

Working together to
change lives

2007 - 2011

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Executive Summary

This is the first countywide strategy in Worcestershire and is the culmination of many years of partnership working between the district housing authorities and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners. The strategy has been written by a consortium of officers called the County Homeless Strategy Group which was formed at the request of the Chief Housing Officers and consists of representatives from each district council and one housing association. The officers attending have both strategic and operational roles and have a variety of experience in housing.

The Strategy outlines the processes we used to develop it, the research undertaken, using primary sources such as customer and partner agency views and secondary data, including the analysis of CORE, P1E and demographic data and what the information collected told us about homelessness in the County.

The group have undertaken consultation on the strategy through participation in a sub-regional stakeholder day from which a suggested sub-regional action plan has been developed for further discussion with the South HMA partnership. Some of the districts also held local events to canvas the views of local service providers and sent out questionnaires to service providers to identify gaps in service provision.

Service user consultation took place through a postal and telephone questionnaire to all homeless households accepted for re-housing in 2005/06. We received over 200 responses from the questionnaire. The responses identified a number of areas that required improvement: the need to make the homeless process more transparent, to keep applicants up to date as their application progresses, the need for greater information sharing between departments and agencies and to ensure all information produced is jargon free.

The information collected demonstrates an increasing problem of affordability caused by high house prices and low wages so that each of the councils is struggling to meet the demand from forming households. There were over 4000 approaches between April 2004 and March 2006 and of these the Council's accepted a duty to rehouse 2227, which is a reduction in acceptances mainly due to an increase in the number of households prevented from becoming homeless.

In the period 2004 – 2006 the largest type of homeless household accepted was households with dependant children, accounting for 51.7% of all acceptances. There were also nearly 200 young people accepted and 163 people with a mental health problem. There are some variances in priority need types across the County, with pockets of high levels of approaches from certain groups. The three main causes for homelessness are similarly across the county, namely, parents, friends and relatives no longer able to accommodate accounting for just under 1000 acceptances between 2004 and 2006, the end of assured shorthold tenancies (just under 400 in the same time period) and the relationship breakdown due to domestic violence (267).

From this research some groups have been identified as more likely to experience homelessness than others, including young people, particularly care leavers, those experiencing domestic violence and those suffering from mental health issues.

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Whilst new services have come on line, and new accommodation provided since the first homeless strategies were published in 2002, there are still some gaps in provision for certain groups. In particular we acknowledge that we are still some way short of providing enough move-on accommodation to bridge the gap between emergency and permanent re-housing and that more needs to be done with developing floating support services for key groups, including those suffering with mental health problems. We hope that the Supporting People review of services to homeless people in 2006 / 07 will assist with this.

Our knowledge of the issues faced by homeless people has grown in this time as has our awareness of good practise examples across the country and all this information has assisted us in devising a robust and challenging action plan that we hope will have a positive impact on changing homeless people's lives for the better.

The action plan we have developed, centres around six key objectives as follows;

- To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of a range of appropriate housing services
- To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection
- To share good practise in, and knowledge of the effective delivery of housing and homeless services
- To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services
- To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives
- Support the development of appropriate types of accommodation for key client groups

We believe these objectives will assist us in developing and delivering services that will assist a range of client groups but more work needs to be done in identifying exactly what these services should be, in conjunction with service users and relevant agencies, and in forming strategic partnerships to ensure that the limited amount of resources available are maximised. This includes working with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) in their key role in sustaining tenancies, reducing evictions and abandonment, preventing homelessness through their housing management functions and making the best use of the existing housing stock as the delivery of appropriate new build is a longer term objective that is harder to deliver.

The Strategy ends by outlining the way forward including the initial period of consultation that will canvas the views of stakeholders and service users, particularly in relation to the analysed data and the action plan.

Beyond the consultation and endorsement from the district council's cabinets, we hope the County Homeless Strategy Group will form a wider partnership to oversee the revision of data and delivery of objectives over the life of the strategy.

Foreword

As Chairman of the Worcestershire Chief Housing Officers Group (CHOG) I am very proud to introduce this Countywide Homelessness Strategy which will guide service development within Worcestershire over the next 3 years.

The vision for Worcestershire is *'to ensure that everyone has access to a place they can call home, where they can close their door and feel safe'*. We know that this is an ambitious vision and will only be achieved by working together.

To achieve our vision the main thrust of our Strategy is to prevent homelessness from happening at all. In cases where homelessness cannot be prevented, it is equally important that we support people until they can be re-housed and fully settled in their new home thereby creating and maintaining a sustainable community.

We have already developed strong working relationships over recent years within the County – so we are not starting from scratch. We believe that by working together with each other and partner Registered Social Landlords, Social Care, Primary Care Trusts, Police, voluntary sector partners and others; we can achieve more outcomes for our customers and at a quicker pace.

The introduction of Homelessness Strategies in 2002 have made significant improvements to the way we work, giving us the framework we need to make a real difference to local people through the services we provide.

Our customers have helped us to shape our services and give us invaluable feedback about how it feels for them. They tell us about the things we get right and those where we still need to make improvements.

We believe that we need to get to the root causes of homelessness. This involves a holistic approach, assisting each household according to their needs and not just providing accommodation.

I am confident that the outcomes from this strategy and our working together will positively change people's lives.

Tim Rice
Chairman
Chief Housing Officers Group

Introduction

Historical Context

In 2002 the Homelessness Act introduced the requirement for all Local Authorities to review homelessness in their area and produce a homelessness strategy. This legislation acted as a catalyst for strategic planning of homelessness services and helped Local Authorities to move from a reactive service to one that encompasses forward planning, partnership working and prevention. We have come a long way since 2002 with many new service developments and a new attitude and style to working together.

The six councils within the County are;

- Bromsgrove District Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Worcester City Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

Five of the six Councils have undertaken stock transfer of their council housing, with only Redditch Borough Council retaining its landlord function.

Within Worcestershire there is a history of effective joint working across housing services and particularly within the homeless environment but the development of Homelessness Strategies in 2002 sharpened this and gave it purpose. In particular the strategy development paved the way for some benchmarking to take place, the growth in recognition of common issues and some initial cross boundary working.

Since 2002 the district councils have worked together to bid for resources and support joint services and projects including Good Start packages, a countywide mediation service, a countywide Youth Homelessness worker and various training programmes. The County have recently been successful in obtaining funding for a Rent Deposit Scheme for Substance Misusers, Support Co-ordinators (for homeless households) and Rough Sleeper Project Officers and continue to try to develop a Countywide Sanctuary Scheme. Officers have also developed joint protocols, such as the 16 & 17 year old protocol with Social Services and much of this work continues, with the Countywide Protocol Group.

Officers within the County have had considerable experience of working together and sharing expertise through the Homeless Officers Group (HOG), a sub-group of the Chief Housing Officers group (CHOG), where it has been possible for all involved to develop a good understanding of homelessness in the County and form excellent working relationships.

Bringing the sub-region and county perspective together

In 2005, when the Local Authorities began to consider updating current strategies, it was very apparent, both to practitioners and the Chief Housing Officers that the district councils shared many common housing issues and recognised that housing markets were similar and in many cases spanned district boundaries.

It is clear that our customers do not recognise the geographical boundaries that exist through local government administration and that common issues cannot be solved without joint solutions.

All officers were committed to the idea of developing a joint homelessness strategy, and the resulting joint action plan this would bring. A sub-group of CHOG was formed to enable the authorities to work together to roll out good practice and maximise the potential for cost efficiencies, with the ambitious aim that customers would have access to the same type and standard of service regardless of where they sought advice across the County.

During the same period the Regional Housing Board (RHB) commissioned a Regional Homelessness Strategy (RHS) that made a number of recommendations including the establishment of a Regional Homeless Implementation Group (RHIG), who would assist sub-regions in developing action plans to tackle homelessness. This group has been formed from a wide range of public sector agencies and the voluntary sector.

The RHB hosted a number of consultation events throughout the development of both the Regional Housing and Homelessness Strategies to share findings with Local Authorities and other relevant organisations and give opportunities for consultation to take place.

In developing this homelessness strategy the issues raised by the RHS, the regional housing market evidence, the Regional Homelessness Strategy and the work undertaken by the sub-region has been fully considered.

The RHIG hosted a number of sub regional stakeholder days to discuss homelessness and the research undertaken by the Centre for Urban Studies (CURS). For the South Housing Market Area the event took place on 24th March 2006 and was very successful in that it pulled together a number of key stakeholders from the sub-region and gave people an opportunity to suggest a wide variety of actions to be fed back to the RHIG.

Who this strategy is aimed at

This homelessness strategy is written primarily with homelessness practitioners and colleagues who work in related fields in mind. However, we want the Strategy to be as accessible as possible so that any lay person, with an interest in homelessness, can look at the research information or a précis of the full document and understand what we hope to achieve for the County and why.

Who helped to develop the strategy

Local Authority and RSL officers from within the County have led on the development of this strategy by bringing together a wealth of expertise from many different housing fields including homelessness, policy and research, housing strategy, social housing management and private sector housing.

To ensure that this Strategy is comprehensive and will meet the needs of a wide range of agencies we involved and consulted with other organisations (please see Appendix one for a full list) including RSLs, Social Care, Probation, the Voluntary Sector and the Primary Care Trust (PCT). This consultation occurred in a number of different ways including direct contact, local events and the sub-regional stakeholder day.

All of the districts have also undertaken customer satisfaction surveys and telephone questionnaires to find out homeless clients views of the service, prevention actions and other related services.

The strategy layout

The Strategy begins by looking at our success in delivering the objectives of previous strategies and in providing local services and what the strategies, and other related local authority actions, have achieved in homelessness, since 2002.

This Strategy considers the wider national and regional context as well as all the other related strategies currently being implemented throughout the area by authorities, relevant stakeholders and the groups that meet to drive the actions forward. This document seeks to identify opportunities for partnership working and to give the reader an informed view of the needs and demands, the delivery of services and identified outcomes. There is information on the sub-regional, county and local district level priorities and actions. This Strategy considers available resources and the different options for delivering improvements. Finally, the mechanisms for monitoring delivery of the actions identified and outcomes achieved are outlined.

The objective of the strategy

The objective of this Strategy is to enable local authorities to make a difference to households threatened or experiencing homelessness, preventing it wherever possible and providing support where needed. Building on thorough local research and analysis, we believe that we have identified the issues and developed solutions to tackle not just homelessness itself, but also its root causes, through a countywide strategy and action plan.

The action plan includes a range of proposed initiatives and services to achieve the desired outcomes, which can be used at a local level, depending on circumstances. The strategy is there to guide stakeholders through the role of preventing and tackling homelessness and from this to make a real difference to the outcomes of people's lives.

Our Starting Point

The purpose of this section is to tell you about the position of each authority at the beginning of the process in terms of current performance, the Audit Commission's views of each organisation and the feedback received from Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) regarding the present Homelessness Strategies.

Learning from our previous homelessness strategies

The Government critically appraised the district homelessness strategies produced in 2002. The purpose of this was to help local authorities to produce homelessness strategies which were fit for purpose, helping to drive real change and service improvement for local people.

On the whole the previous homeless strategies were well received with many identified strengths across the county, including the collection of statistical information, the style and the content of the reviews.

There was recognition of the involvement of key stakeholders in developing the strategies and the consultation that took place with service users.

There were also some identified common weaknesses where improvements are needed to;

- Ensure clear links to other strategies and Government targets
- Provide evidence about the current local homelessness scene with a range of data sources being used
- Show how stakeholder and user consultation have helped to shape the strategy
- Ensure good links between review, strategy and action plan
- Recognise the health needs of homeless people
- Ensure our action plans are SMART and include prevention measures
- Be clear about arrangements for monitoring progress from all partners

This feedback forms part of our countywide homelessness review and has helped us to develop this strategy. It is shown in full in Appendix two. We have also used the newly launched 'Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check' toolkit which has helped us to identify gaps and weaknesses in the services we offer and the robust development of action plans. We are confident that this new Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy will meet the Governments requirements.

Fit for purpose housing strategies

Our local authority homelessness strategies have strong links to wider local authority housing strategies. The government has set a national 'fit for purpose' standard against which our housing strategies are assessed to ensure they are adequate to secure the best housing possible in a district with the resources a local authority has at its disposal and that public money will not be wasted.

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In Worcestershire all of the six local authorities have 'fit for purpose' housing strategies in place.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is about helping councils improve services for their communities. The Audit Commission assesses the performance of councils and the services that they provide for local people. This assessment helps councils to focus on improvement

It is acknowledged that each of the local authorities is at a different stage with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process but in all cases we believe it acts as a catalyst for service improvement.

Local Authority	Performance Assessment
Bromsgrove	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment - 'Poor' due to voluntary engagement, not an actual inspection • Strategic Housing Services 2006 - 'poor' service and uncertain prospects for improvement
Malvern Hills D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment 2005 - 'Fair' • Strategic Housing inspection to take place in 2008
Redditch B C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment 2004 - 'Fair' • Housing Service 2003 - 'fair' with uncertain prospects for improvement
Worcester C C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment 2004 - 'Fair' • Strategic Housing Inspection 2007 – Fair with good prospects for improvement
Wychavon D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment 2003 - 'Good' • Housing Service 2005 'excellent' with excellent prospects for improvement
Wyre Forest D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Assessment 2004 - 'Fair' • Balanced Housing Market 2004 – Grade B, low need for improvement

Where councils have undergone an assessment of their housing service, some of the recommendations directly impact on the homelessness services as follows;

Bromsgrove D C - there is a need to develop service standards, to use customer feedback to tailor local services, to improve the information provided to people in temporary accommodation, to improve the quality of hostel accommodation and reduce length of stay for homeless households

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Redditch B C - there is a need to improve the information displayed at local offices

Worcester CC – there is a need to reduce the length of stay for homeless households in temporary accommodation

Wychavon D C - there is a need to improve signage for the out of hours homelessness service and to raise awareness about the extent of rough sleeping within the district and to put actions in place to address this

Where recommendations have not been fully delivered, these will become part of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for the individual councils.

Achievements to Date

Since 2002, each of the six Worcestershire Local Authorities has worked in partnership with local stakeholders to improve the services provided for local homeless households. The improvements are many and wide ranging.

The Homelessness Strategies 2002 have helped guide staff to work towards clear goals and targets and the top achievements for each council are detailed in the table below;

Local Authorities	Critical achievements since 2002
Bromsgrove D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a comprehensive Debt Advice/Homeless Prevention Service with the CAB • Funding research into the needs of young single people and producing an Action Plan which resulted in the development of a drop in service and private tenancy scheme for 25yr olds • Jointly funding the acquisition of dispersed self contained temporary accommodation with a view to decommissioning the hostels
Malvern Hills D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Government requirement re B and B Placements • Introduction of Sanctuary Scheme • Establishment of 'multi agency' panels in respect Domestic Violence; Youth Homelessness; Mental Health • Reduction in homeless acceptances through prevention mechanisms
Redditch B C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The establishment and further development of an anti-social behaviour team • Developing a rent deposit scheme for homeless households to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast and prevent homelessness • Introduction of a Homeless Prevention Officer post
Worcester C C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Worcester Homeless Partnership to implement the action plan and develop homelessness services in Worcester.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Worcester Multi Agency Assessment Panel to bring together agencies to identify housing and support solutions for homeless households with multiple problems. • Increased the range of prevention options available for homeless households through the introduction of a Deposit Guarantee Scheme • The provision of supported accommodation for young people, developed through a combination of s106 and housing corporation funding. • Increasing information available for statutory and voluntary agencies on services for homeless households through the creation of the Service Directory on the website
Wychavon D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved the accessibility, range and quality of information available to homeless households about the services we provide • Increased support for households who are threatened with or become homeless ranging from early intervention to support in temporary accommodation and resettlement • Increased provision of flexible, suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households within the district to reduce use of bed & breakfast for families. • Worked with partner organisations to ensure an 'early warning' system is in place to prevent homelessness wherever possible. • Introduced a 'spend to save' scheme to enable flexible and innovative approaches to help resolve a homeless or potentially homeless situation and to aid early re-housing.
Wyre Forest D C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development and subsequent success of the Nightstop Service • Working with Centrepoint to provide information and advice on housing and homelessness to schools • Assisting with setting up a Floating Support Scheme operated by WFCH and Stonham to assist people in temporary accommodation • Setting up a Homelessness Forum for local advice and support agencies • Reducing levels of homeless acceptances by using various prevention methods

These achievements represent the tip of what has been achieved during the last few years within the county, giving a flavour of the type of service improvements which have already been implemented.

The nature of homelessness e.g. the number of presentations and causes of homelessness varies from district to district. There are also variations in our culture, performance and the quality of service we provide. This is reflected in the way that

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each District, City or Borough Council has developed their own staffing structures, procedures and tools for addressing the local problems.

There is a clear and ongoing commitment by all the Worcestershire councils to continuous service improvement. It is recognised that by working together and learning from each other that we can be more effective in making a real difference in preventing and addressing homelessness within the county.

Performance indicator information

All effective organisations measure their performance in order to know how well they are doing and to identify opportunities for improvement. There are many methods of performance monitoring that each Local Authority adopts regarding homelessness, be it reports that are developed and audited by government departments or indicators of performance set by individual authorities.

Locally set indicators often reflect a council's own priorities, measure performance to aid continuous improvement and assess the efficiency, effectiveness and value for money of the service they provide. The national indicators are developed by the Audit Commission. These enable comparison with other local authorities and help to drive improvements in public services. A summary of the national Performance Indicator outcomes related to homelessness for all the Worcestershire councils is summarised in the table below;

NPI	Year	Bromsgrove D C	Malvern Hills D C	Redditch B C	Worcester C C	Wychavon D C	Wyre Forest D C
Average length of time (weeks) spent in B&B accommodation	02/03	0	1	0	10	10	6
	03/04	1	4	2	7	11	6
	04/05	0	4	2	7	6	3
	05/06	0	0	2.24	11.3	5	3
	06/07	0	0	0	11.7	5	3
Average length of time (weeks) spent in hostel accommodation	02/03		N/A		N/A	0	N/A
	03/04	9.28	N/A	8	N/A	0	N/A
	04/05	8.61	N/A	8	N/A	0	N/A
	05/06	16	N/A	11.07	N/A	0	N/A
	06/07	8	N/A		N/A	0	N/A
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	02/03	0	0-2	0	6	N/A	0-10
	03/04	0	0-2	0	4	N/A	0-10
	04/05	0	0-2	0	4	N/A	0-10
	05/06	0	4	0	4	2	0-10
	06/07	0	0-2	0	4	0-10	0-10
Percentage change in average number of families in temporary accommodation	04/05	0			38	16.5%	3.37
	05/06	40			-17.6%	-15.8%	35.71
	06/07	-10	-50		-28%	-5	25
Number of homeless households who approached housing advice service and situation resolved	05/06	49	139		198	62	49
	06/07	1 – 5%	150		240	60	20
Proportion of statutorily homeless households previously accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last 2 years	05/06	2.86	4	6.2	0	0	8
	06/07	3	2		N/A	0	3

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Please note the figure for 06/07 is the council target.

The performance results as detailed in the table above show that there has been clear improvement for all councils since the homelessness strategies were published in 2002 in certain areas including rough sleeping, number of households in temporary accommodation and repeat homelessness. The majority of councils have set more challenging prevention targets for 2006 – 2007 and for reducing the length of stay in both Bed and Breakfast and hostel accommodation.

The New Homeless Strategy – Strategic Context

National Agenda

The Government's overall aim is to ensure that more households are appropriately housed, in settled accommodation, with access to quality services and that, where possible, households should be offered more options to prevent homelessness.

The Government's five year strategy to reduce homelessness, 'Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes: Changing Lives' emphasises the need for a holistic, integrated, co-ordinated approach, which tackles the wider causes and symptoms, and looks beyond the provision of housing to the wider range of services and support which may be required by individuals.

Having successfully reduced the numbers of rough sleepers and households approaching as homeless since 2003, the government's focus has now moved on to reducing the number of homeless households being accommodated in temporary accommodation. The Government has set a new national target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. The Government has also set targets to reduce the length of time households spend in unsuitable temporary accommodation, for both households with dependant children and pregnant and 16-17 year olds. More generally the Government has placed increasing emphasis on preventative measures in order to reduce homelessness.

Following recent Cabinet reshuffles the responsibility of Homelessness and Supporting People have now been grouped together and come under the remit of the new Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).

Other strategies and papers have been published in recent years that have an impact on the delivery of homeless services including the Supporting People "Guide to accommodation and support options for homeless households" and the Housing Corporation's "Effective co-operation in tackling homelessness: nomination agreements and exclusions" aimed at establishing protocols between Local Authorities and RSLs in allocating housing.

In addition the Local Government Association (LGA) and Housing Corporation have been working on a national protocol which will feed into key discussions at a local level between housing providers and local authorities regarding joint working and how to achieve some agreed national outcomes.

The delivery of homeless services takes place within a much broader context of local government and issues around the modernisation agenda and efficiency savings as outlined by the Gershon Review and the new local government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities".

Regional Agenda

Regional Housing Strategy

The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (WMRHS) was revised in 2005 following extensive research into the housing markets in the West Midlands. From this four sub-regions were identified that shared similar housing market issues. The six district councils of Worcestershire form part of the South Housing Market Area, along with Warwick and Stratford District Councils. The Strategy itself continues along the themes identified in its predecessor around urban and rural renaissance but gives greater emphasis to issues around affordability and homelessness.

The WMRHS highlighted the acute housing need and affordability issues in the South of the region and this contributed to an increased allocation for affordable housing to help meet needs.

Regional Homelessness Strategy

The Regional Homelessness Strategy (RHS) was commissioned by the Regional Housing Board to inform the WMRHS and provides the strategic steer for tackling and preventing homelessness in the West Midlands

The objective of the Regional Homeless Strategy is to build on Local Authority Homelessness Strategies, incorporate the Government's homelessness targets, secure involvement of key regional stakeholders and initiate a process of change

The RHS emphasises that it is no longer appropriate to look at homelessness in isolation and stresses the benefits to be gained by multi-agency strategies for intervention, which focus on joint working across sectors and a holistic approach.

The strategy included 7 key priorities to be undertaken:

- Incorporate recommendations about the need for additional capital funding into Regional Housing Strategy
- Establish a cross-sector homelessness strategy implementation group at regional level called the Regional Homelessness Implementation Group (RHIG)
- Secure funding for secretariat/co-ordination resources to support the work of the cross-sector homelessness strategy implementation group.
- Promote the Regional Homelessness Strategy and share good practice through website, seminars, visits and participation in other networks
- Enable and support cross-sector partnerships to develop at sub regional level to agree relevant priorities and action plans and move towards joint planning and budget pooling
- Ensure regional coverage of cross-sector partnerships
- Agree priorities and establish SMART targets for sub-regions

The RHIG, reporting to the Regional Housing Board, has a number of tasks such as providing a co-ordinated system within the region which pulls together key partners at regional level to embed homelessness prevention in related strategies and action plans.

The RHS recommended the development of sub-regional action plans to develop cross-sector working, with the initial draft SHMA action plan (shown below) being the first step of the process of agreeing priorities, moving towards joint planning and budget pooling and establishing SMART targets.

Sub Regional Agenda

The areas encompassed within the South Housing Market Area all experience similar difficulties in terms of meeting the substantial housing demand for affordable housing and there has been much similarity in terms of approaches taken to address these problems. During the strategy development it became clear that Worcestershire had many similarities with Warwick and Stratford and, as a result the South Housing Market Area Partnership was formed.

The RHB working through the RHIG held stakeholder events throughout the early part of 2006 to bring together key stakeholders in each of the sub-regions. For the South HMA a consultation event has been held and an initial action plan developed and more details are given below. This plan will be further developed and endorsed by the South Housing Market Area Partnership (SHMAP) to establish agreed priorities and SMART targets.

South Housing Market Area Initial Action Plan

From the stakeholder day a draft action plan has been developed with the following key objectives (for full details of the action plan, please see Appendix six).

- Jointly agreed priorities and pooling of resources
- Capturing cross-sector homelessness and housing need data for the sub-region
- Integrated, holistic strategic approach and cross-boundary working
- Working with private landlords to tackle homelessness
- Preventing homelessness
- Ensuring the provision of appropriate accommodation
- Promoting and disseminating good practice
- Research priorities
- Influencing national policy

County Agenda

The County of Worcestershire faces the dual problems of affordability and a decreasing supply of social housing. This has led to an increasing problem of homelessness and consequently this issue has been raised on the agendas of all the local authorities. In working together to develop this Strategy we have given consideration both the wider context and the strategies and agendas of all the various organisations working in the homelessness field. In particular, the Worcestershire County Homelessness Strategy will have regard to the SHMAP action plan and the overall objectives of the RHS.

The Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy also has links to a wide range of county and district strategies / plans. These are detailed in the following chapter.

Partnership working and consultation

Partnership working

A fundamental principle encompassed in the development of this strategy was that of partnership working. Without it, it would not have been possible to develop or subsequently to deliver the objectives of this strategy. Effective partnership working throughout the strategy development has improved the information exchange and expanded the knowledge and expertise of partner agencies. This has allowed for the sharing of best practice and is something the organisations are keen to expand upon as this clearly improves the delivery of services to existing and potential customers.

In working together to develop this strategy we have been able to have meaningful discussion, consultation and involvement from stakeholders and service users to ensure it is not developed in isolation.

We will make efficiency improvements, including minimising the duplication of work and also reducing the need for the service users to visit a number of agencies before successfully obtaining the service they wanted. We recognise that there is an increasing importance in providing a collective response to a problem rather than it being the responsibility of each individual agency. Through working in partnership we hope to achieve some real synergy in our objectives through finding new, efficient ways of working and pooling resources. As one collective voice for homelessness in the County we hope to have greater influence regionally, to be able to negotiate from a position of strength and to have better access to resources.

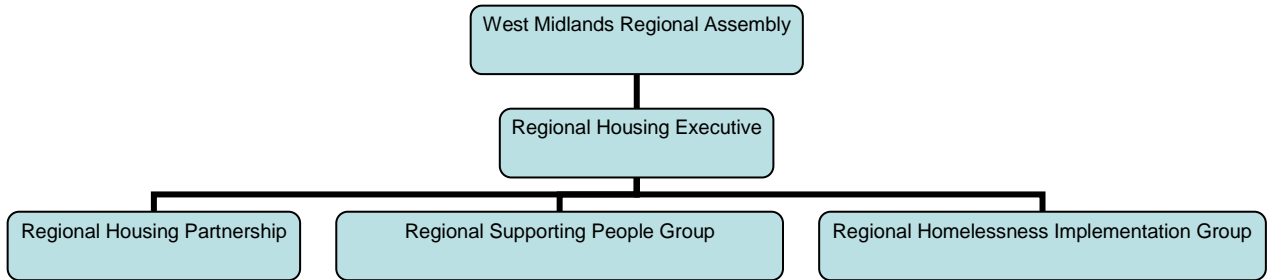
We have developed various mechanisms to ensure successful joint working and through undertaking inter-agency visits and joint training we have improved working relationships and developed common practices.

Working with partners is an integral part of our working life. The majority of the work required to tackle homelessness should take place at a strategic level through regular partnership meetings or liaison meetings and the development of joint protocols between statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies. Our existing partnership arrangements need to be strengthened by ensuring key members of staff attend the right meetings and that all key voluntary and statutory agencies are involved in delivering the action plan.

Key Partnerships

This next section outlines some of the key partnerships that exist within the region that have relevance to this strategy. It has not been possible to include all groups, although we recognise that they may well have an impact on homelessness in the county.

Regional Working Groups



Please see Appendix two for further details.

Sub-regional Working Group

South Housing Market Area Partnership

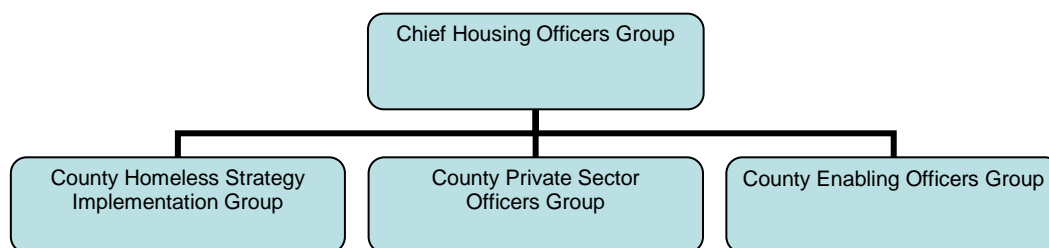
At sub-regional level a partnership has been formed that consists of representatives from Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, Housing Corporation, Government Office of West Midlands and the voluntary sector.

Their remit is to speak and act jointly on issues facing the South Housing Market Area, and to undertake further actions that may arise from the delivery and implementation of the Regional Housing Strategy. In the future this partnership will be responsible for developing a sub-regional housing strategy and housing investment plan. The Partnership feeds directly into the Regional Housing Executive.

There are plans to develop effective links between the partnership and housing and planning executive members to make the decision making more accountable.

The South HMA Partnership has also established a housing market assessment group to oversee the completion of a housing market assessment for the sub-region. This group are due to report back their findings in the new year and will update information on an annual basis.

County Groups and Partnerships



In addition to the county groups illustrated above, who report back to CHOG and through them to the Regional Housing Executive, there are a number of other groups and partnerships that have a direct impact on homelessness in the County. These are shown below and the list of the strategies they have written are shown in Appendix four.

Additional Worcestershire Partnerships and Groups

Worcestershire Partnership
 Substance Misuse and Housing Action
 Group
 Housing Sub Group -Learning Difficulties
 Worcestershire Integrated Neighbourhood
 Network

Supporting People Commissioning Body
 Worcestershire Domestic Violence Forum
 Teenage Paternity and Pregnancy Group
 Youth Homeless Partnership

Community Safety Partnerships
 Children and Young Peoples Board
 Older Persons Partnership Board
 Rural Housing Enabler Steering Group

Worcestershire Neighbourhood Network (WiNN)

This is a 2 year funded pilot project which aims to;

- establish a comprehensive network of neighbourhood-based prevention, healthy living, early intervention and support services for older people and their carers
- harness the capacity of the wider community to improve the lives of older people and carers at a local level
- replace traditional day services with opportunities to access mainstream community activities.

WiNN is using a 'Sure Start' approach, and will focus on three sites within Worcestershire where there is evidence of deprivation – two urban and one rural. A particular focus will be services for people from black and minority ethnic communities.

WiNN is designed to deliver a comprehensive range of preventative services to individuals in their own homes and their own localities to improve their quality of life and to reduce or delay more costly interventions.

The proposal is supported by, and involves Worcestershire County Council (Adult and Community Services), PCTs, voluntary organisations, the police, the fire service, district councils, as well as older people and their carers.

District Groups and Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships

Each authority has local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which consist of a range of representatives from local stakeholders including district councils, RSLs, Police, Older People forums, businesses and voluntary agencies.

LSPs are the key overarching body that are responsible for implementing the Community Strategy and have clear involvement in the development and implementation of the housing and homelessness strategies.

Homeless Partnerships

Within the local authorities, overseeing the delivery of the previous homelessness strategy and tackling issues associated with homelessness is undertaken in a variety of ways including the internal mechanisms, such as Housing Services Team and external mechanisms, such as Local Homeless Partnerships. The Homeless Partnerships are composed of Council officers and statutory and voluntary agencies but the regularity of meetings and the overall remit varies slightly between authorities.

Other Partnerships

Within each of the councils there are a variety of other partnerships that have been formed to address the needs of specific client groups e.g. Mental Health Liaison or to

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tackle certain issues e.g. Community Safety partnerships or the Police Liaison meeting. The majority of Councils also meet with RSL partners through joint commissioning groups to deliver new affordable housing.

Working in partnership with the voluntary sector

Across the County, the voluntary sector has become a key player in the prevention of homelessness and helping to provide diverse and holistic services to homeless households. The importance of these agencies is recognised through their inclusion on CHOG Plus (the quarterly meeting of CHOG that also includes key statutory stakeholders with a strategic interest in housing) and the Provider Forum, held by Supporting People.

This partnership working enables an individual approach to customers to ensure that the homeless response is tailored to their needs. We have always embraced a holistic customer centred approach and found that utilising the expertise of voluntary organisations has helped us to achieve this.

Worcestershire's local authorities have demonstrated their recognition of the importance of the voluntary sector by supporting their work through funding. During 2005/06 in excess of £500,000 was directed towards the voluntary sector to tackle homelessness issues and further detail of this is shown in the table below.

Voluntary sector prevention activities funded by Local Authorities

Council Funded Service	2005/06
Prevention, Advice and Accommodation Services (CAB, Maggs Day Centre, Victim Support, Relate, St Pauls Hostel, WHABAC, Nightstop etc)	£422,614
Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum – Drop in Centre and Rent Deposit Scheme	£ 22,000
Centrepont	£ 12,500
Mediation	£ 15,000
Rough Sleepers Project	£ 30,000
Total	£506,114

The resources outlined above come from a combination of internal council resources and Department of Communities and Local Government funding but does not include any funding received from Supporting People.

An example of successful working with the voluntary sector

An example of positive outcomes from our relationship with the voluntary sector is the Rough Sleepers project and Night Assessment Centre. Rough sleeping is the most severe and visible form of homelessness. The Rough Sleepers project has resulted in reductions in the number of rough sleepers, the prevention of homelessness and the provision of support in dealing with issues of social exclusion experienced by rough sleepers across the County. The extended opening of the night shelter, in Worcester,

during 2005/06 ensured that people were given a roof over their heads during the coldest winter months, and through this, rough sleepers were given opportunities to access support and encouraged to take positive steps to improve their quality of life.

Involvement of the voluntary sector in the homeless strategy

In writing this Strategy we were able to involve voluntary sector agencies through district partnerships and stakeholder days. Questionnaires were sent to all those agencies operating at a countywide level initially, with each authority issuing further questionnaires to service providers working solely within their area, thereby avoiding duplication of data.

The questionnaire requested information on the service each agency provides, the gaps in provision each agency has encountered and how the strategy could develop the service. Analysis of this information is detailed later in the Strategy.

Worcestershire Compact

In Worcestershire the voluntary, community and statutory sectors have developed a Compact document to ensure a thorough and inclusive consultation process is developed and implemented. This will help to provide;

- a framework within which the relationship between the voluntary, community and statutory sectors can be developed in the areas of partnerships, consultation, funding, volunteering, community groups and equal opportunities.
- an even stronger voluntary sector that can express and support its own needs through sustainable community action.
- a greater understanding of the contribution made by volunteers and the services provided by voluntary organisations in meeting the social, economic and environmental wellbeing needs of the County particularly in respect of some of the more vulnerable and socially excluded sections of the community.

The Compact is not about continually looking back - it is about looking at where we are now and moving forward. The way the sectors work together determines how effectively and efficiently the partners are able to improve the quality of life for the people in Worcestershire

Working in partnership with our service users – monitoring satisfaction

Directly consulting with service users is an important part of developing homeless strategies and services. Each council has conducted a customer satisfaction survey, via telephone and postal questionnaires from all homelessness acceptances of service users during 2005. Various areas of homeless services were covered within the questionnaire from the initial point of becoming homeless to the temporary accommodation provision. We have attempted to measure the quality of service the client received and also looked at the usefulness of prevention actions taken and support needs. Analysis of this information is detailed later in the Strategy.

Monitoring customer satisfaction will not cease after the Strategy has been developed. Each Local Authority regularly undertakes customer surveys to establish clients' views on various areas of the service, such as customer service and housing advice, which

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can be used to consider where improvements or changes can be made. Consultation helps prevent services from becoming provider-driven and creates an ever evolving customer led flexible service.

The action plan element of this strategy will also be shared with service users, where possible, as it goes through the consultation phase during 2006 so that as many views as possible can be sought.

Keeping our Strategy up to date and on target

It is critical that effective mechanisms are put into place to monitor the strategy and ensure that all relevant agencies are working to achieving the aims and objectives within the action plan.

In Worcestershire the strategy will be monitored on a local level through the six district council's current mechanisms which are outlined in more detail below;

Council	Internal Monitoring (Council)	External Monitoring (Council plus statutory / voluntary agencies)
Bromsgrove	Monitoring Board (Quarterly)	Homelessness Strategy Steering Group (Quarterly) Community Stakeholder Event (2.5 years)
Malvern	Annual progress reports to Executive Committee Monthly and Quarterly report some Homelessness Strategy indicators to Best Value Performance Team Monthly progress meeting with Homelessness Prevention Officer on some targets set out within the Strategy	Quarterly monitoring reports to the Government Office Bi annual progress meeting of Homelessness Strategy Focus Group
Redditch	Housing Strategy Monitoring Group Environment & Overview Scrutiny Group	Homeless Strategy Partnership (bi-annually)
Worcester	Key Priority Group (6 weekly) Corporate Housing Strategy Group	Worcester Homeless Partnership (Quarterly)
Wychavon	Officer led monitoring (quarterly)	Periodical review with Homeless Partnership
Wyre Forest	Service Policy Panel (bi-annual)	Wyre Forest Homeless Forum (Quarterly)

The Strategy will be implemented, monitored and steered by a county wide multi agency Homelessness Steering Group and various task and finish groups. This group will be chaired by one of the Chief Housing Officers and will be responsible for producing a six monthly progress report which will be taken back to CHOG, CHOG Plus and through any other individual agency reporting mechanisms where appropriate.

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In addition to this many of the action taken by individual councils are monitored through the quarterly progress reports to the Homelessness and Supporting People directorate at CLG.

How we will keep this information up to date

This Strategy will be a live document for five years but during that time, not only will it be critical for us to monitor and update the action plan, we will also need to update the data and information collected regarding homeless household needs and the provision and delivery of services to match these needs.

All the information that has been collected and analysed for this Strategy has been collated in an Evidence Folder that will be made available with the Strategy. This information will be accessible through the internet and can be used by other agencies in the County for their own strategies and work plans.

It will therefore be essential to ensure this information is updated on an annual basis to inform organisations and to see if our work, through the Strategy, is having an impact on homelessness.

Each Council will continue to undertake a customer survey on an annual basis to ensure that those experiencing the delivery of services keep us informed about the standard of provision. We would like to see this extended to cover other groups who use the service but for whom outcomes are more difficult to collect and monitor e.g. those found to be not in priority need or those who are intentionally homeless. We may also expand it to cover customers accessing other organisations providing homeless services.

We will also support an annual stakeholder day that invites organisations from across the County to attend and participate in. This day will seek to update attendees on what has been achieved through the action plan, and to get some understanding from organisations about current key issues relating to homelessness in the County.

About the County

Identifying needs – the methodology

This section covers the current position in the Council with regards to the need for housing and the scale of homelessness experienced in the County. It does this by considering demographic data including deprivation and economic factors, recent trends in homelessness presentations, housing waiting lists and lettings by social landlords and what we know regarding the provision of, and gaps in, services.

We consider our ability to meet needs through the delivery of new affordable housing and the views of stakeholders and customers on the services provided

Finally, we pull together all the information in an analysis of issues and priorities by key client groups and consider options for delivery.

The information gathered to inform us in writing this strategy comes from a variety of sources including primary and secondary data. Much data collection was undertaken through consultation events with stakeholders, a postal and telephone survey to service users and the benchmarking questionnaire. The provision of services was mapped in the County through the use of a simple questionnaire sent to all known services in the County that work with homeless households.

Secondary data sources included the Census 2001, Indices of deprivation and economic information compiled for us by the Research team at Worcestershire County Council, outturns from the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (HSSA), Housing Investment Programme (HIP) returns and P1E information. We were also able to use detailed information on lettings to social landlords through CORE. All of this information has been collated and analysed and is available in our Evidence Folder and electronically at www.worcester.gov.uk.

Demographic Information

Population levels and growth

The population of Worcestershire is expected to grow by 0.1 per cent between 2006-2010. This is lower than the expected growth in the populations of both the West Midlands (1.0 per cent) and England (1.8 per cent). The current population is just over half a million for the County. At a more local level, the population of both Wyre Forest and Worcester City is expected to decrease by 1.1 per cent and 0.6 per cent respectively whilst the other districts will experience some growth.

Mid-year population estimates can be used to compare previous years and also to predict projected population estimates as shown in the table below. This is a consideration for districts when setting their affordable housing targets for forthcoming years.

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Projected Population Structure for Worcestershire, 2006-2010

District	2006	2008	2010	% Change 2006-2010
Bromsgrove	91,550	92,050	92,400	0.9%
Malvern Hills	75,700	76,150	76,500	1.1%
Redditch	81,000	81,100	81,200	0.3%
Worcester City	94,300	94,100	93,700	-0.6%
Wychavon	117,300	117,650	117,800	0.4%
Wyre Forest	98,350	97,850	97,300	-1.1%
Worcestershire	558,211	558,857	558,949	0.1%
West Midlands	5,354,000	5,380,000	5,407,100	1.0%
England	50,483,200	50,922,600	51,367,900	1.8%

Source: Worcestershire County Council

Whilst the overall projected population growth is small for the County, certain key groups are set to grow including ethnic minorities and households migrating into the area.

Ethnicity Profile

The 2001 Census shows that Worcestershire has a mainly white population, 97.5% as compared to 91% of the population in England. Minority ethnic groups in Worcestershire make up 2.4% of the population, this being an increase from 1.4% in 1991. The largest ethnic group in Worcestershire is Asian Pakistani, 0.5% of the population, and the majority of this ethnic group are clustered in two areas of the County, namely Redditch and Worcester City. These districts have 52% and 41% respectively of the Asian Pakistani population in the County.

Ethnic minority groups, by 2010, are estimated to make up 3% of the population of Worcestershire.

Teenage Pregnancy

Within Worcestershire the rates of teenage pregnancy have reduced by 6% from 1998 to 2004, the rates in the county are lower than the national rate. The rate of under 18 conceptions is 33 per 1000 and the rate of under 16 conceptions is 5.3 per 1000. Although the rate is below the national average the rate of reduction is not as fast. The Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Strategy Group continue to work in partnership to reduce teenage conceptions in Worcestershire through the teenage pregnancy and parenting action plan. This includes increasing access to young people's health services, improving sex and relationships education in schools, raising aspirations of young people and targeted work with vulnerable groups of young people. There are some areas of the county that experience rates higher than the national average and more details are given in individual strategies

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Certain parts of the county are seen as hotspots, including one ward in Bromsgrove and Wychavon, two wards in Redditch and Malvern, three wards in Wyre Forest and six wards in Worcester.

District	Under 16 rate (per 1000 13-15)	Under 18 rate (per 1000 15-17)
Bromsgrove	5.8	27.1
Malvern Hills	3.4	25.2
Redditch	5.8	39.7
Worcester	9.5	49.4
Wychavon	5.2	29.4
Wyre Forest	6.8	40.5

District	Ward	Rate (2000-2002)	Rate (2001-2003)	Rate (2002-2004)
Bromsgrove	Charford	94.2	89.8	108.5
Worcester	Gorse Hill	82.1	82.7	104.8
Wychavon	Droitwich Central	Not hotspot	87.8	100.6
Worcester	Cathedral	66.7	62.1	97.6
Worcester	Rainbow Hill	59.1	85.6	85.5
Worcester	Warndon	93.0	86.3	80.4
Malvern	Pickersleigh	69.9	79.8	79.1
Worcester	Nunnery	Not hotspot	56.7	64.9
Wyre Forest	Broadwaters	86.5	74.5	62.2
Redditch	Batchley	58.6	81.9	61.7
Redditch	Church Hill	Not hotspot	Not hotspot	56.2
Wyre Forest	Greenhill	60.4	64.3	64.3
Redditch	Central	73.1	73.5	55.1
Malvern	Kempsey	Not hotspot	Not hotspot	54.7
Redditch	Greenlands	74.8	Not hotspot	Not hotspot
Wychavon	Evesham North	69.3	Not hotspot	Not hotspot
Malvern	Tenbury	62.8	56.1	Not hotspot
Wyre Forest	Oldington and Foley Park	82.2	78.2	Not hotspot
Worcester	St Johns	66.7	70.1	Not hotspot

Employment Structure

During the period 1991-2001 there have been significant changes in the employment structure in Worcestershire. Overall, there has been an 11.9% (28,537) increase in the number of people employed in the County over the ten-year period.

In June 2005, the claimant count unemployment rate in Worcestershire was 2.2% (6,114 claimants). Although this was an increase of 0.4% on 12 months previously, it was still well below the England and Wales average of 3.0%. The increase evident in Worcestershire in June 2005 is partially related to the closure of the Longbridge plant in Birmingham.

Worcestershire has followed the national pattern of decreasing levels of long-term unemployment. In the past six years, the level of long-term unemployment has decreased from 33.6% of all those on the claimant count in January 1999 to 21.0% in June 2005.

However, household incomes continue to remain low in some parts of the county compared to the national average £32,350, with the lowest average income in the county £31,140, in Wyre Forest. In a recent study undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Housing, house prices are now 7.5 times the average income in the West Midlands

The English Indices of Deprivation 2004 (ID 2004)

The new English Indices of Deprivation 2004 are a comprehensive update of the Indices of Deprivation 2000 (ID 2000). The project was commissioned by the ODPM and constructed by the Social Disadvantage Research Centre at Oxford University. Its aim is to better inform policy and to help direct resources to those people living in the most deprived areas.

The new Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD 2004) is a nationally recognised measure of deprivation at the small area level. The model is made up of 7 separate dimensions, or 'domains', all of which can be individually measured and which reflect different aspects of deprivation.

Out of the 34 County Councils, Worcestershire ranks 19th. This means that, on a national scale, it appears that Worcestershire is not particularly deprived. However, at a more localised level, various distinct pockets of deprivation do exist within the County.

Overall, there are 5 areas in Worcestershire which fall within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally on the IMD 2004. Two of these areas are found in Worcester City, two in Wyre Forest and one in Redditch. There are 25 areas inside the top 20% most deprived areas in England. In Worcestershire, the main types of deprivation lie within the barriers to housing and services, education and crime domains.

Key trends in the housing register and lettings of social housing stock

Since the implementation of the districts' individual Homelessness Strategies in 2002 there has been an overall increase in the need for social housing across Worcestershire. The revised homelessness duty imposed under the Homelessness Act 2002, increasing

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house prices, affordability issues, low stock turnover and lack of available land for new builds are all key factors in this. In the main, households are seeking 1 and 2 bedrooms; however the demand for 3 bed properties has also significantly increased.

For the majority of councils, lettings to statutory homeless have decreased as have the number of lettings becoming available.

One of the recommendations from the Centre for Urban Research Studies (CURS) (undertaken as part of the Regional Homelessness Strategy work) was that all Local Authorities should aim to ensure at least 30% of their lettings go to homeless households, to reduce the length of time people spend in temporary accommodation. In considering these figures we can see that 5 out of the 6 authorities in the county are already doing this (please see the Evidence Folder for further information).

It would appear that the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Local Authorities, when compared with the one authority retaining its stock, have seen a fluctuation of LA and RSL lettings, however the overall trend is a reducing number of lettings, particularly evident since 2002/03. Please note this data has been taken from Housing Investment Programme returns and does vary from data recorded on the continuous recording (CORE) system.

Overall lettings between 2001 and 2005

Overall Lettings	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Bromsgrove	339	414	362	206
Malvern Hills	383	446	314	285
Redditch	1141	885	913	890
Worcester City	694	676	725	428
Wychavon	570	551	516	478
Wyre Forest	656	816	608	559
Worcestershire	3783	3788	3438	2846

Analysis of CORE data

The Housing Corporation requires all Registered Social Landlords to collate key information from every allocation made, the mechanism for this being CORE (Continuous Recording). In addition, although not yet mandatory for them, Local Authorities who still retain stock are actively encouraged to participate in the scheme.

Although CORE relates to all lettings (i.e. including transfers and from waiting lists as well as to those housed as homeless), it does give an indication of overall trends in homelessness. A vast amount of data is collected, so only some key points pertinent to homelessness will be noted here with regard to the situation in Worcestershire.

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In 2004/05 there were a total of 2433 lettings in the county recorded on CORE, and in 2005/06, 2366. In both cases the largest number were in Wyre Forest (550 and 582), and the smallest in Bromsgrove (178 and 207).

In terms of household type approximately one third of all lettings were to single adults aged 16 to 59 (828 and 812). The next highest group was single parent households (530 and 536). This was followed by two adults with at least one child, and two adults with no children.

With regard to the economic status of household heads, over one third were either unemployed/job seekers or not seeking work (830 in 2004/05 and 960 in 2005/06). The highest proportions of these were in Redditch, Worcester and Wyre Forest. Conversely these districts also had the highest number of people in full-time employment (which may be a reflection of the larger number of lettings). Others included retired, and long-term sick and disabled.

In the vast majority of allocations the ethnic group was White (British, Irish or Other) – 2366 in 2004/05 and 2303 in 2005/06. The numbers for other groups were as follows:

- Black/Black British 25 and 14 respectively;
- Asian/Asian British 24 and 26;
- Mixed race 19 and 32.

In all of these, a larger proportion lived in Redditch and Worcester than in other districts.

The main reason the household left their last settled home primarily bears out the findings in the P1E data. There are some variations as CORE data includes lettings from waiting lists and not just to those who were previously homeless. However, bearing this in mind it is interesting to note that in all districts over both years being asked to leave by friends or family was one of the top three reasons cited by all those rehoused. Another key factor was relationship breakdown (both violent and non-violent). However, ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy does not come anywhere within the top three, although it is one of the key factors in causing threatened or actual homelessness according to P1E data.

It is very interesting to note that when looking at what type of accommodation the household lived in immediately prior to rehousing, private renting figures at the third highest for Malvern, Redditch, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. Part of this may be explained by households moving due to other factors relating to this previous accommodation (for example condition, health or overcrowding). Living with family is also prominent as either highest or second in all districts over the same period. Within Worcester the second highest is any other temporary accommodation, reflecting their need to move people on into permanent tenancies. (General Needs Housing Association tenancies are the other key properties.)

Key trends in homelessness

Homeless acceptances

There were 4393 homelessness applications were received in the county between 2004/5 and 2005/6 with around 50% of these being accepted as statutory priority homeless (2227 households accepted in total between 2004/5 and 2005/6).

The main reason for acceptances and reasons for homelessness in the county on the whole follow the national trends with over 67% of acceptances being households with dependent children or expecting a child and the top three reasons for homelessness being; parents/friends no longer willing/able to accommodate, loss of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, or relationship breakdown (please see the Evidence Folder).

However, there are significant numbers of young people, and people with a mental illness, being accepted across the county. Nine percent of acceptances relate to 16/17 year olds and 18-21 former care leavers. There are over 7.1% having households with a mental illness.

Homeless acceptances across the county have decreased by nearly 200 cases during the last two years. This shows the positive impact that the implementation of localised homelessness strategies and the prevention mechanisms employed by Local Authorities has made.

Use of temporary accommodation

The type and use of temporary accommodation varies significantly across the County from Bed and Breakfast (B&B) and hostel accommodation to accommodation provided by LAs, RSL's and the private sector.

Worcester City makes the greatest use of B&B accommodation (approximately 30 households at any one time) due to a consistently high number of approaches and acceptances and the lack of alternative temporary accommodation. Worcester City do make much more use of high quality self contained temporary accommodation within the private sector and with RSL's (90 - 100 households at any one time), than the other districts.

Redditch and Bromsgrove are very successful in arranging for homeless applicants to remain at home with their family or friends (68 to 78 households at any one time) and therefore avoiding the use of temporary accommodation.

Wyre Forest have on average 140 households in temporary accommodation within RSL stock indicating that the positive relationship they have with their LSVT organisation has reduced the need for the use of B&B accommodation. In line with the new Government target reducing temporary accommodation, this has now been reduced to an average of 80 households in RSL stock. It is clear that the provision of a homeless hostel has a positive impact in B&B figures in the areas that have one. For instance Redditch, who have a consistently high level of homeless approaches and acceptances but who have their hostel, make the least use of bed and breakfast.

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Length of stay in temporary accommodation

The target around the length of stay in B&B accommodation for families is being met on the whole across the County, and whilst there are not yet any targets around the use of B&B for single people, it is encouraging to see that most Authorities are moving single homeless people in priority need on within the 6 weeks.

