

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 20 November 2014  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Communities  
**PORTFOLIO:** Community Safety  
**SUBJECT:** Anti-Social Behaviour across Housing Tenures  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the work that the Council undertakes to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve conditions in a range of housing tenures and highlight the new Council powers recently introduced.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board**

- 1) **note the content of the report and in particular paragraph 4.2.**
- 2) **delegate to the Strategic Director – Communities the right to exercise the Council’s functions under Part 4 Chapter 3 (closure of premises associated with nuisance or disorder etc.) of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 other than those reserved to the Chief Executive or person nominated by the Chief Executive.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Members will be aware that a range of reports relating to anti-social behaviour have previously been discussed at the Executive Board. In particular, focusing on private landlords and a range of issues surrounding homelessness.

3.2 **Housing Tenure in Halton**

3.2.1 Figures from the 2011 Census reveal that 4,752 households rent their home from a private landlord or letting agency. This equates to 8.9% of all households living in the Borough which (along with Knowsley) is the lowest proportion of private rented stock for all Merseyside and Cheshire authorities and the fourth lowest for all North West authorities. Registered Social Landlords (RSL) dwellings totalled 13,752 or 26% of the total stock, one of the

highest percentages in the north west due to the New Town.

3.2.2 Appendix A compares the size and growth of the private rented sector in Halton and neighbouring local authority areas between 2001 and 2011. As shown all areas experienced high levels of growth in this period. While Halton's growth at 157% is one of the highest it appears that those areas with the lowest proportions of private rented stock experienced the highest levels of sector growth. Over the same period RSL stock witnessed a 15% reduction, due in large part to sales and redevelopment at Castlefields, which reinforces the importance and increasing role of the private rented sector in meeting housing needs. Appendix A provides more information relating to other Boroughs as a comparison.

3.2.3 The vast majority of private landlords in Halton are responsible landlords who have a vested interest in maintaining their properties to a good standard and taking appropriate action against tenants who commit anti-social behaviour or breach other terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement. However, like other areas, there is a small minority of landlords whose properties do not meet minimum standards and/or whose management practices are poor. This can be equally attributed to Registered social landlords.

3.2.4 When issues do arise in the sector they tend to relate to one or more of the following problems:

- Private sector tenants living in poorly maintained properties;
- Poorly maintained empty properties;
- Tenants committing anti-social behaviour;
- Poor and/or illegal management standards;

These problems can be exacerbated if the landlord does not live locally, is difficult to trace and/or for whatever reason refuses to take appropriate action to address identified issues.

The following paragraphs describe the authority's current and planned approach to these issues.

### 3.3 **Tenants committing anti-social behaviour**

3.3.1 Private tenancies are, in the main, assured short hold tenancies which give the tenant the right to live in the property for a fixed period of time (usually 6 or 12 months). Following this period the tenancy reverts to a periodic tenancy which is automatically renewed usually on a month by month basis.

3.3.2 Landlords cannot evict an assured short hold tenant within the fixed term period without a reason (i.e. rent arrears or other breach of tenancy conditions), however, once the initial fixed term has expired

landlords can evict tenants relatively easily even if the terms of the tenancy have not been breached. Consequently private rented tenancies are less secure than most other tenancy types. Landlords do not have to include a term prohibiting unacceptable behaviour in their tenancy agreement, although in practice most tenancy agreements include this as standard.

3.3.3 The Community Safety team work closely with the Police and Youth Offending Team to take appropriate action under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 against perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Remedies have included issuing Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, Parenting Orders, injunctions and closure orders (but see below under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 for the current position). The team also work closely with other relevant Council services such as the Inspiring Families project to tackle the issue and ensure that responses are appropriate and effective.

3.3.4 Where the perpetrator of anti-social behaviour is a private tenant the team will initially write to the landlord to inform them of the problem and offer advice and assistance as often the threat of being evicted from their home is enough to force the perpetrator to improve their behaviour. If the problems do persist the team will take appropriate action against the tenant.

