
Wirral JSNA: Local Housing

Using Housing Strategy Technical Appendix as Evidence Base

**Produced by:
Wirral Council Housing
Strategy Team
Reviewed by: John
Highton, Wirral JSNA Lead**

Wirral JSNA: Local Housing Evidence Base

Author: Wirral Council, Housing Strategy Team

Title of author: Housing Strategy Team

Contact details: Sue Hooper, Housing Strategy Manager, 0151 606 2000

Information request email address: N/A

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Note:

Update imminent from Housing Strategy Team as a consequence of Wirral 20 Pledges by 2020 work. (November 2015)

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1 - Responding to changes in the long term population of Wirral, in particular an increase in the number of older people.

The Evidence and Challenge

- Between 2015 and 2037 there is estimated to be an increase in the overall population in Wirral of 2.58% rising to 325,931 in 2037.¹
- Wirral has an increasingly older population with the largest increase expected for people over the age of 85 years (116.09%) which is an increase of 9,36 to 17,006. In addition, there is also expected to be an increase of 27.34% (72,161) for 64 – 84 year olds. The only other age range expected to increase (5.30%) is 10-19 years.²
- The largest decrease (-20.84%) in the population is the 50-54 year olds group, with a general decrease of 9.04% of the total working population (to 162,891).³
- It is projected that the number of households in Wirral will increase by 9.34% (13,373) between 2015 (143,184) and 2037 (156,557).⁴
- Households over the age of 65 years in Wirral are projected to increase 40.42% (18,735) between 2015 and 2037, to make up 41.57% of all households.⁵
- Aside from the over 65 age group, the largest increase in households is in the 15-19 age group at 25.76% rising from 462 in 2015 to 581 in 2037.⁶

For clarity, the second stage of data from the CLG for the household projections has not yet been released. The following data will be updated once this is released by CLG.

- The average household size is projected to reduce slightly from 2.25 in 2011 to 2.23 by 2021.⁷
- The number of one person households is projected to remain the same between 2011 and 2021, as is the number of households with a couple and no other adult or a couple and one or more other adults. Rather than reduce, lone parent households are expected to increase over the same period by 14% (2,000) and households with one dependent child are forecast to rise by 11% (2,000). All other households with or without dependent children remaining the same between 2011 and 2021.⁸
- The 25-29 and 45-64 age groups are projected to decline; 50-54 had the largest decrease (-18.37%).⁹

¹ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

² 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

³ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

⁴ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

⁵ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

⁶ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

⁷ 2011-based Household Projections Model, Tables 420, 424 and 427, 9 April 2013

⁸ 2011-based Household Projections Model, Tables 420, 424 and 427, 9 April 2013

⁹ 2012-based Household Projections: England 2012-37

- As at April 2015, Supported Housing services provided support to over 4,400 older people through initiatives such as Extra Care Housing, Sheltered Housing and mobile wardens.¹⁰
- In August 2014, there were 10,700 claimants of Attendance Allowance in Wirral (non means tested benefit for which a person must be over 65 years of age and in need of frequent care and attention throughout the day or night, or need continual supervision. There were 6,800 (63.55%) females claiming Attendance Allowance compared to 3,800 (35.51%) male claimants.¹¹
- Previous consultation shows that the existing levels and type of provision for older people no longer meet all of their aspirations and needs. The Supported Housing team are currently carrying out a strategic review of sheltered housing services that will provide a robust evidence base to inform future commissioning decisions.
- MOSAIC household data indicates that in 2012 the average household income for the Borough average of £30,093.¹² The median house price in Wirral in 2013/14 was £135,500.¹³ The average household income in the Borough translates into a buyer capacity (based on 3.5 times the MOSAIC household income data) of £105,326, showing that affordability will be an issue for the borough as a whole. The new Strategic Housing Market Assessment once finalised, will provide up to date information of affordability issues.
- It has been predicted there will be an increase in the UK households of non-white British origin from 8% in 2001 to 20% in 2051. Projected figures are not available for Wirral, however under the 2011 Census, 5.03% of Wirral's population classified their ethnic origin as something other than White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.¹⁴

