



Healthier Housing Strategy 2011-2014



Tamworth
Borough Council

'One Tamworth, Perfectly Placed'

NHS

NHS North Staffordshire
South Staffordshire PCT

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Foreword

Everyone should have a warm, safe and secure home. This has been known since the 1800's, when action was taken to clear slums to improve health and wellbeing, and more recent research has highlighted the importance of a home's contribution to our quality of life. This Healthier Housing Strategy recognises this relationship.

Our Strategy builds on the successes of our previous Strategy and evidence from new research and public consultation, but it is also recognised that there is a long way to go before everyone has the same opportunities of a decent home and a healthy lifestyle. Building new homes is not going to resolve housing need alone – we know housing must contribute more to improve the health and wellbeing of Tamworth residents.

This document describes what we would like homes and housing services to look like in the future. It will not be an easy task, there is much less public money available and the shape of public services is changing considerably, in particular health services. Health issues do not sit in isolation. Measures to improve the health and well being of our population requires a collaborative partnership approach, this includes the public services, the voluntary sector and local businesses.

This new Strategy is innovative in its approach and reiterates the need for continued partnership working to explore new ways to deliver services in a more resource efficient manner. It considers how addressing the quality of the indoor environment and factors relating to the broader social and behavioural environment such as overcrowding, sleep deprivation, and neighbourhood quality can have a positive impact on the health and well being of the population. Individuals and communities will need to play a greater role if we are to be successful and they will have a role to play in making sure that we take the right actions.

Our action plan will be reviewed annually with partners and will provide an opportunity to consider whether we are on course for positive housing and health outcomes, with the use of our combined resources.

Our Healthier Housing Strategy provides a clear description of what we want to see in the future and how we will get there over the next three years.

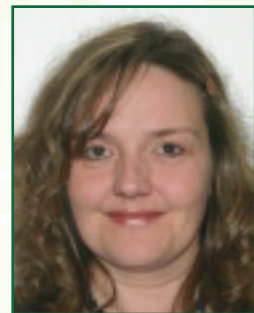
We are confident we will improve the health and wellbeing of our local population and would like to thank all partners for their contribution in the development of this Strategy and hope that you will join us in delivering the vision.



Dr. Aliko Ahmed,
Director of Public Health, Staffordshire



Councillor Mary Oates,
Portfolio Holder for Quality of Life, Tamworth Borough Council



Karen Saunders,
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Executive Summary

Introduction

This Strategy sets out our vision for housing and health over the next 3 years and is supported by an action plan which will be updated annually. The document highlights our expected challenges over this period and puts these into context by including real life examples of the issues we need to overcome.

The Healthier Housing Strategy is also linked to various local, regional and national strategies and policies, including the Government's new Housing Strategy for England.

The health benefits associated with improving housing are difficult to quantify due to other variable influencing factors. Despite this there are clear arguments and evidence to suggest improving

housing conditions significantly improves health outcomes for people. Housing and housing related factors are known to influence physical health (e.g. respiratory disease/pneumonia), mental health (e.g. depression/stress) and general well-being (e.g. diet/exercise).

It is envisaged that by improving housing options, conditions and neighbourhoods within the Borough, via the delivery of this strategy, will lead to improved health outcomes for residents.

This Strategy is part of a wider and long term vision to improve housing and health within the Borough and should not be seen in isolation and will be an ongoing project which will extend beyond the lifetime of this document.

Tamworth's housing – key statistics

- 70.7% of housing in Tamworth is owner occupied
- 9.5% of housing in Tamworth is privately rented
- Tamworth has been highlighted as a repossession hotspot coming 8th in the UK and the place with the most repossessions in the West Midlands (1st)
- 6,310 (25.1%) private sector dwellings fail the Decent Homes Standard in Tamworth
- 19.8% of housing in Tamworth is social housing
- The number of affordable homes required per year to meet housing need is 142
- Homelessness applications in the Borough have increased significantly from 68 in 2009/10 to 91 in 2010/11
- As of Jan 2012 2,103 people were registered on the waiting list for social housing

Tamworth's health – key statistics

- The health of people in Tamworth is varied compared to the England average
- Levels of deprivation vary across the Borough. For example, over 18% of children live in poverty. Life expectancy for both men and women in Tamworth is similar to the England average
- However, life expectancy is 5 years lower for men and 7 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Tamworth than in the least deprived areas
- About 16% of Year 6 children are classified as obese. However, the majority of pupils spend at least three hours each week on school sport. Levels of teenage pregnancy and GCSE attainment are worse than the England average
- Estimated adult healthy eating and obesity levels are worse than the England average. There were about 1,100 hospital stays for alcohol related harm in 2009/10 and there are approximately 95 deaths from smoking each year

Challenges we may face in the delivery of the Strategy

There are a number of political, environmental and social challenges that will be encountered over the next 3 years. The challenges we face include;

- Helping residents afford local housing costs
- Tackling poor tenure and tenancy conditions
- Improving mobility and better utilisation of housing stock
- Improving accessibility to suitable housing for vulnerable residents
- Reducing hazards in the home
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Tackling homelessness
- Encouraging acceptable health and social behaviour to households
- Improving social environment within the local community
- Improving the physical and built environment

Summary of the Healthier Housing Strategic Outcomes for 2011- 2014

The vision for Tamworth is 'One Tamworth, Perfectly Placed'

This Strategy describes how we will contribute to achieving this vision. We want to ensure:

1. There are suitable homes for everyone
2. Homes are healthy warm and safe
3. People are able to maintain an independent and healthy lifestyle
4. Neighbourhood environments enable safer and healthier communities

Housing plays a significant part of any community and is interrelated to a variety of other agendas. By achieving the above outcomes we would like to see a more aspirational, prosperous, healthier and safer Tamworth which will result in better housing options, better housing conditions, improved neighbourhoods and more sustainable healthy lifestyles in the borough.

Monitoring of this Strategy

In order to ensure that the action plan objectives are met, a structured and comprehensive monitoring and review process has been put in place. In adopting this approach, it is intended that all actions within this Strategy will be monitored and that this process will feed into the continuous development and review of both the Healthier Housing Strategy and the longer-term housing vision.

As part of the on-going monitoring and development of this strategy we would like to hear any comments or suggestions you may have concerning this Healthier Housing Strategy or any other housing issues you feel are important to Tamworth.

Feedback

Give us your views and suggestions about this Strategy.

If you have any comments or suggestions you feel are important to Tamworth please contact us at:

Housing Strategy
Tamworth Borough Council
Marmion House
Lichfield Street
Tamworth
Staffordshire
B79 7BZ

Alternatively;
Email: HousingStrategy@tamworth.gov.uk
Or telephone 01827 709700



Our Vision for Tamworth

The vision for Tamworth is 'One Tamworth, Perfectly Placed'. In more detail we want:

- A safe environment in which local people can reach their full potential and live longer, healthier lives.
- A sustainable and thriving local economy, a more aspirational and competitive place to do business

This Strategy describes how we will contribute to achieving the vision and priorities. In particular we will work together to ensure:

1. There are suitable homes for everyone (Access)

- There is a greater choice of homes
- Households are able to move to a quality, affordable home
- People are able to afford a wider range of housing options

2. Homes are healthy, warm and safe (Aspects)

- Homes in all tenures will be safe, warm and well-maintained
- People take responsibility for improvements in the quality of their home environment

3. People are able to maintain an independent and healthy lifestyle (Individual Behaviour)

- There is a reduction in all forms of homelessness
- Vulnerable people are supported to live independently
- People are able to make informed decisions to improve their housing circumstances

4. Neighbourhood environments enable safer and healthier communities (Neighbourhoods)

- Homes of all tenures are in well-designed and managed neighbourhoods
- People and communities are able to take control and responsibility for their neighbourhoods

Improving health

Poor health in Tamworth is a particular challenge to achieving our planned actions and in developing this strategy we have considered what we can contribute to public health programmes and the identified public health outcomes as listed below:

1. Protect people from major incidents and other threats causing harm to their health
2. Improve social and environmental factors, such as poor housing conditions, that can affect health and wellbeing,
3. Promote healthy lifestyles and support people to make healthy choices.
4. Enable people to live longer in good health and improve access to healthcare services.



How we have developed this strategy

The Council has been working with partners and residents to develop this Strategy since 2010.

People in Tamworth spend significantly more time in ill or poor health compared to other areas in the West Midlands and poor housing conditions will further affect their quality of life. We decided to make sure that any action we take to meet people's housing needs and aspirations should consider how we can improve health.

The process of developing this strategy began with external support from the NHS Health Inequalities National Support Team which identified actions, one of which was to produce a Healthy Housing Strategy. A workshop with partners followed and a project group was established to lead the development of the Strategy.

The Council commissioned research to identify the specific health issues that we could address through

housing activity. We consulted widely with partners, housing and health staff and the public to ask what was important to them – over 300 people gave us their opinions. We reviewed feedback from earlier surveys, such as a survey from 2009 about the recession, the Council's Place Survey, and a consultation with young people about homelessness.

