

TELFORD & WREKIN

Homelessness Strategy 2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the second five year homelessness strategy for Telford & Wrekin. It continues the commitment of Telford & Wrekin Council and its partners to tackling homelessness and remedying its damaging impact on quality of life by:

- Working together to understand the causes of homelessness locally
- Intervening to prevent homelessness
- Ensuring that adequate accommodation and support services are available
- Listening to homeless people to develop services that better meet their needs
- Sharing and adopting best practice

It builds on the achievements of the Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008, learns from an interim review of that strategy completed in 2007, adapts to the changing national and regional policy context and sets realistic but challenging priorities and plans for the next five years.

In addition, the strategy will be developed during 2009 to address issues resulting from the current economic downturn, including the rise in mortgage arrears and re-possession.

The successes of the 2003-2008 strategy have been widely recognised, and it is important to set the current process within a review of achievements to date. Each section of the strategy identifies the progress made on specific issues, but here we would draw attention to:

- Year on year reductions in homelessness presentations and acceptances since 2004/5
- The establishment of the KIP project for people at risk of rough sleeping and expansion of the STAY project to provide bespoke support services for younger single homeless people
- The development of the substance misuse bond scheme
- The introduction of a mental health and housing liaison officer
- The launch of a small specialist accommodation project for 16/17 year olds, focussing on tenancy sustainment, life skills and access to education, employment and training

The Council are by no means complacent about progress in tackling homelessness and the interim review conducted in 2007 by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at Birmingham University identified several areas of development which provide the focus for the new strategy:

- to improve opportunities for service users to influence the services they receive
- to improve access to employment and employment training for homeless people
- to properly assess the strategy to ensure that it addresses the needs of our diverse community

The latest national homeless strategy “**Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives**” (ODPM, March 2005) reiterates the need for a holistic, coordinated approach to tackle the wider causes and symptoms of homeless. The strategy has also shifted the focus from rough sleeping and bed and breakfast, to prevention and reduced use of all temporary accommodation. The Government’s target is to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation to 50,500 by 2010. It also commits to tackling wider causes and symptoms, avoiding repeat homelessness and building settled lives.

The Council are keen to ensure that this strategy builds upon the commitments set out in the National Homelessness Strategy and addresses the changing needs of people living in the Borough, and has listened carefully to what our customers and partners have told us throughout the development of the strategy.

Key Aims

- to prevent homelessness in 80% of all cases approaching the Council for assistance by 2011
- to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation to no more than 50 at any one time
- to offer improved opportunities and outcomes for customers
- to improve opportunities for service users to influence the services they receive
- to improve access to employment and employment training for homeless people
- to properly assess the strategy to ensure that it addresses the needs of a diverse community

There are a wide range of local strategies and plans that impact on and are influenced by this strategy. These local strategies and plans include:

The Community Strategy 2006-2011

This is the overarching strategy which sets out the long term vision and community ambitions for Telford and Wrekin and our planned actions for working in partnership to meet these

‘A Question of Balance: A Growing, Sustainable Community’ (2002)

This is the overarching strategy for housing across all tenures. It sets out how the Council aims to meet its housing mission of 'access for all to good quality, affordable and healthy housing in order to promote community and individual well-being'. One of the four key aims of the strategy is 'To promote housing choice and to prevent homelessness'.

The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010

The supporting people programme provides housing related support to homeless households and helps people to live independently and avoid homelessness. Supporting People services provide housing related support for homeless people and those groups at risk of homelessness, and the strategy sets out the priorities for development of services over the five year period

The Children and Young People's Plan 2008-2011

The overarching plan for all agencies working with Children and young people setting out the multi-agency commitment to improving outcomes for every child and young person in the Borough

The Safer Stronger Communities Plan 2008-2011

This is the Borough's strategy for tackling crime, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour issues. The strategy has been developed by the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership with a commitment to achieving one of the key Community Ambitions for Telford and Wrekin – to have "a community that feels safe and protected".

