



Housing Grants

Community & Housing Service Plan 2008-09

Introduction

This Service Plan sets out the priorities, objectives and targets for the Private Sector Housing Assistance Service for 2007/08.

The Service Plan is informed by the Council's corporate priorities and foundations for improvement. Other Service issues have been identified via either a risk assessment or another external source, e.g. Inspection or Audit recommendations.

The Plan gives direction to the service in terms of the Corporate priorities which will impact upon the services, determining our compliance and contribution to assisting the Council in delivering the Corporate Plan. It also sets out the Directorate priorities and drivers for change; for example the Housing Strategy will reflect the Welsh Assembly Government plan for Better Homes for People in Wales.

Monitoring and delivery of this plan will be robust in accordance with the Council's corporate performance arrangements and our own Directorate arrangements which will both inform and involve staff.

This Service Plan provides an opportunity to comment on the issues contained within and to debate within the service areas ideas for change and further improvements.

Comments for Improvement of this plan are welcomed and should be sent to the Service Manager

Signed	Signed
Head of Customer and Housing	Service Manager
.....

1. What we do: Purpose of the service

The Council's Housing Assistance Service seeks to help vulnerable people who may be particularly at risk of suffering health and safety problems as a result of poor housing conditions or housing conditions which do not meet their needs and they do not have the resources or support to undertake remedial action themselves.

The service has a key role in delivering the following corporate priorities and Directorate objectives:

- Facilitating Hospital Discharge
- Facilitating Domiciliary Care
- Providing Home Security
- Keeping Homes Safe
- Keeping Homes Well Maintained
- Keeping Homes Warm
- Ensuring Suitable Homes are Adapted
- Supporting Area Renewal in Deeside
- Promoting Energy Efficiency
- Tackling Climate Change

Over the coming year the focus of the service will be on:

- Improving Housing Quality in the Private Sector
- Improving Energy Efficiency
- Promoting Affordable Warmth
- Promoting Safety in the Home
- Supporting Neighbourhood Crime Prevention
- Supporting Disabled Persons and Providing Adaptations in the Home

2. Where we are now: Baseline statement

This section of the service plan provides a summary of where we currently stand as a service, in relation to:

- Our strengths and limitations
- Our performance
- Our recent achievements and successes

The 'baseline statement' draws on a number of sources, including:

- The annual risk assessment carried out for the service as part of the Wales Programme for Improvement
- The findings of a SLOT exercise undertaken among managers and staff
- Outcomes from Audit Commission

We also list some of the key challenges faced by the service over the coming year. These might be linked to national policy priorities, corporate priorities, and statutory or legislative requirements. They are reflected in the key priorities set for the service over the coming year, and detailed in Section 3.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Experienced staffLoyaltyCustomer focusedQuality serviceCaring OfficersConsistent approachClear guidelines	<p>Limitations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited financial resourcesShortage of Contractors
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Discretion to change policyIntroduction of Equity loansNew structure	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Lack of adequate funding

Our performance

Although the Service continues to receive good feedback through the customer satisfaction surveys it undertakes it is aware of negative perceptions generated through demand/ budget disparity, lengthy delays to enquiries and poor communication with clients and contractors.

Our achievements

The service has developed sound systems for better budgetary control recently and it has developed a new Housing Renewal Policy aimed at modernising and refocusing the Service.

Key risks

Rising demand for Disabled Facilities Grants places extreme budgetary pressure on the Service and can compromise the Council's wider Private Sector Housing Objectives.

The introduction of the Deeside renewal Area is a new risk requiring sound management and extreme political sensitivity towards local community wants and needs.

The view of others

The service has made a number of strides forward in the last year and this must continue to be built upon.

The Service is seen as committed with caring officers who will try hard to match outputs to customer needs.

What this means for us

The Service is to modernise its approach and move away from a Grant led culture to a Housing Assistance led culture. This means developing policies to support people practically and financially improve and repair their homes to meet their needs. There will be less reliance on grant aid, more advice and professional services.