A further event was held in February 2011 to present all the findings from the above work to partners and a first draft Strategy was produced in May 2011. Feedback from that document has led to a number of changes and this revised strategy reflects what people have told us.

You can find out more about how we developed this strategy by visiting www.tamworth.gov.uk and view the evidence and other supporting documents that informed the strategy.

How we will make sure our Strategy is a success

It is crucial that delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan is managed and reported to a variety of audiences. The headline key performance information will be published quarterly to the web using the Council's performance tool which is called Covalent. This report will also be used for:-

- ✓ Quarterly reports to the Housing and Health Delivery Group and all housing partners via the Tamworth Strategic Partnership (TSP) "Task and Finish" groups and other housing partnership meetings
- ✓ Regular reports to the TSP
- ✓ Monthly performance meetings with the Portfolio Holder for Quality of Life
- ✓ Quarterly updates to Tamworth Borough Councils Corporate Management Team
- ✓ An annual performance report to the Councils Cabinet, Partners and Customers
- ✓ An annual review of the Strategy and agreement of refreshed annual action plan

The appropriate service managers have been identified and have responsibility for ensuring the information is loaded onto Covalent. Additionally, the actions contained within the Action Plan directly inform the Housing Service business plans and will have an indirect impact on the delivery of other key services provided by the Council and its partners.

Reports on progress made will be communicated to the Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Local Economic Partnership (via the Business Enterprise Partnership) with the right representation at these meetings and active input into joint working initiatives.

Additionally, a set of indicators will be developed as per the Strategy Action Plan to help determine the impact housing has on health over time.



Challenges faced in Tamworth

This chapter describes the challenges evident in Tamworth relating to housing which will impact on a person's health and wellbeing. These need to be overcome to allow us to achieve our vision. Further evidence of the issues can be found at www.tamworth.gov.uk

The key housing challenges in Tamworth are:

1. Households are unable to access suitable and affordable housing, particularly those who are in poor or ill health (Access)
2. Poor conditions exist within some of the housing stock in Tamworth with a disproportionate amount of older people living in non decent and unsuitable homes, including owner occupiers (Aspects)
3. Some households need support to enable them to sustain a healthy home and lifestyle and there are challenges to sustainability (Individual Behaviour)
4. In some areas the community and neighbourhood environment is having a negative impact on quality of life (Neighbourhood)

Here is a summary of the evidence that has helped us to identify the main challenges.

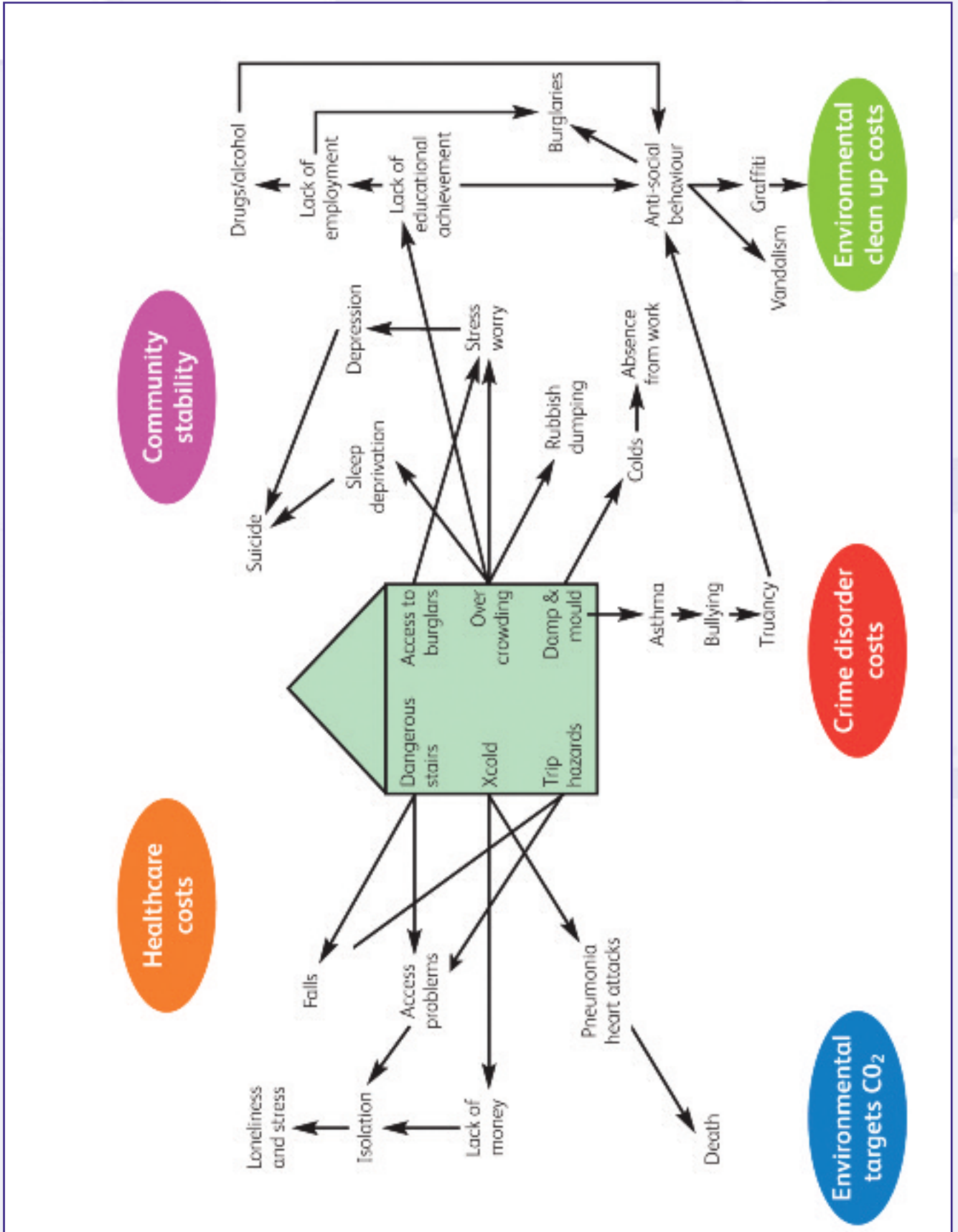
- The population of Tamworth Borough is 75,300 people, which is expected to grow to approximately 81,200 by 2033. The population is ageing, with the number of people above the age of 65 expected to increase by up to 9,400 people by 2033.
- The ethnicity of the population is approximately 94% White British.
- Life expectancy is an indicator of overall health of the population. In Tamworth this ranges from 78.2 years for males and 81.2 years for females. There is also a difference in life expectancy between the most deprived ward (Belgrave), and the least deprived ward (Trinity.)

Life expectancy at birth by ward, 2004-2008

	Men		Women	
	Life Expectancy (in years)	Statistical Difference to England	Life Expectancy (in years)	Statistical Difference to England
Amington	79.2	Similar	82.1	Similar
Belgrave	76.9	Similar	77.8	Similar
Bolehall	79.1	Similar	81.3	Similar
Castle	78.4	Similar	82.3	Similar
Glascote	78.9	Similar	81.8	Similar
Mercian	78.8	Similar	81.9	Similar
Spital	77.5	Similar	79.2	Similar
Stonydelph	77.4	Similar	80.0	Similar
Trinity	81.8	Higher	84.3	Higher
Wilnecote	77.3	Similar	82.4	Similar
Tamworth	78.3	Higher	80.9	Lower
Staffordshire	77.6	Similar	81.4	Lower
England	77.6	Higher	81.8	Lower

Source: Death extracts 2004-2008, Office for National Statistics, Population estimates for local authorities and wards, 2004-2008, Office for National Statistics and Vital Statistics Table 3 for England 2004-2008, Office for National Statistics, Crown copyright.

The consequences of poor housing



Source: Good Housing Leads to Good Health 2008. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

1. Households are increasingly unable to access suitable and affordable housing, particularly those who are in poor or ill health (Access)

Need and demand

- In Jan 2012 2,103 people were registered on the Council waiting list for social housing, an increase of 352 since February 2010 (14% growth). Over a third of those on the register are currently living in insecure accommodation, for example in temporary accommodation, but a quarter are residing in the Private Rented Sector.
- Overcrowding in the private sector is between 1.9% and 3.1%, or between 490 and 770. A greater proportion of these live in North West of the borough, incorporating Mercian and Castle Wards.
- Tamworth has the 4th lowest average household income of the districts of Staffordshire. 53% of households are unable to afford entry-level housing.
- 8 out of the 10 wards in Tamworth have a higher rate of Jobseekers Allowance claimants than Staffordshire (3%), although the worklessness rate has decreased in the last 12 months. Youth unemployment has historically been an issue in Staffordshire and the recent economic recession has made the problem worse. Skill levels in Tamworth are lower than in Staffordshire (in 2009, 21.1% of the population held no qualifications) and there is a lower (but increasing) rate of self-employment.
- Glascote and Belgrave have the lowest incomes in the Borough, with 45% of the adult population in Glascote living in an income deprived family.
- The Government is changing the amount of income that will be paid through benefits to households who need assistance, including housing benefit. It is also changing how people will be paid benefit.
- It is anticipated that social tenants housing benefit will be paid based on an 'appropriate' sized home – any household under-occupying a home will have their benefit reduced.
- For social and private tenants who share their home with other adults who are expected to pay a contribution of the housing cost, it will be assumed that this contribution is higher than it is now and benefits will be reduced.