Evidence: Office for National Statistics, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Supporting People Programme, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, DCLG Household Projections 2011 & 2012

¹⁰ Supporting People Data 2014

¹¹ http://tabulationtool.dwp.gov.uk/100pc/aa/ccla/ccgor/ccsex/a_carate_r_ccla_c_ccgor_p_ccsex_female_feb14.html

¹² MOSAIC Household Data 2012

¹³ Wirral Council House Price Data 2013/14

¹⁴ Office for National Statistics, Census 2011, Ethnic Group (Table QS201EW)

2 - A need to make better use of the existing stock across all sectors and make homes accessible, meeting the backlog of housing need and those for the future

The Evidence and Challenge

The following suggests there is still a significant regeneration challenge particularly within eastern Wirral.

- In April 2015 there were 5,147 empty properties in Wirral, showing a decrease of 1.14% from April 2014. ^[1]
- The number of private sector homes in Wirral empty for more than 6 months (long term empty properties) decreased slightly by 0.77% between April 2014 and April 2015 ^[2].
- There has also been a slight reduction (0.34%) in the number of private sector homes which have been empty for less than 6 months across the borough. (2649 in 2014 to 2640 in 2015) ^[3]
- As of April 2015 1.4% of Wirral's total private housing stock has been empty for more than six months. 41% of the Lower Super Output Areas in Wirral (areas with stock of no more than 1,200 but no less than 400) have a total of 1.4% (or more) long term private empty properties. ^[4]
- All four of Wirral's designated Selective Licensing areas have long term private empty properties of between 3.28% and 5.11%; this is well above the Borough average of 1.4%.
- The number of private empty homes being brought back into use has been steadily increasing year on year rising from 284 in 2009/10 to 302 for 2014/15 ^[5] giving a total of 1764 empty properties brought back into use between 2009 and 2015.
- The number of empty homes in Wirral forms part of a wider regional problem as the North West has the second highest proportion of homes being empty in England; Wirral has the second highest in the North West, meaning there is a significant challenge for Wirral in terms of addressing this and where appropriate making use of these properties to meet the housing needs of the borough ^[6]

1 Empty Property Team statistics April 15 and April 14

2 Empty Property Team statistics April 15 and April 14

3 Empty Property Team statistics April 15 and April 14

4 Council Tax Data 2015

5 Empty Property Team statistics April 15 and April 14

- In April 2015 there were 237 long term empty social homes (owned by Registered Providers) which represents 1.04% of the total social housing stock in the borough. This is an 8% decrease in the number of empty social homes since 2014. ^[7]
- Data extracted from the sub-regional Choice Based Letting Scheme Property Pool Plus (PPP) as at 31st March 2015 shows that :
- 31% of applicants who are successful when bidding for social properties are existing social tenants, with approximately 69% new applicants.
- 508 applicants are classed as overcrowded by one bedroom (a 9.3% increase from September 2014) and 56 by two or more bedrooms (a decrease of 6.6% since September 2014). There are 1278 applicants classed as under occupying compared to 1384 in September 2014, a decrease of 7.7%.
- PPP data indicates that of those applicants currently registered for rehousing, 833 are currently under-occupying by one bedroom, 409 by two bedrooms, 34 by three bedrooms and two by four bedrooms.
- There were 638 applicants registered with Property Pool Plus who require a move to an adapted property.
- Wirral Councils Adaptations Team completed 2,257 adaptations in 2014/15, an increase of 14.3% from 2013/14.
- Wirral's 2013 Private Sector House Condition Survey reported 27,927 (22.7%) dwellings as failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard. 9.8% of these were due to Category One Hazards, 13.5% were in disrepair, 5.8% failed to meet reasonable levels of thermal comfort and 0.5% lacked modern facilities.
- It has been estimated that it would cost £196.291m to achieve the Decent Homes Standard; an average of £7,029 per non-decent property.

