business plans from local, sub regional and regional partners.

Recommendations for Commissioning

List of housing priorities

1) Who's at risk and why?

England has one of the oldest housing stocks in Europe and in 2009, 38% (8.8 million) of all dwellings had been built before 1945; over half of these were built before 1919. The English Housing Survey 2009 found that 20% of households lived in homes with substantial disrepair. Overall privately renting households were much more likely to live in such homes (32% compared to 17% for owner occupiers and 19% for social renters). It also found that the likelihood of private renters living in dwellings in substantial disrepair increased markedly the longer they had been resident in the current home (from 27% for those resident for less than one year to 54% of those resident for 20 years or more).

The likelihood of living in a home in substantial disrepair was also higher than average for particular groups, including one person households (23%), those in poverty (26%) and those from ethnic minority groups (27%), and those living in Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). However such household groups could face very different levels of disrepair depending on the housing sector they lived in. All groups were more likely to live in homes with a substantial level of disrepair if they were privately renting. But this was particularly the case for households in poverty and for those that include people with a long term illness or disability or people aged 60 years or more: for these groups the incidence of substantial disrepair was around twice that of their peers living in the owner occupied and social sectors. Age UK have also identified the risk amongst home owners aged 50+, who make up a significant proportion of all home owners in the City. A number of these residents are unable to keep up with the maintenance of their property for a number of reasons including financial restrictions and long term illness/daily living problems, this can result in the deterioration of these households.

Terraced houses, converted flats and dwellings built before 1919 were far more likely to have Category 1 hazards relating to falls than average. Terraced houses and converted flats had a significantly higher incidence of falls associated with steps and stairs whereas dwellings built before 1919 performed relatively poorly for all types of falls. Terraced houses, converted flats and older dwellings are more likely to have falls hazards relating to stairs owing to dwelling design, for example, very steep or winding staircases and low balustrades or balustrades with large gaps in the rails which are most hazardous for young children, and in HMO accommodation; means of escape, fire precautions and adequate amenities are a concern.

Category 1 falls hazards were most commonly associated with falling on stairs or steps (9% of the housing stock) but 3% of dwellings also had Category 1 hazards associated with falls on the level, 2% with falls between levels and 1% with falls associated with baths.

Untreated damp conditions and mould growth in the home can have a significant impact on both the occupants' health and the fabric of the dwelling. Damp conditions increase the risk of the development of respiratory problems and can also lead to rapid deterioration of the dwelling, creating further problems. While 8% of households lived in dwellings with damp problems this was notably higher for households containing five or more people (11%), households in poverty (12%), multi-person households (14%) and ethnic minority households (15%). In 2009, around 1.8 million or 8% of dwellings had damp problems. However, the incidence of these problems was lower in owner occupied stock (6%) and much higher for private rented dwellings and local authority dwellings (15% and 12% respectively)

For some of these groups, the likelihood of living in a home with damp problems varied substantially by tenure. While the incidence of damp problems was generally greatest among private renters, it was those in poverty and those from ethnic minorities who were particularly likely to live in such dwellings within this tenure group.

Poor quality housing and insulation can result in thermal inefficiencies, this can contribute to ill health and winter deaths, particularly amongst a number of key vulnerable groups such as older people and those with long term illnesses/daily living problems.

The population within the City is ageing, the latest population estimates indicate that there will be continuing growth in the 65+ population by 50%. As a result the expected number of older people with dementia and those with disabilities and frailties will also increase. Homes that are not adequately adapted can result in individuals living in accommodation which is unsuitable to their needs. Increasing the risk of accidents and subsequent further deterioration of health.

2) The level of need in the population

In 2011 there are 125,000 dwellings in Sunderland, 91,000 of which are privately owned or rented and 34,000 that are socially rented. The age of the private sector housing stock is similar to national levels, with 40% of properties built before 1945.

Tenure Type	pre-1919	1920-1944	1945-1964	1965-1974	1975-1981	post-1981	All
owner occupied	21.4	14.6	22.4	15.3	6.8	19.5	100
private rented	57.6	9	8.8	9.9	0.9	13.8	100
vacant	35.2	29.6	9.3	4.8	11.6	9.5	100
Total	25.5	14.9	20.4	14.2	6.6	18.4	100

Poor housing conditions within the City are associated with households in social and economic disadvantage. In 2001 the government set a target that 100% of households in social housing should live in a decent home by 2010. In the social housing sector 34,000 properties (100%) in Sunderland met the decent homes standard in 2010.

The decent homes standard also applies to the private sector. Unlike the social sector the target is not for all houses to meet the standard, only for those households that are classed as vulnerable. The target for 2011 is for 70% of vulnerable households to live in a decent home. According to the 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition survey of the 34,464 households that were classed as vulnerable in private sector housing, 72% lived in a home that met the standard.