The Health & Wellbeing Plan 2008-2011

The Local Area Agreement

The LAA provides a performance monitoring framework for the Boroughs priorities. This framework brings together a set of 198 National Indicators (NIs) which are monitored across the country, and each council has identified 3* priorities from the 198 to monitor through the Local Area Agreement. National Indicator 156, which relates to the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, has been identified as one of the priority indicators for the Borough. The actions and services within the Homelessness Strategy will also contribute to three other Local Area Agreement priorities:

- NI 142 - Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living,
- NI 32 - Repeat incidents of domestic violence,
- NI 117 - 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEET).

Putting People First

The Putting People First concordat sets the scene for a shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care. Ultimately, every locality should seek to have a single community based support system focussed on the health and wellbeing of the local population, bringing together local Government, primary care, community based health provision, public health, social care and the wider

issues of housing, employment, benefits advice and education and training to achieve a complete package of services and support for our customers.

The Homelessness Strategy has been written to complement these other strategies, and to ensure that the Council are able to provide a complete package of services for people in housing need.

Telford & Wrekin Council has made a commitment to apply an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) to the development of its Homelessness Strategy 2009. Ensuring that services are accessible to all was highlighted as an action arising out of the interim review of the first homelessness strategy and, as well as assessing the new strategy to ensure that the actions plan will have a positive impact for all, the strategy has been written primarily for the people who it impacts upon the most –customers.

The strategy has been written in chapters reflecting the range of client groups who may experience homelessness. Throughout the strategy it is clear that demand for and delivery of homelessness services has changed over the last five years, and that housing issues will continue to change. In recognition of this the strategy action plan focuses on what the Council would like to achieve in the first three years of this strategy, after which a review of the action plan and direction of travel will be undertaken to ensure that the strategy's aims and ideas are still relevant to customers.

There are a wide range of organisations across the Borough who work with people in housing need. These partner agencies have been actively involved in the development of this strategy, and will continue to work with the Council to deliver the vision set out in the strategy through their involvement in the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group.

The development of the Borough's new Homelessness Strategy has been supported by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the University of Birmingham, who have worked on housing and homelessness strategies across the region, and Groundswell UK, a leading user involvement organisation working in the field of homelessness.

Most importantly, many service users have been actively involved in the development of this strategy and their contribution has been central to the development of an action plan which truly meets their needs and aspirations.

OVERARCHING ACTIONS

During the development of the new Homelessness Strategy, consultation with partners and service users highlighted four areas of work which were felt to be a priority by all. These actions are aimed at assisting people to gain timely, effective and easy access to services which meet their housing needs.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?		Who will help?	Why does it need to be done?
Review provision of information on services and options for people experiencing homelessness or who have a housing need	Apr 2009	Review current information (website and leaflets) and identify any additional information required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that customers have access to accurate and useful information on the services which may be available to them
Review support services for all homeless households both in temporary accommodation and when they move on into permanent accommodation	Apr 2009 Apr 2009	Develop new outcomes based model for support Extend support services into permanent accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People • Service providers • Service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent repeat homelessness • To ensure individually tailored support plans with self checklists • To assist individuals in developing lifeskills • To ensure best use of resources
Consider options to ensure free and easy access to housing and support services for homeless households via e-mail and text services	Apr 2010	Launch text and e-mail service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that customers are able to access services in a way which is convenient to them
Consider options for the development of a direct access hostel	Apr 2009	Set up steering group to re-evaluate the proposals in the Council's original Places of Change bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People • Police • Housing associations • PCT • Service providers • Service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a single place where people who have no accommodation can stay as an emergency • To prevent rough sleeping • To provide access to a range of services

Develop local actions to address the consequences of the economic downturn in terms of people's housing needs	2009	Explore local options for i) assisting people who face mortgage arrears and / or re-possession, and ii) for stimulating house buying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen's Advice Bureaux • RSLs • Financial institutions • Developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify potential assistance for people facing mortgage arrears /re-possession • To explore possible options for helping to stimulate local house buying
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A further, overarching target for the Borough is to significantly reduce the number of households who need to live in temporary accommodation. The negative impact of living in temporary accommodation is widely recognised, with bed and breakfast accommodation being particularly unsuitable for anything other than short periods of time due to emergencies.