Evidence: Empty Property Strategy, Property Pool Plus data, Strategic Housing Market Assessment & Private Sector House Condition Survey 2013

⁷ Empty Property Team statistics April 13 and April 14

3 - A need to encourage people to stay within the borough through improving stock and providing greater housing choice.

The Evidence and Challenge

- Wirral's housing stock consists¹⁷ of 67.46% privately owned, 15.84% which is privately rented and 15.17% which is social rented. The remaining properties are shared ownership (0.51%) and rent free (1.02%). Although the tenure breakdown is broadly similar, the affordable housing sector is still lower than the national picture (15.17% in Wirral compared to 18.48% in England and 21.76% in Merseyside).¹⁸
- A Private Sector House Condition Survey was undertaken in 2013. This indicated that 24,317 households (20.4%) are in receipt of means tested or disability related benefits and are economically vulnerable.
- 80.35% (118,118) of Wirral properties are in Council Tax bands A-C. 17.33% of the properties in Wirral are in bands D-F.¹⁹
- The median house price in Wirral increased 0.37% from £135,000 in 2012/13 to £135,500 in 2013/14, and further increased by the same amount to £140,000 in 2014/15.
- There was a vast increase in sales during 2014/15, with an increase of 28.83% (1018 more house sales) than in 2013/14.²⁰ This demonstrates a need to continue to target any future investment to regenerating local areas and balancing the housing market.
- A Selective Licensing Scheme in four areas has been introduced in 2015 which aims to tackle poorly managed private rented properties. Anticipated benefits expected are reduced anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping, improved confidence in the housing market and potential growth in property sales.

Evidence: Private Sector House Condition Survey (2013); House Price data 2014, Stockbase 2014, Council Tax data 2015, Selective Licensing Business Case July 2014

¹⁷ Census 2011 data ONS

¹⁸ CENSUS 2011 Data ONS – KS402EW Tenure, local authorities in England and Wales

¹⁹ Wirral Council Tax data 2014/15

²⁰ Wirral Council House Price Data

4 - A need to increase new housing and deliver affordable homes

The Evidence and Challenge

Information below from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is from the 2007 study and the 2010 update. A new SHMA is due to be completed by the end of 2015, providing a more up to date picture to inform this technical appendix.

- The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) previously set the annual housing requirement for Wirral at 500 net dwellings per year. The RSS was formally revoked by the Government on 20 May 2013 and the Council is now responsible for setting a new housing requirement through the Local Plan. This issue is currently being addressed by a review of the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2015. This will identify a housing requirement to be included in the Core Strategy Local Plan, which is scheduled for adoption in 2016.
- The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update 2014 showed a gross capacity of up to 6,020 units on potential housing sites, excluding the significant additional capacity at Wirral Waters, with 62% on previously developed sites. At April 2014 1,933 units also had planning permission.
- In May 2012 over 13,500 residential units were granted outline planning consent at Wirral Waters, alongside new commercial development.
- We will seek to maximise affordable housing supply and maintain our long term aspirational target of 40% affordable housing on suitable sites based on the scale of need; however our recent Housing Viability Study indicates that 10% or 20% of affordable housing, is more achievable, subject to area, on all qualifying sites.²¹
- Wirral's SHMA has an implied requirement for the delivery of 570 new homes per year up to 2029 to balance the housing market and make areas in the east of the borough more attractive to live [the 2008-based CLG household projections reduce this to an annual average of 400 between 2009 and 2029 or 390 between 2008 and 2029 or 360 between 2008 and 2033].²²
- In line with the findings of the SHMA, one in five new homes will initially be required to be affordable, rising to two in five as the market recovers, but this may need to be reduced if the value of the development cannot support them.
- Whilst the Strategic Housing Needs and Market Assessment is due to be updated in 2015, the 2007 study and its subsequent update shows that although house prices in our housing priority areas are still lower than the west of the borough, evidence indicates there is still a 44.4% affordable housing need in that area.²³
- In Wirral, the SHMA indicates over two thirds of newly forming households (63.4%) are currently unable to afford general open market homes for sale²⁴.

