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Skills Needs Assessment for the Housing Industry May 2006

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Executive Summary

Skills and Solutions for Housing Associations and Local Authority Housing Services

Why this report and why now?

1. The objective of this Report is to clearly articulate the skills challenges, explore what drives productivity and competitiveness in the housing sector and consider what can be done to support improvement in business performance.
2. The report is a summary of the Skills Needs Assessment (SNA) for the UK Housing Sector. It is based upon the research undertaken in 2005/06 for the Sector Skills Agreement

Productivity and Competitiveness

3. The SNA identified the following significant external pressures for change: increased competition and a steep rise in use of technology. But pressure is also exerted by housing supply shortages and increasing demand and the continuing drive on home ownership. Additional pressure also comes from a shortage of available land, finance and skilled labour that act as key barriers to growth.
4. Affordability and lack of availability of housing (due to continued house price inflation) ensure that social housing still remains the tenure of last resort for many.
5. These pressures force housing businesses to review their organisational structures and methods of working as they try to increase productivity growth and drive for efficiency, cost savings and continuous improvement.
6. But housing organisations are also under governmental policy pressures to manage and build communities, respond to the growing sophistication of consumers (tenants and leaseholders), whilst being audited, monitored and inspected.
7. The Housing sector has often been seen as detached from competitive pressures but that is no longer the case due to the growing number of mergers and acquisitions (creating 'super' Housing Associations), the ability of private developers to build social housing, competition for contracts, land and staff.

“We are having to become more commercial. Bigger organisations are taking over the smaller ones.”
(Housing employer)

“Over time there may be fewer Housing Associations and that will change the competitive environment.”
(Housing employer)

8. The effect of these pressures is to cause continual, and sometimes resented, change within the sector – managers have to keep the existing services running whilst responding to change.
9. Whilst social housing has performed relatively well, there is still significant room for improvement such as being more responsive to change, dealing with the parts of the sector performing badly and attracting more capital investment.
10. Workforce Development Strategies for success within the sector have been ensuring the workplace was inviting, good working conditions and training linked to the Business Plan. But there are some workforce issues that need addressing, such as:
 - Gender imbalance in technical, professional and managerial roles
 - Housing not being seen as a career of “first choice” by applicants of all ages
 - An ageing workforce
 - Encouraging more BME applicants and staff
 - Using the potential of the largely untapped disabled workforce
11. Although there are problems with recruitment in certain types of job such as maintenance, asset management, finance/accounts and support/care, there are vacancies in key jobs such as the managerial, administrative and personal service roles, but this is more acute in hard to fill vacancies.
12. The response of housing organisations has been to develop their own staff, headhunting, especially for managers, increasing advertising and recruitment spend or increasing salaries and/or training.
13. The sector needs to concentrate on dealing with priority issues (see 11 above) and tackle the significant skill challenges.

Skills Challenges

14. Skills impact positively on productivity, innovation, profitability and competitiveness and are therefore important.
15. The SNA has identified the following skills challenges facing the Housing sector:
 - Customer service and communication
 - Management and leadership and change management.
 - Keeping up with legislation

- Encouraging social inclusion
 - Upgrading and up-skilling skills in Information technology
 - Business planning,
16. There is evidence that there is a significant demand for leadership and management skills. This demand is arising from governmental pressure for high productivity through efficiency savings for better service delivery as well as competitive drivers as the social housing market becomes more commercially orientated.
 17. But there is the wider question of recruiting for generic roles such as customer handling when such skills are at a premium and for the new roles associated with building sustainable communities and the Governments ten year agenda.
 18. The implication for managers is clear in that they need up to date knowledge and skills in leadership and management in order to balance the tasks required of them.
 19. These skills are crucial when managing the significant skills shortages and gaps facing the housing sector and the trend towards flexible working demanded by consumers. These are most notable in regeneration, development and technical skills.
 20. The impact of skill gaps can be severe leading to difficulties meeting customer needs, having to change work procedures and sometimes increased operating costs. Research has found that managerial action is presently inadequate and much more radical steps need to be taken to deal with underlying issues such as poor management.
 21. Action is also needed to encourage increased take-up level 2-4 vocational qualifications such as Apprenticeships and Housing NVQs in order to plug skills shortages and gaps and help replace the ageing workforce.

Supporting Improvements in Business Performance

22. There have been significant improvements and organisational efficiencies within housing organisations through the use of Best Value reviews of service delivery and more recently via the Gershon efficiency savings that are leading to significant savings to be reinvested into improving front line service delivery.
23. This is supported by housing organisations pursuing best practice through initiatives such Bright Futures, Leadership 2010, career mapping and pathways.
24. Whilst the best subscribe to, and gain, the Investors in People award, there is still a perceived reluctance to even find out about this and other business improvement models. The key drivers for business improvement are Housing Corporation Regulation compliance, Audit Commission inspection and Gershon efficiency savings plans.

25. More could be done by housing organisations to use a range of tools and techniques to inform strategic and business plans including scenario and succession planning, identifying clear progression pathways, encouraging the use of apprenticeships to grow their own managers and professionals.
26. Feedback from tenants and leaseholders will continue to be crucial to improving business performance and they are also a potential source of recruitment.

Recommendations

27. The following are recommendations for the short, medium and long term for Asset Skills, its partners and stakeholders:

Short Term

28. Increasing the awareness and understanding of Asset Skills' role and remit within the social housing sector and how it can set out a comprehensive framework for addressing the skills shortages and improve organisational productivity and performance.

Medium Term

30. **Recruitment:**

It is recommended that the following actions are considered to address the recruitment shortages:

High profile recruitment campaign to attract new entrants in the housing industry by:

- *Working with HE, FE and 6th Form colleges to promote housing as a career when students/under graduates before they are making their career choices*
- *Co-ordinating and branding graduate trainee and placement programmes*
- *Enhance the 'Bright Futures' partnership to secure and retain the best talent*
- *Developing both inter-, and cross-sector career pathways*
- *Attracting mature applicants who might be considering a career change*
- *Promote to new entrants – Forum 3¹ Europe's leading recruitment event for voluntary/not for profit organisations*
- *Providing bursaries for school leavers*
- *Looking to other sectors/occupations to recruit*
- *Reducing delays in the recruitment and selection process to capitalise on the best candidates*
- *Changing job titles to reflect the role to encourage applicants to consider housing as a career e.g. Customer Services Assistant versus Housing Assistant*
- *Encouraging more women, people with a disability and those from BME groups into Housing at all levels*
- *Considering setting up Job banks (3 suitable people, 1 gets the job – What about the other 2?)*

31. **Addressing Skills Gaps and Skills Shortages:**

- *Improving leadership and management – Asset Skills branded programmes/partnership approaches, including business planning*
- *Updating communication and customer care skills to respect diversity of customers ²*

¹ <http://www.forum3.co.uk/>

² Asset Skills has developed multi cultural communications skills in Housing materials

- *Identifying and mapping skills required by new/changing roles of housing associations*
- *Improving neighbourhood management and community leadership skills*
- *Identify best practice and disseminate*
- *Recognise skills from other sectors in recruitment*
- *“Growing own” staff in response to skills shortages/gaps by clear career paths and succession planning*
- *Organisations discussing and clarifying the roles/skill sets of the housing officer*
- *Developing team working skills with the demands for flexible service delivery*
- *Linking personal development plans to business plans and encourage innovation and creativity*
- *Sharing skills and learning between housing employers*
- *Working with professional bodies to improve qualifications take-up which meets the needs of employers*
- *Promote competences rather than knowledge*
- *Further development of Foundation Degrees*
- *Encourage take-up of Apprenticeships and NVQs for Housing*
- *Widen access to e-learning*
- *Focus on technical and IT skills, especially skills for remote and mobile working*

Long Term

32. Efficiency and productivity:

- *Improving efficiency/productivity, for example economies of scale within super groups*
- *Developing a framework and tools for workforce planning,, assessment and delivery*
- *Working with large and small organisations to tackle macro issues*
- *Find synergies and generic competences across the sectors and improve cross- sector collaboration*

33. Addressing Skills Gaps and Shortages:

- *Oversee the development of courses, qualifications and outputs which meet those needs – improve learning supply/creating relevant qualifications*
- *Promoting the use of occupational standards*
- *Identifying and improving access to training funding, lobbying for, and reducing bureaucracy to access both UK and EU money*
- *Dealing with workforce imbalances, including balance of men and women in top jobs (Leadership 2010³)*
- *Developing new skills – customer care, social integration, family friendly initiatives*
- *Developing skills to manage a mixed economy of housing stock*
- *Developing/training staff to be on the spot decision makers and responsible for resource allocation*
- *Reviewing business plans to cope with economic instability*
- *Adopting different approaches to the tasks of management and delivery – staff managing their own activity and thinking on the ground*

³ <http://www.leadership2010.org.uk/home.htm>

- *Keeping pace with shifts in skill sets caused by funding regime changes for specific client groups e.g. polarisation between younger and older tenants*

Skills and Solutions for Housing Associations and Local Authority Housing Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Asset Skills is the UK Sector Skills Council (SSC) for the housing associations and local authority housing services. The organisation is a “not for profit” company whose principle role is to raise the productivity and improve efficiency by driving up standards and skills in the housing sector.
- 1.2 The Skills Needs Assessment (SNA) ⁴, on which this Summary is based, was undertaken as the first step in producing a Sector Skills Agreement which are compacts between employers, their SSC, and providers/funders of education and training. The SNA research is based on 2400 interview responses from Asset Skills employers.
- 1.3 These agreements open up the possibility of a new type of dialogue on skills between employers and Government funded agencies to ensure that ‘the skills the sector needs are the skills the sector gets.’
- 1.4 The main objective therefore is to clearly articulate the skills challenges, explore what drives productivity and competitiveness in the housing sector and consider what can be done to support improvements in business performance in West London.
- 1.5 However, because SSCs are new some employers do not yet know what Asset Skills is and there are misconceptions about its role, urgent work should be undertaken to establish Asset Skills in the market.
- 1.6 The main national Stakeholders involved with Asset Skills are as follows:
- Government Departments – ODPM, DfES, DTI, DWP
 - Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)
 - Asset Skills SSC
 - National Learning & Skills Council (LSC)
 - Connexions
 - Large housing associations/employers
 - Housing Corporation
 - National Housing Federation
 - Chartered Institute of Housing
 - Association of Learning Providers
 - Large Training providers
- 1.7 It is clear that these organisations represent a complex web of, often interlocking, sometimes conflicting, relationships dealing with Housing skills and skills issues.

