

Appendix 1



Private Sector Housing Strategy 2017 - 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2017 – 2020, builds on the aims and objectives of the previous strategy 'A Strategy for Private Sector Housing in West Lancashire 2006-2009'. Whilst much has been done to deliver the aims of the previous strategy since 2006, recent changes in the economic environment and Government policy along with updated information regarding the condition of the Borough's private housing stock have necessitated the production of a new strategy.
- 1.2 The purpose of the strategy is to set out a clear vision with objectives and an action plan to enable the residents of West Lancashire to live in decent homes which are in good repair and are safe, secure and warm.
- 1.3 In order to build a picture of the private sector housing stock within the borough, the Council reviews property conditions every five years. The Council commissioned Building Research Establishment Ltd (BRE), to undertake a series of modelling exercises to provide up to date detailed housing stock information in order to inform this strategy. The results of the modelling exercises were published in the 'BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database (Stock Model) for West Lancashire Borough Council' in April 2016.
- 1.4 In addition to the work carried out by the BRE, the Council has ensured that we have engaged and consulted with stakeholders.
- 1.5 The strategy also reflects the Council's corporate priorities which are:
- **Ambitious for our Economy**
Retain and grow jobs, increase skill levels and encourage business and wealth
 - **Ambitious for our Environment**
Enhance the built and physical environment and its cleanliness
 - **Ambitious for Health and Wellbeing**
Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities
- 1.6 The following Council strategies have also been taken into account:
- Sustainable Community Strategy 2007 – 2017
 - Housing Strategy 2014-2019
 - Local Plan 2012-2027
 - Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2020

2.0 KEY OBJECTIVES

2.1 The main findings of the BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database (Stock Model) for West Lancashire Borough Council April 2016 have been used to inform the key objectives of the strategy.

2.2 The main findings were:

- 8,121 dwellings in the private sector have category 1 hazards. Of these, 7,071 (19%) are owner occupied with 1,050 (20%) being private rented. The cost of mitigating category 1 hazards from all 8,121 properties is estimated to be £5,803 per dwelling
- The highest concentrations of all Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) hazards in the private sector are found in the wards of Newburgh, Scarisbrick and Bickerstaffe
- Wards with the overall highest levels of dwellings in disrepair are Bickerstaffe, Scarisbrick and Scott
- The highest concentrations of fuel poverty in the private sector are found in the wards of Digmaor, Moorside and Skelmersdale South
- The highest concentrations of excess cold are found in Bickerstaffe, Newburgh and Scarisbrick
- The average standard assessment procedure (SAP) rating for all private sector dwellings is 55. For owner occupied dwellings the figure is 55 whilst for private rented dwellings it is 56
- 14.5% (6,050) of private sector dwellings and 12.3% (660) of private rented dwellings are estimated to have an energy performance certificate rating (EPC) below band E. Under proposed legislation these properties would not be eligible to be rented out after 2018

2.3 Reflecting these findings, the key objectives of the strategy have been identified as:

Objective 1: Continue to raise the quality of existing private sector housing stock

Objective 2: Make the best use of existing private sector housing stock

Objective 3: Deliver the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2020 residential and domestic sector objectives relating to private sector housing

3.0 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 National Context

- 3.1.1 The Government's Housing Strategy 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' 2011 set out the intended direction for housing. The aim of the strategy was to reignite the housing market and encourage house building.
- 3.1.2 The Government sees the provision of a healthy, well-managed private rented sector as essential to meeting housing need and demand with a focus on raising standards within the sector and for local authorities to address fitness and disrepair issues.

3.2 Regional Context

- 3.2.1 The Lancashire Strategic Housing Partnership is made up of three separate sub-regions, Central Lancashire, Pennine Lancashire and Mid Lancashire. West Lancashire forms part of Mid Lancashire.
- 3.2.2 The Mid Lancashire Housing Contextual statement 2012-2015 sets out the priorities for housing across the Mid Lancashire area of Lancaster, Preston, South Ribble, Chorley, Ribble Valley and West Lancashire.
- 3.2.3 The Local Investment Plan (LIP) for Mid Lancashire was published in May 2012 and puts forward the case for investment in housing and regeneration across the sub region. The LIP has developed the following thematic priorities:
- Delivering significant sustainable housing growth and regeneration to meet demographic and economic needs
 - Integrating housing and economic potential to maximise investment in both
 - Delivering affordable housing to meet economic and social needs
 - Providing better life chances for communities
 - Creating and maintaining places where people want to live
 - Making the best use of assets and achieving more for less

3.3 Local Context

- 3.3.1 Housing is one important element to the economic prosperity and growth of West Lancashire. One West Lancashire prepared a Sustainable Community Strategy for West Lancashire 2007-2017 with one of the key objectives being 'to provide more appropriate and affordable housing to meet the needs of local people'.
- 3.3.2 West Lancashire Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2014-2019 identifies six objectives. The Private Sector Housing Strategy links to objectives 3, 4 and 6.