Financial and management control systems will improve and the service will develop its partnerships internally and externally.

3. Key priorities

The key priorities for the service reflect those areas where we need to concentrate in particular over the coming year, to ensure that we:

- Contribute to corporate and directorate priorities and targets
- Address identified risks at corporate, directorate and service level
- Meet existing and emerging statutory requirements
- Meet the challenges we have identified and set out in our baseline statement

The key priorities for the service over the coming year are as follows:

Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People
Although the Council will consider the needs of all groups it will specifically support people who demonstrate that they have increased vulnerability and heightened need for support and assistance.
Vulnerable groups which will be targeted for assistance are those who may be particularly at risk of suffering health and safety

problems as a result of poor housing conditions in situations where they do not have the resources or support to undertake remedial action themselves.

Such key groups which Flintshire County Council will consider as priorities are:

- Families with children;
- Households of older people beyond working age;
- Those suffering from long term illness and disability.

Vulnerable groups are identified as those who are in receipt of one or more of the principal income related or disability benefits.

- **Households in receipt of pension credit are defined as vulnerable.**
- **Households in receipt of either working tax credit which includes a disability element, or child tax credit, will be defined as vulnerable if they have a relevant income of less than £14,200 (this limit is irrelevant if they receive other eligible benefits);**
- **Households in receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seekers Allowance which includes a disability premium are defined as vulnerable.**

The Council will specifically meet its duties to provide Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and it will consider the provision of wider assistance to Disabled People which will be considered in the light of vulnerability.

The Council will consider how to provide support and assistance to all minority groups and it will not discriminate in the way it provides

assistance under this policy on the grounds of race, gender, age or religion.

The Council is particularly concerned with providing assistance with respect to the following matters:

Maintaining Housing Quality

Vulnerable Owners of poor quality homes will be able to apply for housing assistance under the terms of this policy. Poor quality homes are those that fail to meet the Flintshire Housing Quality Standard.

Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

All householders will be eligible for consideration of energy efficiency grants and advice and will be directed through the Council's Energy Efficiency Manager to access mainstream energy efficiency grants. Such as EEC grants, HEES and Health through Warmth. All vulnerable grant applicants will receive an energy efficiency package on top of the standard grant eligible works. Energy efficiency measures available will top up standards of insulation and heating and help to make domestic fuel consumption more efficient. All energy efficiency measures will be tied into the undertaking of wider works of improvement.

Crime Prevention

All householders will be eligible to receive crime prevention advice and will be directed through the Council's crime prevention partnership for the provision of advice, assistance and other crime prevention services. All vulnerable grant applicants will receive a target hardening package in addition to the standard grant eligible works. Target hardening will improve window locks and door locks.

Home Accident Prevention

All householders will be eligible to receive information, advice and assistance with respect to the prevention of accidents in the home. Discretionary grants will be specifically available to remove safety hazards in and around the home and the Council will work with RoSPA, the Fire Service and other service providers to develop home accident prevention packages which may be available for vulnerable applicants in addition to standard eligible works.

Hospital Discharge

Specific provision will be made available in conjunction with partners to ensure small adaptation works can be undertaken quickly to enable people to leave hospital quickly and safely.

Empty Homes

Owners of empty homes will be able to apply for assistance to bring them back into occupation.