²¹ Affordable Housing Viability Study 2009

²² SHMA 2009 Update P13 Para S32

²³ SHMA 2009 Update –P60 para 6.48-RSS Inner Area equivalent to HMRA

²⁴ SHMA 2009 Update- P47 para ii

- A quarter (25.6%) of all households in Wirral is unable to afford market accommodation of an appropriate size, an increase of 2% since 2007.²⁵
- The median house price in Wirral between 2007/08 and 2008/09 fell by 5.7% and sales reduced by more than half (53.7%) from 6,026 to 2,789. There was a recovery in 2011/12 with a 4.5% increase (to £138,000) in median house price and 5.9% increase in sales (to 2,942).²⁶ In 2013/14 the median house price for Wirral increased by £500 to £135,500 which shows an increase of 0.37% since 2012/13 but this is still lower than the 2011/12 figure of £138,000. In 2013/14 there were 3531 sales, an increase of 15.46% from 2012/13 sales.²⁷
- The Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML) have reported 18,700 loans were advanced to first time buyers during February 2015, a figure which has decreased by 1% from January and down by 16% compared to February 2014. The CML commented that seasonal factors have dampened house purchase lending activity in during February 2015, exacerbated by uncertainty ahead of the general election, but expects to see an upturn in the spring and summer months.²⁸
- The gross mortgage lending reached £16.5billion in March 2015, a 21% increase from February 2015 (£13.6billion) and 7% higher than in March 2014 (£15.4billion).²⁹
- Of the 6,921 Wirral residents that responded to the 2012 'What Really Matters' consultation, 16.5% identified having access to a range of Affordable Housing as their highest priority for Wirral.
- As of 31st March 2015, there were 18274 applicants registered on Property Pool Plus (PPP) which is a 5.3% increase from September 2014. Of these, 508 applicants are in classed as overcrowded by 1 bedroom (a 10% increase from September 2014) and 56 by 2 or more bedrooms (a decrease of 6.6% since September 2014). There are 1278 applicants classed as under occupying compared to 1385 in September 2014, a decrease of 7.7%. There are also 1,643 applicants requiring a move due to health or welfare (representing a small decrease of 1.3% since September 2014), and 48 statutory homeless (unintentionally with priority need) which has increased by 50% since September 2014.³⁰
- There are significant changes to how affordable housing will be delivered in the future with wide ranging proposals to reform social housing. In April 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were reduced. In the North West this equates to an average loss of £7 per week, in Wirral the LHA rate for a three bed house was reduced from £595 to £ 549.99 per month. Below are the current LHA allowances for differing property sizes, along with the prices for 2014/15.³¹
- In 2015/2016 the weekly LHA allowance in Wirral is £60.99, reduced from £64.90 for the shared room rate; £86.30, reduced from £86.54 for a one-bed; £103.56,

²⁵ SHMA 2009 Update P11 Para S22

²⁶ Housing Strategy House Price and sales volume data

²⁷ Housing Strategy House Price and sales volume data

²⁸ Council of Mortgage Lenders statement 14th April 2015 www.cml.org.uk

²⁹ Council of mortgage Lenders statement 23rd April 2015 www.cml.org.uk

³⁰ Property Pool Plus data September 2014

³¹ Wirral Council Scrutiny Review – The Implications of Benefit Reforms on Under-Occupation (March 2013)

reduced from £103.85 for a two-bed; £126.58, reduced from £126.92 for a three-bed and £140.62, an increase from £139.23 for four-bed or over.³²

- In terms of Housing Benefit allowance, in April 2013 under occupation rules introduced for working age tenants in the social sector meant that applicants now receive Housing Benefit based on their housing need in terms of number of bedrooms required. This meant that those in receipt of maximum benefit lost 14% of their benefit if they had one spare bedroom and 25% with two or more spare bedrooms. The Council's Housing Benefits Team identified on 5th May 2015 that 3188 Registered Provider tenants were affected (showing a reduction of 5% since October 2014) with 2557 under occupying by one bedroom and 631 by two or more bedrooms.³³
- In 2014/2015 322 affordable homes were delivered in Wirral, 7.3% over the target of 300. In 2013 a new scheme -Help To Buy was introduced which is open to all prospective purchasers (not just first time buyers) allowing a prospective buyer to loan up to 20% of the cost of a new build home, meaning a 5% deposit is needed with a 75% mortgage. In 2014/2015 51 new home owners benefited from the Help To Buy initiative in Wirral. There is a target of 250 affordable homes to be delivered in 2015/2016.