- Objective 1:** achieve the right supply of new homes including maximising affordable housing
- Objective 2:** regenerate and remodel areas of Skelmersdale
- Objective 3:** making the best use of all existing homes
- Objective 4:** encourage well managed and maintained homes across all tenures
- Objective 5:** encourage investment to meet specialist housing requirements
- Objective 6:** deliver the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy 2012-2020 residential and domestic sector objectives

4.0 LEGISLATIVE POWERS

4.1 In order to tackle poor housing conditions in the private sector, the Council has a range of duties and powers available.

4.2 Housing Act 2004

4.2.1 The Housing Act 2004 'the Act' brought about fundamental changes to the statutory framework for private sector housing. The Act:

- Replaced the previous fitness standard with the new Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- Introduced mandatory licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- Introduced selective licensing for qualifying areas
- Introduced tenancy deposit protection schemes to protect private tenant's deposits
- Introduced a duty on local authorities to keep the housing conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken by them under relevant parts of the 2004 Act and other specified legislation.

4.3 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

4.3.1 Introduced under the Housing Act 2004, the HHSRS is a risk based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies in dwellings. The HHSRS assesses 29 categories of housing hazards and determines whether the hazard is rated as category 1 or 2.

4.4 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

4.4.1 The Act provides the legislative background to the provision of disabled facilities grants. The Council provides such assistance under the Disabled Adaptations Policy 2015.

4.5 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

4.5.1 The order replaced Council's previous powers to provide renovation grants and home repair assistance grants and replaced them with a system allowing provision of a wide variety of assistance to residents/homeowners in private sector housing.

4.5.2 There is now a general power to give financial assistance for home repairs, providing the Council has a published policy for providing such assistance. The Council provides such assistance under the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2015.

4.6 Energy Act 2011

4.6.1 The Act states that, from April 2016 private landlords cannot refuse tenants' reasonable requests for consent to energy efficiency improvements where a finance package through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is available.

4.6.2 The Act also states that from April 2018, it will be unlawful for a landlord to rent out a residential property that does not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard. The intention is for the minimum standard to be set at EPC rating E.

4.7 The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

4.7.1 ECO requires energy companies to assist low income and vulnerable households or those living in hard to treat properties to install energy efficiency measures.

4.8 Housing and Planning Bill 2016

4.8.1 The Housing and Planning Bill 2016 received Royal Assent during the writing of this strategy. In relation to private sector housing, the Act will introduce:

- Banning Orders: local authorities will be able to apply for a banning order preventing a person from letting a property subject to certain conditions being met
- Rent Repayment Orders: where a landlord has committed a relevant offence, a tenant or local housing authority may apply for an order requiring repayment of rent to the tenant/local housing authority
- A duty on private landlords to ensure that electrical safety standards are met

- An obligation on local authorities to ensure that a person applying for a HMO licence is lawfully present in the UK and is not an insolvent/undischarged bankrupt

5.0 REVIEW OF CURRENT PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STRATEGY

5.1 The Strategy for Private Sector Housing in West Lancashire 2006-2009 set a number of key objectives and the Council has been working on projects to achieve those objectives. The following section provides an update on the progress that has been made to achieve those objectives.

5.2 **Objective A: To work with partners to ensure all vulnerable residents have the necessary support systems to live independent lifestyles in safe, secure and warm homes**

Home Improvement Loans Scheme

In July 2009, the Council launched a Home Improvement Loans Scheme. The scheme offered equity loans and repayment loans to homeowners to help them bring their homes up to a decent standard. The amount of funding available was dependent on the level of equity in the property (if seeking an equity loan) or the income levels of the homeowner if a monthly repayable loan was being considered.

During the time the scheme was operational, 10 loans were granted, totalling £141,581.19. Following a review of the scheme, it was determined that it was not financially viable to continue offering loans therefore the scheme was brought to an end in June 2011.

Neighbourhood Energy Saving Scheme

In 2011, West Lancashire Borough Council partnered with South Ribble Borough Council and secured £468,603.00 to offer a Neighbourhood Energy Saving Scheme. The scheme offered free or discounted loft and cavity wall insulation to qualifying home owners across the Borough. The scheme ran from October 2011 until December 2012 with 557 properties fitted with cavity wall insulation and 450 with loft insulation.

West Lancs Winter Warm Scheme

In October 2012, the Council applied to the Department of Health's Warm Homes Healthy People Fund and was successful in securing £54,764 to provide a scheme to help people stay warm over the winter months. A partnership was formed with Help Direct, Riverside Home Improvement Agency, Lancashire West Citizens Advice Bureau and Lancashire Fire and Rescue to operate the West Lancs Winter Warm Scheme that provided:

- Free gas fire and boiler servicing
- Free gas boiler replacement
- Free draft excluder fitting
- Free pipe lagging

- Free money advice including advice on switching energy tariffs
- Free emergency heating
- Free testing of electric blankets

The scheme ran from January to March 2013 and following its success, the Council secured further funding and has been able to continue to provide the scheme, focussing on gas fire servicing, gas boiler servicing and gas boiler repairs or replacement. Since the scheme began, over £60,000 has been provided to qualifying local residents to help them improve their heating systems ensuring they are able to keep warm over the winter months.

People Power Collective Energy Switching Scheme

In February 2013, 13 Lancashire authorities including West Lancashire signed up to the Big Community Switch scheme provided by a company called iChoosr. The scheme in Lancashire was branded as the People Power scheme.