⁴ The full report, including detailed references and regional comparisons is available at www.assetskills.org/

The Housing Sector

This Section summarises the characteristics of the Housing Sector in England and explores industrial and occupational coverage, structure and size. It explains important economic and business issues, together with external drivers of change, such as technology.

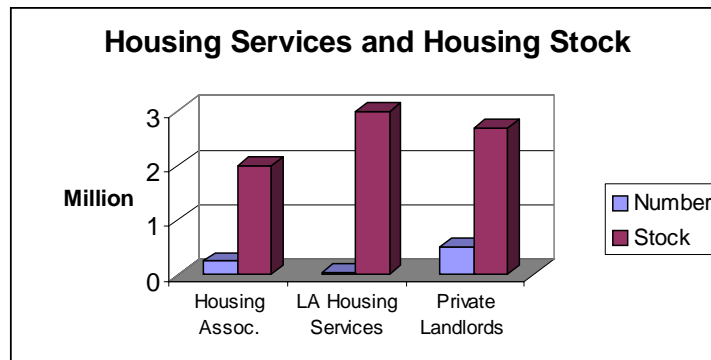
Drivers of change are important in that they determine organisational responses to pressures, opportunities and threats. Changing customer service requirements is one of the key drivers of change as is government policy.

The competitive position of the sector appears to be strong. But specific areas for improvement are identified such as being more responsive to change.

Industrial and occupational coverage

- 2.1 The UK housing industry is largely composed of local authority housing services (including Scottish Homes and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) (409) with 2,983,000 rented housing stock, approximately 2353 registered housing associations with 2,001,000 rentals and approximately 500,000 private landlords with 2,663,000 rented housing stock⁵. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1:

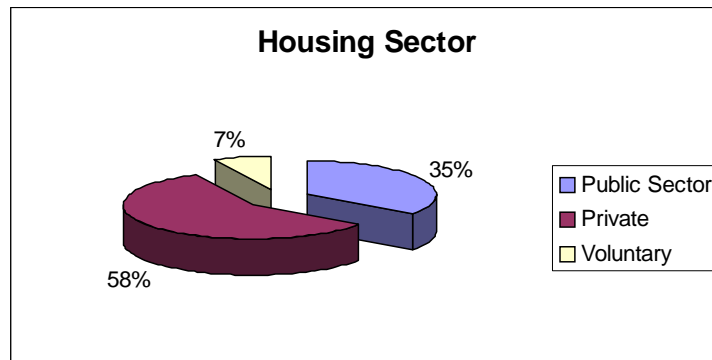


- 2.2 Broadly, 57% of housing organisations are in the private sector, 34% in the public sector and 7% are voluntary organisations⁶. Refer to Figure 2 overleaf.

⁵ ODPM, Housing Statistics 2004, quoted at SNA, p 47

⁶ Property Services LMI Research, p 10

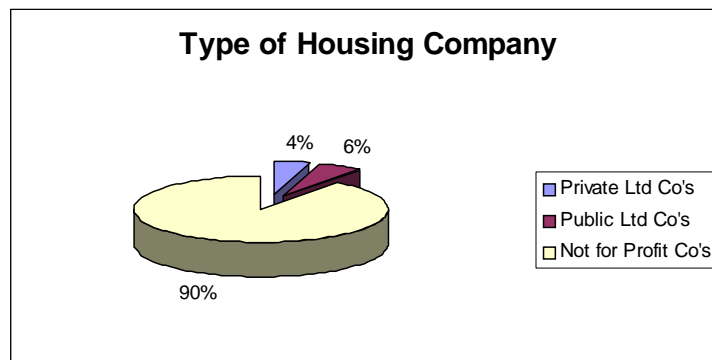
Figure 2:



2.3 There have been distinct changes in UK tenure composition with a modest decline of the social rented sector from 4.4 million in 1998/99 to 3.9 million in 2003/04 due to 'Right-to-buy'.⁷ But the biggest shift has been the transfer of ownership of council housing from local authorities to Housing Associations. Consequently the housing association share rose from 17% in 1993/94 to 37% in 2003/4⁸.

2.4 The Asset Skills SNA shows that the majority of companies in this sector are not for profit (88.5%) with 5.7% being public limited companies and 4.3% being private limited companies⁹. See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3:



Occupational Structure and Size of Housing Organisations

2.5 Unlike other UK sectors, Housing has most of its employment in companies with ten to forty nine employees (52.4%). London has the highest percentage of housing staff in the very largest companies (13.3% with five hundred plus employees)¹⁰.

⁷ Asset Skills, SNA, p 47

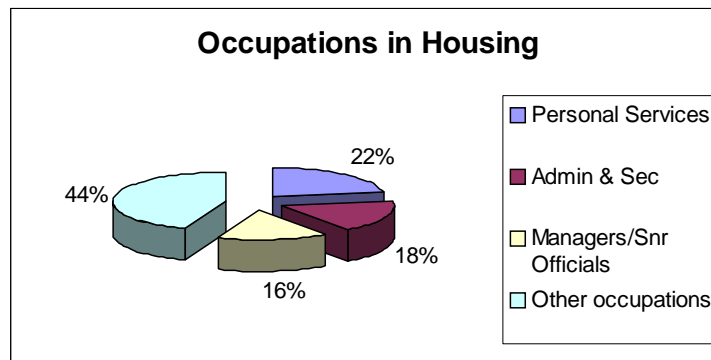
⁸ ODPM, Housing in England 2003'4, Part 1: Trends in Tenure and Cross Tenure Topics, 2005, p 7

⁹ Asset Skills, SNA, p 49

¹⁰ Ibid, p70

- 2.6 Although workforce numbers are estimated at 144,000, another 500,000 private landlords could be added to this total. If volunteers were added the workforce could represent over 1 million people.
- 2.7 Housing staff are most likely to be employed in Personal Services Occupations (22.1%) but 18% can also be found in Administrative and Secretarial, as well as 15.7% working as Managers and Senior Officials¹¹. See Figure 4.

Figure 4:



- 2.8 Companies with five hundred plus employees had more staff employed in professional service occupations than other employment occupations (27%), followed by 17.5% in Administrative and Secretarial Occupations.
- 2.9 The breakdown of personnel by occupation is important because it connects with the skills shortages in certain key areas, such as managerial roles.

Economic and Business Issues

Impact of external drivers of change

- 2.10 The CfA's Skills Dialogue¹² draws attention to significant changes over the last decade, such as:
- Increased global competition
 - Drive for productivity growth
 - Steep increase in the use of technology
 - Growing sophistication of consumers

As a result housing businesses are forced to review their organisational structures and introduce less rigid working practices to respond to these changing drivers of business competitiveness. It is also clear that the Housing industry is neither immune from competition nor the need to drive down costs.

¹¹ Ibid, p 71

¹² Council for Administration, Skills Dialogue 13: An Assessment of Current Skills Needs, 2002, p 9

- 2.11 But globalisation impacts on the housing sector in the delivery of international best practice models of housing, the sourcing of materials and customer needs generated by inward labour force migration and the expansion of the European Union¹³.

Technology Change¹⁴

- 2.12 The research also shows that there are clear opportunities for industries reliant on new technology to benefit from improved use of science and technology but there are also continuing barriers to business-university collaboration.
- 2.13 Removal of such barriers may help not only in terms of accessing higher-level qualifications, where there are skill shortages, but also with the delivery of training related to the introduction of technology to the workplace. Table I sets out the barriers and opportunities:

Table I

Barriers	Opportunities
Changes in building technology Mobile technology Data capture Improved efficiency – staff writing own reports, use of Word, PowerPoint Integrated housing computer systems Improved communication – email, filling in forms on-line etc Internet Allowed increases in range and complexity of services Need for basic and higher level word processing skills	Respond to changing customer needs in a positive way Reduce the costs of housing management, and customers’ costs Change working practices to make the job more interesting and challenging, and Provide opportunities to promote housing as an interesting and challenging career.

“Email has had a huge impact. We’re still way behind on the databases...although that is all going to change when we have an integrated housing system in 2006 which should massively improve the quality of service that we provide. There is going to be a massive retraining programme. And clearly the internet, people being able to pay their bills online, being able to fill in forms online.” (Housing employer)¹⁵

¹³ Asset Skills, SNA, p 91

¹⁴ Asset Skills, SNA, section 4.1.4

¹⁵ Housing employer (Anon)

Characteristics of the Housing labour market

2.14 The characteristics of the housing labour market can be summarised in Table 2 below:

Table 2

Characteristics	Details
LSC Statement of Priorities	<p>People remaining in the workforce longer Declining number of school leavers More women and ethnic minorities in the workforce Growth in jobs requiring higher level skills and Growing differences between sectors and regions</p>
Consequences:	<p>Updating skills and retraining becomes even more important Housing needs to be sold as an attractive career Managers and staff have to be encouraged to achieve higher level knowledge and skills</p>
Patterns of Change	<p>Outsourcing of functions Automation substituting for jobs Rising real incomes Transference of some jobs abroad¹⁶</p>
Main drivers of change	<p>Public sector initiatives¹⁷ Social health issues Economic conditions Technology issues Social changes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ageing workforce ○ Home working ○ Flexible working
Consequences	<p>Fewer housing jobs, but in different geographical areas The ageing workforce will have to be replaced within the next twenty years or so Different working methods will have to be accommodated by managers, and housing organisations</p>
Constant change through	<p>Housing stock transfer to housing associations Drive to offer new services, with greater emphasis on community based services within the context of sustainable communities Commercialisation Emergence of super-housing groups Specialisation (exploitation of niche markets) Regeneration Local authorities becoming more strategic¹⁸</p>

¹⁶ Asset Skills, SNA, p 80

¹⁷ Ibid, pp 80-81

¹⁸ Asset Skills, SNA, p 83

“The Group could be doing more to draw on the expertise and experience offered to it through having such a diverse membership. We found many examples of different members of the Group embarking on projects, independently from each other, resulting in much duplication.” (Audit Commission Inspection Report)¹⁹

Pressures on the sector

2.15 A number of key themes were putting pressure on the sector:

1. Housing supply shortages and increasing demand
2. Continuing drive on home ownership
3. Private developers entering the sector
4. Shortage of available land, finance and skilled labour (key barrier to growth)
5. Affordability/availability of housing due to continued house price inflation
6. Changing procurement rules and procedures
7. Need to manage and build communities
8. Drive for efficiency, cost savings and continuous improvement
9. Customers requiring more choice
10. Accessibility of housing staff demanded by customers
11. Monitoring, inspection and benchmarking
12. Creeping ‘Professionalisation – more higher level skills required²⁰

2.16 But some of the consequences of housing organisations responding to these pressures are wide ranging with some requiring Governmental intervention (1 – 5 above.) But the sector is responding significantly where an organisational response is possible, especially as set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3

Organisational Responses to Change
Making substantial savings (8 above)
Changing policies and procedures to become more transparent and user-friendly (9 and 10)
Managers and staff responding positively to auditing and inspection (11)
Higher level knowledge and skills are being acquired by some managers and staff (12)

*“Affordability of housing is an economic issue that puts pressure on social housing.”
(Housing employer)*

¹⁹ Audit Commission Inspection Report (anon)

²⁰ Asset Skills, SNA. P 83

Consumer Demand²¹

- 2.17 Increasing, and changing customer service requirements is one of the key drivers of organisational competitiveness over the last decade and the ability of a company to anticipate and respond to customer demands is seen as a key strength.

