

CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

STRATEGY

2009-2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chichester District Council's Homelessness Strategy 2009-2014 updates the previous strategy which was developed in 2003. It reports on progress made in delivering the previous strategy, reviews the profile of homelessness in the District and sets out key aims and objectives for the next five years.

The 2003 strategy focused on delivering a service based on homelessness prevention, i.e. seeing homelessness as a process and managing applicants' transition into permanent accommodation. This move towards a prevention and options approach has been successful and is now considered to be the principal means by which to deal with homelessness.

Key achievements since 2003 have been:

- Development of the Housing Options Service as part of a preventative approach to homelessness.
- Reducing the number of homelessness applications and acceptances and starting to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation.
- Reducing the number of families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation in line with the Government target.
- Developing the Private Sector Housing Access Scheme (PSHAS) to help people threatened with homelessness to find alternative private rented accommodation through provision of a Rent Deposit Guarantee and rent in advance.
- Implementation of an Independent Living Scheme (ILS) to support vulnerable customers into permanent affordable housing.

These achievements do not mean that homelessness is no longer an issue. As statistics illustrate, there is still an extremely high level of housing need in the District and the number of people seeking assistance with housing-related issues continues to rise. Affordability and the threat of homelessness is as big an issue as it was five years ago. The downturn in the housing market makes it easier for some households to find a home. For others, for whom home ownership was already marginal, the threat of repossession has grown.

It is essential therefore that we continue to work to prevent homelessness and assist households to resolve their housing issues. Given the high demand for affordable housing we cannot meet everyone's expectations. However we can work to ensure that those who are threatened with homelessness have a wide range of options and are supported to make best use of them.

At the same time we are also receiving increased requests from vulnerable members of the community, to help find secure accommodation or retain their existing home. A new floating support service 'Signpost', introduced in 2007 across Chichester and Arun is making good progress in supporting such people. However it is clear that we need to ensure that support is available for particular groups such as young people, people fleeing domestic violence and people with substance misuse and alcohol problems.

The overall aim of this Homelessness Prevention Strategy is:

To deliver choice in housing through providing a responsive, pro-active, prevention based service which gives good quality advice, assistance and support to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Within this aim there are five objectives:

1. Develop the tools to increase choice for customers and to prevent homelessness by:

- Developing a wider range of prevention options that are applicable to different customers
- Maximising the potential of the private rented sector.
- Maximising the effective use of existing stock and work with our RSL partners to increase the provision of new affordable homes.

2. Assist households to resolve their housing issues by:

- Delivering a more personalised service:
- Establishing customer pathways for preventing homelessness

3. Implement a policy framework that prioritises homelessness prevention by:

- Updating our Allocations Policy to reduce the risk of homelessness.
- Implementing a more effective means of processing homelessness applications.

4. Review the provision of Temporary Accommodation, in particular:

- Ensure that Government targets are met.
- Review financial management and budgeting processes, including a review of the rent structure.
- Review use of the council-owned temporary accommodation after 18 months to ensure it provides a range of options that are appropriate in terms of quality, location and affordability.

5. Ensure that appropriate support is available for vulnerable groups by:

- Continuing to work with partner agencies.
- Working with Supporting People team.
- Researching rough sleeping within the District, identifying any gaps in service provision and investigating the feasibility of developing services for people with alcohol related problems.

Actions identified to deliver these objectives are set out in an Action Plan at the end of the strategy.

Most of the proposals are intended to be contained within existing resources but maximum use will be made of partner agencies. The Council receives £30,000 per annum from the Government which is used to fund homelessness prevention initiatives.

BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGY

Chichester District Council produced a Homelessness Strategy in 2003 and five years on it is timely to review and update the strategy. In 2007 a new over-arching Housing Strategy was produced which set the overall strategic direction for housing in the District supported by individual sub-strategies setting out more detailed actions, one of which is the Homelessness Prevention Strategy. Extensive consultation was undertaken with the community and other statutory and voluntary organisations in developing the over-arching strategy and this has informed the development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

The aim of the District's Housing Strategy is taken directly from Chichester in Partnership's Community Strategy, namely:

“That everyone within the District has the opportunity of living in a decent & affordable home”

Within the Housing Strategy there are three key themes:

- Maximising the effective use of the private housing market;
- Delivering new affordable homes;
- Delivering choice in housing.

In developing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy we undertook a fundamental review of our Housing Options and Homelessness service, including our use of temporary accommodation¹. This review included undertaking an independent audit of the quality of our service, conducted by Shelter, asking customers what they thought of our service as well as a financial audit of the viability of the services we offer. We have also reviewed homelessness trends and information to identify the main reasons for homelessness and how we need to address them. The findings are set out in Appendix One and summarised in the next section.

The review highlighted that although we had been very successful in delivering housing options and homelessness services to meet our own and government performance targets, we were not delivering services that fully met our customers expectations. The review also highlighted that although we could meet the Government's requirement to reduce our use of temporary accommodation this would result in leaving units of temporary accommodation empty resulting in financial loss through reduced income. We have used the recommendations from this review to inform this strategy.

The strategy therefore is firmly focused upon preventing homelessness, taking a holistic view of customer needs, maximising the choices available to customers and being pro-active in the support we offer. It is inevitable however that for some households we will not be able to prevent them becoming homeless and where necessary we will assist households to make homeless applications whilst we continue to work with them to find alternative solutions. We hope that by adopting this approach we will start to manage customer expectations positively and move away from the public perception of homelessness as a fast-track means of accessing permanent social housing.

The overall aim of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy is:

¹ “Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless, Housing Options Services and development of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy” Report by John Palmer, North Harbour Consulting, October 2008

“To deliver choice in housing through providing a responsive, pro-active, prevention based service which gives good quality advice, assistance and support to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness”

The work of other agencies and organisations, especially with the Third Sector is important in ensuring that a range of services are available to vulnerable customers throughout the District. We will continue to support and work with these agencies to ensure that services that are crucial to local people continue to be available.

How does the strategy fit with other national, regional and local priorities?

- **National Priorities:** The Government has issued guidance and targets for the provision of homelessness services. In March 2005, it published a strategy for tackling homelessness entitled “**Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives.**” This set a target to halve the number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation by 2010. This followed the Government’s earlier target of ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families. This target has now been embedded within the National Indicator framework (NI156). There is a further requirement for local authorities to eliminate the use of B&B for 16/17 year olds by 2010.
- **Regional Priorities:** The South East Regional Housing Board has produced a new regional Housing Strategy to cover the period 2008 – 2011. This sets out an overall objective of enabling everyone in the South East to live in a decent home. This recognises the importance of homelessness prevention and its aims include increasing access to the private rented sector, making best use of the existing housing stock and addressing under-occupation.
- **Local Priorities:** Key strategic aims for the District are set out in its new Sustainable Communities Strategy. Consultation with the community has clearly highlighted the importance placed upon access to good quality, affordable housing. This has however been placed within the context of ensuring that the environment and quality of life available in Chichester is not compromised.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy will contribute to the West Sussex Supporting People Strategy which sets out the county priorities for supported housing funding. Housing related support services are a key resource in preventing homelessness. These services are the subject of a countywide strategic review commencing in 2009 which will seek to ensure that there is access to good quality, cost-effective services across the County. Elements of this strategy will also be important in delivering key targets contained within the West Sussex Local Area Agreement (LAA), especially those concerning care leavers, provision of new affordable homes and the number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.

How the Homelessness Prevention Strategy has been developed

Extensive consultation was conducted in 2007 as part of the process of developing the new over-arching Housing Strategy. This involved a wide range of organisations as well as focus sessions in the Community using the newly formed Citizens Panel. This consultation also included issues around homelessness and accessing housing services within the District. Further consultation was conducted in 2008 in relation to the Choice Based Lettings System and in developing the District’s Sustainable Communities Strategy.

HOMELESSNESS IN CONTEXT IN CHICHESTER

The Chichester District is a large predominantly rural area, with high house prices and significant development pressures. The area is highly attractive. Its economy is based on agriculture, horticulture, tourism, and service industries. Providing housing and homelessness services in such a District presents considerable challenges. These include ensuring access to services, providing sustainable and appropriate temporary accommodation and providing sufficient new homes where affordability is a major requirement.

The District's Sustainable Communities Strategy sets out the principal issues that are affecting the District including those that directly bear upon homelessness. These can be summarised as²:

- Higher than average house prices combined with relatively low average wages (compared to county and regional levels), leading to housing demand outstripping supply, and homes becoming increasingly unaffordable for the majority of residents;
- The difficulty of delivering services in a predominantly rural area combined with rural communities becoming unsustainable due to the loss of younger people and increases in retired residents and second homes;
- An increasingly ageing population and associated increase in demands on health and social care services; and
- Out-migration of younger economically active residents.

Various actions and projects have been implemented through the 2003 Homelessness Strategy and these have proved largely successful particularly in reducing the number of homeless acceptances, use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation and helped to make good progress in meeting the reduction in the temporary accommodation target. The underlying problem of the lack of affordable housing and of those seeking assistance and help with housing related problems continues. Indeed it is increasing given the downturn in the housing market and the economy.

Levels of homelessness in the Chichester District

Overall the number of homelessness applications has reduced from 127 in 2005 to 84 in 2007/8 (see Appendix One, table 6). However this largely reflects the shift in emphasis in the service from one based upon processing applications to one preventing homelessness. Previously many such applications were from people who were either not homeless, or threatened with homelessness, or who were not in priority need. A homelessness application is now submitted as a last resort when all other avenues have been exhausted. This trend reflects what is happening nationally, with a 32% drop in the number of homelessness applications from 2005 to 2007 and a 29% reduction in acceptances over the same period. People accepted as homeless within the District has also reduced from 83 in 2005 to 53 by 2008.

A reduction in the level of homelessness applications doesn't mean that homelessness has gone away or that housing need in the District has reduced. The

² For more information on the LSP and the Community Strategy visit our website: www.chichester.gov.uk

increase in the number of households seeking housing advice illustrates that accessing suitable housing is still an issue for many people.

Profile of those accepted as homeless

In developing the strategy we have analysed the reasons why people become homeless and this has determined the types of support we need to put in place (see Appendix One, table 7). The reasons are very similar to those that were prevalent when we developed our previous strategy. This does not mean that existing methods of preventing homeless are unsuccessful but that many people are simply priced out of the housing market. Affordable housing is scarce and demand far outstrips supply.

The three main reasons for people becoming homeless centre on parents or relatives being unable to continue to provide accommodation, the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST) and relationship breakdown. Over the years homelessness due to mortgage repossession has not been a major issue. However during the last quarter of 2008/9 we have seen an increase in people seeking advice in this area as the economic downturn deepens. An important element in the strategy is increasing the amount of support available to homeowners.

An analysis of homelessness acceptances shows that the main households we assist continue to be families with dependant children (see Appendix One, table 9). Given the unaffordability of the overall housing market this means that family sized accommodation is in even greater demand and the time a family may wait for a three bedroom property can be lengthy. Such accommodation is also in short supply in the private rented sector, at an affordable level, which increases the demand for social rented properties even further.

The analysis also highlights that a significant proportion of single people approaching the council for assistance have personal needs that make them more vulnerable and require additional support to live independently. Whilst we believe that our enhanced housing options approach will mean that these customers should be able to access the same types of housing as others, we need to ensure that a range of support is available to help them to maintain their tenancies and their independence. In particular the analysis highlights the following groups that may require some additional support:

- Young people;
- People with mental health issues;
- People with physical disabilities
- Women fleeing domestic violence.