Anyone who was responsible for paying the energy bills in their home could register with the aim of the scheme being that by people looking to switch in large numbers, it would encourage the energy companies to 'bid' for their business by offering competitive energy tariffs.

The Lancashire authorities were unable to continue to promote the scheme; however, iChoosr still provides a collective switching service that can be accessed at www.ichoosr.co.uk

Home Improvement Agency

Home Improvement Agencies are locally commissioned services that ensure people are able to stay safe, secure, warm and retain independence in their own home. Some of the services provided include handyperson services.

In March 2012, the Council partnered with South Ribble Borough Council and Lancashire County Council to procure a Home Improvement Agency for the residents of West Lancashire and South Ribble. Riverside Home Improvement Agency successfully bid to provide the service for residents.

The contract was re-tendered by Lancashire County Council and Preston Care and Repair were appointed as the new providers with the service starting in June 2015.

Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) Scheme

The Lancashire Authorities grouped together to attract funding to offer the CHiL scheme. The scheme was administered by Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen Council's but was available to all Lancashire residents. The scheme was launched in October 2015 and offered measures including new boilers and central heating systems, cavity wall insulation and loft insulation to low income/vulnerable households.

5.3 Objective B: By 2010, increase the number of vulnerable residents living in decent homes in West Lancashire by 80%

The Private Sector House Condition Survey carried out in 2005 showed 9,730 (25.14%) of dwellings in the private sector failed to meet the decent homes standard. The aim was to reduce this figure by 80% by 2010. In order to meet this objective, the Council provided Home Repair Assistance Grants to qualifying home owners and private tenants.

The Private Sector House Condition Survey carried out in 2010 showed 11,770 (29.3%) dwellings in the private sector failed to meet the decent homes standard, meaning the Council failed to achieve its objective of reducing the number of properties failing the standard.

The Council continues to provide Home Repair Assistance Grants to qualifying home owners and private tenants with the grants specifically being offered where properties fail to meet the standard.

5.4 Objective C: To prepare action programmes in conjunction with any corporate regeneration initiatives to identify areas of the district requiring intervention to prevent decline and promote thriving communities who can live in affordable decent private homes

The Council continues to carry out house condition surveys every five years to ensure the condition of its private housing stock remains under review. A Housing Renewal Assistance Policy was produced in 2006 which outlined the assistance available to private residents. The Policy has been reviewed several times since 2006 with the current policy being agreed in April 2015.

5.5 Objective D: To work towards providing an excellent Private Sector Housing Service for all service users making best use of available resources

A review of the work undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team was undertaken and despite a reduction in resources due to the financial downturn, the team still aims to engage with neighbouring authorities and other providers to bring new services into the Borough.

5.6 Objective E: To identify and promote initiatives which help maintain a good supply of decent affordable homes supporting a balanced housing market in West Lancashire

An Empty Homes Strategy was produced with the objective of reducing the number of empty homes across the Borough to less than 1% of the total housing stock over a 5 year period.

Grants were also provided to qualifying owners of empty properties to provide the financial assistance needed to bring the property back into use.

5.7 Objective F: To have in place adequate policies and procedures to promote good quality, well managed private rented accommodation in the Borough

A Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy was produced which outlined the enforcement process to be followed when dealing with properties in disrepair.

In February 2012, the Council launched the West Lancashire Landlord Accreditation Scheme in partnership with the Residential Landlords Association.

6.0 THE NATIONAL & REGIONAL HOUSING PICTURE

6.1 The English Housing Survey is a national survey of people's housing circumstances and also gathers information about the condition and energy efficiency of all the housing stock in England.

6.2 The English Housing Survey Headline Report 2014/15 reported the following findings:

- Owner occupation is still the predominant form of tenure in England with 64% of households being owner occupiers
- The private rented sector remained larger than the social rented sector with 19% (4.3 million) households renting privately
- 37% of households in the private rented sector have dependent children, an increase of 7% from 2004/05. This equates to approximately 912,000 more households with children in the private rented sector
- People aged 25-34 are more likely to rent privately than to buy with a mortgage. In 2014/15, 46% of those aged 25-34 lived in the private rented sector, an increase of 22% since 2004/05
- In 2014/15, the average private rent was £179 per week compared with £99 in the social housing sector
- The energy efficiency of the English housing stock continued to improve with an average SAP rating of 61
- The number of non-decent homes in England continues to decline. In 2014, 4.6 million homes (20%), failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard, a reduction of 3.1 million since 2006
- The private rented sector had the highest proportion of non-decent homes at 29% while the social rented sector had the lowest at 14%. 19% of owner occupied homes failed the standard

7.0 WEST LANCASHIRE AREA PROFILE

- 7.1.1 West Lancashire's geographical location in the North West of England is unique. It has a dual identity, being the southernmost borough in the county of Lancashire but also located within the Liverpool City Region.
- 7.1.2 The borough comprises a mix of vibrant towns and villages sitting alongside tranquil countryside which covers an area of 38,109 hectares and contains the greatest proportion of Green Belt land in England.
- 7.1.3 The majority of people live in the Borough's three main settlements, Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Burscough. There are also three distinct rural areas; the Northern, Eastern and Western Parishes, containing a number of villages, the largest of which are in the settlements of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank.
- 7.1.4 The borough is also adjacent to a number of large urban areas including Southport to the west, Liverpool and parts of Knowsley to the South, St Helens and Wigan to the east and Chorley, Leyland and Preston to the north east.