Overall there were 19,496 households living in non decent homes. In particular, households with a member aged 65+ accounted for 27% of all households living in non decent homes. With the exception of single person households and adult non pensioner households the number of households living in non decent homes was broadly inline with the household types more generally in the city.

Age of Head of Household	Households in non-Decent Property		All Households	
	Property	%	Property	%
Under 25 years	1,080	5.5	3,181	3.8
25 - 34 years	2,481	12.7	11,314	13.4
35 - 44 years	3,492	17.9	17,585	20.8
45 - 54 years	3,891	20	14,427	17.1
55 - 64 years	3,272	16.8	13,451	15.9
65 years and over	5,280	27.1	23,809	28.2
unobtainable	0	0	698	0.8
total	19,496	100	84,465	100

Household Type	Households in non-Decent Property		All Households	
	Property	%	Property	%
Single person non pensioner	3,004	15.4	8,104	9.6
single parent family two person	1,059	5.4	5,191	6.1
adult non pensioner	2,435	12.5	15,922	18.9
small family	4,111	21.1	19,807	23.4
large family	1,759	9	3,725	4.4
large adult	551	2.8	2,753	3.3
elderly	6,576	33.7	28,391	33.6
unobtainable	0	0	573	0.7
Total	19,496	100	84,465	100

Source: Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, 2007

The largest cause of a non-decent home in the city was due to poor thermal efficiency. Energy

efficiency levels within the City are above the national average but nevertheless local issues remain. 7,940 dwellings or 8.9% fail the energy requirements of the Decent Homes Standard offering an average SAP Rating of 47 compared to the City-wide average of 57. 10,398 households or 12.3% of all households in the City are in fuel poverty.

Economically vulnerable households are over-represented in poor condition dwellings however. 9,308 economically vulnerable households live in non-decent dwellings representing 47.7% of all households in non decent dwellings. Similar to national trends, economically vulnerable households are more likely to live in older properties generally, but are overrepresented in properties that do not meet the decent homes standard. 41% of vulnerable households in non-decent dwellings live in properties constructed pre 1919, or 65% in properties built pre 1944, almost 20% points higher than the population in general.

Vulnerable Households in Non Decent homes

Date of Construction	Vulnerable households in non decent homes	%	All Vulnerable Households	%	All House Types	%
pre-1919	4,208	41	10,254	30.7	22,826	25.5
1919-1944	1,167	23.8	4,905	14.7	13,346	14.9
1945-1964	1,887	26.3	7,186	21.5	18,249	20.4
1965-1974	1,283	30.5	4,211	12.6	12,753	14.2
1975-1981	410	19.8	2,067	6.2	5,878	6.6
post-1981	353	7.3	4,810	14.4	16,470	18.4
Total	9,308	27.8	33,433	100.0	89,591	100

1,090 economically vulnerable households live in dwellings with Category 1 hazards representing 52.0% of all households in Category 1 dwellings. 2,110 elderly households live in dwellings with Category 1 hazards representing 23.8% of all households in Category 1 dwellings. In total it is estimated that £111 million is required to repair and improve all non-decent homes in the city. £51.7 million is required for vulnerable households to achieve the decent homes standard, averaging £5,559 per household.

Just over 5% of households (4,364) in the private sector are in properties that are classed as overcrowded, based on the bedroom standard. In particular the area around the town centre and Deptford area show levels as high as 16.5% and the Hendon/East End area is higher than the city figure at 8.9%. It appears to be more prevalent in flats in converted buildings, accounting for 11% of that property type.

Evidence from the older persons lifestyle and aspirations survey, found that overwhelmingly people wanted to live independently and remain in their own homes. This was supported by VCS organisations who highlighted the ongoing need for support to enable people to stay at home and the improved wellbeing associated with this, for example with dementia sufferers. In order to promote independent living there is a need for services to ensure that suitable housing is available across the City, which meets decent home standards and the individual care needs of residents, this will help to reduce the potential risk of harm and number of accidents.

3) Current services in relation to need

The Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal Team within Health, Housing & Adult Services work across all tenures, although it concentrates mainly in the private rented and owner occupied sector. Within the team there are 3 main areas of focus:

- Enforcement & Working in Partnership to Improve standards.