There are already a wide range of agencies that provide support for these groups and further actions proposed for these as well as other potentially vulnerable groups are explored further in Objective 5 below.

Meeting the needs of Rough Sleepers.

One particular group of people who are not represented within the statistics are rough sleepers. A head count was carried out in the District in March 2002. This found six people sleeping rough across the District. At the end of April 2005 a survey of the Housing Register also showed a total of six people who have registered that they are sleeping rough. As at the end of 2008 there were 37 people registered as being of no fixed abode. This does not necessarily mean that they are sleeping

rough but means that they have no settled accommodation and they frequently move around between friends and relations. Currently the only short-term solution for this group is the provision of a direct access hostel, day-centre and an outreach service run by Chichester Stonepillow.

The issue of rough sleepers is kept under regular review and discussed with service providers. We feel that this is an area that requires further investigation and we will work with our partner agencies to research need and develop appropriate assistance.

It is believed that 80% of rough sleepers have addiction problems and 55% have a dual diagnosis. For many, the absence of a home is a symptom of these underlying problems that need to be addressed before long-term permanent rehousing can become a realistic option. It is therefore an area that needs extensive partnership working in order to provide more effective solutions.

Use of temporary accommodation

Where homelessness cannot be prevented and the Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation it has two main sources, its own self-contained flats or private Bed & Breakfast accommodation. The Council has met the Government’s target of not using B&B for families or young people and using this type of accommodation only in an emergency or where the risk posed by the applicant is such that they cannot be housed in family accommodation.

The Council owned temporary accommodation is of a high standard and comprises self-contained flats. Whilst the current economic climate is making it extremely challenging to meet the Government target of halving the use of temporary accommodation we are optimistic that this will be achieved by 2010. The use of temporary accommodation over the past three years is detailed in table 11 in Appendix One which shows a sharp rise in the numbers accommodated in 2008/9. Whilst we accept the principle of reducing the use of temporary accommodation, successfully meeting this target has financial implications for the council in leaving units of accommodation empty and this is explored further in Objective 4 below which details the findings of a recent options appraisal into its use. It is also dependent on increasing the supply of new lettings.

The District is fortunate in having both a women’s refuge, a teenage pregnancy unit and a foyer for young people, and excellent referral arrangements are in place which means that these facilities can be used as emergency accommodation whilst more sustainable accommodation can be sought by the relevant organisations.

Housing Register facts and figures

The implementation of Homemove in July 2007 was a major change to the way in which households can now access affordable homes within the District. Rather than the traditional method of allocating homes, applicants now ‘bid’ for properties. What Homemove doesn’t do however is to increase the amount of affordable homes available to those in housing need. Demand continues to far outstrip supply and the table below shows the number of households registered in housing need.

Table 1: Breakdown of the Housing Register according to priority as at 31st December 2008

Breakdown of the Housing Register - under CBL system³	Percentage	No. of households
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³ Detailed definition of the Banding System is available in the Council’s Allocations Policy –

Band A – Urgent Housing Need	1.5%	81
Band B – High Housing Need	6.1%	339
Band C – Medium Housing Need	26.0%	1440
Band D – Low Housing Need	66.4%	3683
Total	100	5543

When Homemove was implemented in July 2007 there were 2,700 households registered. This now stands at over 5,600, doubling in 18 months. There are various reasons for this. The new system is much more visible and allocation of homes more transparent which has encouraged more people to join. The methods used for advertising are also more visible and attractive to a wider range of people. There are also likely to be more families who simply are priced out of the housing market due to the lack of affordability of local homes. For many the principle of choice is also much more attractive than the old system of being allocated a home by the Council.

Appendix One sets out details of properties that become available each year (table 16 & 17). This shows that with an average of only 300 properties becoming vacant each year there is a considerable mis-match between the demand and supply. Of these 300 approximately half are newly developed homes which are dependent on market developments. Only a small proportion are suitable for families. With lengthy average waiting times for an affordable home it can be seen that we need to ensure that other, viable options are available to customers to assist them whilst they wait for rehousing through Homemove. When we consider that those in most urgent need are housed much more quickly than others we need to ensure that we have a policy framework in place that acknowledges those who are active in resolving their own housing issues whilst also according priority to those in housing need. This is explored further in Objective 3 below.

Maximising housing options to prevent homelessness

Given the challenges that are presented by the difficulty the majority of the community has in accessing the housing market and the huge demand for affordable housing it is essential that we have a range of measures that can assist households in housing need. As a result of the last homelessness strategy a number of options have been developed. This has included practical products as well as assistance available from other organisations and include:

- Provision of capital funds to encourage landlords to bring back into use empty homes
- Provision of capital funding to enable extensions to social housing where appropriate to reduce rehousing pressures
- Rent Deposit & Guarantee scheme
- Homelessness prevention fund
- Use of Discretionary Housing Payments
- Debt advice and court desk service from Citizens Advice Bureau
- Domestic Violence Outreach service
- Teenage Pregnancy Outreach Service
- Signpost Floating Support Service

- Chichester Stonepillow – providing services for rough sleepers.

Whilst these services are extremely important in preventing homeless within the District we need to ensure that we are offering the assistance that is needed. Particular gaps that we have identified include options for homeowners, maximising the use of the private rented sector as well as making more effective use of the existing housing stock particularly through tackling under and over occupation. These are further explored in Objective 1 below.

What does this mean for local people trying to find housing?

Although our analysis shows that according to official reporting, homelessness has continued to reduce over the last five years, the demand for affordable housing and the number of people approaching the Council with problems related to housing continues to rise.

There is a mis-match between the supply of available housing and the needs, expectations and resources of a large proportion of residents within the District. This mis-match exists in the type, tenure, and size of available accommodation. For example flats and maisonettes are the main access property for the first time buyer due to their lower costs. Unfortunately this type of accommodation is scarce in the District and as a result sells at a premium. This prevents access to the housing ladder for many households on average earnings. 25% of households in the District are in receipt of financial support of which 43% are in receipt of Housing Benefit. For many households the only option is to move out of the District to find less expensive housing.

Changing demographics and social factors combined with high house prices mean that economically active households are finding it increasingly difficult to continue to live in the District in which they have grown up. This means that they are either having to commute large distances to their employment or find work elsewhere. This increases pressure on our existing infrastructure, has an impact on family life with increased working hours and affects the local economy with a shortage of local labour.

The Private Rented Sector

Although statistically the Chichester District has a larger than average private rented sector, this is skewed by the impact of the number of properties owned by the landed estates whose properties are not generally available. Households therefore have little choice within the rented sector and what is available tends to be expensive and/or less attractive and poorly maintained. As a consequence there is a large demand for the cheaper properties and many households are forced to relocate to neighbouring Districts. Growth in student numbers has also created additional demand and some traditional family homes are being used as student accommodation. This creates real problems in attempting to prevent homelessness and reducing the demand for affordable housing, as many landlords have no need to rent to people who may not be able to meet all of the financial criteria. This strategy therefore aims to increase the number of options for people to access the private rented sector, for example through developing better relationships with landlords as well as developing initiatives to help people to afford the costs of private renting. Whilst currently we are experiencing a higher than average availability of rented properties this is a result of current housing market conditions with the lack of

movement in house sales. Once this situation changes we would expect there to be fewer rented properties available.

The recent slow down in the housing market and the 'credit crunch' have obvious implications for the actions outlined in this strategy as well as its potential success in continuing to achieve targets in relation to reducing homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation. Already we are seeing the difficulties that first time buyers face in accessing mortgages and the rise in the number of people getting into mortgage arrears and facing repossession. Rising household costs make this even worse as families struggle to meet financial commitments. This strategy also focuses upon improving the help and assistance we can give to homeowners to assist them to remain in their homes, particularly through providing timely advice but also through developing schemes such as mortgage rescue.

Delivering our Strategic Objectives

Key Objective 1: Develop the tools to increase choice for customers and to prevent homelessness

Achievements since the 2003 strategy

- Implementation of the Sussex wide Homemove Choice Based Lettings system which aims to give choice to those seeking affordable housing.
- 264 rent deposits approved since 2003 through the Private Sector Housing Access Scheme (PSHAS).
- Introduction in May 2007 of the 'Signpost' service run by Stonham Housing Association which offers floating support aimed at preventing homelessness.
- Establishment of a Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- Implementing the Housing Options Service aimed at preventing homelessness.

Preventing homelessness involves exploring with customers the choices they have available to resolve their own housing issues. Prevention can mean enabling someone to remain in their own home through for example negotiating with a landlord, assisting them to resolve rent arrears issues or by informing them of their housing rights. It also means providing them with the assistance they need to access alternative accommodation if we are unable to prevent them losing their existing home. This could be through 'products' such as a deposit guarantee or a mortgage rescue solution or through practical support such as mediation or advocacy.

One particular scheme that has proved particularly useful in helping more vulnerable customers to access suitable permanent housing has been the Independent Living Scheme (ILS). This scheme is operated in partnership with our local housing providers and Southdown Housing Association (SHA). SHA lease a property on behalf of the customer who then has, in effect, a trial tenancy with support provided by SHA. This means that the customer is given the chance to develop independent living skills until such a time as the tenancy is transferred into their own name once they no longer need support. This scheme has been particularly useful in assisting people with mental health issues and helps around 10 people per year.

Much has been achieved since 2003 however we need to develop further our approach to homelessness prevention. To support implementation of this strategy we will develop a homelessness prevention delivery plan which will set out for each practical measure a service specification considering options for delivery. We believe that in this way we will develop options that are better tailored to meeting customer needs as well as being cost effective, maximising funding available from other sources. To achieve this objective we will focus attention in 3 key areas.

Develop a wider range of prevention options that are applicable to different customers

Improving the information available to customers by:

- Reviewing the housing options information that is available on the Council's website and the range of leaflets available to customers seeking housing advice.

- Making better use of the information produced by the Homemove system. Information on bidding patterns, demand and availability of properties is essential for customers in making choices about their housing options.
- Maximising the use of the Homemove scheme for advertising private rented properties and home ownership opportunities.
- Where young people cannot remain in the parental home and the foyer is not a feasible option we need to develop services such as supported lodgings or Independent Living Schemes (ILS) to assist them with making the transition to managing their own accommodation.

Maximising the opportunities on offer through the Government's worklessness agenda by:

- Working with our Housing Association partners on the initiatives they implement to assist their tenants in maximising employment opportunities.
- Reviewing the outcomes from the pilot Housing Advice & Employment projects and considering any lessons that can be implemented within the District.

Helping people to stay in their existing homes by:

- Providing greater support for those that already own their own homes through developing mortgage rescue products that supplement the national scheme. The Government has introduced a scheme based upon 2 products: an equity release scheme; and a mortgage to rent scheme. Should we feel that these products will not meet local needs we will consider adopting and funding alternative schemes to prevent homelessness.
- Development of schemes aimed at assisting young people to remain in the parental home through developing effective family mediation schemes with appropriately trained partner organisations.
- Ensuring the effectiveness of floating support services to provide support to the community particularly in areas such as budgeting and tenancy support.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Homelessness Prevention Fund. Often small amounts targeted at prevention can save the Council money by helping people to remain in their own homes. For example by paying off small amounts of arrears or the up-front costs associated with accessing the private rented sector.
- Developing effective working arrangements with partner Housing Associations to ensure that evictions are avoided where possible.
- Maximising the use that can be made of Housing Benefit to sustain a household's existing home. The Council makes use of Discretionary Housing Payments and it is now proposed to maximise the budget aimed specifically at preventing homelessness and also using its flexibility to further fund an enhanced rent deposit scheme.