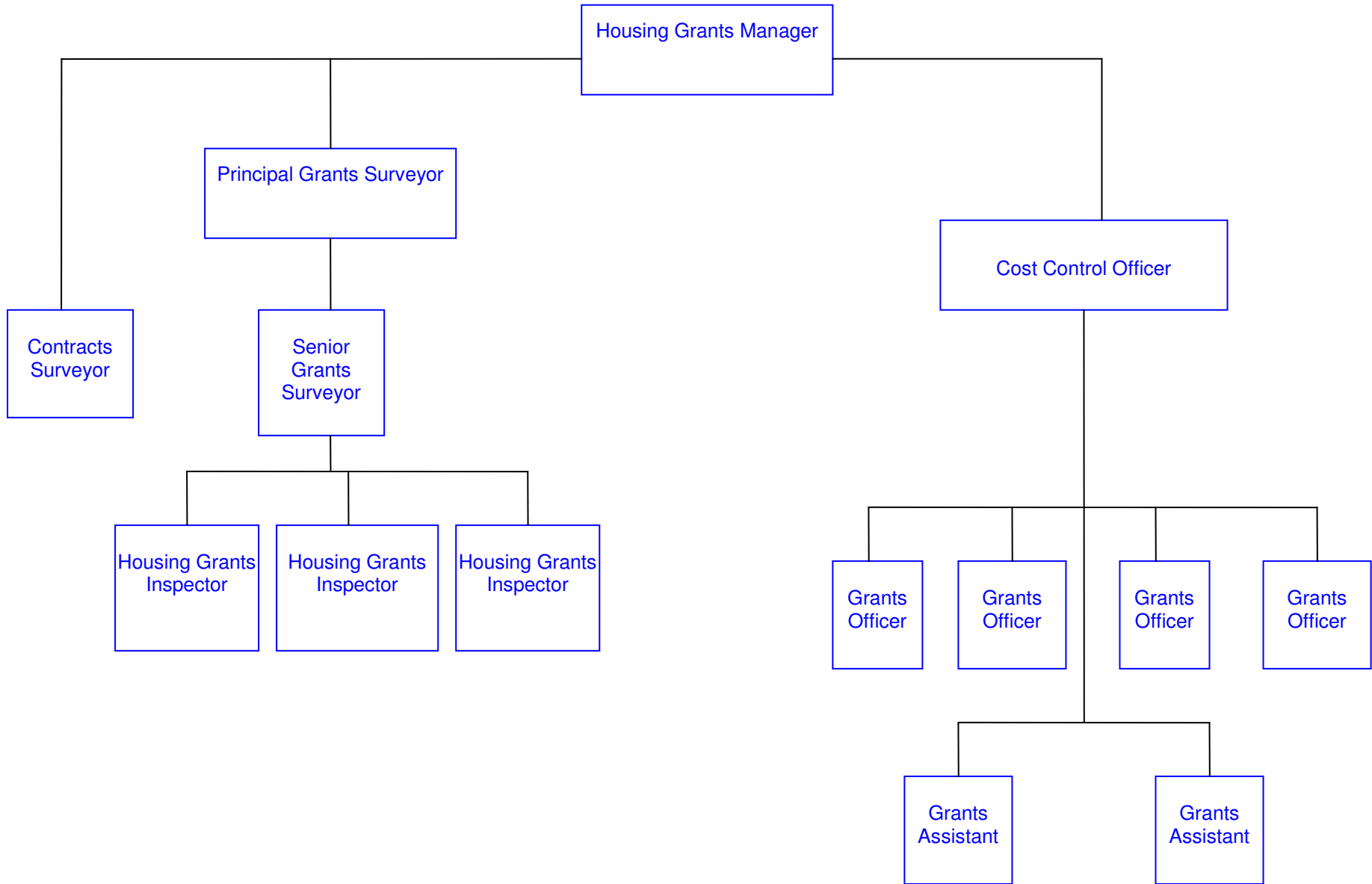
Renewal Areas

The Council is specifically developing its approach to Housing Renewal Areas and this is a defined area of development for any future review of this Housing Renewal Policy.