“The Housing Services Centre (HSC) is impressive and is particularly good at capturing and recording all initial telephone contact from customers...But some residents remain unhappy with the ‘call centre’ approach to service delivery. (The HA) is continuing to work to find the right balance between work handled BY the HSC and locally at the area offices.” (Audit Commission Inspection Report)²²

- 2.18 There is a strong indication that the sector needs to adopt a fresh approach to customer care and to the changing nature of the customer service, such as:
- Changes in working practices, culture and attitudes leading to the shedding of paternalistic ways of dealing with residents
 - More customer-led services
 - Need to retain and recruit people with high-level customer service skills
 - Need to deliver services to more diverse client groups
 - Measurement of customer satisfaction
 - Increased project management skills
 - More emphasis on community development

Government Policy and Regulatory Framework²³

- 2.19 The impact of Government policies and regulations has been intensely felt. From social policy to economic strategy the Housing sector has had to respond to the changing regulatory environment, for example:
- Neighbourhood management and renewal
 - Resident and community empowerment
 - Regeneration, especially from the South East Communities Plan
 - Management and development of affordable housing
 - Rent capping
 - Changes in housing benefit
 - Greater partnership working
 - Best Value – audits, contract completion and monitoring
- 2.20 The Barker Report in 2004²⁴ warns that a volatile housing market had contributed to instability in the economy and creating affordable homes of all types was crucial

²¹ Asset Skills, SNA, chapter 4, section 4.1.2

²² Audit Commission Inspection Report (Anon)

²³ Asset Skills, SNA, section 4.1.5

²⁴ Barker Review of Housing, 2004 http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consultations_and_legislation/barker/consult_barker_index.cfm

for a successful economy and a fair society. It advised the Government to raise the number of affordable homes built each year to over 50,000. This will clearly increase demands on the housing workforce.

- 2.21 The Egan Report²⁵ is directed towards improving supply, efficiency in procurement and to addressing the skills shortages in construction skills.
- 2.22 The Gershon Report²⁶ looks for overall efficiency improvements from public expenditure, including from housing associations.
- 2.23 But the rate of change is seen as being problematic and managers and chief executives will have to cope with maintaining a viable operation and at the same time preparing for the future.

Competitive position²⁷

- 2.24 The Housing sector has often been seen as detached from competitive pressures but that is no longer the case due to the following:
- Growing number of mergers and acquisitions, creating 'super Housing Associations
 - Ability of private developers to build social housing
 - Competition for contracts
 - Competition for land and staff

"We are having to become more commercial. Bigger organisations are taking over the smaller ones."
(Housing employer)

"Over time there may be fewer Housing Associations and that will change the competitive environment."
(Housing employer)

Current performance of the sector²⁸

- 2.25 In general, UK employment has performed well over recent years. By 2001 the employment rate was higher than almost every other OECD country. The Housing sector was also seen as working well, but there was significant room for improvement with respect to:
- Being more responsive to change
 - Dealing with parts of the sector performing badly
 - More capital investment, attracting equity finance

²⁵ <http://www.housing.wales.gov.uk/content/English/e/e25.pdf>

²⁶ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B2C/11/efficiency_review120704.pdf

²⁷ Asset Skills, SNA, section 4.2

²⁸ Asset Skills, SNA, section 4.3

- 2.26 Performance has been enhanced through the inspection framework, allowing organisations to be measured against rigorous criteria.
- 2.27 Even so, it was felt that public and media perception was not always good and the sector needed to work on better processes and communicating success more effectively. It is important to remove this major barrier to recruitment and retention.

Relationship between Performance and Skills²⁹

- 2.28 Housing associations with over 250 homes report annually against a set of Performance Indicators (PIs)³⁰. These measures are widely accepted as accurately measuring productivity in the sector, and as a useful barometer of performance.
- 2.29 Within the Gershon Report³¹ targets have been identified in terms of improving the productivity of the sector but there is a need to introduce more standardised performance/productivity measures across the sector i.e. a productivity target for each housing organisation.
- 2.30 The sector appears to have embraced innovation as a key by which productivity/efficiency could be improved and subsequently better services could be delivered to customers, but this cannot solve everything.

“Innovation is critical to maintain and improve quality... Innovation in products and processes will improve performance but it will not solve everything.” (Housing employer)

“This culture of departmentalism at (the HA), and between members of the Group needs to be addressed to ensure continuous improvements can be achieved... It is often difficult to ascertain whether improvements have actually been achieved.” (Audit Commission Inspection Report)

Housing strategies for success/competitive advantage

- 2.31 The Asset Skills Survey cites a range of strategies that are being employed to gain a stronger position that may lead to a competitive advantage, as follows in Table 4 overleaf:

²⁹ Asset Skills, SNA, 2005, Chapter 4, section 4.4

³⁰ <http://www.housingpis.co.uk/content/reports/pdf/ListofPIs2005.pdf>

³¹ available from http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/B2C/11/efficiency_review120704.pdf

Table 4

Strategies for Success and Competitive Advantage	
Ensuring the workplace is inviting Good working conditions Personal development seen as essential Efficiency savings, with improvements in and increased use of technology Outsourcing and partnering	Strategic positioning Using legislative frameworks to develop a strategy for performance improvement Training linked to the Business Plan to have a direct impact on the profitability of an organisation ³²

Key Points

The characteristics of the Social Housing Sector are summarised as:

- Significant organisational change with the transfer of ownership of council housing from local authorities to housing associations
- Shortage, and competition for, higher skilled occupations, such as managers
- Housing businesses forced to review their organisational structures
- Introduction of less rigid working practices
- Driving down costs and increasing productivity
- Opportunities for the application of new technology
- Need to replace Public Service Associate Professionals
- Female and BME employment set to increase significantly
- Need to respond to changing customer service requirements
- Impact of Government policies and regulatory regime
- In spite of a negative image, the housing sector has competitive advantages and has produced strategies for success

³² Asset Skills, SNA, p 135

3. Right People

This Section summarises the profile of the housing workforce in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and disability. It concludes that more women and BME staff need to be encouraged to apply for technical, professional and managerial roles. The ageing workforce also needs replacing but there appears to be a potentially untapped labour force amongst the disabled.

It explores workforce roles and the major issues affecting skills such as recruitment, vacancies, particularly hard to fill vacancies and turnover and retention rates. The image of the sector clearly needs addressing as does encouraging younger people into Housing.

There are clearly some crucial issues to be worked on in terms of how to recruit and retain the right staff.

Workforce Profile³³

Gender

- 3.1 Just over 60% of the workforce is female, mainly in administrative jobs, but in 29.3% of companies there is an equal split. However, men outnumber women in several sections of the workforce, especially in senior management³⁴.
- 3.2 This gender imbalance is not desirable for the sector as it limits the available workforce and restricts the pool of skills available to employers. As there is nothing inherent about the jobs in the sector that preclude women, steps are necessary to attract more women into the profession, for example looking at flexible working patterns.
- 3.3 The opportunities for full-time work for men have declined with more women taking on part-time work. Therefore there has been significant growth in the proportion of part-time jobs, many of which have been filled by women.

An Ageing Workforce

- 3.4 The majority of the workforce is between 35-44 with over a quarter (26.4%) between the ages of 40-44. Only 13.5% are under 34³⁵. This accords with a 2003 Survey in which a third of employers were concerned that the skills they need in the workforce will be at a premium in the future because of an ageing workforce, with the mean age predicted to rise from 39.1 years in 2001 to 42.4 years by 2025³⁶.

³³ Asset Skills, Skills Need Assessment, sections 3.5,5.7

³⁴ DfES, A Review of Skill Needs in the Property and Housing Sectors, 2002

³⁵ Asset Skills, SNA , p 50

³⁶ SSDA, Skills for Business 2003 Survey of Employers: Research Report 4, 2004, p 5

Ethnicity

- 3.5 Three quarters of the workforce are reported as being white with the most mixed workforce being in London (47.9% white³⁷).
- 3.6 London and three other regions within England report Asian staff making up the majority of the workforce.

“Ensuring services are sensitive to the needs of communities:

- *Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all new staff*
- *Effective liaison with local community to adjust service provided*
- *Staff ownership of equality and diversity agenda and pride in working alongside diverse communities/workforce*
- *Black and Minority Ethnic Forum in existence since 1996*

(Audit Commission Inspection Report)

- 3.7 The above quotation illustrates not only the need for sensitivity but also to promote and nurture the careers of Black and minority ethnic (BME) staff and managers. Both COFEM (Career Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities)³⁸ and PATH National³⁹ address under-representation and inequalities of BME groups in management and the professions by nurturing talent.

Disability

- 3.8 The number of working age disabled people in Public Sector Employment in Britain grew from more than 660,000 in 1998/99 to just over 790,000 in 2002/03, an increase of nearly 20% over the four year period. This compares to a modest growth of 3% among non-disabled people⁴⁰.
- 3.9 However, disabled people were still less likely than non-disabled people to work in the public sector and as differences between disabled and non-disabled public sector employees in educational qualifications are comparatively small there may be a potential untapped labour force here for the Asset Skills sector⁴¹.