CASE STUDY

Charlie is 68 and lives in a private rented flat. He enjoys going to the pub each night to socialise with his friends. Each night when he gets home he puts the TV on and falls asleep in front of it. As he is going deaf the TV is rather loud and disturbs his neighbours into the early hours. His landlord has received numerous complaints from other tenants and although he doesn't want to, has started action to evict Charlie. Charlie therefore approaches the Council for help. After contacting his landlord to find out what the problem is, the Housing Interventions Officer buys him a timer switch for his TV so that it switches off at 10.30pm each night and no longer annoys the neighbours. The landlord lets him stay. £10 spent from the Homeless Prevention Budget therefore saved a lot of distress for Charlie and considerable expense for the Council in having to rehouse him.

Maximise the potential of the private rented sector

Developing links with private landlords

- Developing much more personalised links with landlords with whom we have worked successfully on PSHAS. By consulting them about the type of service they would want to receive from us when assisting us to house our customers we hope that they will want to work more closely with us. Recent research⁴ that has been undertaken showed that landlords would consider housing people nominated by the council if some of the financial risks were mitigated or additional support was made available. This could also be linked to the existing landlord accreditation scheme.
- Maximising the use that can be made of the Homemove scheme for use by private landlords.
- Look to maximise the effective use of private sector renewal grant assistance to landlords to facilitate the use of properties to prevent homelessness, securing nomination rights where appropriate.

Improving the effectiveness of the rent deposit scheme by:

- Reviewing the effectiveness of the overall scheme and in particular the use of rent in advance and guarantee arrangements with landlords to ensure maximum take-up of the scheme, implementing more flexible arrangements if required.
- Maximising the resources available through the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to establish a rent deposit scheme for those customers to whom the Council would have a duty to rehouse under homelessness legislation. It is proposed that these deposits will no longer need to be paid back by customers.
- Implementing a rent deposit scheme aimed at non-priority households which would be subject to repayment to enable recycling of the available funds.

Maximise the effective use of existing stock and work with our developing RSL partners to increase the provision of new affordable homes

⁴ Private Sector Accommodation Report 2006 available on www.chichester.gov.uk

- Encourage our Housing Association partners to be more pro-active in the market and intermediate rental sector, maximising private finance where appropriate.
- Continuing to support bids for public grants as well as make resources available for Housing Associations to develop affordable housing within the District. The Council has set an ambitious target of enabling 200 affordable homes each year.
- Attempting to ease overcrowding issues through learning from the Government funded pathfinder schemes. We already give priority in the allocations scheme for overcrowded families however we will look to identify opportunities to assist RSLs to fund extensions. We will also look to increase the number of family sized properties in the affordable development programme.
- We will also look to tackle under-occupation, thereby making better use of the existing stock. Work is already underway with HydeMartlet to develop an incentive scheme aimed at assisting those who need help in moving to more suitable accommodation.
- Work with the Estate Landlords within the District to identify joint working practices and means of accessing both property and land opportunities.

CASE STUDY

We are developing an incentive scheme to assist under-occupying tenants to move to smaller accommodation thereby freeing up a social rented home for a family who are living in unsuitable accommodation. HydeMartlet have already undertaken an extensive survey of their stock to identify under-occupied homes and their research has shown that people who are interested in moving require different things as an incentive. Some want the expenses of such a move covered whilst others have particular properties in mind, or others simply want some practical help in moving. Current proposals for a new scheme involves adopting a flexible approach to providing incentives with a menu of options. It is proposed to employ a specialist worker to assist households to identify alternative housing and to assist them with the practical aspects of moving if required. An under-occupying household can therefore opt for a financial incentive or practical assistance with a move or a mixture of the two.

Priorities for future action:

- **Review the effectiveness of the PSHAS**
- **Work with HydeMartlet on developing initiatives to tackle both overcrowding and under-occupation within their stock.**

- **Continue to develop 200 new affordable homes each year, wherever appropriate increasing the number of 3 and 4 bedroom homes on developments.**
- **Review working relationships with the Housing Benefit department to ensure assistance is targeted at those most in need.**
- **Implement the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme and seek to develop a more responsive supplementary scheme to deal with local needs.**
- **In partnership with an appropriate organisation implement a Mediation scheme for young people aimed at assisting them to remain in their family homes where appropriate.**
- **Look into opportunities arising from the Government's objectives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for those in social housing.**
- **Consider the potential for expanding the Homemove scheme to provide more information on alternative housing options.**
- **Work with the Estate Landlords to identify joint working opportunities.**

Key Objective 2: Adopt a homelessness prevention approach to assisting households to resolve their housing issues

Achievements since the 2003 strategy

- Developed the Housing Options service as the first stage in adopting a preventative approach to homelessness.
- Reduced the number of homelessness acceptances.
- Visiting all applicants at home who are threatened with homelessness through friends or relatives who are no longer able to house them.
- Housing Option Plans are given to customers following interview which summarises the advice that has been given and action points agreed
- Homelessness computer database installed in 2005 to improve case management.

We have already achieved a lot through adopting a housing options approach as part of the previous homelessness strategy but we recognise that we can do a lot more to prevent homelessness. In particular we want to adopt a problem-solving approach to tackling customer's housing issues. Where in the past we have focussed upon resolving housing issues directly, we recognise that in reality there may be other issues effecting households which are causing the housing problem. We aim to adopt a more personalised service and make better use of other agencies or Council services to assist customers. Examples include linking in with parenting schemes, Homestart or sports diversion programmes to tackle anti-social behaviour issues, or credit unions to tackle financial exclusion issues. To achieve this objective we will focus attention in 2 key areas.

Delivering a more personalised service

The Council has made significant investment in recent years in the way it communicates with the public, including a new Customer Service Centre (CSC). As the previous section noted, the emphasis within the service is on the prevention of homelessness. The first port of call for customers is the CSC who, having established the initial details of the problem, then make a referral to, and an appointment with, a Housing Options Officer. This Officer will then take on management of the case and work with the customer to attempt to prevent their homelessness. If homelessness cannot be prevented then a homelessness application will be taken and an assessment of any duty the Council may have under the relevant legislation undertaken.

Although the Council has been relatively successful in reducing the number of homelessness applications and acceptances taken, this does not mean that housing problems are reducing. They are in fact increasing with a rise in the number of households seeking assistance with their housing problems. Likewise preventing homelessness can be very time-consuming with housing options officers spending large amounts of time negotiating with landlords or assisting customers to access benefits or resolve financial problems. Increases in the numbers of households seeking assistance and subsequent increases in workloads have been reflected in a recent Council decision to invest additional resources in the Council's Housing Services to meet this higher demand for services. These additional resources have

resulted in additional staff being employed within the service and a restructured team which should be better enabled to meet customer needs.

We also want to ensure that we are collecting good quality data which helps us to inform the services we are providing and fully assess the outcomes we are achieving in homelessness prevention. We will review the IT systems we use to ensure that they not only meet the needs of our customers as well as our staff but also help us to record the successes we are achieving. This will involve mapping processes across the service as well as reviewing the interactions of the existing IT systems.

The first point of contact with people who are homeless or potentially homeless is crucial and sets the tone for any future contact. It is essential, therefore, that whilst the applicant is treated with sympathy and sensitivity, the right information is obtained at this stage so that good quality advice can be given and options, which may prevent homelessness can be explored. As part of the current restructure and additional resources the team will now be even more focused upon homelessness prevention and adopt an active approach to assisting customers. Particular actions which will be undertaken include:

- Review the quality of advice, assistance, support and information available to customers.
- Adopt a holistic problem-solving approach to customer needs including homelessness prevention focusing upon assisting households to resolve their housing issues including any underlying non-housing related issues which may be affecting their ability to secure the housing they need.
- Restructure the work of the Housing Options Service to provide specialist staff that work either on homelessness prevention or homelessness application processing.
- Review interaction with the CSC to ensure that customers get the most appropriate advice in a timely fashion.
- Review the IT systems that support the service to ensure that these are efficient and meet customer needs.
- Ensure that performance measures are tailored to delivering a customer focused service.

In adopting our new holistic approach to homelessness prevention, effective partnership working with other statutory and independent sector agencies will be essential to ensure that good quality advice is available throughout the District. We also need to ensure that referral arrangements that are already in place are effective and timely and that organisations can make early contact with our own service.

It is evident from the amount of correspondence we receive to support customers housing register applications that a wide variety of organisations are approached by those seeking affordable housing. We want to raise awareness amongst these organisations about homelessness prevention and housing options in particular with Health and Social Care agencies, Job Centre staff, and voluntary agencies such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau as well as GPs.

CASE STUDY

Elaine and her 3 children approach the Council for help after receiving an eviction notice from her Housing Association landlord. She has received numerous warnings from them regarding the anti-social behaviour of her children and the youngest son in particular who is regularly excluded from school. Our previous Housing Option approach would have been to process a homelessness application or secure an alternative private rented home for the family. The role of our new interventions staff will be to identify and work with relevant agencies to get the support the family need to tackle the root cause of the problem. By working with social services, voluntary agencies and educational welfare officers, tackling the children's behaviour and providing parenting skills support could result in the Housing Association agreeing to withdraw the notice and giving the family another opportunity to stay in their home.

Establish customer pathways for preventing homelessness

To deliver a more personalised service aimed primarily at preventing homelessness we believe we need to adopt a more co-ordinated approach. Building upon the tools we will develop to combat homelessness as set out in Objective 1, we plan to set out customer pathways that can be used to address customers' housing problems as set out in the table below. This will be a useful mechanism for staff when working with customers as well as an easy to understand framework which we can share early with them to set out the options available. This framework will take time to develop as we expand the tools and options available to us in preventing homelessness. It will be the role of the Housing Interventions team to work through these pathways with customers to try to prevent homelessness. If at the end of the process this has proved unsuccessful only then will a homelessness application be processed with the customer, although one may have been taken as a cautionary measure earlier but not acted upon.

Priorities for future action.

- **Continue to develop preventative work in the Housing Interventions Team.**
- **Adopt a holistic problem-solving approach to homelessness prevention focusing upon assisting households to resolve their housing issues including any underlying non-housing related issues which may be affecting their ability to secure the housing they need.**
- **Implement a programme to raise awareness amongst local agencies about housing options and homelessness issues.**
- **Review the IT systems that support the service to ensure that these are efficient and meet customer needs.**
- **Review our partnership working to ensure that we make the most of specialist help available when advising customers.**
- **Ensure that effective referral mechanisms are in place into other available services as well as into our own service.**
- **Implement customer pathways for homelessness prevention.**

Table 2: Customer Pathways to prevent homelessness

Type of household Option	Young single person > 25	Single person 25+	Lone Parent	Couple no dependents	Couple with dependents	Customer with support needs	Teenage Parent	Domestic violence
Rent deposit scheme (priority need)			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Rent deposit scheme (non-priority)	✓	✓		✓				
Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Information about agents and landlords	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Referral to accredited landlord			✓		✓		✓	✓
Homeless prevention fund	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mortgage rescue scheme			✓	✓	✓			✓
Homeshare	✓	✓						
Specialist housing support / agency through referral	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Foyer referral	✓					✓		
Intermediate rental			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Housing Register	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent Living Scheme	✓					✓		
Family Mediation	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Home Ownership options		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Mediation landlord / lender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legal interventions								✓

Key Objective 3: Implement a policy framework that prioritises homelessness prevention.