- For private tenants there are new caps on the amount of housing benefit that could be paid based on the number of bedrooms. Further caps will be introduced for social and private rented tenants by 2013.
- For private tenants aged 25 to 35 housing benefit will be based on a single room in a shared housing. An initial assessment of the people affected by this change has identified 50 individuals in Tamworth who may be at risk of being unable to meet their housing costs.
- Evidence suggests that the economic downturn has had a bigger impact on homes for sale at the cheaper end of the market, with house prices at this end of the market falling by 8.1%, compared to a 4% fall in price for homes in the middle of the house price range. Some households may have a mortgage that is greater than the value of their home and will be unable to sell without losing money.

Real life challenge 1

Mr X & Ms Y are a childless couple living with their parents in an overcrowded terraced house. They are both working but are on modest temporary incomes and cannot afford to rent privately or enter the mortgage market. The lack of affordable housing options available to the couple is contributing to increased stress levels within the household.

Supply

- There are 31,390 homes in Tamworth. Compared to the national picture, there is a slightly higher proportion of owner occupation in Tamworth (70.7% compared to 67%), a lower proportion of private rented homes (9.5% compared to 16%) and higher proportion of social rented homes (19.8% compared to 17%). This means people have different options to choose from compared to other areas.

- House prices and affordability varies across Tamworth. The areas where homes are cheaper to buy are Wilnecote, Stonydelph and Glascote. These areas also face greater deprivation and shorter life expectancy.
- There are 6,230 social rent homes in Tamworth. Only a proportion of these become available for people from the waiting list to move into every year. In 2010/11 this was around 435 (general needs) homes. The number of social rent homes available each year appears to be decreasing; in 2010 the council let 305 homes, in 2009 this figure was 399, a decrease of 25%. The government's new affordable rent model will also reduce the number of social rented homes available as a proportion will be changed to a higher rent (up to 80% of market rent). It will be harder for people on the waiting list to get access to a social rent home.
- The number of homes to rent in the private sector in Tamworth is small, despite a 4% growth between 2001 and 2010. As it is increasingly difficult to access social housing, and very difficult to get a mortgage to own a home, there are more people competing to live in the Private Rented Sector. This will particularly affect households on a low income, such as younger people. To rent privately in Tamworth, households would require an annual income of £23,754 for a 2 bed property, however 39.4% of households have incomes below that amount.
- The number of homes sold in Tamworth has declined since 2006, from 1,639 homes to just 594 in 2010. Sales in neighbouring authorities saw a slight increase in 2010. This is related to a decrease in the number of new build homes in the borough, from a high of 452 new homes in 2006/07 to 137 in 2010/11.
- An assessment of the number of homes that should be built in Tamworth suggests that 142 affordable homes should be built per year – 2,130 by 2026. The current estimate of all new housing supply (not just affordable homes) suggests that 3,100 units could be delivered by 2026. Since 2009 113 new affordable homes have been built. In 2011/12 it is likely that there will be less than 20 affordable units built of which 10 will be low cost homeownership.
- There are few areas in Tamworth administrative boundaries where housing can be developed. Large areas of land are subject to flooding and there is a greenbelt area to the south of the town. There are very few remaining opportunities for further large scale development on brownfield sites.

Health impact

- Housing costs and affordability have been shown to be associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression.
- People living in unsuitable accommodation may be exposed to greater health risks associated with anxiety and depression and increased levels of substance misuse including alcohol and smoking. There are a number of medical research sources indicating that re-housing to a suitable home significantly reduces anxiety, depression and improves mental well being.
- Some households can find it difficult to access appropriate housing and support services and subsequently this may lead to poor access to healthcare services. This in turn could lead to late presentation of illness resulting in poor health outcomes. Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople typically experience higher levels of health problems than members of the non travelling population, a result of poor living conditions and limited access to health services.
- Overcrowded households can cause tensions that can affect a range of issues including educational attainment, loss of privacy, domestic violence and a range of health related problems including mental ill health will have an impact on childhood development and increase the risk of accidents.



2. Poor housing conditions exist within some of the housing stock in Tamworth with a disproportionate amount of older people living in non decent and unsuitable homes, including owner occupiers (Aspects)

Need and demand

- 2,240 vulnerable households live in non-decent homes in the private sector, of which almost a third are a low income (less than £15,000). 2,550 (10.3%) households live in fuel poverty in Tamworth and this is likely to increase as the price of energy is set to increase.
- Approximately 570 people over 75 are living in homes that fail the Decent Homes Standard, due to excess cold or heat, damp and mould (thermal comfort). The Excess Winter Deaths rate in Tamworth varies considerably year on year, but the average rate for all people is 13.1% and for over 65s is 17.7% - on average 23 people die each year from excess cold.
- The population is projected to see significant increases in the number of older people. More than 70% of Tamworth's older population is in the "younger" age group of 60-75 which results in forecasts for an increasing older population, both in absolute numbers and proportionately. Approximately 1,500 people over 75 are living in social housing and 2,700 are owner occupiers. Of those aged 85 and over, 54% are owner occupiers and wish to remain so. 27.3% of the older population live in social rented housing 10.5% of the older population are single pensioner households with 41.3% living in under occupied housing.
- There are over 2,000 households with children in poor housing in Tamworth. There are 7 neighbourhoods in Tamworth that are in the top 10% experiencing the lowest levels of child well-being. These are located in the wards of Amington, Belgrave, Bolehall, Castle, Glascote, Mercian, Spital, Stonydelph and Wilnecote.

Supply

- 6,310 (25.1%) homes in the private sector fail the current standard for a decent home, with a greater proportion of these private rented homes. This reflects national trends of the worse conditions being in the Private Rented Sector. 3,750 homes failed the standard due to thermal comfort, and 3,320 failed because there was a hazard dangerous to the people living there (category 1). There are more non-decent homes

in the North West area, which incorporates Mercian and Spital Wards.

- In March 2010 all of the Council's homes met the Decent Homes Standard. However, investment is needed to maintain and improve upon this standard.

Real life challenge 2

Miss X is a single parent with two young children and has post natal depression which is being made worse by her housing. She lives in a first floor maisonette and although the maisonette is big enough for the family, the external stairs are concrete and she struggles with a toddler and pram on them. This results in her not wishing to go out contributing to social isolation and will impact on her children and their health and development.

Health impact

- Hazards in the home significantly impact on the health of those living there. These include thermal comfort, indoor pollution, space and overcrowding, security light and noise, infection (related to sanitation, water supply, drainage etc) and accidents such as fires, trips and falls. They can impact on physical health in terms of Excess Winter Deaths, respiratory infections, coronary heart disease, strokes and accidents in the home and on mental well being caused by increased anxiety, social isolation and stress levels.
- Difficult choices caused by a reduction in household income may compromise a household's ability to maintain their home to a decent standard, resulting in increased levels of accidents, poorly heated homes or physical deterioration of properties and neighbourhoods and associated poor health outcomes.
- The likelihood of accidents occurring in the home may be increased as a consequence of lifestyle (e.g. smoking, alcohol misuse, DIY activity, preparation of meals, drying clothes in front of fires) as much as defects in the building itself.

3. Some households need support to enable them to sustain a healthy home and lifestyle (Individual Behaviour)

Need and demand

- There has been a significant rise in the number of households approaching the Council for assistance to alleviate homelessness, with 91 applications in 2010/11 compared to 68 in 2009/10. From April to June 2011 there were 31 applications to the Council for homelessness assistance, compared to 11 for the same period in the previous year. This is a similar picture across the country and it is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. It relates primarily to the economic climate. Tamworth is a 'hotspot' for repossessions (8th in the UK and 1st in the West Midlands). Repossessions are expected to rise when interest rates go up again.
- There is evidence to suggest that there are higher levels of disability within Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Tamworth, but appropriate adaptations are not accessed.
- There are between 15,700 and 18,700 residents with mental ill-health in the Borough (this ranges from anxiety and depression to more severe definitions such as schizophrenia). Many factors contribute to poor mental health including environmental, social and cultural circumstances. The wards most at risk within Tamworth include Belgrave, Glascote, Spital, Stonydelph and Wilnecote. Between 90 and 100 people with mental health distress require some kind of housing related support
- Smoking prevalence for adults in Tamworth in 2011 (aged 18+) is estimated to be 23.0% (compared to the national average of 21%). An estimated 95 people die early in Tamworth every year from smoking
- There has been an increase in domestic violence, from 311 incidents in 2008/09 to 353 in 2009/10. The rate per 1,000 population is 4.7, which is 39% higher than the county rate (3.4). Domestic violence is more prevalent in Leyfields, Glascote Heath, Stonydelph and Amington.
- The number of drug offences recorded in Tamworth has increased by 89% in the past 12 months and the rate per 1,000 population is 150% higher than that of the county as a whole. Alcohol related violence increased by 22% during 2009/10. There were about 1,100 hospital stays for alcohol related harm in 2009/10.
- The older population accesses health services more frequently than other households. This is related to accidents, often within the home. In terms of these accidents, most fatal falls are in the over 75's and occur on stairs and steps, making housing design a vital issue.
- Tamworth has a higher teenage pregnancy rate than both Staffordshire and England. Teenage parents are more likely not to have attained educational qualifications, to be out of work, dependent on income support and more likely to require additional support services. There are risk factors that increase the possibility of a young person becoming a parent, such as alcohol and drugs misuse which could lead to unsafe sexual practices.
- 18% of children are living in poverty in Tamworth, with a higher prevalence in the Glascote ward.