3.3.5 A recent survey of private landlords revealed that around 35% of those responding to the survey had experienced problems with tenants causing anti-social behaviour and 72% had had problems with tenants paying the rent. It is clear from comments that by and large landlords are aware of the correct procedure to deal with these issues and are willing to use these procedures if they have to. Nonetheless there is scope to further promote the support offered by the Community Safety Team via the Private Landlords Forum and the "I am a Landlord" webpage.

#### 3.4 Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Reform of anti-social behaviour powers

The Government has recently introduced new legislative provisions to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). The commencement date for most of the new ASB tools and powers was 20th October 2014. However, the provisions relating to injunctions are not yet in force. This Act introduces new powers that may be useful in dealing with problem premises.

Parts 1 to 6 of the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014 has created new tools and powers that organisations are able to use in order to deal with anti-social behaviour in their communities thereby replacing a number of other existing tools and powers.

One of the purposes of the Act is to ensure that any response to anti-social behaviour is victim focussed. In light of this it is important to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to dealing with ASB so that local areas can meet the needs of victims of ASB.

### 3.5 Civil injunction (Part 1 of the Act)

The injunction under Part 1 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is a civil power which can be applied for to deal with anti-social individuals. The injunction can offer fast and effective protection for victims and communities and set a clear standard of behaviour for perpetrators, stopping the person's behaviour from escalating.

3.6 Although the injunction is a civil power, it is still a formal sanction and many professionals will want to consider informal approaches before resorting to court action, especially in the case of under 18s. However, where informal approaches have not worked or professionals decide that a formal response is needed more quickly, they should be free to do so.

### 3.7 **Applicants**

3.7.1 A number of agencies can apply for the injunction to ensure that the body best placed to lead on a specific case can do so. These are:

- A local council;
- A housing provider
- The chief officer of police for the local area;
- The chief constable of the British Transport Police;
- Transport for London;
- The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales;
- NHS Protect and NHS Protect (Wales).

3.7.2 For anti-social behaviour in a housing context the nuisance or annoyance test will apply, that is, where the conduct is capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises or the conduct is capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person. Only social landlords, local councils or the police will be able to apply for an injunction under these provisions in the legislation. In the case of social landlords only, "housing-related" means directly or indirectly relating to their housing management function.

3.7.3 The injunction can be applied for by the police, local councils and social landlords against perpetrators in social housing, the private-rented sector and owner-occupiers. This means that it can be used against perpetrators who are not even tenants of the social landlord who is applying for the order.

3.7.4 The injunction can also be used in situations where the perpetrator has allowed another person to engage in anti-social behaviour, as opposed to actively engaging in such behaviour themselves. For example, in a case where another person, such as a visitor or lodger, is or has been behaving anti-socially, the injunction could be used against the problem visitor, lodger or owner if applicable. An agency seeking to apply for the injunction must produce evidence (to the civil standard of proof, that is, 'on the balance of probabilities') and satisfy the court that it is both 'just and convenient' to grant the order.

### 3.8 **Closure Power** (Part 4 Chapter 3 of the Act)

3.8.1 The power comes in two stages: the closure notice and the closure order which are intrinsically linked. The closure notice can be used by the council or the police out of court. Following the issuing of a closure notice, an application must be made to the magistrates' court for a closure order, unless the closure notice has been cancelled.

#### 3.8.2 Closure Notice

Closure notices are very short term instruments (lasting up to 24 hours or 48 hours). They can be extended by the courts for a period of up to three months (which can be further extended to a maximum of six months) by the issue of closure orders. The purpose of closure notices is to prevent nuisance or disorder continuing at premises.

3.8.3 A closure notice may prohibit access (a) by all persons except those specified, or by all persons except those of a specified description; (b) at all times, or at all times except those specified; (c) in all circumstances, or in all circumstances except those specified. However, a closure notice may not prohibit access by (a) people who habitually live on the premises, or (b) the owner of the premises.