The statutory context within which the Council operates is Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as updated by the Homelessness Act 2002. This places a duty on local authorities to provide housing to those people who are homeless through no fault of their own and who are in priority need. The Council's main duty is to take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of existing accommodation and to secure new accommodation if this is not possible. This reinforces the homelessness prevention approach whereby all alternatives should be exhausted prior to a homeless application being pursued by the customer. If the customer is not in priority need or is homeless intentionally, the duty is restricted to the provision of advice and assistance.

It must however be recognised that customers have the right to make a homeless application at any stage when approaching the Council for assistance and often this right will conflict with the Council's primary objective of assisting customers to pursue alternative options prior to investigating homelessness under statutory provisions. We have already achieved much through adopting a housing options approach as part of the previous homelessness strategy and the previous objectives have set out how we will take this approach further. The new tools and approaches we plan to implement will only be successful where our customers work with us to meet their own housing needs.

We believe that preventing homelessness maximises households' choice and minimises the disruption and distress caused by homelessness. There exists the common perception amongst customers that making a successful homelessness application and spending a period of time in temporary accommodation is a quicker route into permanent affordable housing than waiting for rehousing through Homemove. They perceive the cheaper rents available in social housing as well as the added security of tenure to be much more attractive and worth the disruption of becoming homeless. Current policies mean that households can decide to 'go through' homelessness without pursuing other alternatives, whilst those customers who do work with us to resolve their own housing issues receive little priority for doing so.

We want to implement a policy framework which whilst meeting our statutory responsibilities and providing a safety-net for those in need, fully supports our preferred homelessness prevention approach. To achieve this objective we will focus attention on 2 key areas.

Updating our Allocations Policy to minimise the risk of homelessness.

The Council implemented the Sussex-wide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme, Sussex Homemove, in July 2007. This resulted in a thorough review of the banding system for allocations, making it simpler and easier to understand. It is proposed to update the Allocations Policy to give an appropriate level of priority to homeless applicants but to ensure that those who resolve their own housing issues are not disadvantaged.

After 18 months of operation of the Homemove scheme households are spending longer in temporary accommodation as they await rehousing. Whilst we are keen that all households get the opportunity to express choice in the housing they wish to

occupy this does have an adverse impact upon our ability to meet Government targets in relation to reducing the numbers of households accommodated in temporary accommodation. We therefore plan to review the operation of Choice Based Lettings, investigating the feasibility of ensuring that choice is maximised for those applicants who resolve their housing issues with us and await rehousing through the Housing Register. Specific measures we will seek to introduce include:

- Allowing those that have a priority through being homeless choice on the Homemove Register for the first 16 weeks after which their right to bid will be removed, with bidding undertaken by the Homelessness Officer. Bids made by officers will be considered suitable as previously discussed with the applicant.
- Those applicants accepting a qualifying offer of accommodation will be placed in band B. A qualifying offer occurs when a household accepts a tenancy in the private rented sector and agrees that the Council has discharged its homelessness duties towards them. Those households that continue to occupy temporary accommodation will continue to be in Band C.
- Homeless households or those threatened with homeless who have no alternative housing options other than affordable housing are placed immediately within band A to reduce the length of time they have to wait for permanent rehousing. These households will include those with a very high support need who require some form of supported or adapted housing.

CASE STUDY

Tony and Karen have been living with their parents with their 6-month-old son for the last year. Their parents found the baby too much to cope with in their small house and asked them to leave. Unfortunately they couldn't find anywhere else to live before they had to move out and ended up in Council Temporary Accommodation in Chichester. Although they have been bidding regularly, being in Band C they haven't had any permanent offer of accommodation and they really want to move nearer his work in Selsey. They continue to work with their Housing Interventions Officer and find a 2 bedroom flat for private rent in Selsey at a rent they can afford with some help from Housing Benefit and a rent deposit guarantee from the Council. The landlord has the property as an investment and agrees that as long as they are good tenants they can have a long lease. They agree with the Council that this can be a qualifying offer and they are rebanded to Band B. They now have more priority on the Housing Register and can make the bids they want, waiting for the 2-bed house they want in the Selsey area.

Implement a more effective means of processing homelessness applications

Currently our preferred way of working is to exhaust all prevention avenues prior to taking a homelessness application. This can cause some tension whereby customers have the right to make an application but we may resist this as we work to prevent homelessness. Likewise there is a tension with the same officer both attempting to prevent homelessness as well as investigating any subsequent homeless application. Having restructured the Housing Options Service and split responsibilities within the team this gives us the opportunity to review processes. Different officers will now act to prevent homelessness and should this be unsuccessful the applicant's case will then be passed over to a specialist homelessness officer.

We propose being much more upfront with customers with regard to the right to make a homeless application but to also provide more information about the consequence of this route. Where customers are placed into temporary accommodation we will have much more discussion with them regarding the implications of this for their Housing Register Application and the choices they are able to express through the Homemove scheme. We will discuss with them the types of properties that we are likely to consider to constitute a suitable offer of accommodation.

We will hold monthly interviews with all households in temporary accommodation to encourage them to explore alternative housing options particularly in the private rented sector. We will also look to make use of the potential for qualifying offers in order to discharge homeless duties. The new measures we propose to adopt are summarised below:

- All applicants will be visited at home prior to the determination of their homeless application.
- Using intermediate rental properties as a good alternative for families who are threatened with homelessness.
- Increasing the rents payable by households in temporary accommodation to recover the costs of the accommodation and better reflect the cost of private rented sector accommodation.
- Applicants will not be moved between temporary accommodation units unless there are exceptional circumstances due to the additional costs involved in managing the void process.
- Ensure that all prevention routes are pursued either prior to a homelessness application being made or alongside of an application.
- Make use of Qualifying Offers of accommodation where appropriate.
- On entering the temporary accommodation the Homelessness Officer will advise the applicant of what will be considered to be a reasonable offer of accommodation, detailing the areas which will be considered and the types of properties. This will then determine the bids that will be made on behalf of the applicant. On any subsequent offer of accommodation this information can be reconsidered.

CASE STUDY

Ian & Emma have been living in privately rented accommodation for the last 8 years but the insecurity and frequent moves are starting to become disruptive now that their oldest child has started school. They haven't always been able to find a new home in the same area. When their latest landlord gives them notice that they want them to leave they approach the Council for help. We nominate them to a local Housing Association who have a number of Intermediate Rental properties in the area they want to live. This not only means that they don't become homeless but the greater

security this gives them means that the children can settle into school, Emma can get a part-time job in the community and with the money saved on rent they can start to save for a deposit on a home in the future.

Priorities for future action

- **Review the Council's Allocations Policy to ensure that the policy framework reduces homelessness.**
- **Implement more effective homelessness applications procedures.**
- **Implement housing options reviews with accepted homeless households**
- **Review the potential for the use of qualifying offers.**
- **Implement a system of discussing 'suitable offers' with customers on acceptance of homelessness applications.**
- **Develop a portfolio of Intermediate Rental properties that can be used as a homelessness prevention tool.**

Strategic Objective 4: Review the provision of Temporary Accommodation

Chichester has its own temporary accommodation available to people who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness. This consists of two schemes of self-contained flats. One scheme is located in Midhurst, the other in central Chichester. The standard of accommodation is high in terms of quality as well as size. The Council also uses private bed and breakfast establishments and these are used even when there are vacancies within the council-owned accommodation in the case of households who are deemed to be intentionally homeless or where the occupants poses a potential risk.

The Government has set a number of targets related to the use of temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast. The Council has met the target related to the use of B&B for families and young people. Whilst previous performance meant that we were on track to meet the target related to reducing the overall number of households in temporary accommodation, this is coming under increasing pressure as the current economic conditions are resulting in an increase in homelessness. The target requires us to have a maximum of 28 households in temporary accommodation by 31st March 2010.

Achievements since the 2003 strategy

- **Met the Government target in relation to eliminating the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families accepted as homeless.**
- **Substantially reduced the number of families in temporary accommodation who have been accepted as homeless.**
- **Developed the PSHAS to enable potentially homeless people to access suitable property in the private sector by means of Rent Deposit guarantees and rent in advance.**
- **On target to meet Government target not to use B&B for homeless young people.**

A recent options appraisal of the use of temporary accommodation has been undertaken considering the future use of the properties particularly in the light of the need to meet the Government's temporary accommodation targets as well as the financial viability of the schemes. The subsequent report made a number of recommendations which are in the process of being implemented and the following actions relate to the delivery of this objective.

Ensure that Government targets are met in terms of the use of temporary accommodation.

The Government targets to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and to reduce the use of temporary accommodation overall continue to be extremely challenging. The rationale of reducing the number of homeless families and preventing homelessness cannot be argued against, especially given the cost and disruption associated with homelessness. The reality of preventing homelessness especially in the current economic climate makes this difficult to achieve.

Our actions aimed at meeting these targets therefore focus on a number of areas: reducing homelessness through prevention; diversion from temporary

accommodation into more sustainable housing solutions; and maximising the provision of new affordable homes.

Through these actions we are confident that we will not use bed & breakfast for families or young persons unless it is in an emergency or there are particular risks that mean that alternative temporary accommodation is not suitable. Our close working relationships with the Chichester Foyer also means that if a young person is accommodated in B&B this is only for a short period whilst a referral is made. The new ILS scheme for young people will also provide a sustainable route into permanent housing for people aged between 18 and 25, again minimising the time in B&B.

Without doubt the most challenging target is reducing the total number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 to 28. Whilst we were on target to meet this 18 months earlier than the target date, progress has stalled as the effects of the recession and the impact of CBL has led to higher number of people in temporary accommodation and the length of stay increasing. Actions to help us meet the target are detailed throughout this strategy but particular ones to highlight include:

- Revising the Allocations Policy to reinforce our homelessness prevention approach;
- Work with landlords to develop a portfolio of properties which we can use to prevent homelessness;
- Consider options such as private leasing to assist in the provision of temporary accommodation on a more geographically spread basis;
- Develop a portfolio of intermediate rental properties which we can use to provide sustainable alternatives for families at risk of homelessness; and
- Develop a more pro-active approach to housing options focusing upon problem solving.

Review the financial management of the temporary accommodation and budgeting processes, including a review of the rent structure.

The current budgeting provisions in place to manage the council's temporary accommodation make it extremely difficult to assess its financial viability. During the recent options appraisal work a new budgeting model has been developed.

The need to reduce the use of the accommodation by 50% has considerable financial cost to the Council as it is unable to utilise empty units for any other purposes as tenancy provisions determine that they can only be used in conjunction with a homelessness duty. This has had to be taken into account within the new budget model and this will mean taking increasing numbers of units out of management and adjusting the costings appropriately. We will aim to do this by sectioning off separate wings of the accommodation thus reducing the costs associated with keeping accommodation empty. Thus a decreasing number of units will need to cover the overall costs of providing the temporary accommodation. The new financial model has made it easier to set rents that can be adjusted to ensure that we cover the costs of the service. These new rents are to be payable from 1st April 2009 and will be at a level related to the Local Housing Allowance.

As well as the need to recover costs higher rents will also better reflect the price of renting accommodation in the private sector. Currently the low rents payable in the

council-owned temporary accommodation provide a disincentive to applicants when we are working with them to find alternative. There is no incentive for many people to access a private rented home when they can move into temporary accommodation at substantially reduced rents. Likewise once in temporary accommodation there is no incentive to consider alternative housing options other than permanent Housing Association rehousing. The table below shows the Local Housing Allowance Rents as at January 2009 to which the new temporary accommodation rents will be linked.