Recruitment⁴²

- 3.10 43% of respondents to the DfES LMI Survey⁴³ expressed concern about recruitment. This was also confirmed by research supported by the Housing Corporation in

³⁷ Asset Skills, Skills Need Assessment, p 51

³⁸ <http://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/cofem/>

³⁹ <http://www.pathuk.co.uk/Home/Index.cfm?CFID=983268&CFTOKEN=51645737>

⁴⁰ Disabled Rights Commission, The Employment of Disabled People in the Public Sector, 2004, p 1

⁴¹ Asset Skills, SNA, p 266

⁴² Ibid, section 5.3

⁴³ DfES, A Review of Skill Needs in the Property and Housing Sectors, 2002, p 14

England especially problems with respect to the following jobs within housing associations:

- Maintenance
- Asset management
- Finance/accounts, and
- Support/care⁴⁴

- 3.11 In 2004, MORI listed recruitment as the biggest challenge facing Human Resource Directors, especially those employing staff in London⁴⁵ due to the cost of living, notably housing costs.
- 3.12 The poor image of the sector has already been mentioned⁴⁶ as a major barrier to recruitment and retention, with in some cases little or no image in the ‘outside world’ and therefore in the labour market. These issues are particularly acute with respect to the recruitment of senior managers who were reported as being able to find jobs with better rewards outside the sector.
- 3.13 On the other hand MORI (2002) found working in social housing was viewed as making a difference to peoples’ lives and providing a worthwhile job⁴⁷. Current staff generally appear to have positive views about working in the sector citing the interesting work and opportunities for progression as the key reasons for joining⁴⁸.
- 3.14 It must therefore be concluded that Asset Skills needs to help improve the image of social housing by using the positive comments set out above (section 3.13).
- 3.15 Lack of awareness of career options is another major barrier to recruitment in that the current image promotes a limited range of jobs from clerical to social work and many view the sector as unregulated, dull and lacking in professionalism.
- 3.16 At a senior level competition is high and many staff can get better rewards working outside the sector so they often move on.
- 3.17 Many employers train their own staff as a key approach to ensuring that they were able to place *the right people in the right jobs*. Where this was not possible head-hunting was also seen as an option – ‘who we can nick from someone else.’
- 3.18 This is another unsatisfactory situation which can only be resolved by encouraging young people, as early as possible that Housing is a viable and interesting career option.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p 14

⁴⁵ Housing Corporation, *Staying On: Retaining Staff in Housing Associations*, 2004, p 1

⁴⁶ This Report, section 2.27

⁴⁷ Housing Potential, *The Housing Sector Workforce Development Plan*, 2002

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 4

Vacancies

- 3.19 According to the Asset Skills Needs Assessment, of 2382 employers within the UK,, 32.2% have vacancies to fill within their organisation, a total of 791 employers⁴⁹.
- 3.20 In housing, larger size companies are far more likely to have vacancies to fill, 251-499 had the highest proportion. Two in every three (65.6%) are looking for staff to recruit. Companies with 100-250 have the second highest proportion of employers recruiting staff, 54.5%, a total of 97 employers had vacancies to fill⁵⁰.
- 3.21 Housing vacancies within the UK are primarily for managerial roles, making up a quarter (24.7%) of housing vacancies. Administrative and secretarial roles amounted to 20.1% and personal service staff 15.6% of employers with vacancies. An assessment of vacancies as a percentage of employment showed that managerial roles had the second highest proportion of vacancies (2.3%)⁵¹.
- 3.22 Given that these vacancies exist, it would seem sensible for the Housing sector to develop policies that would encourage applicants from relatively untapped sources, such as the disabled, women⁵² and BME applicants for managerial roles. They would also contribute to replacing the ageing workforce over the coming years. This should extend to encouraging tenants to apply.

Hard to Fill Vacancies

- 3.23 Much the same argument may be applied to hard to fill vacancies in that 249 (10.5%) of the 2382 employers in the Housing sector in the UK have vacancies that are hard to fill within their organisations. Employers with the most problems appear to be organisations with over five hundred employees (35.4% hard to fill vacancies) and those with 100-250 employees next likely⁵³.
- 3.24 The SNA also looks at proportions of hard to fill vacancies by occupations and managerial and senior official roles are the most difficult to fill (30.4% of all housing employers)⁵⁴. Housing Potential refers to the acute competition for quality senior managers in 2002.
- 3.25 When probed as to the reasons for skills shortages, housing employers feel that the main reason is too much competition from other employers (46.6%). They also feel that there are generally low numbers applying for jobs, (27.4%). They are also not very positive about terms and conditions of job roles within housing (27.1% of employers surveyed)⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ Asset Skills SNA, p 154

⁵⁰ Ibid, p 203

⁵¹ Ibid, p 204

⁵² Look at LSC Yorkshire, Invest in Skills programme

⁵³ Ibid, p 207-8

⁵⁴ Ibid, p 209

⁵⁵ Ibid, p 214

- 3.26 It would seem that this situation is best resolved by a number of initiatives linking encouraging young people into housing as a 'first choice' career the untapped potential set out above (3.22)
- 3.27 The main impacts of hard to fill vacancies include
- Increased workload for other staff (55.4%)
 - Delays in developing new products or services (27.0%)
 - Difficulties meeting customer service objectives (24.9%)
 - Increased operating cost (23.5%)⁵⁶.
- 3.28 The main response from employers is to increase advertising and recruitment spend (50.4% of employers surveyed). A significant 39.4% responded by expanding recruitment channels with 21.0% of employers increasing salaries and 27.1% increasing training⁵⁷.
- 3.29 Another possible response is to identify generic roles for staff recruitment. This encourages employers to identify commonality with roles in other sectors such as customer handling. This spreads the recruitment net wider than the Housing sector⁵⁸.
- 3.30 The impact of being unable to fill key roles should not be underestimated, especially as it will directly affect the capacity of housing organisations to retain their staff.

Turnover and Retention Rates

- 3.31 Research discovered a 17% turnover rate within housing organisations but this masks differences within the sector with larger Housing Associations and those in London experiencing most difficulties. There was no consensus as to whether turnover was increasing or decreasing⁵⁹.
- 3.32 The Housing Corporation reports that retention may be a problem for individual organisations rather than the sector as a whole. Problems seem to be focused on specific roles, for example support and care staff and specialists⁶⁰.
- 3.33 MORI (2003⁶¹) find that two-thirds of staff would like to stay with their employer for the next two to three years, either in their current job or through promotion. Where staff were negative about the job they remain positive about the sector as a whole and stated they were most likely to look for another job within the sector.
- 3.34 With respect to job satisfaction, good basic pay was ranked highest (70%) followed by interesting work (67%). There was a consistent relationship between employee satisfaction across a range of issues and the extent to which staff felt they were kept informed by their employers (MORI, 2003).

⁵⁶ Asset Skills SNA, p 215

⁵⁷ Ibid, p 216

⁵⁸ Asset Skills, Hays Competency Model, 2005

⁵⁹ Ibid, p 263-264

⁶⁰ Housing Corporation, Staying On: Retaining Staff in Housing Associations, 2004, p 2

⁶¹ To have and To Hold

- 3.35 Three in five people who had recently left a housing association have done so for 'push' rather 'pull' factors. The main push factors are poor salary, no career prospects and a lack of management support.
- 3.36 However, MORI (2003) found fairly low satisfaction regarding opportunities for personal development. The ratings for line management also reiterated the need for employers to focus on improving career development for staff.
- 3.37 There are dangers in the current position since it will again impinge on the capacity of Housing to retain staff.
- 3.38 But overall, retention was not seen to be more difficult than in other sectors and there was significant stability in middle management occupations, but it was noted that there was a need to up-skill this group⁶².
- 3.39 Headhunting and improved salary packages offered elsewhere were perhaps the greatest cause of concern⁶³.
- 3.40 In terms of demand side issues, at operative level conditions are poor, with pay at minimum wage rates. Care staff may enter the industry because they are motivated to help others, but the levels of pay may not support this and they move on.
- 3.41 On the supply side, a key theme was that housing was not perceived to be a profession people chose to go into at an early age which is evidenced by the lack of under graduate courses which are relevant to the discipline.
- 3.37 This has an effect on the demographics of the sector with organisations often being dominated by middle-aged workers and there is likely to be a staff crisis once the current labour force reaches retirement age.

Key Points

The Housing Workforce profile is summarised as:

- Ageing housing workforce
- Poor image of the sector, but more positive when working in Housing
- Housing Sector needs to be promoted as a career, especially with younger entrants
- Encourage more women into managerial and professional roles, by using for example the Leadership 2010 and Women in Management initiatives⁶⁴
- Black and Asian applicants need to be encouraged into local workforce
- Encourage more disabled applicants
- Possible LSC funding for the above⁶⁵
- Combat the impression of a middle-aged workforce
- Encourage tenants to apply for jobs in Housing

⁶² Asset Skills, SNA, p 264

⁶³ Ibid, p 264

⁶⁴ see Chartered Management Institute, Institute of Leadership and Management and Birkbeck College

⁶⁵ see LSC Yorkshire Invest in Skills Programme

4. Right Skills

This Section summarises the skills required by the housing workforce.

It explores the generic/cross sector skills such as communication and customer handling, skills and indicates the nature of skills shortages and gaps and where they must be filled over time, especially with respect to hard to fill skills shortages.

Managers also need up to date skills in leadership and management to correctly balance the competing priorities they face. They also need to address the identified priorities first to effectively harness the skills and knowledge of their staff.

The impact of skills gaps is assessed together with the action to be taken and the barriers to be overcome.

Finally, occupational standards and the opportunities for Work Based Learning are considered, in order to press home the point that higher level (4 and above) qualifications will be required by more staff. National skills provision needs to be taken more seriously,

The Skills we need

- 4.1 The Skills White Paper ‘Getting on in Business, Getting on at Work’ (2005)⁶⁶ sets out the Government’s plans for making the UK a world leader in skills, an ambitious agenda of reform for the way skills are delivered.
- 4.2 The importance of skills across the whole occupational spectrum has also been increasing, and occupations which require higher skills levels are growing faster than those which require lower skills levels. The need for sector-specific technical skills is also growing in tandem with the increasing need for more transferable, generic skills
- 4.3 This means that managers need to ensure that staff are up-skilled and that their skills are kept up to date.
- 4.4 According to the SNA, looking at the distribution of skills amongst existing employees by occupation, communication skills were perceived as being the most required by 16.3% of employers.
- 4.5 General IT skills were the next most required skill, needed by 12.2% of employers. Of the different company sizes, smaller companies (2-9 employees) appeared to need IT skills more (16.7%)⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/skillsgettingon/>

⁶⁷ Asset Skills, SNA, p 282

“Technology changes have had a major effect...Mobile technology out on site is improving efficiency but also helping the tenant on site who no longer needs to come into the office. They can have someone visit them with the technology and the laptop and they can do their business at their home so it’s a major change in terms of the way that we do our business” (Housing employer)

Generic/cross sector skills⁶⁸

- 4.6 The demand for generic skills in the UK economy has increased over the last decade to the extent that such skills attract a pay premium⁶⁹.
- 4.7 These skills are increasingly in demand as companies become more customer-driven and also increase their focus on communication and team-based practices⁷⁰.
- 4.8 Recruitment skills will become particularly important when recruiting from outside the sector and making housing a first choice career⁷¹.
- 4.9 Since the 1980s a major thrust of housing policy has been to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness in the management of social housing. The objectives have been to stimulate:
- Higher quality performance at competitive costs
 - Greater responsiveness to service users
 - Innovation or new approaches to service delivery⁷²
- 4.10 Relevant staff must have to be skilled in partnership working when building sustainable communities, in neighbourhood management and planning and regeneration issues. Housing association activity is therefore becoming more diverse.
- 4.11 Management Development and Business Planning are two of the top six skills issues. Senior managers in housing are identified as needing a range of soft skills, as demonstrated in Table 5 overleaf.

⁶⁸ Ibid, section 5.9

⁶⁹ The Council for Administration, Skills Dialogue 13: An Assessment of Current Skills Needs, 2002, p 7

⁷⁰ Ibid, p 14

⁷¹ Asset Skills, Hays Competency Model, 2005

⁷² Asset Skills, SNA, p 294

Table 5

Housing Association Activity	Soft Skills for Managers
Problem solving Resource management Community leadership Innovation & creativity Interpersonal and communication Manage tenure diversification	Influencing skills Advocacy, leadership Partnership working (see 4.7) Managing diversity Entrepreneurial skills Business management, including project and budgetary management People management Change management ⁷³

The number and skill level of middle managers also need to be raised.

- 4.12 Managers also need to cope with public accountability. They therefore need skills for auditing, Audit Commission inspection and regulation of activities. Contract completion is also becoming more important and contractors need stronger project management skills.
- 4.13 In addition there was a significant concern about the skills needs of organisations taking over the management of social housing from local authorities. They included many of the management skills listed above. The Housing Corporation reported in 2004 that HR Directors identified poor management as one of the main reasons for poor staff retention⁷⁴.
- 4.14 IT skills were listed as one of the top three skills concerns in Housing Potential's Workforce Development Plan, especially when linked with remote working and self-management⁷⁵.
- 4.15 Given that other sectors are seeking people in these disciplines, it may account for the difficulties faced in recruitment⁷⁶. It is crucial, therefore, that skills are kept up to date and Housing Potential (2002) expressed a high degree of concern about this.
- 4.16 The implications for managers is clear in that they need up to date knowledge and skills in leadership and management in order to balance the tasks required of them in a changing and competitive work environment.

⁷³ Ibid, p 294

⁷⁴ Ibid, p 294

⁷⁵ DfES, A Review of Skill Needs in the Property and Housing Sectors, p 15

⁷⁶ Asset Skills, SNA, p 295

Skills shortages and gaps⁷⁷

- 4.17 Skills gaps occur when staff are not fully proficient to meet the requirements of their job and 21% of housing organisations say they have skills gaps. The NESS Survey (2004) demonstrated that skills gaps are a bigger problem than skills shortages⁷⁸.
- 4.18 Asset Skills meeting with employers provided information about skills shortages with respect to the following jobs (Table 6):

Table 6

Skills Shortages identified by Asset Skills through SNA	Further skills shortages identified by employers during consultation:
Regeneration experts Management/professional business services Development professionals Construction operatives Quantity surveyors (Decent) housing officers Front-line staff to identify and recognise the needs of others Strategic and enabling skills	Quality assurance skills Assessing business performance Motivating people to change and leadership Customer skills Technical skills

- 4.19 With respect to the shortage of technical skills, these are particularly important for delivering new housing development and 'decent home' modernisation.
- 4.20 The SNA showed that 88.2% of housing companies formally assessed skills gaps, with companies with 2-9 employees being least likely to do this⁷⁹. They were assessed primarily by performance appraisals (80%) and assessment centres (20%). Table 7 overleaf sets out those occupations with skill gaps and the causes:

⁷⁷ Ibid, section 5.4

⁷⁸ Ibid, p 233

⁷⁹ Ibid, pp 249-250

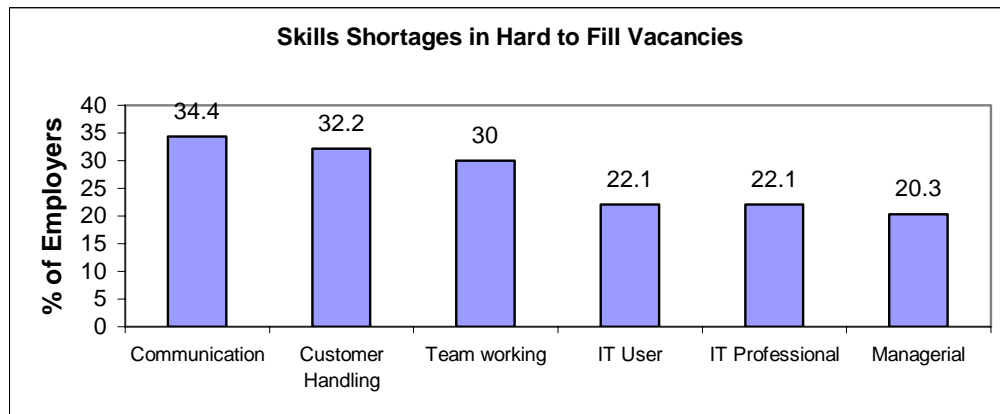
Table 7

Occupations with skills gaps	Causes of skills gaps
Personal Services occupations (32.7%) - especially companies with between 250 and 500 employees. Associate Professional and Technical (20.9%) Administrative and Secretarial occupations (15.2%) Managers and Senior Officials (8%) Skilled Trades (6.3%) Elementary occupations (2.7%) ⁸⁰	Lack of experience/having been recruited (26.3%), Failure to train and develop staff (13.8%) Problems with recruiting people with the right skills (12.8%) ⁸¹

Skill Shortages in Hard to Fill Vacancies

4.21 Figure 5⁸² below sets out the key skill shortages.

Figure 5



4.22 The following six skill gaps in Table 8 (overleaf) have been identified as priorities, by employers in the Housing sector:

⁸⁰ Asset Skills, SNA, Figure 156, p 251

⁸¹ Ibid, Figure 157, p 252

⁸² ibid, pp 213-214

Priority Skills gaps for the Housing sector⁸³:	Gaps related to the changing and diverse roles of housing associations:
<p>Customer care/service, including handling telephone calls</p> <p>Management development - “simple personnel management”, more generic managers, management and leadership and change management.</p> <p>Legislation (including best practice, ‘supporting people’, and raising funds due to the shortfall of grants)</p> <p>Social inclusion</p> <p>Information technology – basics as well as more advanced skills</p> <p>Business planning, especially managements’ lack of vision with respect to IT</p>	<p>Capacity building</p> <p>Regeneration</p> <p>Community safety</p> <p>Working in partnership with others</p> <p>Contract management</p> <p>Basic skills, such as a good grasp of written English.</p>

- 4.23 There are also important gaps in the building and construction industry⁸⁴, especially for carrying out repairs and maintenance, surveyors (competition from the private sector), risk management, and property procurement. But people with these skills appear to be disappearing from the sector.
- 4.24 More private registered landlords are entering the sector but are not skilled in rent collection and debt minimisation
- 4.25 The attractiveness of the sector was again questioned with respondents believing that the private sector presented a more favourable option for specialists⁸⁵.
- 4.26 But managers need to address the priorities first, including their own development needs which are important because they need to harness the skills and knowledge of their staff. If staff are mismanaged they will become de-motivated and productivity will fall, with them eventually leaving.

Impact of Skills Gaps

- 4.27 The most frequent impact of skills gaps was that employers had difficulties meeting customer service objectives (24.8% cited this), more likely to be located in the South East (50.0%), and within companies with 500+ employees (47.1%)⁸⁶.
- 4.28 Difficulties introducing new working procedures also caused a problem (17.0% of employers cited this), especially within large companies (500+).

⁸³ DfES, A Review of Skill Needs in the Property and Housing Sectors, 2002, p 17

⁸⁴ Asset Skills Research Team, Housing Association Case Study, 2005, p 3

⁸⁵ Asset Skills, SNA, pp 248-249

⁸⁶ Ibid, p 283

- 4.29 16.3% of employers thought that increasing operating costs was another impact of skills gaps, especially within companies with 100-250 employees (28.6%).

Action taken to address skills gaps

- 4.30 74% of housing organisations have a training plan and 89% have a training budget but cite a lack of awareness surrounding available sources of funding for training and learning.
- 4.31 96% arranged or funded training for their employees in 2002-03, however 62% of housing organisations do not evaluate training.
- 4.32 The main activity to address skills gaps was the provision of further training (31.7% of employers), especially in the South East (47.1%) and from employers with 50-99 employees (44.6%). 19.3% of those surveyed increased and expanded training programmes.
- 4.34 But Housing Potential (2002) found that the sector had a poor record on training new entrants with an ad-hoc approach to training within many organisations.
- 4.35 Changing working practices was the third most frequent action taken (12.2%) whilst just over 10% reported reallocating work within the company (11.8%)
- 4.36 However, this research is recommending that the above immediate responses to remedy skills gaps are inadequate and much more radical steps need to be taken to deal with underlying weaknesses such as poor management and the image of the sector.

Barriers to addressing skills gaps

- 4.37 Common barriers to developing more proficient staff were:
- Lack of cover for training, especially in companies with 500+ employees (36.4%).
 - Lack of funding, listed by 20.4% of housing employers, especially in London (25.8%), within smaller companies with 2-9 employees (35.1%) and within companies with 100-250 employees (25.4%)⁸⁷.
- 4.38 But lack of cover is sometimes used as a reason for doing nothing and if more funding is required it should be stepped up. The position with respect to skill shortages and gaps is too serious to allow it to go unresolved.

Occupational Standards and vocational qualifications⁸⁸

- 4.39 Across the UK economy the focus is now on upgrading the workforce and equipping employees with relevant qualifications.

⁸⁷ Asset Skills, SNA, p 284

⁸⁸ Ibid, section 5.2

- 4.40 The change from manual to non-manual work has brought with it a gradual professionalisation of the workforce with an upward move at intermediate level to associate professional employment.
- 4.41 Qualifications are a good but imperfect indicator of the skills that individual has – it is possible to have a particular skill without having a formal qualification and vice-versa. However, the general classification levels are as follows⁸⁹: Table 9 below.

Classification of qualifications in the UK	
Level 1	GCSEs, O Levels or equivalent at grades D-G; National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1; Business Training and Enterprise Council (BTEC) first or general certificate; General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) foundation level; and Royal Society of Arts (RSA).
Level 2	Five or more GCSEs, O Levels or equivalent at grades A*-C; NVQ level 2; BTEC first of general diploma; GNVQ intermediate level; City and Guilds Craft; and RSA diploma
Level 3	Two or more A Levels or equivalent; NVQ Level 3; BTEC National; Ordinary National Diploma (OND); Ordinary National Certificate (ONC); and City and Guilds Advanced Craft.
Level 4	First or other degree; NVQ Level 4; Higher National Diploma (HND); Higher National Certificate (HNC); and higher education diploma; nursing; teaching (including further education, secondary, primary and others).
Level 5	Higher degree; PHD; and NVQ Level 5
These levels can be further classified into low skills (level 1 and 2); intermediate skills (level 3) and high skills (level 4 and above).	

- 4.42 The number of highly qualified workers has increased significantly in the UK in recent years. However, countries such as Canada, the US and Australia still had larger proportions of people with high-level qualifications. In addition, many emerging economies have rapidly increased the proportion with such qualifications.
- 4.43 The UK fared less well on the numbers of workers with intermediate skills with less than one third having intermediate skills, compared over half in Germany and France. This is a longstanding problem as this proportion has not increased significantly in the past 30 years.
- 4.44 The counterpart is the relatively large stock of workers with low or no qualifications. Around 7.8 million people of working age in the UK do not have Level 2 qualifications, equivalent to 33% of the working age population. 11% have their highest qualification below level 3⁹⁰.
- 4.45 The Housing sector workforce has a significant proportion of staff with high-level qualifications, 35.5% qualified to Level 3, 22.5% to Level 4 and 31% to Level 5. in view of the growing need for higher levels of skill, these proportions need to continue to rise.
- 4.46 Employees typically pursue NVQs and HNC/Ds and to a slightly lesser extent, degrees. The Chartered Institute of Housing has its own Distance Learning Centre which as at May 2004, provides nationally recognised qualifications including:

⁸⁹ HM Treasury, December 2004, Skills in the Global Economy, p.12

⁹⁰ Asset Skills, SNA, p 145

- National Certificate in Housing
- Higher Certificate courses
- HNC in Housing
- Graduate Conversion course
- Professional Diploma

“We do not tend to set out to recruit graduates, but most of them are graduates and that is not intentional.”
(Housing employer)

“We do not actively recruit graduates, but generally speaking we have a mix. By appearing at careers fairs we have been able to revise a dull image and recruit from colleges and universities.”
(Housing employer)

Perhaps part of the problem is the lack of recruitment plans, as set out above.

- 4.47 67% of housing organisations currently offer N/SVQs but take-up is low. However there is a reasonable amount of take up of related qualifications in Care, Business and Administration.
- 4.48 An important related development is the development of the Supporting People Qualification⁹¹ which has come to the end of a pilot scheme. It was designed to test whether it was practical for trainees from Housing, Care and other sectors to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. There was a positive reaction⁹². This needs to be followed up and set up.
- 4.49 The sector was seen to be relatively well skilled, in which the development of skills, linked to business plans was seen as key⁹³.
- 4.50 But Housing Potential (2002) found anecdotal evidence of a reluctance to release employees for study.
- 4.51 The sector has however been seeking individuals with different skills in recent years, reflecting changing roles and the need to deliver a professional service⁹⁴.
- 4.52 Encouraging a greater take-up of Housing Work Based Learning (Apprenticeships and NVQs) is important as a first step to encouraging younger people into the sector to help replace the ageing workforce and deal with skill shortages.

National skills initiatives and variation of provision⁹⁵

- 4.53 44% of housing companies are Investors in People (IiP) but London had one of the most ‘negative’ Housing IiP outlooks with a combined not interested/lack of

⁹¹ <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/Subjects/Training/Report+of+Supporting+People+Qualification+Pilot.htm>

⁹² Ibid, pp 44-45

⁹³ Ibid, pp 150-151

⁹⁴ Asset Skills, SNA, p 151

⁹⁵ Ibid, section 3.2.1

awareness level of 28.6% (13.6% not interested and 15% lack of awareness). This was notably higher than the UK sector average (18.6%).

- 4.54 Apprenticeships in Housing were introduced in 1995, however, take up of this initiative, as already mentioned above, has been low and the sector needs to concentrate on a competency as opposed to knowledge-based approach. Correspondingly there is a poor understanding of competency-based recruitment.
- 4.55 The e-skills SSC has developed e-skills passports which record the existing skills levels, gaps and opportunities, training/experience and skill requirements of staff in IT. Individuals can complete their own passport and build their own learning plans in order to record and demonstrate their IT experience in terms that an employer can immediately understand⁹⁶.
- 4.56 The following Key Points are a basis for immediate and medium term action to deal with the growing skills crisis in the sector.

Key Points for action on skills

- Skills impact positively on productivity, innovation, profitability and competitiveness and are therefore important
- Higher level skills and qualifications needed, especially communication and IT
- More, and better, management development and leadership in order to balance priorities
- More training for the existing workforce to address skill gaps and keep upto date
- Address priorities first
- Lack of cover and/or funding are not good reasons for inaction
- Increase uptake of Apprenticeships and NVQs
- Need for recruitment plans

⁹⁶ <http://www.e-skillspassport.com/>

5. Right Place

This Section summarises the importance of career progression and succession planning for the replacement of staff and effectively growing ones own professionals and managers.

Having the right people in the right place involves ensuring that managers and staff have the right and relevant skills.

Career progression/ Succession planning

- 5.1 There have also been significant changes in the definition of a 'career', with job moves becoming more frequent and less emphasis on a 'job for life.' These place pressure on employers to keep employees' skills relevant and to maintain professional advantage.
- 5.2 The poor image of the sector has already been mentioned⁹⁷ as a major barrier to recruitment and retention, with in some cases little or no image in the 'outside world' and therefore in the labour market. This leads organisations to grow their own to place *the right people in the right jobs*.
- 5.3 Hard to fill vacancies and skill gaps/shortages will encourage employers to look to train and develop their own staff as a response (27.1% of employers surveyed).
- 5.4 The Bright Futures Project aims to encourage Housing as an attractive career option and to promote the breadth of potential available by working within the sector. Staff generally held positive views about working in the sector⁹⁸ and reasonable levels of job satisfaction. This will tend to encourage staff to progress their careers within an organisation.
- 5.5 Asset Skills is also currently working on career mapping and pathways. This will encourage employers to implement career progression and planning. This will also help to nurture, retain and develop existing talent, especially home grown managers.
- 5.6 Leadership 2010 and the recent joint leadership initiative by the NHF and Lancaster University, especially tailored for the housing association sector, will assist with managerial retention and development.
- 5.7 As already mentioned (paragraph 3.7), COFEM recognised the lack of career opportunities for BME staff and developed a mentoring training pack, secondment guidance and training to encourage senior staff to support groups of BME staff in their careers.

⁹⁷ Asset Skills, SNA, sections 1.32, 3.14

⁹⁸ Summary paras..3.35-36

- 5.9 Career progression and succession planning are clearly a key issue for further development within the sector, especially the encouragement of networking, mentoring and coaching.

Key Points for action on career progression

- Important to improve the image of housing to the outside world and
- Retain and train existing staff to place the right people in the right jobs
- Promote housing as an attractive career through Bright Futures and career mapping and pathways
- Encourage more women and BME staff by mentoring and guidance
- Encourage wider use of career progression and succession planning

6. Right Time

This Section summarises future employment levels and trends within the sector, building in future skills needs, such as technology and looks again at some key drivers of change which will affect the characteristics of the employees of the future.

Clearly there are some important role changes taking place such as remote working, enabled by new technology and the perceived tension in the role of the housing officer. This may lead to the sector seeking to recruit outside the sector, but will require the sector demonstrating that it is interesting and lively.

Present staff will need to be up skilled and future trends built into workforce planning through techniques such as scenario planning.

Employment levels and trends⁹⁹

- 6.1 Housing employers projections were generally optimistic in that 84.5% expected the employment rate to either stay the same or experience little increase over the next three years.
- 6.2 Generally employers with larger numbers of employees were most likely to expect employment to increase substantially. On the other hand, negative perceptions of future employment levels were most likely to have been recorded by those companies – 21.2% of companies with over five hundred employees expected little growth.
- 6.3 A significant 74.4% of companies with two to nine employees expect employment growth to stay the same.

Future Skills Needs¹⁰⁰

- 6.4 The Government has a 10 year strategy to develop sustainable communities and neighbourhoods which is driving new skills such as customer care, social integration, family friendly initiatives and pension/retirement provision
- 6.5 In spite of some general reservations about inappropriate SIC codes for housing¹⁰¹, the IER projections identified that there would be a growth in employment of 46,000 jobs, supplemented with 30-40% replacement demand (40-50,000 new workers).
- 6.6 A number of key drivers were identified including:

⁹⁹ Asset Skills, SNA, section 3.3

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, section 6

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p 20

- Technology
- Economic stability
- Drive towards home ownership
- Changes to working patterns
- Mergers and acquisitions across the sector
- Changes to funding regimes
- Diverse or homogenous client groups
- Changes to the delivery of housing by local authorities

Technology

- 6.7 The ability to work remotely and the rationalisation of back office services may radically change the nature of employment and the profile of individuals that will be required. Such individuals would be on the spot decision makers and responsible for resource allocation.

Economic Stability

- 6.8 The industry needs to review how it might cope with economic instability and a possible shift from tenancy to part ownership, which will impact on the services delivered and on the skills required to manage a mixed economy of housing stock in one place.

Home Ownership

- 6.9 The rate of home ownership has risen from 57% in 1981 to 71% in 2004 and private development may increase competition levels for staff and resources.

Changing working patterns

- 6.10 The need for individuals to manage their own activity and to think on the ground will require a different approach to the tasks of management and delivery and may change the skill sets required by those on the ground.
- 6.11 Rationalisation in the number of housing associations may potentially reduce elements of the workforce, as will the transfer out of local authority housing to Housing Associations.

Changes to funding regimes

- 6.12 The shift of funding towards sustainable communities means that skill sets that are required will change fundamentally.

Diverse or homogenous client groups

- 6.13 The nature of the client group was also seen to be changing, especially to homogenous groups around age. The age profile of tenants was, in many circumstances, polarised between those aged 18-25 and those aged 55 and above.

Many, not all, may be in receipt of some form of benefit and levels of economic activity are lower than the overall population.

Changes to the delivery of housing by local authorities

- 6.14 The local authority housing sector is undergoing dramatic change, from direct management to Arms Length Organisations and the final removal of housing from local authority control. This is having important effects on employment in local authority housing with a combination of cost reduction, budget reduction, and falling levels of employment leading to leaner organisations ready for transfer.

Employees of the future

- 6.15 Local authorities are encouraged to work with housing authorities to provide affordable housing for key workers. This is a significant issue in the recruitment and retention of staff. Lower cost housing for tenants will also combat overcrowding.
- 6.16 This will need a balance between remote working and interaction with teams and was felt to be one of the most challenging aspects that new and existing employees would need to face up to.
- 6.17 The links between remote working, decision making on site and the development of technology to enable it to happen is raising important issues about the relative autonomy of staff in the field as allocators of services.
- 6.17 There was also a perceived tension between the potential future of the housing officer and the way they are perceived by the public. There were two schools of thought presented:
- The housing officer has the role of community advocate, problem solver and manager of local community based activity
 - the housing officer in more of an enforcement role, chasing late rent payments, managing Anti Social Behaviour Orders and inspecting property

Clearly both activities will need to be undertaken and it may mean that two different skill sets will emerge. One way of resolving this was to sub contract elements of the work. The move to a cluster approach to housing work was also cited – work surrounding the core activity.

- 6.18 The process driven nature of the regulation surrounding housing may also prove to be a challenge for individuals who move into the sector as it was seen to be contrary to the entrepreneurial approach that many Housing Associations were now seeking as they broaden their approach. A degree of flexibility may be appropriate as in the pharmaceutical sector, where development is guided by stringent processes which adapt and change to allow innovation to flourish.
- 6.19 Some Housing Associations have taken quite liberal views regarding their roles and the drive towards neighbourhood development has encouraged the development of roles out with their expected activity. Some of these roles are considerably more difficult to fill appropriately. The complexity of such roles is likely to increase.

- 6.20 On that basis the sector may need to look to other occupations for recruitment and will need to demonstrate that it is an interesting and lively sector in which to work. However, at the heart of future skills will be the desire to work with people and this was seen as an essential attribute for new people joining the sector.

Upskilling current staff

- 6.21 Whilst changes to Housing Associations and the roles that individuals fulfil within them are inevitable, current staff appear to be adaptable, flexible and resilient enough to cope with change. It must however be acknowledged that some staff fear change and must be helped through the process.
- 6.22 There is an increasing demand to professionalise the sector in order to raise its profile and image, which is connected to rising skill levels within the sector. To some extent this runs counter to the findings of the future scenarios which predicts the decline of professionalism in the sector. In any event, this will require new types of staff and business practices.
- 6.23 For those individuals who are not able to cope, the industry will become less attractive and there may continue to be attrition, particularly at higher age bands.
- 6.24 However there is a need to effectively promote the industry as a very different environment to that of ten years ago and a working environment that embraced change.

Scenario Planning¹⁰²

- 6.25 Scenario planning offers an opportunity to assess what the future may look like and what indicators will help the sector to identify changing circumstances in the future – what life will be like in 2015.
- 6.26 PESTLE analysis was used as a means of thinking about Political, Economic, Social Technology, Legal and Environmental forces that might affect the sector. Forces are examined as to which are pre-determined or uncertain, which are most important, and which most uncertain. Scenarios are finally developed around the two most uncertain factors.
- 6.27 A key question was put – How will the Housing sector attract, develop and retain people in order for your company/organisation to be effective in 2015?
- 6.28 The most important driving force was seen to be ‘making housing sexy’ which centred on making the industry sector attractive to people. Two critical uncertainties were identified – society being fairer and ‘decline of professionals’. Four scenarios were then constructed, actions identified, and prioritised, that delegates felt were important for the sector to be successful. The most important are set out in the following section.

¹⁰² Asset Skills, SNA, section 6.2

6.29 In terms of a fairer society, delegates concluded that society is relatively unfair at the moment with some belief that it will improve by 2015. They also concluded that the decline in the role of professionals is likely to increase, for example, as a result of the rise in the use and application of IT.

6.30 Scenario planning is a useful tool for drawing up Strategic and Business Plans.

Key Points for action on future skills needs

- Projected growth in employment will make replacing the ageing workforce more difficult
- Need to analyse and react to the future drivers of change in strategic planning
- Continue to involve tenants, residents and leaseholders
- More affordable housing for key workers
- Clarify the balance between remote working, on the site decision making and team interaction
- Resolve the tension of the two roles of the housing officer
- Flexibility with respect to regulatory aspects to enable innovation
- Make housing as attractive a career as possible
- Promote the industry as a different working environment, that embraces change
- Use scenario planning when drawing up Strategic and Business Plans

7. Priorities for Action

This Section summarises the areas where the Housing Sector needs to take action to establish that housing organisations get the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.

This involves a high profile recruitment campaign, addressing skills gaps and shortages and encouraging efficiency and productivity

Priorities

- 7.1 The SNA sets out key strategic issues for the short medium and longer term¹⁰³ within the context of the Government's skills strategy¹⁰⁴. There are a number of key priorities for Asset Skills as SSC with key partners and stakeholders:

Short Term

- 7.2 Increasing the awareness and the understanding of the Asset Skills role and remit within the social housing sector and how it can set out a comprehensive framework for addressing the skills shortages and improve organisational productivity and performance.

Medium Term

- 7.3 **Recruitment:**

High profile recruitment campaign to attract new entrants in the housing industry by:

- Working with HE, FE and 6th Form colleges to promote housing as a career when students/under graduates before they are making their career choices
- Co-ordinating and branding graduate trainee and placement programmes
- Enhance the 'Bright Futures' partnership to secure and retain the best talent
- Developing both inter-, and cross-sector career pathways
- Attracting mature applicants who might be considering a career change
- Promote to new entrants – Forum 3¹⁰⁵ Europe's leading recruitment event for voluntary/not for profit organisations
- Providing bursaries for school leavers
- Looking to other sectors/occupations to recruit
- Reducing delays in the recruitment and selection process to capitalise on the best candidates

¹⁰³ Asset Skills, SNA, Chapter 8

¹⁰⁴ HM Government, 21st Century Skills, July 2003, p47

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.forum3.co.uk/>

- Changing job titles to reflect the role to encourage applicants to consider housing as a career e.g. Customer Services Assistant versus Housing Assistant
- Encouraging more women, people with a disability and those from BME groups into Housing at all levels
- Considering setting up Job banks (3 suitable people, 1 gets the job – What about the other 2?)

7.4 **Addressing Skills Gaps and Skills Shortages:**

- Improving leadership and management – Asset Skills branded programmes/partnership approaches, including business planning
- Updating communication and customer care skills to respect diversity of customers ¹⁰⁶
- Identifying and mapping skills required by new/changing roles of housing associations
- Improving neighbourhood management and community leadership skills
- Identify best practice and disseminate
- Recognise skills from other sectors in recruitment
- “Growing own” staff in response to skills shortages/gaps by clear career paths and succession planning
- Organisations discussing and clarifying the roles/skill sets of the housing officer
- Developing team working skills with the demands for flexible service delivery
- Linking personal development plans to business plans and encourage innovation and creativity
- Sharing skills and learning between housing employers
- Working with professional bodies to improve qualifications take-up which meets the needs of employers
- Promote competences rather than knowledge
- Further development of Foundation Degrees
- Encourage take-up of Apprenticeships and NVQs for Housing
- Widen access to e-learning
- Focus on technical and IT skills, especially skills for remote and mobile working

Long Term

7.5 **Efficiency and productivity:**

- Improving efficiency/productivity, for example economies of scale within super groups
- Developing a framework and tools for workforce planning, assessment and delivery
- Working with large and small organisations to tackle macro issues
- Find synergies and generic competences across the sectors and improve cross-sector collaboration

¹⁰⁶ Asset Skills has developed multi cultural communications skills in Housing materials

7.6 Addressing Skills Gaps and Shortages:

- Oversee the development of courses, qualifications and outputs which meet those needs – improve learning supply/creating relevant qualifications
- Promoting the use of occupational standards
- Identifying and improving access to training funding, lobbying for, and reducing bureaucracy to access both UK and EU money
- Dealing with workforce imbalances, including balance of men and women in top jobs (Leadership 2010¹⁰⁷)
- Developing new skills – customer care, social integration, family friendly initiatives
- Developing skills to manage a mixed economy of housing stock
- Developing/training staff to be on the spot decision makers and responsible for resource allocation
- Reviewing business plans to cope with economic instability
- Adopting different approaches to the tasks of management and delivery – staff managing their own activity and thinking on the ground
- Keeping pace with shifts in skill sets caused by funding regime changes for specific client groups e.g. polarisation between younger and older tenants

7.7 Whilst the above are key priorities, other supplementary action is suggested throughout the Report in the summaries and key points.