3.8.4 If a closure notice is issued it is mandatory that an application for a closure order be made to the magistrates' court. The grounds on which the court may make a closure order are wider than the grounds on which a closure notice may be served. These are (a) that a person has engaged, or (if the order is not made) is likely to engage, in disorderly, offensive or criminal behaviour on the premises, or (b) that the use of the premises has resulted, or (if the order is not made) is likely to result, in serious nuisance to members of the public, or (c) that there has been, or (if the order is not made) is likely to be, disorder near those premises associated with the use of those premises. Whatever the ground applied for the court must be satisfied that the order is necessary to prevent the

behaviour, nuisance or disorder from continuing, recurring or occurring.

3.8.5 It is also worth noting that (unlike a closure notice) a closure order may prohibit access by (a) people who habitually live on the premises, or (b) the owner of the premises.

### 3.9.1 The test

A closure notice can be issued for 24 hours if the council or police officer (of at least the rank of inspector) is satisfied on reasonable grounds:

that the use of particular premises has resulted, or (if the notice is not issued) is likely soon to result, in nuisance to members of the public; or

that there has been, or (if the notice is not issued) is likely soon to be, disorder near those premises associated with the use of those premises, and that the notice is necessary to prevent the nuisance or disorder from continuing, recurring or occurring.

3.9.2 The closure notice can be issued in the first instance for 48 hours or extended from 24 hours up to a maximum of 48 hours by the council's chief executive officer (head of paid service) or designate thereof, or by a police superintendent.

A closure notice may not prohibit access by:

- (a) people who habitually live on the premises, or
- (b) the owner of the premises,

3.9.3 The Community Safety Manager is currently developing a multi-agency protocol for the use of the new tools and powers.

3.9.4 The relevant delegations need to be put in place to enable the Council's functions to be exercised. The Chief Executive is designated under the Act to be the person who may sign a 48 hour notices or extend 24 hour notices and therefore requires no further authority. The Chief Executive is also authorised to designate a person who may also carry out the functions reserved to the Chief Executive under section 77(2)(b) and 77(4)(b) of the Act. However, a delegation from the Executive Board is required relating to (1) issuing 24 hour notices on behalf of the Council and (2) generally to carry out the functions of the Council relating to closure orders. Item ii) of the recommendation to this report will achieve these goals.

### 3.10 **Community Trigger** (Part 6 and Schedule 4 of the Act)

3.10.1 The Community Trigger is a process which allows members of the

community to ask the Community Safety Partnership to review their response to complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour. This expression is shorthand for the local involvement and accountability provisions in the Act.

3.10.2 Victims will be able to use the Community Trigger to request action, starting with a review of their case. Agencies including councils, the police, local health teams and registered providers of social housing will have a duty to undertake a case review when someone requests one and the case meets a locally defined threshold.

3.10.3 The Community Trigger can also be used by any person on behalf of a victim, for example a family member, friend, carer, councillor, Member of Parliament or other professional person. This is intended to ensure that all victims are able to use the Community Trigger. However, the victim's consent should be sought by the person using the Community Trigger on their behalf.

3.10.4 The Community Trigger can be used by a person of any age, and agencies should make it as accessible as possible to all victims.

### 3.11 **Community remedies**

3.11.1 Community remedies are matters for the police to deal with but the Council is involved (under section 101) as a consultee in the process of developing the 'community remedy document'. The community remedy document is a list of actions any of which might, in the opinion of the local policing body, be appropriate in a particular case to be carried out by a person who has engaged in anti-social behaviour or has committed an offence, and is to be dealt with for that behaviour or offence without court proceedings.

#### 3.11.2 **Reporting Thresholds**

A complainant has reported the same problem 3 or more times in the past 6 months to the Council, Police, or their Landlord, and inappropriate action has been taken in line with the relevant agencies policy and procedure.

Or

Different complainants have made reports about the same problem 5 times in the past 6 months to the Council, Police, or their Landlord, and inappropriate action has been taken in line with the relevant agencies policy and procedure.