4. Resources

Current Structure of the Service:

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Current Revenue Budget

	2007/08 £000	Staffing FTE	*Potential budgetary issues for 2008/09	2007/08 IT Implications	2007/08 Asset Implications	2007/08 Legal Implications
Employees	461269	14				
Premises	0					
Transport	25631					
Supplies & Services	9004					
Third Party Payments						
Transfer Payments						
Capital Financing						
Support Costs	105					
Total Expenditure	496009					
Income: Grants from Council – Employees	606443CR					
Grants from Council – Other						
External Grants – Employees						
External Grants - Other						
Additional Revenue						
Total Income	0					
Net Cost	110434CR					

0411- Basic Pay: Undefined growth pressures relating to new IT systems administration requirements and general demand led service pressures

0968- Flexible resourcing may require utilisation of agency staff

Current Capital Budget Expenditure

<u>Grants</u>				
ZHG	221	C205	Home Repair - Discretionary	810,610
	222	C205	Home Repair - House Proud Scheme	0
	231	C205	DFG - Mandatory (Private Sector)	934,550
	236	C205	DFG - Children's Adaptations	245,880
	237	C205	DFG - Discretionary Minor Adaptations	294,850
	241	C205	Renovation - Discretionary	786,610

<u>Disabled Adaptations</u>				
ZHH	711	C205	DFG Mandatory (Local Authority)	1,200,000
	715	C140	Disabled Adaptations/Conts.	75,000

What we want to achieve and how – corporate priorities and foundations for improvement

Corporate priorities		Foundations for improvement	
PA 1	<p>Aim 1: Customer Focus - Putting People First AIM: To ensure all our customers consistently receive an excellent standard of service. (NB: This priority focuses upon the Council's customers and employees)</p>	FFI 1	Communications
		FFI 2	Management development
		FFI 3	Asset management
		FFI 4	Cross directorate working
		FFI 5	Reputation management
PA 2	<p>Aim 2: Safe and Clean Neighbourhoods AIM: To make Flintshire a safe and attractive place to live, visit and work in</p>	FFI 6	Information and records management (FOI)
		FFI 7	Sustainability
		FFI 8	Performance management
		FFI 9	Procurement
PA 3	<p>Aim 3: Healthy and Caring Communities AIM: To encourage good health, promote independence and offer better life chances for all people in Flintshire</p>	FFI 10	HR Strategy
		FFI 11	Access to Services / E gov
		FFI 12	Risk management
		FFI 13	Strategic decision making
PA 4	<p>Aim 4: Investing for Tomorrow's Generation AIM: To ensure all our children and future generations enjoy better prospects in life</p>	FFI 14	Partnership working / Community Strategy
		FFI 15	Project management
		FFI 16	Customer focus Equalities
PA 5	<p>Aim 5: Protecting our Future Way of Life AIM: To meet the needs of the present without compromising the future</p>	FFI 17	Management of subsidiary companies and affiliated entities
		FFI 18	Member development
		FFI 19	Standards and Conduct
		FFI 20	Financial management strategy

What we want to achieve and how (service)

Aim(s) of Housing Grants Service

insert service aim(s)

Objective	Link with: (1) service risk (2a) corporate priority key outcome (2b) foundation for improvement (3) directorate risk (4) national priority	Key action/s (include reference to detailed action plans)	Milestones	Measure and (05/06) performance and 06/07 target (include PI ref)	Target 07/08	Responsibility and Budget implications (draft plan stage only)
The targeting of grant resources to agreed priorities	PA1-5 Failure to meet policy objectives	All grant and assistance priorities set out in policy. Resources clearly allocated Housing Assistance targets set		None	All set within new Policy Oct 08	Housing Grants Manager Budget Conformance to Policy

Objective	Link with: (1) service risk (2a) corporate priority key outcome (2b) foundation for improvement (3) directorate risk (4) national priority	Key action/s (include reference to detailed action plans)	Milestones	Measure and (05/06) performance and 06/07 target (include PI ref)	Target 07/08	Responsibility and Budget implications (draft plan stage only)
Implement Deeside Renewal Area	PA 1- 5	Develop action plan Form working group Tender and undertake NRA Secure WAG final approval		None	October WAG approval	Grants Manager
Restructure Grants Section	PA1- 5	Approval of Service review report Recruit to posts		None	October completion	Grants Manager
Improve CIVICA working	PA1- 5	Data integrity checked and verified Officer routines monitored		None	Ongoing	Grants Manager
Develop specifications to Contractors	PA1-5 Failure of VFM and Financial control.	(a) Develop Schedule or Rates (b) Include secure by design (c) Include Energy Efficiency		None	Schedule of rates adopted March 08	Cost Control Manager
Promote good working relationships with Contractors/Builders and applicant.	PA1-5 Failure to promote quality of service.	Develop Agency role		None	Ongoing	Grants Manager