Despite a significant reduction in the number of people who become homeless in the Borough, due to the Council's homelessness prevention work, there still remains a high number of people living in temporary accommodation. The Government have set a national target for all Local Authorities to reduce their temporary accommodation use by 50% by the year 2010. For Telford & Wrekin this means reducing our temporary accommodation use to no more than 50 units of accommodation at any one time.

With 112 households living in temporary accommodation in December 2008, this target will be challenging and the Council has developed a detailed **Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan** to assist in achieving and exceeding this target. Key actions from this plan include:

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help?	Why does it need to be done?	
Review home visiting policy to ensure visits are carried out for all exclusions	Dec 2008 Quarterly	Agree policy and complete equalities impact assessment Report on number of visits and outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford Christian Council • YMCA • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in homelessness • Reduction in demand for temporary accommodation • Facilitating planned moves
Finalise and agree an integrated pathway through services for young people	Apr 2009	Agree model of services for young people with key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People commissioners • Supporting People service providers • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in youth homelessness • Clearly defined multi agency involvement • Improvement in NI's 91 and 156

			services	
Develop scheme for households with former tenant arrears, negotiating supported AST's in the private sector linked to the credit union scheme	Apr 2009 Quarterly	Launch scheme Report on numbers assisted through scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairshare Credit Union • Private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in silt up of TA • Improved tenancy sustainment skills • Increased access to social housing

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Review literature and incentives package to support qualifying offer initiative and extend model to encompass prevention work	Dec 2008 Quarterly	Agree model and complete equalities impact assessment Report on numbers assisted through scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater take up of Q.O. • Reduction in TA use • Improved relationships with private sector landlords
Relaunch Credit Union scheme to include prevention work and private landlords	Apr 2009 Quarterly	Relaunch scheme Report on numbers assisted through scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairshare Credit Union • Housing Associations • Private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in homeless acceptances • Reduction in number of households being placed into TA
Develop single allocation panel for all young persons accommodation	Apr 2009 Quarterly	Agree procedure and complete equalities impact assessment Report on numbers accommodated through the panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People commissioners • Supporting People service providers • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in failed tenancies due to improved consideration of individual needs • Better use of resources

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

Since 2002 the Government has placed increasing emphasis on homelessness prevention. This was re-iterated in the latest national homeless strategy “**Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives**” (ODPM, March 2005).

Preventing homelessness is defined by government as ‘activities that enable households to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or that provide options to enable a planned and timely move and help sustain independent living’ (ODPM, 2003).

In 2006 the government published **Homelessness prevention: a guide to good practice (2006)** which sets out how the homelessness prevention agenda can be delivered in practice. In addition, it also published “**Preventing homelessness, a strategy healthcheck**”, which provides a framework for local authorities to assess their own homelessness strategy. Telford & Wrekin has used both documents as part of the baseline assessment for this 2008-13 Strategy.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

In response to the strategy healthcheck, and the interim review of the first homelessness strategy, Telford & Wrekin has developed a number of successful schemes aimed at preventing homelessness from occurring.

The Homelessness Prevention Fund:

The use of a fund set up to assist in preventing homelessness has been key in reducing the number of households who become homeless in the Borough. The fund was launched in 2006, and has assisted 91 households in 2007/08, at an average cost of £426 per household. Prevention fund monies have been used in many different ways to prevent homelessness from occurring, ranging from help to clear rent arrears through to financial assistance to family members to provide accommodation.

Mediation

The family mediation scheme has been developed in partnership with Shropshire Mediation Services to offer a mediation service to young people who have been asked to leave the family home. The scheme aims to rebuild relationships and find solutions which allow the young person to remain in the family home. Of the families who used the service, 8% were able to remain at home for the foreseeable future without any mediation at all, 14% were able to remain at home with further mediation help, 8% were able to remain at home for a temporary period whilst further accommodation options and relationship issues were discussed.

