

**Scottish Housing Regulator
Homelessness Improvement Plan
2011 – 2013**

Update – December 2011

SHR REPORT	OUTCOME REQUIRED:	ACTIONS PLANNED	DATE	Priority	UPDATE	
1. Key recommendations						
Across all of its landlord and homelessness activities the Council should:	1.1	Increase its use of service user feedback to improve service delivery, particularly within its homelessness service.	As outlined in Section 2.	April 2012	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Publicise its translation service on its website in community languages.	As outlined in Section 2.	August 2011	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Expand its scenario planning for its business plan for the housing service	As outlined in Section 2.	April 2012	2	As outlined in Section 2.
In delivering services for homeless people the Council should:	1.2	Improve its performance in maintaining contact with people who apply to it for assistance;	As outlined in Section 2.	Throughout	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Take all of an applicant's circumstances into account before reaching a decision on intentionality;	As outlined in Section 2.	December 2011 and then throughout	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Reduce its reliance and expenditure on bed and breakfast accommodation;	As outlined in Section 2.	Throughout	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Ensure it always meets its statutory duty to provide accommodation;	As outlined in Section 2.	Throughout	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Ensure it meets the requirements of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2004; and	As outlined in Section 2.	Throughout	1	As outlined in Section 2.
		Continue to improve access to permanent accommodation.	As outlined in Section 2.	December 2011	1	As outlined in Section 2.

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2. How well is Aberdeen City Council delivering services for homeless people?					
<p>Access to services In summary, the Council's approach to access in its homeless service is improving. The Council does not interview on demand and its interview rooms require improvement, but it has improved the time it takes to interview and the number of applicants it loses contact with. Its information on how to access the homelessness service is widely available and in places where people in housing crisis are likely to find it. It has good arrangements in place for translators and interpreters although this is not well publicised.</p>	5.2	Further improve the service it offers to homeless people through a facility at Victoria House by 2012.	Report on Victoria House to Committee for approval, investigation of alternative/temporary solutions.	September 2013	3 Innovation Fund bid successful for 20 temporary flats, funding package being put in place for supported accommodation
	5.3	Ensure privacy at the central reception.	Short term making less use of reception desk and more people seen in interview rooms. Better facilities to be built in to permanent relocation.	April 2011	2 Now permanently relocated, new interview rooms ensures privacy
	5.3	Improve conditions for interviews.	Remove barriers in rooms with move to Marischal College	August 2011	2 Now permanently relocated, new interview rooms ensures privacy
	5.4	Consider differentiating between roofless applicants/those not when arranging interviews.	Ensure roofless applicants are prioritised for and can access temporary accommodation.	Throughout	2 Temporary accommodation now routinely available. System being put in place for those that are being prematurely discharge from temp
	5.5	Improve on the length of time it takes to interview people who apply for assistance. Meet the target to interview all applicants within three days.	Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly and take corrective action.	Throughout	1 System to be set up. Some delays are now being caused by access to interview rooms at Marischal College
	5.6	Reduce the number of lost contacts between initial approach and interview.	Set up monitoring system which may include use of task manager. Analyse data monthly and take corrective action.	Throughout	1 System to be set up. Homelessness Officers now making more routine contact with applicants

	5.8	Ensure that the website is more user friendly.	Discuss changes with IT. Monitor website hits. Link to offer by Shelter Scotland for Aberdeen to have the first local government website providing housing advice online, linked to a dedicated database of relevant local services.	September 2011	3	Still to be done, awaiting move to Marischal College before starting
	5.8	Publicise the provision of translators and interpreters.	Revise all materials after move to new office.	August 2011	1	Still to be done, awaiting move to Marischal College before starting
	5.9	Analyse outcomes for the 24 hour emergency contact service including lost contacts between the Centre and contact by standby staff.	Set up recording procedure. Analyse data 6-monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	Throughout	3	Still to be done
	5.10	Introduce protocols for the armed forces, young people leaving care and criminal justice and analyse all protocols to fully assess the effectiveness of access arrangements.	Draft/agree protocols. Consideration of protocol with Criminal Justice on Bail/home leave being established and pilot being prepared. Protocol with Childrens Services being established. Protocol with Aberdeen Foyer to be established. Corporate Parenting responsibility being reflected in Allocations Policy.	December 2011 April 2011 July 2011 September 2011	3	Protocol with Childrens Services established and built into new Allocations Policy.
	5.10	Analyse the source of referrals for all homeless applicants.	Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	Throughout	3	System to be set up but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.10 and 5.15	Analyse the multi-agency referral protocol; standard referral form with partners and providers; generic protocol agreement and support assessment form with key providers, agencies and stakeholders in the city.	Set up monitoring system. Analyse data 3-monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations, discuss with partners at Homelessness Strategy Operations Group (HSOG).	Throughout	3	Further discuss at Agency Away Day in October 2011 to ensure system is being used

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2. How well is Aberdeen City Council delivering services for homeless people?					