#### 3.11.3 **What is not suitable for a trigger**

If someone has reported Anti-Social Behaviour and received a

service but the problems and the investigation are on-going;  
***They will be advised to contact the agency they are working with to tell them what is happening***

If someone has reported Anti-Social Behaviour and received a service but they're unhappy with the service received or action taken;  
***They will be advised to submit a complaint under the agency's complaints procedures***

#### 3.11.4 **Response to complaints about anti-social behaviour.**

Section 104 is actually about the review of responses to complaints. In a case where a person has made a complaint about anti-social behaviour in a particular local government area, the relevant bodies in that area must carry out a review of the response to that behaviour (an 'ASB case review') if (a) that person, or any other person, makes an application for such a review, and (b) the relevant bodies decide that the threshold for a review is met. This is also being referred to as the 'community trigger'. The Council is a relevant body and ASB case reviews will be carried out jointly with other relevant bodies. Review procedures must be put in place. Section 105 provides that the relevant bodies (apart from the Council) are (1) the chief officer of police, (2) each clinical commissioning group within the area, and (3) any local providers of social housing who are among the relevant bodies by virtue of the co-option arrangements made in relation to the Council's area.

### 3.12 **Landlord Accreditation Scheme**

3.12.1 As well as the regulatory role of the local authority in enforcing minimum housing standards the Council also strives to drive up standards in the sector by encouraging landlords to apply for accredited status through the Landlord Accreditation Scheme. The scheme also aims to build positive relationships with private landlords. This is particularly important in helping the authority to prevent statutory homelessness and minimising the need to temporarily house homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation resulting from the interim duty to accommodate while investigations are carried out which can present a drain on Council resources.

3.12.2 Halton's Landlord Accreditation Scheme has been in existence since June 2006 and was developed in conjunction with landlords who attend the Private Landlords Forum (see 3.7.12). The scheme is managed by the Landlord Accreditation Officer whose post is located in the Housing Solutions team. The Officer also has responsibility for overseeing the administration of the Bond Guarantee Scheme (BGS) described in 3.7.8.



3.12.3 The scheme is voluntary as are all accreditation schemes throughout the country (whether these accredit the landlord or the property). Legally landlords cannot be compelled to apply for accreditation and schemes are not intended to be used as an enforcement tool. While there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to operate accreditation schemes many do so as they recognise the benefits of building positive relationships with landlords and supporting them to understand and fulfil their responsibilities. There are many benefits to landlords who qualify for accreditation including opportunities to fast track benefit applications, insurance discounts, seminar invitations and general guidance and support.

3.12.4 Membership to the accreditation scheme currently stands at 48 members, covering 170 properties. The authority has also developed a Managing Agent Accreditation Scheme. Two local agents are currently going through the application process, collectively they have management responsibility for almost 330 properties. This is described in more detail below).

3.12.5 In order to qualify for accreditation, landlords must comply with two tests:

#### Property test

The landlord's portfolio of properties must meet the statutory minimum standard for housing. This is currently measured by the Housing, Health and Rating System which is a risk based evaluation tool which assesses 29 categories of hazard (see 3.4.3.1). Properties that are found to contain serious hazards (known as "category 1" hazards) do not meet minimum standards.

Of the 16 standards within the code for the scheme, 12 relate specifically to the property. Property standards are therefore key to the landlord achieving accredited status.

#### Landlord test

The landlord must be deemed to be a "fit and proper" person to rent properties. In deciding whether the landlord is a fit and proper person the Landlord Accreditation Officer takes into account:

- any previous convictions relating to violence, sexual offences, drugs and fraud;
- whether the landlord has broken any laws relating to housing or landlord and tenant issues;
- whether the landlord has been found guilty of unlawful discrimination; and
- whether the landlord has previously managed houses in multiple occupation that have broken any approved code of

practice.