The co-ordinated approach to tackling Domestic Abuse

The Safer & Stronger Communities Partnership has agreed a co-ordinated approach to tackling domestic violence. This co-ordination has involved key agencies working together to deliver a range of interventions which address domestic abuse, including:

- A domestic violence strategy
- Introduction of Sanctuary Scheme offering a range of extra security measures in a victim's house
- Introduction of the Freedom Programme, a twelve week programme designed to increase victims' understanding of the crime and increase their self-confidence and ability to take control of their lives.
- Recruitment of an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate to provide wide ranging support for victims of domestic abuse throughout the court process.
- Introduction of Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferencing, (MARACs) where managers from all key agencies take part in a joint risk- assessment of victims of domestic abuse with a view to agreeing a package of support to maintain their safety.
- Introduction of the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), working with perpetrators of domestic violence to help them to stop their violent and abusive behaviour.
- Launch of a Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) in Telford

The Family Bond Scheme

The Family Bond Scheme was launched in 2002 to help households to find suitable privately rented accommodation. The scheme assists by providing a bond guarantee to the landlord, which allows families to secure accommodation which they may otherwise have been unable to afford due to the large sums of money which are required upfront. The Bond Scheme helped to find permanent accommodation for 98 households in 2007/08.

The Substance Misuse Bond Scheme

The Substance Misuse Bond scheme was set up in partnership with the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership to assist people who have previous substance misuse or alcohol problems to access housing. The scheme has a dedicated housing officer, working in partnership with substance misuse support workers to ensure that the housing and support needs of service users are met. 20 households were successfully rehoused through the scheme in 2007/08.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Although the Council has achieved a great deal since the last Homelessness Strategy, it recognises that there is still more that needs to be done to ensure that it can meet its targets to prevent homelessness in at least 80% of all cases who seek help. There are several key areas of concern which are emerging as this strategy is being developed and which may impact significantly upon the levels and causes of homelessness in the Borough over the coming years:

- The potential impact of ongoing changes in the housing market and the impact of higher house prices and higher interest rates
- The potential for an increase in the number of repossession and eviction proceedings due to arrears, which may be caused by the increasing cost of living
- The potential impact of the new Local Housing Allowance regulations on landlords willingness to let to homeless people and on risk of tenants losing accommodation through rent arrears.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Service users were generally positive about the prevention services which they had experienced, but the key message was one around improved information. Service users felt that a new information and promotion campaign for all preventative services should be launched, to include:

- Materials aimed at customers, with customers being involved to ensure that the design and placement of materials is appropriate
- Information for staff, to ensure that they understand these services and can appropriately refer service users

People generally valued the Bond Scheme, did not mind the payback feature and found the terms of that payback acceptable.

Those people who had been helped in Court by the Housing Options team were happy with the results and the moral support that they received.

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What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Continue to assess the impact of external factors on homelessness presentations, including the credit crunch and mortgage repossessions	Ongoing analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All agencies in the Borough who are working with vulnerable households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that we are continuously reviewing and developing services to meet the needs of our customers
Review all current prevention initiatives, including the Homeless Prevention Fund and the Credit Union Scheme	<p>March 2009</p> <p>April 2009 onwards</p>	<p>Complete review and recommendations</p> <p>Implement any changes as recommended</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Inclusion Officer Fairshare Credit Union Housing Associations Private landlords Service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce the number of people who are unable to find a permanent home because they have outstanding arrears To ensure best use of resources
Expand Adult Placement Scheme to provide emergency accommodation in the homes of volunteers for young people who become homeless	April 2009	<p>develop training programme</p> <p>establish policies</p> <p>develop marketing campaign</p> <p>recruit and train families</p> <p>launch scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult Placement Officer Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make sure that young homeless people do not have to live in bed and breakfast accommodation
Develop an agreement with the Housing Benefits team to use discretionary housing payments to assist people who may otherwise become homeless	<p>March 2009</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Agreement in place</p> <p>Report on numbers assisted through agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Benefits Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help more people to find privately rented housing To reduce the number of people who have to live in temporary accommodation because they do not have a permanent home
Develop an agreement with the County Court in Telford to work together to reduce the number of evictions	<p>Oct 2008</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Agreement in place</p> <p>Report on numbers assisted through agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telford County Court Citizens Advice Bureau <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help more people stay in their own homes by providing advice and support at an early stage To reduce the number of people who have to live in temporary accommodation because they do not have a permanent home