Evidence: Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Affordable Housing Viability Study, DWP, Housing Benefit team, House Price data, Council of Mortgage Lenders, Homes and Communities Agency IMS,

³² <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/advice-and-benefits/benefits/housing-and-council-tax-benefits/local-housing-allowance/local-housing-allowance-rates>

³³ Wirral Council Housing Benefit team data May 2015

5 - Making homes warmer and reducing the energy consumed by households

The Evidence and Challenge

- Across all housing sectors, it was estimated that in 2013, 10.6% of Wirral households were fuel poor³⁴, above the English average of 10.4%³⁵. Fuel poverty levels decreased slightly nationally and locally between 2012 and 2013.
- A Private Sector House Condition Survey was carried out in 2013. The survey found:
 - 14.2% of households living in the private sector in Wirral were estimated to be fuel poor;
 - 22.7% of private sector stock fails the decent homes standard of which 25.6% fail due to a poor degree of thermal comfort. 9.8% of homes fail due to having Category 1 hazards in the home, with 58.9% of these having excess cold hazards;
 - The cost to remedy thermal comfort is £16m and the cost to remedy Category 1 hazards is £65m;
 - 29.7% of private dwellings in Wirral fall within the highest energy efficiency ratings (A, B and C) compared to 11.3% of private housing nationally. Conversely the proportion of private dwellings in the lowest bands (E, F and G) is significantly below the national average (16.9% and 40.3% respectively);
 - The average SAP (energy efficiency rating) for private stock in Wirral is 63, better than the national average for private housing which is 55. For owner occupied housing the average is 62 and for privately rented is 64;
 - Geographically, Birkenhead Parliamentary Constituency (PC) and Birkenhead Settlement Area³⁶ have the highest rates of Category 1 hazards in the home. The lowest energy efficiency ratings (Bands F & G) are found in Birkenhead PC and the Rural Settlement Area. Fuel poverty is most prevalent in Birkenhead PC and the Heswall Settlement Area (mainly due to high housing costs and low energy efficiency ratings);
 - 8.1% of households pay their fuel with pre-payment meters, 24% by quarterly bill and 60% by direct debit;
 - 26% of households stated they could just afford to heat their home and 16% found difficulty in heating their home. 7.1% of households heated only some rooms or one room in the winter.

³⁴ The definition of fuel poverty was changed by the Government in 2013. A household is now considered to be fuel poor where it has required fuel costs that are above average and its income is below the average poverty line (once housing and fuel costs have been taken into account).

³⁵ Department of Energy & Climate Change, 2013 sub-regional fuel poverty data, May 2015.

³⁶ Wirral is divided into eight Settlement Areas, as laid out in Wirral's draft Core Strategy Local Plan.

- 49% of households have previously switched electricity or gas suppliers. 17.5% had switched energy suppliers in the last 12 months.
- Costs of illness arising from cold and damp housing conditions to the National Health Service are estimated at over £1billion per year. Investing £2.3m in addressing housing conditions for excess cold and falls has the potential to address health inequalities and save Wirral National Health Service £9.36m.
- Excess Winter Deaths in Wirral averaged 230 per year between 2008/09 and 2012/13³⁷. It is thought that 10% of these (23 per year) could be attributable to fuel poverty³⁸.
- On the whole in Wirral, geographic areas of higher energy consumption mirror more affluent areas and areas of lower consumption mirror those of lower income.
- In Wirral between 2008 and 2013, mean average standard electricity consumption fell by 8.8% and mean average gas consumption fell by 23.0% (latest figures). Average consumption of both fuels remains higher than the Liverpool City Region (LCR) average.³⁹
- Wirral has above average carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from housing when compared to the LCR and North West. When ranked with other local authorities, Wirral is within the top 20% of North West local authorities for CO₂ pollution from the domestic sector however when comparing CO₂ emissions per capita, Wirral has average emissions.⁴⁰
- CO₂ emissions from housing have fallen in Wirral by 18.7% between 2005 and 2013, compared to an average 18.8% decrease in the LCR.⁴¹