Real life challenge 3

Mr X was a single father with 2 young children and an experienced manager of a company. Unfortunately due to the economic downturn he was made redundant by his company. He was unaware of any of the help available to him and as a result got deeper and deeper into financial difficulties and behind with his mortgage. Mr X ignored these problems which caused a deterioration in his mental health and eventually he had his property repossessed. Mr X was unable to cope with the pressure of these events and as a result had his children taken away from him.

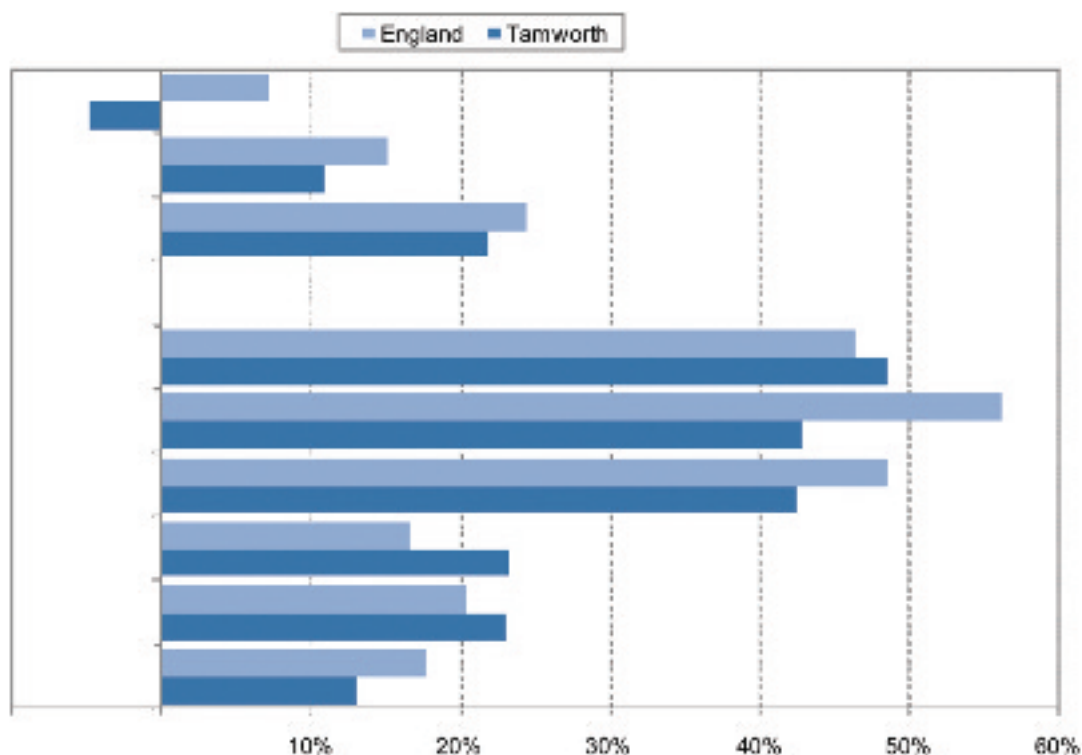
Supply

- Housing support services enable vulnerable people to live independently. The way in which these services are funded changed in 2010. Although Staffordshire County Council has kept the funding at the same level for 2011/12 this may not continue, and the money can now be used for any local activity, not just housing support
- There is greater competition for affordable homes and vulnerable households may find themselves living in the Private Rented Sector where there are higher levels of homes in poor condition

Health impact

- An inability to maintain independent living affects the emotional, social and physical wellbeing, with people feeling out of control, insecure, fearful of what the future might hold and more vulnerable to hazards inside and outside the home.
- An increase in homelessness will make individuals and families more vulnerable to chronic illness, injury from assault, psychiatric illness, and drug and alcohol problems. Early death can result from hypothermia, pneumonia or suicide. There is higher smoking prevalence and low GP registration as well as links to accidents, infectious diseases, poor nutrition and low immunisation rates.

Excess winter mortality by age and cause, 2002-2009



Source: West Midlands Public Health Observatory

A home that is too cold can increase the risk of:

- Respiratory illness (colds, flu, bronchitis and pneumonia)
- Heart attacks and strokes
- Hypothermia
- Deteriorating mental health

4. In some areas the community and neighbourhood environment is having a negative impact on quality of life (Neighbourhood)

- 18.1% of the population live in areas which are amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough, within Amington, Glascote, Stonydelph, Belgrave and Castle. Life expectancy is 5 years lower for men and 7 years lower for women in these areas compared to the least deprived areas.
- At the end of March 2011 there were 259 long term empty properties in the private sector. Disused garage space, indefensible space and a lack of car parking provision contribute to a poor quality environment and fear of crime.
- There were 60.3 incidents of anti social behaviour per 1,000 resident population in 2008/09 which was significantly higher than the Staffordshire County figure of 46.5 per 1,000.

Health impact

- The physical and built environment and perceptions of crime and disorder are significant determinants on an individual's health and wellbeing. A poor visual environment is linked with the increased likelihood of residents experiencing high anxiety levels. It can also limit a healthy lifestyle by its lack of support for physical activity (e.g. access to open space) and access to services (e.g. health services, shops, schools, community centres). The physical environment can be adversely affected by empty or dilapidated properties or can be positively enhanced by well designed housing.
- Personal behaviour within the home and perceptions of what constitutes an acceptable lifestyle may also impact on the quality of life and wellbeing on neighbours and the wider community. Family and individual values and lifestyles may influence behaviours (e.g. domestic abuse, excessive noise, use of gardens, visitors to properties), and cause friction between neighbours, anti-social behaviour, failed tenancies, unstable neighbourhoods and deterioration in the emotional wellbeing of residents.

Real life challenge 4

Mr X and Miss Y had been living in unsettled housing with their children for the past few years. During the last pregnancy the couple became homeless. The couple were rehoused in a neighbourhood in Tamworth which is well known for drug misuse and the couple began having problems with neighbours. Due to Mr X's previous substance misuse problems the couple eventually split up due to stress related issues connected to the neighbourhood and Mr X became homeless as result of the relationship breakdown and the children's contact with him was lost.





Our outcomes in more detail

3.1 There are suitable homes for everyone (Access)

This section looks at the outcomes we are aiming for in order to overcome the identified challenges and describes how we will enable households to access suitable and affordable housing to meet their needs.

What should be in place if we want to achieve the outcome?

A wide range of homes are needed of different types, tenure, size, location and affordability, to meet different housing needs and aspirations, and enable healthy lifestyles and economic wellbeing. Outcomes you could expect to see are:

- New homes are designed to meet identified individual and family needs and aspirations and located in the right places, connected to the services people need to enjoy a good, healthy, quality of life
- New affordable homes are to be developed to meet the needs of households who are unable to meet their own needs without assistance
- New homes are built to the lifetime homes standard to enable active ageing and independent living
- New and existing homes should provide choice to older adults with varying care needs, enabling them to live as independently as possible in their own self contained homes, and have 'round the clock' access to care and support should be available, tailored to each resident's needs (flexi-care). Specialist provision should be available for those suffering dementia
- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople have access to good quality site provision and services
- Under-occupied social and affordable homes are released for use by larger households by enabling moves by residents to smaller accommodation in these or other affordable tenures (overcrowding will reduce)
- Empty homes are brought back into use via grants, investment from home owners or from other partners e.g. housing associations
- Quality temporary and supported accommodation is available to households who need it. Households who are ready to move on are able to access affordable, decent,

accommodation, in a location that will enable them to continue their progress to independence, with support where required

- Information, advice and support enables households on a low income or in receipt of welfare benefits to improve their household income, lifestyles and housing choices through access to education, training and employment



To enable this to happen the following is needed:

- Integrated working between housing, planning, health, the voluntary sector and economic development at a local, county and sub-regional level, with a specific focus on infrastructure, design and regeneration
- A cross tenure, robust, approach to data collection about housing need and demand, cross referenced to available health and economic data
- A common, public, understanding of the need and demand for homes in Tamworth to enable local people to support new development
- Engagement with the public and stakeholders, including the 60-64 year old population to understand need and demand, and to identify aspirations for older age

- A clear and simple planning system that supports sustainable development, healthy homes and neighbourhoods and economic prosperity
- A good understanding and use of available resources to meet needs eg, land, assets, government subsidy, planning contributions, New Homes Bonus etc, and innovation in how resources can be deployed in different situations
- Clear strategic direction for the introduction of affordable rent homes and use of fixed term and flexible tenancies in Tamworth

What challenges do we need to overcome?