- 3.12.6 On receiving an application for accreditation, the Landlord Accreditation Officer will notify Council departments who deal with complaints and enforcement. The notification includes a full disclosure of all properties listed on the application. This is likely to highlight if any “problem” properties have been omitted from a landlord’s application, although to date no landlords applying for the scheme have attempted to exclude any properties from their application. It will also help to identify whether the landlord is a “fit and proper” person to become an accredited landlord.
- 3.12.7 In most cases, the Landlord Accreditation Officer will then make arrangements to inspect all of the landlord’s portfolio of properties. If, upon inspection, only one of the properties fails to meet minimum standards the application for accreditation is rejected unless the landlord takes the necessary action required to bring that property up to standard. Consequently, the scheme contains a built in incentive for landlords to ensure that all their properties meet the required standards.
- 3.12.8 The Environmental Health team has recently installed new software which will enable the team to monitor complaints more effectively. This will be used to identify any hotspot areas. It is intended that officers will then undertake regular visits to hotspot areas to identify and take appropriate action against potential problem properties. The new system will also enable the team to promote their services more effectively by targeting identified hotspot areas.
- 3.12.9 The team were hoping to improve communications with landlords and tenants by creating dedicated “I am a landlord” and “I am a private tenant” webpages on the Halton BC website with links to the Home Page. The webpages will inform landlords and tenants of their rights and responsibilities and advise on appropriate services and how to access them.
- 3.12.10 The Council holds a database of known privately rented properties but not all properties are included. This can sometimes cause a delay in following up any problems as there is a need to trace the owner of the property via Land Registry for which there is a small fee. In order to minimise delays and the cost involved in this the team propose to develop a simple voluntary registration scheme for private landlords to register details of the properties they own. This would be advertised in the local press, Inside Halton and on the Council’s website. Although voluntary the scheme would be promoted in such a way that there is a clear expectation that landlords will voluntarily register their details.
- 3.12.11 The local authority has the power to investigate complaints of harassment and illegal eviction and to instigate court proceedings

on the tenant's behalf, however, complaints against private landlords tend to relate to the condition of the property rather than management issues such as harassment or illegal eviction. There have been a couple of cases that the Environmental Health team have started to follow up but, in both cases, the tenant withdrew the allegations.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 A new policy for Closure Powers will need to be agreed as contained within this report.

4.2 Appendix B provides some case studies on how the team has tackled ASB and it is proposed that the Council and its partners utilise the new powers to target persistent problematic tenants. Work is underway to consider how the Council and its partners can use the powers as a deterrent mechanism.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 At this stage, the financial implications are outlined in the body of the report will not require additional financial resources.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Research suggests that poor housing conditions can have an adverse impact on educational attainment.

##### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None arising from this report.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Poor housing conditions can have an adverse effect on health, consequently, improving the housing stock can bring about positive health benefits.

##### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The safety of housing is a key consideration in assessing whether properties meet minimum standards.

##### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Improving housing conditions has a positive effect on the visual appearance of neighbourhoods and a positive impact on climate change.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Not applicable

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Safer PPB Report: “Scrutiny Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector” 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2012	Municipal Buildings	Strategic Director, Communities
Safer PPB Report: “Scrutiny Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector” 13 <sup>th</sup> November 2012	Municipal Buildings	Strategic Director, Communities
Executive Board Report: “Scrutiny Review of Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector” 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2012	Municipal Buildings	Strategic Director, Communities

## Growth in the Private Rented Sector 2001 to 2011

Area	2001 Census			2011 Census			Growth in private rented sector 2001-2011 (number)	Growth in private rented sector 2001-2011 (%age)	Growth in number of households 2001-2011 (number)	Growth in number of households 2001-2011 (%age)
	Total households	Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (number)	Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (%age)	Total households	Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (number)	Rented from a private landlord or letting agency (%age)				
Halton	47948	1843	3.8	53312	4752	8.9	2909	157.8	5364	11.2
Warrington	78030	3294	4.2	85140	8683	10.2	5389	163.6	7110	9.1
Cheshire East	147144	9069	6.2	159441	18244	11.4	9175	101.2	12297	8.4
Cheshire West	132887	7554	5.7	141442	16021	11.3	8467	112.1	8555	6.4
<b>Total Cheshire</b>	<b>406009</b>	<b>21760</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>439335</b>	<b>47700</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>25940</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>33326</b>	<b>8.2</b>
Knowsley	60553	2282	3.8	61323	5488	8.9	3206	140.5	770	1.3
Liverpool	187865	23243	12.4	206515	44912	21.7	21669	93.2	18650	9.9
St Helens	72697	2865	3.9	75736	7056	9.3	4191	146.3	3039	4.2
Sefton	116847	8911	7.6	117930	14552	12.3	5641	63.3	1083	0.9
Wirral	133345	10827	8.1	140583	20636	14.7	9809	90.6	7238	5.4
<b>Total Merseyside</b>	<b>571307</b>	<b>48128</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>602087</b>	<b>92644</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>44516</b>	<b>92.5</b>	<b>30780</b>	<b>5.4</b>
<b>North West</b>	<b>2812789</b>	<b>215464</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>3009549</b>	<b>424667</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>209203</b>	<b>97.1</b>	<b>196760</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>20451427</b>	<b>1798864</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>22063368</b>	<b>3401675</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>1602811</b>	<b>89.1</b>	<b>1611941</b>	<b>7.9</b>