Evidence: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Private Sector House Condition Survey 2013, ONS, Department of Energy & Climate Change

³⁷ Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales, 2013/14 (Provisional) and 2012/13 (Final), ONS, December 2014.

³⁸ Getting the Measure of Fuel Poverty, Prof. John Hills, March 2012.

³⁹ MSOA domestic electricity and gas consumption data, Department of Energy & Climate Change, March 2015.

⁴⁰ UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2013, Department of Energy & Climate Change, June 2015.

⁴¹ UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2013, Department of Energy & Climate Change, June 2015.

6 - Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable people.

The Evidence and Challenge

Information below from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is from the 2007 study and the 2009 update. A new SHMA is due to be completed during 2015 providing a more up to date picture to inform this technical appendix.

- Overall there are an estimated 29,741 (20%) households in Wirral with one or more members identified as being vulnerable or having a special need⁴², exceeding the national average of 14%⁴³. The predominant vulnerable groups are households with a physical, learning or sensory disability, frail older people and a high number of people with a mental illness.⁴⁴
- The majority of vulnerable households (65%) live in homes owned by them or their families, with 25% living in social rented housing and the remaining 10% living in privately rented homes.⁴⁵
- Wirral's SHMA indicates that in Wirral, there are approximately 26,179 households with learning, physical or sensory disability (across a range of age groups) with these groups⁴⁶ representing 88% of all vulnerable households in the borough.⁴⁷
- Wirral's SHMA indicates there are 2,885 households with a learning disability.⁴⁸ There are currently 195 people with learning disabilities placed into residential care.⁴⁹
- From April 2015, Wirral's Supported Housing Section will fund services for 225 clients with a learning difficulty and 25 clients with a sensory disability.⁵⁰
- To ensure the widest possible options for care and support, in partnership with Adult Social Services a Learning Disabilities Sub Group and Learning Disabilities Housing Operational Panel was developed in August 2012. As at August 2015 the Panel had received 88 referrals for clients with learning difficulties requiring housing, from social care staff, with 60 clients being successfully re-housed into Supported Accommodation and had matched 18 clients to suitable Supported Accommodation. Further clients are being assisted, who currently reside in Council residential accommodation to move (with support) into their own social rented accommodation.
- Wirral has a range of programmes targeted at supporting and enabling vulnerable people to achieve and maintain independence in their own home such as the Supporting People Programme and Disabled Facilities Grants.

⁴² Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P142 Para 18.8

⁴³ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P142 Para 18.9

⁴⁴ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P142 Para 18.9

⁴⁵ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P144-145 Para 18.15 & Table 18.6