Advice and prevention In summary, the Council has a number of initiatives in place to prevent homelessness. It is committed to developing a new approach in the prevention of homelessness and is currently restructuring its services to deliver this. The Council has good tenancy sustainment levels for previously homeless people and its level of repeat presentations has improved. The Council recognises that it needs to develop its referral system and put in place formal protocols.	5.12	Review the major restructuring of the homelessness service to ensure it will meet the requirements of its prevention agenda and the 2012 ministerial target.	Away Day for all homelessness staff to ensure successful restructuring/change of culture. Arrange sessions for area teams to advise on new services. Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	April 2011 July 2011 April 2012	2	Away Day held, further session planned in December Briefings given to area teams, Tenants Forum and external agencies, article in Newsbyte Annual Review will be carried out after April 2012
	5.13	Assess outcomes from the various new initiatives.	Set up monitoring system. Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	April 2012	2	Annual Review will be carried out after April 2012
	5.14	Review formal contractual arrangements with organisations for the period up to March 2012.	Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations	April 2012	3	Annual Review will be carried out after April 2012
	5.16	Improve monitoring of the quality and type of advice it delivers and review its provision of advice and information when its new prevention team is in place in April 2011.	Implement the Customer Service module on iWorld, use new recording on HL1, and carry out Scottish Standards audit on Advice & information. Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations. Participate in the North & Islands Options Hub and utilise lessons learned.	April 2012	2	Customer Service module now in use but needs further development. North & Islands Options Hub meeting quarterly
	5.17	Provide a range of initiatives to prevent homelessness	Implement decisions from Council (30/6/2010) and actions from Homelessness & Resettlement Strategy.	September 2011	1	Now complete
	5.18	Maintain a high level of tenancy sustainment for previously homeless people	Analyse data 3-monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	Throughout	2	System to be set up but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.19	Reduced the level of repeat homeless presentations to at least the national average	Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	Throughout	1	System to be set up but some analysis can be done from existing system

	5.20	Improve how it manages the eviction process including earlier contact between internal services	Prevention Team will liaise more closely with Corporate Governance. Procedure to be drawn up for earlier intervention. Outcomes monitored, analysed and reported. Pre-eviction requirements to be implemented by Corporate Governance when Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 enacted. Working Group established by Head of Service.	Throughout September 2011 April 2012 Throughout April 2011	1	Rent Arrears Improvement Team established and reported. Responsibility now with area teams. Prevention Team/Shelter picking up referrals from Corporate Governance Monitoring System to be set up. Pre-eviction requirements not yet enacted by Scottish Government
	5.21	Improve how it meets the obligations under Section 11 of the Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003	Prevention Team will liaise more closely with landlords/tenants. Outcomes monitored, analysed and reported. Procedure to be drawn up with Private Sector Housing Team.	Throughout April 2012	2	Prevention Team/Shelter picking up referrals. Monitoring System to be set up

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Assessment of homeless people In summary; the Council has made good progress in achieving the 2009 interim target but there are risks to its achievement of the 2012 ministerial target. It gives customer focused	5.24	The percentage of people found to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless to increase to the national figure.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.25	The proportion of applicants that the Council lost contact with before it made an assessment decision to reduce to the national figure.	Guidance for staff to be written. Set up monitoring system which may include use of task manager. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

interviews but it loses contact with homeless applicants and has some weaknesses in its assessment process.	5.26	The percentage of people the Council finds to be intentionally homeless to reduce to the national figure.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.27	Reduce the number of applicants who receive non priority decisions.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.27	Expanded its priority need categories to meet the abolition of priority need by 2012.	Analyse and recommend changes to Housing & Environment Committee if required.	December 2011	1	Report to Housing & Environment Committee in March 2012
	5.28	Meet the target to notify people of the outcome of their application within 28 days.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.29	Ensure we keep in touch with homeless applicants to keep them well informed of progress of their application.	Guidance for staff to be written. Set up monitoring system which may include use of task manager. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action. Monitor/review case closures.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.31	Have regard to all the circumstances of an applicant before reaching a decision on intentionality and record the information it gives to applicants.	Guidance for staff to be written. Guidance on Meeting the Best Interests of Children Facing Homelessness to be implemented. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	June 2011 Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

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2. How well is Aberdeen City Council delivering services for homeless people?					