7.2 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

- 7.2.1 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (neighbourhoods) in England. There are 32,844 small areas in England with every small area being ranked from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). It is common to describe how relatively deprived a small area is by saying whether it falls among the most deprived 10%, 20% or 30% of neighbourhoods in England.
- 7.2.2 The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 is the latest statistical release covering the IMD. The 2015 figures show that out of all 326 local authorities, West Lancashire was the 164th most deprived. This is an improvement on 2010 when the Council was ranked 153rd.
- 7.2.3 When looking at the most deprived 10%, 20% and 30% small areas in England, 18 small areas within West Lancashire fall within one of those percentages. Comparing the figures to the 2010 statistical release we can see that the figures have remained relatively static with an increase of 1 area in the 30%.

Table 1: comparison of deprived small areas

| | 2015 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|
| 10% most deprived nationally | 6 | 6 |
| 20% most deprived nationally | 8 | 8 |
| 30% most deprived nationally | 4 | 3 |
| Total | 18 | 17 |

8.0 PROFILE OF RESIDENTS

- 8.1.1 The 2011 Census recorded a borough population of 110,700, an increase of 2.1% from 2001. Population predictions show that by 2031 the borough's population will be in the region of 120,900.
- 8.1.2 The Office for National Statistics Resident Population Estimates published in June 2014 shows that from 2009-2014; the number of people aged 16-24 and 65+ has increased whilst those in the 0-15 and 25-49 age groups have declined. The number of people in the 50-64 age group has remained relatively static.
- 8.1.3 If these trends continue, further growth is predicted in both the 16-24 and 65+ age groups. By 2035, the number of people aged over 60 is projected to have increased by 35.5% with a 77.4% increase in the number of people aged over 75.
- 8.1.4 The following table shows the percentage of the borough's population by age group and compares it with the figures both regionally and nationally.

Table 2: percentage of the population by age group

| | West Lancashire | North West | England |
|--------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 0-15 | 17.5% | 18.8% | 19% |
| 16-24 | 13.2% | 11.7% | 11.4% |
| 25-49 | 28.5% | 32.8% | 34% |
| 50-64 | 20% | 18.7% | 18.1% |
| 65+ | 20.8% | 18% | 17.6% |

Source: ONS Resident Population Estimates by Broad Age Band June 2014

- 8.1.5 It is clear that the percentage of residents aged 0-15 and 25-49 is lower than both the regional and national figures whilst the percentage of residents aged 16-24, 50-64 and 65+ is higher.
- 8.1.6 Those aged over 65 generally have lower household incomes, therefore an increase in population numbers will increase demand for housing related support, assistance with adaptations and home maintenance.

8.2 Ethnic origin

- 8.2.1 Census 2011 figures show that over 95% of residents in the borough classed themselves as White British, a higher percentage than both the North West and England. Less than 2% of the population are from other ethnic groups, a lower percentage than both the North West and England.

Table 3: ethnic origin

| | West Lancs | North West | England |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| White British | 95.6% | 87.1% | 79.8% |
| White Irish | 0.5% | 0.9% | 1.0% |
| White Other | 2.0% | 2.1% | 4.6% |
| White/Black Caribbean | 0.2% | 0.6% | 0.8% |
| White/Black African | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.3% |
| White/Asian | 0.2% | 0.4% | 0.6% |
| Other mixed | 0.2% | 0.3% | 0.5% |
| Indian | 0.4% | 1.5% | 2.6% |
| Pakistani | 0.1% | 2.7% | 2.1% |
| Bangladeshi | 0.0% | 0.7% | 0.8% |
| Chinese | 0.2% | 0.7% | 0.7% |
| Other Asian | 0.2% | 0.7% | 1.5% |
| Black African | 0.1% | 0.8% | 1.8% |
| Black Caribbean | 0.0% | 0.3% | 1.1% |
| Black Other | 0.0% | 0.2% | 0.5% |
| Arab | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.4% |
| Other | 0.1% | 0.3% | 0.6% |

Source: ONS Census 2011 (updated 30 January 2013)

8.3 Income

8.3.1 Official labour market statistics for January – December 2015 show that there were 49,800 residents considered to be economically active (residents aged 16-64), of those, 47,300 are in employment with 2,500 being unemployed.

8.3.2 The percentage of people in employment is lower than the figures for the North West, England and Lancashire whilst the percentage who are unemployed is lower than the North West and England but higher than Lancashire.

Table 4: % of residents aged 16-64 in employment & unemployed

| | West Lancashire | North West | Lancashire | England |
|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Economically active | 70.6% | 75.3% | 76.3% | 78.0% |
| In employment | 67.5% | 71.2% | 73.6% | 73.9% |
| Unemployed | 4.9% | 5.3% | 3.5% | 5.1% |

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics Jan – Dec 2015

8.3.3 West Lancashire has a higher percentage of people who are not economically active compared with Lancashire, the North West and England.