Table 3: Local Housing Allowance Rates as at January 2009

	Weekly Rate (£)	Monthly Rate (£)
1 bed share*	75.00	325.00
1 bed self contained	138.46	600.00
2 bedroom	173.08	750.00
3 bedroom	207.12	897.52
4 bedroom	311.54	1,350.00
5 bedroom	415.39	1,800.02

*Note: single persons under the age of 25 will usually only be entitled to the 1 bedroom share rate.

Once this new budgeting model and rents are in place we will regularly review the financial management information to ensure that the service continues to be financially viable and that there is not an adverse financial impact upon the occupants.

Review use of the council-owned temporary accommodation in 18 months time ensuring that a range of options are provided which are appropriate in terms of quality, location and affordability.

As noted above the Government’s requirement to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 will have financial implications for the Council as it will necessitate leaving accommodation empty and therefore there will be associated rental loss from these units. We are very concerned that at times of great housing need we will be leaving accommodation empty. However there is little alternative due to the restraints imposed by the fact that the Council owns the accommodation. Alternative means of provision have been considered and there are options for disposal of the accommodation however given the current economic climate it is felt inappropriate to consider these at this time.

We therefore plan to review the use of our temporary accommodation in 18 months time when we will be able to better evaluate the effect of the economic downturn on the housing service. Options that could be pursued are:

- Disposal of the council-owned accommodation to a Housing Association either through outright sale or lease arrangement. This will mean that there would be greater flexibilities in being able to use the accommodation and it would not have to be solely used in terms of meeting our homeless responsibilities. This would mean more effective use of the housing stock as well as making it more cost effective.
- Disposal of the accommodation and the commissioning of a dispersed stock of temporary accommodation. This would mean that we would no longer have

concentrations of temporary accommodation and could have a wider range of accommodation throughout the District. Currently temporary accommodation is only available in central Chichester and Midhurst whilst many people have family, education and support networks in different parts of the District.

- We could also consider providing temporary accommodation through a different means, for example a private leasing. This would mean that temporary accommodation would be provided on a longer-term basis with families occupying such homes for a considerably longer period of time. The accommodation would however be more suited to their needs and could, again, be dispersed throughout the District.

Priorities for future action.

- **Maintain the reduction in the number of homeless families in temporary accommodation to achieve the Government target of 50% by 2010.**
- **Develop relationships with private landlords to enable private rented properties to prevent homelessness and consider options for a private leasing scheme.**
- **Implement a new budgeting and finance model for the management of the temporary accommodation**
- **Restructure the rents for the temporary accommodation to ensure that the costs are met and better reflect private rented sector rents.**
- **Consider options for the future provision of temporary accommodation.**

Strategic Objective 5: Ensure that appropriate support is available for vulnerable groups

A significant proportion of people approaching the council for assistance with housing problems have personal needs that make them more vulnerable. Whereas the majority of households who are accepted as homeless are households with children there are a significant number of single people who require additional support to live independently. This support can be provided through specialist services linked to accommodation or can be delivered on a more flexible basis through 'floating' support. Ensuring that such support is available to vulnerable people is an essential element in preventing homelessness.

Achievements since the 2003 strategy.

- **Implementation of the Signpost Floating support service.**
- **Extension of floating support to support teenage parents and people suffering domestic violence.**
- **Implementation of the ILS scheme to support vulnerable single persons.**

Actions proposed to deliver this objective are:

Continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that services are available to those who need additional support.

Support services are available to a wide range of vulnerable people. These have been developed over a number of years and are funded from a variety of sources. Although not directly provided by the District Council, we make effective use of referral arrangements to ensure that our customers can access the support they need. Although many of these services have not been developed specifically to combat homelessness, many play a crucial part in homelessness prevention. We also want to review the range and quality of advice services provided by other agencies within the District to ensure that we are maximising the use of these services. An overview of services provided in the District is set out below.

The needs of young people

The extension of the priority needs categories to cover all 16 and 17 year olds as a result of the 2002 Homelessness Act has led to a noticeable increase in the numbers of young people approaching the authority for housing advice. The District has an excellent foyer which can accommodate and provide support and advice to 16-25 year olds and this has meant that the impact of this legislation has not been as great as anticipated. Homelessness amongst young people is becoming an increasing concern, however referral to the foyer means that they can receive the assistance they need to move towards independent living. We recognise however that this is not suitable for all young people and we are currently looking at developing a pilot project to develop an Independent Living Scheme (ILS) for young people as well as researching the feasibility of developing a supported lodgings scheme.

People with mental health problems

A significant proportion of single people to whom the Council accepts a homelessness duty are people experiencing mental health problems. The provision

of permanent housing and housing related support is considered to be an integral part of a local multi-agency approach to meeting their needs. Wherever possible a solution is sought through the use of the Independent Living Scheme (ILS).

Women fleeing domestic violence

Homelessness acceptances due to domestic violence continues to be one of the main causes of homelessness within the District. There are excellent facilities available to support women within the County with advice available to assist them to obtain support through Women's Aid Helpline or to access refuge vacancies or floating support if they do not wish to move. Good working arrangements are also in place with the local refuge. Work is planned amongst the other Council's within the County to further develop cross-boundary referral and reciprocal arrangements.

People with drug or alcohol problems

There is often a connection between drug and alcohol abuse and homelessness. There are a number of local organisations who provide general support to those who are experiencing such problems but there is a lack of specialist support for this customer group. Many people have to access support or accommodation in neighbouring Districts. It has been recognised that a particular problem within the District is centred on street drinking. Work is underway to quantify this problem and to research the feasibility of providing appropriate services for this customer group in partnership with local organisation Stonepillow.

Offenders and those at risk of offending

The relationship between homelessness and offending behaviour is well documented and the provision of accommodation with support is acknowledged to significantly reduce the risk of re-offending. 66% of discharged prisoners have accommodation difficulties and greater partnership working is needed to achieve a reduction in homelessness amongst this group. The District Councils within West Sussex have been working together to develop common protocols for this customer group and to provide a county-wide rent deposit scheme to assist ex-offenders to access accommodation within the private rented sector.

Teenage pregnancy

The number of pregnant teenagers and single teenage mothers is low within the District and their housing needs are met through referral to the specialist accommodation and outreach service that is operated by Downland Affinity Housing Association. The housing options service operates in conjunction with Downland Affinity through working to keep teenage parents at home as long as possible whilst awaiting a vacancy within the specialist accommodation. Linked with provision of floating support this means that they are fully supported.

Older People

The 2001 Census Data shows that the population of the District is currently 106,450 with a projected increase of 9.6% to 2021. The most significant changes in age range relate to the over 65-age range (+28%) with the 80+ age range in particular increasing by 28%. The implications of this ageing population are considered within the District's Older Persons Accommodation Strategy⁵ which focuses attention upon

⁵ The Older Persons Accommodation Strategy can be found on the Council's website www.chichester.gov.uk The strategy takes into account the national policy agenda and local partners. strategies for older people

promoting independence and where feasible enabling people to remain in their own homes. Increased use of preventative technology is a key element of this approach and this is an area in which the Chichester District is extremely well served through Chichester Careline.

The strategy also recognises that some of the accommodation based services provided for older persons within the District may not be meeting the expectations and requirements of today's older people. Our Housing Association partners are already addressing such issues implementing reconfiguration plans to ensure that their accommodation meets future needs. The strategy also explores the potential need for an Extra-Care scheme in the north of the District but with a wider remit acting as a base for rural delivery of community based services. The feasibility of developing retirement village style accommodation is also highlighted.

The need to tackle under-occupation has consistently been raised as a priority area through the consultation on the Housing Strategy. The older persons strategy considers possible options in this area but centre on providing incentives across all tenures in particular through setting up a 'Move-Buddy' scheme. This proposed pilot project will provide practical support to older people wanting to move with finding a suitable property as well as assisting them in the moving process.

Gypsies & Travellers

Problems exist for Gypsies and Travellers in accessing information and advice, owing to their distrust of outsiders and widespread literacy problems. The ability to choose their style of accommodation and to decide for themselves whether, or how, they continue to live a traditional travelling lifestyle they consider fundamental and crucial to their sense of independence and autonomy.

A Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment was undertaken by the Council in September 2006⁶. The planning issues highlighted within the assessment will be addressed through the LDF Core Strategy. The assessment also highlighted that basic support is available from the Council but recognised that this support could be improved and better co-ordination could be achieved by implementing the following:

- Provide easy to understand Information on accommodation issues distributed using a variety of methods and review housing services to Gypsies and Travellers and where appropriate assist them in making housing applications.
- Undertake a regular review of needs through the monitoring framework that will be put in place to ensure that the Housing Market Assessment information is updated.
- Establish closer inter-departmental links including across neighbouring local authorities to facilitate the sharing of information to enable effective planning and delivery of services, which meet the needs of the travelling community.

Work with Supporting People team to ensure that services meet local needs.

In 2008 Supporting People implemented a programme of reviewing all Supporting People funded supported housing services within the County to ensure that they are strategically relevant and are effective. This process also involves considering demand and supply of the services to ensure that the limited resources are targeted

⁶ Available on the Council's website www.chichester.gov.uk

most effectively. This is likely to involve decommissioning of some accommodation based services, which tend to be disproportionately expensive, to enable the commissioning of a larger number of more specialist floating support services. This will also mean that services are more widely available to people living in different types of housing.

This Strategic Review process will take place from 2008 to 2010 and services are being reviewed in 3 tranches – Disability, Homelessness and Older Persons services. For each review service specifications will be produced, existing services decommissioned and new services commissioned. We will input into these service reviews to ensure that services are commissioned in each tranche that will assist in preventing homelessness. The services provided through the Supporting People programme are crucial in ensuring the independence of many vulnerable people within the District. Without such services many objectives within this strategy cannot be realised and there is the possibility that levels of homelessness could increase. Work is also underway to develop a new means of ensuring that access to supported housing services in the County are equitable and consistent. This will involve reviewing the operation of local housing support panels and ensuring that there is a consistent means of making referrals to supported housing places across the County.

Research the extent of rough sleeping within the District and any gaps in service provision and investigate the feasibility of developing services for people with alcohol related problems.

A head count of rough sleepers was carried out in the District in March 2002. This count found 6 people sleeping rough across the District. At the end of April 2005 a survey of the Housing Register also showed a total of 6 people who have registered that they are sleeping rough. As at the end of 2008 there were 37 people registered as of No Fixed Abode. Not all of these will be rough sleeping as the majority will be 'sofa surfing' and moving between friends and relatives. We feel that undertaking further research into the extent of rough sleeping in the District is an essential part of this strategy.

The Government has previously set a target of aiming for rough sleeping levels as close to zero as possible. This has now been replaced with an ambition to end rough sleeping once and for all by 2012 and making sure that in future no one has to sleep rough. The Government accepts that action is needed across the whole country and not just in those areas where previous counts have indicated a number of ten or more people sleeping rough each night. They are seeking to ensure that there is an effective safety net in every area as well as actions to prevent rough sleeping.

Direct access hostel facilities, day-centre and an outreach service are operated within the District by Chichester Christian Care Stonepillow and this provides vital services to this very vulnerable group. It is believed that 80% of rough sleepers have addiction problems and 55% have a dual diagnosis. It is therefore an area that needs extensive partnership working in order to provide more effective solutions.

In reviewing the homelessness strategy the lack of services available for those with alcohol problems has been highlighted. The inability of people to access desperately needed services has a knock-on effect by increasing street homelessness, anti-social behaviour, crime etc. It is considered that this is an area where services need to be developed however given decreasing revenue budgets for such support services, a

robust evidence base is required in order to promote the switching of funding into this area.

