



**Local Housing Strategy Guidance**  
**Published August 2014**

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## Introduction

Welcome to a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy and Development team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

The Housing Strategy and Development section is responsible for:-

- Providing the statutory strategic housing authority role within the local authority area
- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Performance management within Housing and Community Safety services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy and Development please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail: [housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

This Briefing summarises the new guidance published by the Scottish Government on the preparation of Local Housing Strategies.<sup>1</sup>

## Background:

Revised guidance for local authorities to assist them in the preparation of their Local Housing Strategies was published by the Scottish Government on 21 August 2014. Local authorities are required by law to prepare local housing strategies supported by an assessment of housing demand, setting out their plans for the delivery of housing and housing related services locally.

The guidance indicates that the LHS should state how the local authority will draw on housing supply, place-making and housing related services to promote good outcomes across a range of social and economic factors, noting that good housing promotes health, education, employment, community safety, social connectedness and community resilience. Alongside this, the LHS should identify where linkages between housing and other services and agencies can help to achieve these wider social outcomes. The LHS covers all housing tenures.

## Key Points:

- The guidance emphasises the strategic importance of the LHS and how it should sit within the wider local strategic context including its fit with Community Planning.
- It stresses the need to comply with the principles of the Christie Commission public service reform recommendations, namely
  - a decisive shift towards prevention;
  - greater integration of public services at a local level driven by better partnership, collaboration and effective local delivery;
  - greater investment in the people who deliver services through enhanced workforce development and effective leadership; and
  - a sharp focus on improving performance, through greater transparency, innovation and use of digital technology.
- The LHS should be a forward looking document that is outcome focused with a clear plan setting out actions for delivery over a 5 year period. The guidance suggests that it would be good practice for local authorities to undertake an annual update of the LHS and publish this on the local authority's website.
- The LHS should set out a Housing Supply Target which is broadly consistent with that contained in the development plan.
- The LHS has a key role to play in contributing to the effective integration of health and social care. It should set out clearly the contribution that housing can make in support of this agenda, through the design and delivery of housing and housing related services. There is more emphasis on this area in the new guidance than previously. Section 9 on *Independent Living and Specialist Provision* details the requirements in this area including the obligation to assess the needs of Gypsy/Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government Local Housing Strategy Guidance  
Thursday, August 21, 2014  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/3070/2>

- The LHS must set out how the local authority plans to address certain Private Sector housing issues, in particular, BTS Strategy, Empty Homes, Housing Renewal Area Policy and the Scheme of Assistance.
- The guidance lists the statutory requirements and the Scottish Government targets that an LHS should support and includes a suggested Outcome and Action Plan Template.
- *Principles of Inclusive Communication*<sup>2</sup> is cited as a useful reference for developing a meaningful and inclusive consultation strategy, and notes the value of adopting a co-production approach.
- The guidance notes the Scottish Government's desire to build on the previous peer review process. Further discussion on this matter will take place between the SG, CoSLA and ALACHO.

## Issues for West Dunbartonshire:

There are no great surprises in the new guidance. There is a greater emphasis on Health /Care/Housing integration, sustainable design, the response to welfare reform and the need to focus on prevention and a housing options approach.

This guidance will support the development of the next West Dunbartonshire Local Housing Strategy in 2016 which will set out:

- a) The extent and type of housing need and demand and the role that specific tenures are likely to play, both now and over the longer term.
- b) The local authority's strategic vision for the future of housing across all tenures taking into account national priorities and .
- c) Clear strategic direction for housing investment, and confirmation that development plans support the strategic aims set out in the LHS.

For further information please contact

**Jamie Dockery**

**Housing Policy Officer**

**Housing Strategy and Development**

**01389 737366**

[Jamie.dockery@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:Jamie.dockery@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government Principles of Inclusive Communication –An Information and Self-Assessment Tool for Public Authorities September 2011

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/14082209/0>