The Coalition Government's major reform of the planning system is intended to simplify the process and enable speedier housing development. Local people are expected to play a greater role in planning in their areas, following consultation, in return for an incentive (the New Homes Bonus).

Tamworth Borough Council looked at the provision of new affordable housing through a study in 2010 which concluded that requiring affordable housing to a good standard, whilst asking the developer to contribute to development of the wider community, may affect the viability of developing new housing. Therefore the Council will not meet the need for affordable housing through the development of private housing schemes alone: alternative funding sources will be needed e.g., the New Homes Bonus.

An assessment of the need for residential and transit pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople suggests that although pitches are needed (14 in total up to 2026), it may not be possible to meet these within Tamworth's administrative boundaries, as a result of a limited supply of suitable land. The Council has a policy which is designed to assist in the provision of sites for Travelling Communities.

Funding for affordable housing was cut from £8.4 to £4.5 billion in 2010 as part of the Coalition Governments drive to cut spending. Changes have been proposed that will result in higher rents being charged in new homes and new tenancies ('affordable rent' for Social Housing will be up to 80% of the cost of renting a home in the private sector). More investment from banks and other private sector lenders is expected and social landlords may sell homes or land to add to their funding to build and develop new homes. As the result of the changes there is likely to be less

supported housing as this type of accommodation is costly to provide. The new model is also likely to result in fewer, if any, developments of new supported housing as the level of income this accommodation generates is insufficient once service charges and support costs are included. Government policy currently dictates that Councils are unable to charge 'affordable rents'. 'Affordable rent' is likely to be unaffordable to low income households who are not in receipt of full housing benefit.

The Private Rented Sector will need to play a greater role in accommodating households in housing need. Councils will be able to offer suitable accommodation in the private sector to homeless households without requiring the applicant's agreement. As this sector is small in Tamworth it will be unlikely that there will be enough accommodation to meet needs.

Tamworth is projected to see a 33% increase in over 65's by 2019 compared to 23% across England. Tamworth also has the highest proportion of older people over the age of 85 in home ownership, of which many are non-decent (see homes are healthy, warm and safe). There is a need for a range of options for older people, with integrated care and support, yet capital and revenue resources have reduced. 552 flexi-care housing units are needed by 2020 in the Borough, of which 243 should be for rent. The Council is looking to remodel existing accommodation before building new homes.

There are other households with particular health related needs who will require some housing in the future, perhaps with some form of support attached and/or suitable for people with a physical or sensory disability. 80% of people with a learning difficulty will require housing options with the many requiring some form of housing related support.



What are we already doing that we will continue and what new opportunities exist?

The Core Strategy is a spatial planning document that describes how Tamworth's ambitions will be achieved through the use of land, buildings and infrastructure, including establishing the number, location and type of new housing to be delivered. The Core Strategy is in development and is scheduled to be adopted by the Council by December 2012. Based on current evidence, the Core Strategy anticipates that 2,900 new homes will be delivered by 2026. In developing the Core Strategy consideration has been given to a number of options to meet the demand for housing, particularly as development land is in short supply. To put it into context, the only site with the capacity to deliver a substantial number of new homes (up to 1,150) is Anker Valley and the remaining homes would need to be delivered on smaller sites across the Borough. If additional new housing demand is identified, other delivery options would need to be considered including:

- A higher density of homes could be developed. However, people generally aspire to live in more spacious neighbourhoods and demand for high density areas is currently low. Increasing densities is also unlikely to lead to a significant increase in supply.
- Developing homes on employment land. However, this is likely to affect the current lack of local job opportunities and increase the number of people living in the area but commuting out of the area for work.
- Developing on open space. This is likely to reduce the amount of open space available to residents and impact on creating sustainable, healthy, communities
- Seeking new homes to be built in neighbouring authority areas. Subject to the level of future housing need being agreed, this option would need to be discussed and agreed with adjoining local authorities

The Core Strategy will also set out the size and type of housing required to reflect local needs. It has been agreed to commission a more up to date evidence base of housing need to support establishing tenure type and mix and location in the context of government's housing, welfare and health reforms. The outcomes of this study will be used to provide the evidence base for related Core Strategy housing policies.



It is likely that The Core Strategy will require that new housing developments:

- Include 30% affordable homes on developments of 15 or more homes
- Include 20% affordable homes on developments of 5 -14 new homes
- Provide financial contributions equivalent to 10% of affordable homes where developments are for up to 4 new homes

The current Local Plan (the Core Strategy will replace this) says that appropriate housing will be built to meet the needs of an ageing population requiring specialist needs and support or care. This includes the requirement for homes that are suitable to meet the needs of older people, persons with disabilities, and chronic medical conditions.



In 2010/11 27 affordable homes for rent were developed in partnership with Waterloo Housing Association and Council-owned sheltered housing scheme, Thomas Hardy Court, was remodelled into an Extra Care Scheme. £858,684 of Homes and Communities Agency funds was spent in Tamworth in 2010/11 to develop new affordable homes.

The priorities for future investment in affordable homes have been identified and are described in the Southern Staffordshire Local Investment Plan (LIP) which includes Cannock Chase, Lichfield, and South Staffordshire. The LIP aims to ensure that all residents in Southern Staffordshire have access to good quality, appropriate and affordable housing and can thrive in safe, healthy and prosperous communities. The Plan recognises housing's significant role in contributing to and enhancing the social, health, economic and environmental wellbeing of residents. Whilst each local authority area has its own issues, the priorities are broadly similar:

- Increasing housing choice to meet local housing needs and aspirations
- Targeting poor quality housing and raising housing standards
- Reducing and preventing homelessness
- Ensuring a variety of housing and support options are available for our more vulnerable residents
- Encouraging thriving and sustainable communities

There is work to be done by the LIP partners to decide how priorities will be achieved with significantly reduced funding from the government. The Council is currently considering how best to use the New Homes Bonus. Although it is an incentive to communities to support development, with limited money for both public services and new homes it is important that the right balance is struck.

The Council continues to work to regenerate the most deprived neighbourhoods and improve the supply of affordable homes. A review of the Council's assets has identified number of under-used garage sites and work is underway with other social landlords to look at developing these sites.

Housing supply and housing services have a clear contribution to make to economic resilience and growth beyond ensuring that new housing is built. Although this hasn't always been recognised nationally, there are two opportunities for the Council



to align what we do in housing to contribute more to economic ambitions:

- A new Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was set up in late 2010 and aims to promote and realise economic growth. This business-led partnership has developed a strategy, focussing on business, people and place. There is an opportunity, working with the LEP, to develop housing services to enable those on low-incomes and unemployed households to access training and employment, and for investment in housing improvements to contribute to local businesses.
- The Tamworth Strategic Partnership has a number of economic aims, including developing skills and creating quality employment locally. Tamworth's Business Enterprise Partnership has recently developed a strategy to engage with the business sector and it will act as a coordinator for discussions between the Council and business partners locally, for example the Council's housing team. There is an opportunity for the council to engage with the business sector on health and housing issues, particularly to enable a healthy workforce.

At the end of March 2011 there were 259 long term empty properties in the private sector. The council has restructured its private sector housing service to be more effective in bringing empty properties back into use. A full time Officer has been employed to increase the supply of good quality private rented properties and £70,000 has been provided to offer grants and loans to bring empty properties back into use. There have been 38 empty properties brought back into use in 2011/12 to date without any financial incentives.

The Council introduced a choice based lettings scheme in April 2010 to enable people to access social rented homes more easily and so they can see

that homes were being allocated fairly. Initial findings are that there has been a 25% reduction in the turnover of council-owned homes as people are able to choose where they live and then stay there. An independent review of the scheme in 2011 has resulted in a number of recommendations for improvement which will be adopted this year. Work has already started to test a new agreement between the council and other social landlords to make sure affordable homes are easily accessed. Work is also underway to look at how affordable and decent homes in the Private Rented Sector could be accessed by people through the choice based lettings scheme.

In future, as a result of the Government's proposals for social housing reform, the Council will have greater freedoms to decide who is able to access affordable homes. Social landlords and the Council's own landlord service will also be able to decide how long tenancies will be granted for. The Council, working with other landlords, will develop the best approach to meeting housing needs fairly in Tamworth.

The Council enables move-on from supported housing. There is an agreement with support providers, the County Council and partners have produced a good practice guide and the County Housing Support Strategy has built upon this.