Request for Service and Assistance are received from the public relating to housing conditions and tenant management issues. In 2010/11 1,074 requests were received due to sub-standard housing conditions, a 53% increase since 2007/8. The service also maintains standards in houses in multiple occupation (HMO), including those that are required by law to be licensed and those that are not. There are 147 mandatory licensed HMOs in the city and 806 non-licensable HMO properties in the city. In 2011 the service introduced new safeguarding conditions in the licenses that now require owners & managing agents to consider and act upon any issues that may arise in HMO properties accommodating the

vulnerable. This will be monitored through the CQC monitoring arrangements.

In response to the poor management practices and health implications to residents, the Council declared a selective licensing scheme in the middle Hendon and 'Long Streets' area. This requires all private landlords & their properties to be licensed by the Council, with regular inspections to ensure that properties meet the statutory minimum standard for housing. As part of this regime there are over 715 properties in the area that are required to be licensed. 685 applications have now been received. The remaining 30 unlicensed premises will see enforcement and prosecutions taken against the owners. As part of the inspection regime 112 empty properties in the area have been brought back into use.

The Council maintains an accredited landlord register that residents can use to find a new place to live and be sure that the management practices and the physical conditions of the property are to a decent standard.

In 11/12, 460 empty homes were brought back into use and this continues to be a priority for the council. The success of the team has led to the council receiving continued 'new homes bonus' funding from Govt. and continued invitations to submit bids to fund further innovative schemes to bring empty premises back into use.

Area Renewal:

Using intelligence led approaches, regeneration and renewal activity has taken place in several areas of the city. By looking at housing conditions, tenure mix, management of stock & general demand in the areas it is possible to understand how sustainable and appropriate housing stock is in an area. Using this approach enables the Council and its partners to determine the appropriate action to take, which can include retain and refurbish or assembling land and properties to clear and make way for new development.

Where it is judged that the area should be retained and refurbished, the physical condition of properties is brought back to a decent standard and the surrounding neighbourhood is improved. An example of this is working in partnership with Back on the Map to provide and manage a block improvement scheme in the Hendon area. There is additional block improvement work being conducted in the Castletown renewal area of the city.

When it is judged that current stock and its surrounding environment are no longer viable, a second option is to assemble land and clear to provide new housing to meet demand and aspirations. As part of, and during this process a 'masterplan' for the area is produced. This looks at all issues in the area, not just housing, to provide a comprehensive regeneration of the area. This includes transport infrastructure and access, health, community facilities, crime, and environmental issues. This type of intervention is usually conducted in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and other partner agencies and includes community groups.

In addition, the council works in partnership with registered providers in the city and their development and regeneration programs.

Independent organisations within the voluntary and community sector offer a number of services to support people around their housing need. Age UK, offer independent housing advice on a number of matters such as equity release schemes.

4) Projected service use and outcomes in 3-5 years and 5-10 years

In the current economic climate, and the reduction in the level of public sector spending, future large scale renewal schemes are unlikely to progress in the short term. Through the housing priorities plan – strategic targets for new development – are going to be achieved. As part of this plan it is envisaged that there will be cross site development, where the council will sell high quality land in some areas, on the condition that developers will build and invest in areas that may not be as economically viable as an individual site.

As the Selective Licensing scheme progresses through its five year life span, it is moving from the initial signup phase to a more focused enforcement phase. This should improve the quality of housing stock further, with the associated health benefits in the area, and the sustainability issues and market conditions.

The services provided across the Council are being reconfigured to be more locally responsive and to tackle issues that are important to the local community. As part of this work the housing service is re-

aligning its resources to work in the 5 area committee areas of the Council.

5) Evidence of what works

Having collaborative and enforcement approaches to tackling disrepair in the city has secured real improvements in the quality of the stock. The 2007 stock condition survey compared the quality of stock in 2002 to 2007 and found that significant improvements had been made. It founds the level of unfit, the housing standard that was superseded by the HHSRS in 2004, reduced in the Castletown and Southwick areas, both of which were part of neighbourhood renewal areas during the period.

AREA	2002		2007	
	UNFIT	%	UNFIT	%
Castletown	142	6.1	48	1.8
Central	426	12	219	4.9
Colliery	225	8.8	121	4.2
Grindon	28	1.5	4	0.2
Hendon	325	8.7	190	4.3
Hetton	36	1.1	135	4
South Hylton		0	62	2.5
Southwick	56	3	19	0.9
Thorney Close	37	3.1	22	0.9
Town End Farm	0	0	11	0.5
Washington North	163	5.4	27	0.7
City Remainder	1,142	2.1	1,624	2.9
ALL AREAS	2,580	3.2	2,482	2.8

Declaring Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) and producing Masterplans to regenerate areas, although costly, does improve areas. The council has been successful in attracting £20million of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) since 2002. In addition, by working with agencies it has been possible to improve the physical quality of properties in the surrounding streets, reinforcing the message that the whole area is being improved and encouraging other home owners and third parties to invest in the area again. After NRAs come to a conclusion there is continuing engagement with residents and landlords to maintain standards in the area.