<p>Securing temporary accommodation</p> <p>In summary, Aberdeen City Council is working to improve its approach to securing accommodation for homeless people. It gives homeless households the same level of choice as other applicants and has recognised the need to offer a greater proportion of its permanent lets to homeless households. However it takes a long time to accommodate people particularly single homeless applicants and is aware it needs to increase the number of houses it secures for homeless people through its RSL partners.</p>	5.35	Reduce the % of households in B&B.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	2	Numbers reducing Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.36	Reduce the length of stay in B&Bs.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Review all cases at 10/20/30 weeks to monitor obstacles. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	2	Time reducing but longer periods in temporary accommodation flats likely as the number of lets available is reducing. Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.37	Further increased the supply of temporary accommodation.	Implement decisions from Council (30/6/2010) and actions from Homelessness & Resettlement Strategy. Set targets for void turnaround and monitor. Analyse data 3-monthly, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	June 2011 June 2011	1	Completed, 300 temp flats, PSL started, Victoria House proposals proceeding, utilising Tullos School Lodge, 8 properties from Langstane HA, 6 properties from Tenants First. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

5.39	Meet the statutory duty provide temporary accommodation to those people who require it.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Review Accommodation Unit rules for discharge. Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Very few applicants now not given temporary accommodation Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
5.40	Reduce the temporary accommodation arranged by the applicant to the national figure.	Guidance for staff to be written. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	2	Fewer applicants arranging own accommodation because of costs Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
5.41	Launch the PSL Scheme.	Team Leader and Team being recruited, PR to be taken forward, landlords to be recruited, scheme details and procedures to be written up and publicised internally and externally. Once established, set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	May 2011	1	PSL launched but slower than expected in terms of getting properties. Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
5.41	Discuss with the RSLs about using their properties for temporary accommodation.	Meetings to be arranged to take this forward.	June 2011	2	Currently one RSL will provide properties

	5.42	Maintain and expand support provision to maintain tenancies.	<p>Young Single Persons Housing Project and New Tenancy Support restructuring into Resettlement Team, new resettlement workers being recruited. New Shelter Scotland staff being recruited to work with Prevention Team. Furniture Scheme to be finalised.</p> <p>Prevention & Tenancy Set Up Fund scheme to be in place by April 2011. Improving Employability/Improving Social Networks proposals developed. Set targets for void turnaround (YSPHP) and monitor. Establish system to monitor and review outcomes from support provision. Resettlement Guidelines to be drawn up.</p> <p>Additional Support requirements to be implemented when Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 enacted.</p> <p>Review role/hours of New Tenancy Support clarify links with Tenancy Support Officers. Review times taken to get support package allocated, impact on deferments and the numbers being allocated SSSTs. Responsibility for former supporting people contracts for housing support for homeless people will be clarified ensuring this integrates with housing allocations. Ensure Child Protection (GIRFEC)/Vulnerable Adults responsibilities clear.</p>	<p>August 2011</p> <p>April 2012</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>December 2011</p>	2	<p>Restructuring complete</p> <p>Shelter staff now operating Furniture Service established Funds established</p> <p>Being commissioned from April 2012</p> <p>Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system</p> <p>Further service being commissioned from April 2012</p> <p>Review in progress</p> <p>Staff training being monitored</p> <p>Supported The Cyrenians successful bid to the Big Lottery for 5 year funding for an expanded Violence Women Initiative</p>
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			Restructuring of Accommodation Unit staff is being implemented. Guidance for staff to be written. Occupancy agreement and rules revised. Resettlement planning systems to be established. Consider the need for Care Commission registration.	December 2011 December 2011		Complete Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system Social Care & Social Work Improvement Scotland (formerly Care Commission) have been written to
5.45	Introduce a standard for B&B accommodation and carry out regular audits of the accommodation.	Standards document prepared from Shelter Scotlands' standards. Procedure to be written up. Carry out annual audit, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	September 2011	3	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system	
5.46	Ensure that there are no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order 2004.	Guidance for staff to be written. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system	
5.48	Consider how to take more account of an applicant's personal circumstances when allocating temporary accommodation to meet the needs of people to be close to schools and family support.	Guidance for staff to be written. Guidance on Meeting the Best Interests of Children Facing Homelessness to be implemented. Make use of delegated powers where required with respect to allocations to families Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	December 2011 Throughout	1	Guidance in preparation in line with new Allocations Policy. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system	

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	5.51	Review the Council's Allocations Policy.	Currently being reviewed. Review whether housing application forms are necessary for non-mainstream allocations.	September 2011	1 Completed
	5.52	Take account of personal needs such as proximity to family support or schools as recommended in the Code of Guidance.	Guidance for staff to be written. Guidance on Meeting the Best Interests of Children Facing Homelessness to be implemented. Increased monthly number of cases audited. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	December 2011 Throughout	1 Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	5.52	Reduce the number of the appeals against offers of permanent accommodation.	Guidance for staff to be written. Set up monitoring system. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action. Consideration to be given to holding first offer if turned down until decision taken on second offer. Consideration to homelessness officers being involved in the allocation.	Throughout	3 Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system Second offer now being held pending appeal

homeless people through its RSL partners.	5.54	Use the provisions under section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to secure accommodation for homeless people.	Section 5 procedure for LHA/GHA to be drawn up and implemented. Nominations to continue for CBL. Guidance for staff to be written. Analyse data 6-monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
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2. How well is Aberdeen City Council delivering services for homeless people?					