<p>Agree procedures with the local hospitals to ensure that people are not homeless when they are discharged from hospital</p>	<p>Aug 2009</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>agree and implement new/updated procedures</p> <p>Report on numbers assisted through agreement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Princess Royal Hospital • Royal Shrewsbury Hospital • Social services teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gap identified through Homelessness Strategy Healthcheck
<p>Further develop work in schools to raise awareness of homelessness issues as part of an early intervention strategy</p>	<p>Dec 2008</p> <p>Sept 2009</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Evaluate current scheme and agree options to extend</p> <p>Launch programme in schools</p> <p>Report on number of young people receiving awareness raising package</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools • Telford Christian Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the number of young people who become homeless, and to improve lifeskills and understanding of the housing allocation process

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Government's national homeless strategy **Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (2005)** recognises that young people can become homeless for a wide range of often complex reasons and therefore a holistic approach is required. It outlines how the government is working with local authorities and voluntary sector partners to:

- prevent vulnerable young people becoming homeless, through early identification and intervention
- support homeless young people and those living in temporary accommodation
- to ensure their housing and wider support needs are met;
- manage the transition of young people between temporary and settled accommodation to ensure continued access to the services they need.

In 2006 the Government announced a package of measures to tackle youth homelessness. These included:

- A commitment to end, by 2010, the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation by local housing authorities in discharging their homelessness duty to secure suitable accommodation for 16-17 year olds
- Improved access to homelessness mediation across the country (including family mediation for young people).
- The creation of a new national supported lodgings development scheme providing accommodation, advice and mediation services for young people who can no longer stay in their family home

The Government has recently launched a new national youth homelessness scheme, to be delivered by a range of voluntary and community sector agencies and jointly led by Centrepoin and YMCA England. The scheme will develop strategic and operational responses that prevent, and reduce the overall level of, youth homelessness in England. The aim is to ensure that young people's wider support needs are tackled appropriately and supportively.

The New Performance Framework for Local authorities and local authority partnerships includes indicators relating to:

- Numbers of 16 – 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training – national indicator 117
- Numbers of young offenders with access to suitable accommodation – national indicator 46
- Numbers of care leavers in suitable accommodation – national indicator 147

Within Telford & Wrekin, although there has been a fall in the number of 16-17 year olds accepted as homeless from 55 people in 2004/05 to 39 people in 2007/08, this group has risen as a proportion of all accepted homeless people.

This demand for assistance from young people is reflected in the numbers of referrals made to STAY, a project established by Telford Christian Council to provide services to young single people under 25. STAY received 815 referrals between the period January 2007 and March 2008. Within this 73% of referrals were because friends, relatives and parents were unable to accommodate them.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

In recognition of the increasing number of young people who are becoming homeless in the Borough, the Council has worked closely with partners to develop seven units of supported accommodation for young homeless people, with a dedicated support and resettlement officer. The scheme offers young people the opportunity to develop tenancy sustainment skills and life skills, and will offer education and training opportunities and supported move on accommodation.

