

Are you going in the right direction?

Get your bearings with a housing strategy health check

We're used to managing change but 2008 has been a challenge, with 2009 looking no different. The economic situation has seen a dramatic shift from boom to bust, regional and local government reforms plough on and the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenant Services Authority are entering the fray. With so much happening can you be sure your housing strategy is taking you in the right direction?



At HQN we're acutely aware of the limited capacity and resources in housing to respond to this level of change. But we also know that not to take stock may prove costly in the long term: wasted staff time and effort, financially and for your communities. It's for this reason we're offering a personalised service that requires only a small, but focussed, input from you and your partners, but with the potential for considerable return.

WHAT WILL A HEALTH CHECK INCLUDE?

- We will provide you with a short questionnaire to complete prior to the check. This will be focussed on extracting critical information about your area, vision and priorities, partnerships and delivery. It will not take hours to complete
- We will undertake a short review of the information you provide, using our unique assessment matrix that combines current policy with best practice. This will be provided prior to our day with you
- With you we will agree the key stakeholders who need to be involved in a conversation about strategic direction: elected members, senior non-housing managers, chief executives of your ALMO or LSVT and housing associations, service user advocates. You provide the contact details and we will provide the invitations

- We will spend a day with you and stakeholders to:
 - Present challenges based on our review
 - Facilitate discussion about these and the wider operational context
 - Identify opportunities for action
 - Prioritise action for the next year and beyond

- We will give you a short and objective written view of where the local authority needs to improve its strategic approach to housing following our time with you.

WHAT BENEFITS WILL A HEALTH CHECK BRING?

Beyond the confidence that you're going in the right direction, the health check will:

- Identify priority areas for improvement in your strategic approach. This could range from partnerships to knowledge to understanding of value for money

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- Give you an up-to-date perspective on the policy issues, existing and emerging, that you should be planning for and responding to, from the role of the local authority in strategic commissioning and leading a provider market to planning for longer-term outcomes
- Provide an opportunity for you to bring elected members, service managers and external partners together to get up to speed with the current agenda, and to have a strategic conversation
- Enable you to identify the work that is required to respond to the 'single conversation' with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and to prepare for Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

WHY SHOULD I SEEK SUPPORT FROM HQN?

Our Strategic Housing Service is in a unique position, combining experience and expertise from the best people in the sector with the skills to get the most out of you, and those you work with, over a very short period of time.

We are specialists in:

- Enabling the development of regional, sub-regional and local housing strategies and plans
- Working with elected members, directors, chief executives and local strategic partnerships to develop vision, direction and governance
- Directing and managing all forms of housing service for all types of local authorities, in every region
- Supporting local authorities to improve housing services, including preparing for inspection by the Audit Commission and working with a number of 'three star and excellent' local authorities
- Understanding cost and value from strategic housing services, having developed the first framework in the country

- 'Excellence' in strategic housing; we've just researched this on behalf of the Audit Commission.

We will also bring an up-to-date policy perspective, informed not just by paper but by conversations at a national and regional level, including with CLG and the Audit Commission, regional assemblies and development agencies.

We are objective and will bring external but constructive challenge and support.

WHAT WILL IT COST?

Very little of your time in preparation: we estimate half a day to respond to our questionnaire and provide stakeholder details.

Our support will cost £1,500 plus VAT, including expenses. Members of our Strategic Excellence Network (SEN) can claim a 10% discount.

We are also able to offer a sub-regional health check if appropriate; cost dependent on the number of local authorities involved and status of the joint strategy.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

For more information and to book the service please contact Russell Helms on **0845 4747004** or email **russell@hqnetwork.co.uk**

For an informal chat about the service and whether it will suit you please contact our Executive Director, Gill Leng, on **07872 198173**, or email Gill at **gill.leng@hqnetwork.co.uk**

DID YOU KNOW?

We offer a range of other tailored services to support local authorities, and sub-regional partnerships to develop their strategic approach to housing. Please talk to Russ or Gill for further information or see our 'in-house support' section at **www.strategynetwork.org.uk**

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