Leadership and strategic planning	6.4	Ensure the Homelessness and Resettlement Strategy 2009-2013 is implemented.	Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	April 2012	2	Annual Review will be carried out after April 2012
	6.5	Ensure the Assurance and Improvement Plan for Aberdeen City is implemented.	Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations.	April 2012	2	Annual Review will be carried out after April 2012
	6.6	Improve working with strategic partners.	Further develop the Homelessness Strategy Operations Group (HSOG). Inter-Agency Referral arrangements in place. HSOG sub group discussing closer working arrangements. Regular reviews with and feedback from commissioned services.	Throughout	2	Regular meetings held, Agency Away Day and Service User Away Days held, briefings given to agencies Some reviews of commissioned services undertaken. Positive feedback from agencies

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Performance management, planning and reporting	6.7	Report the cost of B&B accommodation to the Housing and Environment Committee.	Discuss with Finance, etc to facilitate this. Ensure budgets for individual parts of the service are available and monitored.	April 2012	2	Completed
	6.9	Improve access to performance information on the website.	Discuss with ICT, etc to facilitate this. Monitor website hits.	April 2012	3	Still to be done, within timescale

	6.9	Improve reporting of financial performance information to tenants.	Mechanisms to be set up.	April 2012	3	Still to be done, within timescale
	6.10	Utilise monthly performance reports to develop or improve service delivery.	Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations. Review the Assurance & Improvement Plan and ensure this is implemented. Review and revise current KPIs.	April 2012	2	Still to be done, within timescale
	6.11	Include Scottish Housing Best Value Network and benchmarks information in any published or reported information.	Discuss with QA&PM.	April 2012	3	Still to be done, within timescale

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Customer focus and influence	6.12	Monitor performance against service standards and publically report on how these are met.	Review service standards and publish. Carry out annual review, draw up report and record actions taken from recommendations. Set up system to ensure leaflets/posters are available & up to date including language leaflet at reception.	April 2012	3	Standards in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	6.13	Improve privacy at the reception desk and ensure interview rooms are comfortable.	As outlined in Section 5.2 & 5.3	August 2011	1	Completed
	6.14	Improve response rate from customer feedback and use the information to drive service improvements.	Service User Involvement Plan to be developed. Guidance for staff to be written. Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	1	Service User Away Day held, follow up to be worked on
	6.16	Meet 14 day target of responding to requests for reviews of decisions.	Guidance for staff to be written. Analyse data monthly.	April 2012	3	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

6.16	Monitor or report performance against meeting the target of 14 days to respond to appeals.	Analyse data monthly, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	3	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
6.16	Improve the quality of response letters including information advising people of their right to go to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.	Guidance for staff to be written. New template letters to be devised.	September 2011	3	Guidance, template letters in preparation.
6.16	Improve publicity around the right to request a review of an offer of temporary accommodation.	Guidance for staff to be written. New template letters to be devised.	September 2011	3	Guidance in preparation.
6.16	Utilise information from reviews to help identify potential ways to improve the service.	Guidance for staff to be written. Analyse data, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
6.17	Increase the number of homelessness applications assessed through the monthly audit.	Guidance for staff to be written.	September 2011	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
6.18	Record and monitor subject matter of complaints, trend information and volume of complaints and this information to develop or improve service delivery.	Guidance for staff to be written. Formal system to be devised for individual complaints, enquiries for Councillors/MPs/MSPs and from other third parties. Analyse data, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

	6.20	Use the national Customer Satisfaction Measuring Toolkit for four parts of Housing & Environment Services to collect information on service users' age, out of hours contact and usage of interpretation or translation services.	Guidance for staff to be written. Formal system to be devised. Analyse data, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	2	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system
	6.21	Utilise service user feedback to improve services, particularly within the homelessness service.	Analyse data, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	1	Guidance in preparation. Further analysis to be established but some analysis can be done from existing system

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Equalities and diversity	6.23	Further develop the approach to equalities clearly showing timescales, responsibilities and targets. Provide further training for staff.	Guidance written. Annual report to be compiled.	April 2012	3	Guidance in preparation.
	6.24	Establish a link to the translation service on the homepage of the Council's website and expand the languages it is advertised in.	Discuss changes with IT. Monitor website hits.	September 2011	1	Partly done
	6.25	Monitor the requests for leaflets available in alternative formats and report and use the information to improve the service.	Guidance for staff to be written. Formal system to be devised. Analyse data, draw up report, record actions taken from recommendations and take corrective action.	April 2012	3	Guidance in preparation.