The family mediation scheme which is referred to in the chapter on Preventing Homelessness has been established to offer support for young people to rebuild family relationships and has been successful for 50% of the families who have attended.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

With 16/17 year olds and other vulnerable young people accounting for over 50% of all homelessness acceptances in Telford in 2007/08 the Council recognise the need to develop more focussed services in partnership with a range of other agencies. In particular, a number of targets have been set to ensure a partnership approach towards reducing youth homelessness, with demonstrable results:

- Reduce number of acceptances from young people by 75% by 2010
- Eliminate the use of bed and breakfast for all 16/17 year olds by 2010
- Develop a young person's hub with user involvement to provide one stop advice
- Make best use of accommodation and give choice to young people at risk of homelessness

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Several young people reflected that whilst they would like to attend mediation services this had not been possible as their parents had refused to participate.

People were particularly supportive of ideas to explore emergency accommodation in the homes of volunteers for young people, although they did reflect the need to ensure that both the young person and the volunteer were properly assessed and supported.

There was support for the development of a young person's hub, bringing together a range of services under one roof. It was felt that this should be located centrally in a friendly, unthreatening building, with opportunities for young people to be involved in the design and running of the service.

There was also enthusiasm for a mentoring scheme, and young people felt that they could better relate to another young person with similar experiences. Older people who had experienced homelessness were also keen to share their experiences with young people.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?	
Develop a Young Persons Hub, where young people can go to discuss housing issues and get advice and assistance,	<p>April 2009</p> <p>Sept 2009</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Agree joint project with Children's Services</p> <p>Agree action plan for redevelopment of existing service</p> <p>Ongoing implementation of agreed action plan</p> <p>Report on number of young people using the service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • Connexions For Youth • Youth Offending Service • Stay Project • YMCA • Service users • Local authority commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a single place where young people can go to get advice on their housing issues • To ensure that we are able to provide early intervention services which may prevent future homelessness
Ensure young homeless people are represented at the Youth Forum raise awareness of issues that are affecting young homeless people in the Borough	April 2009	<p>Develop a briefing pack for young people interested in attending the Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People • Connexions For Youth • Youth Offending Service • Stay Project • YMCA • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • St Basils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that all agencies in the Borough are working together to help young homeless people • To give young homeless people the opportunity to discuss their issues with agencies in the Borough
Develop a procedure for all 16 and 17 year olds who are threatened with homelessness to be interviewed jointly by Housing and Children's Services to ensure that all their support needs are identified and agreed	Dec 2008	<p>Agree procedure for joint assessments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • Stay project • YMCA • Connexions for Youth • Youth Offending Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that young people threatened with homelessness have the support they need to deal with their situation
Set up a multi-agency group to discuss all vacancies which occur in schemes which provide housing to young people, and to agree who the property should be allocated to	<p>Dec 2008</p> <p>Dec 2008</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Agree accommodation to be included</p> <p>Agree members of the allocation panel</p> <p>Report on all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported Housing Providers • Supporting People commissioners • Youth Offending Service • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • Connexions for Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that young people are put into accommodation which is suitable for their needs • To make sure that young people are able to stay in their tenancy without any problems which could lead to them being evicted

		allocations		
Train one person who has been homeless each year to act as a mentor to young people who are faced with homelessness	April 2009 April 2010 April 2011	Agree training and support package for peer mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connexions For Youth • Service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that young people are able to get advice from somebody who understands their situation
Review services for young people with autistic spectrum disorders	Dec 2008	Review current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young People services • Adult Transition Services • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that young people with autistic spectrum disorders who experience homelessness are able to access accommodation and support which is suitable for their needs

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IMPROVING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

The Housing Act 1996 sets out a number of categories of applicant who have a priority need for accommodation. Perhaps one of the most diverse categories is that around vulnerability, which considers the needs of people who are less able to fend for themselves due to:

- old age
- mental illness
- a learning disability
- a physical disability
- because they have been looked after or fostered as a child
- because they have been members of the country's armed forces
- because they have been in custody or detention
- because they have been subjected to violence or threats of violence
- other special reasons, where the housing difficulties faced by a person are unusually severe

As well as the categories above, households where there is a pregnant woman or dependent children are also considered to be a priority for housing.