Objective	Link with: (1) service risk (2a) corporate priority key outcome (2b) foundation for improvement (3) directorate risk (4) national priority	Key action/s (include reference to detailed action plans)	Milestones	Measure and (05/06) performance and 06/07 target (include PI ref)	Target 07/08	Responsibility and Budget implications (draft plan stage only)
Work with Partners to develop a more holistic approach of service delivery, set targets for overall client satisfaction.	PA1-5 Failure to maximise synergies	Promote joint working arrangements with other agencies/set agreed targets and outcomes. Design Team Adult Social Care Care & Repair Environmental Health - Empty Homes Scheme.		None	Attend C&R Strategy Committee Meetings Attend joint ASC and CS meetings Regular Liaison	Grants Manager
Increase number of customer service satisfaction inspections	PA1-5					Cost Control Manager
Seek long term funding Planning arrangements to enable balance service and staffing	PA1-5 Broad policy and assistance failure	Joint working to include Finance Provide open and accountable grant spending programme to meet service provision via monthly budget meeting.			Structure reviewed October 08	Housing Grants Manager

Appendix 1

Initiative / Project	Lead Sector	Outcomes to be sought	Potential Efficiency Gains (if known)	Set-up costs or other resources needed
<i>Brief description of project (s)</i>	<i>Indicate the lead sector and FCC's involvement</i>	<i>Briefly describe benefits/outcomes sought</i>	<i>Identify where (if any) potential Efficiency Gains may occur and a value (£) if known.</i>	<i>Identify considerations for implementation within FCC</i>
1. Working across the Welsh Public Service				
What are the areas in which you are making most progress in working together as the Welsh public service?				
N/A				

Initiative / Project	Lead Sector	Outcomes to be sought	Potential Efficiency Gains (if known)	Set-up costs or other resources needed
2. Making better use of resources				
What are the areas in which you are making most progress in making better use of resources?				
N/A				

Initiative / Project	Lead Sector	Outcomes to be sought	Potential Efficiency Gains (if known)	Set-up costs or other resources needed
3a. Putting the citizen at the centre (customer service)				
What are the areas in which you are making most progress in improving customer service?				
Management Review	4	Streamlined procedures, effective budgetary management, increased processing efficiency and budgetary congruence	Not known	Not known

Initiative / Project	Lead Sector	Outcomes to be sought	Potential Efficiency Gains (if known)	Set-up costs or other resources needed
3b. Putting the citizen at the centre (public engagement)				
What are the areas in which you are making most progress in improving public engagement?				
N/A				

Initiative / Project	Lead Sector	Outcomes to be sought	Potential Efficiency Gains (if known)	Set-up costs or other resources needed
4. Preparing the workforce				
What are the areas in which you are making most progress in preparing the workforce?				
N/A				

Appendix 2

1. Ensure that the Welsh language is a natural, integral part of the planning of Council Services.

	ACTION	COMMENTARY
1.1	Undertake a detailed and thorough assessment of the impact of any new or revised policy, plan or initiative on the Welsh language / Welsh Language Scheme.	Housing Renewal Policy available in Welsh
1.2	Ensure that all relevant Welsh Language Scheme requirements are incorporated within contracts and agreements with third parties.	To be started 08/09
1.3	Undertake a self-assessment of compliance against the Welsh Language Scheme and integrate improvement actions within 2008-09 service plans.	To be started 08/09