Table 5: % of residents economically inactive

| | West Lancashire % | North West % | Lancashire % | England % |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---------|------|------|------|------|
| Total | 29.4 | 24.7 | 23.7 | 22.0 |
| Student | 24.3 | 23.9 | 23.3 | 26.3 |
| Retired | 29.8 | 14.2 | 18.3 | 13.8 |

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics Jan – Dec 2015

8.4 Earnings

8.4.1 The Labour Market Statistics January – December 2015 also report on mean earnings. The gross weekly pay for all full-time workers in West Lancashire was higher than the rate for Lancashire and the North West but lower than the figure for England.

Table 6: mean earnings comparisons

| | West Lancashire (£) | North West (£) | Lancashire (£) | England (£) |
|---|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Gross weekly pay all full time workers | 503.50 | 492.0 | 479.20 | 532.60 |
| Gross weekly pay male full time workers | 514.40 | 529.90 | 516.60 | 574.60 |
| Gross weekly pay female full time workers | 492.40 | 441.80 | 436.90 | 474.10 |

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics Jan – Dec 2015

8.5 Out of work benefits

8.5.1 Between January – December 2015, there were 1,330 (1.9%) people claiming out of work benefits, 850 (2.5%) were male, lower than the North West but higher than Lancashire and England. 480 (1.4%) were female, lower than the North West but the same as Lancashire and only slightly higher than England.

Table 7: % of residents claiming out of work benefits

| | West Lancs% | North West % | Lancashire % | England % |
|---------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| All | 1.9 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 1.8 |
| Males | 2.5 | 3.1 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| Females | 1.4 | 1.8 | 1.4 | 1.3 |

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics Jan – Dec 2015

8.5.2 Out of those claiming out of work benefits, the highest number of claimants was in the 25-49 age group at 750. However, when looking at the percentage of claimants as a percentage of the population by age group, the highest percentage of claimants is in the 18-24 age group which is consistent with figures regionally and nationally.

Table 8: % of the population age group claiming out of work benefits

| | West Lancs Total | West Lancs % | North West % | Lancashire % | England % |
|---------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Age 16+ | 1,330 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 1.8 |
| 16 – 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0.0 |

| | | | | | |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 18 – 24 | 325 | 2.7 | 3.8 | 3.0 | 2.5 |
| 25 – 49 | 740 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 1.8 |
| 50+ | 265 | 1.2 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.5 |

Source: Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics Jan – Dec 2015

9.5.3 An analysis of the benefits claimed shows that the largest number of claims was for ESA/Incapacity benefit, with carers benefit and disabled benefits the next highest. This again is consistent with the regional and national picture.

9.0 PROFILE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STOCK

9.1 Number of Dwellings

9.1.1 The Stock Model shows that the borough has a current total housing stock of 49,219 dwellings, an increase of 3,838 from the 2011 Census.

9.2 Tenure

9.2.1 Despite high average house prices, owner occupation is still the predominant form of tenure in the borough with social housing being the second largest.

9.2.2 The private rented sector in West Lancashire grew significantly between 2001 and 2011 from 5% of the total housing stock to 12% however current figures show that since 2011, there has been a small decrease in the number of privately rented properties.

Table 9: tenure proportions West Lancashire

| | 2011 | 2015 |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Owner occupied | 33,393 | 36,543 |
| Privately rented | 5,332 | 5,356 |
| Total private sector stock | 38,725 | 41,899 |
| Social Housing | 6,656 | 7,320 |

9.2.3 West Lancashire has a higher percentage of owner occupiers compared with the North West and England but has less social and private rented housing.

Table 10: tenure proportion comparisons

| | West Lancashire | North West | England |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|---------|
| Owner Occupied | 74.2% | 64.5% | 64% |
| Social Housing | 14.8% | 18.3% | 17% |
| Private Rent | 10.8% | 14.1% | 19% |

Source: BRE Stock Model West Lancashire 2016 & English Housing Survey 2014/15

9.3 Property Prices

9.3.1 There is a high demand for housing in West Lancashire despite average house prices being higher than in both Lancashire and the North West.

Table 11: average house prices

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| England & Wales | £189,901 |
| West Lancashire | £161,170 |

| | |
|------------|----------|
| North West | £116,018 |
| Lancashire | £106,847 |

Source: Land Registry House Price Index April 2016 & ONS House Price Statistics for Small Areas 2013 (updated May 2015)

9.3.2 Private rents in West Lancashire are also higher than the North West and Lancashire and only marginally lower than England.

Table 12: mean private rents 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| England | £600 |
| West Lancashire | £561 |
| North West | £554 |
| Lancashire | £515 |

Source: Valuation Office Agency Private Rental Market Summary Statistics England 2014/15

10.0 CONDITION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING IN WEST LANCASHIRE

10.1.1 The 'BRE Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database for West Lancashire Borough Council' April 2016 provides the Council with dwelling level information on 7 key indicators relating to house condition, energy efficiency and household vulnerability. The model focusses on owner occupied and private rented properties. The condition of social housing is not included in the exercise.