Supporting People is now the most significant source of funding for holistic support led approaches to tackle homelessness. The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 sets the local strategic framework for housing related support for a number of client groups including homeless families and teenage parents. Key priorities focus on:

- preventing homelessness;
- reducing use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation;
- commitment to a flexible approach to provide supported housing and move-on accommodation for young parents and families;
- collaborative approach to provide supported housing for teenage parents;
- extension of floating support to 'sofa surfers';
- and provision of adequate support to families in temporary accommodation

The New Performance Framework for Local authorities and local authority partnerships includes indicators relating to:

- Supporting vulnerable households to achieve and maintain independent living – national indicators 141 and 142
- meeting the accommodation needs of offenders – national indicator 143
- adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation – national indicator 145

In March 2002, the Government announced a target to end the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels to accommodate homeless families with children, except in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks. Nationally, this target was met in March 2004, and is being sustained through the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) order 2003, which came into force in April 2004.

Approximately 22% of registered homeless people have reported having a drug and/or alcohol problem. One of the key objectives of the Safer & Stronger Community Strategy 2005-2008 is to help prevent homelessness of people with substance misuse problems. Priority actions include:

- Strengthening links with the Supporting People strategy to ensure those with substance misuse problems are helped to live successfully within the local community.
- Highlighting the accommodation needs of people with substance misuse problems
- Promoting a joined up approach between housing providers and local support services
- Helping to sustain people in drugs treatment services by increasing access to and supporting them to retain their accommodation

People accepted as homeless due to mental health needs accounted for 6.36% of all homeless people in 2007/08. The Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 priorities for people with mental health needs include:

- cross-tenure floating support;
- specialist training for housing support staff;
- improving access to settled accommodation.

One of the future development needs identified in the Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010 is to develop a model of supported housing and floating support aimed at helping ex-offenders along with access training and employment opportunities.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Council has launched the Home Improvement Agency, aimed at helping homeowners and private tenants to remain safe, secure, comfortable and independent in their own home, and specialising in helping people who are over 60 or disabled.

The Council has introduced a package of support for people who have experienced homelessness to help them to settle in their new home. The number of people who become homeless more than once in the Borough has dropped significantly over the last two years, and this appears to be as a result of the support we are able to provide.

An Offender Resettlement Protocol has been developed, setting out a multi agency commitment to tackling the problems of homelessness, to focus on preventing homelessness for offenders and to ensure appropriate and accessible housing related support for ex offenders.

The Substance Misuse Bond scheme has been set up in partnership with the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership to assist people who have previous substance misuse or alcohol problems to access housing. The scheme has a dedicated housing officer, working in partnership with substance misuse support workers to ensure that the housing and support needs of service users are met. 20 households were successfully rehoused through the scheme in 2007/08

A Mental Health Liaison Officer role has been developed to ensure that the specific needs of people with mental health issues are addressed when considering their housing needs. This officer plays a key role in liaising with mental health services and housing providers to ensure that people with mental health issues are suitably housed.

The Council has set out proposals for the development of dedicated housing related support services for ethnic minority households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. An unsuccessful application for funding from the Ethnic Minority Innovation Fund sought to create support services to provide a first point of contact for all ethnic minority households with housing issues, and to signpost or fulfil an advocacy and support role as appropriate. The service would also promote access to other key services which would improve health and well being, including community health provision, social care, welfare benefits, education and employment.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Although services are available to help anyone with a housing issue, it is recognised that the Council needs to develop further specialised services for some vulnerable groups:

- Improve co-ordination of services for older people experiencing homelessness
- Further develop multi-agency services to help people with a learning disability to live in the community
- Ensure that we have service to help vulnerable households who have become homeless through their own actions
- Work in partnership to achieve targets around supporting all vulnerable households to live independently

The Council will also seek to find alternative means of funding proposals to assess the suitability of services for ethnic minority households, and to develop future services to address any unmet need.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

People generally found mental health services to be useful, but were concerned that depression and other mental health problems created barriers to them being able to move into permanent accommodation and to be able to access employment and training.