⁴⁶ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P144-145 Para Table 18.1

⁴⁷ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P144-145 Para Table 18.1

⁴⁸ Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 P142, Table 18.1

⁴⁹ Supporting People Data October 2015

⁵⁰ Supporting People Data October 2015

- The Housing Support Programme budget for 2014/15 is £7.28m. This funds 46 external providers that, when at full capacity are able to provide services for 4,857 vulnerable people at any given time.⁵¹
- In 2013/14 Wirral's Home Improvement Agency processed 3158 Jobs to support vulnerable people consisting of 1,295 Disabled Facilities Grants, 1,863 fast track minor adaptations.
- In September 2014 there were 651 applicants registered on Property Pool Plus that have requested an adapted home.⁵²
- Since the re-focus to a Homeless Prevention and Housing Options approach to homelessness in 2008, the number of statutory homeless acceptances decreased significantly from 467 in 2007/08 to 51 cases in 2009/10 (a reduction of 89%). However recent years saw a reversal of this trend with an increased demand on the service and a corresponding increase in statutory homeless acceptances to 165 cases in 2012/13 (an increase of 65% compared with the previous year).⁵³ In 2014/15, the number has reduced again to 100 cases that have been accepted under homeless legislation.
- In 2014/15 the Housing Options Team were able to prevent an average of 176 cases per quarter from becoming homeless, with an average of 58 cases per quarter (33%) assisted to remain in the home and an average of 118 cases per quarter (67%) assisted to find alternative accommodation.
- Of these cases prevented from becoming homeless, an average of 37 cases per quarter (21%) of them were due to interventions and assistance with accommodation in the private rented sector.
- In 2014/15, of the (100) cases where homelessness could not be prevented in the time available and who were accepted as unintentionally homeless, more than half - 54% were considered to be priority need because the household included dependent children. 12% of the statutory homeless acceptances were considered to be vulnerable primarily because of mental illness but mental illness was an underlying cause in other cases as well.
- In 2014/15, of those homeless applicants who were eligible, priority need and unintentionally homeless, over half the main applicants (57.57%) were within the 25-44 age group, with just over a quarter (25.75%) being in the 16-24 age group.⁵⁴
- The three main reasons for homelessness in Wirral in 2014/15 were violence (*The 'violence' category includes domestic violence, violence from other associates and racially motivated violence.*) (25%), the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (17%) and parents no longer willing to accommodate (11%).

⁵¹ Supporting People Data from Housing Strategy Action Plan

⁵² Property Pool Plus statistics – September 2014

⁵³ Housing Advice and Housing Options team statistics – October 2015

⁵⁴ P1E Data

- There is still an underlying low level incidence of rough sleeping, mostly by single people with complex needs, usually with problematic drug and alcohol use. The Rough Sleeper Estimate in Autumn 2014 estimated 5 rough sleepers.⁵⁵

Evidence: Supporting People Programme, Supported and Special Needs Housing Commissioning Strategy 2008 – 11, Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 and update 2010, Property Pool Plus data. Housing Advice and Housing Options team Statistics, P1E data, HCA IMS, Housing Strategy Action Plan

⁵⁵ Rough Sleeping Figures Autumn 2014, published 26th February 2015, found at - <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2014>

7 - Supporting employment, learning and skills through the delivery of housing programmes

The Evidence and Challenge

- Wirral still has the capacity to undergo continued economic growth, with a job density rate of only 58 jobs per 100 working age people.
- Although performing well in comparison to the Liverpool City Region (LCR) authorities, Wirral continues to have a higher percentage of people claiming out of work benefits than the regional and national averages with high concentrations in deprived areas. Wirral currently has 26,580 people claiming out-of-work benefits (November 2014 latest data); this includes Job Seekers, Incapacity Benefit/ESA and other income related benefits. This is approximately 13.5% of the working age population and has decreased by 2.2% since November 2012. Wirral is performing well in the percentage of people claiming out of working benefits when compared to LCR authorities. However, Wirral continues to perform behind the Regional and National averages at 11.8% and 9.7% respectively.
- Wirral's employment rate is currently 67.8% to December 2014 (latest figure). This is a decline of 2.2% since March 2014. This decline over recent months comes after a period of good performance for the Borough; in June 2013 the employment rate was at its highest point since December 2004.
- Earnings for full-time employees **living** in Wirral are higher than the North West average, at £497.80 per week and Wirral has the second highest earnings for employees in the LCR (Wirral previously had the highest earnings in the LCR). Earnings for full-time employees **working** in Wirral are significantly lower than for England but have surpassed the North West average for the first time since the statistics were recorded in 1997. Wirral has the third lowest median earnings by workplace in the Liverpool City Region at £485.60 per week, which is an increase on the 2014 figure of £477.80. However, the difference in performance between people living and working in Wirral implies that people living in Wirral are accessing high value employment outside of the borough and people working in Wirral are not in as highly paid employment.
- The percentage of people in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance in Wirral (expressed as a proportion of the resident working age population) is 1.6% compared to 1.8% for the North West and 1.9% for England. Even though Wirral performs well compared to the LCR and nationally, this is likely to be due to the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) across the country. Wirral's roll out of UC began in July 2014 and as of March 2015 there were 2,940 people claiming the benefit in Wirral, 68% of which are out of work.
- According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 (latest release), Wirral is the 60th most deprived of the 326 districts in England and is therefore in the bottom 20% nationally. The Employment domain of the IMD 2010 indicates that Wirral performs poorly on this indicator, being ranked 10th worst out of all districts (the bottom 3% nationally). The indices of deprivation are currently being updated for publication in summer 2015.