CASE STUDY

John has approached the Council for help with his housing. He has always lived at home but has suffered from mental health problems for many years which means that he currently is unable to work. He desperately wants to live independently and get a job but does not feel that he could keep a home of his own without a lot of support. His support worker puts him forward to be considered for the Independent Living Scheme and he is accepted onto the waiting list. Once a place becomes available on the scheme he is allocated a support worker by Southdown Housing Association and they bid for properties through the Homechoice Scheme. Once he is successful his support worker helps him arrange everything he needs to do in order to move in. Southdown are in effect the tenant of the property and they sub-let the property to him. There are regular multi-agency meetings to ensure that John is coping and that he has the support he needs. After 12 months he is receiving only minimal support and has secured himself a part-time job. He then takes over the tenancy from Southdown and no longer needs their on-going support.

Priorities for future action

- **Implement a pilot ILS project for young people.**
- **Research the feasibility of establishing a supported lodgings scheme for young people.**
- **Develop cross-Council referral and reciprocal arrangements for people suffering domestic violence.**
- **Research the extent of rough sleeping within the District and any associated gaps in appropriate services.**
- **Research the feasibility of developing an accommodation based service to assist 'street drinkers'.**
- **Implement the recommendations of the District's Older Persons Accommodation Strategy particularly in relation to tackling under-occupation and reconfiguring sheltered accommodation.**
- **Review the housing services provided to ensure that they take into account gypsy and traveller issues.**
- **Input into the Supporting People Strategic Service Reviews to ensure that a wide range of services are available to vulnerable people in order to prevent homelessness.**
- **Review the range and quality of advice services provided by other agencies within the District to ensure that we are maximising the use of these services**

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2009-2014 ACTION PLAN

TASK	TIMESCALE	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RISKS/ ASSUMPTIONS	LEAD OFFICER
1. Continue to develop preventative work to achieve a further reduction in the number of homelessness applications and acceptances focusing upon establishing customer pathways.	April 2012	High	Number of households in TA at the end of each quarter.	Within existing resources Additional prevention tools may require capital or revenue funding.	Risk of sudden unexpected increase in homelessness. Continued downturn in the economy.	Housing Interventions Manager
2. Develop proposals for a young persons mediation service	December 2009	Medium	Greater number of cases prevented following family conflict resolution with a target of 25% of referrals to mediation resulting in homelessness being prevented.	Revenue resources may be required	Provider available to deliver services	Housing Initiatives Officer
3. Review domestic violence procedures with other agencies	April 2010	Medium	Produce new advice and information leaflets by Summer 2010	Within existing resources	None	Senior Interventions Officer
4. Develop a programme to raise awareness about homelessness amongst young people	April 2011	Low	50% reduction in homeless applications from those aged 16-17	Within existing resources	None	Senior Interventions Officer
5. Reduce the number of families in Temporary Accommodation by 2010	April 2010	High	Maintain reduction in number of homeless families in temporary accommodation to meet 2010 target	Within existing resources	Relies on sufficient level of permanent accommodation in all sectors being available	Housing Interventions Manager

TASK	TIMESCALE	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RISKS/ ASSUMPTIONS	LEAD OFFICER
6. Further develop relationships with landlords to expand the PSHAS	December 2009	High	Develop a list of landlords who take referrals direct from CDC	May require additional resources	Relies on sufficient available accommodation in private sector	Housing Initiatives Officer
7. Undertake further research into the levels of rough sleeping within the District.	Summer 2010	Medium	Accurate assessment of need established	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Manager
8. Review services available for rough sleepers and identify any gaps in provision	December 2010	Medium	Action plan for meeting service gaps	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Manager
9. Enable the development of a 'wet house' facility for single homeless people	April 2011	Medium	Scheme complete by April 2011	Capital funding from Housing Corporation and revenue funding from SP programme	Assumes site, capital and revenue resources all remain available	Housing Enabling Manager in partnership with CCA
10. Investigate the feasibility of developing a Supported Lodging scheme to provide temporary accommodation for young people in crisis	Summer 2011	Low	Feasibility report.	Revenue funding may be required	Risk of revenue funding not being available	Housing Initiatives Officer
11. Develop a pilot ILS for young people in partnership with WSCC	Summer 2009	High	Scheme to be in place by Summer 2009	Revenue funding from WSCC; accommodation by CDC	Risk of revenue funding not continuing.	Housing Interventions Manager
12. Continue to work with all agencies to increase the level of affordable housing accommodation by 200 new homes per	Ongoing 2008-2013	Very High	200 affordable homes completed each year	Continued capital funding from Housing Corporation and CDC	Risk of reduction in Housing Corporation funding from 2010/11 onwards	Housing Enabling Manager in partnership with partner Housing Associations

TASK	TIMESCALE	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RISKS/ ASSUMPTIONS	LEAD OFFICER
year						
13. Review the provision of Temporary Accommodation	Autumn 2010	Medium	Options Appraisal completed	Within existing resources	None	Assistant Director Strategic Housing Services
14. Review the Allocations Policy to maximise opportunities for homeless prevention.	Summer 2009	High	New Allocations Policy in place.	Within existing resources	None	Assistant Director Strategic Housing Services
15. Review Homelessness Application procedures including maximising the use of Qualifying Offers.	September 2009	High	New procedures in place.	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Officer
16. Develop a portfolio of Intermediate rental properties to assist with homelessness prevention.	December 2010	High	Portfolio of new properties in place.	Will require additional capital resources	Properties available and economic climate allows acquisition of sufficient properties.	Housing Enabling Manager
17. Review Homelessness & Housing Options IT systems.	December 2009	Medium	Action plan for developing IT systems in place.	Within existing resources	None	Business Systems Analyst
18. Implement Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme and identify any gaps in the scheme.	April 2009	High	Scheme in place.	May require additional capital resources depending upon gaps within the Government scheme.	Funding available.	Housing Enabling Manager

TASK	TIMESCALE	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RISKS/ ASSUMPTIONS	LEAD OFFICER
19. Consider recommendations from pilot worklessness schemes.	December 2010	Low	Action plan for further measures	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Manager
20. Review effectiveness of the PSHAS and implement new procedures to maximise effectiveness of the available DHP funding.	July 2009	High	New scheme and procedures in place.	Within existing resources.	Funding continues to be available.	Housing Interventions Manager
21. Investigate the feasibility of implementing a private sector leasing scheme.	December 2009	Medium	Feasibility report.	Feasibility within existing resources. Any new provision will require additional resources.	None	Housing Enabling Manager
22. Implement a scheme aimed at tackling under-occupation.	September 2009	High	Scheme in place	Will require additional resources to implement incentive scheme.	None	Housing Enabling Manager
23. Implement a new financial modelling system for the council-owned accommodation including a review of rents.	April 2009	High	New budgeting and rental structure in place.	Within existing resources.	None	Assistant Director Strategic Housing Services.
24. Review housing options advice provision for Gypsy & Traveller families	April 2011	Medium	Revised policies & procedures in place.	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Manager
25. Review housing options advice provision for migrant workers	December 2011	Medium	Revised policies & procedures in place.	Within existing resources	None	Housing Interventions Manager

TASK	TIMESCALE	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	RESOURCES REQUIRED	RISKS/ ASSUMPTIONS	LEAD OFFICER
26. Develop effective working relationships with the Estate landlords	July 2010	Medium	Working relationships and action plan established.	Within existing resources	None	Housing Enabling Manager
27. Review the range and quality of advice services provided by other agencies within the District to ensure that we are maximising the use of these services	April 2011	Medium	Map of service provision & action plan for meeting any identified gaps in service provision	Within existing resources	Positive engagement of other agencies.	Housing Interventions Manager

APPENDIX ONE – HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

HOMELESSNESS IN CONTEXT IN CHICHESTER

Levels of homelessness in the Chichester District

A reduction in the level of homelessness applications and acceptances does not mean that homelessness has gone away nor that housing need in the District has reduced. The table below illustrates the split between housing advice and the number of homelessness acceptances that result. This shows that accessing suitable housing is still an issue for many households within the District.

Table 6: Number of housing advice & homelessness cases 2003 – 2008

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 (to Q3)	Total
Housing advice enquiries	634	606	794	575	2609
Homelessness applications	127	135	84	99	445
Homelessness acceptances	83	81	53	65	282

These figures reflect national trends which have seen a drop in the number of homelessness applications of 32% between 2005 and 2007 and a 29% reduction in acceptances over the same period. The introduction of the Council's Housing Options Service placed much greater emphasis on homelessness prevention. Previously those threatened with homelessness made a homelessness application before any advice on alternative options was considered. Many such applications were from people who were either not homeless, or threatened with homelessness, or who were not in priority need. A homelessness application is now submitted as a last resort when all other avenues have been exhausted.

This new approach has had an impact both on the total number of applications and on the ratio between applications and acceptances. Although this has been a successful start we know that we need to go further and be even more pro-active to reduce the incidence of homelessness.

The number of people found to be intentionally homeless however remains high with 13 in 2005/6, 17 in 2006/7, 18 in 2007/8 and 9 in 2008/9. We hope that by adopting a more preventative approach to homelessness we can ensure that we encourage people to seek advice much earlier and either stop them becoming homeless or assist them in securing alternative accommodation.

Reasons for homelessness

The table below shows the principal causes of homelessness since 2005/06. This illustrated that the main reasons for homelessness continues to be parents or relatives no longer willing to accommodate other households, relationship breakdown and ending of private sector tenancies. This shows that the actions we have highlighted around ensuring that we assist those threatened with homelessness as early as possible should help us to assist families to secure alternative accommodation in the private sector. Other than for those fleeing domestic violence,

we can often work with families or landlords to give us more time before people become homeless.

Table 7: Reasons for homelessness where a full housing duty is accepted

	2005/6	%	2006/07	%	2007/08	%	2008/09 (to Q3)	%	Total
Parents not willing to accommodate	31	37%	25	31%	7	13%	12	19%	75
Other relative not willing to accommodate	12	15%	5	6%	8	15%	11	17%	36
Non-violent relationship breakdown	2	2%	2	3%	1	2%	3	5%	8
Violent breakdown of relationship (partner)	7	8%	3	4%	2	4%	8	12%	20
Violent breakdown of relationship (non-partner)	0	0%	1	1%	1	2%	1	2%	3
Racially motivated violence	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Other forms of violence	2	2%	2	3%	0	0%	1	2%	5
Racially motivated harassment	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Other forms of harassment	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
Mortgage arrears	3	4%	3	4%	2	4%	1	2%	9
LA / public sector rent arrears	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1
RSL / HA arrears	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Private sector arrears	3	4%	4	5%	3	6%	2	3%	12
Termination of AST	11	13%	13	16%	21	40%	14	21%	59
Loss of rented (other)	2	2%	4	5%	1	2%	0	0%	7
Left prison / remand	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Left hospital	1	1%	7	9%	1	2%	5	7%	14
Left other institution / LA care	0	0%	1	1%	1	0%	0	0%	2
Left HM forces	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%	1	2%	2
Other reason	7	8%	11	14%	4	8%	6	9%	28
	83		81		53		65		282

*Note: due to rounding percentages may not equate to 100%

Approximately 12% of all homelessness acceptances nationally are due to domestic violence and although not as high as this in Chichester, this continues to be one of the main causes of homelessness within the District. There are excellent facilities available to support women within the County and we will continue to assist women to access these. The incidence of domestic violence is under-represented in these figures as through making use of the services available we also assist these households to secure private rented sector homes through our rent deposit scheme in order to avoid the disruption of temporary accommodation.