Vulnerable homeless households experienced a feeling of “being in limbo” while they were in temporary accommodation which made it hard for them to participate in other activities. However, they were particularly positive about the support provided:

“Its basically the fact that we haven’t ended up in a hostel and that we are in a house as a normal family and the children have been able to go to school they took all that into consideration for me”

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Develop a scheme to help people who are considered to be intentionally homeless to find a home	April 2009 Sept 2009 Quarterly	Develop and agree scheme Obtain approval from private landlords and housing associations Report on number of households assisted through scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrekin Private Landlord Association • Housing Associations • Support providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that all our customers have the opportunity to find a home
Agree procedures for helping and supporting people with mental health issues to find a permanent home	Oct 2008 Nov 2008 Quarterly	Recruit specialist mental health support officer Agree annual targets and action plan Report on number of people supported to move into permanent accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Services • Housing Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the number of people with mental health issues who have to live in temporary accommodation because they do not have a permanent home
Agree procedure for multi-agency Team Around the Household meetings for households who have a range of needs and issues	Oct 2008	Agree procedure with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Services • Substance Misuse Services • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young Peoples Services • Housing Associations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that all support needs are met so that households have a greater chance of successfully sustaining a permanent tenancy
Agree programme of parenting support for young families	Mar 2009 Quarterly	Agree planned programme of support and desired outcomes with partners Report on number of young families successfully moving on into permanent accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health visitors • Young parents • Support workers • Telford & Wrekin Children & Young Peoples Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure that families are able to successfully move on into a permanent homes

Develop services to support people with a learning disability to live in their own homes with support	March 2009	Develop a range of options to offer alternative housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary Care Trust • Adults with Learning Disabilities Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable people with learning disabilities to live in the community
Identify service gaps for vulnerable households	Sept 2009	Complete analysis of services and identification of areas for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Strategic Partnership Board • Service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that we have a clear picture of services and are able to develop effective new services to meet the needs of our customers

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IMPROVING SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic Abuse is defined as:

“Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality”

Research shows that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience Domestic Abuse at some point in their lives. This means that in Telford, with a population of 83,800 females and 81,700 men, potentially 20,950 women and 15,600 men in the Borough will experience Domestic Abuse at some time in their lives. In Telford & Wrekin Domestic Abuse accounts for 24% of all reported violent crime.

Over 50% of the children who currently have a Child Protection plan have concerns about Domestic Abuse as a contributory factor in the decision to bring the matter to a multi-agency child protection conference.

Domestic abuse continues to be one of the main reasons for homelessness for the period 2004/05 to 2007/08. Although there has been a steady drop in the numbers of applicants made homeless as a result of domestic abuse during this period from 68 households in 2004/05 to 43 in 2007/08, as a proportion of homelessness applications it remains the second highest cause of homelessness behind friends/family exclusions. Domestic violence also accounts for 19% of repeat homelessness applications in 2007/08.

The Telford and Wrekin Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008 – 2011 has three key aims:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Probation and justice
- Support for victims

The strategy has driven forward a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to funding and delivery of services to tackle domestic abuse in the Borough

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Domestic Abuse Strategy's co-ordinated approach to tackling domestic abuse has led to a number of achievements including:

- The appointment of a Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator in the Housing Needs Team
- The delivery of a Sanctuary scheme
- The establishment of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC).

- The appointment of two Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) to support victims through the criminal justice process
- The accreditation of Telford's Specialist Domestic Violence Court

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

The Domestic Abuse Strategy includes a detailed action plan which sets out the following key objectives to deliver on the three aims:

- Map the provision and extent of domestic violence
- Identify children where there is domestic abuse and improve provision and co-ordinated support
- Build a more objective domestic abuse partnership structure and establish agency commitment and representation
- Develop multi-agency training and awareness of domestic abuse
- Establish a process which identifies those most at risk of domestic abuse and responds to their needs swiftly and effectively
- