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**Councils' leadership role in Housing - discussion with the Homes and Communities Agency and feedback from LG Group housing seminars**

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**Key messages emerging from the LG Group seminars March 2011**

Increasing the supply of housing

With their strategic housing responsibilities, unitary and lower tier authorities must play a strong role in:

- defining the full range of housing needs in their communities;
- identifying the amount of new housing which should be built in the future, the most appropriate mix of tenures, and the land required to meet these needs;
- working in partnership with registered providers, land owners and private developers to bring forward the needed schemes.

The combination of tighter lending requirements introduced by mortgage providers alongside reductions in government investment in housing, means that it will be more difficult to finance new home construction. Private developers will continue to seek to renegotiate their Section 106 obligations

In many communities, promoting new developments on publicly owned land offers significant opportunities to bring forward affordable housing schemes

Where requested, as an enabling agency the HCA offers considerable resources in support of councils' efforts to meet their housing needs. The HCA welcomes efforts to update Local Investment Plans to set a framework for this assistance.

Putting homes to good use

In every community, the 'market' will embrace a wide range of social, affordable and market rented housing and a variety of ownership models. This means that councils must develop a more refined understanding of their citizens' housing needs, aspirations and ability to pay – and the contribution that each tenure will make.

The relationship between councils and registered housing providers will be

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increasingly important to formulate and implement tenancy strategies that support sustainable communities. This will require strong leadership, shared agreements around goals, and mutual trust.

Improving existing homes

Councils need to identify how home improvements can deliver health, energy efficiency and other social outcomes. This can provide the basis for funding bids.

In future, the private rented sector will play an even more important contribution to meeting needs. Councils should carefully consider how best to work with private landlords to improve stock condition and management. Councils have significant powers and new funding (for empty homes) that they can use proactively; a mixture of enforcement and support is likely to achieve the best outcomes.

Supporting vulnerable people and communities

Housing professionals need to build relationships with Health and Wellbeing Boards. They need to understand Boards' specific goals, demonstrate how housing can support them, and evidence value for money and efficiency in doing so.

Councils could expand the range of floating support available to people in general housing as an alternative to new integrated supported housing schemes. They could do this by co-producing with service users, allowing them to shape future services.

Councils must include relevant housing information within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and use it in a consistent manner to inform capital and revenue investment through the Local Investment Plan, the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and any Joint Commissioning (care or support) Strategies.

Councils might want to consider adopting housing-led programmes focused in deprived areas, (such as those in Dorset, Liverpool and Wakefield) to improve residents' health and wellbeing, to prevent acute needs from emerging with the consequent resource savings.

Aids and adaptations programmes offer significant potential for cost-savings – both in terms of how they are funded and the savings that can be made in acute care. Whole-community or group approaches to supporting people can provide benefits by deepening relationships between citizens, reducing isolation and increasing purchasing power and efficiency.



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