2. All communication between the Council and customers is in the customer's preferred language.

	ACTION	COMMENTARY
2.1	Review all stationery to ascertain whether all items are fully bilingual, and amend as necessary.	To be started 08/09
2.2	Ensure that all staff have bilingual standard text on e-mail, 'auto-signatures', disclaimers, and 'out of office' replies.	To be started 08/09
2.3	Audit standard letter templates and make bilingual where they are English only.	To be started 08/09
2.4	Ensure that staff greet all external telephone calls bilingually.	To be started 08/09
2.5	Ensure that every 'service switchboard' / main service contact point that uses an automated answering service or answer phone delivers bilingual greetings and messages.	To be started 08/09
2.6	Ensure that staff who use voicemail begin their recorded messages with a bilingual greeting, record English or bilingual messages as appropriate,	To be started 08/09

	and invite callers to leave Welsh or English messages.	
2.7	Ensure that help-lines, automated telephone services and call centres set up by the service provide an equal service in Welsh and English and ensure that arrangements are in place to make callers aware of this option.	n/a
2.8	Denote switchboard, reception, counter, front of office, contact office and similar posts as 'Welsh Essential', amend job descriptions, and ascertain language skills of current post holders.	n/a
2.9	Ensure that receptionists/counter and front of office staff greet members of the public bilingually.	n/a
2.10	Provide bilingual receptionists, counter and front of office staff with Welsh Language Board <i>laith Gwaith</i> badges.	n/a

3: Ensure that all bilingual items for public use/public display are bilingual.

	ACTION	COMMENTARY
3.1	Conduct an audit of all Council items bearing the Council's name/logo and ensure that all such items are made bilingual.	To be started 08/09
3.2	Conduct an audit of all Council signs – permanent, temporary, fixed and portable – and ensure that monolingual signs are made bilingual.	To be started 08/09
3.3	Ensure that staff and third parties contracted by the service produce bilingual material for public use.	To be started 08/09
3.4	Undertake an audit of all forms with a view to verifying that their format, language content, terminology and diction style comply with this Scheme, and implement a programme to revise these forms where necessary.	To be started 08/09
3.5	Review all displays, information boards, exhibitions etc and ensure that they meet the requirements of the Scheme.	To be started 08/09
3.6	Establish 'control points' to ensure that those who are responsible for producing and displaying public and official notices comply with this Scheme.	To be started 08/09

4: Ensure that the Welsh Language Scheme is implemented and monitored.

	ACTION	COMMENTARY
4.1	Ensure that all staff are aware of the specific requirements of this Scheme and how they impact on their individual roles.	To be started 08/09
4.2	Ensure all staff provide information to the Council regarding their Welsh language skills.	To be started 08/09
4.3	Identify the resources that will be required to meet the requirements of the Scheme in 2008-09 and feed into the budget process.	To be started 08/09
4.4	Ensure that all staff record all complaints, comments or compliments regarding the Welsh Language Scheme and its implementation, together with officers' responses to those complaints or suggestions.	To be started 08/09
4.5	Provide a report to the Corporate Equalities Board regarding progress against all service plan actions relating to the Welsh Language Scheme by November 2007.	To be started 08/09

Appendix 3

Service Name:		Name of specific function or service area with voluntary sector relationships;/or indicate here if 'NO' relationship exists.						
Housing Grants		none						
Name of Voluntary Sector Organisation / Grant Recipient:								
Name of grant scheme by which organisation is funded:								
Service Provided – Please describe:								
In-kind support provided to organisation (e.g., assets including buildings) – Please describe:								
Other - Please describe:								
Frequency of Relationship Review (Tick appropriate box):	Annual	<input type="checkbox"/>	Annual recurring	<input type="checkbox"/>	One Off	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Other, please describe:				Please indicate the year this funding started:				
Type of Arrangement (Tick appropriate box):	Formal Contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	Service Level Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exchange of Letters / Forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
If Other, please describe:								
Financial commitment for 2007/08 - Please include 2006/07 if grants for 2007/08 are not yet known:								
Please provide any further supporting information here and attach any relevant documentation with your template:								
Contact Officer – Please include Name and Post Title:								