Composition of households accepted as homeless

The table below shows the composition of households accepted as homeless. This shows that the majority are accepted due to having dependent children or being pregnant. Other main causes include being vulnerable as a result of old age, physical disability or mental illness. For these vulnerable groups the support services we have highlighted as being so crucial in preventing homelessness are equally important in order for them to move on from temporary accommodation and to sustain a permanent tenancy.

Table 8: Composition of households accepted as homeless 2005-2009

	2005/6	%	2006/07	%	2007/08	%	2008/09 (to Q3)	%	Total
Due to Emergency (fire/flood)	2	2%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	3
Household with dependent children	50	60%	40	49%	32	60%	43	66%	165
Household with pregnant member	16	19%	13	16%	6	11%	5	8%	40
16/17 year old	4	5%	1	1%	1	2%	0	0%	6
Care leaver	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Vulnerable due to old age	0	0%	3	4%	2	4%	2	3%	7
Vulnerable due to physical disability	2	2%	4	5%	5	9%	3	5%	14
Vulnerable due to mental illness / disability	6	7%	16	20%	5	9%	10	15%	37
Vulnerable due to drug dependency	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1
Vulnerable due to alcohol dependency	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Former asylum seeker	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Other	3	4%	2	3%	1	2%	0	0%	6
Formerly in care	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1
Vulnerable due to being ex-HM forces	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Vulnerable due to ex-custody / remand	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0
Vulnerable due to suffering violence	0	0%	1	1%	1	2%	0	0%	2
	83		81		53		65		282

*Note: due to rounding percentages may not equate to 100%

The extension of the priority needs categories to cover all 16 and 17 year olds as a result of the 2002 Act has led to a noticeable increase in the numbers of young people approaching the authority for housing advice. The fact that the District has an excellent foyer which can accommodate and provide support and advice to 16-25 year olds has meant that the impact of this legislation has not been as great as anticipated with only 6 young persons being accepted as homeless over the period.

The table below shows the types of household that were accepted as homeless over the past 3 years. This highlights that two thirds of households accepted as homeless within the District contain children. Given the disruption that temporary accommodation has on family life this shows that our efforts to prevent homelessness and reduce our use of temporary accommodation are important targets.

Table 9: Family composition of homeless households 2006-2009

	2006/07	%	2007/08	%	2008/09 (to Q3)	%	Total
Couple with dependent children	13	16%	14	26%	11	17%	38
Male lone parent household	2	3%	1	2%	1	1%	4
Female lone parent household	38	47%	19	36%	35	54%	92
Male single person	10	12%	12	23%	8	12%	30
Female single person	12	15%	2	4%	7	11%	21
Other	6	7%	5	9%	3	5%	14
	81		53		65		199

*Note: due to rounding percentages may not equate to 100%

Perhaps not surprising the majority of households accepted as homeless are under the age of 45 with the highest being between 25 and 44. This reflects the fact that families make up the highest percentage of applicants becoming homeless.

Table 10: Age of main applicant of homeless households 2005-2009

	2005/6	%	2006/07	%	2007/08	%	2008/09 (to Q3)	%	Total
16-24	34	41%	34	42%	15	28%	20	31%	103
25-44	38	46%	37	46%	24	45%	35	54%	134
45-59	10	12%	6	7%	12	23%	7	11%	35
60-64	0	0%	3	4%	1	2%	2	3%	6
65-74	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1
75+	1	1%	1	1%	1	2%	0	0%	3
	83		81		53		65		282

*Note: due to rounding percentages may not equate to 100%

Use of temporary accommodation

As highlighted throughout this strategy we believe that being in temporary accommodation is a disruptive experience for families and one that can have an adverse impact upon family life, children's education as well as on employment opportunities. Whilst the temporary accommodation we have available is of an excellent standard, we are working hard to reduce our use of temporary accommodation through adopting pro-active homelessness prevention measures.

This is however a tough challenge all the time the legislative framework does not support a preventative approach and especially with a down-turn in the economy meaning that more and more households are approaching the Council for assistance

with both financial and housing related problems. The table below sets out the use of temporary accommodation since 2005. The council has a target to have a maximum of 28 households in temporary accommodation by 2010. Whilst good progress was being made to reach this target ahead of the 2010 target, the impact of the economic downturn can be clearly seen in the steady rise in the figures since the beginning of 2008/9.

Table 11: Households accommodated in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter.

	2005/6				2006/07				2007/08				2008/09			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4												
B&B	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	3
Hostels	47	47	44	42	49	30	46	47	34	31	31	35	52	51	47	40
Total	50	47	44	42	49	30	46	47	34	31	31	35	53	53	49	43
Homeless at Home	22	13	13	18	25	1	13	20	25	31	34	38	46	18	18	7
Of Which Families in B&B	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Of which Families in Hostels	43	42	38	36	42	23	31	29	20	20	21	25	34	38	37	31
Total	45	42	38	36	42	23	31	29	20	20	21	25	35	39	37	33

Note: these figures include all households accommodated at the end of each quarter

In terms of length of time in temporary accommodation the length of stay in the Council's temporary accommodation continues to rise. This is largely as a result of the impact of the introduction of the Choice Based Lettings System. As explained in the strategy meeting the Government's target for the reduction in the use of temporary accommodation will be a challenge.

Table 12: Length of stay in temporary accommodation

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 to Q3
B&B	2.54 weeks	6.95 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks
Hostel	31.25 weeks	24.59 weeks	32.12 weeks	45.67 weeks

Note: figures include all households accepted as homeless but not those for whom no statutory duty is accepted.

Analysis of the District's Housing Register

The implementation of Sussex Homemove in July 2007 is a fundamental change to the way in which households can now access affordable homes within the District. Rather than the traditional method of allocating homes, applicants can now bid, or express a preference, for properties. This will result in a much more transparent system and it is hoped will result in more sustainable communities and greater satisfaction amongst applicants. The information that the new system provides on customer expectations and demand for properties is also extremely valuable in planning future developments. It is hoped that this system can be expanded over the coming years to include different tenures as well as being used by landlords in the private rented sector. The sub-regional nature of the scheme means that it also provides greater mobility opportunities for applicants to seek housing across East and West Sussex.

Table 13: Breakdown of the Housing Register according to priority as at 31st December 2008

Breakdown of the Housing Register - under CBL system⁷	Percentage	No. of households
Band A – Urgent Housing Need	1.5%	81
Band B – High Housing Need	6.1%	339
Band C – Medium Housing Need	26.0%	1440
Band D – Low Housing Need	66.4%	3683
Total	100	5543

What Homemove doesn't do however is to increase the amount of affordable homes available to those in housing need. Demand continues to far outstrip supply and the table above shows the number of households registered in housing need. When compared to the number of properties that become available each year and the average waiting times, it can be clearly seen that we need to ensure that other, viable options are available to customers to assist them whilst they wait for rehousing through Homemove, hence the importance of the measures proposed throughout this strategy.

The demand for affordable housing continues to rise and has increased greatly since the introduction of Choice Based Lettings in July 2007 when the Housing Register stood at 2,700 households. In less than 18 months therefore, the Register has doubled. There are a number of reasons for this increase. Not only has the Affordability Gap continued to increase, the new system has made the allocation of affordable housing much more visible, the process has been advertised more widely and is more attractive to a wider number of people. Feedback has shown that younger people in particular find the new medium more attractive. Previous analysis of the Housing Register has shown that around 8.5% of applicants do not have a local connection to the District. Thus the growth in demand cannot be attributed to the greater freedoms that applicants have in applying to different Council's. We do not however have data on the numbers of applicant who are registered in multiple areas.

The table below lists applicants' first choice for a particular parish where they have a strong local connection to that parish. This shows a lower number of applicants who have a local connection but this reflects the higher criteria level for a local connection to a parish where this is a requirement for an allocation in that parish. Points to note from this analysis is the high demand in the Bournes area and especially in Selsey, Hunston and the Witterings. Demand is also high in the north of the District particularly in the market towns of Midhurst and Petworth.

⁷ Detailed definition of the Banding System is available in the Council's Allocations Policy – www.chichester.gov.uk

Table 14: Local Connection & first choice preference by parish as at February 2009

Parish	With Local Connection	Parish	With Local Connection
Appldram	0	Lodsworth	9
Barlavington	0	Loxwood	18
Bepton	0	Lurgashall	4
Bignor	3	Marden	0
Birdham	24	Midhurst	252
Bosham	68	Milland	8
Boxgrove	24	North Mundham	28
Bury	13	Northchapel	24
Chichester	1517	Oving	15
Chidham	16	Petworth	135
Cocking	8	Plaistow	6
Compton	2	Rogate	19
Donnington	26	Selsey	420
Earnley	6	Sidlesham	13
Eartham	0	Singleton	19
Easebourne	52	Southbourne	142
East Dean	4	Stedham	5
East Wittering	133	Stopham	0
Ebernoe	0	Stoughton	1
Elsted	1	Sutton	3
Fernhurst	49	Tangmere	57
Fishbourne	60	Tillington	8
Fittleworth	26	Trotton	2
Funtington	17	West Dean	20
Graffham	11	West Lavington	1
Harting	23	West Thorney	5
Heyshott	11	West Wittering	61
Hunston	41	Westbourne	57
Kirdford	26	Westhampnett	4
Lavant	19	Wisborough Green	14
Linchmere	19	Woolbeding	0
		Summary	
		3549	

The table below sets out a breakdown of the Housing Register by ethnicity. This shows that the overwhelming majority of applicants are white British. There are however a small minority of applicants of different ethnicity and we ensure that Housing Register material is available on request for these applicants. Likewise given the migrant population within the District employed in agriculture we have a significant proportion of applicants from Eastern European countries and when assisting these applicants with housing related queries we can make use of translation facilities that are available across Chichester and Arun. The Council also

has a number of foreign language speakers within its staff and good use of these skills are made when required as well as ongoing use of the Language Line facility.

Table 15: Housing Register applicants by ethnicity as at September 2008

		Total	Percentage
A	White British	4799	90.59
B	White Irish	8	00.15
C	White other	32	00.60
D	Mixed white/black Caribbean	11	00.20
E	Mixed white/black African	15	00.28
F	Mixed white Asian	17	00.32
G	Mixed white other	35	00.66
H	Asian/Asian British/Indian	4	00.07
J	Asian/Asian British/Pakistani	0	00.00
K	Asian/Asian British/Bangladeshi	4	00.07
L	Asian/Asian British Other	16	00.30
M	Black/Black British / Caribbean	3	00.05
N	Black/Black British African	8	00.15
P	Black/Black British Other	1	00.01
R	Chinese	3	00.05
S	Other	172	03.24
Z	Not stated	169	03.27
	Total	5297	100.00

The table below sets out the number of homes that have become available annually by property size. This highlights the lower numbers of larger family sized homes that become available each year. We have increased the number of 3 bedroom+ houses we are developing however the demand for this size of properties continues to grow. Initiatives such as tackling under-occupation are particularly important in contributing to increasing the numbers that become available.

Table 16: Properties let by property size 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2008

	2005/06	%	2006/07	%	2007/08	%	Total	%
Bedsit	22	7%	13	4%	11	4%	46	5%
1 Bed	102	33%	103	34%	116	40%	321	36%
2 Bed	140	45%	155	51%	137	46%	432	47%
3 Bed	39	13%	35	11%	26	9%	100	11%
4 Bed	7	2%	0	0%	3	1%	10	1%
5 Bed	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	2	0%
Total	311		307		293		911	

The table below sets out the number of homes that have become available annually split by priority of applicant. The information in this table is split as the housing register system changed in 2007/08 to take account of choice based lettings. This shows that lower need households, i.e. those in Band D or the Economic / Community band have been successful in securing rehousing if at lower numbers than the priority bands.