The Council also encourages and enables under-occupiers to release family homes. There is an Incentive to Move scheme where £1,000 is offered for the tenant to move to a new property, or a removal service will be arranged and paid for.



What will we do over next 3 years?

Tamworth Borough Council will complete and adopt the Core Strategy. Action to develop community support for development will be identified and implemented.

Work with the local health economy to identify how priorities in the Local Investment Plan can be delivered with reduced Government funding, for example through the use of rent income for Council homes, New Homes Bonus and bringing empty homes back into use.

Take action to increase the availability of land for new housing development, for example we will identify and make use of under-used council owned land.

Work with neighbouring authorities and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities to identify potential housing sites to meet identified need.

Develop a co-ordinated approach to enable Flexi Care housing to be developed, alongside other housing options for people as they get older.

Work with private landlords and other partners to develop and improve private rented homes so they contribute to meeting housing need more effectively. This will be done in partnership with the business sector.

Work with the business sector through the Business Enterprise Partnership and Local Enterprise Partnership to link the health and housing offer to economic ambitions.

Make effective use of the social and 'affordable rent' housing stock, for example through the development of a tenancy strategy and improvements to the choice based lettings scheme.

Develop the housing options service to enable people to improve their own housing circumstances and home, and to meet their own needs for example by providing information on low cost home ownership and options in the Private Rented Sector, and enabling access to employment opportunities.

3.2 Homes are healthy warm and safe (Aspects)

The activity we describe in this section will contribute particularly to preventing and reducing the impact of poor quality home environments on health and wellbeing.

What should be in place if we want to achieve the outcome?

Decent, safe and energy efficient housing is necessary for physical, emotional and social wellbeing. Action in this area is likely to improve health outcomes for local people more than any other area of housing activity. For homes to be healthy for people living in all tenures:

- New homes will be energy efficient and sustainable – carbon neutral where possible. Existing homes in all tenures will be energy efficient and people will be able to keep their home warm, reducing fuel poverty and Excess Winter Deaths
- Existing homes in the private sector will be good quality and free from hazards that increase the risk of illness e.g. caused by damp and mould and accidents
- Homes in the social rented sector, temporary accommodation and supported housing meet a decent standard
- Indoor air quality is improved and noise pollution is reduced, contributing to fewer respiratory problems and improving wellbeing respectively
- People feel safe in their home as measures to improve home security are in place
- People understand the effect living conditions and hazards have on their health and are able to take action to address these, for example to prevent accidents

To enable this to happen the following is needed:

- A good understanding of housing conditions in the private (rented and home ownership) and social housing sectors
- Information, advice and clear signposting to services that enable people to improve the condition of their home
- Knowledge of households and communities whose health is more likely to be affected by unhealthy homes, who may be less able to improve their circumstances, for example older people, and who will benefit from co-ordinated, targeted, action to address the greatest health inequalities eg, in the most deprived wards
- Planning design guidance for new and existing homes supports improvements in energy efficiency and will contribute to tackling climate change
- Joint working with Staffordshire County Council and health commissioners to improve the quality of homes and prevent ill-health
- A good understanding, and use, of available resources to meet needs e.g., the Green Deal and Feed in Tariffs



What challenges do we need to overcome?

There is no Government funding available to improve housing conditions in the private sector: in previous years funding has been available. The Council and other public sector partners have limited resources.

Private rented homes will need to play a greater role in meeting housing needs as there is limited social, affordable housing. The economic climate may mean that people cannot afford to maintain their home. The condition of owner-occupied homes lived in by older people is a particular concern. We will need new ideas and sources of funding to ensure that housing condition – and health – does not deteriorate.

External regulation of the public sector is reducing. Regulation of social rented homes now focuses primarily on business viability. National research recommendations to regulate the private rented sector are also not being pursued. The Council, communities and customers will need to take more of an interest in the quality of homes in the future, particularly where public money is being spent, for example through the payment of housing benefit for rent in the Private Rented Sector. We will need to build on existing structures e.g. tenants forums and the Tamworth Landlord Accreditation Scheme to enable this.

In March 2011 there were an estimated 76 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) in Tamworth, of which 16 HMOs have been licensed as required by legislation in order to ensure decent standards. The introduction of the single room rent for households under 35 years old by the Government may increase demand for shared accommodation (HMOs). Not only will it be important to ensure these homes are of good quality and managed well, it will be important

to consider alternatives where sharing accommodation is unsuitable for vulnerable households who may find living with other people affecting their mental health and wellbeing. The Council has targeted households at immediate risk from welfare reform and the new housing needs survey will seek to understand more about specific demand from this household group.

Changes in personal circumstances and fluctuations in income due to job loss or proposed changes to welfare benefits may affect people's ability to meet their housing costs, in turn affecting their health and wellbeing. For example, rising fuel costs have forced a number of households who previously would not have been in fuel poverty into a situation where they may need to make difficult choices between heating their home adequately and other priorities such as providing members of the household with a healthy diet.

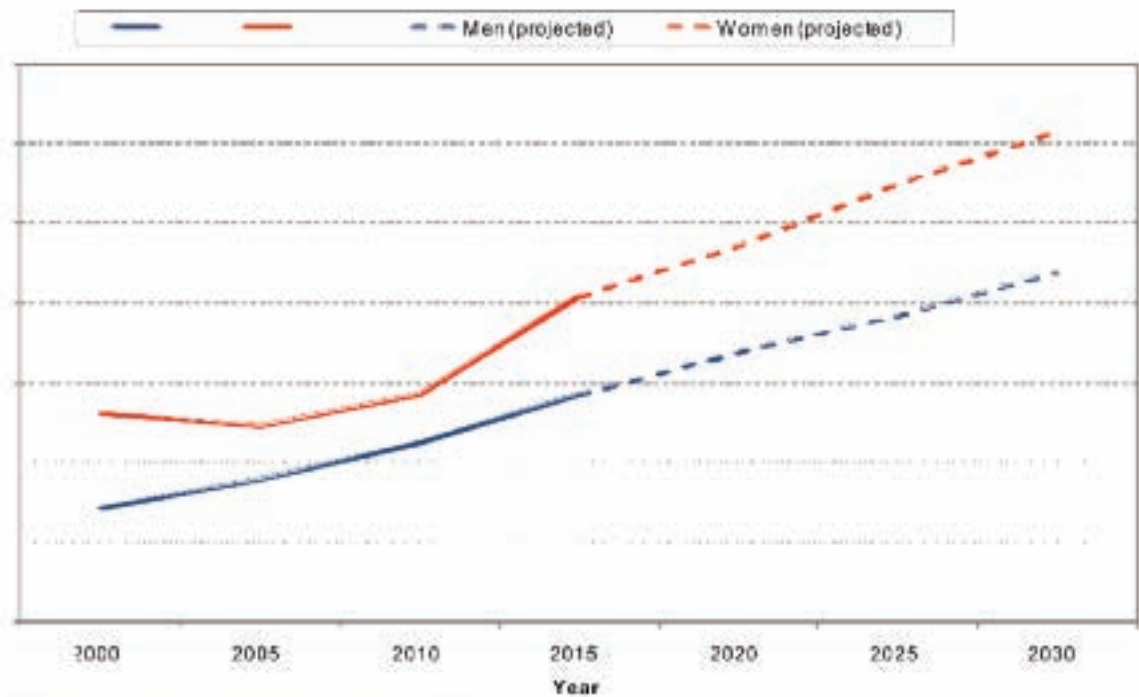
To date the Warm Front grant has been available to help low income and vulnerable households improve energy efficiency. This grant is being replaced by the 'Green Deal' – improvements will be paid for through energy bills. Vulnerable people may need support to understand the change and private landlords are likely to need encouragement to allow their tenants to have improvements. The Council is looking at the role it will play in the Green Deal and how it will work with energy companies to identify vulnerable households and homes that are 'hard to heat', using data available from Energy Performance Certificates.

Environmental attitudes amongst residents of Tamworth are less 'green' than the rest of the county as highlighted in a recent survey; it will be a greater challenge to increase interest and change behaviours. This is critical as existing homes have the greatest contribution to make to carbon reduction targets.