- According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 (latest release), Wirral is the 106th most deprived of the 326 districts in England and is therefore no longer in the bottom 20% nationally (as it was when previous IMDs were calculated in 2007 and 2010). On the Employment domain of the IMD 2015, Wirral is now ranked 42nd out of the 326 districts in England compared to 10th in 2010. Although this is an improvement, Wirral is still in the bottom 20% nationally, indicating that employment is still an area where Wirral struggles, compared to other local authorities in England.
- An average of 6.90% of young people in Wirral are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Ward level information from 2013 data showed stark differences in NEET between the Wirral wards. The gap between the highest and lowest NEET wards was 15.88%, with Clatterbridge ward having the lowest at 0.97% and Birkenhead & Tranmere the highest at 16.85%. In May 2012 the gap was 18.48%, which meant that NEET inequality decreased between 2012 and 2013.
- Investment of over £108m was secured and invested in improving over 13,000 former council homes between 2005 and April 2010.
- £134 million is being spent between 2011 and 2018 on developing affordable housing in Wirral, helping to creating employment and training opportunities for local businesses and people⁵⁶.
- The HMRI programme and the subsequent Transition Fund invested £108,643,113 from 2003 to 2013 and facilitated a range of initiatives including the provision of Neighbourhood and Environmental Wardens, revitalising green spaces, home improvements, and the provision of new homes to improve local communities.
- Wirral was successful in securing £1.4 million funding through the Local Authority New Build Programme as part of a £2.8 million scheme, to develop 23 units new affordable homes. This scheme provided opportunities for local employment and supported the appointment of 2 apprentices with the build contractor.
- Wirral has supported 2 private developers to secure £1,843,536 funding to 'Kickstart' private housing developments that have been unable to complete.
- The Council is investing £1.5m to support the development of 100 units of affordable housing with Registered Provider partners. It has also allocated £3m towards delivering 102 units of extra care housing with partners.
- Wirral Waters is a £4.5 billion mixed use regeneration scheme covering 500 acres of docklands with the potential for over 20,000 jobs during the lifetime of the scheme. It was designated Enterprise Zone status by the Government in 2011. A total of 38,000sqm of dwelling floorspace has been approved.
- As part of Wirral Waters, work commenced in 2012 on land remediation for the International Trade Centre. This is a 228,300sqm phased development with the potential for 3,000 jobs; it is the first of its kind in Europe. Following this in 2014, work began on land preparation for an Advanced Supplier Park for the automotive

⁵⁶ Wirral Council Affordable Housing Database

and energy industry and also on a new campus for Wirral Met College which is to be a Built Environment, Skills and Enterprise Centre.

- By September 2014, 54 cases had been approved through the Government's Mortgage Rescue scheme which was fast tracked in Wirral in 2009, enabling these residents to remain in their homes.
- Up to May 2015, Wirral Council had supported businesses with 13 Regional Growth Fund Projects through the Offshore Regional Growth Fund (RGF) Project, securing £17.6m of private sector investment within the borough, creating and safeguarding over 850 jobs. It had also supported businesses with 31 RGF Projects through the Liverpool City Region Business Growth Grants, securing over £25m of private sector investment within the borough and creating and safeguarding over 900 jobs.

Evidence: Wirral's Economic Recovery Plan, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Stock Transfer Promises report, NOMISWEB, JSNA