

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY
for
HEREFORDSHIRE
2008-2013



FOREWORD

By Councillor O Barnett
Cabinet Member for Social Care Adults & Health



Since Herefordshire Council published its last Homelessness Strategy in 2003, a great deal has changed in the English housing market. Nationally, the number of households registered with housing waiting lists across the country has risen steadily, creating additional pressures on the availability of affordable housing in England. At the same time, the wider housing market has also changed. More people own their own homes, and house prices have increased year on year, presenting considerable challenges for young people wishing to take their first step on the housing ladder by renting or purchasing a property. In Herefordshire, we have seen very similar themes develop in our local housing market. Rents and property prices have also risen across the county, and affordable housing remains in short supply too. There are around 5,500 households registered with the county's Home Point choice-based lettings scheme, bidding for around 795 properties a year. So, in this context, it is crucial that the Council works hard to help tackle the housing pressures faced by Herefordshire residents. If it doesn't do that, homelessness could become a bigger issue in our community, and that's not something anyone wants to see here.

As you read through the strategy, you will also see another big change in the way that homelessness is tackled, which is taking place nationally and locally. For the next five years, the Council's Homelessness Strategy emphasises the need to prevent homelessness whenever possible as homelessness prevention is the key to protecting the people of Herefordshire in a challenging housing market. In 2006, government advisors visited the authority, and led us through a range of initiatives being encouraged across the country, in their bid to prevent homelessness nationally. Herefordshire Council subsequently launched its own homelessness prevention approach on the basis of this advice, and the results to date have been impressive. Since 2006, in line with government guidance, homelessness has been significantly reduced in Herefordshire. New initiatives, such as mediation and sanctuary, have helped young people remain in the family home, and protect women from the threat of domestic violence. Interventions from the Homelessness Prevention Fund have also enabled people to remain housed without moving into temporary accommodation, an environment often associated with issues such as declining health, falling school attendance, and limited employment opportunities. Further reducing the use of temporary accommodation is a key target inside the Council's Local Area Agreement, and achieving this will enhance the wellbeing of households and communities across the county.

The Council is delighted to be able to work together with a number of agencies across the county to tackle homelessness and this new strategy shows just how important our partners have become in helping prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. Their role is central to protecting vulnerable people from the risk of homelessness and in helping the Council develop its broader strategic approach to this issue. I would like to express my thanks to our partners for their continued support and for their considerable input, together with that of their customers, during the consultation phase associated with this latest strategy. I would also like to thank the staff in the Homelessness and Housing Advice team who continue to work hard to prevent homelessness.

The Homelessness Strategy sets out how the Council aims to achieve better outcomes for the people it serves, and I look forward to hearing of continued improvements over the next five years.

Contents

SECTION ONE - CONTEXT, OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE	6
1.1 The National Context.....	6
1.2 The Regional Context – The West Midlands.....	6
1.3 Sub Regional Context (West Housing Market Area –WHMA)	6
1.4 Our Strategic Vision.....	7
1.5 The Strategic Outcomes.....	7
1.6 Strategic Links.....	7
1.6.1 Links to relevant Strategies.....	8
1.7 How will we do this?	9
1.8 The development of the Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy	9
SECTION TWO - RESOURCES, ISSUES AND SERVICES	11
2.1 Prevention of homelessness.....	12
2.1.1 Current picture.....	12
2.1.2 Prevention issues	13
2.1.3 Key actions	14
2.2 Advice	15
2.2.1 Current picture on housing advice	15
2.2.2 The main issues about advice in Hereford	15
2.2.3 Key Actions	16
2.3 Affordable housing.....	17
2.3.1 Current picture of affordable housing.....	17
2.3.2 the main issues of affordable housing.....	18
2.3.3 Key actions	18
2.4 Temporary accommodation	19
2.4.1 Current picture of temporary accommodation	19
2.4.2 Issues about temporary accommodation	19
2.4.3 Key actions	19
2.5 Local Housing Allowance.....	20
2.5.1 Current picture.....	20
2.5.2 Main issues	20
2.5.3 Key actions.....	20
2.6 Health and homelessness	20
2.6.1 Current picture and issues	20
2.6.2 Key actions.....	20
2.7 Education	21
2.7.1 Current picture.....	21
2.7.2 Main issues	21
2.7.3 Key actions.....	21
2.8 Employment and life skills	21
2.8.1 Current picture.....	22
2.8.2 Main issues	22
2.8.3 Key actions.....	22
2.9 Crime and community safety	22
2.9.1 Current picture.....	22
2.9.2 Main issues	23
2.9.3 Key actions.....	23
2.10 Research.....	23
2.10.1 Current picture.....	23
2.10.2 Main issues.....	23
2.10.3 Key actions.....	23
SECTION 3 - REVIEW OF THE MAIN NEED GROUPS IN HEREFORDSHIRE	25
3.1 BME groups including migrant workers.....	25
3.3 Care Leavers	26
3.4 Key actions for Care Leavers.....	27
3.5 Domestic abuse and those fleeing violence	27
3.6 Key actions for those fleeing violence.....	29

3.7 Excluded from services due to multiple and complex needs	29
3.8 Key actions	30
3.9 Ex-offenders	31
3.10 Key actions	32
3.11 Gypsies and travellers	32
3.12 Main issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Herefordshire	33
3.13 Some of the main issues noted in stakeholder interviews are:	34
3.14 Key actions for Gypsies and Travellers	34
3.15 Homeless families	35
3.16 Key actions for homeless families	36
3.17 Learning Disabilities	37
3.18 Key actions for service users with learning disabilities	38
3.19 Mental health	38
3.20 Key actions for service users with mental health needs	39
3.21 Older people	40
3.22 Key actions for older people	41
3.23 Rough sleepers	41
3.24 Key actions for Rough Sleepers	42
3.25 Singles and couples over 25 years old	42
3.26 Key actions for homeless single people and couples	43
3.27 Substance misuse	43
3.28 Teenage and young parents (from 16 to 25 years old)	45
3.29 Key actions for teenage and young parents	46
3.30 Young people aged 16 – 17 years	46
3.31 Key actions for Young People aged 16 – 17 years need group	48
3.32 Young People aged 18 – 25	49
3.33 Key actions for Homeless Young People aged 18 – 25	50
SECTION FOUR - CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE USERS, STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS	51
4.1 Introduction	51
4.2 Consultation with Stakeholders, HSI, Staff and Sub regional partners.	51
4.3 Consultation with Service Users	51
SECTION FIVE - IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE REVIEW	53
5.1 Implementation of Strategy	53
5.2 Sub Regional Strategy	53
SECTION SIX - ACTION PLAN	55
APPENDIX ONE – Review of housing needs and homelessness from 2003 – 2008	56
1.1 Introduction	56
1.2 Consultation considerations	56
1.3 What has been achieved so far?	56
1.4 Levels of Homelessness	59
1.5 Levels of Intentional decisions	60
1.6 Levels of Repeat Homelessness	60
1.7 The Main Reasons for Priority Need and Accepting Homelessness	61
1.8 Reasons for Homelessness	61
1.9 Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation	62
1.10 Homelessness and Prevention team (Housing Advice Services)	63
1.11 Supporting People	64
1.12 Shelter statistics for families and single people	65
1.13 BME and Migrant Workers Homelessness Statistics	65
1.14 Future Need of Herefordshire Citizens	66
1.15 Home Point	66
1.16 Affordable Housing	67
1.17 Property statistics	68
1.18 Economic Information	69
1.18.1 Unemployment	69
1.18.2 Earnings and affordability	69
1.18.3 Housing stock in the county	69
1.18.4 Population	69

1.18.5 Local information	69
1.18.6 Financial	69
1.18.7 Partnership Working	70
1.18.8 Consultation.....	70
APPENDIX TWO - A report on the findings of the Homelessness Strategy consultation sessions with service users, March 2008.....	71
Aims	71
Methodology.....	71
Methodology – continued.....	72
Headline summary.....	72
Current and past housing difficulties of the attendees.....	72
Results	72
Appendix Three - The results of the Service Users Homelessness Strategy survey 2008	81
Aims:	81
Methodology:.....	81
Headline summary:.....	81
Appendix 1- Tabulated results	83
Appendix 2- Key client groups service and support identification.....	90
Appendix 3 Full free text results.....	97
Appendix Four - Acknowledgements	109
Appendix 6 – Sub regional SMART ACTION PLAN.....	112

SECTION ONE - CONTEXT, OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

1.1 The National Context

In 2002, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) produced “More than a Roof: a report into tackling homelessness.” It concluded there needed to be a shift from a reactive approach to homelessness provision, towards a greater emphasis on preventing homelessness. Planning for prevention involved developing research and monitoring work that would lead to the development of evidence based strategy.

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a number of changes, which reflected this new approach. The Act brought in a range of changes to the way local authorities deliver their homelessness service. A major change was the requirement for local authorities to carry out a homelessness review – mapping current needs and services - and then to produce a strategy, setting out how homelessness would be tackled in the future. The ODPM guidance laid out three key aims that were needed to underpin all homelessness strategies:

- Prevention of homelessness
- Provision of appropriate accommodation
- Provision of support to ensure sustainment of tenancy and avoid repeat homelessness

These aims remain the foundation of central government’s 2005 document “Homeless Strategy Sustainable Communities: settled homes: changing lives”, along with the “Code of Guidance - Local Authorities” from 2006, which gives local authorities advice and assistance on measures for tackling homelessness.

1.2 The Regional Context – The West Midlands

It is recognised that in addressing homelessness, housing need and support issues, local authorities need to work together to identify and tackle overall regional trends and develop a broad cross-authority approach rather than work in isolation. To this end a Regional Housing Strategy, a Regional Supporting People Strategy and Regional Homelessness Strategy Smart Action Plans have been produced. Herefordshire Council is an active member and attends the Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (R.HSIG).

1.3 Sub Regional Context (West Housing Market Area –WHMA)

The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy identifies four sub-regional housing market areas (HMA’s) in the West Midlands Region: North, South, Central and West. Herefordshire forms the West Housing Market area with neighbouring Shropshire.

Herefordshire and Shropshire local authorities aim to move towards cross-boundary working, information sharing and best practice along with research and development work, much of which is co-ordinated through the West Housing Market Area Partnership. Both in 2006 and March 2007, a homelessness conference was attended by both Shropshire and Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy Implementation group (HSIG) members to discuss the possibilities of cross-boundary working and homeless-related services in both counties. The results from these conference away-days have been used to influence the sub regional ‘Smart Action Plans’ that outline the expected achievements within the next 5 years with Shropshire partners. See appendix 6 for the sub regional Smart action plans; these actions are also included in the main action plan.

West Housing Market Assessment (WHMAs)

The West Housing market assessment (WHMA'S) has been undertaken by external consultants during 2007 and is due to be finalised during 2008. The assessment will identify local housing market areas, what the local needs are and what types of housing will be required to ensure a balanced housing market. The final recommendations will inform National, sub regional and local policies and strategies for both housing and planning.

1.4 Our Strategic Vision

The Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 -2013 and its appendices identify the current position on homelessness and lays out Herefordshire Council's key strategic outcomes and actions in tackling homelessness in the county. The Strategy and action plan detail how the six outcomes will be achieved, and maps out a delivery deadline, detailing each action's links to performance indicators in the county, see appendix 7 for the relevant performance indicators. The Strategy has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders, the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG), service users and staff. It is a stand-alone document but has intrinsic links to other strategies as detailed in the strategic links section.

1.5 The Strategic Outcomes

Our overall objective for this strategy is to achieve the following 6 outcomes:

Six Outcomes

- **The prevention of homelessness through the effective targeting of housing options and services.**
- **To end the use of bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation and to continue to reduce the overall number of households in temporary accommodation.**
- **To ensure sufficient accommodation and support is available for people who are, or who may become, homeless.**
- **Improve joint working amongst all agencies concerned with homelessness and prevention.**
- **To reduce homelessness and it's related impacts amongst vulnerable client groups including young people and children.**
- **To maximise the effectiveness and targeting of homelessness services through the use of improved data collection and intelligence gathering.**

1.6 Strategic Links

The Herefordshire Community Strategy is the overarching strategic document for Herefordshire Council and its public, private and voluntary sector partners. The Community Strategy sets out a shared vision for the county to 2020. This links with the Herefordshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities and is managed by the Herefordshire Partnership.

The Community Strategy divides its vision into 4 themes as detailed below: -

- **Economic Development and Enterprise**
- **Healthier communities and Older people**
- **Children and Young People**
- **Safer and Stronger Communities**

The Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group have ensured that this Strategy has considered these themes and ensures that there are links from the actions required within this

Strategy to the themes within the Community Strategy, the Corporate Plan, the Local Area Agreement and the Service Plan along with the national indicators.

This Strategy is well integrated within the Herefordshire Community Strategy along with the Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011 which sets out how the Council intends to achieve the shared vision for Herefordshire. Within its seven themes, those relevant to this Homelessness Strategy are listed below with an outline of their relevance:-

Theme: Safer and Stronger Communities / Sustainable Communities.

Council Priority: To secure sufficient affordable housing to meet the needs of local people

The Homelessness Strategy and action plan sets out the work required to increase the numbers of affordable housing units over the next five years along with improving the quality of temporary accommodation and links to support services to prevent homelessness for the future.

Theme: Children and Young People.

Council Priority: To maximise the health, safety, economic wellbeing, achievements and contribution of every child

This Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan sets out the work required in the next five years, to ensure zero families with children are accessing bed & breakfast accommodation. The actions also aim to provide a range of accommodation and housing support solutions to assist vulnerable young people and care leavers in the transition to independence.

Theme: Health and well-being / Older People.

Council Priority: To reshape adult social care, enabling many more older and other vulnerable people to maintain control of their lives

The Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan sets out the work required to provide a homelessness and prevention & options service for older people, to enable older people to remain in their own home or to access private sector accommodation with support.

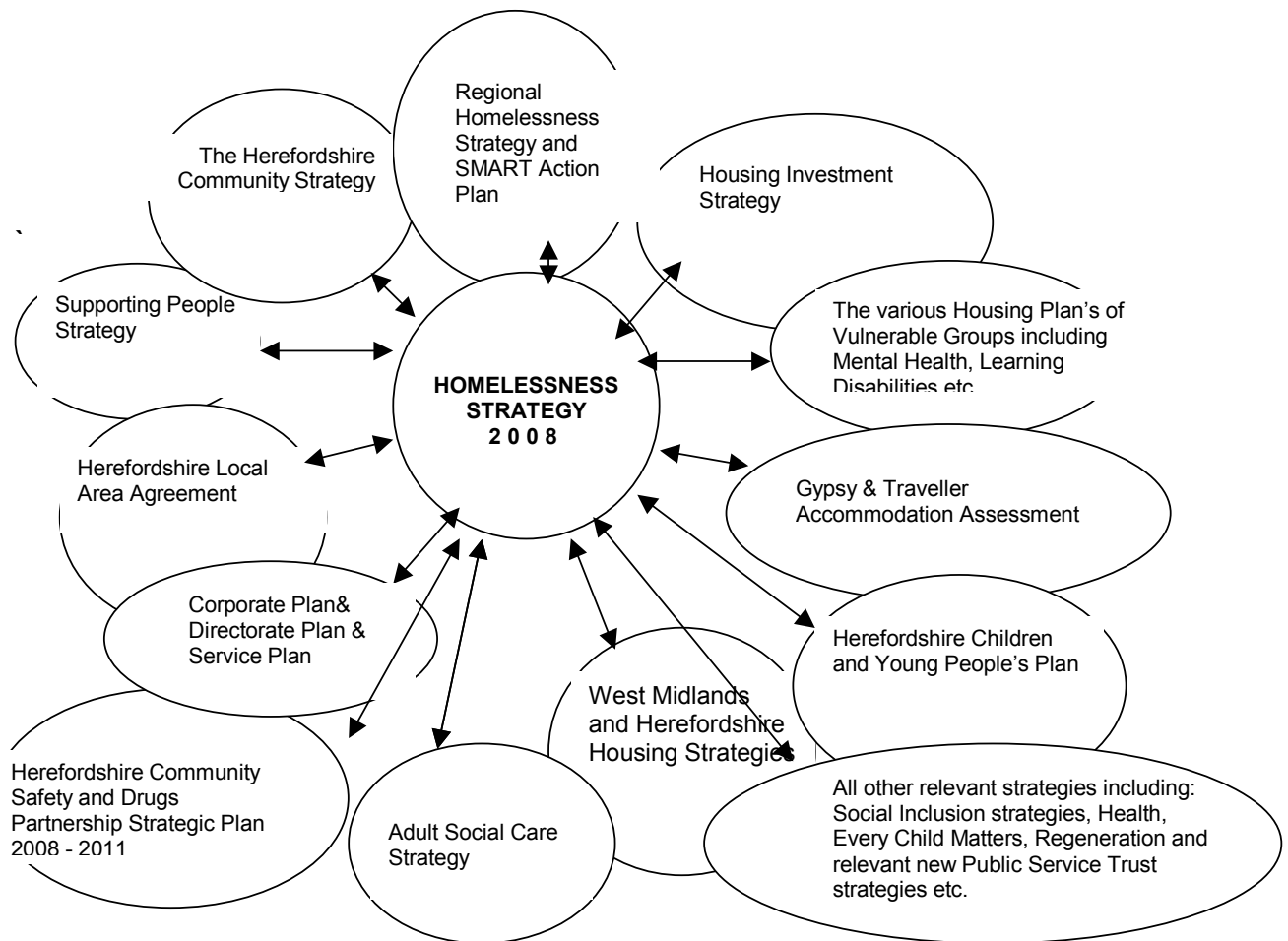
Theme: Economic Development and Enterprise.

Council Priority: To secure the essential infrastructure for a successful economy, enabling sustainable prosperity for all.

The Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan sets out the work we will achieve to encourage previously unemployed homeless service users back into work.

1.6.1 Links to relevant Strategies

To support the joint working approach to tackling homelessness set out in the Strategy, it is essential that, homelessness is viewed as an integral part of the wider strategic and policy framework promoting social inclusion, community safety and developing sustainable communities. To achieve a successful implementation, the aims, objectives and actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy aim to reflect the relevant community and corporate plan priorities. The diagram below has outlined the key strategies and plans that have influenced the development of the Homelessness Strategy and that will impact on its implementation.



1.7 How will we do this?

We will aim to deliver and continually develop our Homeless Strategy Action Plan, which includes a range of prevention measures, advice and advocacy services along with actions to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and increase housing options for vulnerable groups in Herefordshire to meet the needs identified.

In conjunction with Supporting People, we intend to ensure that housing related support is available to address the needs of vulnerable households and work with stakeholder agencies to devise and deliver individual support packages. We will also strive to ensure that support assists individuals in working towards remaining independent.

In developing new ways of working, we will investigate and utilise research and best practice examples drawn from service users along with voluntary and statutory agencies nationwide.

Where an assessment of need identifies a requirement, we will work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and other accommodation providers to develop new or improved accommodation options. We will also be working to identify ways to remove the barriers to access existing accommodation through initiatives to address issues of exclusion due to a history of vulnerability e.g. Rent arrears or anti-social behaviour.

1.8 The development of the Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy

The development of the Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy has been influenced by the statutory requirement arising from the Homelessness Act 2002. The Act came about from a

realisation that the causes of homelessness are often complex and inter-related and that, with the provision of effective preventative action and joint working between voluntary and statutory agencies, people could be helped before they become homeless. A multi-agency development group produced Herefordshire's first Homelessness Strategy in 2003. In order to implement the 2003 – 2008 Strategy, a Homelessness Strategy co-ordinator was employed in September 2005 by Herefordshire Council and the *Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG)* was established in 2006.

The HSIG includes approximately 16 lead officers from the main relevant Council departments along with the major stakeholders throughout the county. The main aim of this group is to lead on, complete and review the current strategy action plans and develop the 2008 Homelessness Strategy.

Equally importantly it has been prepared in consultation with a wide range of other organisations and draws on the public consultation with service users undertaken to establish the priorities within the Action Plan. The results of the consultation are included throughout the document. Consultation techniques and results are discussed within Section Four of this strategy. Along with consultation, the information on National, Sub regional, County and homelessness trends have also informed the Strategy and the results are included in the review section at appendix two and throughout this Strategy. HSIG is responsible for the Homelessness Strategy and meets quarterly to be updated on the work completed by the lead officers along with progressing the development of the 2008 Homelessness Strategy.

Please see appendix 4 for members of the Herefordshire Homeless Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG).

SECTION TWO - RESOURCES, ISSUES AND SERVICES

This section of the Strategy outlines the main homelessness service provision and comments on the key issues in Herefordshire. Each sub section incorporates the relevant results from the review and consultation (see appendix 1, section 4, appendix 2 and 3). It should be noted that to gather a full picture of this strategy, that the reader will need to review all appendices, particularly appendix one, two and three.

With this information, Herefordshire Council have identified the key gaps in services and set out our actions to achieve the six strategic objectives (detailed in section one) These actions are also displayed on our comprehensive Action Plan, please see appendix 7.

An overview of the current provision of Homelessness Services

The Homelessness and Housing Advice team is based at Herefordshire Council's Garrick House, in the centre of Hereford city. The fourteen members of this team are employed by Herefordshire Council and provide housing advice, signposting and support to vulnerable households across the County. In addition to these duties within office hours, they also provide a nightly out-of-hours and weekend emergency homelessness service on behalf of the Council.

This team receive thousands of enquiries a year from members of the public who have a range of housing issues, as well as from other professionals who may refer their clients to the service for focussed assistance and support. Incoming contacts are made by telephone, email, and in person, if a situation is at crisis point.

When the team receives a call, a Housing Options Officer carries out an initial assessment of the urgency of the situation and makes contact with the enquirer to gather further information, and undertake an assessment of housing need, which is recorded by the team for future reference. Often, callers require advice and assistance over the telephone, and this helps them solve their housing situation without any further help from the team itself. However, incoming housing enquiries can also require a more detailed and intensive response from the service, and in these circumstances, Housing Options Officers will quickly refer the situation onto a Homelessness Prevention Officer, who provides longer-term support, which aims to prevent households becoming homeless in Herefordshire.

There are 4.5 FTE Homelessness Prevention Officers in the team, which will be supported by a Senior Homelessness Prevention Officer, who also carries a caseload, and provides supervision and guidance to colleagues on a regular basis. Homelessness Prevention Officers carry out home visits to vulnerable households in the community, usually within a week of receiving a referral from a Housing Options Officer. During this visit the Homelessness Prevention Officer explains the broader housing context in Herefordshire, and helps devise an action plan, designed to avoid homelessness, and find a suitable housing solution in every case. Prevention Officers are able to call upon the Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund in order to help customers secure housing solutions, and the fund provides help around rent-in-advance, deposits, damages, and rent arrears, together with a range of other incentives designed to increase community stability locally.

Most importantly the team includes two homelessness officers who will undertake formal Homelessness assessments under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002). These two officers are supervised and supported by a Senior Homelessness Officer - together, they help the Council determine what short term and long-term housing duties may be owed to callers in housing crisis.

Support to this team is provided by two administrators, along with strategy development from a Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator.

2.1 Prevention of homelessness

2.1.1 Current picture

The broad focus of this Strategy is to prevent homelessness. Prevention not only involves the development of new initiatives but demands a particular approach to planning and service delivery. Herefordshire's preventative approach to homelessness includes two overarching features: - an efficient Prevention team, coupled with a prevention fund.

The Prevention team working alongside Housing Options and Homelessness officers provide advice, basic support, loans of goodwill including payment of rent arrears, bidding on properties, a rent deposit scheme, sanctuary scheme, mediation scheme and representation, and also develop further accommodation options or initiatives that are available for service users. Where prevention is unachievable, the Prevention team aim to work with other agencies to try to minimise the disruptive impact of homelessness on individuals and households.

In addition to the Homelessness Prevention officers, Supporting People provide essential assistance to many of the Council's prevention objectives and service plan themes and indicators. By providing housing related services to empower clients across all tenures including homeowners and caravans. Supporting People fund the prevention services such as Shelter and SHYPP, which link directly to the count of BVPI 213 for preventing homelessness.

The homelessness prevention related services currently available for people in Herefordshire include: -

- Prevention Officers offering intervention services, advice, home visits, action planning, bidding on properties and signposting with the aim of preventing homelessness.
- A prevention fund, of £168,710 in 2007/2008, is used in many ways, including: - making goodwill payments to parents and friends to maintain a place for someone to stay, paying off rent arrears to ensure that a service user can remain or start a new tenancy.
- Shelter offers a housing related support service for the homeless, both in temporary accommodation and into the first year of their tenancy. This service is funded by Supporting People.
- A rent deposit scheme, which offers the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.
- The mortgage rescue and low cost home ownership schemes offer assistance to service users to purchase or remain within their own home with the aim of preventing homelessness.
- Increasing awareness of homelessness and prevention by training and awareness days along with attendance at team meetings at many support agencies.
- The Sanctuary scheme offers additional and intensive security measures and equipment to victims of abuse. This scheme is offered in partnership with West Mercia Police, Herefordshire Council and Women's Aid to enable the victim/s to remain within their own home
- Supported Housing for Young People Project (SHYPP) provide a drop in service to all young people under 25 years old providing housing advice and support.
- The Citizens' Advice Bureau offers a general advice service to all clients across Herefordshire on all housing issues.
- CAB also offers a specialist Housing Caseworker to all clients qualifying for legal help, funded by the LSC. This position provides level advice on housing issues including homelessness, possession orders and security of tenure matters.

- Women's Aid offer drop-in surgeries and a free phone number for women experiencing domestic abuse. The support officers will offer housing related advice and signpost to the relevant agencies.
- Home Point offer assistance and advice on registering for affordable housing.
- A mediation service is offered to 16 – 17 year olds and their parents or guardians to improve relationships and encourage a return home or a planned move from home with the aim of preventing youth homelessness.