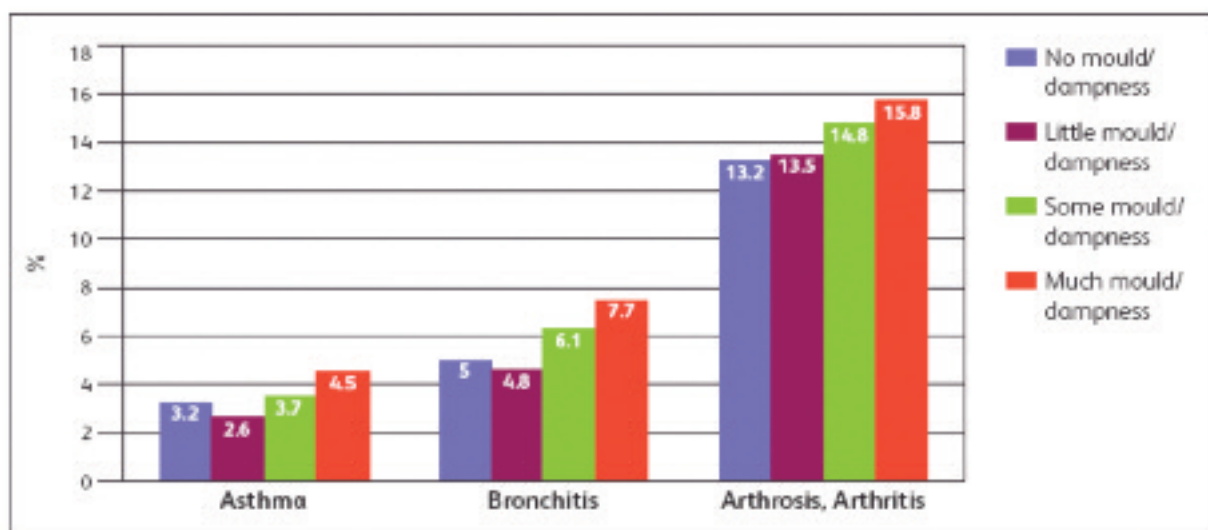
A particular health issue that arises from the condition of housing in Tamworth are accidents arising from falls (37%) with around 70% of these occurring in people aged 65 and over, with higher hospital admission rates for accidents in Tamworth than the England average. Most fatal falls are in the over 75's, and occur on stairs and steps, making housing design a repair issue. The County Council offers a falls service and Tamworth has successfully promoted a service to all GPs so they are able to refer people for assessments and improvements. The Council is proposing that a service similar to the 'Let's Work Together' project in Lichfield is provided in Tamworth by housing agencies, the Council, the Fire Service and social care and health.

Impact of Poor Housing on ill -Health: Current and Projected trends in falls in Tamworth



Source: Projecting Older People Population Information (POPI)

Prevalence of some chronic diseases by mould/dampness categories



Source: Good Housing Leads To Good Health: A toolkit for environmental health practitioners

What are we already doing that we will continue and what new opportunities exist?

The Core Strategy will include appropriate policies and design guidance will be developed to ensure that new homes are built to an appropriate energy efficient standard, in sustainable locations.

The current Private Sector Stock Condition Survey provides an up to date picture upon which we can plan and take action. This will build on existing work such as the Tamworth Landlord Accreditation Scheme and partnership working through the landlords' forum and the National Landlords Association. The council has provided a dedicated officer to oversee this work.

The Council has taken a pro-active approach to enforcement. In 2010/11 89 homes were made free of serious hazards as a result of enforcement action. Tamworth is the only Council in Staffordshire where a landlord has been prosecuted for failure to provide adequate standards.

Assistance to homeowners will be enabled through the Home Improvement Trust, replacing Kickstart (loans are provided to improve housing conditions). There is a Handypersons Service and the Council currently provides Home Assistance Grants (these are likely to be replaced by loans). The Home Energy Advice Line is also targeted to home-owners and private rented homes.

Tamworth Strategic Partnership aims to raise the aspiration and attainment levels of young people. The quality of the home environment has an impact on this ambition; cold, damp and cramped conditions, shared with other members of the family when over-crowded, are not conducive to study. The action we describe to reduce over-crowding will go some way to alleviate this.

Building on the achievements of recent years (all social rent homes met the Decent Homes Standard in 2010), sustaining levels of decency remains a priority. A change in how Council-owned homes are funded will be implemented from April 2012; rent will be kept by the Council to invest in homes and services. Although the change means the Council will take on a considerable amount of debt (£60 million); the priority will be to ensure that this is paid off, in previous years a proportion of rent from Council-owned homes went to the Government. The new arrangement will be better for the Council and tenants. A new, long term, business plan will be developed.

The Tamworth Household Sustainable Energy Action Plan sets out action to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency and to contribute to outcomes identified within the Tamworth Climate Change Strategy. Home Energy Advice Tamworth (HEAT) was established in August 2009, providing a helpline to encourage energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty in the private sector. Since its launch in excess of 1600 installations of cavity wall and loft Insulation have been made into homes. A number of customers have also been referred to health services through this work and staff have been trained to recognise households who could benefit from improvements to their home.

Although temporary accommodation is used to accommodate homeless households in an emergency, there is a possibility that an increase in homelessness may lead to the use of more temporary accommodation. We will need to ensure housing conditions are of an acceptable standard.

What will we do over next 3 years?

Develop the planning policy framework and implement this to ensure that all new development is in accordance with this and the latest design standards.

Implement the Household Sustainable Energy Action Plan and make improvements to HEAT, recognising the introduction of the Government's Energy Bill.

Revise the Council's Financial Assistance Policy and improve awareness of assistance available to home owners and private tenants.

Work with private landlords, for example through the Landlord's Forum and to develop existing mechanisms such as the Tamworth Landlord Accreditation Scheme to attract more landlords.

Develop and deliver the Council's business and investment plan for Council owned homes, in partnership with tenants to ensure standards are maintained.

Provide information and advice to tenants, homeowners and landlords to enable them to make their homes safe and secure, enabling access to measures such as smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

3.3 People are able to maintain an independent and healthy lifestyle (Individual behaviour)

The activity we describe in this section will contribute particularly towards helping people to maintain independent lifestyles, for example people who have limited mobility, or who are unable to be active in the community and make social connections.

What should be in place if we want to achieve the outcome?

Over time people's circumstances change, as people get older, have a family, gain or lose employment. For some, their independence and quality of life may be affected. Homes and housing services can enable people to remain independent, and to lead a healthy lifestyle. To achieve this:

- Good quality information is widely available to enable people to manage their own housing circumstances without assistance
- Good quality advice and support is accessible and available to people who need assistance in order to meet their housing need. Households are supported in order to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- Support is available to enable people to regain their independence, sustain their tenancy, and/or maintain their independence in the longer term
- Assistance is available to households who need to adapt their homes in order to remain living there independently, or to access more suitable accommodation if this is more appropriate
- Housing customers, including those living in temporary and supported housing, are able to access health and leisure services, information and advice, in order to improve their health and wellbeing

- Joint commissioning between housing, health and social care and those working in the criminal justice sector to tackle behavioural issues such as smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, anti social behaviour and to contribute to the aspiration of building recovery communities.
- Customer use of housing services is recorded, particularly housing advice services, in order to inform decisions about the use of resources and to improve service delivery
- People are able inform and shape the services they need, choosing what they want wherever possible



To enable this to happen the following is needed:

- A good understanding of the housing and health needs of people and households who are more vulnerable to crises and/or at risk of losing their independence. This information needs to be shared with others eg, health and social care commissioners
- An understanding of the factors that impact on people's housing circumstances eg, the economy, through partnership working, and of people's attitudes and behaviour, in order to influence them more effectively

What challenges do we need to overcome?

Recession and welfare reform are affecting personal circumstances. Fluctuations in income due to job loss, for example, may affect people's ability to meet their housing costs, resulting in homelessness. As previously highlighted, homelessness in Tamworth and across the country is increasing. There are health impacts: increased homelessness may contribute to an increase in health issues, placing additional demands on housing and related services such as the NHS and voluntary sector. It is a priority for resources to remain directed towards activities to prevent homelessness.

The Government's social housing reforms will enable social landlords to introduce fixed term or flexible tenancies, so that best use is made of limited social and affordable rent housing. The minimum length of this type of tenancy is expected to be five years (in exceptional circumstances this can be 2 years).

Towards the end of the tenancy there will be a review to establish if the household's circumstances have changed and whether the home remains the most suitable option. Security of tenure has an impact on health and wellbeing, with insecurity raising anxiety levels, and moves meaning potential disconnection from health services and social networks. It will be important that the Council, health partners and social landlords work together so that health is considered in the process of developing and implementing tenancy policies locally.

Although Staffordshire County Council and Tamworth Borough Council has maintained funding in 2011/12 for housing support and homelessness, significant reductions in public sector funding for the longer term may mean that this position will change in the future. Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) is a more immediate concern, as demand is outstripping supply: a budget of £290,000 for 2011/12 was fully committed by September 2011. The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey estimates that the council and partners will need to spend just over £3.8m on adaptations over the next 5 years. Work is needed to ensure that what is available is used fairly and that health and social care partners contribute funding where the outcomes evidently reduce demand for their services eg, hospital admissions health partners currently contribute to the DFG grant.

Reforms to social care are intended to enable people who need care to maintain their dignity and respect, giving individuals more control over the services they receive for example, through the use of personalised budgets. Whilst improving choice and control is positive, it also presents a challenge; people will need information about what services are available, and how their health and care needs are affected by their housing circumstances. This will need integrated working between housing, health and social care commissioners.