Table 17: Properties let by band 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2008

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Total	%
Needs Band Transfer	37	10	6	53	8%
Needs Band Homeless	84	65	10	159	24%
Needs band Other	122	142	24	288	43%
Economic / Community	68	90	8	166	25%
Total	311	307	48	666	
Band A	N/A	N/A	47	47	19%
Band B	N/A	N/A	104	104	42%
Band C	N/A	N/A	66	66	27%
Band D	N/A	N/A	28	28	12%
Total	N/A	N/A	245	245	

Using the Homemove scheme we can get information about waiting times. The information obtained needs to be viewed with a great deal of caution as these are only indicative times. How long a household will wait for rehousing will depend upon their flexibility in the type of home and area they will consider, the urgency of their needs and how their needs change over time. In particular one particularly lengthy wait can adversely skew waiting times for that period. The average wait times however can be used as an indication.

Table 18: Waiting time on the housing register by band - all Bands 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest Wait	Longest Wait	Average Wait
Sheltered	9	5 weeks	13 years	27 months
Studio general needs	18	4 weeks	10 years	12 months
1-bed general needs	146	4 weeks	8 years	11 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	89	20 days	24 years	11 months
2-bed house	79	3 weeks	10 years	8 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	1	5 weeks	5 weeks	5 weeks
3-bed house	50	4 weeks	8 years	12 months
4 bed house	4	11 months	6 years	29 months
5 bed house	0	0	0	0

Table 19: Waiting time on the housing register by band – Band A 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest Wait	Longest Wait	Average Wait
Sheltered	1	7 months	7 months	7 months
Studio general needs	5	5 weeks	21 months	9 months
1-bed general needs	53	4 weeks	3 years	9 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	17	4 weeks	24 years	22 months
2-bed house	33	3 weeks	18 months	4 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	1	5 weeks	5 weeks	5 weeks
3-bed house	29	4 weeks	31 months	5 months
4 bed house	1	21 months	21 months	21 months
5 bed house	0	0	0	0

Table 20: Waiting time on the housing register by band – Band B 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest Wait	Longest Wait	Average Wait
Sheltered	5	5 weeks	13 years	32 months
Studio general needs	5	4 weeks	8 months	3 months
1-bed general needs	47	4 weeks	7 years	8 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	49	20 days	18 months	5 months
2-bed house	34	7 weeks	33 months	8 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	0	0	0	0
3-bed house	18	4 weeks	4 years	14 months
4 bed house	3	11 months	6 years	32 months
5 bed house	0	0	0	0

Table 21: Waiting time on the housing register by band – Band C 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest Wait	Longest Wait	Average Wait
Sheltered	2	5 weeks	27 months	14 months
Studio general needs	7	7 weeks	16 months	6 months
1-bed general needs	28	7 weeks	8 years	13 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	17	7 weeks	35 months	10 months
2-bed house	10	7 months	10 years	22 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	0	0	0	0
3-bed house	3	27 months	8 years	5 years
4 bed house	0	0	0	0
5 bed house	0	0	0	0

Table 22: Waiting time on the housing register by band – Band D 1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008.

Type / Size	No. of Lets	Shortest Wait	Longest Wait	Average Wait
Sheltered	1	4 years	4 years	4 years
Studio general needs	1	10 years	10 years	10 years
1-bed general needs	18	5 weeks	5 weeks	22 months
2-bed flat or maisonette	6	11 weeks	6 years	29 months
2-bed house	2	6 months	14 months	10 months
3-bed flat or maisonette	0	0	0	0
3-bed house	0	0	0	0
4 bed house	0	0	0	0
5 bed house	0	0	0	0

When we consider that those in most urgent need are housed much quicker than others we need to ensure that we have a policy framework in place that acknowledges those who are pro-active in resolving their own housing issues whilst also according priority to those in housing need. This is an important element within this strategy.

We have also highlighted within this strategy the need to investigate more fully the needs of rough sleepers. Previous counts have shown very low numbers of rough sleepers however anecdotally other agencies report fluctuating numbers throughout the years. Having analysed the data on the Housing Register this has shown that there are 37 households registered as of no fixed abode. It must be acknowledged however that this does not necessarily equate to people sleeping rough as it can mean that households are staying temporarily with a series of friends or relatives in what has commonly become known as 'sofa surfing'. We anticipate that the further research planned will increase our knowledge of the needs of this client group.

Glossary of Terms

The following is a brief description of some of the terms commonly used throughout this document:

Accommodation based services:

This is housing where support as well as accommodation is provided to vulnerable persons. A condition of the tenancy will be that support is provided and the two elements cannot be separated. If support is no longer needed then the customer will need to leave the accommodation.

Affordable Housing:

Housing which is subsidised to some degree to provide homes for rent, shared ownership or low cost sale to meet the needs of local people who would not otherwise be able to gain access to housing at full market cost.

Allocations Policy:

This is the policy which is used to determine how affordable housing is allocated to Housing Register applicants. The policy is used to prioritise applicants in accordance with Government legislation and guidance.

Assured Shorthold tenancy (AST):

This is a tenancy introduced in the 1996 Housing Act. It is the default tenancy for all tenancies granted after this date. The tenant receives a six-month tenancy and is secure provided that he keeps to the terms of the tenancy agreement. After this initial term the landlord can regain his property by giving the tenant two months notice to leave the property.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) (see also Homemove):

This is the means by which affordable homes are allocated in accordance with the Council's approved Allocations Policy. Rather than vacant properties being allocated to the highest placed applicant on the Housing Register, available properties are advertised through various means and applicants bid for, or express an interest in, up to three properties. Bids are then prioritised according to the Council's Allocations Policy and the highest placed bidder is offered the property. All Councils are required to implement CBL schemes by 2010.

Department of Communities & Local Government (CLG):

The Government office which looks after and determines national housing policy.

Discretionary Housing Payments:

These are additional payments that can be made through Housing Benefit where there are shortfalls in rent payments which means that a customer may be threatened with homelessness. Examples of where this can be used are for funding rent deposits, paying rental top-ups in exceptional circumstances.

Enabling Role:

The assessment of housing need, the development of policies, and the marshalling of resources by the Council in a way which facilitates the meeting of those needs by a variety of other agencies in the private and independent sectors.

Floating Support (Outreach):

Support given to vulnerable people to help them to maintain their own homes as an alternative to developing specialist housing projects. This support can be provided regardless of the type of housing or their tenure and is not linked or tied to the accommodation they occupy.

Foyer:

Supported accommodation for young people between the ages of 18 and 25. The support is specifically tailored to developing life skills and encouraging the young person to engage in further education or employment before moving onto independent living.

Fuel Poverty:

Fuel poverty is where a household must spend more than 10% of their income on fuel in order to maintain a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

Homebuy:

A term adopted by the Government to cover intermediate housing such as shared ownership. This covers New Build Homebuy where applicants can purchase a minimum of 25% share in a new build scheme specifically designated for the purpose and Open Market Homebuy where applicants can purchase a property on the open market at 75% of its value with the remainder covered by an equity loan.

Homeless Applicant:

A person or household that approaches the Council for assistance as a result of being homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days. A formal application is made by the household and this is assessed in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 to assess whether the Council will have a duty to provide permanent rehousing.

Homelessness Prevention Fund:

A small amount of resources which are available for use by the Housing Interventions Officers to prevent homelessness. These are used on a case-by-case basis and can be used for example to pay off rent arrears.

Homemove:

The District's Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs):

This term describes a building in which a number of separate households are resident, usually sharing some communal facilities such as bathroom or a kitchen, but with separate tenancies or licences.

Housing Benefit:

Money which people on low incomes or benefits can get to help them pay their rent. It is a Government scheme administered by the local authority.

Independent Living Scheme (ILS):

A scheme by which Southdown Housing Association lease an affordable housing unit from a local housing provider and sub-let it to a vulnerable person in need of accommodation. Southdown then provide ongoing support to the tenant until they are ready to live independently. The tenancy is then transferred to the occupant and support ceases.

Intermediate Rent:

Properties let on the basis of the rents being higher than social rents but at a maximum of 80% of market levels. Assured Shorthold Tenancies are granted to the occupants and provided that they adhere to their tenancy agreement, there is greater security than renting in the private market.

Landed Estates:

The large estate landlords such as Goodwood or Cowdray who have large land and property holdings which are used primarily for their own workers but are also rented to others.

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer:

The process by which both the management and the ownership of council housing is transferred to another body, usually a Registered Social Landlord. It requires the consent of a simple majority of tenants in a ballot.

Local Area Agreement(LAA):

The agreement between the local authorities in the County, West Sussex County Council and the Government which sets certain targets for service provision that will be jointly prioritised.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP):

A multi agency partnership charged with developing the Community Strategy and ensuring effective joint working between agencies at a local level.

Mortgage Rescue Scheme:

Schemes which are aimed at home owners who are at risk of becoming homeless through being unable to afford their mortgage repayments. Assistance can be through Housing Associations converting the property from purchase to rent or by the purchase of equity shares. The home owner often remains in the property as a tenant of the Housing Association.

Move-on Accommodation:

Permanent or longer temporary accommodation provided for people who need to move out of short stay supported housing projects such as hostels or night shelters.

Outreach Support:

See Floating Support.

Private Rented Sector:

Rented housing controlled by private landlords rather than Councils, RSLs or the voluntary sector.

Private Sector Housing Access Scheme (PSHAS):

A scheme devised to assist households to access private rented accommodation. The Council pays the landlord a month's rent in advance and guarantees a deposit through a bond scheme. The rent in advance is paid back by the tenant to the Council through weekly payments.

Private Leasing Scheme:

A Housing Association enters into an agreement with a private landlord or investor to lease a property for a number of years. The rent is guaranteed for the landlord as well as return of the property in the same state, save for fair wear and tear. The Housing Association then lets the accommodation to Council nominees who are threatened with homelessness or are homeless.

Qualifying offer:

An agreement between the Council and a homeless applicant that the customer will accept a tenancy in the private rented sector as a consequence of which the Council will no longer have a statutory duty to accommodate the homeless person.

Regional Housing Board (RHB):

The new body set up by the Government to agree a strategic and funding priorities for housing in the South East Region. Whilst the Housing Corporation will still administer the funding process for RSLs it will be on the basis of priorities set by the RHB.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL):

A housing organisation, registered with the Housing Corporation which provides housing for rent, shared ownership or sale on a not for profit basis. It is also known as a housing association.

Right to Buy:

The legal right by which council and those tenants of RSLs which are not registered charities are able to purchase the home of which they are a tenant at a discount.

Shared Ownership:

A scheme aimed at providing first time buyers, who cannot afford to buy outright, a home suited to their needs. The buyer purchases a part of the equity, paying rent on the remainder which is usually retained by a RSL. The initial share can be between 25% and 75% of the equity.

Signpost Housing Support service:

A generalist floating support service providing support to vulnerable persons at risk of homelessness. Support can be provided in finding accommodation, accessing benefits and forwarding onto other specialist services.

Social Homebuy:

A new scheme to be introduced by the Government whereby existing Council tenants who qualify for the Right to Buy their home outright instead purchase a share in it. The minimum share is 25%.