Ongoing developments

- The re-specification of the rent deposit scheme, with the potential of a dedicated rent deposit scheme officer, funded by Supporting People.
- Supporting People to re-specify the homeless housing related support services in the county, which are to be funded by Supporting People.
- The specification of a service to deal with the Hard to House families to be potentially funded by Supporting People (potentially the family intervention model).
- The research into the provision of an RSL Tenancy Support Officer to assist existing RSL tenants maintain their tenancies with the position to be funded through Supporting People.
- To embed the good practice set out in the Herefordshire RSL homelessness protocol, which lays out the agreement of the county's RSL's to assist Herefordshire Council with the prevention of homelessness.

2.1.2 Prevention issues

The introduction of the Rent Deposit Scheme provides many people, particularly those households that have been found intentionally homeless, with an option and opportunity to access the private rented sector. This vital service can prevent people from becoming rough sleepers or 'sofa surfers' and provides an opportunity for a decent home. However it is noted by the Homelessness team, stakeholders and service users that this service is getting busier. With this in mind, it has been agreed that a dedicated Rent Deposit Scheme Officer is required, in order to improve access, waiting times and avoiding the loss of accommodation. Research is currently being carried out by Supporting People into the possibility of a dedicated officer to run the scheme.

Evidence is currently unavailable to detail the numbers accessing the Homelessness and Prevention service. This is an essential requirement of planning of services and future prevention strategies, and so HSI strongly recommends that this be rectified. BVPI 213 return recorded that the teams carried out 301 prevention cases in 2007 / 2008. However this is not recording the full extent of the work being carried out by the team every day. In 2002, the CLG document 'More than a Roof' concluded that there needed to be a greater emphasis on planning for prevention, which should involve developing research and monitoring that would lead to the development of evidence based strategy.

In 2008/2009, the Homelessness and Prevention team will increase in number as part of an overall structure. However, stakeholders and service users have expressed concern about their access to the service. This may be due to the increased numbers of service users trying to access the service because of increases in house and rental prices, or the increased number of support workers within the county trying to access the team. With these factors unconfirmed and without a recording system, the evaluation of staff is difficult to assess.

In line with the Audit Commission's requirements for an organisation delivering an excellent service, it is important that homelessness services in Herefordshire are to have clearly defined, accessible and regularly updated procedures to ensure that prevention cases are dealt with appropriately, consistently and speedily in line with the relevant guidance. 2008 consultation results have specified a requirement for homelessness and prevention procedures to be produced.

In addition to the direct prevention services offered by the local authority, it is understood that there needs to be joint partnership working for prevention services to be effective. The Homelessness Forum and HSIG both provide forums for the sharing of ideas, planning and information along with individual work with agencies on joint training, which have proved to be very successful. However, it is noted that there is a requirement to improve our partnership working, particularly with local churches. The churches provide essential services to the homeless and may offer the local authority assistance to prevent or reduce the effects of homelessness. We would welcome assistance from the group 'Churches Together' along with other voluntary groups to assist in reducing and preventing homelessness and its effects in the county.

With recent communication from CLG, there should be an assumption that a new request will ask for a Homelessness Prevention Court desk. This is to assist people who are experiencing mortgage repayment difficulties. Previously CAB in Hereford, provided a court desk, with approximately 5 visitors per week. However, as this was not separately funded, the service was discontinued. In the light of the CLG discussions it should be noted that Herefordshire Council will attempt to action this request.

2.1.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions: -

- The re-specification of the rent deposit scheme, with the potential of a dedicated Rent Deposit Scheme Officer, funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS3
- Supporting People to re-specify the homeless housing related support services in the county, which are to be funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS23
- To seek the development of a housing related support service to deal with the challenge of Hard to House households whose tenancy history is preventing an offer of settled accommodation.
- Associated with this, to set up a new Homeless Case Panel Action Group to review individual Hard to House cases and to drive forward ideas and solutions with long term planning, potentially using the family intervention model. REF HOS1 and HOS2
- To seek in partnership with the Supporting People programme, the development of an RSL Tenancy Support service to work closely with the Homelessness and Housing Advice team assisting existing RSL tenants to maintain their tenancies. REF: HOS4
- To review the procedures and customer service standards of the Homelessness team to ensure that all homeless and prevention applications are dealt with appropriately, consistently and efficiently. To ensure that the procedures are clearly defined, accessible and followed by staff in line with the Audit Commission Key Line of enquiries requirements. REF: HOS45
- To work in partnership with the voluntary sector including charitable and church organisations working with the homeless, to develop appropriate solutions for Herefordshire to enable emergency access to food and shelter for homeless individuals particularly during periods of cold weather. REF: HOS46 (when temperatures fall below zero degrees for three consecutive nights in line with CLG guidance.)
- An IT system to record prevention and homelessness service users accessing the local authority Homelessness and Prevention service. This system is to record client information. It is a requirement that other agencies such as Home Point and RSL's, Shelter and SHYPP can access and add into this information. REF: HOS39
- To keep under review the resources applied to providing homelessness and housing advice services in Herefordshire in responding to national developments and local demand to housing advice. REF: HOS54
- To develop a court desk service in Herefordshire aimed at preventing homelessness by ensuring households are appropriately advised and supported in cases where repossession proceedings are being taken against them. REF: HOS9

2.2 Advice

2.2.1 Current picture on housing advice

Herefordshire Council recognise that the provision of timely appropriate and accurate housing advice is a crucial part of homelessness prevention as well as a legislative requirement under s166 of the Housing Act 1996. As recently outlined in the CLG paper 'Expanding Choice, Addressing Need', the Enhanced Housing Options approach is a new way of providing housing advice, which empowers clients and transforms lives. This housing option approach fundamentally transforms the way that those in housing need interact with providers of housing advice, therefore the CLG would like to see a wider range of advice being provided across a wider range of clients, including the traditionally hard to reach groups.

The housing related advice services currently available or being developed for people in Herefordshire include: -

- A dedicated Options and Prevention team provided by Herefordshire Council, offering housing options advice, prevention support and funding, along with homelessness advice.
- SHYPP provide a drop in service to all young people under 25 years old providing housing advice and support.
- The Citizens' Advice Bureau offers a general advice service to all clients across Herefordshire on all housing issues.
- CAB also offers a specialist Housing Caseworker to all clients qualifying for legal help, funded by the LSC. This position provides level advice on housing issues including homelessness, possession orders and security of tenure matters.
- Employment and training advice is offered at Connexions for those under 25 years.
- West Mercia Women's Aid have trained support staff who provide housing advice and support, advocacy and emergency accommodation to women experiencing domestic abuse via their free phone helpline, and at Outreach appointments.
- Home Point offer assistance and advice on registering for affordable housing as well as video guides for non-nationals and the hard of hearing.

Ongoing developments

- Investigate the creation of a specialist Advocate Worker position, to work with vulnerable adults, offering assistance through the Home Point systems.

2.2.2 The main issues about advice in Hereford

Within the recent consultation sessions with 23 service users and 66 surveyed service users, the main request made by those surveyed was for improved information and advice from the local authority as well as debt advice. The main requirement is the preparation of leaflets and a directory on homelessness services (including audio and other relevant media). Those consulted requested that this information should be circulated to public, prevention officers and support agencies along with uploading to the web sites.

In addition to these requests by service users, stakeholders requested that a Housing Advice Strategy and Customer Services Charter be prepared with the aim of continuously improving housing advice services to the public.

In order for Herefordshire to ensure the delivery of an excellent service, it is recommended that we should produce a Homelessness Advice Strategy. The updated Audit Commission's key lines of enquiry (KLOE's) will need to be considered along with the Enhanced Housing Options approach.

Although many of the KLOE's have been filtered into this document, it is also recommended that Herefordshire Council review each KLOE and produce a planning document to facilitate Herefordshire's intention to ensure it is delivering an excellent service.

Within recent consultations with service users, requests were made for a one stop shop or information hub for housing and homelessness advice, with some of the comments including: -

"I would like a drop in centre - like the info shops where you can get your (homelessness & housing) advice under one roof."

"So we can get leaflets there and watch information and talk to someone."

"All the forms are in one place."

"So I could see everyone under one roof."

"Someone to see me."

"Somewhere that is open when I come home from work"

"Somewhere I could get benefits, homelessness and Home Point advice"

2.2.3 Key Actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In recognising the important role that timely and appropriate housing advice can play in preventing homelessness, the Council will work with its partners on the following actions in taking forward the Homelessness Strategy.

- To research the benefits advice within the county and produce a signposting pack to the relevant benefits advice services. REF: HOS47
- To produce a number of information leaflets as well as a directory of services in a range of formats appropriate to service users' needs. These need to be circulated to all agencies supporting many client groups. To ensure this information is available on the Council web pages. REF: HOS11
- Investigate the creation of a specialist Advocate Worker position, to work with vulnerable adults offering assistance and advice through the Home Point system. REF: HOS49
- To produce a document outlining and reviewing the requirements of KLOE's (key lines of enquiry). This planning document should detail how Herefordshire will achieve these requirements over the next five years. REF: HOS50
- To produce and implement a Housing Advice Strategy taking into account the latest requirements of the Audit Commission KLOE's along with CLG and relevant guidance. To build in procedures for routine monitoring and staff training on delivering this advice. This is linked to action HOS 50. REF: HOS51
- To review the procedures and customer service standards of the Homelessness team to ensure that all homeless and prevention applications are dealt with appropriately, consistently and efficiently. To ensure that the procedures are clearly defined, accessible and followed by staff in line with the Audit Commission Key Line of enquiries REF: HOS45 and HOS51
- To work jointly with 'Info in Herefordshire' centres to expand their role in the front line provision of homelessness and housing advice supporting the specialist role of the Homelessness team. REF: HOS12
- To research the need and possibility of a one-stop shop / info hub or one conduit for housing related and homelessness advice. This would involve the major agencies, i.e. housing benefit, Home Point, Homelessness and support agency representatives. This will need to be considered in the context of the accommodation strategy REF: HOS56
- To work with Citizens Advice Bureau on the development of a specialist debt advice service in support of homelessness prevention. REF: HOS16

2.3 Affordable housing

2.3.1 Current picture of affordable housing

Since 2003, the Council has secured an additional 683 units of affordable housing; this includes 220 units for low cost home ownership. In addition, 326 empty units around the county have been brought back into use.

In an era of poor affordability in the private sector, many people approach the local authority for advice on how to find a home that is right for them. Herefordshire has experienced significant house price increases in recent years by comparison to wage levels in the County. As a result of this, there is a significant shortage of affordable housing, which increases pressure on the Homelessness services.

Demand for affordable housing is high with approximately 5,500 people on the Home Point housing register. Further statistics and information on affordable housing is provided in appendix one – Review of Homelessness.

Consequentially, addressing the high demand for affordable homes has become a key government priority. In recognition of this demand, the government are investing £8bn in new affordable housing over the next three years and will be providing 70,000 new affordable homes per annum by 2010/2011. To secure sufficient affordable housing is a theme of the Herefordshire Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, in order to meet the needs of local people. The regional spatial strategy partial review has identified increasing housing numbers within the West Midlands region, and Strategic Housing will be working to ensure that this leads to an increase in the supply of affordable housing for Herefordshire. Hereford City's identification as a new growth point and the opportunities within the proposed Edgar Street Grid regeneration will be key to achieving the higher targets set for the county.

The Strategic Housing Service Plan outlines the new supply of housing that will be developed that is accessible to the community, taking account of earnings to house-price pressures within the county As well as making best use of the existing affordable units.

The targets for the oncoming years for additional units are detailed below: -

Targets for affordable housing units built or acquired	Total
2008/2009	200
2009/2010	300
2010/2011	350

Plus the Targets for empty properties back into use	Total
2008/2009	110
2009/2010	120
2010/2011	130

*** This includes the use of a range of initiatives.**

As from May 2008, the Housing Minister announced that new support to help first time buyers into affordable home ownership would be offered. These measures are a key part of the government's priority to ensure a strong, stable economy, and to provide opportunities for all first time buyers with a household income of £60,000 a year or less to apply to buy a share of a home, under a major expansion of the government's Home Buy programme.

The affordable housing and related options / schemes available in Herefordshire include: -

- Affordable homes to rent and shared ownership properties are advertised through the Home Point agency created through a partnership with the largest RSL's in the County. This choice based lettings scheme manages the housing register and covers over 97% of RSL stock in the County.
- The Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- The Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes – providing assistance to people to access the property ladder.
- The Empty Property Strategy ensures that empty properties are brought back into use within the county. Check with NG that is happy with this comment.
- The Local Authority Housing Needs and Development team assess housing needs and work in partnership with RSL's, developers and the housing corporation to increase the supply of affordable housing in the county.

Ongoing developments

- The LAA target to deliver 850 affordable homes over the next 3 years.
- Re-provision of the Women's Aid refuge with a potential of 2 further units.
- The securing of additional 6 – 7 properties for the provision of additional dispersed units of safe accommodation for women experiencing domestic abuse.
- The review of existing initiatives to bring empty properties back into use.
- The Housing Needs and Development team are currently undertaking research around the 'Development of Initiatives to Incentivise Tenants to downsize.' This work is reviewing under occupancy in Herefordshire to encourage and facilitate households that are under occupying to move to more suitable sized properties, and to make better use of the existing housing stock.
- The development of a new Landlords focus group. This will include a group of private sector landlords who will influence the Landlords event bi annually. It is hoped that this group will assist the accreditation scheme.

2.3.2 the main issues of affordable housing

In recent consultation sessions with service users, 15 individual comments were made about the lack of affordable housing within the County including:

"There are not enough private sector properties"

"I keep bidding with Home Point, but there are just not enough properties in Hereford."

"When you rent in the private sector, it is too expensive"

"Landlords do not take benefits or the rent deposit scheme"

"The increase in migrant workers means less private houses are available for rent"

"The Council should offer incentives to landlords to take people"

2.3.3 Key actions

The provision of a range of affordable housing options in working towards a balanced housing market is fundamental to reducing homelessness levels in Herefordshire. In addition to the current range of affordable housing options described above, the Council will work with its partners on the following actions in taking forward the Homelessness Strategy.

- Herefordshire Council will develop a private sector landlord incentive scheme, with the aim of encouraging private sector landlords to offer more homes to vulnerable client groups for a longer period of time, along with taking people on benefits or the rent deposit scheme.
REF: HOS53

- The acquisition and build of targeted affordable housing units as well as empty properties brought back into use.
- The ongoing action by the Housing Needs and Development team.
- To continue to develop the report 'Development of Initiatives for Tenants to downsize.'

2.4 Temporary accommodation

2.4.1 Current picture of temporary accommodation

In light of the Government target to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010, the provision of affordable housing in the county is critical. This objective has been reflected within Herefordshire's Local Area Agreement and represents the main homelessness target as well as a key objective within this Strategy.

In addition to this target, the council aims to reduce to zero the use of B & B for all 16 and 17 year olds as well as for families with children. Herefordshire Council are working with local specialist youth housing providers on a set of initiatives to minimise the use of Bed and Breakfast for 16 – 17 year olds to ensure that the CLG target is reached by 2010. Stonham have agreed that 16 - 17 year olds will be able to access Pomona Place temporary supported housing in Hereford. Along with this, 7 units of accommodation completed in 2007, with support, are provided to young people leaving care.

2.4.2 Issues about temporary accommodation

16 of those consulted had stated their concerns about the location and quality of temporary accommodation. These concerns included that families with children may be placed away from schools in another town, resulting in children travelling miles to school. The main concern about bed and breakfast is that there are no cooking or washing facilities, which causes families hardship. Those consulted expressed concerns that if they complained about the quality or safety of the temporary accommodation, this may affect their homelessness decision.

16 and 25 individual service users during consultation stated their concern, that there was no facility for single homeless adults within the county, resulting in their sleeping rough or sofa surfing and unable to wash. This issue is reflecting the broader shortage of affordable housing and the fact that the majority of adults over 18 years of age who are homeless will have no duty owed to them in respect of temporary accommodation. The 16 and 25 service users interviewed had requested a direct access hostel or washing facilities.

2.4.3 Key actions

The provision of sufficient accommodation for people who are or may become homeless is a key objective for the Homeless Strategy, it is recognised that the overriding target for temporary accommodation is contained within the Local Area Agreement i.e. – 82 units by 2010/2011. In recognising this, it is important to ensure that the range and quality of temporary accommodation is appropriately matched as far as possible to the needs of those households requiring temporary accommodation. In working towards these objective the council will work with its partners to achieve the following actions: -

- To develop a Temporary Accommodation Strategy with action plan. This Strategy and action plan is to review all current temporary accommodation usage, location and quality, and the facilities for washing and cooking. It also aims to reduce to zero the number of 16 - 17 year olds and/or families with children in bed and breakfast by 2010, also with securing an easily accessed emergency bed in temporary accommodation. REF: HOS6
- To undertake a "Hidden Homeless and Rough Sleeper Needs Analysis" to include a needs mapping exercise to ensure a strategic approach to tackling, managing and reducing homelessness amongst this client group. This Strategy should review the appropriateness and requirement of a direct access hostel or provide alternative solutions. This action links to HOS18. REF: HOS20

- To complete temporary accommodation procedures for staff to follow when placing people in temporary accommodation. These should include a complaints procedure if the temporary accommodation is not adequate. REF: HOS52

2.5 Local Housing Allowance

2.5.1 Current picture

The introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a new factor that needs to be considered in monitoring homelessness. The LHA is a new way for Housing Benefit to be calculated and paid. This scheme introduces a flat rate of maximum benefit based on the area where the applicant lives and the number of occupants in their household. A potential issue is that this benefit is paid directly to claimants unless they are deemed vulnerable.

2.5.2 Main issues

During the initial evaluation of the pilots using the LHA, welfare agencies reported that the LHA appears to have had little impact on existing tenants. However, there is some evidence to suggest that landlords were pulling out of the Housing Benefit market due to a reluctance to rent to new tenants with an unknown housing history, if direct rent payments to the landlord cannot be guaranteed. This could result in homelessness amongst the vulnerable groups showing an increase.

As of April 2008, the Housing Benefits team have reported no changes in number of claims or other issues.

2.5.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In recognising the important role that timely and appropriate housing advice can play in preventing homelessness the council will work with its partners on the following actions in taking forward the Homelessness Strategy.

- The review and monitoring of the impact of Local Housing Allowance on the sustainment of tenancies, particularly among vulnerable groups. REF: HOS14

2.6 Health and homelessness

2.6.1 Current picture and issues

There are strong links between the experience of homelessness and poor health. In some cases poor health can be one of the trigger factors leading to homelessness, while in other cases medical problems are caused or exacerbated by sleeping rough or living in cramped or unsuitable temporary accommodation.

Coupled with this, research has shown that people experiencing homelessness have often had greater difficulty accessing primary medical care, this has laid down a number of local priorities for tackling health inequalities, which include improving NHS primary care services and strengthening disadvantaged communities.

We intend to reflect these priorities and seek to reduce the impact of homelessness on individuals' and households' health.

2.6.2 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local

Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to reduce the health risks amongst homeless households: -

- To ensure that homeless households in temporary accommodation have continued access to GP / dentist by placing them, if appropriate, in temporary accommodation as close as possible to their last residence. REF: HOS6
- By requesting all temporary accommodation providers inform people of the nearest GP and dentist. REF: HOS6

2.7 Education

2.7.1 Current picture

A history of poor education has been identified as one of the factors that increase an individual's chance of becoming homeless, and in turn children who experience homelessness are highly likely to have a disrupted education. It is important to develop a range of interventions that break this circle.

Research has shown that homeless children can lose a quarter of their schooling during their homeless period, and families often find it difficult to maintain their children's schooling, especially when placed in temporary accommodation. It is imperative, therefore, that the Council maintains its performance in meeting its statutory obligations, using emergency accommodation only for a short while before households are housed in permanent accommodation.

Herefordshire SHYPP began the 'Schools Education Project' in 2006 with the aim of providing homelessness education in schools. SHYPP officers, along with young volunteers or mentors who have accessed the SHYPP service, aim to provide valuable housing and homelessness education to 14 and 15 year olds. This is expected to reduce and prevent homelessness for the future amongst young people and is linked to the LAA indicators.

2.7.2 Main issues

There is a requirement in Herefordshire from those consulted that additional support or advice is provided to homeless families in temporary accommodation, to ensure that children are able to continue attending school wherever possible. Service users requested the possibility of developing links with schools near temporary accommodation, to ensure that the schools are able or willing to take children on a temporary basis along with ensuring that support is available to assist parents in approaching a new school where necessary.

2.7.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve education amongst homeless households: -

- To continue to fund a tenancy support service for families with children.
- To continue to fund the Schools Education Project and review the opportunities for expansion.
- To ensure that families accessing temporary accommodation reside as close to their last residence as possible. To link into the Temporary Accommodation Strategy – to ensure a good spread of accommodation around the county to minimise the disruption to education or unrealistic demands for travel. REF: HOS6

2.8 Employment and life skills

2.8.1 Current picture

1,517 people were claiming unemployment benefit in Herefordshire in January 2008, in comparison to 1,634 in January 2007. Employment within Hereford is identified as a strategic centre in the current Regional Spatial Strategy. In line with the HQN Strategy Excellence Network advice on Strategies, it is important that Herefordshire builds on the links to other Strategies, particularly those that are built on the links being made at national level. An example of this to be considered within Herefordshire is to work with long-term hostel residents to move successfully into work and settled accommodation.

Women's Aid currently offer a rolling programme of group work for their service users, groups focus on life skills such as budgeting, cooking on a budget, returning to work, legal workshops, parenting under stress, DIY, confidence and assertiveness.

2.8.2 Main issues

During recent consultation sessions, 36 service users requested life skills and employment advice services. In addition to this result, consultation with 67 service users in Hereford revealed that 62% of those surveyed were not working part time or full time or attending any government schemes.

The link between unemployment and homelessness is shown to be significant. It is vital therefore, for all agencies concerned to target, encourage and enable service users to aim to access employment and training.

2.8.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers,

the Council will work with it's partners in taking forward the following actions to improve employment and life skills amongst homeless households: -

- To develop links with the Learning & Skills Council and Job Centre, encouraging attendance at HSIG. REF: HOS58
- To investigate in discussion with Childrens services the need for a 'life skills training service.' With life skills trainer rolling training sessions on subjects such as budgeting, child care, time management for household responsibilities, debt advice, anger management, nutrition and cooking, finding a new house, assertiveness, employment and education advice. The trainer can signpost to other services within the training session. This should aim to be a direct access service. REF: HOS55

2.9 Crime and community safety

2.9.1 Current picture

Anti-social behaviour can lead to homelessness for both the perpetrator and victim. However, information gathered indicates that a range of measures are being used in Herefordshire, which tackle anti-social behaviour before it leads to homelessness. Herefordshire's Registered Social Landlords have developed an extensive range of interventions aimed at dealing with anti-social behaviour with eviction being seen as the last resort. These interventions include the use of neighbourhood mediation schemes, tenancy support, tenant involvement officers, signing up to the RSL homelessness prevention protocol and also the use of Anti-social Behaviour Orders.

The Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership tackle anti social behaviour through multi-agency tasking and co-ordination. Their priority to deal with anti social behaviour is one of five priorities set out with their strategic plan 2008 – 2011.

2.9.2 Main issues

There are a low number of people accepted as homeless by the Council after leaving their homes due to non-domestic violence or threats of violence.

Main Reason for Homelessness Priority	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008
Fleeing violence excluding domestic violence	5	7	2	3	1

Although numbers are small, it is still necessary to consider what is available to households who are evicted or have to leave due to anti-social behaviour, and whether specialist support is available to reduce the possibility of repeat homelessness.

2.9.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improving opportunities to those excluded from housing in the county due to crime and anti social behaviour: -

- To continue to take a multi agency approach in addressing anti-social behaviour.
- To ensure that support is available to those who may be at risk of homelessness through perpetrating anti-social behaviour. REF: HOS33
- To seek the development of a housing related support service to deal with the challenge of Hard to House households whose tenancy history is preventing an offer of settled accommodation. Associated with this, to set up a new Homeless Case Panel Action Group to review individual Hard to House cases and to drive forward ideas and solutions with long term planning, potentially using the family intervention model. REF: HOS1

2.10 Research

2.10.1 Current picture

This Strategy bases the assessment of the levels of need on a combination of returns the Council has to make to government, along with statutory agencies' own data, and on the outcomes of specialist research and monitoring exercises that have been carried out. However, in order to prevent future homelessness, it is important to gain a fuller picture of need in the county, and to monitor the numbers of people who could not be accommodated or supported, what their support needs were, and make some assessment of why they were unable to access suitable services.

2.10.2 Main issues

It is recognised that there is a necessity for a comprehensive needs mapping system to be developed which would gather both qualitative and quantitative information about service users, and also about those who were unable to access services. It is also acknowledged that there are a number of identified gaps in our understanding of homelessness in Herefordshire. Gaps include levels of homelessness, especially for single homeless or those not presenting to the local authority, key reasons for homelessness and needs of specific groups. It is also necessary to consider the effectiveness of current provision, particularly with regard to tackling repeat homelessness.

2.10.3 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local

Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve data collection and targeting of homeless services: -

- The development of an IT system to record service users accessing the local authority Homelessness and Prevention service. This system is to record client information. It is a requirement that other agencies such as Home Point and RSL's, Shelter and SHYPP can access and add into this information. REF: HOS39
- A 'hidden homeless' or presenters survey to review the true numbers of homeless single people presenting to agencies within Herefordshire. Links to action HOS20. REF: HOS18

SECTION 3 - REVIEW OF THE MAIN NEED GROUPS IN HEREFORDSHIRE

This section of the Strategy reviews the main need groups in Herefordshire, outlining the current services available within the county. Results from the consultation are inherently considered throughout this section with the key gaps or issues for that need group recorded. These views are taken to formulate the set of key proposals and actions to be achieved in the next 5 years to form the Homelessness Strategy. The key issues and consequent actions suggested within each need group are linked to performance indicators and other relevant strategies within the attached Action Plan. This is to ensure a flow of the document and ease of reading.

3.1 BME groups including migrant workers

Nationally, people from BME groups are more likely to experience homelessness. In 2005, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated that 3.7% of Herefordshire's total resident population was from an ethnic minority (6,600 people).

Homelessness figures for 2007/2008 show that out of a total of 206 decisions, 5 were from households describing themselves as BME. This represents a low number of 2.5 % of applications. We aim to ensure that BME communities are not disproportionately affected by homelessness, and where a household is threatened with homelessness, the advice, accommodation and support offered is culturally and ethnically appropriate and appropriate services are provided for both newly arrived and established BME communities.

In addition to the BME statistics, it should be noted that all population estimates are based on the concept of 'usual residence'; therefore a short-term migrant will not be included in any estimates of resident population. The figures for migrant workers in Herefordshire can be represented with the annual registrations for a national insurance number, which have increased dramatically to 2,120 in Herefordshire in 2007. Anecdotal evidence from the Homelessness team state that migrant workers are not currently accessing the Homelessness service in large numbers. However it is recommended that the evidence and needs of this group are reviewed regularly by Herefordshire Council to ensure that these groups are catered for in the event of increasing numbers or crisis.

The housing services currently available for BME groups in Herefordshire: -

- Migrant workers' schemes and advice
- Diversity workers in council
- A "Welcome to Herefordshire" web site offering housing and homelessness advice to migrant workers, which is translated into 4 languages
- The video "talking guides" provide housing advice and information in video format to 6 languages including English, Russian, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese and British Sign Language. This ensures Home Point advice is available to the BME groups and those that are unable to read English easily.
- West Mercia Women's Aid is currently recruiting a Polish speaking support worker to work with Polish and eastern European women affected by domestic abuse.

3.2 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice and opportunities for BME groups.

- To improve Information - prepare leaflets on homelessness services (including audio and other relevant media) to be prepared and circulated to public, prevention officers and support agencies, along with uploading to the web sites, the circulation of these leaflets should also be made specifically to BME groups in conjunction with the Diversity team at Herefordshire Council. Groups. REF: HOS11
- Research and prepare a Housing Advice Strategy to be prepared with the aim of improving housing advice services to the public. REF: HOS51
- To prepare a Directory of Homelessness and Related Services - to be used by service users and support teams. REF: HOS13
- To prepare an annual review of key information particularly for migrant workers, BME groups, teenage pregnancies and care leavers. This information will be reviewed by HSI and any appropriate actions planned. REF: HOS14

3.3 Care Leavers

Those young people that are ‘looked after’ are eligible for continued support from Social Services to help them towards independence up to the age of 20 years. The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2002 sets out how this process should be achieved. The Homelessness Act 2002 states that care leavers aged 18 and under 21 who are “former relevant children” that become homeless are the responsibility of the local authority and are automatically in the priority need category.

The number of ‘looked after’ children in Herefordshire averages around 170 per year, the majority of which are placed in local authority foster care. Care leavers aged 16 – 21 are able to access supported lodgings through providers approved by the Children and Young People’s Directorate. In addition to this, care leavers are encouraged to remain with their foster parents.

As we can see from the table below, 3 homeless acceptances were made for this group in 2007/2008, these three care leavers were from out of county arrangements. It is suggested that the low number in acceptances in this group was due to the ‘Home Point Care Leavers’ Protocol’. This protocol ensures that care leavers are given priority status on the Housing waiting list, 6 months prior to their 18th birthday. This provides enough time to find accommodation before the young person has to leave the care system, along with the introduction of the 7 Supported Housing After Care units in 2008 (SHAC) and dedicated support officer. This has assisted indirectly in the reduction of homelessness.

Priority Reason for Homelessness	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Care leaver aged 18 to 20	6	10	8	11	1	3

What homelessness and housing services are currently available for care leavers in Herefordshire?

- Priority status is given to care leavers, 6 months prior to their 18th birthday to ensure they can find housing
- 7 units within general needs housing with housing related support are available to care leavers.
- A dedicated SHAC (Supported Housing for After Care) support officer based at SHYPP provides outreach support to those living in the 7 independent after care units
- 4 units available within the SHYPP foyers for after care young people
- New Dawn agency offers intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people leaving care or with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health or previous housing difficulties.
- Supported lodgings through approved providers
- To remain with foster parents
- Pomona Place temporary supported housing accepts homeless young

- people aged 16 years and over.
 - Under the Homelessness Act 2002 if care leavers aged 16 or 17 who are “relevant children” become homeless, Social Services have the responsibility for providing them with accommodation and support.
- Ongoing developments**
- Strategic Housing with the assistance of Supporting People plan to roll out the Move On Planned Protocol (MOPP) to their providers in Herefordshire. This will inform strategic considerations in relation to accommodation needs and provide an aid to strategic planning.

3.4 Key actions for Care Leavers

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to prevent homelessness amongst those fleeing violence: -

- Due to the provision of additional units and the successful protocols between Aftercare, SHYPP and Home Point, it is not considered that any further units are required. However it has been suggested this be monitored and reviewed as part of the Action Plan and that accommodation services as detailed above should continue if appropriate.
- The number of care leavers applying as homeless will be reviewed by HSIg annually to ensure that any appropriate actions are planned. REF: HOS14
- Strategic Housing with the assistance of Supporting People plan will aim to roll out the Move On Planned Protocol (MOPP) to their providers in Herefordshire. This will inform strategic considerations in relation to accommodation needs and provide an aid to strategic planning.

3.5 Domestic abuse and those fleeing violence

Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on the people and the families who experience it. The Homelessness Act 2002 recognises this and has extended the provisions of the existing legislation and specified that anyone suffering violence or at risk of suffering violence within or from outside the home would be categorised as a priority need group.

Reasons for loss of last home	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Relationship breakdown (violent)	77	89	114	103	37	46
Main reasons for priority need						
Fleeing violence	20	35	44	30	10	17
Of which, domestic violence*	17	30	37	28	7	16

* This is the main reason for priority. However, if a family with children were fleeing domestic abuse, they would be placed in a different category with the main reason as a ‘family with children.’

Although there has been a drop in 2007/2008 to 46 acceptances, those giving the reason of ‘violent relationship breakdown’ form the third largest group of people reporting the loss of their settled home. The reason for the decline to 46 acceptances since 2005/2006 is not quite clear. However, it is important to note that the overall number of acceptances in all categories had remained fairly constant over the period, with violent relationship breakdown remaining at 25% in 2006, 25% in 2007 and 22% in 2008, if shown as a percentage of all homeless acceptances.

Women's Aid and Herefordshire Refuge Statistics	2002/ 2003	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007
Number of Women's Aid helpline calls from Herefordshire callers	498	503	541	563	630
Numbers of women accommodated in refuge	56	47	46	30	23
Number of requests for space when refuge is full from Herefordshire applicants	36	46	57	62	70

As can be seen from the table above, the numbers of women and children accommodated has been decreasing, with a corresponding and considerable increase in the number of local requests for space when the refuge was full. It seems the demand is there, but the refuge has been unable to meet this demand because families have been staying in the refuge too long. This may mean that the refuge is effectively 'blocked' with families waiting for general needs accommodation. It is suggested that Herefordshire Council review these women's waiting times and their homeless applications, in light of the decrease in Homeless acceptances from women fleeing domestic abuse.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are increasing calls to the police and Women's Aid from same sex couples, with one of the couple claiming domestic violence. At this point, there is no statistical information to back up this evidence, but it should be noted that figures might need to be collected from Women's Aid, the police and Homelessness team to provide information on needs assessment in the future.

The homelessness and housing related services currently available for people experiencing domestic abuse in Herefordshire: -

- Women's Aid 24hr free phone helpline, offering advice and support as well as arranging emergency accommodation.
- Women's Aid floating support is a county wide specialist service for women and children affected by domestic abuse.
- Women's Aid refuge offering 7 units of accommodation, which housed 35 households in 2007/2008 (plus 10 emergency admissions on the sofa bed)
- Sanctuary Scheme offering security measures and equipment with the assistance of West Mercia Police, Herefordshire Council and Women's Aid to enable the victim or family to remain within their own home
- A pilot IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) from 2008 – 2011, funded by Supporting People and managed by Women's Aid. Provide support to victims who are assessed as being at high risk.
- Dedicated domestic abuse time allotted every Friday in Hereford magistrates courts
- The Freedom Programme providing domestic abuse prevention and recovery training to victims of domestic abuse. This service is managed by Women's Aid and provided by accredited Freedom trainers.

Ongoing developments

- With a housing needs analysis completed, the planned re-provision of the Women's Aid refuge in Hereford City requesting two additional units of accommodation
- A proposal to secure 5 or 6 dispersed properties at any one time from the County RSL stock. These properties will provide move-on or safe alternative accommodation from the Women's Aid refuge and will also enable grown up children to live with their families. Intensive floating support will be provided

by Women's Aid. (As per Homeless Strategy 2003)

- The establishment and set up of a service called MARAC in Herefordshire (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference). This multi agency panel provides support and assistance for victims of serious domestic abuse. The panel includes members such as the Police, Women's Aid, Probation, Health and the local authority and aims to offer a joined-up approach to assisting high risk victims of domestic abuse
- The update of a Domestic Abuse Strategy to be completed by the DA forum in 2008.
- To employ a dedicated DA / MARAC co-ordinator within Herefordshire Community Safety and Drug Partnership (included in their strategy 2008 – 2011)
- A proposal to further expand the Women's Aid outreach support service to offer increased support to children living in the community who are affected by domestic abuse with the assistance of Supporting People funding.

3.6 Key actions for those fleeing violence.

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to prevent homelessness amongst those fleeing violence: -

- The planned retroversion of the Women's Aid refuge in Hereford City, with a potential of two additional units of accommodation. REF: HOS 31
- A proposal to investigate with RSL's the provision of 5 or 6 properties at any one time, from the county RSL stock. These properties will provide move-on or alternative accommodation from the Women's Aid refuge. This will also enable grown up children to live with their families. Women's Aid will provide intensive floating support. REF: HOS32
- To co-operate in the setting up and implementation of a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) panel in Herefordshire, to provide joined-up approach to assisting high-risk victims of domestic abuse. REF: HOS33
- The completion of a Domestic Abuse Strategy to be completed by the DA forum in 2008. REF: HOS34
- To support the employment of a dedicated DA / MARAC co-ordinator. To be managed by the Community Safety and Drugs Partnership (included in their strategy 2008 – 2011) REF: HOS35
- To review the proposal to further expand the Women's Aid outreach support service to offer support to children living in the community affected by domestic abuse. REF: HOS36
- To promote joint working between the Homelessness & Prevention Service and Women's Aid. Women's Aid to support and advocate for service users wanting to access the Homelessness team. REF: HOS37.
- To review the decrease in numbers of women fleeing domestic abuse accessing the Homeless team. REF: HOS9

3.7 Excluded from services due to multiple and complex needs

Case Scenario;

'John' says, "I have had a rocky past, I have been evicted from a few places a number of years ago as I was loud and took drugs and built up a fair bit of debt. I also go into prison sometimes. I can't find work or anywhere to live. I mainly sleep rough."

Excluded groups are by their very nature difficult to describe. However this group could include households who have been excluded from accommodation and/ or services due to anti-social or violent behaviour, substance misuse or history of offending. Those who are excluded are often

deemed to have "multiple and complex needs." The term in this instance is used to describe an individual that is not owed a legal duty by any team or Act or may be excluded from a services support because of their past actions with support workers. These individuals often have more than one type of support need, which may include minor mental health problems, anti-social behaviour, anger management, debt problems etc.

A significant number of those who find themselves excluded from services sleep rough whilst others stay temporarily with friends or family, or in temporary accommodation supplied by the local authority. One support worker stated "that these clients take up the time of many agencies, trying to 'make them fit in', they must cost the system a fortune."

Herefordshire does not have a specialist and specific accommodation project dealing with those excluded from the services for various reasons and consequently staff and stakeholders have reported that there is a lack of appropriate accommodation or intensive support for some of these clients excluding those with drug or substance misuse issues.

In addition to the problems accessing accommodation for this group, there are also statements that there is a lack of clarity about exclusions from accommodation along with the over-ruling of clients on waiting lists. Agencies have stated that sometimes when individuals are banned or over-ruled from using particular services or applying for housing, it can be unclear why the skip or exclusion has occurred, whether there is an appeal procedure, and when the ban can be reviewed. This might result in individuals who believe themselves to be banned not accessing services or applying for housing when in fact, the ban has expired or is no longer relevant.

The housing services currently available for people that have been excluded from services in Herefordshire: -

- Carr Gomm service based within FACT and the Assertive Outreach Team provide housing related support and floating support to users of the Mental Health service
- The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme, which offers the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy
- Shelter offer a housing related support service for those with multiple and complex needs excluded from services both in temporary accommodation and into the first year of a tenancy.
- Women's Aid provide refuge and housing related floating support services to women affected by domestic abuse, who also have additional complex needs.

Ongoing developments

- Supporting People to re-specify the homeless housing related support services in the county, which are to be funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS23

3.8 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers,

the Council will work with it's partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice and opportunities for those excluded from services: -

- A 'hidden homeless' or presenters' survey to review the true numbers and reasons of homelessness presenting to agencies within Herefordshire. REF: HOS18
- To seek the development of a housing related support service to deal with the challenge of Hard to House households whose tenancy history is preventing an offer of settled accommodation. Associated with this, to set up a new Homeless Case Panel Action Group

to review individual Hard to House cases and to drive forward ideas and solutions with long term planning, potentially using the family intervention model. REF HOS1

- To encourage agencies including Home Point landlords to have a statement of their exclusion policies, which include the right of appeal and process for review of exclusion. HOS24

3.9 Ex-offenders

There is a general lack of information about the levels of homelessness amongst ex-offenders. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 ex-offenders should be accepted as being in priority need if it is established that they are vulnerable as result of their time spent in prison. In the year 2006/2007, Herefordshire Council accepted zero ex-offenders as being owed the full duty on this basis. It is highly likely, however, that those individuals who had an offending background were accepted on other grounds of vulnerability including substance misuse and mental health as they quite often chose not to disclose their criminal history.

The initial support service available to ex-offenders is West Mercia Probationary Service. This service is responsible for managing ex-offenders who have been in custody and now are on licence or are serving community sentences.

An offender management programme also exists to support prolific offenders defined as those who have been in the criminal justice system three times or more in the space of three years. The Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO) scheme deal with a small number of offenders in the locality who are responsible for committing the majority of crime. The aim of this scheme is to reduce the risks of re-offending.

Brailey House in Worcester currently offers high surveillance 'approved premises' (bail hostel) for those returning to the area. A number of clients living at this hostel have found it difficult to find move-on to accommodation in Herefordshire. The probationary manager recently reported that one offender had been unable to find somewhere to live for the past 6 months and was still looking. This leads to the approved premises being blocked. In addition to this issue, Bridge House, supported transitional housing for ex-offenders in Hereford is currently reporting a waiting list of 9 as of May 2008; it should be considered that this figure may not be the full picture of those waiting, as referrals may not arrive if the accommodation is already full.

In addition to these services available to ex-offenders, Herefordshire has a record of excellent engagement with the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) processes and has successfully managed the risk posed by some offenders through the provision of appropriated accommodation. The MAPPAs panel ensure that all applicants who may pose a serious risk to the public have access to the social housing providers. The purpose is two-fold - to minimize the risk to an individual or the public as a whole, and also to minimise the risk to the offender. The ability to find this settled accommodation makes monitoring safer and can reduce the risk of further offences being committed.

In 2007, The Regional Offender Management Delivery Group analysed the volume and range of offender housing need data in this region. GOWM commented that the amount and quality of data relating to housing need is growing and will increase significantly over the next three years.

Pathway Delivery Group results of housing need assessment of ex-offenders (through probation)	% of assessments that record a significant housing need inc short term accommodation required	% of those with a housing need that include a housing objective in the sentence plan	% of those with a housing need that record a housing intervention in the sentence plan
Herefordshire Probationary Services	36%	23%	17%

The table above details 59% of offenders have accommodation issues. In 36% of cases, the accommodation problem is directly linked to offending, for example in the case of sex offending. This information has never been translated into strategic priorities

With this in mind, a full needs analysis is required to assess the need for housing solutions for this group and the relevant support required. However any future investment in this area in common with all other client groups will be subject to the availability of Supporting People funding.

Some of the key housing services currently available for ex-offenders in Herefordshire are:

- Bridge House offer units of supported accommodation for ex offenders
- Carr Gomm provide tenancy support service in partnership with FACT
- Rent deposit Scheme
- Low cost home ownership schemes in the County
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties
- Floating support service provided by Stonham to offenders to assist with issues such as housing related support.
- Brailey House in Worcester is the 'approved premises' for offenders.

Ongoing developments

- Prison leavers' discharge protocol is currently being used in Shropshire, this is planned to be extended to Herefordshire in 2008/2009.
- A creation of a wrap around service for drug and alcohol service users along with offenders. The housing related support element is to be funded through Supporting People.
- The re-specification of the housing related support service funded by Supporting People.

3.10 Key actions

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice and opportunities for ex-offenders: -

- To develop and implement a joint housing and probation services protocol for the assessment and referral of offenders to homeless services which is to provide a housing link scheme to work with offenders due for discharge to assist them in attaining appropriate housing and support. REF: HOS22
- Supporting People to re-specify the homeless housing related support services in the county, which are to be funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS23
- A creation of a wrap around service for drug and alcohol service users along with offenders. The housing related support element is to be funded through Supporting People. REF: HOS15
- A housing needs analysis to be carried out to identify the numbers and housing options required for ex-offenders. REF: HOS57

3.11 Gypsies and travellers

One of the intentions of Government policy towards Gypsy and traveller accommodation is to 'mainstream' provision as far as possible. Thus the Housing Act 2004 makes it clear that Gypsy and traveller accommodation needs are to be assessed just as all other needs are, and are to be

included in local authority Housing Strategies as well as in local planning documents. However, it is clear that Government policy is not to encourage Gypsies and travellers to live in mainstream housing but to make culturally acceptable provision in the form of caravan sites.

Government policy and the courts have accepted that some Gypsies and travellers have a strong cultural aversion to living in bricks and mortar, and that their wishes should be met as far as possible.

The 2006 Homelessness Code of Guidance refers specifically to Gypsies and travellers, reminding authorities of their duties. Someone is homeless when they live in a moveable dwelling (caravan) and have nowhere they can legally live in it. This means that, for a Gypsy and traveller with an evidenced marked cultural aversion to bricks and mortar, 'suitable' accommodation would be a place on a caravan site if at all possible.

The Housing Strategy for Herefordshire 2005-2008 requests for a strategy in reply to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment of 2007, which reviewed the current accommodation provision and the future needs in Shropshire, Herefordshire, Telford & Wrekin and Powys.

Anecdotally, Gypsies and travellers do live in bricks and mortar housing. However, there is no source of information, which provides the numbers of Gypsies and travellers that currently live in housing. This is true nationally, regionally and locally.

In April 2008, of the 5,314 applicants on the Home Point client database, only 13 identified themselves as 'Gypsy/Romany traveller', and 4 as 'other traveller'. About 20 families are thought to have moved from sites to housing over the past 5 years. Most will not identify themselves as travellers for fear of discrimination, so these figures are not reflective of the true situation.

There are also issues around appropriate service delivery and potential support needs for Gypsies and Travellers in housing. Specialist support is required. A number have had 'run-ins' with authorities because they do not feel that anyone is listening to them or taking account of their cultural needs. Many Gypsies and travellers are very 'private' people and do not like to discuss personal issues with outsiders they do not trust.

Housing services currently available for travellers and Gypsies in Herefordshire: -

- The Herefordshire Council Gypsy and traveller liaison officer offering support and advice in the county to local authority site residents and housed Gypsies and travellers.
- A Herefordshire Traveller Health project worker.
- A pilot scheme providing housing related floating support funded by Supporting People. This service provides a specialist Gypsy and Traveller Housing Support Officer to offer housing related support services to Gypsies and travellers living or looking to move into bricks and mortar accommodation. The current caseload has been increased to 8 cases.
- In addition, a number of generic Supporting People housing related support services and other mainstream housing support and related services which Gypsies and travellers may be able to access including the Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

Ongoing developments

- A working group at local level are taking forward the actions of the housing assessment, in order to secure 100 pitches throughout the County by 2012 and improve the quality and methods of allocating pitches.

A sub regional group will look at cross boundary working.

3.12 Main issues for Gypsies and Travellers in Herefordshire

More recently, a representative of the Herefordshire Traveller Health Project noted that the project case log reveals growing accommodation problems (usually concerning moves to or between housing) being faced by traditional Gypsies and travellers. The Project is finding these problems harder to solve.

3.13 Some of the main issues noted in stakeholder interviews are:

Gypsies and travellers are obviously affected by housing market pressures on social housing like everyone else. This means longer waits for everyone, especially for larger families who need 4 bedroom properties.

General access issues will affect Gypsies and travellers. For example, increasing emphasis on homelessness prevention increases the importance of private tenancies where Gypsies and travellers may face discrimination.

The Herefordshire Gypsy Liaison Officer works to support housed Gypsies and travellers. The main issues she comes across are neighbor problems, discrimination and harassment, anti-social behavior, filling in forms, and liaison with education, health and other services. A few Gypsies and travellers do not manage in housing even with her support.

A number of stakeholder interviewees raised concerns about a general lack of awareness amongst generic service staff of Gypsy and traveller issues and cultures. This was reaffirmed in the Gypsy and traveller interview survey: over 50% of interviewees felt people working in different services needed to be more aware of Gypsy and traveller cultures, ways of life and issues affecting them. Comments offered in the interviews with Gypsies and travellers illustrate this.

Consultees have requested that information on site/plot availability is easily accessed and that the outcome of applications and the assessment process is transparent. There has been a request that the advertising of plots / sites go through Home Point with a board approving the placement.

In September 2007, Supporting People commissioned Shelter to launch a pilot service supporting Gypsies and travellers with a diverse range of issues including homelessness, arrears, and neighbor and landlord disputes. The largest reported problems are unsuitable accommodation and tenancy support requirements. Due to the complexity of the cases, the new officer's caseload is currently 8 clients, however a waiting list is in operation with 3 households waiting to access support as of April 2008. Along with this detailed support, Shelter have put in place a service that will offer immediate support to signpost clients to other specialist services where appropriate, to ensure that immediate needs are being met.

3.14 Key actions for Gypsies and Travellers

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSI officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for Gypsies and Travellers: -

- The progression of the 'Housing Needs of Gypsies and Travellers Working Group' to deliver the findings of the 'Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment 2007'. This could support the needs analysis and commissioning framework for the future. Links to HOS41 REF: HOS40
- The 'Housing Needs of Gypsies and Travellers Working Group' to request discussion, consideration and review of the allocation procedures of allocating pitches or site placements. REF: HOS38
- To investigate the possibility of housing allocation teams throughout the county registering on the Home Point system a Gypsy or traveller being housed in bricks and mortar. REF: HOS41
- To continue to consider the needs of Gypsies and Travellers in developing housing-related support services throughout Herefordshire.

3.15 Homeless families

The “applicant with children” homeless category is the largest category in Herefordshire, making up 129 acceptances out of 206 in 2007/2008. Homeless couples or individuals who have responsibility for dependent children would be assessed as having a priority need by the local authority, depending on their circumstances, they are likely to be eligible for the full housing duty. Families, where a duty has been accepted, usually receive a priority status and would have a short stay in temporary accommodation until they secure accommodation through Home Point or other permanent accommodation. Whilst it is recognised that any time spent in temporary accommodation can be difficult and disruptive for the households involved, in 2004 the Government passed regulations prohibiting the accommodation of homeless households with dependent children in bed & breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks, this target has been further extended with a CLG target of zero families in bed & breakfast by the year 2010.

The Herefordshire team are committed to complying with this target and have reduced the average length of time spent in temporary accommodation to 5 weeks in bed & breakfast. In addition to this target, the majority of those interviewed during consultation in Herefordshire, requested research around placements in temporary accommodation including the locations, the quality and the suitability. A key priority of Herefordshire Council is that a Temporary Accommodation Strategy is researched and implemented.

County wide, homeless families are to be treated as a priority in line with the Local Area Agreement performance indicators and the themes of the Herefordshire Community Strategy. A relevant Council Priority is: To maximise the health, safety, economic wellbeing, achievements and contribution of every child

Supporting People and Herefordshire Council commissioned the Shelter housing support service in August 2005, to work with families and individuals who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The clients that have been referred to the Shelter service require intensive support in a broad range of housing related areas. Since its launch, Shelter has received 378 referrals for support and in April 2008, there were 27 households on the Shelter waiting list. It has also been noted by Herefordshire Council that the Herefordshire figure for relationship breakdown (violent and non violent) of 35% is higher than the national average of 20% in 2007. It is suggested that the Homeless Strategy Co-ordinator investigates this and targets work accordingly.

Homeless Families	2002/ 2003	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008
Applicant with children	206	236	245	235	92	129
Average length of stay in bed and breakfast for FWC						5 weeks
Shelter Waiting List	April 2007	April 2008				
Number on waiting list	0	27				
Current case load	60	70				

- Housing services currently available for families with dependent children in Herefordshire: -**
- Emergency temporary accommodation for applicants with children if required.
 - Shelter offers a housing related support service for families with children both in temporary accommodation and into the first year of a tenancy.
 - Women’s Aid provides intensive housing related support to families who have been affected by domestic abuse, both in temporary accommodation and own tenure.
 - The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme. This scheme offers the first month’s rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.

- Housing advice along with home visits by the Council's homeless prevention officers.
- Application to the local authority prevention fund offers an opportunity for previous rent arrears to be paid to allow for a new tenancy to begin or bills to be paid to maintain a tenancy.
- The mortgage rescue and low cost home ownership schemes with the aim of preventing homelessness.
- A potential priority status on the local Home Point register to enable families to find accommodation as quickly as possible.

Ongoing developments

- The re-specification of the rent deposit scheme, with the potential of a dedicated rent deposit scheme officer, funded by Supporting People.
- The re-specification of the homeless services in the County funded by Supporting People.
- The specification of a service to deal with the Hard to House families to be potentially funded by Supporting People (potentially the family intervention model).
- Research into the provision of an RSL Tenancy Support Officer to assist existing RSL tenants to maintain their tenancies, with the position to be funded through Supporting People.

3.16 Key actions for homeless families

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for homeless families: -

- To seek the development of a housing related support service to deal with the challenge of Hard to House households whose tenancy history is preventing an offer of settled accommodation. Associated with this, to set up a new Homeless Case Panel Action Group to review individual Hard to House cases and to drive forward ideas and solutions with long term planning, potentially using the family intervention model. REF: HOS1
- To improve homelessness prevention for families, to potentially acquire a small number of appropriate properties to provide intensively supported transitional housing for families with children who have been found intentionally homeless or who are hard to house. Potentially to research the family intervention model with the assistance of supporting people. REF: HOS2
- The re-specification of the rent deposit scheme, with the potential of a dedicated rent deposit scheme officer funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS3
- To seek in partnership with the Supporting People programme, the development of an RSL Tenancy Support service to work closely with the Homelessness and Housing Advice team assisting existing RSL tenants to maintain their tenancies. REF: HOS4
- To develop a joint Housing and Social Services protocol for early intervention where children are at risk of homelessness. REF: HOS5
- To develop and implement a 'Temporary Accommodation Strategy' with action plan. This strategy should review all current temporary accommodation usage, location and quality, and seek to improve the quality of temporary accommodation, particularly to ensure washing and cooking facilities. The Strategy is to reduce to zero the number of 16 / 17 year olds and families with children in B&B by 2010, encompassing the specialist advice for reducing youth homelessness. REF: HOS6
- To commission additional research into the increased number of relationship breakdowns in Herefordshire, with the aim of reducing the percentage of numbers in this homeless category as compared to the national statistics. REF:

- To review the housing related support service in response to emerging needs. It is envisaged that the re-specified service will work with both families and single people. (Shelter). REF: HOS23

3.17 Learning Disabilities

People with learning disabilities who become homeless may be found in a priority need group for the purposes of a homeless application. This would depend on the nature of their learning disability and its effect on their daily life. Adult Social Care learning disability services will take the lead in finding appropriate accommodation where an individual is assessed as having severe learning disabilities and is homeless or vulnerably housed. However for individuals with mild to moderate learning disabilities, the Homelessness and Prevention team would assess them and establish if they are in a priority need group and offer assistance in accordance with statutory requirements.

Learning disability services are undergoing radical changes to meet the changing needs and expectations of individuals who access services. This is mainly focussed on ensuring that individuals stay within their local community and access mainstream services. In relation to housing this may result in more individuals becoming homeless as Adult Social Care move away from a paternalistic response in providing accommodation and support solutions to one of supporting the individual to access mainstream services.

Some individuals with learning disabilities may require specialist housing services due to specific issues such as substance misuse, mental health issues etc. Where this is the case individuals would access these through mainstream service provision with additional support provided by the learning disability service if appropriate.

Housing related services currently available for people with Learning Disability issues in Herefordshire: -

- The Shared Ownership scheme is available to assist individuals with the purchase of their own home; this is called “SOLD” (Shared Ownership for people with a learning disability) and is offered through the Council’s Housing Needs and Development team.
- The Herefordshire Adult Placement Service offers accommodation with support to vulnerable adults who would not be able to maintain their own tenancies.
- Floating Support is provided via four approved providers funded through the supporting people grant who specialise in supporting people with a learning disability within their own homes.
- Transitional accommodation is provided in eight units of cluster accommodation in Hereford City. This is designed to ensure that younger individuals develop the skills and experience over a two year period to live as independently as possible
- Many people with a learning disability continue to live with family carers. However, this often breaks down when the family carer is no longer able to offer support, resulting in homelessness.
- A high percentage of people live in registered care placements. This is expected to decrease dramatically over the next few years as individuals begin to take more control over their lives and access ordinary housing solutions with support.
- Learning Disability Services have appointed a Housing care Manager, who will assess individuals wanting to live more independently and who are eligible for Social Care.
- The Supporting people Grant have funded a Housing move on worker for two years to ensure that individuals live as independently as possible and access appropriate housing and support options.

Ongoing developments-

- 5 New cluster flats in Ross are being developed in partnership with Strategic Housing to support people to move on from registered care placements.

- 2 new developments of 6 cluster flats are being developed in Hereford City to support people to move on from registered care
- 6 new cluster flats are being developed in Hereford City to support people who currently live with older family carers (aged 70-+)
- Herefordshire Council is entering into a partnership with Midland Heart Care and Support to reconfigure existing Learning Disability services to offer more tenancies and ordinary living situations. This will include services for younger people with a LD who without the right provision may become homeless. It will also include the development of a transitional service to offer more intensive support to individuals to get them into tenancies and ensure they have the necessary skills to maintain them.

3.18 Key actions for service users with learning disabilities

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSI officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for those with learning disabilities: -

- To ensure the Learning Disability Housing Plan remains under review.

3.19 Mental health

Agencies report that individuals with mental health problems are one of the groups who find it hardest to access appropriate accommodation if they become homeless. Without a suitable home, their mental health can deteriorate.

It is essential that people with mental health problems have an appropriate place to live, with somewhere they can feel at home and secure. In addition to housing difficulties, this need group are likely to have a low and unstable income, have periods of great vulnerability, and experience discrimination in the community. It is therefore understood that many will need active assistance to secure and sustain appropriate housing. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) found that, compared with the general population, people with mental health problems are: -

One and a half times more likely to live in rented housing, with higher uncertainty about how long they can remain in their current home

Twice as likely to say that they are very dissatisfied with their accommodation or that the state of repair is poor

Four times more likely to say that their health has been made worse by their housing

As detailed in the table below, there has been a reduction in homelessness acceptances to clients with mental illness or disability over the past 3 years, in contrast with the steady numbers of Mental Health clients supported by the mental health services in Herefordshire. However, there has been a greater amount of prevention work carried out before a person makes a Homeless application, which has resulted in the general number of applications being reduced.

A concern voiced amongst Mental Health care co-ordinators is that the medical agency used by the Homelessness team may be stricter on the assessment of the vulnerability of Mental Health when assessing homelessness acceptances. However, improved services in the past 3 years to supporting people services such as the Carr Gomm housing related support services may have a bearing on part of the reduction. In light of this information, Herefordshire Council have made key proposals to ensure that Mental Health service users are able to access the support and advice they require.

Reason for Homelessness	2002/	2003	2004/	2005/	2006/	2007/2008
-------------------------	-------	------	-------	-------	-------	-----------

	2003	/2004	2005	2006	2007	
Mental illness or disability	41	51	48	28	9	8
As a % of Homeless Applications	6.74	8.63	6.68	4.86	3.81	2.2

In 2008, and in addition to the Housing Plan, Mental Health will be carrying out a further housing needs analysis to establish the accommodation requirements of their service users.

Housing related services currently available for people with Mental Health issues in Herefordshire: -

- Mental Health has a range of transitional housing support schemes in the county. This transitional supported housing is provided at Ferncroft and Madonna House. These 2 schemes are managed by MIND or Carr Gomm and funded by Supporting People.
- Herefordshire MIND offers a floating outreach support scheme for people living in their own homes.
- Carr Gomm service based within FACT and the Assertive Outreach Team provides housing related support and floating support to service users of the Mental Health service. This service is funded by Supporting People.
- MIND provide day services, which include a number of support programmes for people with a range of mental health issues.
- A Mental Health Housing Development Officer. This Officer works with a range of agencies both strategically and operationally to assess service users' needs and identify appropriate accommodation.
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties.
- A shared ownership scheme called "Own Home" in partnership with Advance, which is specifically designed for mental health service users. This scheme provides the possibility for service users to purchase their own home.

Ongoing developments

- Mental Health will carry out a detailed housing needs analysis in 2008/2009.
- The introduction of an 18-month pilot by Supporting People providing a floating support service for the resettlement of Mental Health Service users including those from Stonebow to access accommodation and maintain tenancies.

3.20 Key actions for service users with mental health needs

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers, the Council will work with it's partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for those with mental health needs:

To set up six-monthly meetings / good practice forums between mental health service and housing providers, and organise joint training to raise awareness and develop joint working. REF: HOS7

A detailed accommodation needs analysis will be carried out in 2008 / 2009 by Mental Health to support their Housing Plan. The local authority will ensure the results and requests are filtered into their housing strategies and planning of resources if applicable. REF: HOS8

A review of the Supporting People funded pilot service offering a floating support service for those mental health service users who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. REF: HOS10

3.21 Older people

Demographic trends and projections show that we have an aging population in Herefordshire, there is an estimated population increase by 2011 for the older age brackets with 18% increase within the 65 – 74 years and 20% increase in ages 85+. As older people make up an ever-increasing section of our community, the need to provide planned and co-ordinated services to meet their needs will continue to grow. Older people have varying needs in terms of their abilities to live independently and the choices they wish to express. There is a need to provide a range of options for older people, including supported schemes and floating support, and this is reflected in a theme within the Community Strategy: -

“To reshape adult social care, enabling many more older and other vulnerable people to maintain control of their lives.”

The number of homelessness presentations from the elderly within Herefordshire is relatively low, with 4 applications from those above 65 years in 2007/2008.

It is important, however, to ensure that homelessness amongst the elderly is not hidden by their living with family or in unsuitable accommodation or taking up a hospital bed whilst alternative housing is found.

Herefordshire Council is currently reviewing its position with regard to housing provision for older persons and although an overarching strategy for older people was published in August 2007, any future development of extra care provision is dependent upon the outcome of an Older Persons' Housing Plan.

In the interim, work is evolving around the development of services through Supporting People, including telecare and low-level handy-person services, and through developing the village warden pilot service into an enhanced countywide service.

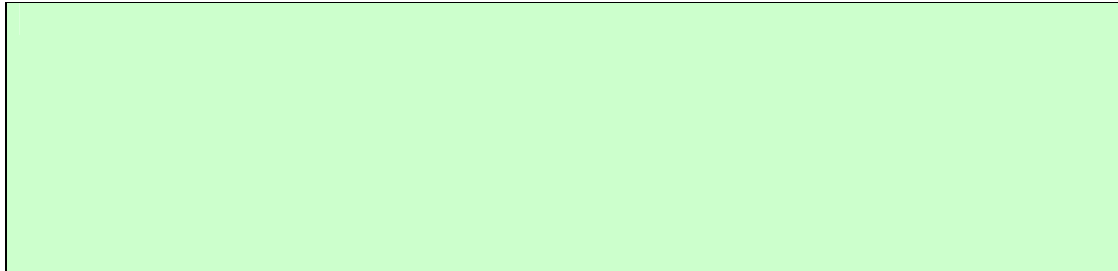
In January 2008, the Leadon Bank extra care scheme in Ledbury opened. This was commissioned by the Council as part of a redevelopment of care home stock and is a purpose built facility providing 52 units of accommodation (both one and two bedrooled) supported by a dedicated domiciliary care and supporting people service along with a range of communal facilities. The facility includes a registered re-ablement centre and community day care resource, which tenants may also benefit from, according to future needs. Communal facilities are available to the wider local community as a means of supporting community involvement and integration.

The housing related options currently available for older people in Herefordshire: -

- The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme. This scheme offers the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.
- Shelter offer a housing related support service for those older people both in temporary accommodation and into the first year of a tenancy
- The Home Improvement Agency offer a Handy Man service to enable older people to remain in their own home with improvements and adaptations to their homes to live more independently, part funded by Supporting People.
- The extra care scheme at Leadon Bank in Ledbury providing 52 units of accommodation for older people.

Ongoing developments

- Work will be completed in 2008 on Hereford City's first Extra Care scheme, which will enable over 91 older people to live independently in their own homes with support matched to their individual needs.
- The preparation and development of the hospital discharge protocol between the County Hospital, Community Hospitals and Herefordshire Council.



3.22 Key actions for older people

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for older people: -

- To complete in 2008, Hereford City's first Extra Care scheme, which will enable over 91 older people to live independently in their own homes with support, matched to their individual needs. REF: HOS42
- The preparation and development of the hospital discharge protocol between mental health, County Hospital, Community Hospitals and Herefordshire Council. REF: HOS43
- To develop a register of adapted properties within the county. REF: HOS44
- To improve information - prepare leaflets on homelessness services (including audio and other relevant media) to be prepared and circulated to public, prevention officers and support agencies along with uploading to the web sites. These should also take account of BME Groups and Older People. REF: HOS 11
- To prepare a Directory of Homelessness and Related Services, to be used by service users and support teams. REF: HOS13
- To develop an older persons housing plan, in alignment with the aims and objectives of the Older Person Strategy for Herefordshire "Growing older In Herefordshire"

3.23 Rough sleepers

The term "rough sleeper" covers anyone who is homeless and sleeping outside or in buildings not designed for habitation such as warehouses or car parks.

In spring 2004, a rough sleeper count took place in Herefordshire, which returned a zero count. It should be noted that this is a "snapshot" exercise, which takes places on one night using volunteers who go out on to the streets and literally count the number of rough sleepers.

Housing services currently available for rough sleepers in Herefordshire: -

- There are several drop-in centres in the City. None of these restrict their facilities exclusively to homeless people or rough sleepers. They offer meals, washing and laundry facilities. They also offer advice, support and sign posting to other agencies.
- The drop-in centres are, between them, open regularly throughout the week.
- Open Door is a city centre based drop-in facility. It is open two mornings a week. Run by volunteers, it offers breakfast, some basic life skills training, befriending and sign posting.
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for rough sleepers. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties

Ongoing developments

- St Peter's Church ('Sheepfold') has started research into the provision of a direct access shelter for those who find themselves unexpectedly homeless.
- A planned rough sleepers count for Autumn 2008.

3.24 Key actions for Rough Sleepers

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with it's partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for rough sleepers: -

- A rough sleepers count as per the CLG guidelines in Autumn 2008. REF: HOS19
- A 'hidden homeless' or presenters survey to review the true numbers of homeless single people presenting to agencies within Herefordshire. REF: HOS18
- With the results from the 'hidden homeless' count, to develop a "Hidden Homeless and Rough Sleeper needs analysis" to include a needs mapping exercise, to ensure a strategic approach to tackling, managing and reducing homelessness amongst this client group. This should review the need for a Direct Access Hostel or offer alternative solutions. REF: HOS20

3.25 Singles and couples over 25 years old

The term 'single homeless' is generally used to indicate single people or couples who do not have dependent children. Single homeless people would not have a priority need for accommodation under homelessness legislation unless they were found to be vulnerable in line with the criteria laid down in the legislation. If registering with Home Point, this group are likely to be Gold Band at the highest. Statistical evidence for this group is vague, and the rough sleepers count in 2003 returned a zero count. However, consultation from stakeholders and service users, suggests that there is a large number of singles and couples 'sofa surfing'.

This group report a difficulty in finding affordable single unit housing in the county that they are likely to be able to access, and can often be jumping from house to house to secure a bed for the night. Other problems discussed are the difficulty of accessing affordable housing through Home Point if you are in the lower bands, along with a difficulty accessing the private rented sector, as many agents do not accept housing benefit tenants.

Results from the consultation specify a requirement for a direct access hostel in Hereford, this gap was identified in the 2003 Homelessness Review: -

“Insufficient managed temporary accommodation and support services for vulnerable single homeless people”

Housing related options currently available for single homeless people in Herefordshire: -

- The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme. This scheme offers the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.
- Low cost home ownership schemes.
- Open Door and Salvation Army offering meals and blankets.
- Shelter provides dedicated housing support to a small number of singles and couples who are homeless. (10% of this caseload is the maximum)
- Housing advice detailing options from the Local Authority prevention team.
- Registration on the Home Point waiting list for affordable housing.
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties.
- Pomona Place temporary supported housing provides units of accommodation for single homeless with priority need.

Ongoing developments

- St Peter's Church ('Sheepfold') has started research into the provision of a direct access shelter for those who find themselves unexpectedly homeless.
- A planned rough sleepers count for Autumn 2008.

3.26 Key actions for homeless single people and couples

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers, the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for single people and couples:

- A 'hidden homeless' or presenters survey to review the true numbers of homeless single people presenting to agencies within Herefordshire. REF: HOS18
- A rough sleepers count as per the CLG guidelines in Autumn 2008. REF: HOS19
- With the results from the 'hidden homeless' count, to develop a "Hidden Homeless and Rough Sleeper needs analysis" to include a needs mapping exercise, to ensure a strategic approach to tackling, managing and reducing homelessness amongst this client group. This should review the need for a Direct Access Hostel or offer alternative solutions. Links to HOS18. REF: HOS20
- Supporting People to review the housing related support service in response to emerging needs. It is envisaged that the re-specified service will work with both families and single people. (Shelter). REF: HOS23

3.27 Substance misuse

Anecdotal evidence from stakeholders and support agencies state that individuals with substance misuse and dual diagnosis issues make up a significant amount of single homeless people in Herefordshire. The current report from DASH states a caseload of approximately 360 service users as of April 2008. Homeless individuals with substance misuse issues often have dual diagnosis of problems and are people whom agencies can find it very difficult to assist in finding accommodation. Nationally, many accommodation projects will not accept individuals who they suspect are using illegal drugs or are likely to bring drugs onto the premises. However, agencies

do acknowledge that some of their residents may be concealing their drug use and that excluding them when drug use is discovered is not always the most positive approach.

Approval is currently being sought to provide relevant statistics of drug users and their housing needs and to commission an analysis. This information will be fed up to the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group when completed, prompting a review of this needs group and a potential to assess the action planning.

Accommodation providers have recently reported that information sharing from the drug support agencies is sometimes very difficult and this may influence their offer of accommodation.

Housing services currently available for people with substance misuse issues in Herefordshire: -

- DASH offers outreach support to those dealing with substance misuse.
- Community Alcohol Service (CAS) offers a range of support and counselling services to people with alcohol dependency.
- The Rent Deposit Scheme to assist people into the private sector rented accommodation.
- SHYPP will house those with drug or alcohol difficulties aged between 18 – 25 years old, in conjunction with the relevant support packages.
- Women's Aid will accommodate in refuge, and support via floating support, women who have a drug or alcohol difficulties in addition to their experience of domestic abuse.
- Low cost home ownership and mortgage rescue schemes enable people to part or fully purchase their own home.
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties.
- Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) is a dedicated team of low criminal justice drug workers who as part of their service and provide advice and assistance with accommodation.

Ongoing developments

- A creation of a wrap around service for drug and alcohol service users along with offenders. The housing related support element is to be funded through Supporting People.
- Approval for the commissioning of a housing needs analysis for this group.

Key actions for clients who substance misuse

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSI officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for those clients with substance misuse needs: -

- A creation of a wrap around service for drug and alcohol service users along with offenders. The housing related support element is to be funded through Supporting People. REF: HOS15
- To commission a housing strategy for people with substance misuse problems, which will identify the housing needs of those with drug and alcohol problems. REF: HOS17
- To develop information-sharing procedures and a pro-forma care package that landlords can view. REF: HOS18

3.28 Teenage and young parents (from 16 to 25 years old)

Teenage and young parents, particularly single mothers, can find themselves homeless for a range of reasons including a relationship breakdown with partners or with their own parents. Overcrowding is reported as a major issue and nationally there is a high level of repeat homelessness amongst this group. Young People over 16 years old who are parents or are pregnant would be in a priority need category for the purposes of making a homeless application to the local authority. Herefordshire accepted 22 pregnant women as homeless in 2007/2008, comprised of 12 teenagers, and 9 under the age of 25, and 3 pregnant women over the age of 25.

In November 2007, Every Child Matters in Herefordshire carried out a needs assessment. It was reported that current teenage pregnancy levels are relatively low. The conception rate for girls aged 15 – 17 years was 32.9 per 1,000 girls, compared with 45.8 in the West Midlands region. However, the overall low rates mask 'hot-spots' in the Belmont, St Martins, Hinton and Leominster South wards.

Reason for Homelessness	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Pregnant – no other children	49	65	65	55	18	22
Parents not willing / able to accommodate	90	122	113	97	38	63
Total number of young parents accessing SHYPP support services within the year		34	47	82	112	101
Young parents (16-18 years) accessing SHYPP support services within the year.			12	26	26	36

It is reported that the availability of support for young parents is poor in the pre-tenancy stages. SHYPP can only really start to work with young parents once a tenancy commences (within reason) and a young parent and child are likely to have three or four moves from 1st homes to emergency bed and breakfast, into more suitable temporary accommodation, then into their own flat, all of these moves occurring whilst the young parent is trying to cope with a new baby. A support worker may be with them, but this transition may be difficult, however.

It is important to ensure that, when accommodation is offered, there is an assessment of need, and that steps are taken to ensure support is available for every young parent.

What homelessness and housing services are currently available for young parents in Herefordshire?

- Pomona Place, temporary supported housing accepts pregnant young women aged 17 years prior to the seventh month of their pregnancy.
- Women's Aid accepts young women from the age of 16 into the refuge, including pregnant or young mums. Women's Aid has dedicated children and young people support and advocacy worker, who also provides parenting support.
- SHYPP provide two young parent support workers supporting 101 young women in 2007/2008.
- Sure Start help young people with parenting skills. Also provide a starter pack. (Ross and Leominster)
- Connexions run a training session – "Young Mums-to-be" group over 10 weeks to

- develop skills for life including budgeting and IT skills.
- Free counselling service available through SHYPP.
- Shelter offers a housing related support service for teenage/young parents, especially if they are a couple, both in temporary accommodation and into the first year of a tenancy.
- A weekly post natal group for teenage parents, run by health visitors, at the Greencroft centre.

Ongoing developments

- A survey to investigate the needs of SHYPP's young parents is underway.
- Discussion of a third lone parent worker at SHYPP is planned.
- The Schools Homeless Education Project sessions are to be re-written to include education and information for young parents or potential parents aged 14 – 15 years old.

3.29 Key actions for teenage and young parents

- To ensure that ALL teenage or young parents accessing the Homelessness and Prevention team are referred to housing related support where needed. REF: HOS27
- That all teenage parents accessing temporary accommodation undergo a needs assessment and are instantly referred to the relevant support services. REF: HOS27
- To work in conjunction with SHYPP to prepare a Teenage Parents Homelessness Needs Analysis, to assess current housing needs and ensure solutions for accommodation and support. REF: HOS30
- To promote the Schools Education Project for Young Parents. ONGOING
- Supporting People to re-specify the homeless housing related support services in the county, which are to be funded by Supporting People. REF: HOS23

3.30 Young people aged 16 – 17 years

Since the Homelessness Act 2002, the priority need categories were extended to include 16 – 17 year olds due to their potential vulnerability. Young people who are aged 18 – 25 years are not a priority by virtue of their age, unless they are a care-leaver aged 18 - 20 years old.

The CLG guidance also recognises the vulnerability of this group and have set every local authority the target of zero 16/17 year olds in bed and breakfast by 2010, this target is referenced within the Herefordshire Local Area Agreement and cross-referenced into the Strategic Housing Plan.

As of 2007/2008, there had been an increase in Homeless acceptances in Herefordshire from 16 – 17 year olds to a total of 14 acceptances. This increase may be explained by several factors including Supporting People extending the number of support services for these vulnerable young adults in the past year including additional workers within SHYPP (Supported Housing for Young People), Shelter, and the introduction of the New Dawn agency along with the independent services of the Schools Education Project as well as Connexions. This increased awareness may contribute to the rise in numbers, along with an increase in home visits by prevention officers to the family home, to encourage the young person to go through the proper route.

Main Reason for Priority – Homelessness	2002/ 2003	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008
Aged 16 or 17	27	36	48	33	5	14
Numbers of 16/17 year olds as main applicants in bed and breakfast (age at entry)					Not known	4

Prevention officers have also been given the responsibility and freedom to offer small goodwill payments to help alleviate parents' financial concerns and to encourage the young person to

remain at home. This low level of homelessness may also be due to young people approaching other agencies directly.

However, the increase in 2007/2008 is in line with SHYPP's figures reporting a steady increase of 16 – 17 year olds within the Foyer accommodation to 19 in 2007/2008. SHYPP also provide advice and information that is helping young people to return home or find alternatives to making a homeless application. The SHYPP duty team report that they prevent homelessness amongst approximately 50% of young people they see following a few interviews. After that, they will attempt a reasonable number of interventions (Foyers, Nightstop, family & friends) before they refer the young person to the Homelessness service.

SHYPP STATISTICS FOR 16 – 17 YEAR OLDS	2001	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Referrals to the SHYPP service	168	714	630	592
% of referrals that are 16/17 years old	42%	38%	48%	34%
Number of referrals that are 16/17 years old	69	268	302	199
Number of 16/17 year olds accommodated in the Foyers (age at entry)		7	10	19
Numbers of 14-15 year olds attending the Schools Education Project.			127	145
Total numbers on Foyer waiting list				84

What homelessness and housing services are currently available for young people aged 16 – 17 years in Herefordshire?

- SHYPP offer a drop-in surgery, with a duty and crisis team offering housing related advice and support along with sign posting to young people aged 16 – 25 years. SHYPP has 20 staff across the whole team.
- An outreach support service for young people and young parents is offered by SHYPP.
- Three accommodation Foyers in Hereford, Ross and Leominster, managed and supported by SHYPP officers. These units currently supply 29 units of transitional supported accommodation.
- 7 units of shared accommodation in Union Street and Newtown road. These shared houses provide a 'stepping stone' for people leaving supported housing but in need of peer support.
- New Dawn agency offers intensive support for 60 young people with multiple and complex needs. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health or previous housing difficulties. This service is funded through Supporting People.
- The Schools Education Project is part funded by the local authority and aims to provide valuable housing and homelessness education in schools to 14 and 15 year olds in the county. SHYPP officers along with young volunteers run this training. In 2007/2008, it was conducted within 5 Herefordshire schools and reached 45 pupils with the aim of reducing homelessness in the future.
- Advice and assistance provided by the Local Authority prevention officers including home visits if appropriate along with the offer of prevention funds for goodwill payments or top-up of rents to parents, guardians or landlords.
- Pomona Place temporary supported housing accepts homeless young people aged 16 years and over, although Pomona Place do not have a set number of bed-spaces for this age group, however they do accommodate this age group.
- Mediation service is offered to 16 – 17 year olds and their parents or guardians to improve relationships and encourage a return home or a planned move from home.
- Shelter operates an intensive housing related support service, which may be offered to

16 – 17 year olds

- Connexions based in Hereford City offer assistance and support into education and employment to 16 – 26 year olds.
- Nightstop is a service providing overnight emergency accommodation placement with a volunteer household to young people for a very short period. This service is managed by SHYPP.
- Close House is a youth drop-in facility in Hereford city centre, catering for 16-25 year olds. Offering a safe environment with support, guidance and counselling, as well as signposting to other relevant agencies.
- Various sports, training, volunteering and healthy living projects are provided by SHYPP, which are designed to support formerly homeless young people and reduce chances of repeat homelessness.
- The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme, which offers the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables 16 – 17 year olds to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.

Ongoing developments

- With the amount of 84 on the SHYPP waiting list, there is a further needs analysis being carried out by SHYPP with suggested accommodation and support solutions.
- Expanding the Nightstop project to take on longer stays with the aim of reducing young people in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Currently the MOPP (Move-on Planned Protocol) is used by Pomona Place- Stonham and Home Point. However it is planned that this protocol will be extended to other supported housing providers in the County.

3.31 Key actions for Young People aged 16 – 17 years need group

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIg officers,

the Council will work with its partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for young people: -

- To produce a Young People's Homelessness Strategy to include people aged 16 – 25 years. Providing evidence of information, ideas and services along with the proposed need for new preventative solutions as well as accommodation and support solutions for young people leaving home as well as those found intentionally homeless. REF: HOS25
- The numbers using the Mediation Service have declined in the past year. Research with Prevention Officers suggests that it takes time to encourage parents and young people to take part in the service. Prevention Officers may not have this time due to larger case loads, therefore it is suggested by Herefordshire Council that research into another young people's agency reviewing the 'take-over' of this prevention service and potentially extending the mediation service to include young people above the age of 18 years. REF: HOS26
- Statistics outlined in this section have shown that there were four young people aged 16 – 17 years in bed and breakfast at the end of March 2007. With this in mind, Herefordshire Council recommend a system of needs assessment to be integrated into any accommodation referral procedure, particularly regarding any young people moving into bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation, to ensure that each young person's needs are identified, and that support is available as appropriate. REF: HOS27
- With the aim of developing further accommodation options for young people, the Nightstop scheme is to be developed further, to encourage supported lodgings for 3 months until Foyer places may become available or alternative accommodation can be sought. REF: HOS28
- To develop a joint Housing and Social Services protocol for homeless 16 and 17 year olds and those at risk of homelessness. REF: HOS29

- To research an easily accessible emergency bed in a temporary accommodation provision to prevent 16/17 year olds being placed in bed and breakfast. REF: HOS6
- To produce a Temporary Accommodation Strategy with action plan. This Strategy and action plan is to review all current temporary accommodation usage, location and quality, to seek to improve the quality of temporary accommodation with the aim of using clean and decent self contained temporary accommodation with washing and cooking facilities. To reduce to zero the number of 16 / 17 year olds in bed and breakfast by 2010 - encompassing the specialist advice for reducing youth homelessness. REF: HOS6
- To develop information sharing procedures and a pro-forma care package for 16 - 17 year olds that Home Point landlords can view - with the aim of assuring Housing Associations that may offer a tenancy to this client group. REF: HOS18

3.32 Young People aged 18 – 25

Young people aged 18 – 25 are not deemed as priority due to age unless they are leaving care or have mental health difficulties. The local authority provides housing advice to this group along with the financial support to young people’s agencies including SHYPP and New Dawn. There is local support from other voluntary and statutory organisations including Connexions.

Within consultation from service users and stakeholders, this group report a difficulty in finding affordable single unit housing in the county that they are likely to be able to access, and can often be jumping from house to house, to secure a bed for the night. Other problems discussed are the difficulty of accessing affordable housing through Home Point if you are in the lower bands along with a difficulty accessing the private rented sector, as many agents do not accept housing benefit tenants or the rent deposit scheme.

Results from the consultation specify a requirement for a direct access hostel in Hereford. This gap was identified in the 2003 Homelessness Review: -
 “Insufficient managed temporary accommodation and support services for vulnerable single homeless people”

SHYPP’s criteria ensure that their teams will support 18 – 25 year olds with the offer of limited accommodation placements within the Foyers. It is being reported that there are a large number of ‘sofa surfers’ by the stakeholder agencies, and that these young people can be in very vulnerable situations. SHYPP can take these young people but with a waiting list of approximately 84 people, there are a number who will be waiting for a while.

SHYPP STATISTICS FOR 18 – 25 YEAR OLDS	2001	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Referrals to the SHYPP service	168	714	630	592
% of referrals that are 18 – 25 year olds	58%	62%	51%	64%
Number of referrals that are 18 – 25 year olds	99	446	326	383
Number of 18-25 year olds accommodated in the Foyers (age at entry)	N/A	40	50	32
Numbers of 14-15 year olds attending the Schools Education Project.	N/A	N/A	127	145

Total numbers on Foyer waiting list	84
--	-----------

It should be noted from the information in the previous table that the referral numbers in 2007/2008 had dropped; this figure includes only those people who were referred to the Supporting People services including SHAC, Young Parent, and Foyers etc. However, in previous years all referrals were counted including non-supporting people services such as Nightstop and prevention work.

Housing related services currently available for Young People aged 18 – 25 years: -

- The local authority offers a rent deposit scheme, offering the first month's rent and deposit as a loan to those that require financial assistance. This enables those that may be vulnerable to seek and accept a private sector tenancy.
- Low cost home ownership schemes.
- Open Door and Salvation Army offering meals and blankets.
- Shelter provide dedicated housing support to a small number of single homeless people (10% of their caseload is the maximum)
- Housing advice detailing options from the Local Authority prevention team.
- Registration on the Home Point waiting list for social housing.
- New Dawn is a support agency offering intensive support for young people. New Dawn support, advise and signpost young people with complex needs including being released from prison, mental health needs or previous housing difficulties

Ongoing developments

- St Peter's Church ('Sheepfold') has started research into the provision of a direct access shelter for those who find themselves unexpectedly homeless.
- A planned rough sleepers count for Autumn 2008.

3.33 Key actions for Homeless Young People aged 18 – 25

The aim of the Homelessness Strategy is to reduce or prevent homelessness in Herefordshire. In light of this information, and taking into account the statutory requirement, CLG guidance, local Strategy requirements and the results of consultation with service users, stakeholders, staff and the HSIG officers,

the Council will work with it's partners in taking forward the following actions to improve housing advice, opportunities and housing related services for young people: -

A 'hidden homeless' or presenters survey to review the true numbers of homeless single people presenting to agencies within Herefordshire. REF: HOS18

A rough sleepers count as per the CLG guidelines in Autumn 2008. REF: HOS19

With the results from the 'hidden homeless' count, to develop a "Hidden Homeless and Rough Sleeper needs analysis" to include a needs mapping exercise, to ensure a strategic approach to tackling, managing and reducing homelessness amongst this client group. This should review the need for a Direct Access Hostel or offer alternative solutions. REF: HOS20

SECTION FOUR - CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE USERS, STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Introduction

This section outlines the consultation that has occurred in the preparation of the Homeless Strategy 2008. The more detailed consultation reports and results are attached to the Homeless Strategy 2008 in appendix 2 and appendix 3.

4.2 Consultation with Stakeholders, HSIG, Staff and Sub regional partners.

Herefordshire Council and stakeholder staff were interviewed throughout 2007 and 2008 in preparation for gathering information for the writing of the Homelessness Strategy 2008. Those interviewed were asked for their opinions and comments on levels of need, gaps in provision and how gaps could be filled. In addition to these individual meetings, requests and interviews, a Homeless Conference was held in autumn 2007 where Councillors, stakeholders and staff attended and provided their expert opinions, ideas and requests. An away day was also held in February 2008 with the Homelessness and Prevention team to discuss the gaps in provision and requirements for the new Strategy.

Two further away days at sub regional level with our Shropshire partners, the West Housing Market area occurred in 2006 and 2007 with approximately 60 representatives attending both events. Colleagues from Herefordshire and Shropshire detailed the provisions of service in each county and detailed potential services that could be shared. Attendees discussed ideas for the future, gaps in service and potential trends for each authority area as well as the services that can be shared across the County borders. The West Housing Market Area sub regional information is included within the Homelessness Strategy.

In addition to the consultation with individuals, the Herefordshire Homeless Strategy Implementation group (HSIG) was formed in 2006 and includes 16 members from a wide range of statutory and voluntary agencies. This group has continuously reviewed the 2003 Homeless Strategy and have been the driving force in providing information of the levels of need and gaps in provision for the 2008 Homeless Strategy. The ideas, opinions and comments of staff and stakeholders have been fed inherently throughout the Homeless Strategy 2008 and its associated documents.

4.3 Consultation with Service Users

Two forms of consultation exercises were carried out with Service Users and those experiencing housing difficulties in the County: -

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with 67 service users throughout the County. Five consultation sessions of 3-hour duration with over 21 people experiencing housing difficulties.

Face-to-Face interviews with service users

The Homelessness Strategy questionnaire was sent to over 20 housing related support agencies in Herefordshire in February 2008. Eight agencies agreed to conduct the face-to-face interviews with their Service Users over a period of four weeks resulting in the agency staff returning 67 questionnaires. The results provided information on the family compositions, their current and past housing situation and difficulties, along with the agencies that had been contacted and the quality of support or usefulness of that service. The Service Users were also asked to comment on the gaps in the current provision.

For a more detailed report of this survey, please see appendix 3 attached to the Homelessness Strategy 2008.

Consultation Sessions with service users

Five consultation sessions were held on the 7th March 2008 with over 21 service users and those experiencing housing difficulties. The 21 individuals and their children volunteered from requests from over 20 support agencies in the County. The aim of the consultation sessions was to gather the comments, opinions and ideas of those experiencing housing difficulties in the County. Throughout the 5 sessions, the attendees were asked to discuss their ideas on housing difficulties in the county and ways in which to either improve or provide new homelessness or related support services.

For a more detailed report and analysis of the results of the day, please see appendix 2. However the ideas, opinions and comments of these service users have been fed inherently throughout the Homeless Strategy 2008 and its associated documents.

SECTION FIVE - IMPLEMENTATION AND FUTURE REVIEW

5.1 Implementation of Strategy

Cabinet will endorse the Homelessness Strategy. Consequentially the implementation of this Strategy will continue to be overseen by Herefordshire's Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG). This group meets quarterly and they will use the attached action plan. It is anticipated that work groups will be set up to action specific projects that require a multi agency approach. These groups will be led by the lead officer or a member of HSIG and comprise of representatives from appropriate agencies. The day-to-day co-ordination of the implementation of the Strategy will continue to be the role of the Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator, employed by Herefordshire Council.

Monitoring

Ongoing Strategy implementation will be monitored by HSIG using a range of criteria detailed in the Action Plan. Outcomes will also be monitored using information gathered from specific monitoring exercises as well as a range of existing sources. These would include local authority homelessness statistics and national and local performance indicators, and statistical information collected by other statutory and voluntary sector agencies.

5.2 Sub Regional Strategy

Workshops were held in each sub-region during March 2006 to discuss the implementation of the regional strategy. The material collated at these workshops as well as discussions in 2007 in each sub-region have helped to shape the results and sub regional SMART action plan (see appendix 6). The Regional Homeless Strategy Implementation group (*RHSIG*) and the sub-regional groups all contributed to identifying and agreeing the outcomes that need to be delivered.

Each sub-region has a SMART action plan, which has a small number of actions and results for us to achieve over the next 3 years.

As we note above the results and action plans were arrived at through analysis of the workshop material, reference to the Regional Strategy and through local consultation via the sub-regional leads.

For example the workshops in each sub-region all identified sharing of data and good practice as one of the key things that needs to be developed to help reduce homelessness; therefore both data sharing and best practice sharing feature as results for some of the sub-regions. The numbers of results and actions for each sub-region are small at this point so that progress can be made and an atmosphere of success generated around regional and sub-regional working.

Once actions and results are being delivered they will be reviewed and other emerging results and actions may be added. However, no one sub-region's set of results or action plan covers all the outcomes that need to be delivered but collectively they are addressing all the key areas and outcomes for the West Housing Market area.

The sub-regional action plans have been developed in a way that takes account of the practical application of the strategy; this means that there are a limited number of results and actions for each sub-region.

It should be noted that the Strategy and SMART Action plan is not a statutory document and as such reporting is not directly linked to any financial or formal inspection regime. Herefordshire see this as an opportunity for the Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (RHSIG) to take an approach to monitoring which is based on mutual trust and light touch evidencing.

Ongoing review of Homeless Strategy and Action Plan

This Strategy contains an overview of Herefordshire's priorities for the next five years. It is proposed that the action plan is reviewed annually by HSIG, to determine any amendments that are required in the light of new evidence or data. HSIG should continue to be regarded as a strategically recognised group in response to the regional and sub regional agenda. A progress report will be produced annually and submitted to the Head of Strategic Housing and Cabinet.

SECTION SIX - ACTION PLAN

Please see the Action Plan, which is separately bound and attached to this document

APPENDIX ONE – Review of housing needs and homelessness from 2003 – 2008

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the County of Herefordshire, assess its likely extent in the future and identify some of the services that are currently being carried out. A further review of more specific information has also been carried out for each individual need groups including learning disabilities, substance misuse and single homeless people etc. This specific review data is reported within the need groups or service titles within the Homelessness Strategy 2008. Therefore it is important to consider this document in conjunction with the Homeless Strategy and other appendices including that on consultation.

As part of the review process we have aimed to establish as comprehensively as possible, a profile of homelessness in Herefordshire. We recognise however, that there are existing gaps in our knowledge and that the collection of data and information must be an ongoing and shared process. This, in turn, will inform continued Strategy development and the annual monitoring and evaluation procedure.

It should be noted that in reviewing Homelessness statistical information and quantitative data, further work will be carried out in completing work commenced in assessing the support needs of socially excluded groups including vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in Herefordshire. The Supporting People commissioning plan is to be completed very shortly. With this in mind, the Homeless Strategy includes provision for further work to be undertaken on assessing the gaps in provision and needs of all the vulnerable groups in Herefordshire. However the HSI recommended that a number of consultation events should be conducted for service users and stakeholders to assess the gaps in services utilising the statistical information that has been obtained. These results have been considered throughout this review and Strategy and it is believed that the sample sizes of consultation provide robust findings.

1.2 Consultation considerations

This review and strategy also considers those surveyed: - over 88 service users were interviewed by individual face-to-face interviews with set questions, along with service users attending various consultation sessions, which requested their opinions on key issues with their housing difficulties and their thoughts on the gaps in provision of services. The robust results from these surveys are reflected throughout this review and strategy and the appendices detailing the consultation results. In addition to service users surveys,

1.3 What has been achieved so far?

- **Reconfiguration of Herefordshire Council's Homeless Service.**

The Homelessness and Housing Advice team returned to Herefordshire Council in April 2006. A number of the Homelessness Team have changed job titles and are currently working as prevention officers. The staff structure was remodelled in 2008. This is currently awaiting approval. Please see appendix 5 for the detail of numbers within the new staff structure.

- **Prevention Fund**

Cabinet approved this funding in 2005 with the key objective of preventing homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast in the county. The Prevention Fund provides the facility to the Homelessness Team to 'offer' financial support to homeless or potentially homeless citizens. The funds may be used for a range of solutions including rent deposits, goodwill payments to relatives to maintain accommodation, storage of furniture, kennel fees, the payment of rent arrears and

many other solutions in order to prevent a person from becoming homeless. Much of this money is paid to clients as a loan but can offer a second chance to help them secure accommodation.

- **Affordable Housing**

Since 2003, Herefordshire Council have reported the securing of an additional 683 units of affordable housing, these include 220 units of low cost home ownership, bringing the total of affordable housing stock in the county to 10,759 (as at 1st April 2007).

- **Housing related support from Shelter**

The intensive housing related support service was set up in Herefordshire in 2005 in conjunction with Shelter, Supporting People and the Homelessness Service at Herefordshire Council, to offer intensive support for a maximum of one year to approximately 60 homeless or potentially homeless families with multiple and complex needs. This service aims to prevent future homelessness and enable service users to maintain their tenancies. Currently stakeholders are working in partnership to commission a revised housing related support service in response to emerging needs. It is envisaged that the re-specified service will work with both families and single people.

- **Mediation Scheme for 16/17 year olds**

This new scheme was introduced into Herefordshire in 2006, and offers mediation services to young people and their families. The mediators will work both with the parents/guardians and the young person to work out their problems at home, with the aim of preventing homelessness or to potentially facilitate a planned move on for 16 and 17 year olds from their home.

- **The Sanctuary Scheme**

This new scheme was established in 2006, offering domestic abuse or harassment victims a security service, which may enable them to choose to remain within their own home. Herefordshire Council staff work with the Police and Women's Aid to offer security advice and equipment such as alarms, locks and in extreme cases, a panic room. The aim of the Sanctuary Scheme is to prevent homelessness for the victims and their children.

- **Schools Education Project**

Herefordshire 'SHYPP' (*Supported Housing for Young People*) began this project in 2006 with the aim of providing homelessness education in schools. SHYPP officers, along with young volunteers or mentors who have accessed the SHYPP service, aim to provide valuable housing and homelessness education to 14 and 15 year olds. This is expected to reduce and prevent homelessness for the future amongst young people and is linked to the local area agreement (LAA) indicators.

- **RSL Homeless Prevention Protocol**

This protocol was developed and signed in 2007 by Herefordshire Council and the Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) operating within the County. This protocol is the first of its kind in the Country. The aim of the protocol is to set out the agreement between the Local Authority and the major Housing Associations in the County for working together to prevent homelessness in Herefordshire by establishing partnership working and early warning systems to prevent homelessness.

- **Hospital Discharge Homelessness Protocol**

This protocol is currently being presented to the PCT, Mental Health and the community's hospitals with the aim of reducing homelessness amongst those leaving hospital.

- **Home Point – additional partners**

Following the successful addition of two further partners to the Home Point board during 2006 – 2007, South Shropshire Housing Association also joined the partnership during 2007 – 08. The addition of three partners to the Home Point choice based lettings scheme in the past four years have enabled those service users registered for affordable housing, more choices around the County.

- **Home Point Video “talking guides” and SMS bidding**

The text message bidding service was launched in mid 2007, to enable applicants on the waiting list to ‘bid’ for properties quickly and easily. The video “talking guides” were launched in February 2008 and provide housing advice and information in video format to 6 languages including English, Russian, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese and British Sign Language. This ensures that Home Point advice is available to the BME groups and those that are unable to read English easily.

- **Gypsy and Traveller Officer at Shelter**

Devised in partnership with Supporting People and provided by Shelter. A dedicated support worker was employed in September 2007, to work with gypsies and travellers who had adopted or were seeking to adopt a settled life-style. This pilot specialist service aims to support housed gypsies and travellers to maintain their tenancies along with working with those families who wish to move into bricks and mortar accommodation.

- **Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment**

The assessment was undertaken during 2007 by external consultants, in partnership with the Shropshire and Powys Local Authorities (housing, planning and environmental services). The assessment highlights the future needs of site provision, housing and housing related support for this group. It incorporates the work previously undertaken in Herefordshire around G & T currently occupying settled traditional housing.

- **Empty Property Strategy**

The former strategy is currently being updated to cover the period 2008 -11, which will outline the tools and resources available to the local authority and private landlords to bring empty properties back into use. Since 2003, 296 properties have been brought back into use.

- **Mortgage Rescue service**

Herefordshire Council has been operating the scheme with limited resources for a number of years and have prevented over 24 households from homelessness. The scheme operates in partnership with a housing association and allows the owner-occupier to remain in their existing property purchasing a share of the property and renting this back at an affordable rent.

- **Rural Housing Enabler (RHE)**

Herefordshire council, its preferred RSL partners and Community First have jointly funded the post of a Rural Housing Enabler to raise awareness and deliver affordable housing across the remoter rural areas of the county. This officer visits parishes and undertakes housing need surveys. It is anticipated that the RHE will contribute in providing additional affordable homes over the next 18 months, by identifying potential development sites to meet the need identified in the surveys.

- **West Housing Market Assessment (WHMAs)**

This assessment has been undertaken by external consultants during 2007 and is due to be finalised during 2008. The assessment will highlight local housing market areas and what the local needs are and what types of housing will be required to ensure a balanced housing market. The final recommendations will inform National, Sub regional and local policies and strategies for both housing and planning.

- **Herefordshire Housing Needs Assessment 2005**

This provides an overview of the current needs across the county using a range of methodologies. It is envisaged that this will continue to be updated as a summary document of housing need across the county, collating data from the various assessments and local housing needs surveys.

- **CAB**

From March 2008, the Citizens Advice Bureau began operating a contract awarded by the Legal Services Commission (LSC). This contract funds a part time Specialist Housing Caseworker whose remit includes helping clients on a range of housing issues including homelessness or threatened homelessness, possession orders, security of tenure matters, property bidding and many other legal housing issues. This service is available to all clients qualifying for legal help. In

addition to this specialist service, the CAB offers a general advice service to all clients on all housing issues.

- **Mental Health Accommodation Development Officer**

This position was employed in late 2007 with the aim of assisting - both strategically and operationally - the accommodation needs of mental health clients. It is hoped this position will reduce the numbers of homelessness amongst mental health service users.

- **Care Leavers' Protocol**

This protocol was developed by Home Point and Herefordshire Council's After Care team in 2007 to ensure the efficient processing of aftercare referrals. These new procedures ensure that those young people leaving care are provided with a high priority status on the County's housing waiting list. This status is given to them 6 months prior to their 18th birthday and leaving the care system. This enables the County's care leavers to secure timely, suitable and permanent accommodation through the housing waiting list before they leave the care system.

- **Support Housing for Young People Leaving Care - After Care (SHAC)**

7 single person self contained properties in Hereford were purchased across the city specifically for young people leaving care. A new post was created within SHYPP to provide support to these young people. The aim of this project is to develop independent skills for young people leaving care within a 2-year period before moving into their own accommodation.

- **Move on Accommodation for Young People**

4 self-contained flats at Newtown Road were redeveloped as move on accommodation for the SHYPP foyers. This project is run in conjunction with the Aftercare team who can recommend young people to move into the vacancies created by foyer residents moving to Newtown Road. SHYPP have also developed a property with Kemble Housing in Union Street that provides 3 rooms in a shared house environment for people leaving supported housing but in need of peer support.

1.4 Levels of Homelessness

As of 2008, the number of homelessness applications and acceptances to Herefordshire Council has reduced since the end of 2005/2006, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Number of Homeless applications and acceptances	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Applications	608	591	719	598	236	358
Acceptances	417	490	510	416	148	206

The ultimate decline in the figures since the return of the Homelessness and Housing Advice team in 2006 to Herefordshire Council reveals that the actions that have been adopted by the local authority and support agencies around the county concerning prevention and housing options had succeeded overall in turning around the rising tide of homelessness acceptances. The increase in 2007/2008 by 58 acceptances may potentially be explained by a number of theories including the increase in interest rates, which has anecdotally caused private sector landlords to sell or for people to lose their homes. These increases traditionally create an increase of number of clients accessing the service.

The various prevention activities carried out by the local authority and support agencies to reduce levels of homelessness are detailed throughout the various sections in the Homeless Strategy. These activities along with the use of the prevention fund to 'offer' financial support to homeless or

potentially homeless citizens will enable the local authority to maintain homelessness at a reasonable level.

1.5 Levels of Intentional decisions

The number of applicants found intentionally homeless in Herefordshire has remained approximately steady over the last 3 years with 41 cases in 2007/2008. Statistics show that in the past year the proportion of those found intentionally homeless has decreased to a level of 11.45% as shown as a percentage of Homeless applications, however there has been an increase in Homeless applications which points to this figure remaining reasonably steady.

Table 2 – Number of applicants found intentionally homeless	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Found intentionally homeless	21	20	28	42	39	41
Found intentional as a % of Homeless Applications	3.5%	3%	4%	7%	17%	11.45%
Applications	608	591	719	598	236	358

Support workers within agencies around the County along with the increased work of the prevention officers dealing with 301 BVPI prevention cases in 2007/08 have assisted to ensure that the numbers found intentionally homeless remain constant in the past few years. In addition to intentionality, 67 applications were made in 2007/2008 to the team from households that were not homeless or were not in priority need as compared to 49 in 2006/2007. It is suggested that it would be useful to reduce the percentage of those found intentionally homeless along with the level of applications through joint working, improving knowledge and options to service users and support agencies with the aim of reducing the levels of unsuccessful or inappropriate applications. It is important to consider that this education would be useful in terms of providing guidance to clients and stakeholders but not to pre-determine status. See action point references on the Action Plan: HOS 1,7,18 and 37

1.6 Levels of Repeat Homelessness

There are a number of factors why individuals or households experience repeat homelessness, these include being vulnerable due to issues that may repeat themselves such as substance misuse, poor mental health, and a history of offending or a background of institutionalisation. Tackling repeat homelessness has been flagged up by the CLG as a key objective for local authorities nationally. Therefore the importance of the provision of appropriate accommodation, assessment of need and availability of support are all key to ensuring that this objective is met. Within Herefordshire the number of repeat homeless cases have decreased over the past 4 years as detailed in the next table.

Table 3 – Number of repeat homelessness cases	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Number of Repeat Homelessness cases	12	12	8	3

This can be explained in some part with the introduction of improved and/or increased services from Supporting People, Mental Health, Women's Aid, SHYPP and the Local Authorities prevention team. However it is the aim of this strategy to reduce the numbers of repeat homelessness cases further, the actions set out in the section "excluded from services" within the

Homeless Strategy and the other need groups aim to deal with some of the sub issues that relate to repeat homelessness in an attempt to maintain or decrease the numbers in this group further.

1.7 The Main Reasons for Priority Need and Accepting Homelessness

The largest reported group in 2007/2008 is from applicants with children and pregnant, this issue is addressed within the two need groups: Homeless Families and Teenage Parents within the Homeless Strategy. It has been noted within the section that a teenage pregnancy strategy is required, particularly focussing on the age of the pregnant women and if move-on accommodation should be an option available in the County for these young women if applicable. The increase within the 16 – 17 year old category has been addressed in the relevant sections within the Strategy, particularly in light of the CLG target of reducing homelessness and its effects amongst this group.

Table 4 Main Reason for Homelessness Priority	2002/ 2003	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008
Applicant with children	206	236	245	235	92	129
Pregnant – no other children	49	65	65	55	18	24
Aged 16 or 17	27	36	48	33	5	14
Care leaver aged 18 to 20	6	10	8	11	1	3
Old age	15	17	14	14	4	4
Physical disability	17	13	18	6	6	7
Mental illness or disability	41	51	48	28	9	8
Other special reason	31	18	15			0
Emergency	1	6	4	1	3	0
Previously in care	4			3	0	0
Served in HM forces		2	1			0
Been in custody / on remand		1				0
Fleeing violence	20	35	44	30	10	17
Of which, domestic violence	17	30	37	28	7	16
TOTAL	417	490	510	416	148	206

The reason 'fleeing violence' has shown an increase in the past year but a decrease from 2005/2006. This is addressed within the 'domestic abuse' section within the Strategy along with associated actions.

1.8 Reasons for Homelessness

The key reasons for homelessness in Herefordshire are listed below in table 5 and closely follow the national trend for the top three reasons. There has been a dramatic decrease in homelessness applications since the introduction of the prevention team and prevention funds since 2005. However, it is noted that the Herefordshire figure for relationship breakdown (violent and non violent) of 35% is higher than the national average of 20%. It is suggested that the HSI group investigates this and targets work accordingly.

Surprisingly, rent arrears as a reason for loss of last settled home is a lower than expected percentage, however it should be noted that most Homeless applicants with rent arrears are found intentionally homeless. Consequentially the figure below will not be representative of the national trend. It is therefore recommended that the Homeless team record those applicants with rent or mortgage arrears for future monitoring information.

Table 5 - Main reason for loss of last settled home	2002/ 2003	2003 /200	2004 /	2005 /	2006 /	2007 /	2008% of total
--	-----------------------	----------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	---------------------------

		4	2005	2006	2007	2008		
1	Parents not willing / able to accommodate	90	122	113	97	38	63	34%
2	Loss of rented accommodation	102	108	104	95	29	42	20%
3	Relationship breakdown (violent)	77	89	114	103	37	46	19%
4	Relationship breakdown (non violent)	54	46	51	39	15	22	12%
5	Other relatives / friends not willing / able to accommodate	34	29	36	19	5	17	9%
6	Other (emergency, rough sleeping)	19	39	46	18	8	4	2%
7	Mortgage arrears	11	5	3	8	2	4	2%
8	Leaving institution / care	12	17	17	16	7	5	1%
9	Other forms of harassment	13	22	23	19	4	1	1%
10	Rent arrears	5	13	6	2	3	2	1%
	TOTAL	417	490	510	416	148	206	100

1.9 Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide housing to those that have been accepted, as priority need. If appropriate these households may be placed in various forms of temporary accommodation, which may include bed and breakfast or another type of temporary accommodation. The government has set targets to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. The target figure for temporary accommodation for Herefordshire is 83. With three years remaining, a working group has taken up the gauntlet to reduce temporary accommodation by 20 units per annum, along with reviewing the location and property type of accommodation available within the County. This group review the schedule identifying the planned closures of temporary accommodation. The council is aiming to use bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children only in emergencies; this is in line with the CLG target of zero families in this type of accommodation by 2010. Herefordshire have reduced the average length of stay for families from 11 weeks in 2005/2006 to 5 weeks by the end 2007/2008.

Table 6 - Households in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter 4	2003 /2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/2008
Total households in temporary accommodation at year end	134	193	173	135	133
Numbers included in above, but in the Bed and Breakfast category	N/R	69	65	23	40
Breakdown of all households in Temporary Accommodation					
Of which are pending or intentional decisions	35	49	34	51	45
Of which are households with children	86	116	117	94	80
Snapshot – Number of families with children in bed and breakfast at end of quarter 4	N/R	N/R	N/R	7	14
Snapshot – Number of 16 / 17 year olds in bed and breakfast at end of quarter 4.	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R	4

The results from the above table have been fed into the Homeless Strategy with the aim of reducing the numbers within temporary accommodation from 133 to 83 by 2010, along with reducing the numbers of families and 16 – 17 year olds in bed and breakfast to zero.

1.10 Homelessness and Prevention team (Housing Advice Services)

The Homelessness and Housing Advice Services returned in house on the 1st April 2006 following the end of the contracting out arrangements. The Service had been re-modelled to ensure a preventative approach to tackling homelessness leading to the significant reductions in the levels of homelessness acceptances and the use of temporary accommodation.

The Homelessness and Housing Advice team is based at Herefordshire Council's Garrick House, in the centre of Hereford city. The fourteen members of this team are employed by Herefordshire Council and provide housing advice, signposting and support to vulnerable households across the County. In addition to these duties within office hours, they also provide a nightly out-of-hours and weekend emergency homelessness service on behalf of the Council.

This team receive thousands of enquiries a year from members of the public who have a range of housing issues, as well as from other professionals who may refer their clients to the service for focussed assistance and support. Incoming contacts are made by telephone, email, and in person, if a situation is at crisis point.

When the team receives a call, a Housing Options Officer carries out an initial assessment of the urgency of the situation and makes contact with the enquirer to gather further information, and undertake an assessment of housing need, which is recorded by the team for future reference. Often, callers require advice and assistance over the telephone, and this helps them solve their housing situation without any further help from the team itself. However, incoming housing enquiries can also require a more detailed and intensive response from the service, and in these circumstances, Housing Options Officers will quickly refer the situation onto a Homelessness Prevention Officer, who provides longer-term support, which aims to prevent households becoming homeless in Herefordshire.

There are 4.5 FTE Homelessness Prevention Officers in the team, which will be supported by a Senior Homelessness Prevention Officer, who also carries a caseload, and provides supervision and guidance to colleagues on a regular basis. Homelessness Prevention Officers carry out home visits to vulnerable households in the community, usually within a week of receiving a referral from a Housing Options Officer. During this visit the Homelessness Prevention Officer explains the broader housing context in Herefordshire, and helps devise an action plan, designed to avoid homelessness, and find a suitable housing solution in every case. Prevention Officers are able to call upon the Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund in order to help customers secure housing solutions, and the fund provides help around rent-in-advance, deposits, damages, and rent arrears, together with a range of other incentives designed to increase community stability locally.

Most importantly the team includes two homelessness officers who will undertake formal Homelessness assessments under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended 2002). These two officers are supervised and supported by a Senior Homelessness Officer - together, they help the Council determine what short term and long-term housing duties may be owed to callers in housing crisis.

Support to this team is provided by two administrators, along with strategy development from a Homelessness Strategy Co-ordinator.

Herefordshire Council are committed to Prevention and have increased the numbers of Homelessness and Prevention staff in 2008 pending recruitment. However consultation with service users and stakeholders has made some of these comments: -

- “Not enough people to pick up the phones at Homelessness and Home Point”
- “More phones please”
- “It is difficult to communicate if there are not enough people to pick up the phones “
- “More prevention officers please”

Recruitment to vacant posts following a re-structure of the Homelessness team should enable increased capacity to respond to service demands. Service standards have been developed which set out the service responses people contacting the service should expect. This process will be enhanced by further work with the council’s Info in Herefordshire one stop shop approach to enable appropriate responses depending on the nature and urgency of each case. A review of customer feedback obtained through the monitoring of compliance with the service standards will further inform the development of service responses. It should also be noted that new procedures have been developed for the team associated with the move to prevention, and a review of the table below, indicates that the team are completing a larger quantity of prevention cases.

Table 7 – Homelessness and Prevention team information	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Homeless Applications made to team	608	591	719	598	236	358
Prevention cases completed by team (BVPI 213)	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	213	301
Prevention Cases uncounted as not matching exact criteria within BVPI 213	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	102	50
*Approximate number of Clients that went into temp accommodation or prevention officer was unable to complete case paperwork etc						
TOTAL CASES – THROUGH THE HOMELESS AND PREVENTION TEAM	608	591	719	598	551	709

If we also consider that support agencies such as Shelter, SHYPP and Women’s Aid state that their waiting lists are increasing, then we could assume that the numbers approaching the Homeless team may be increasing. It should be noted that the population in Herefordshire is not increasing markedly and anecdotal evidence from the Homeless team suggest that there are very few cases from the migrant workers population.

However one potential cause of increases in numbers accessing the service may be the increased awareness. There has been an increase in support workers within the County to reflect the increase in need and provision for the socially excluded client groups as indicated by Supporting People. Couple these increases with two stakeholder consultation events. Therefore the knowledge of the public and capacity of stakeholders may be increasing and causing more phone calls into the team. It should also be considered that the team have a number of responsibilities that were not occurring in 2006 including the running of the rent deposit scheme, mediation scheme, sanctuary scheme, bidding officer and prevention count.

It would be useful to further review the potential increasing numbers accessing the Homelessness and Prevention team, however it is difficult to deduce due to the lack of an IT system or adequate electronic recording of client information, consequentially information on client numbers and the quantity of people approaching the Homelessness team is unable to be gathered

It is the view of HSI that a re-evaluation of the staffing numbers is considered along with an IT system to record the number of cases administered by the team each year.

1.11 Supporting People

Supporting People currently supports in excess of 3500 vulnerable people to maintain and sustain their independence through the provision of effective housing related support services. Supporting People provides services to vulnerable people throughout Herefordshire. The clients that are supported include homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, women escaping domestic

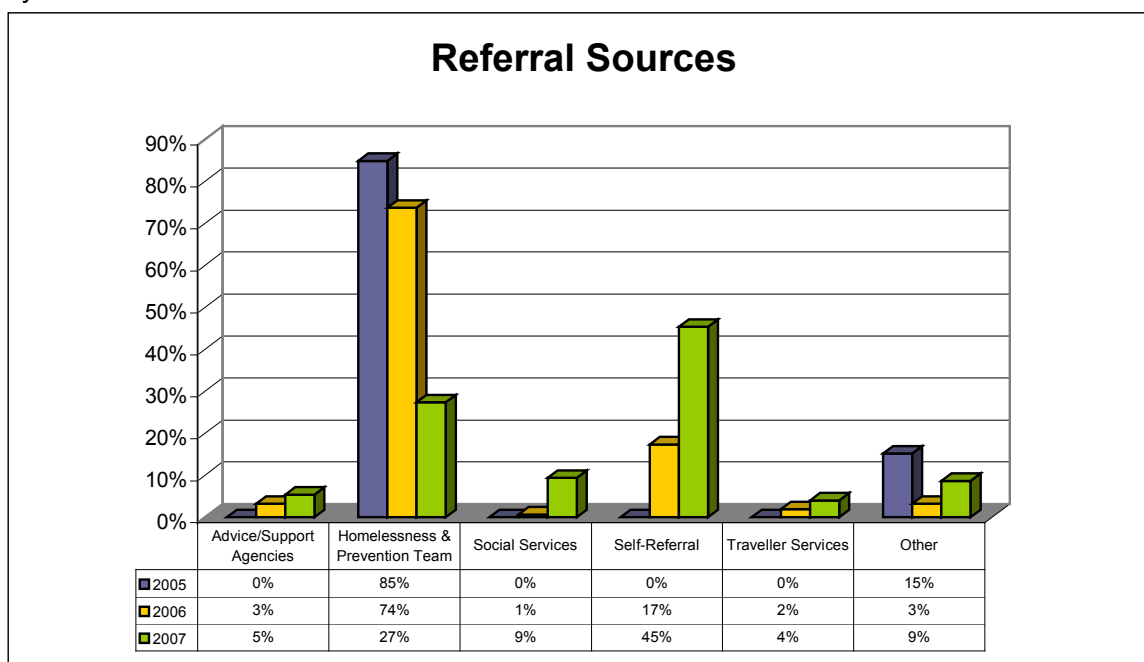
abuse and vulnerable young people. The funding for these services is in excess of £2 million and represents a third of the annual Supporting People grant. In addition to the current services the Supporting people Partnership are considering the introduction of further initiatives including a Rent Deposit Scheme.

1.12 Shelter statistics for families and single people.

Supporting People and Herefordshire Council commissioned the Shelter Housing support service in August 2005 to work with families and individuals who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The clients referred to the Shelter service require intensive support in a broad range of housing related areas.

Since its launch, Shelter has received 378 referrals for support from Homeless families and single people. In April 2008, its current caseload is 70 households, amongst 6.5 support workers with 27 households on the Shelter waiting list.

As of April 2008, the Shelter service received 45% of its referrals through self-referrals by clients, most of whom have been directed to the service via existing or former clients. Referrals from the Homeless and Prevention team had fallen to 27% as detailed below. However with 27 households on the waiting list, it is currently not possible to increase the number of referrals to the team but it may be noted as a consideration for future service consideration.



1.13 BME and Migrant Workers Homelessness Statistics

Several sources of anecdotal evidence exist that allude to an increased influx of European workers in Herefordshire post accession. In particular, local service providers in the county such as the police, council, health services and voluntary organisations (such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau) have noticed an influx of people from Eastern European states.

No comprehensive estimates exist of the number of migrant workers in Herefordshire at any one time, which could assist us in predicting potential homelessness issues; however, we can draw on the data source of National Insurance Number registrations and the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS). It should be noted that they provide inflow data only, as there is no requirement to de-register if a person leaves the UK. They also do not include people migrating for the purpose of studying or other reasons.

Annual registrations for a national insurance number doubled for the UK over the past five years from 2002 to 2007, but in Herefordshire, they increased from 270 to 2,120, a staggering 685% increase. Of all individuals registered on the Worker Registration Scheme in Herefordshire, 99% were in full time employment. However, the most striking observation is the relatively large proportion of 29% intending on staying for duration of between 6 – 11 months in Herefordshire compared with the national figure of 3%. Although these figures are potentially increasing in Herefordshire, it seems that seasonal and migrant workers are not presenting as Homeless at the current time. However it is recommended that HSIg review the information from local sources annually.

Table 10 – BME information	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007 /2008
Number of homeless applications from BME groups	16	25	7	5
Number of Homeless acceptances from BME groups	10	13	4	2
Number of general Homeless acceptances	719	598	236	206
% Of BME acceptances, shown as a percentage of homeless acceptances	1.3%	2.1%	1.7%	0.9%
Numbers of BME groups registered with Home Point (Snapshot)	288	219	189	286

Within the results in Table 10, there is a reduction in the number of BME service users accessing the Homelessness services for the past two years with a decrease from 2.1% to 0.9% in 2007/2008 of homeless acceptances made from BME clients. However with increases in population of BME groups and numbers on the Home Point register, further investigation is required and action to ensure BME groups feel that they may access the services available in the County.

It is suggested that the figures of BME groups and migrant workers and the services available for these groups should be reviewed annually by the HSIg to ensure that these groups are catered for in the event of potential homelessness and that the marketing of the services available within the county is actioned for these particular groups.

1.14 Future Need of Herefordshire Citizens

This strategy bases the assessment of the levels of need on a combination of returns the Council has to make to Government along with statutory and voluntary agencies' own data and on the outcomes of specialist research and monitoring exercises that have been carried out. However, in order to prevent future homelessness, it is important to gain a fuller picture of need in the County and to monitor the numbers of people who could not be accommodated or supported, what their support needs were, and make some assessment of why they were unable to access suitable services. It is recognised that there is a necessity for an IT system to be used by the Homelessness and Prevention teams to ensure this data is readily available for the future and to ensure that a comprehensive needs mapping system may be developed which would gather both qualitative and quantitative information about service users, and also those who were unable to access services. This issue is discussed further in the Research section within the Homeless Strategy.

1.15 Home Point

The shortage in the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable single people and homeless families is a critical issue nationally. The Local Government Association has predicted that approximately five million people are estimated to be on waiting lists by 2010 across the whole of

the country. Consequentially continued effective and targeted programmes of intervention are required to decrease the levels of homelessness. This will need to be balanced by continued initiatives to increase the supply of accommodation, which is affordable to local people.

With 5314 applicants registered for affordable housing with Home Point, the choice based lettings agency in Herefordshire as of April 2008 along with 145 priority status holders, Herefordshire has seen a decrease since 2004 in the numbers registered for affordable housing. However it should be noted that numbers on the Home Point register could depend on when the waiting list review was completed and it is assumed that the numbers remain fairly constant. Reviewing the table below, Herefordshire has shown an increase in the numbers of applicants housed in the year 2007/2008 from 735 to 795, due to the small increase in numbers of properties advertised every week.

Table 11 – Home Point key data	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Numbers on Waiting List	5686	7740	5377	4193	5314
Number of priority status applicants (snap shot)	213	240	288	130	145
Number of gold status applicants (snap shot)	1585	1871	1047	816	955
Number of Priority Status (Homeless) housed in year	368	363	285	246	236
Number of Total applicants housed in year	813	772	696	735	795
Average No of properties per week	16	15	13	14	15

Home Point currently report that Priority Status holders wait an average length of time of 5 months to be housed. This may cause financial concerns if there is a family waiting in bed and breakfast for permanent housing. Therefore it is the aim of the Homelessness and Prevention team to reduce this time further over the next few years.

1.16 Affordable Housing

Since 2003, Herefordshire Council have reported that an additional 697 units of affordable housing have been secured; this includes 220 units for low cost home ownership. In addition to the 326 empty units around the county that have been brought back into use.

In an era of poor affordability in the private sector, many people come to the local authority for advice on how to find a home that is right for them. 42 (20%) of Homeless acceptances in 2007/2008 were due to loss of rented accommodation.

Addressing the high demand for affordable homes has become a key government priority. In recognition of this demand, the government are investing £8bn in new affordable housing over the next three years and will be providing 70,000 new affordable homes per annum by 2010/2011. In addition to this, the aim of securing sufficient affordable housing is a theme of the Herefordshire Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, in order to meet the needs of local people.

The regional spatial strategy partial review has identified increasing housing numbers within the West Midlands region, and Strategic Housing will be working to ensure that this leads to an increase in the supply of affordable housing for Herefordshire. It is hoped that Hereford City's identification as a new growth point and the opportunities within the proposed Edgar Street Grid will be key to achieving the higher targets set for the county.

Within Herefordshire, 697 affordable housing units have been acquired or built since 2003 and it is noted that with recent changes to the staff structure in the Housing Needs and Development

department, higher targets of affordable units have been set and are likely to result in an increasing number of units being attained in the next 3 years as detailed in table13 below.

Table 12 - No of affordable housing units built or acquired	Rented	Home Ownership	Total
2003/2004	63	41	104
2004/2005	30	52	82
2005/2006	63	125	188
2006/2007	64	118	182
2007/2008	58	83	141

Table 13 - Targets for affordable housing units built or acquired	Total
2008/2009	200
2009/2010	300
2010/2011	350

The Strategic Housing Service Plan outlines the new supply of housing that will be developed that is accessible to the community, taking account of earnings to house-price pressures within the county.

At the date of publication of this strategy, the West Midlands regional spatial strategy preferred option proposes the delivery of 16,600 new homes in Herefordshire between 2006 and 2026. Hereford City has been identified as a new growth point with the expectation that approximately 50% (8,300) of these new homes will be delivered within the City itself. The above target proposing the delivery of 850 affordable homes over the next 3 years has been agreed as a Local Area Agreement (LAA) target for Herefordshire, slightly above the assumed affordable housing numbers expected to be delivered in the County through the RSS preferred option.

1.17 Property statistics

The facts and statistics mentioned below are taken from the fourth quarter of 2007/2008, unless otherwise specified.

- The median price of a property in Herefordshire was £190,000. However, the median property prices in England and Wales were £179,950 in comparison with £145,850 for the West Midlands. Herefordshire exceeds the West Midlands median price of a property by around £40,000.
- Herefordshire has a high proportion of detached properties than is the case regionally or nationally and detached properties tend to be more expensive than non-detached.
- The lower quartile price of a property in Herefordshire for the 4th quarter of 2007 is reported as £144,000. Assuming a 5% deposit, the earnings needed to secure a mortgage if the amount borrowed is calculated at 3.25 times earnings, would be approximately £42,100 per annum or £36,500 for single earners using a rate of 3.75 as a multiple.
- The median gross annual earnings for Herefordshire are £20,000.
- As of January 2008, the minimum private sector rent for a 3-bedroom house in Herefordshire was between £500 - £600 per calendar month. If a family has an income of £20,000 and were paying normal tax deductions, they would have a balance of approximately £650 remaining for all living expenses.

1.18 Economic Information

1.18.1 Unemployment

- 1,517 people were claiming unemployment benefit in Herefordshire in January 2008, in comparison to 1634 in January 2007.
- Over two thirds of claimants were male (71%)
- The numbers of claimants who claimed unemployment benefit for 12 months or longer has increased to 155 in January 2008 (110 in Jan 2006). Source: Office for National Statistics Monthly Unemployment claimant counts

1.18.2 Earnings and affordability

- Median annual earnings for people who work full time in Herefordshire was £20,000 in 2007, 11% below the regional median figure and 17% lower than earnings across England as a whole. (*QER – February 2008)
- The preferred measure of affordability is quoted as the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings (the lower the figure, the more affordable the area is). Herefordshire was set at 9.40 for 2007, as compared to 6.88 for the West Midlands region and 7.25 for England as a whole.

1.18.3 Housing stock in the county

- The number of affordable units in the county including low cost home ownership is 10,759 as at 1st April 2007.
- 7 properties were sold in 2007/2008 under the Right to buy scheme.

1.18.4 Population

- The most recent population figure for Herefordshire is 177,800
- The population grew by 500 between mid 2005 – 2006, however this does not include international migrants unless they change their country of residence for at least a year.
- The total population of Herefordshire is forecast for 2011 to be 182,400, this is a 2.6% increase (an increase of 4,600 people)
- The total population of Herefordshire is forecast for 2026 to be 193,600.
- There is an estimated population increase by 2011 for the older age brackets – 18% increase within the 65 – 74 years and 20% increase in ages 85+.
- There is an estimated population decrease by 2011 of 12% for the age groups 35 – 44 along with a decrease of 3% for 25- 34-year age bracket.

*Source: The office for National Statistics (ONS 2006 mid year estimate and the E & W – ONS 2006 based national population projections)

1.18.5 Local information

- 62% of children in Ridgemoor and 49% in Golden post (Leominster and Newton Farm respectively) live in income-deprived households and feature in the Top 10 % nationally.
*Source: QER – February 2008

1.18.6 Financial

A result of the new Homelessness Prevention Fund can be seen within the detail in the table below. The information reveals a large increase in expenditure in 2006/2007. With many potentially homeless people encouraged to make use of the prevention fund to avert homelessness, at the same time as significantly decreasing temporary accommodation costs. This had led to a dramatic reduction in homeless acceptances from 416 to 148 in that year.

As mentioned in line 2 within the table below, there is a significant decrease in expenditure on temporary accommodation since 2005/2006. This was largely due to the appointment and effectiveness of the new Homelessness & Prevention team, manager and fund. There is a clear correlation between staffing levels in key areas and the levels of temporary accommodation costs. It should be considered, that these costs could continue to be reduced by increasing prevention staff levels further.

Table 14 – Homelessness and Prevention expenditure		2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
1	Prevention Fund	N/r	N/r	£33,742	£262,737	£168,710
2	Temporary accommodation	£141,082	£485,353	£1,471,727	£629,923	£599,836

1.18.7 Partnership Working

Partnership working is critical to the success of a strategy. The majority of agencies concerned with the provision of services to homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, have demonstrated a high commitment to working together to maximise the capacity to respond. The Homeless Strategy has been jointly developed and is a multi-agency response to the needs of homeless people in the county.

1.18.8 Consultation

There has been widespread consultation in the production of the Herefordshire Homelessness Strategy 2008 involving a wide range of local partners, including customers, stakeholders, local authority and PCT staff, registered social landlords along with related HSIG members in Shropshire (Our West Housing Market Area partner). The key issues of these consultation sessions formed the basis of the Homeless Strategy and Action Plan.

The review of stakeholders and service users has been completed using the following methods:

- Desk research
- Interviews with staff members and stakeholders
- Visits to area offices to observe working practices
- Survey of those using housing related services
- Consultation discussion sessions with service users of Homelessness and Housing services.
- Input from Herefordshire and Shropshire Homeless Strategy Implementation groups
- Comments from the Homelessness Conference workshops

The consultation results are shown within reports attached as appendices to the Homeless Strategy 2008, with the relevant requests for services being incorporated within the need groups within the Strategy.

APPENDIX TWO - A report on the findings of the Homelessness Strategy consultation sessions with service users, March 2008

Organiser Lead: Tara Roche, Homeless Strategy

Aims

The aim of the consultation sessions was to gather the comments, opinions and ideas of those experiencing housing difficulties in the County. Throughout the sessions, people were asked to discuss their ideas on housing difficulties in the county and ways in which to either improve or provide new homelessness or related support services.

The results from the consultation day along with the face-to-face surveys will feed into the 2008 Homeless Strategy.

Methodology

The consultation day was held on Friday 7th March 2008 at the Green Dragon hotel, Hereford. This event was advertised by sending circulation emails to over 25 support agencies and local authority departments to encourage their service users to attend. Emails were sent to Shelter, SHYPP, Homeless Forum, Mental Health, Home Point, RSL Forum chair, Probation, Stonham Housing Association, Police, Social Services, Women's Aid, Herefordshire Council Info teams for advertising in reception areas etc. The event was also advertised for two weeks in the Admag newspaper, this paper was chosen as it advertises the local housing stock.

Five individual consultation sessions were run with small groups of service users throughout the day. Each group were given the following questions/subjects to discuss over a period of 3 hours. 21 people attended these sessions.

- What housing difficulties do you think people have in the County?
- Why do you think we have these problems?
- What services do you think are needed in the County to help people with housing difficulties
- How important is this service – please prioritise each of the services on their importance (1 is important, 5 is not very important)

An example was provided to the group, as follows: -

What housing difficulties do you think people have in the County?	Why do you think we have these problems?	What services do you think are needed in the County to help people with housing difficulties	How important is this service – please prioritise each of the services on their importance (1 is important, 5 is not very important)
They get into rent arrears and loose their home.	People are not taught how to budget anymore. So credit cards get people into debt	To get this type of education in schools	3
	Loan sharks up on the estates	Debt management advice on the estates	1

Methodology – continued

The facilitators ensured that each group member had their right of say and they did not have to read or write.

Facilitators of the event were supplied by the support agencies. This was to ensure a friendly, non-authoritarian voice whilst asking intrinsic questions. The facilitators were from Shelter, SHYPP and Stonham.

Each group were given the subjects to consider, they then discussed the subject and the facilitator wrote down their comments. Due to confidentiality issues and to encourage forthright discussion, the comments were not registered against a person, but kept as a group return.

Headline summary

- 21 people attended the event
- 12 were female / 9 male
- Ages of service users ranged from 17 to 70.
- Breakdown of ages of people attending the consultation sessions were: -

Age group	
16-17 years	2 attendees
18-25 years	8 attendees
26 – 40 years	7 attendees
41 – 69 years	3 attendees
70+ years	1 attendees

- Five sessions were run throughout the day with approximately 4 people in each session to allow for detailed discussion

Current and past housing difficulties of the attendees

- 13 consultees had been or are currently homeless, 5 attendees had been or were rough sleepers
- 2 are currently homeless at home
- 1 attendee was waiting to be decanted from their home.
- 6 of the consultees have now found somewhere to live- although 1 cannot afford the rent.
- 2 attendees are currently rough sleeping
- 2 attendees are about to be made homeless
- 1 attendee is sofa surfing
- 8 attendees are currently living in temporary accommodation supplied by the local authority and are awaiting a permanent property.
- 2 of the attendees are currently sleeping rough.
- 1 of the attendees was from a traveller background
- 1 of the attendees was from a probationary background
- 1 of the attendees noted to us that they had had mental health problems caused by street homelessness over many years.
- 1 of the attendees was an ex alcoholic
- 9 of the attendees had children

Results

Within the table below, a synopsis of the comments from the attendees have been grouped together for ease of reading and put into the relevant sections. The most commented requirement is at the top of the table. From these comments, an action is provided, that will feed into the Homeless Strategy 2008 along with the link of the action.

ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS - ON HOMELESS STRATEGY - MARCH 2008
21 Service users and 5 facilitators attended during a day long consultation event on current homeless services

Headline Description of comments	Number of comments	Synopsis of Service Users comments	Actions required - to add to Action Plan in Homeless Strategy 2008	Priority (if priority number was mentioned)	Links to other Strategies
Information and leaflets	23	<i>"I do not know where to go / we need help and information / we cannot get information / We need clearer communication and access to prevention fund/ I do not understand homelessness and what I am supposed to do/ I need help/ We need a directory of Homelessness services available"</i>	1. To improve Information - prepare leaflets on Homelessness Services (including audio and other relevant mediums) to be prepared and circulated to public, prevention officers and support agencies along with uploading to the web sites 2. Research and prepare a Housing Advice Strategy to be prepared with the aim of improving housing advice services to the public 3. To prepare a Directory of Homelessness and related services - to be used by Service Users and support teams	1	In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIg group members
Customer Services Charter	16	<i>We want the Homelessness service to answer their phones / to have targets on responses to service users / to treat service users with respect and empathy/ be able to contact team for advice</i>	Customer Services Charter detailing response rates and targets for performance along with customer care standards for Homeless service users	1	In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIg group members

<p>Direct Access Hostel including Washing facilities for clothes and showers</p>	<p>16</p>	<p><i>No where for single adults to get some sleep / sleeping rough - you cannot wash / cant get work / more likely to go back to prison or re-offend and take drugs. Need somewhere to sleep and wash</i></p>	<p>1. To carry out a needs analysis for a Direct Access Hostel with facilities to wash clothes etc 2. To carry out hidden homeless count</p>	<p>LAA priority for NI154/NI155 along with Economic reasons - to increase the economic potential and address worklessness - NI152 along with decent homes for stronger communities/ Along with links to LAA NI19 - rate of re-offending and N130 and N146 and NI143 - settled homes for ex offenders. Many reports from homeless forum agencies about numbers of people sofa surfing within the County. There is no quantitative evidence for a new direct access hostel, but we suggest that a needs analysis is carried out to identify potential numbers and the potential support from Supporting People agencies to</p>
---	-----------	--	--	--

				enable people to move-on from the Direct access hostel.
Complaints about Temporary accommodation	16	<i>Families with children being placed away from schools in another town, Cleanliness and no washing or cooking facilities</i>	<p>1. For a Temporary Accommodation Strategy with action plan - This strategy and action plan is to review all current temporary accommodation usage, location and the quality - to seek to improve the quality of temporary accommodation with the aim of using clean and decent self contained temporary accommodation with washing and cooking facilities.</p> <p>2. To complete Temporary Accommodation Procedures -for staff to follow when placing people in temporary accommodation, this should include a complaints procedure about temp accommodation etc</p>	<p>LAA - Children and YP - N150, NI117, Along with Stronger communities NI175 - access to services, along with increase the availability of appropriate decant housing / Every child matters / Government Teenage parents strategy /</p>

Landlord incentive Scheme	15	<i>Not enough private sector properties / when you rent in the private sector - it is too expensive/ landlords do not take benefits or rent deposit scheme/ increase in migrant workers means less private houses are available for rent/ offer incentives to landlords to take people</i>	To develop a private sector landlord incentive scheme with the aim of encouraging private sector landlords to offer more affordable homes for a longer period of time along with taking people on benefits or using the rent deposit scheme	1	Links to the LAA - NI154 - More affordable homes
Affordable Housing	15	<i>"We need more affordable houses" " bigger houses required" not enough private sector houses"</i>	To develop affordable housing units as targeted by Local Authority and Government	1	LAA NI155 and NI154 and NI156 - To increase the availability of appropriate decent and affordable housing - increasing the number of affordable homes
Debt and Benefits advice	10	<i>"It is too easy to get into debt" /" we request a debt and benefits advice in one place" " someone to advice and offer guidance."</i>	To review the current Debt Advice in the county, to provide a needs analysis and requirement for Debt Officer. A potential request through Supporting People. To assist service users maintain their tenancies	Not marked	In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIg group members

<p>One Stop Shop</p>	<p>8</p>	<p><i>A drop in centre - like the info shops / where you can get your (Homelessness & Housing) advice under one roof. So we can get leaflets there and watch information and talk to someone. All the forms are in one place. Someone to see me. Somewhere that is open when I come home from work</i></p>	<p>To research the possibility of a One-stop shop for housing and Homelessness advice with major agencies involved i.e. -housing benefit, home point, homelessness, support agencies representatives. This will have to be considered in the light of the accommodation strategy</p>	<p>1</p> <p>In reply to the large number of comments from service users for this type of service links to LAA - Stronger Communities - - Where people can influence decisions in their locality. This action may clash with the Accommodation Strategy</p>
<p>Single person move on accommodation</p>	<p>9</p>	<p><i>“A young person growing up causes overcrowding there is no where for young people to move to” pregnant young girl has no where, when she needs to move out of home.” “ No affordable single unit accommodation for young people to move out of home and be safe”</i></p>	<p>To review the need of Single young person move on accommodation. This action to be linked to the action for "direct access hostel review and the teenage pregnancy strategy." Needs analysis to be carried out in conjunction with Supporting people and the young persons agencies as well as probation and DASH</p>	<p>Links to LAA - Increase the availability of appropriate, decent and affordable housing NI156 - reducing street homelessness - along with Every Child matters and N146 -, N119 and N1143 - Offenders living in settled accommodation to build safer communities</p>

<p>Improve communication - IT system</p>	<p>6</p>	<p><i>“The staff in Council departments don’t know our cases, we have to tell them over again each time we call.” And “The Council departments don’t know what other departments are doing”</i></p>	<p>1. Homeless client IT system to be developed or expand the Home Point system, with the aim that Herefordshire Council relevant staff members can access the database and share relevant key information 2.The Project workers forum - to discuss the requirement of special cases panel</p>		<p>In line with the corporate commitment to progress modern technology - Herefordshire Connects</p>
<p>Re-evaluation of Homeless staff quantities and staff roles</p>	<p>5</p>	<p><i>“Not enough people to pick up the phones at Homelessness and Home Point” and “ more phones please” and “it is difficult to communicate if there are not enough people to pick up the phones “ and “ more prevention officers please”</i></p>	<p>Evaluation of staff requirement and staff roles within Homeless team.</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIg group members</p>
<p>Improve the procedures for 'Skipping' on Home Point shortlist</p>	<p>4</p>	<p><i>“People should be informed, if they are being black-listed (skipped) by the landlords of Home point, so that we can do something about it AND I have mental health problems and bi polar, I kept bidding but no one told me I had rent arrears and was being skipped.”</i></p>	<p>To review with Housing Associations and Home Point whether they can inform client that they are being skipped</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIg group members</p>

Rent deposit scheme	3	<i>"The Rent deposit scheme is not being accepted by landlords / We need someone dedicated to run the service"</i>	To ensure commitment along with a dedicated officer to process and promote the Rent Deposit Scheme		LAA - To increase the availability of affordable housing for stronger communities
Downsizing incentive scheme	3	<i>"There is too many Older people living in large houses whilst families live in too small houses"</i>	Downsizing incentive scheme	2	This has an effect on Families being able to move to the appropriate house size for their group, thus allowing children to have their own bedrooms - links to Every child matters and LAA - Younger age group - mental health. Increases Childs potential to study in their own bedroom
Advocate at Home Point	2	<i>We do not know how Home Point system works - what is the banding?</i>	To prepare evidence and paper for Supporting People to consider a Vulnerable Applicants officer - working on behalf of Home Point. Officer to assist service users with the process of Home Point, the bandings and bidding	1	In reply to the qualitative data supplied by the number of surveys from service users along with information from support agencies along with requests from Homeless Forum and HSIG group members
Gypsy and Traveller Sites	2	<i>The allocation of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers sites is not fair - it should be advertised through Home</i>	A request for a review of the site allocation process to be made to Environmental Health	Not marked	

		Point			
Teenage Pregnancy and Young Parents Strategy	1	<i>Girls are getting pregnant younger - so they can get a place to live / benefits. They then get drunk; they do not work - as they are afraid of working and going into real world. This is down to lack of education</i>	1. Teenage Pregnancy Housing strategy to evaluate the needs of Young Parents for accommodation and support	1	Teenage Parents Next steps by Department of health / Every Child matters / reducing teenage pregnancy is a government priority / teenage pregnancy: accelerating the strategy to 2010. Links to LAA N150 - emotional health of the newborns and young children / along with the mental and physical health
Charity request - to set up a furniture store and food and blankets hand out	1	<i>I moved into accommodation, but there is no furniture</i>	To request to Homeless Forum - for a charity to run a furniture / and blankets and food hand out for new tenancies and rough sleepers	3	

*For detailed listings of the service users comments at this event, please contact the Homeless Strategy Co-ordinator.

Appendix Three - The results of the Service Users Homelessness Strategy survey 2008

Aims:

The aim of this face to face survey was to question people in the county who have experienced housing difficulties. The questions asked for their views and ideas on what services have helped them and what services would have helped them with their housing issues.

The survey also asked what help and support (if any) may have helped to prevent the worsening of their housing issues. The aim of these questions were to highlight that perhaps certain housing issues could have been helped or be prevented prior to escalation.

The results from the survey along with the associated consultation day sessions involving those who have experienced housing difficulties would feed into the Homelessness strategy 2008 onwards.

Methodology:

The survey was sent to over 17 agencies in Herefordshire who provide support to those who are experiencing housing difficulties in the county. Eight of the 17 agencies agreed to assist. The agencies staff conducted face to face interviews with 67 service users in the county. The survey asked the following:

- The composition of the respondent (to help gauge the sample base was reflective of the overall picture of Herefordshire)
- To suggest which organisations they had contact with and the usefulness of the support they received
- To suggest services that may have prevented the housing issues they have found themselves in.
- To suggest what is missing in Herefordshire with regards to services and support for those with housing difficulties.

Headline summary:

- 67 Surveys were returned.
- The highest proportion of respondents were single males who were experiencing homelessness and support needs, prominently within the 18 – 24 age range (43.5%)
- 59.70% of respondents were male.
- 2.0 % were pregnant
- 18.4% are experiencing mental health problems
- 44.3% are homeless (Living with friends on a temporary basis, street homeless, B&B, living in the Foyer)
- 4.8% had fled home due to violence or threat of violence
- 20.7% of respondents had accessed the Homelessness and Housing advice team.
- 9.7% of respondents were older people (65 and over)
- 62 of respondents are not working or attending training schemes

The free text questions allowed the respondent to inform us 'in their own words' the following:

- Their current housing difficulties
- How the support and services they have accessed have helped them
- Reasons as to why they could not access services needed
- What services they would personally like to see in the future

The **most common themes** for each free text question are broken down below full responses can be found below in the free text results.

Q15 Please briefly outline your current housing difficulties

Current housing difficulty	Count
Eviction or family breakdown	10
Currently in temporary accommodation/ temporary accommodation coming to an end	10
Currently homeless	7
Difficulty with rent/ bills or other financial issues	6

Q22 Please outline briefly how these services have helped you

These answers are service specific and could therefore not be grouped, revision of the full results are listed below and provide the data for these.

Q24 Please provide reasons why you could not access the services you needed:

Reason	Count
Services not offered/ lack of information on services and where to go for information	18
The service does not currently exist in Herefordshire	11
Regulations preventing access or age restrictions preventing access to services	5
Currently not able to access accommodation due to waiting list size and/ or banding	3

Q25 What services would you personally like to see available in the future?

Service	Count
Hostel/ Drop in centre/ Overnight shelter/ Access centres	20
More accessible/ better advice – Raised awareness of services and support	11
More properties- Social/ sheltered/ affordable	10

Free text summary

The most common themes from the survey free text results show there is a need for greater access to emergency information and support.

There is no provision in Herefordshire for one conduit for all available information and if a person finds themselves unintentionally homeless there is very little support in terms of where to go for information or emergency accommodation available.

The free text comments above (in full – see below) confirm that ‘Services not offered/ lack of information on services and where to go for information’ was the primary reason as to why people did not access the services they needed.

Q25 the most requested service was more provision for a ‘Hostel/ Drop in centre/ Overnight shelter/ Access centres’.

Appendix 1- Tabulated results

Please tick the client groups by which the client is defined. Please tick ALL those that are appropriate to your client:	
Base	147 100.00%
Older People with support needs	3 2.00%
Older people with mental health	3 2.00%
Frail Elderly	2 1.40%
Mental health problems	27 18.40%
Learning disability	2 1.40%
Physical or sensory disability	3 2.00%
Single homeless with support needs	18 12.20%
Alcohol problems	5 3.40%
Drug problems	11 7.50%
Have been in prison or at risk of offending	10 6.80%
Pregnant	3 2.00%
Aged 16 or 17 years old	5 3.40%
Have been "in Care" or leaving care	2 1.40%
Have fled home because of violence or threat of violence	7 4.80%
Are a homeless family with support needs	5 3.40%
A family experiencing housing difficulties	11 7.50%
Former asylum seeker or refugee	0 0
Teenage parents	3 2.00%
Rough sleeper	12 8.20%
Traveller or Gypsy	1 0.70%
Have served in the armed forces	1 0.70%

Sofa surfing (living with friends temporarily)	13 8.80%
Have no recourse to public funds (due to immigration status)	0 0

Your Gender:	
Base	67 100.00%
Male	40 59.70%
Female	27 40.30%

Your age:	
Base	62 100.00%
17 and under	5 8.10%
18 - 24	27 43.50%
25 - 44	17 27.40%
45 - 64	7 11.30%
65 -74	5 8.10%
75+	1 1.60%

What is the family composition of this client?	
Base	67 100.00%
Single	43 64.20%
Couple	9 13.40%
Single with children	5 7.50%
Couple with children	5 7.50%
O.A.P	3 4.50%
Pregnant	2 3.00%

Do you have a disability, long term illness or health problem (12 months or more) which limits daily activities or the work they can do?	
Base	63 100.00%
Yes	34 54.00%
No	29 46.00%

If YES, please specify (tick all that apply):	
Base	35 100.00%
Deaf/ hard of hearing/ acute hearing	1 2.90%
Blind/ partially sighted/ sensitive to light	0 0
Learning disability or difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)	0 0
Mental health	28 80.00%
Progressive/ Chronic illness (e.g. MS, cancer)	3 8.60%
Mobility difficulties	3 8.60%

How would you describe yourself?	
Base	66 100.00%
White (British, Irish any other white background)	64 97.00%
Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, any other mixed background)	0 0
Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, any other Asian background)	0 0
Black or Black British (Caribbean, African or any other Black background)	0 0
Chinese	0 0
Gypsy/ Romany Traveller	2 3.00%

Where are you currently living:	
Base	70 100.00%
Supported housing	11 15.70%
Residential care home	0 0
Adult placement	0 0
Supported lodgings	0 0
Woman's refuge	0 0
Foyer	5 7.10%
Teenage parent accommodation	0 0
Hostel	0 0
Living with family	6 8.60%
Living with friends-Permanent	1 1.40%
Living with friends-Temporarily	10 14.30%
Street Homeless	9 12.90%
Renting property	14 20.00%
Own my own property	3 4.30%
Hospital	4 5.70%
Prison	0 0
Bed and Breakfast	7 10.00%
Mobile Home/ Caravan	0 0

Could you choose the best option below

that outlines your current housing difficulties:-	
Base	66 100.00%
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate you	19 28.80%
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	11 16.70%
Non- violent breakdown of relationship with partner	2 3.00%
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	5 7.60%
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	3 4.50%
Racially motivated harassment	1 1.50%
Other forms of harassment	2 3.00%
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	0 0
Rent arrears	1 1.50%
Debt problems	5 7.60%
Loss or rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured short hold tenancy	4 6.10%
Required to leave accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support	0 0
Leaving/ left prison	5 7.60%
Left hospital	7 10.60%
Left other institution or LA care	1 1.50%
Flood/ fire	0 0
Left HM Forces	0 0

Please outline the services you have accessed to help you with your	Which services did you find most useful? (Local Authority/ NHS and
--	---

housing difficulties (Local Authority/ NHS and Police services):		Police services):	
Base	164 100.00%	Base	63 100.00%
Homeless and Prevention Team	34 20.70%	Homeless and Prevention Team	11 17.50%
Home Point	39 23.80%	Home Point	13 20.60%
Mental Health teams inc crisis team	16 9.80%	Mental Health teams inc crisis team	13 20.60%
GP	13 7.90%	GP	6 9.50%
Local Health visitors	5 3.00%	Local Health visitors	1 1.60%
Social Worker/ Social services	10 6.10%	Social Worker/ Social services	5 7.90%
FACT	1 0.60%	FACT	1 1.60%
Probationary services	6 3.70%	Probationary services	3 4.80%
Housing Benefit Office	11 6.70%	Housing Benefit Office	4 6.30%
Welfare/ Benefit Office	5 3.00%	Welfare/ Benefit Office	1 1.60%
Job Centre	13 7.90%	Job Centre	2 3.20%
Police	10 6.10%	Police	3 4.80%
Gypsy and Traveller Support Officers	1 0.60%	Gypsy and Traveller Support Officers	0 0

Please outline the services you have accessed to help you with your housing difficulties (External or voluntary agencies):		Which services did you find most useful? (External or voluntary agencies):	
Base	91 100.00%	Base	68 100.00%
Shelter	11 12.10%	Shelter	7 10.30%
SHYPP	26 28.60%	SHYPP	25 36.80%
Women's Aid	1 1.10%	Women's Aid	1 1.50%
Mediation services	1 1.10%	Mediation services	0 0
Open Door	12 13.20%	Open Door	10 14.70%
MIND	4 4.40%	MIND	3 4.40%
Citizens Advice Bureau	10	Citizens Advice Bureau	4

	11.00%		5.90%
CARR GOMM tenancy support services	4 4.40%	CARR GOMM tenancy support services	4 5.90%
Stonham floating support	6 6.60%	Stonham floating support	5 7.40%
Connexions	16 17.60%	Connexions	9 13.20%

Please outline the services you have accessed to help you with your housing difficulties (Hostels):		Which services did you find most useful? (Hostels):	
Base	9 100.00%	Base	3 100.00%
Hostel Support staff	2 22.20%	Hostel Support staff	2 66.70%
Bridge House	3 33.30%	Bridge House	0 0
Pomona Place	4 44.40%	Pomona Place	1 33.30%

What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future:	
Base	236 100.00%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	32 13.60%
A new hostel is needed	25 10.60%
Accessibility to hostels	23 9.70%
Benefits advice	22 9.30%
Better transport links	18 7.60%
Employment advice	18 7.60%
Life Skills	18 7.60%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	16 6.80%
Debt management	13 5.50%
Mediation services	10 4.20%
Links to health service	10 4.20%

Debt counselling	9 3.80%
Domestic violence advice	8 3.40%
Accessibility to buying your own property	7 3.00%
Links to mental health teams	7 3.00%

Are you working (part time or full time or any government training schemes)?	
Base	67 100.00%
Yes	5 7.50%
No	62 92.50%

Are you in full or part time education?	
Base	65 100.00%
Yes	6 9.20%
No	59 90.80%

Appendix 2- Key client groups service and support identification.

The results below are to be used to show services identified by specific client groups which they would have liked to have received in response to their housing issues and needs.

A family experiencing housing difficulties	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future.	
Base	51
Life Skills	6 11.80%
Benefits advice	6 11.80%
Employment advice	6 11.80%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	6

	11.80%
A new hostel is needed	5 9.80%
Better transport links	4 7.80%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	4 7.80%
Accessibility to hostels	3 5.90%
Debt management	3 5.90%
Domestic violence advice	2 3.90%
Debt counselling	2 3.90%
Mediation services	2 3.90%
Links to health service	1 2.00%
Accessibility to buying your own property	1 2.00%
Links to mental health teams	0 0

Sofa surfing (living with friends temporarily)	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	59
Accessibility to rented accommodation	9 15.30%
Accessibility to hostels	6 10.20%
Employment advice	5 8.50%
A new hostel is needed	5 8.50%
Better transport links	5 8.50%
Life Skills	4 6.80%
Benefits advice	4 6.80%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	4 6.80%
Links to health service	4

	6.80%
Accessibility to buying your own property	3 5.10%
Mediation services	3 5.10%
Debt management	2 3.40%
Debt counselling	2 3.40%
Links to mental health teams	2 3.40%
Domestic violence advice	1 1.70%

Alcohol problems	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	30
Accessibility to hostels	5 16.70%
A new hostel is needed	5 16.70%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	4 13.30%
Better transport links	3 10.00%
Domestic violence advice	2 6.70%
Life Skills	2 6.70%
Benefits advice	2 6.70%
Employment advice	1 3.30%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	1 3.30%
Links to health service	1 3.30%
Links to mental health teams	1 3.30%
Debt management	1 3.30%
Debt counselling	1 3.30%
Mediation services	1 3.30%

Accessibility to buying your own property	0
	0

Pregnant	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	11
Accessibility to hostels	2 18.20%
Life Skills	2 18.20%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	2 18.20%
Benefits advice	1 9.10%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	1 9.10%
Mediation services	1 9.10%
A new hostel is needed	1 9.10%
Accessibility to buying your own property	1 9.10%
Employment advice	0 0
Better transport links	0 0
Debt management	0 0
Debt counselling	0 0
Links to health service	0 0
Links to mental health teams	0 0
Domestic violence advice	0 0

Have fled home because of violence or threat of violence
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do

answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	27
Benefits advice	4 14.80%
Debt management	3 11.10%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	3 11.10%
Domestic violence advice	3 11.10%
A new hostel is needed	3 11.10%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	3 11.10%
Better transport links	3 11.10%
Accessibility to hostels	2 7.40%
Debt counselling	1 3.70%
Life Skills	1 3.70%
Employment advice	1 3.70%
Links to health service	0 0
Links to mental health teams	0 0
Accessibility to buying your own property	0 0
Mediation services	0 0

Aged 16 or 17 years old	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	13
Life Skills	2 15.40%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	2 15.40%
A new hostel is needed	2 15.40%

Accessibility to rented accommodation	2 15.40%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	2 15.40%
Better transport links	2 15.40%
A new hostel is needed	2 15.40%
Benefits advice	1 7.70%
Employment advice	1 7.70%
Domestic violence advice	1 7.70%
Accessibility to buying your own property	0 0
Debt management	0 0
Debt counselling	0 0
Mediation services	0 0
Links to health service	0 0
Links to mental health teams	0 0
Accessibility to hostels	0 0

Are a homeless family with support needs	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	13
Accessibility to rented accommodation	3 23.10%
Debt management	1 7.70%
Debt counselling	1 7.70%
Domestic violence advice	1 7.70%
Accessibility to hostels	1 7.70%
A new hostel is needed	1 7.70%

Better transport links	1 7.70%
Life Skills	1 7.70%
Benefits advice	1 7.70%
Employment advice	1 7.70%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	1 7.70%
Links to health service	0 0
Links to mental health teams	0 0
Mediation services	0 0
Accessibility to buying your own property	0 0

Teenage parents	
What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future	
Base	25
Debt management	2 8.00%
Debt counselling	2 8.00%
Mediation services	2 8.00%
Life Skills	2 8.00%
Better transport links	2 8.00%
Employment advice	2 8.00%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	2 8.00%
Links to health service	2 8.00%
Domestic violence advice	2 8.00%
A new hostel is needed	2 8.00%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	2 8.00%
Accessibility to buying your own	1

property	4.00%
Accessibility to hostels	1 4.00%
Benefits advice	1 4.00%
Links to mental health teams	0 0

Appendix 3 Full free text results

Q15 Please briefly outline your current housing difficulties

Current housing difficulty	Count
Eviction or family breakdown	10
Currently in temporary accommodation/ temporary accommodation coming to an end	10
Currently homeless	7
Difficulty with rent/ bills or other financial issues	6
Currently waiting/ bidding with Home Point	5
Need some support mental or physical	5
Violence or threat of violence	4
Present accommodation no longer suitable	3
Drink problems	1

“Have been in B&B accommodation since August 07 after fleeing violent partner. Myself and my 4 Children are still waiting to be housed in our own tenancy.”

“Living in a B&B and bidding each week via Home Point for a property”

“Will need intensive support both physically and mentally”

“Low priority with Council”

“Homeless due to being kicked out of accommodation. The accommodation was leased to me with added employment, false complaints were made to the lease holder and thus was made homeless”

“Too long waiting list, plus I am not very interested in single council accommodation as I would probably mess it up”

“Living in temp B&B”

“If K returns home parent will beat her again”

“Need help and support due to violent relationships”

“Money, lack of accommodation”

“Homeless”

“NFA Lack of help with Drink Problems”

"Trying to find anywhere that will take the rent deposit scheme. Private landlords not interested and B&B's full. Home Point have flags on system due to past offending"

"Been in Bed and breakfast but due to unsocial behaviour asked to leave"

"Without own accommodation since 2002 on coming out of prison. Lived with various relatives but now unable to do so. Spent 6 weeks in Stonebow, diagnosed with Bi Polar disorder. On discharge accommodated in B&B. Now awaiting independent accommodation"

"No where to live staying with other drug users and where ever I can."

"Pomona Place full at the moment. My History of prison goes against me. I bid every week through Home Point"

"None of the above. Need more home help, cleaning, cooking etc my illness at the moment prevents me from housing associations"

"Recent confusion/ Poor self care resulting in problems at home"

"Lived in ex partners house"

"In Pomona Place but would like a flat in Hereford or Ross"

"Difficulty paying bills and rent"

"Looking for supported housing"

"Flat is very cold and not enough money for rent"

"Difficult living alone, hoping for supportive accommodation"

"Currently selling my own home to downsize to smaller home to release capital"

"None due to living in foyer"

"Living in rent arrears and have rent arrears"

"Living in supported housing and have rent arrears"

"In temp, just found unintentionally homeless- facing street homeless"

"After being homeless just over a year ago, we got 1st tenancy July 07 and we have just completed an exchange"

"I can only live at Foyer for 2 years - up this year"

"Living in a Foyer"

"In 2 bed 2nd floor flat - temp accommodation with son and daughter"

"Ready for move on from supported housing"

"I am 19 weeks pregnant and at the foyer you can't have children so need accomm before I give birth"

"17 yrs old had to leave Mums due to family problems and now living in foyer"

"Homeless - sofa surfing with friends"

"Made to leave by parents 2.5 months homeless and sleeping in a tent girlfriends not allowed to stay - now sleeping in a car. Unable to afford private rent"

"Family breakdown"

"Breakdown in relationship with Mum"

"Couldn't get on with Step Mum in Hereford. Moving to Mums in Plymouth"

"Family breakdown"

"NFA and sofa surfing"

"Domestic violence from partner. I left our home and moved to my sisters/ sofa surfing. Moved to Ross foyer 5 months ago."

"Tiny one bedroom house - share with one young son - 9 months"

"Lost job after fiancé committed suicide last November and everything has spiralled down"

"Living with friends in one bed flat. Overcrowding an issue. (2 couples living in flat, 2 females both pregnant) Landlord has issued a letter to tenants - asked non tenants to vacate in 2 weeks"

"Couple with 4 children, living in rented 2 bed property with Herefordshire Council. Does have rent arrears which is on a payment plan of £5/ week"

"Living in a house co-op, having difficulties with new group of people who have moved in. Fear of harassment."

"4 Children aged 12-3 yrs. relationship breakdown - Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Council have yet to contact Hereford Council to make a referral"

"Now permanently housed"

"Too young to get a flat"

"Living in private rented accommodation and have been given 1 month to leave"

"Homeless"

"I am currently Homeless, sleeping rough and I'm occasionally able to stay with friends"

"I have been at the foyer now for 16 Months. My situation has changed very much and I now have a full time job which will be my chosen career. I will be looking to move out in the next 2 months to my own accommodation where I will live independently"

"Housing unsuitable due to stairs"

The following free text responses include in brackets **all** the services the respondent marked as having accessed and found to be useful.

Q22 Please outline briefly how these services have helped you:

"They have talked to Housing on my behalf and helped to keep me in Hereford" (G.P, probationary service, shelter)

"Homeless Team helped with rent arrears ensuring they are paid.

Home Point - Taking Bids.

Mental Health - Medication, having someone to talk to.

Stonham- making Phone Calls, filling in forms, chasing up housing, Homeless team”
(Homelessness and prevention team, Home Point, mental health team inc. crisis team, Stonham floating support)

“Patient - not well enough to leave hospital as yet”
(N.A)

“Open Door has helped me, by giving blankets and provision to me”
(Open Door)

“Open Door have provided me with food and shelter regularly for some years now, all for no cost. Without being overly pushy.”
(Housing benefit office, Open Door, MIND)

“They have not helped at all”
(Home Point, police, Stonham floating support marked as accessed Open Door marked as helpful)

“Listened, fed and tried to help”
(Open Door)

“Sanitary - keeping clean. Salvation Army - blankets, food”
(CAB, Open door, Stonham floating support)

“Open Door- fed, clothed and listened”
(Homelessness and prevention team, Home Point, G.P, Open Door)

“Providing information (Home Point) Allowed to use phone - referral to WHABAC (Probation) Approved for Rent Deposit Scheme (Homeless Team) Sign posting to services (Shelter)”
(As stated)

“Found me accommodation”
(Social Worker/ Social services)

“Anne Holland (DASH) made initial referral for housing. Anne Holland referred to Stonham Floating support. Wendy Dyer, Stonham has continued liaison with housing department.”
(As stated)

“Has only been getting help through DASH”
(As stated)

“I would not be able without support to maintain tenancy and live in the community”
(Mental health team inc. crisis team, CARR GOMM tenancy support services)

“Every week with my Carr Comm support worker I place a bid through Home Point. My benefits are now in place since I left prison. Housing, Tax, DLA, Income support”
(Homeless and Prevention Team, Home Point, Mental Health teams inc crisis team, Housing Benefit Office, CARR GOMM tenancy support services)

“I can say without Carr Comm and the mental health team support. I would have lost tenancy and be in hospital.”
(G.P, Mental Health teams inc crisis team, CARR GOMM tenancy support services)

“Admission to Jenny Lind to Stonebow mental health problems, tackle memory problems and transfer to community hospital due to ulcer”
(N.A)

“Home Point - resource to find accommodation. MH teams - returned to Pomona, Stonebow unit - stabilizing mental health and advising, Stonham keeps a roof over head and helps with bills”

(As stated)

“CSO have helped with sign posting - CAB will look at acquiring free legal advice”

(As stated)

“They had time to listen”

(Mental Health teams inc crisis team, Social Worker/ Social services, MIND)

“No services accessed”

“Homeless prevention put in contact with, SHYPP provided accommodation, Benefits office arranged income support and Housing Benefit”

(As stated)

“Gave support, somewhere to live and they are fair”

(SHYPP)

“Somewhere to live, met new people and learnt new skills”

(SHYPP)

“Gave advice”

(FACT, Probationary services, Mental Health teams inc crisis team, SHYPP, Connexions)

“Police - provided information on Homeless prevention. Homeless prevention paid arrears for temp accommodation. SHYPP assisted to claim HB that was owed for temp accommodation once in 1st tenancy.”

(Police, SHYPP)

“SHYPP housed me and provided support”

(Home Point, SHYPP)

“Gave me a warm, safe place to live. Helping me to survive on my own”

(SHYPP)

“Only just started working with SHYPP. She is hoping to get something out of working with SHYPP”

(Home Point, SHYPP)

“I was given a bed-sit by SHYPP and offered support to get own business off ground, been on business, training and tax courses. Also involved in 3 peaks challenge, life coaching and been SHYPP rep.@ foyer fed event in London. Now working with Outreach to move back into my own tenancy. Also accessed Night stop before I moved in foyer.”

(SHYPP, Hostel support staff)

“Social worker contacted SHYPP and homeless prevention and she provided reference for foyer. SHYPP gave me somewhere to live after being homeless for about 5months. In the time at SHYPP my drug problem has been addressed”

(Social Worker/ Social services, SHYPP)

“Helped me get a roof over my head”

(SHYPP)

“Mostly good support through situations and assistance”

(SHYPP, Connexions)

“SHYPP outlined personal situation put things into perspective, gave me peace of mind”

(SHYPP)

“When I was homeless helped me find accommodation”
(G.P, Homeless and Prevention Team, SHYPP, Connexions)

“Connexions helped me find work and told me about SHYPP. SHYPP did Home Point application and I have stayed on Nightstop”
(As stated)

“Help more back home”
(Home Point, Homeless and Prevention Team, SHYPP, Connexions)

“They gave me a roof over my head, they gave me advice and helped me with my benefits”
(SHYPP)

“Homelessness Prevention team helped me get present accomm. Have not paid last 2 weeks rent. My only concern is the length of time it will take to repay”
(N.A)

“Took time to discuss my housing situation with me – Shelter”
(As stated)

“Derek Allen is awaiting a referral from Oxford. As yet I've received no help”
(N.A)

“Shelter helped me through the Homelessness issues. I have become more confident since working with Shelter”
(Homeless and Prevention Team, Shelter)

“They have helped me learn about the outside world”
(Social Worker/ Social services, SHYPP, Connexions)

“With my housing issues”
(Home Point, SHYPP)

“Helped provided accommodation, even evicted still supported me. Luke at connexions - good options and someone to talk to”
(SHYPP, Connexions)

“SHYPP have helped me with Nightstop and other areas on housing. Connexions are always there to be a listening ear”
(Home Point, SHYPP, Connexions)

“These services have helped me to gain self confidence and they have helped me to gain some out of school qualifications and they have also helped me to meet new people.”
(Homeless and Prevention Team, SHYPP)

As reference to Q24 – Q23 results:

What services or help would you have liked, that you did not or could not receive? Please do answer this section as it will help drive the type of Homeless services that will be available in the future:	
Base	236 100.00%
Accessibility to rented accommodation	32 13.60%
A new hostel is needed	25

	10.60%
Accessibility to hostels	23 9.70%
Benefits advice	22 9.30%
Better transport links	18 7.60%
Employment advice	18 7.60%
Life Skills	18 7.60%
Relationship or family advice/ counselling	16 6.80%
Debt management	13 5.50%
Mediation services	10 4.20%
Links to health service	10 4.20%
Debt counselling	9 3.80%
Domestic violence advice	8 3.40%
Accessibility to buying your own property	7 3.00%
Links to mental health teams	7 3.00%

Q24 Please provide reasons why you could not access the services you needed

Reason	Count
Services not offered/ lack of information on services and where to go for information	18
The service does not currently exist in Herefordshire	11
Regulations preventing access or age restrictions preventing access to services	5
Currently not able to access accommodation due to waiting list size and/ or banding	3
Mental/ Physical health support needed to access services	2
Not having a permanent address	1
Lack of accessible social housing in Herefordshire	1
Respondent has an anti social history	1
Domestic issues	1

“It was not offered to me”

“Not one in Hereford - Hope Scott House you can't get into.”

"Far to many people on waiting list, no action made unless priority"

"Generally down to not having a permanent address. But also a personal stubborn streak which prevents me from accessing these services (perhaps stupidly)"

"There isn't a hostel it's difficult to get private accommodation"

"I find it difficult to be housed because I do not have any dependents and I am fit and able. I do not have any health issues or disabilities. Not being housed because I am healthy and able it is a disgrace maybe I should do more harm than good."

"Getting place on the bus."

"Lack of transport, non availability of accommodation, lack of social housing"

"Do not exist in Hereford"

"Did access B&B through Police and Homeless team. But was asked to leave because outdoor temperature was above 0 degrees C. A so called rule that I was unaware of and in all honesty bewildered by."

"No hostel"

"They are not available" (Hostels and rented accommodation)

"Past History. Anti Social behaviour. Forensic History"

"Phone messages left for Homeless prevention team not responded to. Refused accommodation by Pomona Place. Bidding regularly for properties but always unsuccessful. Although priority status, still in B&B after 6 months. More consideration of personal circumstances and history should have been taken into account when offering a property. Told if I didn't accept a property I would be intentionally homeless."

"Domestic Issues - splitting up with ex partner"

"I could only access services with support my mental health is not very good at the moment"

"Lack of motivation - depressed at the moment I find it very difficult to function"

"Didn't believe in what I was saying"

"Stephen is happy with the help received so far"

"Knowing who to contact - how to access these services"

"Did not know they were all available"

"Not offered - Don't know how to access them"

"Not aware of full extent of available services"

"I didn't know about them - lack of information"

"No where provides the time and service"

"Because they did not exist"

“Just not informed of what’s out there and also we were in V. rural area so had no access to appropriate transport.”

“I wasn't aware of services available and didn't find any info at the time. A new hostel is needed as there is no where for people to go.”

“Homeless prevention said that they could not help me as I was too old. They gave me a form for Home Point. I went to the job centre and they referred me to SHYPP”

“She didn't need any of them”

“Because there is no hostel in this County. Didn't have access to that type of information before homelessness happened to me”

“No hostels. My age was a factor”

“I didn't know where to go, no one told me anything”

“My worker from SHYPP accessed the homelessness team but so far they have not contacted me”

“Because of my age and some are not there.”

“Wasn't informed”

“Lack of information”

“At 18 too old for mediation/ family service”

“Lack of information”

“Lack of information”

“I didn't know they were available.”

“Not sure how to access or that I could.”

“Did not know where to start”

“No reply from Hostels when called. Did not return calls when they said they would. Spoke to Council about rent deposit scheme, she has still to await appointment. So far has been waiting 4 months. Interviewee was not given options or information on accessibility to buy own property.”

“Unsure who to approach- ended up contacting supporting people for help”

“Awaiting referral”

“I would have liked the Homelessness team to be more patient with me on the phone. I felt they got angry with me because I was confused”

“Not really available in the county”

Q25 What services would you personally like to see available in the future?

Service	Count
Hostel/ Drop in centre/ Overnight shelter/ Access centres	20
More accessible/ better advice – Raised awareness of services and support	11

More properties- Social/ sheltered/ affordable	10
Help finding employment	2
Better transport links	2
More support services to provide help at home	2
Access to rehabilitation, advice and support	2
More opportunities for young people	2
Help with domestic violence issues	1

“A Direct Access Homeless Hostel. More drop in centres like open door. Stonham Floating service to continue”

“Hostels, more accommodation available, homeless services improved”

“An overnight shelter for those in genuine need”

“More hostels and drop in centres. More help finding employment”

“I think there should be more properties for single people who are out of work but only for those who make an effort to find employment and want independence and responsibility. I do not want to rely on the charities of friends for support.”

“Better transport”

“Hostel more social and affordable housing”

“Y.M.C.A”

“Genuine accommodation for those who for whatever reason, have fallen into 'genuine' homelessness. A place that has access to cooking, washing, personal hygiene facilities and a choice NOT to share but to remain individual on a personal basis.”

“Hostel, affordable housing, sheltered housing”

“As before: List of landlords who accept rent deposit or housing benefits. Or list of B&B/ guest houses. Access to some form of Temp Accommodation. Chance to review flags on Home Point system.”

“Another hostel”

“A hostel for Homeless people. A drop in centre for Homeless during the day. More independent advice. More one bedroom accommodation.”

“Access top housing for single males some sort of loan arrangement for deposits for flats/ housing”

“When I came out of prison I was put in J.S.A. This caused me many problems I had no support in the time. It took five weeks before I started to receive benefits. This caused problems with housing benefits and tax benefits”

“Home help services - cooking cleaning, shopping for me”

“Alfred’s needs - memory problems, and poor day care could argue he needed or needs more input / visits or support at home.”

“Help with rehabilitation”

“Don't know”

“Not sure”

“Increased awareness of services”

“To be more aware of what is available”

“Nothing to add”

“Male night stop”

“Night stop in Ross”

“More housing options (more choice in location) and more housing”

“Direct access hostel in County. Information on where to go and how to prevent yourself from ending up homeless”

“Hostel. Info on what's available before becoming Homeless”

“Better transport. Better advice and info perhaps in schools so you know where to go.”

“Direct Access hostels, More supported accommodation”

“Different homelessness processes at the Council (i.e better understanding of youth homelessness and attitude, different processes with couples) An easy access hostel, somewhere to hang out in evening”

“More access centres for young people”

“More opportunities directed at young people”

“Not sure as moving away”

“Information centres - better access for young people training and employment”

“More hostels, not enough homeless accommodation around. Alcohol support”

“More advertisement of help with domestic violence. To know where to go for help”

“More flats/ houses to rent”

“One stop shop for Homeless people with support to see you into accommodation”

“More available services for homeless people and more suitable temp accommodation”

“Someone from the Council as a face to face contact. Homeless team who answer the telephone. Shorter waiting list at Shelter”

“Not sure”

“More foyers, a hostel, more support workers”

“More services for people who are not entitled to housing. Hostel (Direct Access) supported accommodation”

“Free access to gym, swimming and other sports activities 14-24”

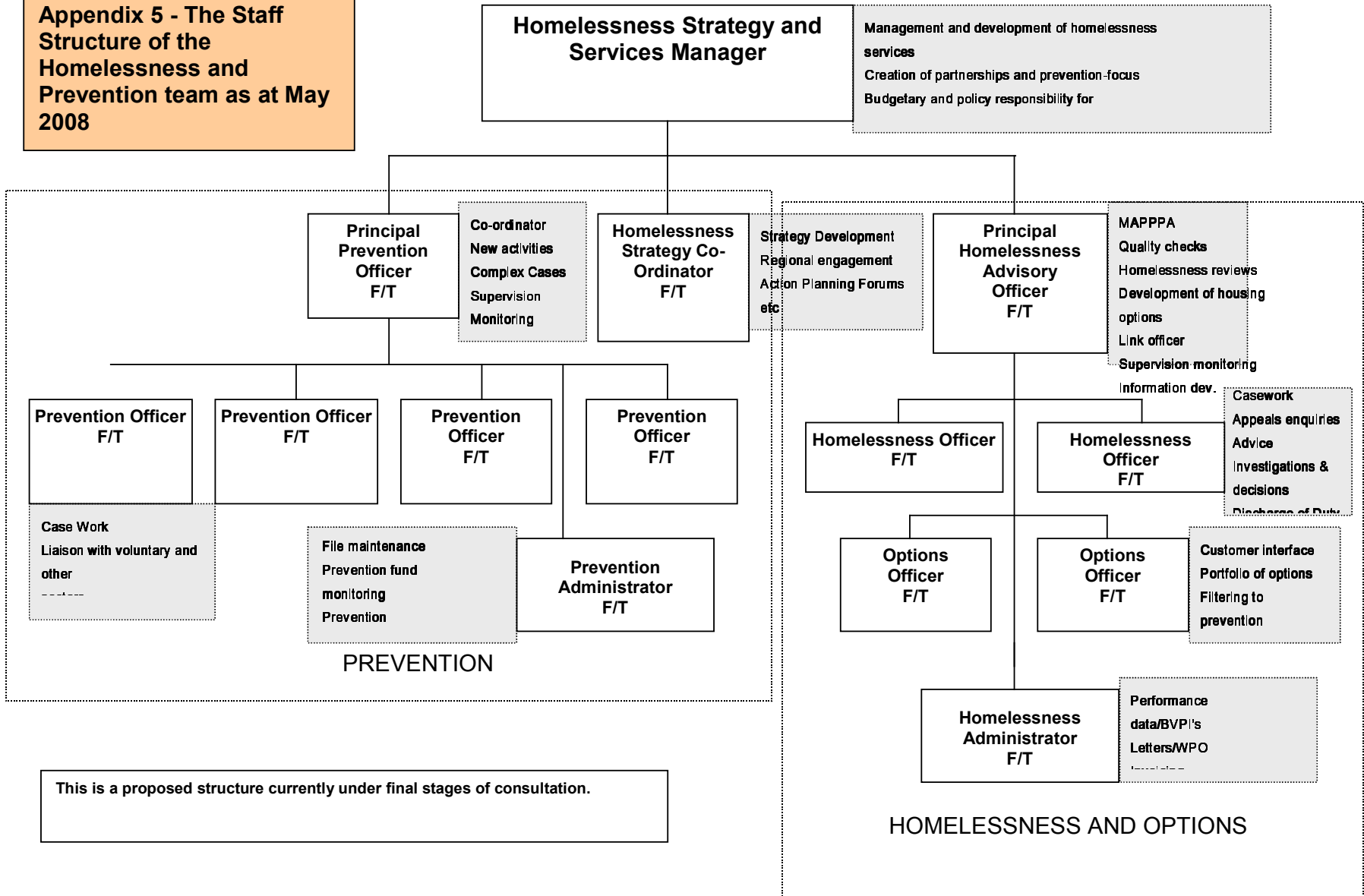
Appendix Four - Acknowledgements

The partnership working indicated in this strategy has been developed as a result of the support and co-operation of the Herefordshire Homeless Strategy Implementation Group (HSIG) and wider partners and stakeholders. Their contributions have been invaluable.

The members of Homeless Strategy Implementation Group are: -

Polly Hearsey	Shelter
Sam Pratley	Supported Housing for Young People (SHYPP)
Jamie Burns / Louise Norman	Home Point – choice based lettings agency
Paul Baker	Probationary Service
Chris Boote	RSL forum representative, Marches Housing
Catherine Collis	Women's Aid
Charles Naylor	West Mercia Police
Mark Hemming / Mair Edmunds	Mental Health Services, Drugs agencies and PCT
Ian Gardner	Herefordshire Council, Supporting People
Linda Maden	Herefordshire Council, Children Social Services
Jane Thomas	Herefordshire Council, Housing Needs and Development
Lorraine Fewtrell	Herefordshire Council, Homelessness Team
Derek Allen	Herefordshire Council, Homelessness Team
Claire Keetch	Citizens Advice Bureau
Paul Towner	Homeless Forum
Denise Bradley Lloyd	Herefordshire Council, Private Sector Housing
Karen Pritchard	RSL representative, Kemble Housing
Lydia Bailey	Adult Social Services
Christine Petherick	Housing Benefit
Ceri Vaughan Jones	Shropshire HSIG representative
Tara Roche	HSIG chair

Appendix 5 - The Staff Structure of the Homelessness and Prevention team as at May 2008



This is a proposed structure currently under final stages of consultation.

Appendix 6 – Sub regional SMART ACTION PLAN

West Housing Market Area – Shropshire and Herefordshire

1.6 Carry out sub-regional gypsy and travellers' needs survey. (West HMA).
Use this data from the survey to shape policy and investment, at least two examples of it being used in this way.

1.7 Develop cross authority data sharing on key homelessness data, investigate cross boundary presenter survey. At least two examples of new data sharing being used to influence policy, procedure or practice.

2.8 Share best practice on resettlement of offenders and specific projects designed to improve resettlement (RESIT) , investigate the potential for wider application of similar schemes. Examples of improved quality of resettlement , and evidence of 2 examples of practice being changed or new service being developed.

3.6 Share best practice and extend use of protocol for work with RSLs on prevention of homelessness. At least four examples of RSLs using the protocol to develop **prevention action plans**.

4.5 Commission joint (sub-regional) Housing Market Assessment. (West HMA). One example of shared research and data being used to influence cross boundary working.

5.3 Develop joint protocols and supporting materials for hospital and mental health service discharge. (West HMA, South HMA,C1 HMA). Evidence of improved quality of discharge planning and service user experience.