Table 13: key indicators split into categories

| Indicator | House condition indicators | Energy efficiency indicators | Household vulnerability indicators |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Presence of HHSRS cat 1 hazard | √ | | |
| Presence of cat 1 hazard for excess cold | √ | √ | |
| Presence of cat 1 hazard for falls | √ | | |
| Dwellings in disrepair | √ | | |
| Fuel poverty | | | √ |
| Dwellings occupied by low income households | | | √ |
| SAP rating | | √ | |

10.2 All HHSRS Category 1 Hazards

10.2.1 West Lancashire has a higher percentage of private dwellings with category 1 hazards (19%) than the North West (16%) and England (17%).

10.2.2 The percentage of owner occupied and privately rented dwellings with category 1 hazards were similar at 19% and 20% respectively.

- 10.2.3 The areas with high concentrations of dwellings with category 1 hazards are Newburgh, Scarisbrick, Bickerstaffe and Halsall. It is reasonable to assume that these areas tend to have greater numbers of older properties therefore will record higher levels of hazards overall due to the contribution of greater numbers of excess cold and falls hazards.
- 10.2.4 The urban areas of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk tend to have lower concentrations of hazards.

10.3 Category 1 hazard: excess cold

- 10.3.1 This category covers the threat to health from sub-optimal indoor temperatures. Those aged 65 or over are more at risk of illness from excess cold. A healthy indoor temperature is around 21°C although cold is generally not perceived until the temperature drops below 18°C. Serious health risks occur when the temperature falls below 16°C.
- 10.3.2 The causes of excess cold can be poor energy efficiency, an absence of central heating, not using heating systems due to the cost, excess ventilation e.g. ill-fitting doors/windows etc. Measures such as structural thermal insulation, adequate heating systems, the exclusion of excessive drafts etc, can all help to make a property warmer.
- 10.3.3 There are relatively high levels of excess cold hazards in the Borough with the highest concentrations in the more rural wards of Newburgh, Scarisbrick and Bickerstaffe. The urban areas of Ormskirk and Skelmersdale tend to be less affected by excess cold hazards.
- 10.3.4 Breaking down the figures by tenure, 11% (4,103) of owner occupied dwellings and 9% (495) of privately rented dwellings had a category 1 hazard due to excess cold.

10.4 Category 1 hazards: falls hazards

- 10.4.1 This category covers falls associated with baths, showers, any level surfaces, trip hazards, stairs and falling between levels (e.g. out of windows, balconies, landings). Those aged 60 and over are more vulnerable to falls with those aged 5 and under being more vulnerable to falls between levels.
- 10.4.2 3,286 (7%) of all dwellings in the Borough were identified as having a falls hazard. This is slightly lower than the North West (8%) and England (9%).
- 10.4.3 Of the 3,286 dwellings found to have a falls hazard, 3,155 (8%) were in the private sector. Again, this is better than the North West (9%) and England (10%). 2,694 (7%) were owner occupied and 461 (9%) were private rented.

10.4.4 The highest concentrations of falls hazards were found in the wards of Bickerstaffe, Moorside and Newburgh.

10.5 Disrepair

10.5.1 The disrepair indicator used to inform the BRE Stock Model is based on the disrepair component of the Decent Homes Standard.

10.5.2 The Decent Homes Standard states that a property should be above the legal minimum standard for housing, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities (bathrooms and kitchens) and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and central heating).

10.5.3 A dwelling fails the disrepair component if:

- One or more key building components are old and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- Two or more other building components are old and because of their condition need replacement or major repair

(key building components are; external walls, roof structure and covering, windows/doors, chimneys, central heating boilers, electrics)

10.5.4 The stock survey showed that when looking at all dwellings, the number in disrepair in West Lancashire was lower than the figure for the North West and only marginally higher than the figure for England.

10.5.5 When looking at the figures for private sector dwellings, West Lancashire's figures are the same as England but lower than the North West. Breaking these figures down further, the condition of owner occupied and private rented housing stock is far better than at national level.

Table 14: % of dwellings in disrepair by tenure

| | West Lancs | North West | England |
|-----------------------|------------|---------------|---------|
| All dwellings | 6% | 8% | 5% |
| All private dwellings | 6% | 9% | 6% |
| Owner occupied | 6% | Not available | 18.6% |
| Private rented | 9% | Not available | 28.6% |

10.5.6 While Bickerstaffe, Scarisbrick and Scott wards have the highest overall levels of dwellings in disrepair, there are pockets of areas with higher levels of disrepair. These areas are to the west of Birch Green in Skelmersdale and in central Ormskirk.

10.6 Fuel Poverty

10.6.1 Poor standards of energy efficiency mean that many low-income households face high costs to maintain a warm home. As a result, many of these households do

not heat their home to an adequate level. Many households experience pressure in paying their energy bills and these pressures tend to be most acute for households on lower incomes.

10.7 Fuel Poverty 10% Indicator

- 10.7.1 The original definition and indicator of fuel poverty was set out in the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 and stated that a household was in fuel poverty if it spends more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth.
- 10.7.2 Using the 10% definition, 15% (7,512) of all the dwellings in the Borough are fuel poor, the same as the figure for England but lower than the North West (16%).
- 10.7.3 Looking at the figures by tenure, 16% (5,722) of owner occupied dwellings and 18% (947) private rented dwellings in the Borough are fuel poor.
- 10.7.4 The highest concentrations of fuel poverty are in Bickerstaffe, Scarisbrick and Newburgh.