Key trends in Affordable Housing Provision

The use and length of stay of homeless households in temporary accommodation is significantly influenced by the availability of permanent housing solutions. For many authorities, with declining numbers of existing social lettings becoming available, this is achieved through new housing developments and making the best use of existing social rented stock.

Housing Needs and New Build in Worcestershire

The whole County is experiencing a shortfall in the supply of affordable housing against the needs identified in the housing needs surveys carried out by each individual authority during the last 3 years (please see the table below).

	Bromsgrove	Malvern	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
Identified Shortfall per annum	418	150	366	400	303	325
New Affordable Housing 2005/06	75	12	57	88	90	69
Target 2006/7	80	80	80	70	40	40

NB The source of the shortfall data was obtained differently across districts so figures may not be fully comparable.

In terms of future delivery of affordable housing the district councils anticipate the following numbers being produced between 2007 and 2010 (please see table below).

Year	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
2007/08	119	55	145	94	31	40
2008/09	92	138	81	125	59	40
2009/10	80	185	150	96	170	50
Total	291	378	376	315	260	130

NB Some of these figures are based on assumptions as schemes have not yet got planning approval or Housing Corporation funding.

Housing Market Assessment

In 2006, the South Housing Market Partnership which consists of Stratford, Warwick and all Worcestershire local authorities, commissioned a Housing Market Assessment (HMA) to identify the need for affordable housing across the sub region and influence future housing allocations.

This HMA identifies that a key feature of the housing market relates to the pressure from inward migration which, due to longer distance commuting by higher paid employees is affecting house price affordability. The result is that those who are lower paid and locally

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employed are being increasingly excluded from the market, with increasing numbers of households on housing waiting lists and living in inadequate accommodation.

The research identified an annual requirement for 2,800 additional affordable dwellings across the sub region, half of which are required by those for whom social rent is the only affordable option, while the other half is required for households who could afford a low cost housing model based on an average figure of £67,000 across the sub region.

Issues identified by HMA in each district

Malvern	High value housing stock with small proportion of modest terraced houses and flats. In addition to a very strong retirement demand it attracts long distance out-commuters and in-commuters from adjacent sub-regions, and high proportion work from home. Low incomes create affordability problems – 42% of newly forming households unable to buy at 50% lower quartile compared with 35% elsewhere. Household growth if driven by in-migration and longevity rather than birth rate within the existing population. After several years of mainly high quality flatted development there will be one major housing development which provides the opportunity to meet current and short term needs (but more likely to compensate for lack of such development in Worcester). A lack of brownfield land and restricted river crossings limit future growth in both housing and employment, but strong technology base and attractive location would otherwise make this a sustainable growth area.
Worcester	Designated sub-regional focus for growth, with substantial in-commuting and high proportion of jobs in growth sectors, but with development limited to regeneration sites it is providing only high value flats, and family new housing will be 10+ years away due to need for major infrastructure. Lower than average house prices, with over a third of sales in 2005/06 below £120,000, but acute and growing shortage of affordable housing (only 13% of total stock) – especially 2 and 4 bedroom houses – and no prospects for increased social supply (maximum 40% of amount required) even after 2011. Serious doubts as to capacity to fulfil growth role through urban extensions – but well placed as the hub for the surrounding local housing markets.
Droitwich	The only area (apart from Redditch) with the regional average of 20% social housing. Also the only area with more than a token level of 4-bed social rented houses (at 4%, twice the proportion of the rest). Regeneration sites currently creating a limited housing supply, with tenure mix but no family houses. While reduced supply post 2011 (if not before) should be almost adequate to meet local need, there is the prospect of being affected by displaced need and demand from surrounding areas, as well as by continuing out-migration from the conurbation. In particular, it must be affected by lack of supply in Worcester, which it may be best placed to compensate for due to good accessibility, which will facilitate out-commuting.
Evesham	Subject to twin in-migration pressures – from south east and conurbation – with an economy that brings in large numbers of low paid migrant workers. One major greenfield housing development will deliver wide housing choice, and together with existing stock good proportion of bungalows as well as houses, and fewer flats - but 4 beds are less than 1% of the social stock which contrasts with 4% in Droitwich. High proportion of jobs in growth sectors, and also working from home, providing good prospects for sustainable growth, but also high degree of out commuting.
Persore	Similar migration pressures and housing stock to Evesham, but without any new housing development. Much smaller market town (by far the smallest local housing market in the sub-region), but strong employment base (incl. centre for local administration) and good communications. Low level of locally generated demand, but good prospect for sustainable growth that takes pressure off both Worcester and Evesham. As with Evesham, the social stock contains good proportion of 2 bedroom houses and bungalows rather than flats but less than 1% of 4 bedroom houses.

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Bromsgrove	Highest residence based earnings, highest proportion of owner occupation (80%) and lowest workplace based earnings and low proportion of flats: this all reflects the extent of out-commuting and high house prices. Embargo on new housing due to high level of past completions and outstanding consents, but as small windfalls the latter do not offer much prospect of affordable housing. Future supply of affordable plus lower quartile market housing (existing plus new) will not meet local needs, let alone any in-migrant demand. Regeneration of South West Birmingham Estates might take some pressure, but there is no evidence to suggest this will actually happen.
Redditch	Larger social sector (at the regional average) and lower market values creates better affordable supply than elsewhere, but still well below level required to meet local need, let alone displaced need from surrounding high value areas. Regeneration of outdated social stock with mixed tenure could reduce affordable stock, but RSS proposals for increased level of new development should balance this. Very small private rented sector is reflected in high proportion of housing applicants living at home or with friends. High level of households falling into need (2x the average) reflects less affluent or financially stable population and continuing need for higher level of affordable and private rented supply.
Wyre Forest	Despite a high proportion of jobs in growth sectors residence based earnings, and hence house prices, are the lowest in the sub region. The RSS proposals, making no provision for the in-migration, reduces the level of future new housing supply, but continuing demand from retired as well as commuting households means there will be a high proportion of local need that is unmet but with no where to go, with higher priced and equally constrained adjacent areas. While an increase in shared ownership property is required these need to be at an affordable level otherwise local needs will have to be met by social rented housing.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) is focused on making cities and urban areas attractive. Development outside of major urban areas is focussed on key towns or cities (the sub regional foci) which in Worcestershire is Worcester. The emphasis for other areas is in matching new housing development to the needs of the local community. The need for affordable housing post 2011 in Worcester is dependant upon land being released for development outside the City boundary. This is unlikely to be delivered until well after 2011, by which time the backlog of need will have accumulated substantially.

In the north of the County two District Authorities have been forced to impose a housing moratorium as they have exceeded the housing allocation in the RSS, with the exception of new affordable housing on infill and rural exception sites. This stifles the authority's ability to take advantage of Section 106 on site provision.

In the south of the County, housing allocations fall short of meeting housing needs and there are fewer opportunities to develop new affordable housing because of the need to promote brownfield sites first and protect green areas.

If the highest option for housing allocations is agreed in the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, and 50% of this allocation is delivered as affordable housing, this would amount to £1,700 dwellings per annum, which is fewer than that identified in the HMA.

Key trends in the current provision of services for homeless households

In preparing this Strategy the councils undertook a mapping exercise with organisations to identify services that were currently being provided and, used this information, to identify service gaps and duplication on a district and county basis.

In this section we will consider gaps in services that were identified through this exercise. For gaps only affecting individuals Council's please refer to that authority's chapter.

Clearly one issue facing all councils is the lack of emergency and move-on accommodation for certain client groups and these are discussed in more detail below. All districts were also concerned about the lack of provision of support services for families in temporary accommodation but were socially isolated and lacking in key skills that were aggravated by being in temporary accommodation. Many organisations also identified the need for additional research aimed at specific client groups to identify and to fully understand needs.

Key trends identified through customer consultation

The district council's undertook a customer consultation exercise in 2005, as outlined in the section entitled "Working in partnership with our customers", via a postal and telephone questionnaire. This information has been used to shape our understanding of homelessness from the service user perspective and has influenced some of the actions we now wish to bring forward, both at County and individual LA level.

The postal questionnaires were sent to all homeless acceptances for the first three quarters of 2005/06 and the telephone questionnaire, conducted to give us some more qualitative data, was carried out on all homeless acceptances for the last quarter of 2005/06. We recognise that our questionnaire had some limitations in that we did not collect the views of cases that were prevented or refused and we hope to address this in the future with further research. In terms of response rates the overall response was 210 (postal and telephone surveys) and so we believe the results to be representative of the group of service users as a whole.

The respondent's views of their reasons for homelessness match the local trends as identified in the P1E returns. It was also interesting to see that whilst a large proportion of respondents said that they did approach for help before crisis point a high percentage didn't think that their homelessness could have been prevented. Some examples of reasons for this given by respondents include "you can't control someone else's actions" (in relation to family exclusion), "the relationship with my mum broke down after the baby was born" and "I had no money to get me out of the situation and no one would help me". They identified the causes of their homelessness, and therefore reasons why it couldn't be prevented, as some very serious life changing events including relationship breakdown, becoming pregnant, job loss and death in the family. Contributing to this was a lack of access to services due to mental health etc, a perceived lack of control over circumstances and people believing they were in a disadvantaged situation.

In terms of accessing the housing advice and homeless service most people knew where to go to get help (168 respondents), although very few knew about the availability of the out of hours service (144 respondents were not aware of it however please note that they may not have needed to access it) and for the majority of respondents the application process itself was reasonable although there were some issues around keeping people up to date with the homelessness process (76 respondents). Perhaps more worrying was at least 50% of people said that they had to repeat their housing situation to different people. This may be because the respondents went to more than one agency to get help and advice or alternatively it might highlight the need to make the application process more efficient and ensure staff are well trained and aware of the

process, particularly where the first port of call for many is the Worcestershire hub (the Customer Service Centres that operate throughout the County).

A large variety of temporary accommodation is used across the County so it is difficult to compare results but it is clear that in all cases respondents were more favourable about self contained accommodation and less so about B&B and hostels.

Respondents highlighted that they were not always offered support (61 respondents). This may be due to a perception, on behalf of the officers, that they do not need support but may also be about the availability of support services.

In moving the outcomes forward in a positive way it would appear necessary to consider the following actions;

- The need to improve information sharing between departments, especially between HB and housing, to provide more joined up and effective services
- Ensure that all advice given, whether verbal or written is jargon free
- To ensure service users are kept up to date with their application as it progresses, including their position in terms of waiting for settled accommodation
- To review the various stages of an application, from first approach to final outcome, to ensure the process is as efficient and practical as possible
- To further review and improve the customer questionnaire on a regular basis to improve the quality of data collected and to collect information from service users other than homeless acceptances
- To ensure everyone is aware of the availability of support services.

Key trends identified through consultation events

The councils supported the sub-regional stakeholder day which pulled together a number of organisations that work with homeless households. These organisations identified key trends in homelessness and made a number of suggestions for future actions outlined in Appendix six.

For much of the sub-region, homelessness figures are remaining static or reducing. This is because of improved homelessness prevention work being undertaken rather than an overall reduction in homeless households.

Clearly, for many organisations, the reducing availability of social housing lets and small numbers of new build housing, meant accessing affordable accommodation was the greatest problem.

The Councils within the sub-region identified issues with particular client groups including those with mental health problems, migrant workers, travellers etc. and identified the need to look at agreeing joint priorities and the future pooling of resources to tackle some of these issues.

Following on from this event some of the Worcestershire councils held their own stakeholder days and the outcomes from these are fed into district action plans.

How this consultation has helped shape our strategy

The views of organisations delivering services on the frontline and those of service users have been interesting and informative and have given us a real understanding of the difficulties faced by people who become homeless. It has also identified what work has been successful and what more needs to be done.

In reviewing and analysing the wealth of information from the various consultation exercises the councils have identified six key priorities that we believe are critical to tackling homelessness and having a positive impact on people's lives. These objectives span client groups and, for the most part, include objectives that can be delivered within current resources. In deciding the priorities it was critical that we selected ones that we believed could be delivered within the timescales and involve organisations where a culture of strong partnership working already exists.

However we recognise for this strategy, and the work of the district housing authorities, to truly be far reaching more partnership working needs to take place with organisations that have proved harder to engage with and who may not see the relationship with housing as key to their primary function.

The six key priorities are;

- To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services
- To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information
- To share good practise and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless services
- To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships across the County
- To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives
- Support the development of appropriate types of accommodation for key client groups

These key priorities will be supported through the development of a series of actions that the district councils will sign up to in addition to individual actions that might be undertaken and are shown in the individual district action plans.

The key priorities aim to address the issue of homelessness holistically and some will span all the client groups whilst others are clearly aimed at particular groups. Where actions, within the action plan, are aimed at just specific groups we have tried to make it clear. For the benefit of those agencies working with individual client groups we have attempted to pick out issues as we see them and the section below covers these.

Issues and priorities for each client group

This section seeks to identify issues and priorities for key client groups where there are similarities across the County and where there are either a high volume of approaches or an identified lack of service provision. This would lead us to conclude a shared service or commonality of approach will assist all the council's in resolving problems. Within the section for each individual Council other client groups may feature and other issues and priorities may also be identified for these client groups.

Households with dependent children

The majority of approaches made to the districts are from households with dependant children but the group itself is very diverse, from young parents through to lone parents on low incomes to couples with permanent employment.

While there are a number of support services available to this group e.g. floating support, HomeStart etc. the key issue we identified is the effect that temporary accommodation has on the household. In the past it has been easy to assume that this group, as a whole, has the inner resources to cope with the effects of homelessness and assistance has only to be offered to a minority who have clearly needed additional support.

However, this client group as a whole face issues such as poor health, lower educational achievement, debt problems and social isolation whilst going through the homeless process as well as having to deal with the effects of being in accommodation that is temporary in nature. All these problems are compounded when the parents in question are very young, and as identified previously, there are some parts of the County suffering from a higher than average teenage pregnancy rate.

It is clear that in dealing with this client group we need to be looking at our referral systems e.g. informing social services and the PCTs that families are going to be placed into temporary accommodation, and ensuring the links and support are there to avoid the negative effects. Countywide, we have a good record of visiting families in temporary accommodation as local authorities but we need to ensure the families are not adversely affected by the accommodation we provide for them. This can be assisted by providing good quality self-contained accommodation and by giving adequate support for as long as it is required.

The new duties in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 require local authorities and their 'relevant partners' to cooperate to improve children's wellbeing: this is defined as the five outcomes. Worcestershire County Council has a duty under the Children Act 2004 to make arrangements to secure co-operation among partners to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. The relevant partners must cooperate with the authority in its making of those arrangements. The 'relevant partners' include the strategic health authority and primary care trusts, district councils, police authority, probation board, Youth Offending Teams, Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council. In practice the arrangements have encompassed a much wider group of partners, including from the voluntary and community sectors; schools, General Practitioners and other service providers, such as childcare and culture organisations; children and young people themselves; and their families, carers and communities.

The Government intends that all areas should produce a single, strategic, overarching plan for all local services for children and young people, by April 2006. This Plan is to be

produced jointly by the local authority and all relevant partners. The purpose of this plan is to co-ordinate activity across partners to improve outcomes for children and young people. This Strategy will compliment the Children and Young Peoples Plan and support the delivery of many of the housing targets within the plan.

Households with mental health problems

Whilst it can be said that the number of approaches for people with mental health problems are relatively small across the County, and some areas have experienced a reduction, the effects on becoming homeless for this client group are particularly damaging.

The mapping of services highlighted a clear lack of supported accommodation and floating support for those suffering from mental health problems. This view is supported by the Supporting People strategy 2005-10.

We positively support the proposed change to mental health legislation that will seek to alter the way people suffering from a personality or behavioural disorder (but no mental health diagnosis) are dealt with and hope this will lead to people accessing help and support at the right time.

We also believe there is an under-provision of services for older people with mental health needs and have worked jointly with health, social care and other agencies to develop the Older People's Strategy. Housing is fundamental for older people. The two action plans will work in harmony to address the identified gaps in provision using a whole systems approach to meet the needs of the community.

It is essential that we develop partnerships, services and work processes that assist homeless households suffering from poor mental health.

Young people and care leavers

The consultation undertaken with stakeholders and organisations has highlighted ongoing problems with young people and care leavers although again the number of approaches from this client group is relatively small. Independent research and data collection carried out in the County by agencies such as Centrepoin in their snap shot survey highlight a continual need to improve work processes, partnership working and delivering services to this client group.

It would appear that a strategic, stepped approach of emergency Nightstop, followed by foyer scheme, self-contained supported and then independent accommodation would be the most likely route to tenancy sustainment. We also recognise that this particular client group may benefit from having holistic services delivered to them from a specialist provider.

In addition we feel that there is a need for further investigation of the "shared house model" to maximise the use of existing accommodation and we hope to work on a pilot for this scheme with an RSL partner or private sector landlord. We also recognise that not all districts within the County have access to accommodation in the stepped approach outlined above, or that certain parts are missing e.g. Nightstop in Worcester city. There is very limited access to social services supported accommodation and yet clearly some of this client group would benefit from this type of accommodation.

Similarly to families with dependant children we believe we need to consider a wider agenda than housing with this client group as they are often some of the most disadvantaged households. This means considering the development of services or advice that also considers lifestyle issues such as diet and exercise as well as education, training and employment.

People with substance misuse problems.

Through the consultation exercise at sub-regional and local level we are aware that tackling homelessness amongst people with substance misuse issues is still a major concern. Much work has been done over the last homeless strategy period but this has focused primarily on research and the development of improved assessment processes, such as the Worcester City Multi-Agency Assessment Panel, rather than the delivery of accommodation and support.

Again this client group is highlighted in the supporting people strategy as lacking accommodation and support services.

There is clearly an imbalance across the County in terms of services with large areas not having enough direct access hostel provision or rough sleeper's services (which is where many people with drug and alcohol dependencies end up). However, solving this issue is more than six district councils can achieve and we believe that this client group, probably more than any other, would benefit from more effective partnership working that involves the Primary Care Trusts as well as drug and alcohol agencies and commits such organisations financial resources as well officer time.

More recently the County has successfully bid for resources from Supporting People to develop a rent deposit scheme for substance misusers, which will be delivered by the Worcester Housing and Benefits Advice Centre and it will be important for us to evaluate this project and support it through the work of individual councils.

Prison leavers

We are aware that the numbers of prison leavers that represent homeless people is disproportionate across the County, with the greatest impact on the council(s) with prisons close by e.g. Redditch.

Within Worcestershire in 2005/6 1254 persons were assessed by the Probation service for pre-sentence reports (before a court), 221 had some problem with accommodation and 419 were assessed that the "criminogenic problem" directly related to their offending was accommodation needs.

The overall number of homeless acceptances throughout the County is very small (6 in 2005 /06 and 7 in the previous year which equates to 0.5%) but according to the Rough Sleepers project workers, prison leavers clearly end up homeless. In 2004/05 an average of 39 clients per quarter (more than 50%) was prison leavers and in 2005/06 the figure was just under 50%. Invariably the prison leavers have multiple problems including substance misuse and mental health problems.

Prison leavers are likely to have less access to employment, particularly as many are likely to have poor educational attainment and this in turns restricts their ability to access housing and other services.

Victims of Domestic Violence

In terms of domestic violence, in the last two years, the county has accepted a duty to rehouse more than 80 households. This equates to 4% of all those accepted in 2004/05 and 3% of those accepted in 2005/06. However, we are aware that this is not the full extent of households suffering from domestic violence. In Worcester alone, in 2005/06 the West Mercia police recorded 510 incidences.

For many of victims of domestic violence they have to leave the family home to escape the violence and this compounds the problems experienced by all households in temporary accommodation, as they are often a long way from support networks.

We fully support the Domestic Violence Forum strategy and hope to have involvement in deciding and delivering on objectives during the lifetime of this strategy. We will also work with Supporting People in their review of services for victims of domestic violence that will be completed during 2007.

Choosing our options for delivery

A considerable amount of information has been collected, analysed and used to help us choose which options are selected for countywide delivery. It became clear through working together to develop the strategy and through the consultation exercises undertaken that we are all affected by the same issues throughout the county. It is also clear that there are similarities in the client groups we deal with and in the reasons for homelessness.

Whilst there are undoubtedly some variations in homelessness and the provision of services between Councils, it has been relatively easy to identify some key issues we feel are important to tackle at County level. The County actions will be outlined in the next part of this strategy, with individual actions being included within the chapter that looks at issues for each district.

We have selected options for delivery that we believe we can implement because they relate either wholly or in part to the strategic functions of district housing authorities rather than those of other agencies. We have also given consideration to what other priorities exist for our council's and within other organisations action plans where many of our issues will be addressed including the Children and Young Persons Plan, the outcomes from the Supporting People review of Homeless Services and the Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Forum.

This means that some options for delivery have been rejected, at least in the short term as we did not believe they are achievable such as the direct provision of accommodation specifically for substance misusers, despite us recognising the need for such a facility. We will, however, continue to work with them on the delivery of the Worcestershire Three Tier Housing model. We have also been unable to include a definite commitment to pool resources although this remains a longer term objective of the group. There are

also client groups for whom we have been unable to include any specific objectives, either because information regarding need is not available at the moment, or because these groups are not a high priority for the Councils.

County Priorities

This strategy is the culmination of more than a years worth of data collection and analysis and over that time our understanding of homelessness and the issues facing each district council has grown. We have been able to identify best practise and where opportunities exist for joint working in the future. We are also aware of what has been achieved through the previous homelessness strategies and what has worked well in other parts of the country.

In drawing together this action plan we therefore believe we have developed a framework of seven priorities within which to develop a comprehensive list of actions that will help us achieve our goal of preventing homelessness and, where this is not possible, of ensuring the work that we do with homeless households supports and empowers them, has a positive impact on their lives and helps us to create sustainable communities.

What are our priorities

Our priorities are therefore focused around improving our understanding of homelessness generally and some key groups in particular, about preventing homelessness where possible through improving people's life chances, in conjunction with other partner agencies, and offering a greater range of alternative housing options and in providing support and good quality temporary and / or supported accommodation for those households we accept a statutory duty to.

We recognise that the reduction of homelessness cannot take place without drawing on the strengths and resources of other agencies so the need to develop strategic partnerships and joint work processes is key to the delivery of this Strategy.

To be able to deliver on these priorities we must share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless services with each other and to learn from other council's in the country.

The action plan has been developed to illustrate what actions need to be achieved each year during the life of the strategy although certain projects will span the years as each part in the process gets delivered.

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Action Plan – Year One (2007-08)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Establish a County wide Multi Agency Homelessness Strategy Steering Group	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG Partners: CHOG Plus Nacro / Probation Community Mental Health Teams, Women's Aid Voluntary Agency reps	Opportunities: To monitor and evaluate the successful implementation of the action plan and improve service delivery to the customer Risks: To fail to achieve comprehensive multi agency representation	Officer Time	Target: Paper written and circulated for discussion May 2007. Agreement to new structure July 2007. Quarterly meetings est. Bi-annual progress report on the action plan to be prepared	To provide a formalised approach between agencies on homelessness. To deliver a seamless service to homeless or potentially homeless customers.
Develop and implement joint protocols and regular liaison meetings with key agencies	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG/HOG Partners: PCT, Probation, Nacro, CMHT's, Women's Aid, refuges, Supporting People	Opportunities: Better working relationship with partners. Improved service for customers Risks: Clients not being correctly signposted to services. Increased Homelessness due to prevention mechanisms not being accessed at an early enough stage. Regular training and ensuring use of protocols	Officer Time	Target: Hospital Discharge Protocol - April 2007. Housing and Probation Protocol – July 2007	Improved access to services and customer satisfaction. Improved performance in prevention of homelessness.
Develop joint training and job shadowing initiatives across the county	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice, homeless prevention and other related services	Lead: HOG Partner agencies County Training Group	Opportunities Improved relations and understanding of roles Risks Having time available to organise and release staff	Officer time	Target: July 2008 scope project with ES and HOG. August contact relevant organisations. September 2008 begin training and shadowing initiatives	Improved working relationships between statutory and voluntary organisations. Improved knowledge of services on offer to people who are threatened with homelessness for all providers involved.
Investigate provision of another direct access hostel, Nightstop and Foyer in the county to address differences in current provision	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: WFDC/ Wychavon Partners: Supporting People, Nightstop, Bromsgrove Youth Homeless Forum, Centrepoint Foyer Federation, Connexions	Opportunities: Improve supply of accommodation with training and support Risks: Targeted group remaining in unsuitable TA Risk of tenancy failure	SP Budget Housing Corporation	Supported accommodation bids to HC – June 2007. Ongoing research into needs. Target: March 2008 Completion of SP homelessness review – Target: March 2008	Expansion of Nightstop in South Worcestershire Provision of at least 1 new Foyer in County

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Action Plan - Year Two (2008 – 09)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Introduce a county wide, cross agency web based data collection package for single homeless people	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: WCC Partners: Centrepoin WHABAC	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform strategies, work plans and bids incl removing double counting Risks; IT package, current data	Officer time	Target: August 2007 website to go live. September 2007 training to all users. March 2008 end of first 6 month report.	To support bids for funding from other organisations based on empirical evidence. Improved understanding of issues enabling for co-ordinated service delivery across agencies.
Develop a county wide data capture system for standardised housing and homelessness information	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Group Partners: County Council Research & Intelligence Unit	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform, update & monitor success of the strategy and actions Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time	Target: Establish sub-group to examine current data collection methods and agree type and system by December 2007. Ongoing quarterly reporting to strategy group.	Regular meetings to update statistical data. Measure the success of the County Homeless Strategy by seeing decreasing numbers of approaches and acceptances. Development of data recording system to inform policy decisions.
Develop the existing customer satisfaction survey to capture information from all homeless clients	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Group	Opportunities; Improved data on service users perceptions that will led to real engagement and improvement in service delivery Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time Prize money to encourage participation - £100 per authority	Target: December 2007 once P1Es for 2006/07 completed. September to meet to discuss format. October to distribute and collate responses. November to produce report. December to feedback responses to strategy group / committee.	Data captured on homeless households not accepted for statutory re-housing. Production of standardised customer information to assist with service delivery options.
Review the homeless application process	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Bromsgrove Partners: All district LA's	Opportunities: Improvements in accessibility and consistency. Risks: None	Officer Time	Target: To review the current homeless application process across the county by September 2007. To identify appropriate changes and produce report by December 2007. To implement changes by March 2008.	Improved application or applications tailored to client groups as appropriate and compliant with equalities requirements. Ensure efficiency and practicality of system

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Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Develop resettlement packages appropriate to people's needs	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: Supporting People Partners: County Homeless Strategy Group HOG	Opportunities Increasing the sustainability of tenancies and longer term homelessness prevention Risks Lack of resources to develop new services	Supporting People budget	Completion of supporting people homeless review Target: 2008-09	Reduction in the number of failed tenancies.
Work with support providers and to key strategies to equip people with the skills to sustain a tenancy.	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: Worcester City Council Partners: HOG	Opportunities Increasing the sustainability of tenancies and longer term homelessness prevention Risks Lack of resources to provide courses	Officer time Cost of delivering training courses	Target: To undertake research in county with group of homeless households by July 2008. Identify training providers and costs by October. 2008. Evaluation and feedback by February 2009 with view to establishing rolling programme and securing funding.	Improved experiences of households in temporary accommodation Reduction in the number of repeat or cross-generational homelessness Equipping people with the skills to make a house a home, avoid debt , be effective parents and have a healthy and happy life
Encourage the best use of existing stock by - increasing the % of RSL lettings to homeless households and other vulnerable groups (ASB) - tackling under occupation and empty homes - reducing the number of evictions/abandonments	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Wychavon Partners: Other LA's, partner RSL's, Private Sector Fora, North Worcs Care and Repair Agency	Opportunities: Increase supply and provision of Affordable Housing Risks: Vulnerable groups will remain in unsuitable accommodation	Officer time	Work with prevention officers group to look at best practice examples. Target: September 2008 Underoccupation schemes set up across the county. Target: March 2009	Ensure that a minimum of 30% general needs lettings going to homeless households across County. Empty homes back into use – targets according to each local authority. Reduce the number of homeless approaches due to eviction to less than 5 per annum across the county.
Develop resettlement packages appropriate to people's needs	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: Supporting People Partners: Homeless Strategy Group	Opportunities Increasing the sustainability of tenancies and longer term homelessness prevention Risks Lack of resources to develop new services	Supporting People budget	Target: Completion of supporting people review by March 2008. Each district council to consider outcomes and review policy in light of findings by March 2009.	Reduction in the number of failed tenancies.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Ensure all temporary accommodation provided is good quality, self contained and where support can be accessed if required.	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Malvern/ Bromsgrove Partners: Other LA's, Supporting People/ support providers, RSL's	Opportunities: Standardise quality of temporary accommodation across County Risks: Unsuitable accommodation without support remaining	Officer time	Mapping exercise completed by July 2008. Further research to follow after above completed	Reduction in the number of failed tenancies. People able to maintain employment, education etc whilst occupying temporary accommodation. No detrimental effects on health and well being through occupying temporary accommodation.
Improve mechanisms to record the longer term outcomes of homelessness prevention	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: Prevention officers group Partners: Support providers Voluntary & community agencies	Opportunities; Improve data collection for the county to inform and update the strategy Risks; Difficulties in developing services flexible enough to cope with changing demands	Officer time	Target: Attend prevention officers group to launch project by July 2008. Identify remit of project and analyse information by December 2008. Produce report for consideration by strategy group by March 2009.	Monitor the long term effectiveness of homelessness prevention across the county to inform use of resources and policy decisions
Encourage the best use of existing stock by - remodelling/re-designation of stock - loft conversions	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Wychavon Partners: Other LA's, partner RSL's, Private Sector Fora, North Worcs Care and Repair Agency	Opportunities: Increase supply and provision of Affordable Housing Risks: Vulnerable groups will remain in unsuitable accommodation	Officer time	Work with RSL's to consider remodelling options. Target: March 2009 Work with private sector officers group to look at best practice examples . Target: September 2008	Less popular stock remodelled for alternative client groups / supported accommodation. Families able to remain in own home and extend living space to reduce overcrowding through loft conversion grants.
Research and improve links with private sector landlords to prevent homelessness and overcome issues of access	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worcester CC Partners Other DC's HB teams Private Sector Landlord Forums County Council	Opportunities Increasing the availability and quality of private rented stock Risks Increasing number of vulnerable homeless	Officer time	Target: Autumn 2008	Reducing the number of homeless acceptances due to the end of AST's and preventing homelessness through improving access to the PRS

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Investigate the feasibility of a countywide youth homelessness service for young people	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worcester CC & Wyre Forest DC Partners Bromsgrove Youth Homeless Forum Centrepoint YMCA Nightstop Other DCs, Connexions	Opportunities Increasing range of affordable housing Risks Failure to identify a provider or resources	Officer time	Target: Spring 2008	Reduction in youth homelessness across the district A better, more co-ordinated and holistic service for young people
Consider the need to develop support services to tackle social exclusion for those who fall through the net of statutory agencies	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Worc CC Partners Other DC SP Social Services	Opportunities Tackling rough sleeping & chaotic clients with complex needs and thereby reduce costs incurred by PCT, Police etc Risks Increasing numbers of homelessness, particularly rough sleepers	Officer time initially Financial resources from Supporting People, Community Safety and Voluntary Agencies	Outcomes from SP Homeless Review Target: December 2008	Reduction in social exclusion and homelessness for chaotic client groups. Reduction in costs for PCT, Police etc
Develop and implement joint protocols and regular liaison meetings with key agencies	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: CHOG/HOG Partners: PCT, Probation, Nacro, CMHT's, Women's Aid, refuges, Supporting People	Opportunities: Better working relationship with partners. Improved service for customers Risks: Clients not being correctly signposted to services. Increased Homelessness due to prevention mechanisms not being accessed at an early enough stage. Regular training and ensuring use of protocols	Officer Time	Target: Mental Health and Housing Protocol – 2008 / 09 Domestic Violence Protocol – 2008 / 09 Adult Services protocol – 2008 /09	Improved access to services and customer satisfaction. Improved performance in prevention of homelessness.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Action Plan – Year Three (2009-10)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To develop a housing advice toolkit (to include homelessness prevention and good practice directory)	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Malvern Hills District Council / Elgar Housing Partners: County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Comprehensive & consistent range of services available across the county Risks Officer time to develop	Officer time Printing costs	Target: To meet with MHDC and review progress on their housing advice toolkit by July 2009 To consider research into prevention methods undertaken in previous year. To develop draft by January 2010. To circulate to each council by February 2010. Toolkit agreed by March 2010.	Comprehensive and consistent county wide housing advice delivered to service users through a variety of organisations across the county Increase in officer knowledge of cross boundary services
Develop comprehensive homelessness awareness raising in schools	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Homeless Officers Group Partners Centrepoint, Schools, Connexions	Opportunities Early prevention Risks Officer time / resources may not be available Schools not interested in delivering training	Officer time Training materials	Develop appropriate training package by June 2009. Contact schools for new academic year by September 2009. Deliver sessions throughout December – March 2010.	A reduction in the number of under 25 approaching as homeless and increasing the number of preventions to this age group
Use knowledge to develop specialised projects such as good practice in DHP and HB administration, mediation services across all client groups etc.	To share good practice and knowledge of the delivery of housing advice and homeless prevention services	Lead: Wychavon County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Early intervention and prevention Risks Barriers from other departments and organisations	Officer time Resources for new schemes e.g. £60k for relate mediation project	To develop in conjunction with prevention toolkit. Target: 2009 - 10	Developing a range of services to support the prevention toolkit. Delivery of high quality and consistent services across the county.
Undertake regular county benchmarking exercises	To develop a countywide methodology and system of data collection for homelessness information	Lead: County Homeless Strategy Officers Group	Opportunities Ensure cost effectiveness of services Risks Service becomes to cost driven	Officer time	Develop new set of measures that are activity based. December 2009 Collect data and analyse by March 2010	Possible cost savings and efficiencies identified

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Work with Supporting People to review the support provision specifically to homeless households	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Worcestershire Supporting People Partners: DCs RSLs Other Statutory and Voluntary Sector organisations	Opportunities: Timely strategic review Risks: To transform services may be long term	Staff time Realignment of funding Worcestershire Supporting People funding	Participation in the strategic review Joint ownership of the strategic targets Target: March 2010	No pre-determined outcomes Strategic targets will be based on partnership and customer feedback to the review team
Develop a comprehensive range of supported housing options	To empower customers to make a positive change to their lives	Lead: SP & CHOG		Supporting People	3 SP schemes to secure HC capital funding in the 2008-10 bidding round	To meet the objectives of the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy
Increase the supply of supported move-on accommodation for victims of domestic violence	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Redditch/ Bromsgrove DC. Partners: Other LA's, County DV Forum, Supporting People, Womens Aid	Opportunities: More suitable and appropriate accommodation Risks: To remain in unsuitable temporary accommodation	SP Strategic Review	Target: July 2009	Need to await outcome of SP reviews – increase in types of accommodation available to occupy including refuge spaces, self-contained safe houses and sanctuary schemes.
Implement Choice Based Lettings model based on Wychavon's model throughout the county	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: Wychavon D C Partners: DCs RSLs	Opportunities: DCLG funding To build on success of existing scheme Risks: Managing the changeover to CBL scheme on an individual district basis	Staff time DCLG funding and direct funding from DCs and RSL partners	Gaining support of politicians and stakeholders Bid submission Partnership approach to developing model and implementation Target: March 2010	Successful implementation of the CBL scheme across the county Increased choice for local people People having sufficient understanding of housing issues and a range of options to be able to exercise choice effectively

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Action Plan – Year Four (2010 - 11)

Goal	Priority	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Increase the supply of move-on accommodation for substance misusers	Support the development of appropriate types of temporary, permanent and move on accommodation for a variety of client groups	Lead: Worcester Partners: Other LA's, CDT, Supporting People, SMAT	Opportunities: More suitable and appropriate accommodation Risks: To remain in unsuitable temporary accommodation	SP Strategic Review	Feasibility work completed Target: March 2011	Need to await outcome of SP reviews. Reduce the use of inappropriate accommodation, including where people are occupying supported or emergency accommodation they no longer require.
To support the development and delivery of related strategies to ensure strategic relevance	To develop joint working processes and strategic partnerships to improve the delivery of services	Lead: HOG	Opportunities: Improved service for clients Risks: Conflict with district council priorities could lead to failure to deliver objectives	Officer time	As per individual strategy	Ensure strategic fit with Supporting People 5 year plan, Children and Young persons plan, Domestic Violence strategy, Worcestershire Youth Homeless Partnership strategy, Teenage pregnancy strategy, county parenting strategy. Ensure strategic ownership of the strategy
Develop appropriate housing services for migrant workers and gypsies based on outcome of the SHMA research	To better understand the needs of key client groups for the delivery of appropriate housing services and to prevent homelessness	Lead Wychavon DC Partners Other DC Planning sections County Council	Opportunities To utilise resources effectively across the county Risks Additional service demands but limited resources	£3,000 per district and county	Target : December 2007 for research to be completed. Sites identified as part of Joint Core Strategy July 2008 – October 2010. Submitted to secretary of sites in January 2009. District councils to develop policies for dealing with migrant workers and gypsies and travellers by March 2011.	South HMA Partnership to work together to consider and develop additional sites and services relating to housing and health based on identified need.

Bromsgrove District Council

Bromsgrove's vision

The Council's vision for Bromsgrove District is 'Working together to build a District where people are proud to live and work, through community leadership and excellent services'.

The Council considers homelessness to be the most severe form of housing need and whilst there are very few people in the District who are actually roofless, the need for settled accommodation to those who do not have a place to call 'home' is recognised as being fundamental to their well being. The Council also recognises that simply putting a roof over someone's head does not always solve their homelessness and that it needs to understand why some people are unable to stay in their own home and what assistance would help them to do so.

To achieve this, the Council has focussed resources towards providing early intervention preventative and support services for the homeless, improving the supply of permanent accommodation, improved temporary accommodation and increased access to the privately rented sector.

Tackling the scale and complexity of homelessness in its various forms, is a challenge that the Council is determined to rise to by improving services and empowering those who are threatened with homelessness and improving the prospects for those experiencing actual homelessness.

This Countywide Homelessness Strategy 2006-2011 updates our 2003-2008 Strategy by taking a critical view of the services provided and identifying gaps in current service provision.

Through the development and monitoring of Bromsgrove Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 it became clear that many of our homelessness issues cut across the District boundaries and required a countywide response. Bromsgrove District Council has welcomed the opportunity to develop the Worcestershire Countywide Strategy. Countywide working has already resulted in a step change in improvements to the homelessness service through the development of new initiatives, contributing to debates and protocols and learning from others. Whilst working collaboratively with our local authority partners to enhance services, our priorities lie within Bromsgrove District which has its own unique set of local issues that need to be tackled in respect of homelessness and housing need.

The local profile

The District can be characterised as predominantly rural, with about 90% designated as Green Belt land. Bromsgrove is well served by motorways, and, railway stations located throughout the District provide quick and frequent services to Birmingham and other parts of the Country.

The District has an estimated population of 90,000 which is projected to increase to 92,250 by 2011. There are a total of £38,203 households of which just over a quarter contain older people only and a further 9.1% contain both older and non older people.

Bromsgrove District has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the County (1.7% Feb 07) whilst, household incomes are the highest in the County. This is reflective of the high number of residents who are able to commute out of the District for work.

Ethnicity

Bromsgrove has an ethnic minority population of 3.3% which is low when compared to other districts. The Council works hard to ensure that the needs of these and other minority groups are identified and taken into account when developing its Strategies.

Age

Just over a quarter of all households in Bromsgrove contain older people only (25.2%) and a further 9.1% contain both older and non older people. The increasing proportion of older people in the District is a key issue for the Council.

House Prices and Tenure

Land registry data shows that property prices in the District are high when compared with national figures and the affordability of housing in the District is a major issue.

Average House Prices		
	Bromsgrove	Worcestershire
Detached	£351,039	£307,823
Semi Detached	£196,208	£178,326
Terraced	£165,360	£151,306
Flat	£125,870	£133,689

Land Registry Oct-Dec 2006

There is an imbalance in the proportion of owner occupied properties to those in the social housing sector and addressing this shortage is a key priority identified by the Council in its Housing Strategy 'Unlocking the Door to Meeting Housing Needs in Bromsgrove District 2006-2011'.

Housing Tenure		
Owner Occupied	32,333	84.5%
Privately Rented	2,101	5.5%
Registered Social Landlord	3,755	10.0%

HSSA 2005/06

The Housing Waiting List

The number of households on the Housing Register as at 1st April 2007 was 1,780. During 2005/06 287 properties became available for letting which gives some indication of the supply and demand issues faced by the District.

Homelessness Trends

The Authority introduced homelessness prevention in 2004 which led to a significant decrease in the number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need. During 2003/04, 238 households were accepted as homeless and in priority need, this reduced to 141 during 2004/05. During 2005/06 the number of acceptances rose to 175 but reassuringly acceptances reduced to 122 during 2006/07 indicating a continuing downward trend since 2003 despite this small fluctuation. The Council has recognised that there is a backlog of households in temporary accommodation and has developed a Strategy and Action Plan to tackle this backlog. Progress has been made towards the 2010 target of 34 by reducing numbers in temporary accommodation to 50 as at September 07.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness service

Following the transfer of its housing stock to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) in 2004, Bromsgrove District Council contracted out its Homelessness Service through a service level agreement to BDHT and its Housing Advice Service to Bromsgrove and District CAB.

Other homelessness prevention services are delivered through a variety of providers in the District including Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum, the Customer Service Centre, Charford Multi Agency Resource Centre and Centrepoint.

Since the introduction of the Housing Advice Service with Bromsgrove and District CAB there has been a significant reduction in those presenting as homeless due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

Homeless Due To Termination Of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	
2003/04	22
2004/05	12
2005/06	8

However, it became apparent that the opportunity to address potential homelessness for those being excluded by parents, families or friends at an earlier stage was being missed.

Homeless Due To Parents/Relatives/Friends No Longer Willing to Accommodate	
2003/04	78
2004/05	53
2005/06	86

The Council has therefore working in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and Supporting People to create a floating, non tenure specific, support service targeting those who may need help to sustain their tenancies and will work with families to prevent parental exclusion and repeat homelessness.

The Council has also working in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust to create a home visiting service delivering a quick response to those threatened with homelessness. Officers now utilise home visiting opportunities to identify the need for support and prevention services, consider each households housing options and encourage households to access housing through the housing waiting list.

Overall preventative work has significantly improved. In 2005/6, 52 clients were prevented from becoming homeless. In 2006/7 this increased to 76 and up to 30 September 2007, a further 87 clients have been prevented from becoming homeless.

Youth Homelessness

A significant number of homeless approaches in the District are from young people and the Council is looking to develop a more holistic approach to youth homelessness by linking in to partner agencies to address support needs, training, health issues, life skills coaching, mentoring and employment.

Younger people, who have no vulnerability, are not counted in the homelessness statistics. Across the County there is a general lack of a unified monitoring system for youth homelessness and whilst there are fewer people sleeping rough in

Bromsgrove District than in Birmingham or Worcester, there is a prevalence of sofa surfing and staying with friends.

The Council is working in partnership with Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum, Wyre Forest District Council and Supporting People with a view to developing accommodation with on site support and access to training, education and employment opportunities for those of 25 years of age and under. It is envisaged that this accommodation would also include a training flat so that young people can have an opportunity to experience independent living and develop an understanding of their responsibilities and improve their life skills.

We recognise the need to maximise opportunities to engage with partner agencies and the voluntary sector in order to improve outcomes for younger homeless people. We would like to develop holistic services that include advice on training, employment, financial literacy, mediation, sexual health and mentoring.

The need to provide a range of housing options to young homeless and potentially homeless people in the District is high on our agenda and we are introducing a pilot Nightstop scheme and seeking other innovative methods of providing affordable housing solutions ie: through shared housing. We recognise that not enough work is being done with young people who are more likely to be at risk of becoming homeless and BDHT, linking in with the Government's Respect Agenda, are leading a multi agency approach to encourage young people to engage with them and other support services, offering rewards to those that do.

Teenage Pregnancy

It is clear that teenagers in the District are being made homeless due to pregnancy and the Council is working to improve awareness of, and access to, contraception through the County Sexual Health Outreach Worker. The Ward of Charford has been identified as a teenage pregnancy 'hot spot' area. During the period 2001-2003 there were 22 under 18 year old conceptions. Floating support to these young people is provided by Stonham and Bromsgrove Youth Homelessness Forum.

Rough Sleeping

Bromsgrove District experiences minimal levels of rough sleeping. The rural nature of the District means effective counting is difficult and we continue to work closely with voluntary agencies and the police to monitor this situation.

Learning Disabilities

The Learning Disability Housing Strategy 2003 identified 17 people with a learning disability as wanting to live in Bromsgrove and there is a need for more intensively supported services as well as an extension of existing floating support services. The Learning Disabilities Team are working with BDHT to identify opportunities to develop shared accommodation for this client group within existing BDHT housing stock.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has been identified as a problem for the District. A Domestic Abuse Task Group consisting of Police, Community Safety, Probation, PCT, Stonham and Strategic Housing Officers was established by the Bromsgrove Crime and Disorder Partnership to raise awareness, reduce domestic violence and identify gaps in the provision of services.

The Gateway Refuge for women suffering domestic violence closed during April 2006 and the Council has worked in partnership with BDHT to remodel the accommodation

into 5 self contained units for those suffering from Domestic Violence with the introduction of an extended floating support service being provided by Stonham.

The Council has a Sanctuary Scheme in place to give those who are suffering domestic violence an opportunity to remain safely in their homes should they so choose.

Drug and Alcohol Misuse

Issues of drug and alcohol misuse are being addressed through the Community Safety Partnership, the Substance Misuse Action Team, Space and Supporting People. A Countywide Rent Deposit Scheme for this client group had been developed through Supporting People and Bromsgrove Council is working with the nominated agency to ensure that the scheme is available for Bromsgrove Residents.

Older People

The Older People's Strategy for Worcestershire 2006-2010 identifies that older people are especially vulnerable because of their age. Homelessness is especially damaging to the health and well being of older people and there is a risk that they can die before their needs are met.

There are a high proportion of older people registered on the Council's housing register and a joint commissioning approach by BDHT and Bromsgrove District Council has been successful in attracting funding from the Housing Corporation for 27 units of Extra Care housing and the remodelling of 65 existing dwellings to Extra Care standard.

The Private Sector Housing Team are working with BDHT to identify opportunities for the provision of short term housing solutions for residents who are unable to be discharged from hospital until their property has been adapted to meet their needs.

Mental Illness

Whilst there is some specialist housing with on site support provided for people with mental health issues in the District, it is apparent that there is a need for more transitional accommodation that bridges the gap between full residential care and the supported provision already in existence. The Council already offers a quota arrangement for the allocation of housing to this client group and is continuing to work with mental health services and Supporting People to develop a greater understanding of housing and support needs.

Offenders

Whilst there are 3 prisons located in the District, Bromsgrove and District CAB, who visit the prisons to offer advice services, have advised that there are no major issues regarding the housing of ex offenders in the District as, upon release, the majority of them return to their former area of residence. This situation will be reviewed annually.

Key Issues for Bromsgrove

Increasing the Supply of Permanent Accommodation

Our housing needs survey 2004 identified that 418 units of affordable housing are required annually if all housing needs are to be met. There is a backlog of households in temporary accommodation and the Council is working hard to deliver more affordable housing as 'move on' accommodation to provide settled housing solutions for these households. Bromsgrove has sufficient land with planning permission to meet the Regional Spatial Strategy housing targets up to, and beyond, 2011 and currently has a housing moratorium in operation that restricts planning approvals to affordable housing schemes only, with a small number of specified exemptions. This constrains the ability of the Council to negotiate 'on site' provision and excludes the cross subsidy of affordable housing by private developers.

The Council has:

- Developed a 3 year investment strategy with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust that will provide Extra Care Housing, improve temporary accommodation for the homeless, promote move on from under occupied family housing and free up and recycle assets for re-investment and future affordable housing provision.
- Improved delivery in affordable housing in 2005/6 and 6/7 including provision of shared and fixed equity low cost housing and rural housing.
- Identified rural housing needs through parish surveys in 5 rural areas.

The Council recognises the need to raise awareness of homelessness and housing issues and has embarked upon a series of roadshows to encourage Parish Councils to engage with the Rural Housing Enabler to promote affordable housing in villages and raise awareness of housing related services.

Hostel Decommissioning

During 2005 the Council identified, through customer consultation, a need to decommission and remodel the outdated hostel accommodation. The timescale for achieving this was accelerated following the Audit Commission Strategic Housing Services Inspection report published April 2006, which highlighted the poor quality temporary accommodation provided by the hostels. The Council in partnership with BDHT is in the process of replacing the 35 rooms with 41 self contained dispersed units.

Whilst the Council has a good track record for the very low use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, it recognises that the hostel decommissioning may adversely affect its performance and in order to minimise any negative impact the Council has introduced additional homelessness prevention services.

Private Sector Housing

The Council's Housing Standards Officer is working with Private Landlords to drive up standards of privately rented accommodation in the District. The new Housing Initiatives Officer is developing initiatives that can deliver attractive private sector alternatives for homeless households, particularly those wanting to live in rural areas where there are limited opportunities for social rented housing.

Resources

Since the stock transfer in 2004, the Strategic Housing Services team has been restructured and increased in size. The team now includes Private Sector Housing

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy
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and a new Housing Initiatives Officer post has been created to maximize housing options in the Private Sector.

Detail of Resource	Resources Available 2006/07	Resources Available 07/08	Estimated Resources Avail 08/09
Revenue - Strategic Housing, Enabling and Private Sector	£537,763	551,738	565,711
Revenue - Housing Advice, Homelessness, Temporary Accommodation Waiting List and Nominations	£312,022	323,978	310,875
Council and CLG / SCG for Disabled Facilities Grant	£400,000	£786,000	£663,000
Council Capital Grants to RSLs to support Rented, Shared Ownership / Low Cost Affordable Housing Scheme	N/a	1,376,000	£350,000
Council Capital Grant – Extra Care Housing Scheme	£0	£500,000	500,000
CLG Homelessness Funding / spend on support and prevention services.	£57,000	£80,000	£60,000
Revenue support to North Worcestershire Care and Repair Service	£63,620	£64,613	66,551
Discretionary Home Repair Grants	£160,000	161,000	163,000
Private Sector Energy Efficiency	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Single Capital Pot Allocation	£217,000	£162,000	

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Bromsgrove's Action Plan

Target	Lead Officer and Partners	Opportunities and Risks	Resources	Milestones and Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Encourage greater involvement and more partnership working from related agencies	Lead: Andy Coel/ Amanda Glennie	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continual Improvement in services and information on needs Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less concentration on existing services 	5 Officer Time	Social Care and Probation more actively involved in the Homelessness Forum by Target: June 2007	A greater understanding of needs to inform future strategy development and service improvement
Introduce a Spend to Save Scheme	Lead: Jennifer Delorenzo	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering Homelessness Prevention Officers to prevent more homelessness Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for Money Concerns about appropriateness of spend 	5,9 Staff time/ Funding	Spend to Save Scheme introduced Jan 07	Reduced Homelessness
Continue decommissioning/remodelling hostel accommodation.	Lead: Andy Coel	Opportunities: Improved temporary accommodation Risks: Increased homelessness due to improved accommodation. Reluctance of homeless households to move on.	5,6,9,14 Officer time/ funding	Successful bid to the Housing Corporation by Dec 2007 for the remodelling/demolition and rebuilding of two hostels.	Improved accommodation and better outcomes in respect of health, well being and safety for customers.
Encourage older people who are underoccupying properties to move into alternative accommodation that will better meet their needs as they become more frail and in need of support.	Lead: Andy Coel	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased availability of family accommodation. Improvement in quality of life for frail elderly Risks: Increased staff resources required to encourage older people to consider moving with no guarantee of success.	1,5,6,10 Staff Time Capital funding of more desirable accommodati on.	Monitor and review customer opinions of the new Extra Care scheme March 2008	More older person accommodation which will in turn free up family housing.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Target	Lead Officer and Partners	Opportunities and Risks	Resources	Milestones and Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Develop specialist accommodation for young people with on site support	Lead: Elaine Mortimore (BYHF)	Opportunities: A holistic approach to youth homelessness. Risks: Resource intensive – may result in conflicting priorities	4,5,6,7,11 Officer time/ funding	Identification of site and successful bid to the Housing Corporation by April 2008	A holistic approach to youth homelessness with improved outcomes in respect of life skills, education, employability.
Develop emergency accommodation for young people ie: Nightstop, Crash Pad	Lead: Amanda Glennie/ Jennifer Delorenzo	Opportunities: More suitable emergency accommodation for young people resulting in better outcomes for health and well being. Risks Resource intensive	5,11 Officer time/ funding	Participation in the Supporting People review of the needs of young people during 2007.	Increased range of housing options resulting in reduced use of B&B/hostel accommodation.
Research the health needs of homeless households and their ability to access health services.	Lead: Amanda Glennie	Opportunities: An awareness of health needs and improved signposting of services. Opportunities to work in partnership with PCT's.	5 Officer time	Use findings of Health and homeless report as a baseline to compare with those who experience homelessness.	Better understanding of health needs and improved awareness of, and access to, health services
Only use B&B accommodation in emergencies or where hostel placement is inappropriate	Lead: Jayne Burton	Opportunities: Improved outcomes for homeless households. Value for money Risks: Not meeting B&B targets. Exceeding B&B budget	5 Officer time/B&B budget	Meeting B&B target for 2006/07	Minimal use of B&B

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Target	Lead Officer and Partners	Opportunities and Risks	Resources	Milestones and Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
Monitor and Review Services with a view to their continual improvement considering best practice and learning from partners and agencies.	Lead: Amanda Glennie	Opportunities: Improved services and greater partnership working. Risks: Capacity issues impeding continual improvement agenda	5 Officer time	Choice Based Lettings to be introduced by February 2008	Improved service that is tailored to meet the clients needs with a greater focus on prevention and more collaborative working with partners.
Ensure full consultation and participation of partners and service users to inform strategy, policy and service development.	Lead: Amanda Glennie	Opportunities: Service users and stakeholders directly influencing service provision. Risks: Time consuming	5 Officer time	Develop a suite of questionnaires and investigate other methods of engaging with homeless households by March 2007	Making service users views and experiences integral to service/strategy and policy development.

Malvern Hills District Council Homelessness Strategy

Malvern's vision

The Council, with its partners shares a vision which provides the basis for the Vision 21 Community Strategy: The Council has adopted a vision for the Malvern Hills District that draws upon the Community Strategy published by the Vision 21 Malvern Hills Partnership (LSP) in 2002.

The vision ***“is of a District which has first class services and facilities, is clean, safe, healthy and prosperous and has vibrant and active communities”***.

The local profile

Geography

Malvern Hills District covers 57,710 hectares, lies on the western edge of Worcestershire and is situated in the south of the West Midlands Region.

Malvern Hills has three towns. Malvern is the principal centre of population, amenities and employment in the district. The market town of Tenbury Wells is located in the north-west and Upton-upon-Severn lies in the south-east of the district.

Economy

The 2001 Census showed that of the resident population aged 16 to 74, 62.9% were employed and 16.9% were retired. Malvern Hills has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the County (1.3%). Pickersleigh Ward has the highest unemployment rate in the district (2.6%).

The District contains a number of employment sites of varying sizes and locations. The largest employer, QinetiQ, is based in Malvern with the adjacent Malvern Hills Science Park, where high-technology businesses are located in a managed workspace facility. The Enigma Business Park employs in excess of 1,000 people. A number of smaller employment sites and business parks are located in Upton and Tenbury and throughout the district's rural areas such as those at Great Witley, Hallow, Hanley Swan, Holt and Martley. Retailing is centred on Malvern and the two market towns. Malvern is also well placed to benefit from tourism given its unique setting and its natural environment and its links with famous people and products.

In the past, the local economy of the district relied upon agriculture and the defence industry. Agriculture and horticulture still remain major employers in the rural areas.

Demography

The population of Malvern Hills increased by 4.7% between 1991 and 2001. Over 20% of the population are aged over 60 and over 50% of people aged between 20 and 59.

The latest ONS estimate of the District's population is 74,400 in mid-2004 (up from 73,800 in mid-2003). The net effect of natural change in that period was to reduce the

total population by 400 (600 births less 1000 deaths). However, this reduction was more than offset by migration; net internal migration of 900 plus net international migration of 100. (Source: ONS 2005).

The emphasis of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy on the regeneration of the Major Urban Areas will increasingly direct housing investment away from the shire counties, but this pattern of migration – chiefly from the MUAs and from neighbouring regions – is expected to continue in the medium term.

Ethnic Minorities

Malvern's black and minority ethnic population is small in comparison to other Districts within the County. The 2001 Census indicated that 96.7% of Malvern's population was white and the largest single non-white ethnic group was Chinese (0.4%):

Health issues related to housing

Generally the overall health of the district is good with only 8.37% of the population indicating that their general health was not good and 18.5% of the population having a limiting long-term illness.

New Affordable Housing Supply

Between 1995/96 and 2004/05 a total of 970 units of social housing stock were provided in the district.

Registered Housing Need

The number of households registered on the Common Housing Register as at the 1st April 2006 is 1751, including transfer applications. The comparable figure for 2005 was 1841.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness service

In 1995 the Council transferred its stock to Elgar Housing Association (EHA). All homelessness investigations are undertaken by EHA together with preventative work and housing advice, who employ a dedicated homelessness prevention officer, one homelessness officer, two Housing Officers and two Tenancy Support Worker. The Council's Housing Team retained the statutory responsibility of making homeless decisions and undertaking homelessness reviews together with the more Strategic functions.

From 2001 to 2004 homelessness was on the increase. The Council (via its agents EHA) employ a dedicated homelessness prevention officer and this post together with the implementation of a comprehensive Homelessness Prevention Policy has resulted in the a large number of homelessness preventions as outlined above. During 2005/06, 138 cases were prevented from becoming homeless and this represented a 50% drop in homeless presentations and acceptances.

Government funding has enabled a number of key homelessness achievements during 2004 and 2006. These include:

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

- Meeting government requirement/target not to place families or pregnant households in bed and breakfast for no more than 6 weeks except in an emergency
- Introduction of district wide Sanctuary Scheme to enable victims of domestic violence to remain in own home
- Introduction of protocol with locals prisons to give early warning of release from prison
- Introduction of locality groups relation to domestic violence and young persons
- Introduction of 'Good will payment Scheme'
- Establishment of successful Landlord's Forum

Short term housing solutions such as sharing with family members or utilising short term letting arrangements, frequently lead to homelessness. The Council's **Homelessness Strategy** (2003 - 08) sets out the policies and initiatives that the Council, in partnership with other agencies, has put in place to take a proactive preventative approach to homelessness, and also to enable the provision of a range of housing solutions where preventative action has failed. The challenge for the Council is to ensure that adequate resources and measures are in place to reduce the incidence of homelessness arising.

The key issues for Malvern Hills

Whilst the Council have been successful in a number of key areas with regards it homelessness services there are still a number of issues which need addressing as follows:-

Within Malvern there is a shortage of affordable housing and lack of accommodation available within the private sector for homeless persons. This is coupled by a lack of suitable accommodation (with and without support) for vulnerable homelessness persons such as those clients with mental health problems.

There is also a lack of move on accommodation for young people from Projects such as the Foyer and there is a generally a lack of suitable accommodation for this client group both in terms of emergency accommodation and more settled permanent accommodation.

There is also the need to press ensure future funding to ensure the continuation of the employment of a homelessness prevention officer and to fully implement homelessness preventative measures and initiatives.

Key targets for homelessness

A series of key objectives and targets have been determined as essential to addressing the issue of homelessness. These are summarised in the table below.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Malvern Hills Priorities

Key Objective	To reduce homelessness arising in the district and to deal effectively and efficiently with those households accepted as homeless.
Key Target 1	(i) To fully implement the Homelessness Strategy objectives during 2004 to 2008. (ii) To carry out a review of the Homelessness Strategy in 2007. (iii) Ensure that opportunities for the annual ODPM homelessness funding are maximised for the benefit of the District.
Key Target 2	To reduce the number of homeless presentations by 5 % annually over the next five years
Key Target 3	(i) To meet the Government target of not placing families and pregnant households in Bed and Breakfast for more than 6 weeks – except in an emergency. (ii) To ensure 100% of all homeless decisions are made within 33 working days. (iii) Maintain high customer satisfaction rate for the homeless and housing advice service – target 90%
Key Target 4	(i) Develop a Homelessness Prevention Strategy during 2007. (ii) Reduction of repeat homelessness by 2% over next 3 years
Key Target 5	(i) Revised Homelessness Agency Agreement with Elgar Housing Association approved by July 2006 (ii) To rehouse homeless acceptances into permanent accommodation within 40 days.
Key Target 6	(i) Develop a Nightstop service, a crash pad or direct access housing by July 2007. (ii) Provide floating support, for young people moving into RSL or private rented accommodation through the Supporting People Strategy (iii) Increase the availability of affordable accommodation for young people as part of new housing developments.
Key Target 7	To continue to work with all Worcestershire district councils in sharing best practice and delivering countywide homelessness solutions.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Malvern Hills Action Plan (2)

To implement the homelessness strategy and to provide a sensitive service for homeless clients

PROPOSED ACTION	MILESTONE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS	PARTNERS	RESOURCES	MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
Fully implement Homelessness Strategy Action Plan by 2008	Complete 80% of Actions by March 2006 Complete 90% of Actions by March 2007 Complete 100% of Actions by March 2008	Housing Manager	Council's Agents RSL Partners Local Stakeholders	ODPM Grant Funding £50,000 per annum Staff time	Housing Services Team Homelessness Strategy Focus Group
Review and monitoring Homelessness Strategy's Progress	Carry out an annual review of Action Plans and progress 2006 - 2008	Housing Manager	Council's Agents RSL Partners Local Stakeholders	Staff time	Housing Services Team Homelessness Strategy Focus Group
To carry out Rough Sleepers estimate as per Government requirement National PI	Ongoing analysis being carried out annually	Housing Manager	Voluntary and Statutory Organisations Parish Councils	Staff time	Housing Services Team Best Value Performance Team ODPM Quarterly monitoring
Develop Homelessness Prevention Strategy during 2007	Produce draft Homelessness Strategy by June 2007 Produce Final draft for consultation by September 2007	Housing Manager Homelessness Prevention Officer	Council's Agents RSL Partners Local Stakeholders	Staff time	Homelessness Prevention Strategy Focus Group

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

PROPOSED ACTION	MILESTONE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS	PARTNERS	RESOURCES	MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
<p>Cease use of B & B as temporary accommodation for families and pregnant households for no more than 4* weeks except in an emergency –</p> <p>National BVPI 183 *Note: this is below Government target of 6 weeks</p>	<p>On track to meet target for year end March 2007 Achieve target for year end 2008 Achieve target for year end 2009 Achieve target for year end 2010</p> <p>To hold bi annual Landlords Forum and to encourage Private Sector landlords to provide accommodation for homeless persons in place of Bed and Breakfast To work closely with RSL partners in order to that RSLs provide accommodation for homeless persons in place of Bed and Breakfast</p>	<p>Housing Manager Housing Manager Housing Manager Homelessness Prevention Officer</p> <p>Housing Manager Homelessness Prevention Officer</p>	<p>Council's Agents RSL Partners Private landlords Council's Agents RSL Partners Private landlords Housing Manager</p>	<p>ODPM Grant £10,000 to finance Spend to Save Initiatives</p> <p>ODPM Grant £10,000 to finance Spend to Save Initiatives</p>	<p>Housing Services Team Best Value Performance Team ODPM Quarterly monitoring</p> <p>Housing Services Team</p>
<p>To ensure that all homeless decisions are made within 33 working days</p> <p>Local Housing PI</p>	<p>Year 2005/06 - 96% of decisions made within 33 days Year 2006/07 - on target to reach 100% of decisions within 33 days</p>	<p>Housing Manager</p>	<p>Council's Agents</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Services Team Quarterly reports to Executive Committee Best Value Performance Team</p>
<p>To permanently rehouse homeless acceptances under a target time of 40 days</p> <p>Local Housing PI</p>	<p>Year 2005/06 - rehousing took 35 days Year 2005/06 –estimated rehousing time 53 days</p>	<p>Housing Manager</p>	<p>Council's Agents</p>	<p>Staff time</p>	<p>Housing Services team Quarterly reports To Executive Committee Best Value Performance team</p>

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

PROPOSED ACTION	MILESTONE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS	PARTNERS	RESOURCES	MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
<p>To carry out research into Homelessness within the District</p> <p>(Action was part of Homelessness Strategy Action Plan)</p>	<p>Draft Strategy in place by February 2007</p> <p>Strategy to be completed by June 2007</p>	Housing Manager Homelessness Prevention Officer	Stakeholders Voluntary and Statutory bodies	ODPM Funding circa £20,000	Homelessness research project group
<p>Launch of Malvern Hills Nightstop Service</p> <p>(Action under Homelessness Strategy)</p>	<p>Procedures and protocols to be drawn up by April 2007</p> <p>Nightstop co-ordinator to be appointed by June 2007</p> <p>Host families to be recruited by Summer 2007</p>	Housing Manager Homelessness Prevention Officer	MHYAT FOYER	ODPM Funding circa £10,000	Nightstop Project Group
<p>To ensure that service users are consulted on the way in which their homelessness application was dealt With</p> <p>Local Housing PI</p>	<p>Year 2005/06 – 100% of service users satisfied with service</p> <p>100 % of service users satisfied with service provision year 2006/07</p>	Housing Manager	Councils Agents	Staff Time	Housing Services Team Best Value Team Quarterly monitoring reports to Executive Committee
<p>Review of homeless prevention services to be carried out.</p>	<p>By April 2007</p>	Housing Manager	Council's Agents	Staff time	Housing Manager

Redditch Borough Council Homelessness Strategy

Redditch's vision

“Our vision is for Redditch to be successful and vibrant, with sustainable communities built on partnership and shared responsibility. We want people to be proud that they live or work in Redditch.”

The Redditch Partnership launched this vision in June 2003 in ‘20/20 Vision, Community Strategy for the Borough of Redditch’.

Housing plays a key role and underpins many of the themes that the partnership will concentrate on:-

- Healthy communities;
- Safer communities;
- Better environment;
- Education, learning and skills;
- Economy;
- Connecting Redditch;
- Culture and recreation.

The local profile

Population projections dating back to 1996 suggest that the population of Redditch would grow by 6% in the period 1996 – 2011. However, more recent projections from the County Council indicate that the population growth will actually start to slow and possibly contract in the longer term. By 2011, the Borough population is estimated to be 78,150. The original “target” population envisaged for the Redditch New Town was 90,000. In view of the continuing population trends above and the growth of smaller and single person households, the New Town population estimate will now be unrealistic.

A key consequence of the New Town expansion was that there was a large influx of young families into Redditch. Thus, the age profile of Redditch has historically shown much higher proportions of younger people than in comparison to the County, Region and Country.

A more recent demographic trend which has been noted is that whilst there is still a higher proportion of people below 35 years, the overall age structure of Redditch is ageing, in line with the rest of Worcestershire. Between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses, the numbers of people aged 0 – 15 fell by 11.1%. The 2001 census showed that the proportion of people aged 75 years and over had risen by 36.8%. There are now more people aged 30 – 60 years than those less than 30 years. Projections from Worcestershire County Council state that the proportion of those aged 65 years and over will increase from 12.2% to 14.6% by 2011 and the proportion of those aged 75 years and over from 5.7% to 6.3% by 2011.

By 2021, Redditch will have a significant section (over 30%) of the population aged over 65, which has important implications for the future development and management of the

Council and Registered Social Landlord Housing Stock and also the nature and extent of the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance provisions.

Redditch differs from most of Worcestershire (except Worcester City), in that the local demography also includes a significant Black Minority Ethnic population (BME), at 5.2% of the overall population. 2.6% of the BME population was recorded at the 2001 Census as being Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, which form the largest minority ethnic group, but there is also a sizeable Black Caribbean and Polish community within Redditch. The BME groups contribute to the diversity and culture of Redditch as a place to live and work and also provide valuable contributions to the development of local policies and plans.

In line with the UK as a whole, whilst population growth is slowing, the numbers of households in Redditch is increasing, because of changing social patterns of more single people households and single parent families in addition to the traditional "nuclear family". The 2001 Census showed that the number of households was 31,652, which represented a 5.9% increase over the decade since 1991. County Council projections indicate the number of households will rise to 34,464 by 2011 – a growth of 8%. This will place further pressures on the local housing market, especially the supply of affordable housing for rent and for sale.

Economy

Redditch is identified in the West Midlands Regional Planning Guidance as a Strategic Town Centre. Through the Regional Planning Guidance, it is aimed to promote the development of a region-wide network of strategic centres to boost economic growth and regeneration. Redditch is seen as being a significant centre within the West Mercia sub-region and as such, will act alongside other strategic centres as a focal point for future economic and industrial growth.

The latest unemployment figures (July 2004) show that, at 2.5%, the level of unemployment in Redditch is below both the 2.9% national average and West Midlands region figure of 3.5%. The level of unemployment has reduced yearly since 1993. However, unemployment in Redditch is the highest of all local authorities in Worcestershire and is well above the County figure of 1.8%.

The 2001 Census did show that Redditch had the highest rate within Worcestershire of economic activity in the 16 – 74 age groups at 74.1%. Only Redditch and Worcester had rates above the County average of 70.7%. The County average is in itself above the West Midlands regional economic activity rate of 65.9% and the national economic activity rate of 66.9%. However, this is influenced by the lower proportion of retired households within this age group in Redditch and its relatively younger population profile as detailed earlier.

For those in employment in Redditch, 28% are employed in the manufacturing sector. This is far higher than both the county and national average. The retail/wholesale/hotel sector and the public and other service sector are also major employers, with each having approximately 22% of employees. The proportion of Public Service employees in Redditch remains lower than the Worcestershire average. Finance and business is less prevalent in Redditch and Worcestershire than within England as a whole.

The Office of National Statistics released workplace, migration and travel to work data on the 3rd February 2004, as part of the release of the National Statistical Report Part 2. The data includes information on workplace population, distance travelled to work and migration. Some of the results relating to Redditch which can be inferred from the data include the following:

- The daytime population of Redditch is 53,654 - this includes the number of people who work in Redditch plus people who live in Redditch and do not work.
- The workplace population of Redditch is 36,542, this relates to the number of people who work in Redditch.
- 27.6% people live in Redditch but work outside of the area. Of these 39.5% are female and 60.5% are male.
- The majority (22.3%) of people aged between 16-74 who live and work in Redditch have semi routine occupations.
- When we look at incomes for those working in Redditch, we find that incomes tend to be lower than both the county and regional average.

Income figures produced by Paycheck for 2004 showed that the average household income in Redditch was £29,275. This is the fourth lowest figure of the Worcestershire authorities and is comparable to the County figure of £30,400. The average income in Redditch is also above both the national average income of £29,000 and the West Midlands average income of £25,500.

The 2004 ODPM Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks Redditch at 146 out of 354 local authorities in terms of income deprivation (1 is the most deprived). This figure is below the Wyre Forest figure of 162 and Worcester figure of 165 and highlights, therefore, the relatively low incomes of many people within the Borough.

Within Redditch as a whole, just over 20% of the population are experiencing income deprivation but this displays spatial variation across wards. Batchley is within the 10% most deprived wards across the country, whereas Feckenham is within the 15% least deprived of wards.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness services

Following a review of housing services in 2003 Homelessness and Housing Strategy merged and moved into the Borough Directorate with the delivery of housing advice being a generic role within the 4 One Stop Shops and the Homelessness & Strategy team.

The structure of the team consisted of a Housing Policy Manager, a Homelessness Team Leader, 3 FTE Homelessness Officers, 2 Homelessness Assistants, an enabling officer, 1.5 FTE Homeless Support Officers managing the Council's hostel. The role of a Homelessness Prevention Officer was added to the team utilising some of the ODPM Homelessness grant.

A robust options appraisal in 2004 resulted in the decision for Redditch Borough Council to retain and manage its housing stock.

In 2006/07 a review of Homelessness Services and housing advice resulted in the creation of the Housing Options Team to provide more detailed specialist advice to assist in prevention of homelessness and manage the new Choice Base Lettings. We have developed a comprehensive approach to the challenge of preventing homelessness, taking a multi-agency, inclusive approach which we believe will have a significant impact. We are exploring and developing a wide range of initiatives which will keep the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and rough sleeping to almost negligible levels. We wish to maintain and enhance our excellent service by improving our information and partnerships with other agencies. We will reduce the incidences of homelessness by making the best use of available housing.

Key issues for Redditch

Affordable housing

The evaluation of the market in Redditch Borough is based on specially prepared information taken directly from the Land Registry database for the year to 31st March 2005 and an analysis of local estate agency sales looking at entry level properties, i.e. the lowest quartile stock.

The Land Registry recorded the average price for all dwellings in the Borough at £144,267. The average semi-detached dwelling was sold for £135,068, lower than the Worcestershire average of £163,478. Terraced house prices have risen by 98.0% and flats by 181.7% since 2000.

An income of £20,600 is required to buy a one bedroom flat in the East area of Redditch, rising to £23,200 in the West area. A two bedroom flat requires an income of £25,600 in the East and up to £28,300 in the West. Terraced properties are cheaper in the West area, requiring an income of £27,400, rising to £35,500 in Astwood Bank and Feckenham.

We assess terraced houses to be the main entry level for first time buyers in view of their lower cost and volume of sales. However flats also provide a route into home ownership for first time buyers due to their lower cost. 49% have inadequate income to be able to buy and 38% cannot afford to rent privately. Additionally the private rented sector has low quality standards and is the housing preference of around 5.3% of existing households moving and 6.3% of concealed households forming. Where this is the case lack of supply may cause some households to have to leave the Borough to meet their requirements.

In addition to the scale of affordable housing to meet general household's requirements, there are specific needs which should also be addressed. These are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

Sheltered Housing

In total, the data suggests a combined requirement for 1,038 units of sheltered accommodation over the next three years to 2008:-

- 62 units of affordable sheltered housing and 41 units of private sheltered housing, 103 in total, to meet existing households needs;
- 619 affordable sheltered and 316 private sheltered units, 935 in total to meet the needs of in-migrating parents / relatives.

Of the total requirement of 1,038 units, 681 are in the affordable sector and 357 in the private market.

Some of this requirement will be addressed by flow of the existing sheltered stock, but acceptability of existing stock to meet today's standards will need to be assessed in calculating the scale of new delivery.

The significantly higher level of elderly accommodation for people moving into the Borough is common to other DCA surveys. Generally the forecast is being made by their children who assist in the moving process. Conversely the indigenous older population prefer to continue in the area / surroundings they know and within their own home as long as possible.

Supported Housing

Existing households moving were asked if they were interested in supported housing and what type of supported housing they required. There is an expressed need for 172 units of independent accommodation with external support over the next three years to 2008.

Use of temporary accommodation

Redditch Borough Council has its own homeless hostel providing 22 units of accommodation for both single and family applicants. A review of the temporary accommodation service was undertaken in 2003 and the Council is currently considering working in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord or Private Finance Initiative to improve the facility and services provided. The Council has achieved the duty of not placing families in Bed & Breakfast for more than 6 weeks; however this will become increasingly difficult with the continual increase in applications.

Lack of accommodation within the private rented sector

The private rented sector in the Borough is very small, less than half the national average level. Re-let supply is therefore also low and an assessment has been undertaken to assess turnover relative to need levels. Over three years the survey data suggests that around 510 units a year become available, but 660 households require market rented housing, a shortfall of 150 units.

However 38% of the private rented stock is detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows, around 526 units. The need for entry-level accommodation, particularly for concealed households, is for flats and terraces and analysis of the data for these types only reveals that demand exceeds supply by almost 200 units over a three years period. This shortfall is more than the total need expressed for this tenure and type by new forming households.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

In terms of access to the market annual supply is only around 100 units a year, 8 to 9 units a month, to meet total demand in this sector. This scale of turnover is totally inadequate to provide opportunity for over 300 new households forming alone each year who cannot afford to buy.

Prevention of homelessness through early intervention and specialist housing advice regarding housing options.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Resources

REVENUE FUNDED SERVICES (PLANNED SPEND)	2005/6 (Budget) £	2006/7 Est. Planned spend £	2007/8 Est. Planned Spend £	2008/9 Est. Planned Spend £
Strategic Housing, Enabling & Private Sect	98,680	72,600	74,778	77,021
Homelessness & temp accommodation	310,860	355,030	365,681	376,651
Waiting List & Nominations			217,230	223,750
Redditch Care & Repair Services	97,500	109,610	113,070	116,630
CAB – Core Service	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
Total for Homelessness, housing advice, housing strategy and Private Sector Housing Renewal	597,040	627,240	860,759	884,052

Additional Notes

- costs above include the management and maintenance of the Council's Homeless Hostel
- £50,000 from DCLG grant for Homelessness Prevention Officer, Rent Deposit Scheme, contributions towards Redditch Nightstop, Worcestershire Youth Homelessness Strategy
- 2007/08 costs for implementing a specialist housing advice and choice based lettings team

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Redditch's Action Plan

OBJECTIVE 1 - MEETING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS

Goal	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	Monitoring Arrangements	Target Date
Increase supply of affordable housing Priority - High	Develop and monitor local performance indicators for % of affordable housing delivered on qualifying sites, development density and size / type of properties	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review Group Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee Housing Development Group	Ongoing
	Support appropriate bids to the Housing Corporation for Approved Development Programme funding	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant		Ongoing
	Develop and promote low cost home ownership / shared ownership and Homebuy in the Borough	Housing Enabling Officer	Within existing revenue budget		Ongoing
	Investigate alternative methods of delivering affordable housing	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget		August 2006
	Develop and implement a rolling programme for updating the housing needs assessment data annually	Housing Policy Manager	Capital expenditure of £5,000 p.a. (estimate)		October 2006 October 2007 October 2008 October 2009
Develop a partnership arrangement with Registered Social Landlords Priority - Medium	Consult with Registered Social Landlords on preferred partnership agreement	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review group Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Completed
	Develop and implement preferred partner agreement with selected partners	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget		Completed
	Review and monitor agreement	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget		March 2008
	Support appropriate bids to the Housing Corporation for Approved Development Programme funding	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget		Ongoing
Develop an Empty Homes Strategy Priority - Low	Review good practice and explore possible partnership with RSL for private sector leasing	Head of Environmental Health Housing Enabling Officer	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review Group	August 2007

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

OBJECTIVE 2 - TACKLING HOMELESSNESS AND PROVIDING HOUSING OPTIONS

Goal	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	Monitoring Arrangements	Target Date
Preventing Homelessness through housing advice and assistance Priority - High	Assessment of current advice providers and service available	Housing Options Team Leader	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review Group Homelessness Strategy Review Group	December 2005
	Develop a housing advice strategy in partnership with other advisory organisations	Housing Options Team Leader	£5,000 ODPM Homelessness grant funding		March 2006
	Develop and implement a rent deposit scheme	Housing Options Team Leader	£10,000 ODPM Homelessness grant funding		August 2006
	Take a proactive role in enforcing standards in the private rented sector to avoid this being a reason for homelessness	Housing Options Team Leader Head of Environmental Health	Within existing revenue budget		December 2006
Implement Choice Based Lettings Priority - High	Develop a local scheme involving key stakeholders	Head of Housing Services	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review Group Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	December 2006
	Introduce Choice Based Lettings Pilot for 12 months prior to implementation	Head of Housing Services	Within existing revenue budget		March 2007
	Explore alternative ways of delivering allocations and tenancy services	Head of Housing Services	Within existing revenue budget		December 2006
Improve communication with customers and increase customer satisfaction Priority - Medium	Update Housing website and promote electronic access to services and information	Business Project Management Team	Within existing revenue budget	Borough Tenants' Panel Customer Access Strategy Group Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	September 2005
	Incorporate the Communication & Consultation Strategy into the Tenant Participation Strategy	Business Project Manager	Within existing revenue budget		January 2006

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

OBJECTIVE 3 - MEET EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

Goal	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	Monitoring Arrangements	Target Date
Increasing and improving access to emergency accommodation Priority - Medium	Develop 'move on' for people living in emergency accommodation	Homelessness Team Leader Head of Housing Services	Within existing revenue budget	Housing Strategy Review Group	April 2007
	Support applications for funding through the Housing Corporation Approved Development Programme for temporary accommodation	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget	Homelessness Strategy Review Group	Ongoing
Improve the Council's temporary accommodation provision Priority - High	Develop a partnership arrangement with a Registered Social Landlord to provide purpose built and managed temporary accommodation	Head of Corporate Strategy	Capital expenditure will be required but not yet assessed	Housing Strategy Review Group	April 2007

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

OBJECTIVE 4 - IMPROVING CONDITIONS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Goal	Milestones	Lead Officer	Resources	Monitoring Arrangements	Target Date
Carry out enforcement activity against landlords and householders to maintain housing conditions Priority - Medium	Licensing of high risk HMOs (to conform with Part 2 of Housing Act 2004)	Head of Environmental Health	Within existing revenue budget Capital expenditure to commission surveys / inspections (not yet assessed)	Housing Strategy Review Group Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Ongoing
	Introduce proactive inspections, approach to involve service of "minded to" notices and coupled with offer of financial assistance where appropriate	Head of Environmental Health	Within existing revenue budget		April 2005 to April 2008
	Establish and implement an accreditation scheme with stakeholders	Housing Policy Manager	Within existing revenue budget		April 2007

Worcester City Council's Homelessness Strategy

Worcester's vision for housing

The vision for Worcester City is to meet housing needs across all tenure groups by balancing the housing market and better serving the needs of our community by developing a new style strategic housing role... (the service) will therefore strive to work in partnership to ensure the housing needs of all households are addressed creating and sustaining an entire range of housing choices making Worcester city a place where people want to live, work and can enjoy a high quality of life within a healthy community.

For Worcester, this strategy fully supports our commitment to partnership working and will deliver a more comprehensive and seamless service to those people experiencing homelessness in the county. Worcester has its own set of distinct issues and this section of the strategy identifies these by considering the city profile, the particular set of difficulties that present themselves and the current service delivery. We consider priorities that are specific to the city and the resources available to meet those priorities and finally we include a plan that has actions that Worcester will undertake in addition to those agreed by all the districts in the County.

The local profile

Population

A Housing Requirements Study carried out for Worcester City Council in 2005 identified that the City has a resident population of 93,119 in 38,962 households. Mid year estimates from the National Statistics Office for 2005 highlight another increase with the population now reaching 94,300. This means that the population of Worcester has increased by 13.2% in the last 15 years. However, longer term population projections identify that the population will remain relatively static, although the growth in the number of households is likely to continue through people living longer and separations / divorces.

Ethnicity

Census 2001 data states that 96.55% of the population of Worcester are white which is 8% higher than the regional, and 6% higher than the national level. The largest ethnic minority group is made up of members from the Asian sub-continent although there are a growing number of Portuguese and Eastern European economic migrants settling in the city.

Age

The age structure of Worcester residents follows the regional and national trends, although it is worth noting that we have a relatively significant high level of 20-44 year olds in comparison to the regional and national average.

Unemployment

Worcester City has the second highest unemployment rate in the county with 2.7% of 16-74 year olds in Worcester unemployed according to National Statistics Online. There is significant variation between wards and this is more the case here than any other district in the county for instance Warndon's rate is 6.2% compared to Warndon Parish North rate of 0.8%.

Qualifications

According to the Census 2001, over a quarter (27.59%) of people aged 16-74 in Worcester have no qualifications, which is only slightly below the national average. More up to date data from the Learning and Skills Council Annual Plan 2006/7 shows that Herefordshire and Worcestershire perform better than the regional average across all qualification levels. Over 50% of the working age population have at least a Level 2 qualification. However, it is estimated that 28% of the working age population have no qualifications. Furthermore, 10% of people are believed to have only entry level literacy skills and almost 40% have only entry level numeracy skills.

Housing tenure

The majority of people in Worcester are owner occupiers. We have a lower level of social housing tenants than the national and regional levels at 14%.

The housing waiting list.

Worcester City Council operates a Joint Waiting List (JWL) with three RSLs. These are Worcester Community Housing, Nexus Housing Association and Beth Johnson Housing.

There are approximately 2600 households on the waiting list at any one time. The largest demand is for a one bedroom property followed by a two bedroom property. This reflects the demand we experience from newly forming households and households arising as a consequence of relationship breakdown.

The average time spent on the waiting list for accommodation varies according to the persons housing need and type of property / area they desire. Those seeking family accommodation wait longer than mature or elderly singles / couples and even people in the greatest need will usually be on the waiting list for 12 months before an offer is made. The areas in the city with the greatest demand for social housing are the city centre and the north east of the city (Warndon, Warndon villages and Ronkswood). The South Housing market Assessment (2007) has identified the greatest pressure is for a two bedroom house where the average waiting time is 16 years.

Homeless approaches and acceptances

Worcester City receives on average of 650 homeless approaches per year and accepts, on average, 190 of these households as statutory priority homeless. Following the restructure in 2004 and a range of new homelessness prevention measures (please see below for further information), the number of acceptances is set to reduce in 2006/7. The average number of approaches has ranged between 45 and 55 per month over the last 4 years whilst the latest quarters figures (Quarter 2, 2006/7) indicate a decrease at only 31 acceptances.

Reasons for homelessness

The top three reasons for homelessness in the City follow the national and regional trend and are, as follows;

- Family/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate (47% of those accepted)
- Termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (19% of those accepted)
- Relationship breakdown due to domestic violence (7.5% of those accepted)

and many of the actions included in this strategy will be aimed at trying to reduce these causes of homelessness.

Issues with particular client groups

In addition to those service users identified in a previous section of this strategy, Worcester recognises that there are particular issues with groups beyond those listed. These service users are briefly identified and discussed below.

Teenage Pregnancies

Worcester has a particular issue with teenage pregnancies and is still above the national and county rates for conceptions in both under 16's (9.5) and under 18's (49.4). Within the city there are particular hotspots including Warndon, Cathedral, Nunnery, Rainbow Hill and St Johns and Gorse Hill wards and these will be targeted for action, along with particular client groups, by the Worcestershire Teenage Pregnancy and Parenting Strategy Group.

Learning Disabilities

In a Housing Needs Survey undertaken by Learning Disability Partnership Board Housing Sub-Group, 59 people with a learning disability were identified as wanting to live in Worcester, 19 of which would require low or moderate support during the day and 21 require it at night. Of these individuals 12 are currently living in registered homes and 30 with family carers.

Rough sleepers

One of the main concerns for Worcester is the number of those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. Worcester is a focal point for this client group because it has a range of services available for this client group that are not available in the rural areas of the county. Single persons housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable and the available supply of affordable and supported housing does not meet the demand.

Worcester has two homeless hostels, a rough sleepers outreach team, a day centre, a night assessment centre for street homeless people over the coldest winter nights of the year, and a rent deposit scheme for single people. Despite all this service provision, monitoring data from Worcester Rough Sleepers Project suggests that the number of rough sleepers or potential rough sleepers has increased by 21% since 2002/3 from an average of 58 clients per quarter to an average of 70 clients per quarter in 2005/6.

Data from the first 6 months of the single homelessness monitoring system (please see single homeless section below), the 2005 night assessment centre and the performance monitoring data all highlight that many of these clients come from other districts within the county, but also from a range of different areas throughout the country where the service provision is not as comprehensive.

- The 2005 night assessment centre recorded that out of the 78 people they questioned about local connection, 21 came from outside the county and 57 from within Worcestershire (37 from Worcester City, 8 from Wyre Forest, 2 from Bromsgrove, 4 from Redditch, 3 from Wychavon and 3 from Malvern).
- Approximately 23 of the outreach team's clients per quarter do not have a local connection.

Therefore some of the key issues within the Worcester City Action Plan will be around tackling the issue that we have with people local to Worcester City sleeping rough and trying to prevent this occurring, but also around assessing the need for further provision of services for this client group throughout the county.

The actions within the Worcester City Action Plan will link directly with the Worcester City Rough Sleepers Strategy.

Single Homeless

The incidents of single homelessness remain high in the City and the Council works in partnership with a wide range of organisations to tackle this very diverse client group. Although the majority of single homeless people are not owed a full rehousing duty, all are entitled to advice and assistance and the Council provides this through a variety of sources including directly through the Customer Service Centre and Housing Advice Team, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Worcester Housing and Benefits Advice Centre (WHABAC).

In terms of the numbers of single people and childless couples seeking advice of housing issues we have identified that the single homeless monitoring system recorded 649 approaches to key homeless agencies in the City (From 1st August 2005 to 31st January 2006), 101 of which came from other districts within the county, and 81 of which came from outside the county. For formally recorded approaches under the Homelessness Act 2002, 192 households were found to be non-priority homeless in 2005-06 and the majority if these are likely to be single people. We also have over 1700 households registered on the waiting list seeking one bedroom accommodation.

Whilst the Council's resources must inevitably be focused primarily on those households to whom we have a rehousing duty to, clearly we have a role to play in supporting and, where possible, co-ordinating the activities of those organisations that play a large role in helping single homeless people. We will also work with social and private landlords to ensure that accommodation is made available to single people, and that this accommodation is of a high standard whilst still remaining, as far as possible, affordable.

Temporary accommodation

We have an average of 100 households in temporary accommodation at any one time. Temporary accommodation consists of a variety of different types including private sector tenancies, RSL stock and Council owned supported accommodation for young parents.

Much investment has taken place within the homelessness service to reduce the reliance on Bed and Breakfast (B&B) and to move households through this type of accommodation as quickly as possible. This includes the opening of 18 units of two bedroom self contained temporary accommodation in 2006 and increasing the use of private sector housing. We have also been successful at procuring rooms to gain cost efficiencies in B&Bs and are working with establishment owners to improve standards and ensure compliance with the Housing Act 2004. We recognise the importance, for homeless households, of being able to offer good quality self-contained accommodation with support if necessary to assist them during a challenging part of their lives.

The introduction of a new computerised system for monitoring voids and arrears in temporary accommodation, and an interface with the housing benefits system, has also improved our income recovery rates and enabled us to identify early, and provide support to, those tenants with poor financial literacy skills but we recognise that more work needs to be done in this area. Assisting people in accessing services whilst in temporary accommodation should help with creating sustainable and settled communities in the short and long term.

The creation of a team of accommodation officers, a Support Co-ordinator and Support Worker have all helped to improve people's experiences of temporary accommodation and drive down the incidence of repeat homelessness, with the council having one of the lowest rates in the county.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness service

Following the transfer of the housing stock to a new RSL in 2004, the homelessness team were retained by the Council. In the beginning of 2005 the section was restructured to create a Housing Advice Team, comprising of 5 Housing Needs and Advice Officers (one of whom deals with statutory homeless investigations), one Systems Support Officer (who maintains the waiting list) and a Team Leader. More strategic functions were placed under the remit of the broader Strategic Housing Services team and a new part time post was created to deliver this work.

Officers undertook a comprehensive training programme to develop their ability to give out prevention advice on debt counselling, domestic violence and tenancy matters etc. and were given a "spend to save" budget to be used to prevent homelessness or the use of temporary accommodation, mainly through accessing the private sector or preventing the use of temporary accommodation.

At the current time both housing advice and prevention services are delivered through a variety of providers in the city. This is done directly, from the Council's Housing Advice Team (HAT) and indirectly from a number of voluntary agencies and projects that the Council provide resources too including the Citizens Advice Bureau, Rough Sleepers project, Maggs Day Centre and WHABAC. In total the Council provided more than £140,000 in 2005/06 to voluntary agencies to deliver housing advice and related services, both within the city and across the County.

The key issues for Worcester

Within Worcester the shortage in affordable housing and the lack of Council owned self-contained accommodation has meant homeless households spend long periods of time in sometimes unsuitable accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast. Key to resolving this problem will be the exploration of a long term alternative to B&B, making better use of existing stock, bringing more affordable housing on-line and improving the quality of stay for those people using temporary accommodation. For those faced with homelessness, and particularly B&B, we want to improve their experience and future outcomes through working with them on issues like parenting skills, health, diet and financial literacy. However, to truly identify what information and training is needed we want to work directly with a group of homeless households to establish a client forum that challenges the way we deliver our service and improves outcomes for all.

We recognise the limited range of emergency accommodation for young people and the general lack of move-on accommodation for a range of client groups that have accessed emergency and supported accommodation but need to move on to something more independent and we will continue to pursue funding opportunities and delivery vehicles for more of this type of accommodation. We also broadly support the principle of developing specialist officers or a specialised service to deal with approaches from single people, particularly those under 25 to not only provide housing advice but a more holistic service that would include advice on training and employment opportunities, financial literacy, mediation, sexual health etc. We recognise that key to our success is early intervention when relationships between children and their carers first starts to break down.

Worcester has done much to resolve the problems faced by rough sleepers and to attempt to move them onto a more positive and constructive lifestyle but there is much more to do and the development and implementation of a Rough Sleepers Strategy will continue to make progress in this field. We also need to ensure we utilise the links we have to community safety to tackle problems caused by rough sleepers in a positive and empowering way. The work that we, and many of the excellent voluntary agencies and

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

accommodation providers have done in the city, brings with it a raising of expectations and an increase in demand from people, particularly rough sleepers, who wouldn't necessarily have come to Worcester otherwise. Some of these people migrate to Worcester from surrounding districts due a lack of facilities available in their local area and we would therefore support the development of facilities in other parts of the county or financial contributions to those services currently in existence in Worcester that benefit the wider area e.g. the Night Assessment Centre.

Much work has been done across the County to provide services to victims of domestic violence and this has lead to a reduction in levels of homelessness experienced by victims of domestic violence in Worcester. We would like to develop the role of housing authorities within the domestic violence forum so more work can be done on supporting our current and developing new, housing related initiatives to offer victims of domestic violence choice, support and equality of opportunity across the county.

The SHS team will continue to work with the private sector, to develop a real alternative for homeless households and to drive up standards especially within the shared house sector. This work should be supported by our close working relationship with the Revenues and Benefits team and our ability to access Discretionary Housing Payments where appropriate. The University expansion will also have an impact on the supply of private rented accommodation – for further details on our work in this area, please see our Housing Strategy 2004-9.

We are also aware that we should begin by targeting the most deprived wards within the city as these are the areas in which there is generational and repeat homelessness often caused by (both indirectly and directly) high unemployment, poverty, high teenage pregnancy rates, poor school achievement rates and greater incidents of crime. To successfully change the belief that social housing is readily available we need to challenge people's expectations and empower them to find their own alternative solutions to housing need.

We will work in partnership with relevant organisations to resolve homelessness and housing need with particular client groups such as teenage parents and people with learning disabilities.

Finally we recognise that we need to both build our understanding of homelessness through further research, particularly in measuring outcomes from our prevention mechanisms, and build the knowledge of our partner organisations and the general public. This can be done through raising awareness, both of homelessness itself and the impact it has on households, and of the vast array of services out there that can assist people and prevent homelessness, if they only access them at the right time.

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Resources

Following the stock transfer in 2004, the Strategic Housing Services team has been restructured and increased in size. The team now include a Home Improvement Agency (South Worcestershire Care & Repair), a Supporting people funded Support Co-ordinator and a Support provider for the Young Parents Scheme. Funding to external agencies includes the money received from DCLG but this runs out in 2008. Staffing costs beyond 2006/07 are based on estimates (2.5% increase to 2006/07 costs).

Revenue Funded Services	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Strategic Housing, Enabling & Private Sect	271,300	278,082	285,034	292,159
Housing Advice, Homelessness & temp accommodation	231,390	237,174	243,103	249,180
Waiting List & Nominations	18,700	19,167	19,646	20,137
South Worcestershire Care & Repair Service	52,260	53,566	54,905	56,277
Energy Efficiency	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
External agencies	133,460	134,571	46,710	47,877
145 Bromyard Road	Pepperpot rent	Pepperpot rent	Pepperpot rent	Pepperpot rent
Supporting People funded posts	68,060	69,761	71,504	73,290
Total Housing Services	795,170	802,321	730,902	748,920

Stock transfer did not produce a capital receipt and any income generated from Right to Buy sales has been allocated to non-housing projects. However a capital pot of £1,000,000 has been identified for the purchase of accommodation for homeless households. There is also a bid for a spend to save budget included in the Ongoing Capital Project section below.

Capital Funded Services	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Private sector grant	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
Regional Housing Pot	385,000	288,600		
Capital Project	1,000,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Capital receipts	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Housing Corporation Grant				
Recycled Capital Grant	Subject to RSL sales	Subject to RSL sales	Subject to RSL sales	Subject to RSL sales
Regional Housing Board – Special Funding	£20 for SHMA housing market assessment			
County Council Revenue Resources	£500k pa identified for Extra Care Hsg throughout county			
Supporting People Revenue or Capital funding	Revenue £15.8m (06/07) for Worcestershire			

In addition to the funding shown above we have also had £6,315,187 capital allocation from the Housing Corporation in 2006/08.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Worcester City's Action Plan

Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation for homeless households	Housing Services Manager HATL Accommodation Officers	Opportunities Provision of better quality, temporary accommodation Long term asset Risks Initial capital outlay Reduction in preventable cases	Capital available to purchase homeless accommodation Officer time Spend to Save budget	Full implementation of temporary accommodation reduction action plan. Target: 2010 The amount of temporary accommodation for 2010 at 50 units. Target: year on year reduction to 2010 Purchase of suitable property or alternative solution to meet need. Target: 2007/08	Reduction in the use of bed and breakfast to only in emergency and no longer than 6 weeks for families and young people. Reduction in overall provision of temporary accommodation to 50 units; 2007/08 = 100 2008/09 = 60 2009/2010 = 50.
Develop initiatives within the Private Sector that support our prevention work	Principal Strategic Housing Officer HATL Housing Advice Team	Opportunities Private sector assisting us in reducing number of statutory homeless Risks Property price increases attracting less people into buy-to-let schemes and making accessing affordable housing harder	Officer time Consider other available housing resources including Regional Housing Pot for improving conditions in private sector.	Complete research in private sector to understand why tenancies end. Target: 2 Landlord forums a year and 4 quarterly newsletters and regular promotion of schemes via website, press and Landlord forums / fairs. Target: annual To prevent 300 households from becoming homeless each year of strategy. Target: 2010	Reduction in the use of bed and breakfast to only in emergency and no longer than 6 weeks for families and young people.
Develop regular system for contacting applicants throughout the homelessness process	HATL Accommodation Officers	Opportunities Improved service delivery Risks Continued dissatisfaction with the service	Officer time SMS texting service costs	Monthly visits to all homeless households Fortnightly contact Target : July 2007	Homeless households that are confident and well informed about the homeless process leading to improvement in satisfaction rate from baseline in 2007.
Research whether homelessness occurs primarily from hotspots in city and the reasons for this	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	Opportunities Better understanding of the factors leading to homelessness across the city. Risks Limited options for tackling causes if part of broader factors e.g. poorer educational attainment, employment prospects and health.	Officer time (IT / JWL report written may mean additional costs)	Scope research project based on identified homeless approaches. Target :March 2008 Undertake research and analyse results. Target: July 2008 Circulate report and action plan to identify ways of reducing approaches. Target: December 2008.	Decrease in homeless approaches from "hotspots". Services aimed at particular areas or client groups deemed at risk of homelessness.

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Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To establish two client forums; one for homeless households and one for rough sleepers to assist us with measuring the quality and tailoring our services to homeless people.	Project officer Housing Advice Team Rough Sleepers Project Workers	Opportunities Improved service delivery Improved customer satisfaction Risks Difficulty in gaining representation from transient groups	Officer time	Establishment of two client forums; Rough Sleepers Target: June 2007 Homeless households Target: September 2007	Services delivered to homeless households in a more efficient and effective way. Range of services that meet customer's expectations. Reduction in the level of repeat homelessness and entrenched rough sleeping.
Deliver the objectives of the Rough Sleepers Strategy	Project Officer Rough Sleepers Project Workers Housing Advice Team	Opportunities Reduction in the number of rough sleepers Risks More attractive range of services actually increases numbers of rough sleepers coming to city	Current funding from DCLG Homelessness Directorate grant £35,000 Council grant to Maggs day Centre and St Pauls Hostel £20,000 Supporting People funding Officer time	Please see strategy for individual milestones and targets.	Reduction in the number of rough sleepers accessing the Rough Sleepers Project by 5% each year from baseline figure of 300 p.a.
Develop and deliver range of local initiatives to tackle domestic violence in the city, in conjunction with Domestic Violence forum strategy, including the development of a Sanctuary Scheme.	Principal Strategic Housing Officer	Opportunities Services aimed at supporting victims of domestic violence. Services that support the reduction in domestic violence incidents Risks Demand for service that cannot be met due to limited budget	Officer time £5000 Sanctuary Scheme grant (match funded by RSLs)	Implement Sanctuary Scheme Target: October 2006 Attend and influence domestic violence groups and attend consultation events on SP review of DV services. Target: Ongoing and August 2008 Development other initiatives as appropriate Target: 2008 - 09	Services available that support the wishes of the victims of domestic violence and prevent homelessness where possible including the exploration of providing safe houses.
Ensure that we co-ordinate and support the work done by statutory and voluntary agencies to tackle single homelessness	Project Officer Single Homeless Forum	Opportunities Full use made of range of services available Risks Homelessness increasing as service users not accessing services.	Officer time DCLG grant £67,500 Council funding £45,000	Develop work plan with Single Homelessness Forum Target: 2008	Services working together to reduce single homelessness in the city and provide effective and co-ordinated services where required.
Ensure all information to homeless households and other service providers is accessible.	Project Officer	Opportunities Full use made of range of services available Risks Homelessness increasing as service users not accessing services.	Officer time	Paper version of the web based information directory. Annual reviews of all information provided to service users. Target: 2008	Increased number of homeless preventions and sustained tenancies as service users and agencies access full range of accommodation and support services available. Homeless prevention numbers 300 p.a.

Wychavon District Council Homelessness Strategy

Wychavon's vision for homelessness services

To prevent homelessness, wherever possible, by providing timely advice, assistance and support, helping people make informed choices about their lives.

Objectives

- To work with partners to prevent homelessness by providing timely and appropriate advice about housing options and the assistance needed to meet a customers needs
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented, to enable appropriate support services to be provided, particularly to families who may be placed into temporary accommodation
- To support households to sustain tenancies and to prevent homelessness reoccurring.

Introduction

Our previous Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008 'Making a difference to everyone' set the strategic direction for improving our homelessness services within the district. By working in partnership we have delivered all of the actions ahead of time and have changed our service beyond recognition, creating a 'can do' culture within the team and with our partners.

We now provide a very proactive service where improvements are part of the day to day operation of the service with the customer always at the centre of our approach. We are very proud of the partnership initiatives we are involved in and the positive outcomes that have been achieved for local people.

This turn around in our service is reflected in the fact that Wychavon is the first district council to achieve a double excellent rating for its housing service via the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process and more recently has earned the privilege of becoming a Regional Homelessness Champion and a Regional Youth Homelessness Champion.

We want to continue to develop improved services for those people in our community who are faced with homelessness and recognise that by working together across Worcestershire we can ensure that everyone has access to the same high quality services and initiatives.

This strategy has been developed after a robust homelessness review and involvement/consultation of a range of stakeholders. This chapter focuses on the particular issues we face within the Wychavon district and tells you about our current service provision, the resources available and the actions we intend to take over the next three years to prevent homelessness.

The Local Profile

Population

Wychavon is the largest of the six local authorities in Worcestershire both in terms of size (66,300 hectares) and population (119,100). Half of the district population lives in the three market towns of Evesham, Pershore and Droitwich and the other half in the 100+ rural villages.

The 2004 sub national population projections indicate that the district's population is expected to grow significantly to 122,800 by 2011. This is affected by in-migration into the area predominantly from the south east but also from the conurbation. Another significant contributor is that more people are living for longer.

Ethnicity

Within the Wychavon district, 98.8% of the population are white as evidenced in the Census 2001. At the time of the census 2001, this was significantly higher than the average for the region and nationwide. Recent information collected for the electoral register shows that the main ethnic groups within the district are Polish, Italian and South African. There are also increasing numbers of European economic migrants moving into the local area to work in the local food industry.

Age

The age structure of the district is 26.5% people under the age of 25 years, 47.2% aged between 25 years and 59 years whilst the 60 years and over sector of the population accounts for 26.4%. It is anticipated that there will be an increasing number of older people over the next few years within the district and this is associated with rapidly changing needs / aspirations.

Unemployment

Unemployment within the district is low. Department of Work and Pensions data indicates that the unemployment rate within the district has been between 1.7% and 2.0% over the last 12 months. The main employment locally is in the automotive, distribution, food and public service sectors. This disguises a relatively low wage economy in some areas. Approximately 14% of the population are in receipt of housing/or council tax benefit.

Local Housing Market

In Wychavon approximately 76% of all homes are owner occupied with approximately 17% socially rented and 7% privately rented. There are very high housing needs within the district. The main drivers being the increasing population and the increasing affordability gap that is making it difficult for local people to access market housing. This has meant increasing pressure on the existing socially rented housing within the district and increasing numbers of people on the housing register.

The housing waiting list

The council administrates a common housing register on behalf of itself and seven Housing Association partners which are collectively known as the Wychavon Housing Consortium. The partner Housing Associations are: Rooftop Housing Group, Festival Housing Group, Bromford Housing Group, West Mercia Housing Group, English Churches Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing Group and Housing 21.

A choice based lettings scheme called 'Wychavon Home Choice' was introduced in May 2006 within the district and this is empowering local people to take ownership of their housing problems and to make informed choices about where they choose to live. This meets one of the Governments targets.

This scheme is helping us to work with local households to prevent homelessness arising by awarding applicants threatened with homelessness a high priority. The scheme also helps people make realistic housing choices with properties of a range of tenures being advertised side by side via the scheme and detailed information available about rents, location, local facilities etc.

Homeless approaches and acceptances

The Council is becoming more proactive in its work to prevent homelessness and during 2006/07 this resulted in 92 households being prevented from becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness. This was a 44% increase in performance on the previous year. This was achieved by early intervention and a range of initiatives to help such as rent deposit scheme, money advice, use of the spend to save budget, empty home nominations, mediation services and more.

Despite our proactive preventative work which has led to a reduction in the number of homeless approaches that are made within the district, there were 129 homeless decisions made during 2006/07, with 80 (62%) of these accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Reasons for homelessness

The main cause of homelessness acceptances within the district is due to relationship breakdown (60%) including parents no longer willing or able to accommodate, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate, non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner, violent breakdown of relationship with partner or associated persons

The second main cause of homelessness within the district is the loss of assured shorthold tenancies (26.25%).

More recently Officers advise there has been an increase in repossessions, particularly relating to households who have purchased their home on the open market or under the Right to Buy scheme and are now finding it unaffordable. Higher aspirations and easier access to credit have had an impact.

Temporary Accommodation

By working in partnership, the Council has been successful in moving away from the use of hostel/shared temporary accommodation for homeless households. We now have a

flexible arrangement with our partner Housing Associations to use mainly two bedroom self contained flats dispersed within the general needs stock to meet the homeless demand, reducing reliance on unsuitable bed & breakfast accommodation. This has enabled us to meet the Governments target of not placing families into bed & breakfast except for in emergencies and then for no longer than 6 weeks.

We have also changed the use of 12 small, unsuitable self contained units used for temporary accommodation and thereby reduced the overall number of temporary accommodation units in the district by half, meeting the governments target for 2010.

Housing Officers undertake regular support visits to all households placed into temporary accommodation and it is proposed that these visits continue when households are re-housed until they are settled and no longer need our support. Additional support packages are organised through various partner organisations for homeless households who have been assessed as needing specific support to meet their needs.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness service

The Council transferred its housing stock in 1994 to two partner Housing Associations who now play a key role in helping the council to discharge its homelessness duties by becoming involved in prevention activities, providing suitable temporary accommodation to meet local needs and assistance with re-housing and support packages for those households who are accepted under the legislation. Good working relationships with our partner Housing Associations and other stakeholders are essential to a successful homelessness service.

The council also provides significant funding to Citizens Advice Bureau to help them run an advice surgery in each of the market towns and this helps compliment the statutory services the council provides. Further work is ongoing with the Worcestershire Supporting People Team to identify further low level support services which may be funded within the district to compliment the statutory homeless service.

Together with our partners, we have developed a range of tools to use in preventing homelessness within the district and some are summarised below;

- **Publicity** – People need to know about the service we offer. We have developed a wide range of leaflets available in many outlets across the district and improved the information held on our website
- **Early Warning Scheme** – We have worked with our partners to develop referral processes at an early stage to enable us to provide timely advice for people who may be faced with homelessness
- **Rent Deposit Scheme** – We have developed our Rent Deposit Scheme after significant consultation with our customers and private landlords to ensure the scheme is effective and helps homeless households to access privately rented accommodation
- **Spend to Save Scheme** – This scheme is invaluable in enabling Officers to spend on activities which will save the council monies in the longer term e.g. continuation of current accommodation with family or with a private landlord, help to move, help to get belongings out of storage, payment of former arrears etc. The savings from these activities are significant and result in reduced pressures for the homeless households themselves.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

- 3rd Party Rent Payments – This overcomes the issues faced by Housing Benefit claimants whereby a private landlord may want the rent calendar monthly but Housing Benefit pays 4 weekly in arrears. The council pays the rent monthly to the landlord and housing benefit is reimbursed so there is minimal expenditure by the council but enables access to privately rented housing
- Money Advice – We have a Money Adviser as part of the Housing Services team and this enables effective working with our customers to help prevent homelessness.
- Support visits/packages – a combination of i) Officer support visits to households in temporary accommodation and once re-housed, as well as ii) packages of support arranged with partner organisations and iii) referrals to general floating support services provided within Worcestershire and funded by Supporting People,
- Fast track housing benefit – this is where a designated Housing Benefit officer works with the homelessness staff to fast track claims for households placed into temporary accommodation, where this is needed to prevent homelessness and to consider the award of discretionary housing payments.
- Exit surveys – to find out from our customers what works well and where we still need to improve our services.
- Protocols for joint working - with Social Services, Prison Service etc

The key issues for Wychavon

The key issues that we face within the district are;

- The lack of affordable homes
- Relationship breakdown (various kinds)
- Loss of Assured Short hold Tenancies
- Financial difficulties leading to repossession
- Young and single older people `sofa surfing' between family and friends
- Increasing approaches from people from abroad

There are few known incidences within the district of rough sleeping but many young and older single people are `sofa surfing', moving between relatives and friends with no settled accommodation. This is further exacerbated by the closure of a supported housing scheme in the north of the district last year.

There is no evidence of homelessness re-occurring within the district. This may be attributable to the support packages which are arranged for the more vulnerable homeless households as they move into permanent accommodation.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Resources

The Housing Services team provides a wide range of housing related services which enables effective joint working to take place with a strong customer focus.

The revenue expenditure for the Wychavon Housing Service is detailed below;

L.A. Revenue Funded Services	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Housing Strategy	£120,578	£137,100	£137,100
Housing Development	£114,345	£113,800	£ 98,800
Homelessness	£197,889	£189,300	£189,300
Housing Advice	£199,864	£211,700	£211,700
Common Housing Register	£157,915	£115,800	£115,800
Housing Renewal	£225,321	£236,600	£237,400
South Worcestershire Care & Repair	£30,558	£30,700	£30,700
Total Housing Services	£1,046,470	£1,035,000	£1,020,800

This does not include the following revenue funding sources for 2007/08;

CLG Grant	£30,000
Regional Homelessness Champion	£ 4,000
Regional Youth Homelessness Champion	£20,000
CLG funded projects	£11,000

Worcestershire Supporting People is working in close partnership with the Worcestershire housing authorities to reshape and provide high quality, cost effective housing related support services within the county to meet local needs. This funding was £15.8 million in 2006/07.

L.A. Capital Funding	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Disabled Facilities Grants	£582,600	£543,000	£542,000
Discretionary Housing Assistance	£220,492	£359,000 (includes £195,840 regional allocation)	£163,000 (regional allocation N/K)
Affordable Homes pot	£ 22,724	£200,000 (includes £66,960 regional allocation)	£225,000 (regional allocation N/K)
Total	£825,816	£1,102,000	£930,000
National Affordable Homes Programme	£5,669,705		N/K

The capital funding available is focussed on delivering new affordable homes, improving property standards, enabling disabled households access around their homes and funding specific housing related initiatives as approved by local members to meet the Council's strategies and plans.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Wychavon Action Plan

Priority 1 To increase the availability of affordable homes

Outcome Better use of existing affordable homes and the development of new affordable housing

Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To work with partner Housing Associations to undertake research into the issue of under occupation in social housing stock. To use the findings to develop a Joint Action Plan with the aim of freeing up more family accommodation for those in need.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon D C Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rooftop H G ▪ Festival H G ▪ Bromford ▪ Carintha H G ▪ Nexus H G 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To find out the reasons why people under occupy Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ineffective use of social housing stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ £15,000 to £20,000 for research project ▪ £10,000 for incentives and other initiatives Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commissioning of research project ▪ Final report ▪ Joint Action Plan ▪ Delivery of local initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report identifying level of underoccupation, reasons for underoccupying and what alternatives people would be interested in ▪ Number of family homes which are freed up
To work with partner Housing Associations to pilot the benefit of loft conversions to enable larger households to remain living in their settled environment, particularly those in rural areas.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon D C Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rooftop H G ▪ Festival H G 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To pilot a new approach to meeting need Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May not be successful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ £150,000 for the conversions Target: March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop procedures ▪ Identify referrals ▪ Undertake works ▪ Evaluate success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of households who are enabled to have their needs met within their existing homes ▪ Number of households who are enabled to maintain their local networks
To work with partners to bring empty properties in the district back into use	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon D C Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Home owners 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To enable empty homes to be brought back into use Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Under-utilised housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ £30,000 Target: March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify empty homes ▪ Work with owners to bring properties back into use ▪ Agree nomination rights for homeless households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the standard of privately owned homes which have been left empty for more than 6 months ▪ Make more affordable homes available for those who need them
To work with Home2Own and Festival Housing Group to maximise the take up of market homebuy from within the Wychavon district	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nexus H G ▪ Festival H G Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon D C 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To make best use of the available funding for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Market the scheme within the local area ▪ Identify suitable applicants ▪ Evaluate outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enable more households to get a foot on the ownership ladder ▪ Enable socially rented housing to be allocated to

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

		market homebuy Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Restricted access locally 		households who cannot access the open market, intermediate housing or the private rented sector	
To work with partner Housing Associations and developers to enable the provision of additional new build affordable housing	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon D C Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partner developing Housing Associations ▪ Developers ▪ Planning department ▪ Rural Housing Enabler ▪ Parish Councils 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To make best use of the available Housing Corporation funding Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ NAHP ▪ Direct LA funding Target: March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor new planning applications ▪ Continue to develop relationships with local developers ▪ Promote 'Rural Affordable Housing Guidance' document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximise affordable housing units through the planning system ▪ Enable households to remain within their support networks ▪ Encourage tenure mix in rural areas

Priority 2 Outcome **To increase the prevention of homelessness**
Less approaches from households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To develop early referral processes with the probation service to help prevent homelessness and prevent re-offending	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Probation Service ▪ Youth Offending Service 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work together to reduce risk of reoffending by maximising housing options for offenders Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustaining tenure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Funding for new initiatives Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify stakeholders ▪ Develop referral routes and procedures ▪ Promote scheme amongst customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevention of homelessness among offenders ▪ Prevention of reoffending behaviour ▪ Promoting sustainable tenancies
To explore the merits of developing a 'nightstop scheme' within the district	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nightstop UK ▪ Connexions 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing numbers of NFA young people and those staying in inappropriate accommodation Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time Target: March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish best practice with Nightstop UK ▪ Discuss with local authority partners who have the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in numbers of young people who are NFA ▪ Provision of safe accommodation for vulnerable young people ▪ Reduction in temp accommodation costs

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breakdown of placements 		<p>scheme in place (Redditch and Wyre Forest)</p>	
Work with Private Landlords Forum to maximise private sector lets and reduce homelessness	<p>Lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Private Landlords Forum ▪ Lettings Agent 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximise lettings to waiting list applicants ▪ Widen choice for those in housing need ▪ Help to co-ordinate rent payments <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustaining tenure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Rent Deposit Scheme <p>Target: March 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Landlords Forum meetings ▪ Continue to develop relationships with local private landlords ▪ Advertising of private vacancies on Wychavon Home Choice scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More availability of vacancies for those in housing need ▪ Reducing pressure on the social housing stock ▪ Filling vacancies more quickly for landlords
To investigate the possibilities of developing a new mediation service	<p>Lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mediation service providers ▪ Centre point 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taking pressure off housing stock by enabling customers to stay at home <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity levels may not be adequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Pump prime funding <p>Target: March 2009</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussions with partners ▪ Service development ▪ Pilot programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prevention of homelessness ▪ Reducing cost of temporary accommodation ▪ Enabling families to stay together
Ensure early referral to the council's Money and Benefits Adviser	<p>Lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC/Money and Welfare Benefits Adviser <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAB ▪ Connexions ▪ Older Persons Services 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assisting with customers debt problems before they reach the point where their home is at risk ▪ Maximising customers' access to welfare benefits <p>Risks:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time <p>Target: March 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raising awareness amongst staff ▪ Promoting the service to groups that work with our customers ▪ Articles in newsletters ▪ Flyers in shops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling households to remain in their own homes ▪ Enabling customers to maximise their benefit entitlement
Further develop the sanctuary scheme and work with Worcestershire Supporting People to ensure there is adequate service provision to meet the needs of households suffering domestic violence	<p>Lead:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanctuary Scheme ▪ Worcestershire Supporting People ▪ Housing Associations 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taking pressure off housing stock by enabling victims of domestic violence to remain in their own homes <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victims of Domestic violence at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Cost of fitting the Sanctuary room <p>Target: March 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting the scheme amongst partners and support providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enabling sufferers of domestic violence to remain in their own homes safely thus taking pressure off housing stock ▪ Reduction in families having to flee to escape DV

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Priority 3 Outcome **To provide suitable support services to meet individual needs**
Enabling resettlement, independent living and reducing repeat homelessness

Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To participate with the Worcestershire Supporting People 'strategic review of homelessness services' and explore any opportunities to develop new complementary services providing support to homeless households in the district.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worcestershire Supporting People Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easing the pressure on homeless households by providing them with more support Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Realignment of existing funding ▪ Bids for new funding Target: March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Involvement in the strategic review of homelessness services ▪ Development of strategic targets ▪ Participation with transformation of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reshape services available to best meet needs of our customers ▪ Provide complementary support services within the district
Contact all homeless households once re-housed after 2 weeks, 6 weeks and 6 months to ensure resettlement	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Range of statutory and Voluntary stakeholders 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nip potential problems with new tenancies in the bud Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-occurring homeless applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single post tenancy visit carried out at the moment ▪ Develop procedure ▪ Discuss with Housing Needs Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide extra support to customers ▪ Ensure sustainability of tenancy
To facilitate the development of support packages for those homeless households who need them	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support Service providers 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easing the pressure on homeless households by providing them with more support Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Funding towards any new initiatives Target: March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult with customers about their needs ▪ Discuss with support providers ▪ Assemble packages on a case by case basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide maximum support for homeless households ▪ Enable more customers to live independently ▪ Ensure sustainable tenancies
Survey homeless households allocated housing to ensure their support needs are being met and that customer feedback is used to shape our services.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RSLs 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve services from the customer's point of view Risks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Forms & postage Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand on existing Exit survey currently undertaken ▪ Publish results on website ▪ Results inform policy ▪ Feedback to customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that customers are satisfied with the service they receive ▪ Using customer comments to shape future service provision

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Priority 4 Outcome **To develop services to meet the needs of young people who may become homeless**
Enable supported personal development of young people

Target	Lead & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To participate with the Worcestershire Supporting People 'strategic review of young people services' and ensure a thorough review of provision for young people within the district.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worcestershire Supporting People Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC ▪ Range of other stakeholders 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Link into proposed strategic review Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transformation of services may be long term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Realignment of existing funding ▪ Worcestershire Supporting People funding Target: March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Input into the strategic review of young people services ▪ Discussion with current service providers to identify gaps ▪ Consult with our customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More support for young people in the district
Introduce basic budget training for all young 16 / 17 year olds placed into temporary accommodation	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Centrepont ▪ Youth workers ▪ Connexions 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To make the most of the opportunity TA gives young people to develop their independent living skills ▪ Sustainable tenancies Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity of staff to deliver and evaluate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Cost of developing the training programme Target: March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Money and Welfare Benefits Adviser to work with other stakeholders to scope a training programme for young people ▪ Consult with young people ▪ Consult with other support providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable tenancies for young people
Introduce a programme to raise awareness amongst young people in schools about the reality of the housing options available to them	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local schools 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise awareness amongst young people about the realities of the housing market Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of impact on young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Costs of developing a programme Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult local schools to discuss time availability ▪ Discuss with other organisations who have tried something similar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring that young people know where to go should they find themselves in housing need ▪ Raising awareness among young people about housing in the district and across the country
Production of an advice pack for young people about all the things they need to consider before leaving home.	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wychavon DC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RSLs 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on good practice examples Risks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer time ▪ Cost of producing the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consult with our customers about what is needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enable young people to make informed choices ▪ Number of young people

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	Other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Degree of circulation of the packs	packs Target: March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Discuss with other organisations who may have produced something similar	where homelessness is prevented
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Wyre Forest District Council Homelessness Strategy

Wyre Forest's Strategic Objectives

Based on the revised review and consultation, Government guidance and local circumstances, the Council is setting the following overarching objectives for its Homelessness Strategy over the coming year. These will be monitored, assessed and reviewed annually with new targets set.

Objective 1 - "To operate and support comprehensive housing advice and assistance services that focus on preventing homelessness, assisting people to maintain existing accommodation and, where necessary, securing other permanent accommodation"

Objective 2 - "To continue developing joint working with Health, Social Services, RSL's and other statutory and voluntary agencies to assist people who require additional support"

Objective 3 - "To provide affordable housing and ensure that where temporary and emergency accommodation for homeless households is required it is suitable and meets their needs"

Objective 4 - "To ensure that robust systems are in place to monitor and evaluate homelessness services"

The Local Profile

Formed following Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, the Wyre Forest District, covering an area of approximately 75 square miles/195 square kilometres, is situated in a semi-rural, yet central location in the north-west of Worcestershire.

The three main towns (Kidderminster, Stourport on Severn and Bewdley) form a "triangle" within the District each being approximately 3 to 5 miles apart from each other. The population is 96,945 (2001 Census). 85% of residents live in the three main towns. Kidderminster, a manufacturing town, contains about 57% of the district's total population (55,000) and is the main centre, whilst Stourport has a population of about 20,000, and Bewdley 10,000.

When the *Wyre Forest Housing Needs Survey 2000* was carried out, the average price of a property in the district was £85,995 with the average wage at £18,944. This gave an income multiplier of 4.5 times salary.

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The average household income in the Wyre Forest is now £28,974,000 (2004 data held by Worcestershire County Council). The average house price in the district is now £153,622 (2004 data held by Worcestershire County Council), i.e. 5.3 times salary.

Although the population is only projected to increase by 0.6% to 2021, a major increase in the numbers of older people is predicted, particularly in the 65+ age group (48.7%). (HNS 2000)

There has been a reducing number of homeless cases both presenting and being accepted in the district, and this is in part due to homeless prevention work being carried out on behalf of the Council by Community Housing Group Ltd and other agencies.

During 2004/05 on average there were 5.7 homeless priority cases accepted per 1000 of population. In 2003/04 this figure was 7.4 cases. The number of homeless presentations in the Wyre Forest has always historically been relatively high, but this pattern is changing.

The key issues for Wyre Forest

As outlined above the numbers of homeless presentations and acceptances have dropped substantially over the past few years due to ongoing prevention work. Ongoing analysis of the numbers and case details will allow us to structure an even more targeted response in future.

In many areas across the country, the combination of rising prices in the private sector and the extension of priority to additional groups laid down by the *Homelessness Act 2002*, has resulted in an initial higher level of homeless applications. However, in most areas, as in Wyre Forest, targeted work has reduced these figures.

The Council will ensure it considers not only the level of provision of additional affordable housing in the district and the improvement of existing stock, but also that it takes into account the importance of continuing preventative work in assessing the longer term view.

The Government has set a target to achieve an end to the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children, except in emergencies, and even then for no longer than 6 weeks (*More than a Roof*). In the Wyre Forest we have managed to achieve this through concentration on the provision of alternative accommodation.

With the introduction of Wyre Forest Nightstop & Mediation, and targeted prevention work, the district has seen a substantial reduction in the numbers of young people accepted as a result of parents no longer accommodating them, which is a main cause

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

of homelessness, from 73 in 2004/05 to 46 in 2005/06. The third most common cause i.e. 'other friends/relatives can no longer accommodate' may also be affected by this work.

Joint working with private sector landlords, through the landlord's forum and consideration of a landlord's accreditation scheme may also assist to reduce the number of shorthold tenancies coming to an end. If the service is more widely known, a greater number of private sector tenants may seek advice at an earlier stage.

One of the Wyre Forest Homelessness Strategy action plan targets for 2003/04 was to set up a new Wyre Forest Homelessness Forum for local advice and support agencies to monitor and deliver the Homelessness Strategy. By bringing different organisations together this Forum can share expanded knowledge and expertise. The first Homelessness Forum was held on 22 March 2004 when stakeholders discussed homelessness provision in the Wyre Forest area, difficulties and identified areas of improvement.

The third and fourth Homelessness Fora were held on 22nd July and 25th October 2005, when the current Action Plan was formulated and agreed.

The delivery of housing advice and homelessness services

Wyre Forest District Council transferred its housing stock in March 2000 to Community Housing Group Ltd. Consequently housing need identified through the Council's Waiting List and Points Scheme is now met through the operation of nomination arrangements with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) who have homes in the district.

The Homelessness, Housing Advice and Waiting List service is provided by Community Housing Group Ltd, from the Council's original offices in Kidderminster, through a Service Level Agreement with the Council. Wyre Forest District Council monitors the effectiveness of the service, and regular meetings and reviews are part of the process.

The service can be accessed either by personal visit or by telephone, it is open to the general public, not just to tenants, and comprehensive advice is available through a range of leaflets and interviews if required. Advice can be given on a range of housing options including private sector renting.

A key priority in delivering our homelessness service is by adopting various prevention methods, which are accessible to all client groups. This is not only provided by Community Housing Group but also by various voluntary agencies, partly funded by the District Council. During 2006/07 the Council has provided over £70,000 of funding to these agencies to prevent homelessness and also uses resources from DCLG.

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A Rent Deposit Scheme has been made available which allows access to the private rented sector to people who would not otherwise be able to rent privately due to the lack of a holding deposit. The Council's Rent Deposit Scheme requires the repayment of the loan at a low rate on a weekly basis. Along side this scheme, a Spend to Save scheme was developed in 2004/05, which can be used in a variety of ways, such as deposits to access the private sector (alleviating the use of temporary accommodation) or as loans to clear existing tenant arrears. In 2005/06 the District Council provided over £25,000 to prevent homelessness through these two schemes.

Finally in 2006/07 the Council has successfully developed and piloted a Sanctuary Scheme to prevent homelessness for victims of violence, be it domestic or otherwise. This is where a main room, generally the main bedroom, is replaced with high level security features to provide a safe room or Sanctuary to allow for victims to call for and await the arrival of the police.

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Resources

The Council holds a Housing Services budget which includes the operation of the Homelessness and Housing Advice and Service through a contract with Community Housing Group, and additional funding through Priority Need Order monies.

The revenue expenditure is as shown below. This includes the funding we receive from DCLG which is for £67,000. This was under-spent in 2005/06 and therefore gives a figure of £93,390.86 for 2006/07.

REVENUE FUNDED SERVICES (PLANNED SPEND)	2006/7 Spend £	2007/8 Est. Planned Spend £	2008/9 Est. Planned Spend £
Strategic Housing and Enabling	192,650	146,842.50	148,998.55
Homelessness & temp accommodation	151,960	155,960	159,670
Contractors Charges to C.H.G. for Homelessness Service	276,750	283,660	290,760
Total for Homelessness, housing advice and housing strategy	621,360	586,462.50	599,428.55
Funding to External Agencies	93,390.86	TBC	TBC

The 2006/07 Strategic Housing and Enabling revenue budget includes a one off amount of £50,000 for a survey of local housing stock.

For forthcoming years we have predicted the employee costs rising with inflation, with an increase of 3% for 2007/08, and 2.5% for 2008/09.

Affordable housing, irrespective of whether it is provided for rent or sale, must be made available at a price level, which can be sustained by local people in housing need. The increase in affordable housing stock in the district should assist the Council in meeting need, and in some cases can result in specific provision for an identified group. Wyre Forest District Council has streamlined the ownership of land and buildings in the district, and now owns very few properties or land which would be suitable for the development of affordable schemes. However, there are still plots and sites available on the open market, and discussions are continuing to take place with our partner Housing Associations around the development of possible schemes, although there is a significant demand for land from private developers.

The Council has and will continue to use its own capital resources where appropriate to fund new Housing Association schemes. Recently these resources have been used to purchase individual properties on the open market.

Conclusion

We will continue to develop a strategic approach to homelessness in the district, and to work in partnership with other agencies to develop services that meet the needs of homeless people. There will be an ongoing review process, which will be summarised in the production of annual updates to the main Homelessness Strategy document, in tandem with updates to the Housing Strategy. This will ensure a consistent approach to the wider housing market and in particular a focus on homelessness issues.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Wyre Forest's Action Plan

Target	Lead Officer & Partners	Opportunities & Risks	Resources	Milestones & Target Timescales	Expected Outcomes
To reduce the number of tenancy failures and repeat homelessness	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFDC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFCH ▪ RSL partners ▪ Forum 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify any demographic or socio economic trends. 	Officer time	Research reasons for tenancy failure <u>Target:: Ongoing</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of prevention work
To continue the implementation of the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy in Wyre Forest	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFDC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forum 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To ensure homelessness within Wyre Forest is tackled not solely through an individual strategy 	Officer / partner time	<u>Target:: up to 2010</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All agencies to participate in the delivery of the Worcestershire Supporting People Strategy 2005 – 2010 ▪ Informed strategic direction
To develop joint services that complement existing services provided by the Council	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFDC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFCH ▪ Forum 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To continue and improve joint working throughout the service Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less concentration on existing services 	Officer / partner time	To assess the current level of advice and support to non priority homeless clients <u>Target:: February 2007</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop options of advice and support for non priority homeless clients
Ensure effective liaison and communication with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFDC Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WFCH ▪ Forum 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To continue effective liaison and communication between all agencies regarding homelessness 	Officer time	Maintain private sector landlords Forum meetings <u>Target:: April 2007</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider a Rent Guarantee Scheme for private landlords ▪ Review composition and function of the Homelessness Forum ▪ Consider incentives for private landlords to accept homeless households

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Policies and procedures of the Council and the Forum partners to be continually reviewed and updated in line with the strategy's objectives and aims	Lead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forum 	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify issues/trends between agencies ▪ Develop joint plans/initiatives Risks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ineffective target/delivery of service ▪ Value for money 	Officer / partner time	Identify the targets/work plans of each statutory and voluntary organisations <u>Target:: January 2007</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure joined up working
To ensure the full consultation and participation of partners and service users to inform strategy policy and service development	Lead: Forum	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy to be developed through multi-agency working and initiatives Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ineffective targeting/delivery of service ▪ Strategy developed as less specific to homelessness in general and more to individual agency requirements 	Officer / partner time	Identify existing service user consultation methods <u>Target:: December 2006</u>	Consider using these methods to help inform the work of the Forum
The Council and Partners to make relevant performance information publicly available	Lead: Forum	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardisation between agencies Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Value for money 	Officer / partner time	Map current reporting of performance information <u>Target:: October 2006</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardisation of reporting performance information

Resources for delivering homeless actions

At the present time resources shared by the county for the delivery of the countywide action plan are not available, although there may be individual commitments from authorities.

Within each individual strategy there is an outline of resources available to deliver the homelessness and housing advice services, strategic and enabling functions and private sector housing. This covers the period of the first three years of this strategy. This information covers resources that are obtained from external funding sources as well as internal, including from Supporting People and DCLG.

Comparing the provision of housing services in the County

In the development of this strategy the Local Authorities undertook a benchmarking exercise to compare the costs of providing a statutory housing function and particularly the provision of housing advice and homelessness services. We also looked at the individual council's structures and how they had resourced each part of the strategic housing service in terms of staffing numbers.

Despite the various different models for provision adopted by the authorities, costs appear to be very similar for the housing service overall. Overall structures are broadly similar as well and although, within the homelessness and housing advice element, some council's place more emphasis on prevention than statutory work. However all Council's were moving towards a preventative model in line with current best practise.

Within each organisation the distribution of resources to different elements within strategic housing varies quite considerably but unsurprisingly the majority of expenditure went on housing advice and homeless services. All the Councils, with the exception of Worcester had at least two members of staff whose responsibility was for the waiting list and the costs here varied more dramatically. This, in part, reflects the different working arrangements made through stock transfer with the new LSVT RSLs in each of the Council's.

As some of the Councils have contracted out their homelessness and housing advice services, we were keen to see the impact of this on comparative costs but results were inconclusive as the range of services on offer and the workloads varied so much.

Next Steps

Conclusion

Homelessness is the acutest form of housing need and in some cases the most visible to the local community. Our joint aim is to prevent homelessness from happening within the county wherever possible and so we have worked together to develop this strategy to improve the prevention and support services we are able to offer to local people over the next 5 years.

We want to have a real impact on tackling homelessness and, as a result, change the lives of local people for the better and to create strong and prosperous communities. Our plans for doing this are clearly set out in this document.

We have placed our service users at the centre of our cross authority plans, complementing and underpinning other key strategies and plans such as the Community Plan, Children & Young Peoples Plan and the local authority Housing Strategies. This approach would not be possible unless supported by all of the Worcestershire councils and effective partnerships.

To find out further information

We have produced a summary of our homelessness strategy and this leaflet can be made available in larger print, braille or audit cassette on request.

If you need help with understanding this strategy or its summary in your own language, contact Ethnic Access Link on Tel: 01905 25121.

If you would like access to any of the documents listed in Appendix four please contact us.

How to contact us

Bromsgrove District Council
Council House
Burcot Lane
Bromsgrove
B60 1AA

Telephone: 01527 881288
E-mail address:
worcestershirehub@bromsgrove.gov.uk
FAX: 01527 558217
Opening hours:
Monday – Wednesday: 9.00am – 5.00pm
Thursday 10.00am – 5.00pm
Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm
Saturday 9.00- 12.00 noon
Direct Dial Housing: 01684 862151
E-mail :
worcestershirehub@malvernhills.gov.uk
Website: www.malvernhills.gov.uk
Minicom 01684862186
Fax 01684 574906
Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am
– 5.30pm

Malvern Hills District Council
Customer Service Centre,
The Library,
Graham Road,
Malvern,
Worcestershire,
WR14 2HU

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Alcester Street
Redditch
B98 8AH
Worcester City Council
Orchard House complex
Farrier Street
Worcester
WR1 3BB

Direct Dial Housing: 01527 543069
FAX 01527 65216
Opening hours: 9.00am – 5.30pm Monday
to Thursday and Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm
Out of hours emergency 01527 67666
Direct Dial Housing: 01905 722233
E-mail address:
housing@worcester.gov.uk
FAX: 01905 722211
Opening hours: 8.30 am – 5.00pm Monday
to Friday (except Wednesday opening
10.00 am)

Wychavon District Council
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persore
WR10 1PT

Saturday 8.30am – 12.30 pm
Direct Dial Housing: 01385 565020
E-mail address:
housing@wychavon.gov.uk
FAX: 01386 554416
Opening hours: 9.00am - 5.00pm Monday
to Friday

Wyre Forest District Council

9.00am – 12.30pm Saturday
Direct Dial Housing: 01562 732356.
Housing Strategy 01562 732561
E-mail address:
worcestershirehub@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
FAX: 01562 732556
Opening hours: 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday
to Friday (except Wednesday opening
10.00am)

Wyre Forest Community Housing
Civic Centre
Stourport on Severn
Worcestershire
DY13 8UJ

Direct Dial Housing: 01562 732313/16 –
Public; 01562 732314 - Staff
E-mail address:
HousingNeeds@communityhg.com
FAX 01562 733005
Opening hours: 9-1 & 2-4.30 Mon-Fri

Glossary

Affordability – a measure of whether households can access and sustain the cost of private sector housing.

Affordable Housing – Subsidised housing provided by an organisation allocating on the basis of need. Dwellings normally made available for rent but may also include subsidised home ownership such as shared ownership where a Registered Social Landlord or Local Authority retains an interest.

Audit Commission – organisation responsible with inspecting council's and registered social landlords to drive up standards.

Brownfield – A site that has previously been used for other purposes e.g. an industrial site.

CADPOG – County and District Planning Officers Group – County professional group of officers involved in planning services.

Capital Expenditure – Expenditure on assets that provide a use or benefit over a number of years.

Capital Receipt – The proceeds from the sale of land or other assets.

CBL – Choice Based Lettings – A system enabling housing applicant's greater choice in the allocation process for social rented accommodation by "bidding" for properties.

CHOG – Chief Housing Officers Group – County professional group of officers involved in strategic housing.

CHOG Plus – Chief Housing Officers Group as above plus representatives from PCT, Social Care, Connexions, Supporting People, the Housing Corporation and the Government Office for the West Midlands.

CORE – Continuous Recording – Central database of lettings of social housing which includes comprehensive data regarding household size, income, reason for housing need and property information.

CURS – Centre for Urban Studies – The organisation commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Housing Board to develop a West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy.

DCLG/DeCLOG – Department of Communities and Local Government is the Department responsible for local government, social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal.

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant – Grant made available from central government and sometimes enhanced by local government to enable those with disabilities to have adaptations made to their homes.

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Gershon Efficiency Review – A study conducted for the Prime Minister and Chancellor to identify new ways of incentivising the public sector to exploit opportunities for efficiency savings and so release resources for front line public service delivery.

Greenbelt – Land designated for protection from development.

HMA – Housing Market Assessment – An analysis of housing markets and housing needs using waiting list, lettings and house price data.

HMO – House in Multiple Occupation – a property containing two or more separate households.

HOG – Homeless Officers Group – County professional group of officers involved in Homelessness and partner agencies such as Supporting People and Centrepont.

Housing Association (also known as a RSL) – A non-profit making organisation providing homes for those in housing need.

Housing Corporation – A government organisation that funds and regulates housing associations.

HSSA – Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix (also known as the HIP return)– Annual monitoring by the Department for Communities and Local Government of housing activity over the previous financial year. Used to inform local authority plans.

Housing Needs Survey – A local comprehensive survey of the housing related needs within the District, commissioned by the Local Authority and used to inform local authority plans.

Housing Register – a voluntary register of people requesting assistance with securing affordable housing to meet their needs.

Intermediate housing – Subsidised or part ownership schemes for housing eg shared ownership, shared equity, resale covenant or low cost affordable housing.

LSVT – Large Scale Voluntary Transfer – Transfer of housing stock from a Local Authority, to a Registered Social Landlord on the basis of a positive vote by tenants.

Local Government Association – organisation made up of council's that ensures high standards maintained throughout the public sector.

Move On Accommodation – Accommodation available to those in temporary or specialist accommodation that provides more settled permanent accommodation for the former or opportunities for more independent living for the latter.

Nomination Agreement – An agreement between the Council and its partner housing associations to re-house people from the housing register.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) – the former ministry with responsibilities for housing.

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Older People – As defined in the State Pension Scheme – Men over 65 and women over 60 years of age.

PCT – Primary Care Trust – New organisational structures replacing the former health authority.

PIE – Quarterly housing activity report relating to homelessness submitted to DCLG.

Private sector landlord – a landlord renting a home at market prices.

Rent Deposit Scheme – a scheme operated by local authorities whereby assistance is given to eligible applicants towards a private tenancy rent deposit, or a bond, or guarantee is given to the landlord.

RHB – Regional Housing Board – A partnership of representatives from the key regionally based housing organisations, tasked with identifying the needs of the region and putting in place a strategy to meet these needs.

RHIG – Regional Homeless Implementation Group – A Group set up by the Regional Housing Board to assist sub regions in developing action plans to tackle homelessness.

RHS – Regional Homelessness Strategy – The regional framework for homelessness in the West Midlands.

RPG – Regional Planning Guidance – The regional framework for planning in the West Midlands.

RSL – Registered Social Landlord – A non profit making organisation providing homes for those in housing need.

RSS – Regional Spatial Strategy – Provides a spatial framework to inform the preparation of local development documents, local transport plans and regional/sub regional strategies and programmes that have a bearing on land use activities.

Section 106 Agreements – Agreements between a council and developers, negotiated as part of the planning process.

SHMA – South Housing Market Area - The housing market area that was identified as having similar housing issues in the Regional Housing Strategy which encompasses the local authorities of Worcestershire, Stratford and Warwick.

SMART targets – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timescale targets.

Social Care – The new name for Social Services.

Social Inclusion – Ensuring that no one is disadvantaged from accessing services due to their personal circumstances.

Special Needs – Particular client groups whose needs are above average due to their needs e.g. The elderly, the disabled or those suffering from mental illness.

Worcestershire County Homeless Strategy

Subsidy – The provision of financial subsidy towards the capital or running costs of a project or service.

Substance Misuse – People who have alcohol and/or drug dependency problems.

Supported Housing – Housing providing care and support services for people with special needs.

Temporary Accommodation – accommodation provided for homeless households in priority need whilst their eligibility for assistance is assessed.

WMRA – West Midlands Regional Assembly – Regional strategic partnership made up of 100 voluntary members. Responsible for developing and co-ordinating a strategic vision for improving the quality of life within the Region.

WMRHS – West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy – the regional framework for housing in the West Midlands

List of partners

Bromsgrove District Council

Malvern Hills District Council

Redditch Borough Council

Worcester City Council

Wychavon District Council

Wyre Forest District Council

Wyre Forest Community Housing

Appendix One – List of organisations we consulted with

Arksey Carers in Partnership	Regional Assembly
Asha	Rooftop Housing Group
Beth Johnson Housing Group	SAFFA
Bromford Housing Group	St Paul's Hostel
Bromford Support	Spa HA
Bromsgrove District Council	SITRA
Bromsgrove CAB	Smallwod Almshouses
Bromsgrove Youth Homeless Forum	Social Services
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Stonham Housing
Centrepoint	Stratford on Avon District Council
Connexions	Supporting People
Community First	Turning Point
Connect Accommodation Referral Services	Warwickshire Community Council
Community Drugs Team	Waterloo Housing Group
Centre for Urban Research Studies	Wychavon District Council
Early Intervention Service	West Mercia Police
Elected members from Wyre Forest District Council, Redditch Borough Council	Wyre Forest Community Housing
Department of Communities and Local Government	Worcester City Council
Domestic Violence co-ordinator	Womens Aid
Elgar HA	Wychavon District Council
English Churches Housing Group	Worcester Community Housing
Ethnic Access Link	Wolverhampton City Council
Family Mediation	Worcester Housing & Benefit Advice Centre
Focus Foyer	Worcester CAB
Housing Corporation	Worcester Rough Sleepers Project
Homeless Link	Wyre Forest Nighstop
Home start	Wyre Forest District Council
HMP Blakenhurst	YMCA
Housing Corporation	145 Bromyard Road
GOWM	
Malvern Hills District Council	
Maggs Day Centre	
Nexus Housing	
NCH After Care	
Probation	
Redditch Borough Council	
Redditch CAB	
Redditch & Bromsgrove PCT	
Redditch YMCA	
Redditch Nightstop	

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Appendix Two – Feedback on previous homeless strategies

Themes	Bromsgrove	Malvern	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
Fit with other strategies	Some strategies missed	Most Strategies covered	Some strategies missed	Some strategies missed	Most strategies covered	Some strategies missed
Strategy development process	Good stakeholder involvement and service user consultation	Strategy development was inclusive process.	Limited stakeholder involvement in document and no service user consultation	Good stakeholder involvement and service user consultation	Not clear if stakeholder / service user consultation took place but assumed it did	Good stakeholder consultation but not service user. Not clear if views incorporated
Impact of contracting out	Not relevant here	Not relevant here	Not relevant here	Not relevant here	Not clear if LSVT partner involved and no issues identified in relation to stock transfer	Contracted out service involved in review but not clear if involved in Strategy / Action Plan
Link between review, strategy and action plan	No clear link between review and strategy. On whole strategy translates into action plan but some areas not covered	Action plan directly relates to strategy	Review and action plan directly related but some recommendations not included.	Good links between documents but lack of info in review meant couldn't identify why B&B identified in strategy as issue.	Strategy and review not well linked. Action plan directly relates to strategy.	Strategy reflects review but action plan doesn't have actions for all issues identified in strategy.
Strengths	Survey of approaches to all agencies (in addition to LA) Spread of hml applications and potential for rehousing in rural parts of district Consultations and Financial info good.	Prevention actions drawn out throughout strategy. Strong emphasis on multi-agency working. Highlighted areas of good practise	Information on repeat homelessness. Criteria and mechanism for monitoring action plan. Recognition of links between health and homelessness and actions developed to assist this.	The review identifies key issues, concerns, risks and future trends by client group. Format and objectives is clear. Strong focus on prevention. Section on substance misuse.	Strategy identifies actions needed. Format good with links with other strategies / agencies.	Clear objectives for strategy which are followed through in the action plan. Attention to each client group good in review and strategy. Good detail on prevention and review looks at homeless presentations and information about levels of needs and presentations from several different client groups. Wide range of agencies took place in consultation workshop.
Weaknesses	Summary in review would be useful. Review and strategy don't consider health needs of homeless people. Limited involvement of social services in steering group. Stakeholder issues not always reflected. Strategy very short.	The strategy did not recognise the health needs of homeless people There were no real monitoring systems in place Neither Social Services or Probation were greatly involved in strategy development.	Limited data on need that doesn't help LA to understand scale of problem. Structure of strategy. Key client groups not considered. Map of advice services mentioned but not included. Feedback from agencies not summarised.	No consideration of homeless families in review. Review contains little analysis and no conclusions as included in strategy but more useful if summary in review as well. Things included in strategy not in review and vice versa.	Review data needs more analysis and more data from other sources. Arrangements for measuring and monitoring progress are not specified and no targets. No specific recognition of corporate response to homelessness. Strategy doesn't address rough sleeping	Insufficient analysis of homelessness or trends (including future levels). Action plan not detailed enough. Strategy does not attempt to address all major causes of homelessness. Actions in strategy not translated to action a in action plan. Resources for implementation not identified and neither is

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				Rough sleeping actions need more work.	and some actions in relation to B&B are a little vague.	monitoring mechanisms. No detail on how to work more closely with health and social services.
Themes	Bromsgrove	Malvern	Redditch	Worcester	Wychavon	Wyre Forest
Action Plan	Clear actions but no measure of outcomes. Most actions responsibility of Council.	The action plan was not SMART. Action plan may be too ambitious to deliver	Difficult to read. Actions not always SMART. B&B objectives unlikely to be effective in short term.	Strong action plan except rough sleeping. Good on reducing B&B and learning more about causes of homelessness.	No lead agencies, milestones, resources or outcomes for actions.	Clear actions but needs to say who's responsible, priorities and milestones.
Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation	Internal monitoring mechanism set up but not external identified?	Apart from Focus Group no real monitoring systems in place	Monitoring difficult without SMART targets but criteria good. Will report to councillor, staff and strategy group.	Not clear who monitoring within LA but WHP, Housing Board & LSP clear and robust mechanism.	Not specified and hard to see how actions will make difference.	Will obtain customer views but not on ongoing basis and set up homelessness forum but with no specific role to evaluate
Overall assessment	Strong strategy and detailed action plan but more agencies need to be included.	Strong review. Action plan not SMART.	Review misses important data and lacks feedback. Stronger strategy and action plan.	Thorough review and good strategy.	Weak review. Stronger strategy. Some actions not SMART.	Review and Strategy reasonably good. Action plan doesn't address all key issues and isn't SMART.
Good practise	Increasing provision of TA for young people. Protocol between HB and housing mgmt staff to speed up processing. Quota of allocations for people leaving hospital and other institutions. Minimising under-occupancy.	Work on prevention. Undertaking further homelessness research. Working with private and social landlords to identify those at risk of losing tenancies.	Criteria set for monitoring and evaluation strategy. Reporting to tenants panel.	Drop-in services for young people. Data on outcomes from SmartMove scheme. Outcome of applications made by intentionally homeless households.	Training for staff to recognise mental health problems so as to respond appropriately.	Resources information good. Prevention services identified is good.
Gaps	None	BME Groups not covered. Does not address health needs of homeless persons	Data from other agencies to indicate scale of need, particularly amongst non-priority groups. Feedback from other agencies and user consultation	Focus on preventing homelessness amongst private sector tenants.	Not clear if Wychavon intends to meet B&B target. No assessment of rough sleeping. No targets, milestones, priorities, resources, lead agencies and outcomes in Action Plan.	Info on rough sleepers, households in B&B and actions to meet gvt targets is lacking. Also info on repeat homelessness, offenders, rural homelessness and shared actions with other agencies.

Appendix Three - Details regarding partnership groups

Regional

West Midlands Regional Assembly –

The Assembly brings together representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. There are one hundred Assembly Members consisting of representatives from Local Authorities, stakeholder groups and the business sector. There are three main areas of work which the Assembly are involved in, regional planning, scrutinising the work of Regional Development Agencies and representing the region to ministers.

Regional Housing Board –

The Regional Housing Board consists of members from bodies such as the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Housing Corporation and the Regional Housing Partnership. The two main roles of the Board are the preparation of the Regional Housing Strategy and advising ministers on how the region's annual allocation of funding for housing capital works should be made.

Sub-regional

South Housing Market Area Partnership –

The Partnership consists of representatives from Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, developers and areas of the voluntary sector, and has been formed in response to the Regional Housing Strategy. Their role being to speak and act jointly on issues facing the South Housing Market Area, and to undertake further actions that may arise from the implementation of the Regional Housing Strategy.

The Partnership feeds directly into the Regional Housing Board.

Appendix Four - Related Strategies

National Level

Sustainable Communities Every Child Matters More than a roof Supporting people strategy

Regional Level

Regional Spatial Strategy Regional Homeless Strategy Regional Housing Strategy Regional Economic Strategy Regional Supporting People Strategy

Sub-regional Level

South Housing Market Assessment Partnership Homeless Action Plan

County Level

SMAT Action Plan Youth Homelessness Strategy Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Worcestershire's Forum Against Domestic Violence

Older People's Housing Strategy Mental Health & Housing Strategy Learning Disability Housing Strategy Worcestershire Partnership Plan

District Level

Housing Strategy Homelessness Strategy Rough Sleepers Strategy (WCC only) Corporate Plans

Community Safety Partnership strategy (South and North) Community Plan

Appendix Five - Organisations that mapping service questionnaires were sent to;

Advance	PEAL
Age Concern	Probation Stonham floating support
Armchair	Racial Equality Council
Asha	Relate
Bath Road YP scheme	Rethink
Benefits Agency	Revenues and Benefits
British Legion	Salvation Army
Bromford Housing Group	Sanctuary
Bromsgrove Youth Hml Forum	SMAT
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	St Pauls
CAB	Stonham
CDT	Support coordinator
Charlford Multi-Agency Resource Centre	Supporting People
Connexions	Surestart
DIAL	Time 4U
DV coordinator	TP coordinator
Early Intervention Team	Turning Point
Ethnic Access Link	WCH
Headway	Whabac
Homestart	Women's Aid
HWASA	Worcester College of Technology
Job Centre	Worcester Volunteer Centre
Maggs	Worcestershire Family Mediation
Mencap	WRSP
Mhhyat	YMCA
Mind	YOT
NCH	YOT
Nexus	Youth Enquiry Service
Noah's Ark Trust	
Onside Advocacy	

Appendix Six – South HMA Partnership Action Plan

1.1 Jointly Agreed Priorities and Pooling of Resources

- Explore the potential of developing shared services / initiatives to improve service delivery across the sub-region and achieve efficiencies.
- Consult with Supporting People Teams to explore agreed priorities for homelessness services across the HMA.

•

1.2 Capturing Cross –Sector Homelessness and Housing Need Data for the Sub-region

- Identify and share existing good practice in data capture, Agree and implement a common methodology that avoids double counting and duplication of work.
- Agree a protocol for multi-agency collection and recording of information (standardised data recording system)
- Identify resources for the effective analysis of data to inform Regional, sub-regional, County and local plans/strategies.
- Make best use of existing data (County Council, West Midlands Observatory).
- Assess, in consultation with Support People Teams the potential of an HMA wide Supporting people Services Directory.

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1.3 Integrated, Holistic Strategic Approach and cross-boundary working

- Develop working relationships between professions, for example, social services, housing and health. This could be based on extending/rolling out existing successful protocols and identifying good practice.
- Ensure effective mechanisms for integration and partnership working across sector – for example, floating support providers forum, private landlords (establish County wide forum?) and specialist providers/ support service forums
- Development of HMA promotional material to raise awareness of homelessness

1.4 Working with Private Landlords to Tackle homelessness

- Assess how to improve working relationships with private landlords and include estate agents in private sector landlord forums along with other relevant agencies.
- Identify owners with empty properties, and work to bring these properties back into use.
- Work with employers to promote their involvement in securing affordable accommodation to meet the affordable housing needs of local workers.
- Produce information on rights and responsibilities for tenants and landlords in the private sector

1.5 Preventing Homelessness

- Identify good practice in preventing homelessness within the sub-region and replicate where appropriate.
- Explore the possibility of extending the Worcestershire Family Mediation Service across the HMA.
- Review use of Discretionary Housing Payments/ Discretionary Housing Benefit pot to identify good practice and to assess how it can be best linked to Homeless Prevention funds
- Repeat the survey commissioned by ODPM in 2005 on the use of homeless prevention tools by local authorities within the HMA in order to monitor progress (see section 5.2).
- Identify in the light of the above and multi-agency data capture which prevention tools/practices to focus on and implement across the HMA

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- Review advice services to ensure consistent and quality advice given across the HMA
- Roll out domestic violence sanctuary Projects across the HMA
- Provision and delivery of school education packs – aimed at preventing homelessness

1.6 Ensuring the Provision of appropriate Accommodation

- Work in partnership with the RHE and others to ensure that intermediate models of affordable housing are affordable for local people and needs.
- Identify supported housing accommodation and housing related support gaps and address these. e.g. drug/alcohol dependencies, young people, prison/probation leavers, floating support for clients with multiple needs, move on accommodation.
- Encourage local authorities and registered social landlords to implement initiatives to reduce under occupation and evaluate designation of stock
- Consult with local authorities and registered social landlords to agree a minimum percentage of lettings to homeless households.

1.7 Promoting and Disseminating Good Practice

- Develop a mechanism for identifying and sharing good practice. This is particularly an issue in terms of developing good practice / information sharing links between Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

1.8 Research Priorities

- Research should be commissioned to assess the needs and impact of migrant workers on the housing market and to identify good practice.
- Ensure the needs of travelling families are included in the assessment of housing needs in the SHMA, and that these needs are met. Consider developing the Herefordshire model across the HMA (see Appendix 2- good practice)
- Share experience of choice based lettings, explore a HMA choice based lettings system and review the impact on the rehousing of homeless and those threatened with homelessness households
- Research into why private landlords terminate tenancies and the policy implications.

1.9 Influencing National Policy

- Influence national policy to limit cost of land on rural exception sites to ensure affordable housing can be provided.

1.10 Action Plan

- Develop these key tasks into a sub-regional implementation action plan, which is agreed by all partners, identifies timescales and clear responsibilities, sets SMART targets and clear jointly agreed outcomes, and identifies the financial resources to deliver the plan. The action plan should identify what individual organisations can contribute to meeting the agreed outcomes and should include how success in delivering the plan will be monitored and evaluated.
- Hold a meeting in one year's time to provide an update on homelessness issues and progress in taking forward the action plan and to facilitate networking.