Early intervention in neighbourhoods and working in partnership with other agencies and landlords has proven to be a more cost effective and less disruptive approach to improving conditions in neighbourhoods. A co-ordinated early response to rises in complaints, such as in the Eden Vale area of the city, has been successful in bringing the standards of properties back to reasonable and acceptable levels.

Energy efficiency schemes in the city have been successful in improving the thermal efficiency of properties in the city. Since 1987 over 40,000 properties have received cavity wall insulation. Home energy efficiency rates in private housing in the City have improved significantly since 2002. This period has witnessed a 7.5% increase in average SAP Ratings with corresponding reductions in CO2 emissions (-15.4%) and energy use (-7.1%). These improvements in energy efficiency have been critical to continued reductions in Fuel poverty in spite of sharply increasing energy costs. In 2002, 13145 private households (16.5%) were in fuel poverty. This has reduced to 10398 households in 2007 (12.3%) - a reduction of 21%. These improvements correspond to the acceleration in energy efficiency schemes and grants by local authorities and partners that insulated on average 3,400 properties per year.

6) User Views

Housing satisfaction levels within the City are good. 4,981 households (59.0%) are very satisfied with their current accommodation; 29,365 households (34.8%) are quite satisfied. 4,475 households (5.3%) expressed direct dissatisfaction with their home. Levels of dissatisfaction with current housing are higher in the Hendon/East End, Town Centre/Deptford and Thorney Close/Plains Farm/Springwell areas. Rates of dissatisfaction are also higher for households living in private rented accommodation and pre-1919

<p>housing. Households living in non-Decent homes are also less satisfied with their housing circumstances, as are those households living in dwellings with Category 1 hazards.</p> <p>As part of the NRA work, there has been extensive evidence of community engagement in regeneration and renewal activities, with changes to plans as a result of feedback, e.g. in Castletown; The service has identified the need to improve community engagement with local neighbourhood management and related functions on an area basis, including feedback to communities about impact of actions; This will mean more information will be regularly produced.</p> <p>The Housing Service's statutory operational functions are well-publicised locally with good engagement with landlords, e.g. opportunities to join 'Recommended List' for accredited landlords & Member surgeries, particularly for Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) and diverse range of leaflets about neighbourhood relations;</p> <p>Housing Renewal engagement with partners, including accredited landlords via Private Landlords Forum; but systematic outcomes reporting improvement area. Excellent engagement in Hendon area for selective licensing schemes, with far higher take-up rate amongst landlords than expected;</p> <p>Housing Renewal works with housing partners, including RSLs, in pursuing statutory functions such as ASB, housing renewal initiatives and bringing empty properties back into use.</p>
<p>7) Equality Impact Assessments</p>
<p>As part of the creation of Health, Housing & Adult Services Directorate, the Housing Renewal Team undertook an Equality Assessment on the services that the team delivers. It found that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principles of fairness, equality, access and inclusion are integrated within the service provision. • The service is geared to meet the needs of all members of the community. However, it does need to engage more with BME communities to raise awareness of aspects of the teams remit. Also youth outreach work has been carried out in the renewal areas and needs to be continued as older people from within the community tend to get more involved.
<p>8) Unmet needs and service gaps</p>
<p>Greater regulation of the private rented sector would improve the quality and standard of housing. Although the Council would welcome additional legislation, national government has suggested that it disagrees and no new legislation is imminent.</p> <p>Although the energy efficiency schemes in the past have had great success in improving the thermal comfort and efficiency of the stock in the city, there are a large number of pre 1919 properties in the city that are solid wall properties that can not receive cavity wall insulation. A more disruptive and expensive approach would be to fit cladding to the property. Targeting the areas surrounding the city centre, that were constructed pre 1919 will help improve thermal efficiency further. Households most at risk in this area include young single-person households and the elderly.</p> <p>Landlords are frequently requesting assistance and access to funding for remedial work and property improvement. Although controversial, as it is providing a subsidy to private investors, it would likely improve properties where vulnerable households are likely to be housed.</p> <p>Engagement with the voluntary and community sector during the JSNA process has identified a the need for housing strategies and provision to be in place that meets the needs of both an increasingly diverse population as well as an ageing population who require various support, particularly in relation to sustaining independent living within their own homes.</p>
<p>9) Recommendations for Commissioning</p>
<p>Route to utilise EP for homelessness.</p>
<p>10) Recommendations for needs assessment work</p>
<p>Next stock condition survey due in 2012</p>
<p>Key contacts</p>

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