10.8 Fuel Poverty (Low Income High Costs) Indicator

- 10.8.1 The new definition being rolled out by Government states that a household is in fuel poverty if their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type and if they were to spend their income would be below the poverty line.
- 10.8.2 Using this new definition, 9% (4,559) of all the dwellings in the Borough are fuel poor, 1,790 fewer properties than under the 10% definition. Fewer owner occupied dwellings would also be fuel poor, 8% compared to 16% but more private rented dwellings would be affected, 19% compared with 18%.

10.9 Low income households

- 10.9.1 A low income household is defined as a household in receipt of:

- Income support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Council tax benefit
- Housing benefit
- Attendance allowance
- Disability living allowance
- Industrial injuries disablement benefit
- War disablement pension
- Pension credit
- Child tax credit (income less than £15,050)
- Working tax credit (income less than £15,050)

- 10.9.2 19% (9,215) of all dwellings were identified as being low income households, lower than both the North West (23%) and England (33%). Of the private sector

stock, 10% (4,300) dwellings were identified, lower than the North West (14%) and England (24%).

10.9.3 8% (2,856) owner occupiers, 27% (1,444) private rented were identified as having a low income.

10.9.4 The wards with the highest levels of low income households are Digmaor, Moorside and Birch Green.

10.10 Energy Efficiency

10.10.1 The energy efficiency rating of a property is measured by the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). This gives the property a rating between 0 and 100 based on the calculated annual energy cost for space and water heating. The higher the number, the better the energy performance of the dwelling.

10.10.2 Whilst there are areas across the borough with lower than average SAP ratings, concentrations are mainly found in the more rural areas. Low SAP scores are usually found in areas that include larger older homes where little work has been done to improve energy performance.

10.10.3 The wards with the worst SAP ratings are Newburgh, Bickerstaffe and Scarisbrick.

10.10.4 An Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is required whenever a new building is constructed or an existing building is sold or rented out. The SAP score is converted to a band with bands ranging from A-G. Band A represents the best performance. The estimated average SAP rating for the Borough's private sector stock is 55 which corresponds to an EPC rating of D.

10.10.5 The number of private sector dwellings with an EPC rating below E is estimated to be 6,058 (14.5%). The distribution of EPC ratings across the bands is similar to the England figures however West Lancashire has a higher proportion of dwellings in the F & G bands than the rest of England.

10.10.6 Under the Energy Act 2011, from 1 April 2018, landlords must ensure that their properties meet a minimum energy efficiency standard. This has been set at band E. The current number of private rented dwellings falling below band E is estimated to be 660 (12.3%). If these properties do not improve their EPC rating by 1 April 2018, they would not be able to be rented out.

11.0 COST OF MITIGATING CATEGORY 1 HAZARDS

11.1 The average cost of mitigating category 1 hazards in the 8,121 private sector dwellings across the borough has been determined using costings from the English Housing Survey 2012 data. It is estimated that it will cost £47,127,764 to remedy all the category 1 hazards, an average of £5,803 per dwelling.

12.0 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COMPARISONS

12.1 Comparing the condition of all the private housing stock in West Lancashire with the English Housing Survey average, the borough performs better for:

- Falls hazards (8% compared to 10% nationally)
- Fuel poverty (LIHC definition) (10% compared to 11% nationally)
- Low income households (10% compared to 24% nationally)

12.2 Performs worse for:

- Excess cold (11% compared to 7% nationally)

12.3 Excess cold is one of the most commonly occurring hazards and as there are comparatively high levels in West Lancashire, it is likely that this hazard is contributing to the higher levels of all hazards. For all housing stock, the percentage of properties with a category 1 hazard for excess cold is higher in West Lancashire than in the North West.

12.4 The average SAP rating in West Lancashire at 55 is worse than the average for England at 61 and the North West at 58.

12.5 12.3% of dwellings in the private rented sector are estimated to have an EPC rating below band E compared to 9.5% nationally.

13.0 COMPARISONS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY 2010

13.1 The following table compares the key findings of the 2010 survey with the key findings of the 2015 stock model.

Table 15: key finding comparisons

| | 2010 Survey | 2015 Stock Model |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Owner Occupiers | 34,550 (73%) | 36,543 (74.2%) |
| Privately Rented | 5,580 (12%) | 5,356 (10.8%) |
| Social Housing | 7,115 (15%) | 7,320 (14.8%) |
| Residents aged 65+ | 32.3% | 20.8% |
| Average Income | £473 per week | £503.50 per week |
| Disrepair | 11,770 (29.3%) | 2,641 (6%) |
| Category 1 Hazards | 6,690 (17.3%) | 8,121 (19%) |
| Excess Cold | 5,760 (14.4%) | 4,598 (11%) |
| SAP Rating | 53 | 55 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cost to Mitigate Hazards | £61.8m (£5,250 per dwelling) | £47.1m (£5,803 per dwelling) |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|

- 13.2 Comparing the results shows that there has been an increase in the number of owner occupiers and in the number of social housing dwellings but a reduction in the number of privately rented dwellings.
- 13.3 The number of dwellings assessed as being in disrepair has fallen significantly but the number of properties identified as having category 1 hazards has increased.
- 13.4 It is encouraging to note that fewer properties are suffering from excess cold and the average SAP rating has improved.
- 13.5 Although the overall cost of mitigating all category 1 hazards has reduced, the average cost per dwelling has slightly increased.