**Private Rented Sector Case Studies**

**Case studies for enforcement activity**

**Case study 1**

A three bedroomed property in Runcorn was reported to the Environmental Protection team as the tenants had not had hot water or heating for a couple of weeks, and the landlord wasn't assisting. There were two tenants at the property.

Officers visited the property and confirmed that there were issues. In order to resolve the matter quickly Officers contacted the landlord to advise that the work was required immediately. She failed to cooperate and took no action. Further discussions with the tenant confirmed that no works had been carried out.

A Statutory Notice was served on the landlord to require the works to be completed.

The landlord failed to comply with notice and no improvements were made therefore a decision was made to refer the matter to the Council's legal department. Consequently the landlord was prosecuted for failing to comply with the legislation and the magistrates imposed a fine. A new boiler has now been installed.

**Case study 2**

A sub-standard House in Multiple Occupation was brought to the team's attention by the Council Tax department. The landlords had been letting rooms in a commercial premise. There were issues with fire Safety and lack of facilities for the tenants. This was brought to the landlords' attention and they were advised of the standards that are expected in a House in Multiple Occupation.

The landlords worked closely with an Architect, Environmental Health and Building Control to ensure that the premises were refurbished quickly and to a high standard to ensure the safety of the tenants. New fire systems were installed, new windows and doors and the general lay-out altered which resulted improvements to facilities at the premises.

The works have now been completed and eight tenants are benefiting from the new facilities.

**Rent arrears**

Client A approached Housing Solutions as her property had become unaffordable due to a job loss. She was in receipt of Local Housing

Allowance, however her entitlement did not cover the full rent amount and so created a shortfall that was unmanageable (£60 per month). The tenant had been maintaining the rent but was beginning to struggle and so wanted help rehousing. A discussion with her landlord led her to believe he wasn't willing to negotiate on the rent. Having advised the landlord of our involvement with Client A and informing him of the local housing allowance rate he was willing to reduce the rent in order to make the shortfall more manageable and a new 12 month tenancy agreement has been signed.

### **Bond Guarantee Scheme**

Client B suffered a marital breakup and when the couple split the mortgaged property they owned was subject to repossession proceedings. Client B had custody of his three children, one of which recently became a mother herself creating a fourth dependent child within the household.

Client B approached the Council for assistance with his homeless situation. The quickest and most effective homeless prevention tool for this family was the Bond Guarantee Scheme (BGS). Client B was able to locate a property in the most convenient area for him and his children with regards to proximity to schools, family support network etc. The BGS provided the landlord with a bond and also set up direct payment of Local Housing Allowance, which helped in persuading the landlord to accept Client B despite his adverse credit history.

Client B and his family were in settled accommodation for 17 months, with no issues, however a change in the client's circumstances affected his benefits and resulted in a shortfall in the rental payments which he was unable to meet. As the client had come through the BGS, the landlord knew she could make contact with a designated officer within the Council at an early stage to highlight the issues. Contact was made with the tenant by this officer to gather further information. This was used in addition to the background information already held to make a referral to the welfare rights team. They were quickly able to use this information to work with Client B and ensure he was receiving the correct benefits he was entitled to, which in turn allowed him to get his rental payments back on track. The client and his family were therefore able to remain in the property and the tenancy is still continuing successfully to date.