Conclusions

- 7.8 This Report has essentially been a Summary of the Asset Skills ‘Skills Needs Assessment’ with some additional analysis for recommended courses of action to address the skills crisis within the sector.
- 7.9 Appendix I contains an Implementation Plan which has been drafted by Asset Skills and agreed with employers in order to implement the above priorities, that in turn have been drawn from this Summary.
- 7.10 The Implementation Plan has short, medium and long term action but it will be important to embark on all aspects of the plan in order to improve the prospects of the Housing sector as a long term, worthwhile and satisfying career. It needs to attract everyone who wish to work with tenants and leaseholders to improve their housing prospects.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.leadership2010.org.uk/home.htm>

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Implementation Plan and Outcomes for Housing

Right People				
Issues/Research outcomes	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Inability to attract young and new blood	Identify barriers to apprenticeship take-up	Take-up improves by 100% (?)	Bright Futures, employers and providers	End 2008
Declining numbers of school-leavers	Foundation Degree for Housing	Take-up improves by 100% (?)	Bright Futures FE institutions	End 2008
Lack of awareness about career options	Promote sector as a career of first choice, using success stories from school leavers to graduates	More entrants	Bright Futures Schools and tertiary institutions, EBPs ¹⁰⁹	End 2009
	Branded graduate recruitment	More entrants	Asset Skills ¹¹⁰ & Bright Futures HE Institutions	End 2009
Negative perceptions of the sector	Build promotion/campaign on positives of housing jobs	More entrants	Bright Futures	End 2009
Low numbers applying	Bright Futures	Higher numbers applying	Bright Futures	End 2009
	'Take your teacher to work' day	Usage of this promotional tool	Bright Futures Employers	End 2008
	Encourage leavers/new entrants i.e. fast tracking	Usage of this promotional tool	Bright Futures Employers	End 2008
	Identify quality recruitment standards and good practice etc in sector	Identify quality recruitment	CIH Good Practice Unit	Mid 2006

¹⁰⁹ Education Business Partnerships

¹¹⁰ Asset Skills role as broker

	Disseminate good practice	Dissemination of good practice	Asset Skills/CIH Employers	Mid 2006
	Employers give students time to study to make job more attractive	Students routinely given time to study, include in employer engagement statistics	LSC Employers	All LSC Needs Assessments 2009
Address ageing workforce	Identify barriers to recruitment by research and good practice	Identify barriers	Asset Skills Employers pilot	Mid 2006
Replacement of retiring staff	Produce good practice guide to recruitment within the sector Disseminate good practice	Disseminate	Asset Skills LSCs Employers	End 2006
	Deal with obstacles in recruitment process, such as time lines, pace and procedures	Apply good practice	Employers	2007
Low numbers applying	Tap into tenants and leaseholders as a potential source for recruitment Signpost tenants and leaseholders to free training and support to help them apply for posts e.g. return to work/study programmes, short courses on customer care, using computers etc	Tenants/leaseholders apply and successfully work within the sector Increase number of applicants	Bright Futures/Asset Skills Employers	By 2008
Untapped supply of disabled potential applicants	Encourage more disabled applicants	Target 5% of disabled applicants in the workforce	LSC Employers	By end 2009
Gender imbalance	Identify obstacles	Identify	Bright Futures	2007
	Encourage more women in technical, professional and managerial roles	Incorporate into promotional tools	Bright Futures Employers	By 2009
Competition from other sectors	Apply the above good practice	Entrants/applicants increase	Employers	By end 2009

	and promotional materials			
Right Skills – Customer Service				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Rising customer expectations	Companies becoming more customer driven	Measures to put customer first by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Compacts • Involve in meaningful decision making • Measuring customer satisfaction 	Employers	Immediate
	New approach to customer service	Better customer service	Asset Skills ¹¹¹ Employers	Immediate/on-going
	Research to identify the new approach and progress within the sector Good practice identified	New approach identified and progress known	Asset Skills by Sector Skills Agreement LSCs Employers pilot	Immediate
	Skills training for staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Interpersonal • Customer care • Team skills • Customer care company policies 	Staff fully trained	Employers LSC funding	Immediate/on-going
	Cultural Awareness in Customer Care Training in Housing	Training applied	Asset Skills	Immediate/on-going

¹¹¹ Asset Skills as broker

	Budgets to match higher customer expectations	Higher, more appropriate budgets for tenant involvement etc	Employers	As/when
	Hays competency model	Apply generic names to roles	Asset Skills/Hays pilot	Immediate
	Disseminate results	Apply generic names to roles	Employers	By 2008
	Research to identify career progression in customer service	Career progression identified	Bright Futures	By 2008
	Disseminate	Applied by employers	Employers	By 2008
	Reward schemes – incorporate into the above research	Schemes established	Employers	By 2008
	Greater delegation/empowerment for staff, especially when remote working	Delegation/empowerment operational	Employers	By 2009
	Skills training for above	Training supplied	Asset Skills	By end 2007

Right Skills – Management and Leadership				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Attracting managerial applicants into the sector	Branded leadership/management promotional campaign	More applicants	Asset Skills Employers	By end 2007
Massive loss through retirements	Recognise skills from other sectors	Skills recognised	Employers	By end 2007
Recruiting through technical channels	Ensure have managerial and 'soft' skills	Have soft skills	Employers/Training partnerships	By end 2007
	Competency modelling/mapping	Competencies known and accord with Leadership and Management competencies, produced by Management Standards Commission (MSC)	Asset Skills	By end 2006
Under representation of women in senior management	Leadership 2010	Gender imbalance improved	Bright Futures Employers	By 2010
Under representation of BME groups in senior management	New initiative	BME imbalance improved	Bright Futures COFEM Employers	By 2010
More/better leadership and management training	Identify best practice in leadership and management training within the sector	Best practice established and published	Asset Skills ¹¹² /CIH	By end 2007
	Robust		Employers	By end 2007

¹¹² Asset Skills as broker

	selection/assessment processes			
	Team Building training	Deals with lack of cohesion, organisational objectives etc	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
	Vision and Values training	Clarifies vision and values of housing associations Encourages culture of ownership and shared responsibility	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
	Strategic management training	Delivers strategic management skills	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
	'Soft' management skills	Delivers 'soft' management skills	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
	Improve skills for neighbourhood management and community leadership	Skills delivered	CIH	By end 2008
	Dealing with work/life balance, stress and demands of the job	Appreciation delivered	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
	Evaluation and feedback of management training	Evaluation and feedback delivered	Branded leadership and management training	By end 2007
Costs of training – time/resources	Cost/benefit of recruiting new managers	Relative costs/benefits established	CIH Good Practice Unit	By end 2007
	Partnerships to deliver leadership/management training	Partnerships brokered – establish formal pilot at Hounslow Homes	Asset Skills	Immediate
Lack of succession planning	Take steps to grow own managers	Own managers grown	Guidance provided by CIH/ Asset Skills/Employers	By end 2008

	Work with professional bodies to tailor skills solutions and increase qualification take up.	Tailored skills solutions	CIH, ILM and other relevant Institutes	On-going
Possible conflict in role of Housing Officers	Clarify skill sets of Housing Officers	Clarified	CIH	By end 2007
Growth in jobs requiring higher level skills – Level 4 and above	Improve qualifications take-up	Take-up improved by 100%	Bright Futures	By end 2008
Personal development plans linked to business plans	Links established – Newport City Council pilot	Links established	Asset Skills pilot	Immediate

Right Skills – Legislation				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Responding to legislative and regulatory changes	Training to implement relevant changes – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Value • Neighbourhood management/renewal • Resident/community empowerment • Supporting People • Regeneration • Development of affordable housing • Management • Rent capping • HB changes • Increasing home ownership • Partnership working • Competition from private developers • Efficiency agenda 	Training/qualification delivered Supporting People – organisational competencies/capabilities	Chartered Institute of Housing Asset Skills to encourage take-up	As/when By end 2007
Opportunities for learning	New clubs around sharing skills and learning	Learning achieved	LSCs & Employers Unions	By end 2008
	Expand opportunities for e-learning	Opportunities expanded	CIH	By end 2008
Inspection/regulation	Prepare managers/staff for Audit Commission inspections	Staff and managers better prepared	CIH	By end 2007

Right Skills -IT				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Substitution of IT for jobs	Ensure all staff and managers have the requisite IT training for the tasks they undertake	All staff and managers IT literate at basic/advanced level, as appropriate	Employers	As/when
Time to study	Time commitment required	Commitment honoured	Asset Skills guidance Employers	By end 2008
	Link IT training to the strategic aims/objectives of the organisation	Training linked	Asset Skills – good practice Employers	By end 2008
	Integrate IT into leadership and management training	Integrated	Asset Skills MSC	By end 2008
	Staff and managers to use the full range of IT functions	Full range used	Employers	By end 2008
Need to improve access to, and quality of, IT skills	Train staff with IT skills required for remote and mobile working	Staff trained	Employers	As/when
	Skills analysis and short workshops on specific software	Skills analysis completed Workshops held	Employers	By end 2008
	Promote e-skills passports	Promoted - usage	Asset Skills Employers	By end 2008
	Creating career paths and publicising them	Created/publicised	Bright Futures Employers	By end 2008
Fast response to IT changes	Attracting professionals from other sectors –	Attracted	Employers	By end 2008

	Forum 3			
Understand needs of IT users	Inter-departmental work shadowing	Carried out	Employers	As/when
	Graduate trainee schemes	Graduates recruited - numbers	Bright Futures Employers	By end 2008
	Going out into the community to recruit requisite skills, including tenants/leaseholders	New sources for skills created	Employers	By end 2008
Changes in building technology	Train maintenance staff in mobile technology data capture	Trained	Employers	By end 2007

Right Place				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Changes in definitions of a career	Identify and share good practice in succession planning	Identified and shared	CIH Good Practice Unit	By end 2008
	Update employees skills, relevant to medium/long term	Updated	Employers	As/when
	Allocate realistic budgets	Allocated	Employers	As/when
	Promote apprenticeships (see above)	Promoted	Asset Skills	On-going
	Identify career paths and promote to staff	Identified	Bright Futures Employers	By end 2008
Ageing workforce	Encourage employers to train/develop their own staff more effectively	Employers train/develop their own	CIH Employers	By end 2008

	Give staff time to study	Given routinely	Employers	By end 2008
Right Time				
Issues	Solutions	Outcomes	Responsibility	By when
Need to plan to take account of Government's 10 year strategy	Develop new skills	New skills identified Advice on action to be taken	Asset Skills Employers	By end 2008
Possible economic instability	Review in Business Plan and Operational Plan	Reviewed	Employers	On-going
Strategic Planning	Scenario planning	Less uncertainty	Employers	On-going
Continuing drive for home ownership and developing services for home owners	Skills for managing a mixed economy of services	New skills identified	Asset Skills Employers	By end 2008
Demand for remote working and rationalisation of back offices	Develop/ train staff to be on the spot decision makers/resource allocators	New skills identified	CIH Employers	By end 2008
Changing work patterns Need to cover diverse roles	Develop different approaches to tasks of management and delivery – staff managing own activities/thinking on the ground Balance between remote working and interacting with teams Identify and share good practice on flexible working	New skills identified	Asset Skills Employers	By end 2008