As previously discussed within this Strategy there is a need for flexi-care homes in Tamworth for people as they get older and for people with a learning disability. People living in other forms of accommodation access a range of services at the moment, for example support in sheltered housing, assistive technology, community alarms, handypersons services, home improvement

agencies, and floating support. Shifting to more flexi-care accommodation may affect demand for these services. Given resource pressures, care will need to be taken to manage the resources currently available is so that people are not negatively affected.



What are we already doing that we will continue and what new opportunities exist?

In 2007 the council introduced a more preventative approach to homelessness. For example it completed 3 mortgage rescues, enabling homeowners who are struggling to pay their mortgage to remain in their home. We adopted a revised Homelessness Strategy in 2009. Homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation have reduced (although the Council is currently seeing an increase).

Vulnerable households are being supported during the recession. Additional Council funding has been made available to the Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide services for residents with financial difficulties in addition to the established court desk service that prevent homes from being repossessed. The Council is also in the process of improving prevention services from the voluntary sector. The Council's landlord service continues to support tenants in financial difficulties in the form of financial inclusion support from dedicated officers.

Staffordshire's Housing Support and Independence Strategy 2011-2014, Focusing on the Future, aims to enable every resident in Staffordshire to live as independently as possible, increasing their choice, control and improving their experience of services.

For this to happen there needs to be new collaborative ways of working and developing local partnerships that produce a range of services for people to choose from and providing opportunities for full participation in the community in which they live.

Significant Government health reforms are being implemented. These are intended to enable residents to live independently and promoting healthy lifestyles will be continuing areas of work for Public Health, which will become the responsibility of the County Council.

The newly formed Staffordshire County Council Health and Well-being Board will be responsible for developing a multi-agency Health and Well-being Strategy. The Health and Well-being Board membership will include elected members, service users and health representatives from the Clinical Commissioning Group.

There is an opportunity to align and enhance our work in this area in partnership with others, particularly as health reforms will promote personal responsibility for individual behaviour and behavioural change. Social landlords and housing support providers are in a good position to offer preventative and community health services as well as support and care.

Mental well being is as important as physical health. Preventing and responding to mental health problems is important to improve educational attainment, behaviour and self-esteem for children and young people, reduce absences from work, reduce re-offending behaviour, and reduce rapid declines in the health and wellbeing of older people (and dependency). The new Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board has identified mental health as a priority: it will be important that we work with them to shape the housing contribution which could include home visits; home safety improvements; working with young homeless people; enabling people to volunteer; warm home initiatives for older people and access to programmes and education in, or close to, the home.

As part of the Council's commitment to working with health partners the Tamworth Homelessness Education Prevention Programme was introduced in 2010 and visits schools and works with young people to prevent homelessness. This has been expanded to provide homelessness awareness sessions at local hospitals and health centres, preventing patients being discharged with no home

to go to, or to an unsuitable home. We will develop this to ensure that outcomes for people supported through this route are the contributing to improved health and wellbeing.

There is an early eviction protocol in place between the Council's landlord service and the Housing Advice Team. Improvement is needed to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved as a result of this arrangement, and to extend arrangements to other social landlords in Tamworth.

The Council will be working with a range of partners on the 'Let's Work Together' Scheme to develop a service where any professional that enters homes can identify other issues that may have an impact on the Health and Wellbeing of that tenant or resident and refer them to the relevant agency. This scheme has been endorsed by the TSP and has the support of all relevant agencies.

What will we do over next 3 years?

Review the Council's approach to Disabled Facilities Grants and assistance in light of increasing demand and the positive outcomes for housing, health and social care.

Review and revise the Council's housing advice services to provide universal and targeted information and advice services that will enable people to improve their own housing and health circumstances, prevent homelessness and make best use of resources.

Deliver the existing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan and review and develop a revised strategy and associated Action Plan in partnership with others. (This will include improvements to eviction protocols, for example.)

Commission services as appropriate to respond to housing issues, eg, debt advice.

Improve monitoring and performance management arrangements to ensure housing services are responsive to changes in housing need, achieve positive outcomes for customers and deliver mutual benefits to all partners eg, housing, health and care.

3.4 Neighbourhood environments that enable safer and healthier communities (Neighbourhood)

Activity described in this chapter will improve the neighbourhood environment so that it has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

What should be in place if we want to achieve the outcome?

The environment around the home has an impact on health and wellbeing. To achieve this, the housing offer will ensure that:

- The environment around the homes is improved so it is free from pollution and crime and offers access to open and green space
- People are able to easily access employment, education and other essential services and amenities from their home
- Neighbourhoods support social and community networks
- Anti-social behaviour and other forms of crime are tackled
- Local residents are able to engage in decisions about their neighbourhood environment and to influence the use of resources to improve things
- Communities are supported to develop and maintain a strong sense of identity and spirit

To enable this to happen the following is needed:

- Housing input from the Council and its partners is needed in Tamworth's approach to working at a local, neighbourhood, level
- Partners in housing and community safety sector work together to address issues that affect the quality of life for residents eg, anti-social behaviour
- Neighbourhood management is co-ordinated amongst partners. Action to address inequalities in the most deprived neighbourhoods is co-ordinated and targeted.
- Spatial planning policy ensures quality neighbourhood design, with access to open spaces, safe walking and cycling routes and connections to services and amenities



What challenges do we need to overcome?

A number of neighbourhoods face a range of inequalities, from poor health and housing, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence, unemployment and low levels of educational attainment.

A recent assessment of open spaces in Tamworth found that areas of poor quality open space in some areas of the Borough such as Coton Green and Perrycrofts, around Ventura Park Belgrave and Two Gates, whilst Stonydelph lacks an urban park. A deficiency in play space in all areas except the east can be addressed by requiring new developments in these areas to include a play area or contribute towards enhancement of existing play spaces in need of improvement.

A recent local transport survey identified that a large number of Tamworth residents do not have access to a car. Older people report particular difficulties in accessing public transport, for example it is difficult to walk to the bus stop or get on the bus, whilst taxis are felt to be expensive. Easy access to local health services from the home is important if people are to remain living independently in the community. Planning policy for new homes will need to consider this whilst action is taken to improve access for residents living in existing homes.

What are we already doing that we will continue and what new opportunities exist?

Staffordshire County Council and Tamworth Borough Council have been targeting services to address disadvantage within defined communities. Within Tamworth there are 4 distinct neighbourhoods which have been identified as priority areas - Amington, Belgrave, Glascote, and Stonydelph. This approach – referred to as locality working – is being reviewed at the moment but it is likely that a plan will be developed for each of the areas to direct resources. Neighbourhood management is also being considered. We will need to consider how housing activity can contribute to ambitions for these areas, bearing in mind that housing priorities may not be in the same area, for example poor housing conditions may exist elsewhere in the Borough.

In developing the Core Strategy, options for housing and town centre regeneration plans we will need to understand the impact of new development and population growth on the need for health services. There is an opportunity to do this through new partnerships with health, as part of the Tamworth Strategic Partnership.

As previously discussed, delivering the Local Investment Plan will go some way to improve the quality of neighbourhood environments in Tamworth. For example our planned work to develop new homes through the use of Council owned assets such as under-used garage sites which are known to attract crime. The design of new neighbourhoods could include access to healthier food options eg, by influencing shop owners to improve the quality of what they provide to customers. Action to bring empty homes back into use will also contribute to a better environment.



The Tamworth Strategic Partnership is implementing a 'Total Place' approach to tackling alcohol misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour in Tamworth and developing early interventions to tackle youth crime. This approach brings together resources from a number of partners, including those working in the housing sector, to overcome challenges and achieve outcomes. The Council and its landlord service both have anti-social behaviour policies that explain the action that will be taken should someone demonstrate this behaviour.

A 'hub' of services including housing, social care, and the fire service, has been located at Tamworth Police Station to target areas where there are high levels of crime. This approach will be developed to become more strategic and preventative (at the moment the focus is on responding to specific cases).

Over two fifths of Tamworth's population believe that clean streets are the environmental aspect that makes somewhere a good place to live. We will be able to build on this interest, working with housing customers who feel the environment is important to encourage others to play a role in maintaining clean and safe neighbourhoods.

What will we do over next 3 years?

Deliver housing regeneration priorities identified in the Local Investment Plan and by the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Ensure that new housing developments take health implications into consideration through joint work between Council planning services and health partners.

Take action to improve access to services for households who may lose their independence, for example by introducing or promoting alternative forms of transport to older people.

Identify the housing contribution that can be made to delivering plans for neighbourhoods, particularly those facing the greatest inequalities.

Continue to work in partnership with others to prevent and respond to anti-social behaviour.



Summary

The Council has produced this Healthier Housing Strategy document which will be further developed and amended over the next three years to take account of new Government legislation, emerging best practice, the needs of residents in Tamworth and other factors. To help achieve this we will update our Action Plan annually to enable the Strategy to remain relevant and up-to-date. This Strategy document is supported by a number of documents that are available on our website www.tamworth.gov.uk. These are:

1. Executive Summary
2. Challenges document
3. Process document
4. Glossary of terms
5. Bibliography
6. Annual Action Plan





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Healthier Housing Strategy 2011-2014

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