14.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 14.1 The evidence presented shows that West Lancashire has a growing population with the biggest growth predicted in the 16-24 and 65+ age groups. Growth in these age groups will present different challenges for the Council.
- 14.2 It has been shown that people aged 16-24 are more likely to rent accommodation in the private sector therefore it is important that the Borough has a private rented sector that can respond to this increase in demand by providing well maintained, professionally managed and affordable accommodation.
- 14.3 An increase in the number of people aged 65+, who are more likely to be home-owners on lower incomes, will increase demand for services that assist in helping to maintain homes to a decent standard and adapting them to enable independence at home.
- 14.4 The Borough has more private dwellings with category 1 hazards than both the North West and England. Many associate private rented properties with having category 1 hazards but it is clear from the evidence that the percentage of owner occupied and privately rented properties with category 1 hazards in West Lancashire is virtually identical.
- 14.5 The areas where properties are more likely to have category 1 hazards are the more rural areas. This suggests that any future schemes to tackle properties with category 1 hazards should be targeted to the more rural areas.
- 14.6 The increase in the number of private dwellings with category 1 hazards since 2010 can be attributed to a number of factors including the economic climate and a reduction in the amount and availability of grant funding.

ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE 1: CONTINUE TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STOCK

| ACTION: | TASKS: | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: | TIMESCALE: |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| Remove Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) category 1 & 2 hazards | Work with home owners and private landlords to remove identified hazards using enforcement powers where necessary | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | On-going |
| Implement the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 | Amend the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy Enforce the regulations using enforcement powers where necessary | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | April 2017 On-going |
| Implement Chapter 2 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 in relation to banning orders | Amend the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy to reflect the power to apply for a banning order | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | December 2017 |
| Implement Chapter 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 in relation to maintaining the content of the database of rogue landlords and property agents | Amend the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy to reflect the responsibility of the Council to maintain the content of the database | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | December 2017 |

| | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Encourage private sector landlords to voluntarily improve management and standards by becoming accredited | Review the West Lancashire Landlord Accreditation Scheme | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | February 2017 |
| Tackle problematic landlords | Enforcement action where appropriate | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | On-going |
| Identify Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) to help improve management standards | Obtain HMO list | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | Annually in May |

OBJECTIVE 2: MAKE THE BEST USE OF EXISTING PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING STOCK

| ACTION: | TASKS: | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: | TIMESCALE: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Increase the number of empty homes returned to occupation | <p>Work with owners to resolve any barriers to bringing the property back into use</p> <p>Use enforcement action including enforced sales where necessary and appropriate</p> | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | Annually in May - achieve a reduction in the number of empty properties reported by Council Tax |
| Support vulnerable residents to remain in their own homes | <p>Continue to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to assist in adapting properties where necessary</p> <p>Develop a policy option to provide discretionary assistance outside of the mandatory DFG scheme to tackle issues such as facilitating hospital discharge</p> | <p>Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager</p> <p>Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager</p> | <p>On-going</p> <p>September 2017</p> |
| Assist vulnerable homeowners to maintain their homes to a decent standard | <p>Review the Home Repair Assistance Grants Scheme</p> <p>Promote the Integrated Home Improvement Agency Service</p> | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | <p>March 2018</p> <p>May 2017</p> |

OBJECTIVE 3: DELIVER THE COUNCIL'S SUSTAINABLE ENERGY STRATEGY 2012-2020 RESIDENTIAL AND DOMESTIC SECTOR OBJECTIVES RELATING TO PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

| ACTION: | TASKS: | RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: | TIMESCALE: |
|--|---|---|--|
| Work with landlords to improve energy standards in the private rented sector | <p>Increase the number of privately rented properties that have basic energy efficiency measures installed</p> <p>Utilise the West Lancashire Landlord Accreditation Scheme to provide information/promote energy efficiency grants/offers to landlords</p> | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | On-going |
| Promote energy efficiency schemes | Continue to work with the Lancashire Energy Officers Group to raise awareness of any external funding available to address energy efficiency and fuel poverty | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | On-going |
| Administer the Winter Warm Scheme (subject to annual funding from LCC) | Provide funding to eligible home owners to carry out boiler repairs/replacement | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | Annually Oct – Mar (subject to funding from LCC) |
| Produce a HECA progress report | Produce an annual report and publish on the Council's website | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | Annually (March) |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|----------------|
| Explore fuel poverty referral system | Explore provision of a single point of contact for fuel poverty enquiries | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | September 2017 |
| Promote fuel switching schemes | Continue to work with the Lancashire Energy Officers Group to raise awareness and promote fuel switching | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | On-going |
| Consider projects specifically focussed on vulnerable groups | Target the elderly and those with young children Identify funding streams to help deliver extra support to vulnerable residents Target properties with low SAP ratings | Homelessness & Private Sector Housing Manager | On-going |
| Continue to support energy providers to deliver ECO | Continue to work with the Lancashire Energy Officers Group to assist energy providers in discharging their obligations under ECO | Private Sector Housing Team Leader | On-going |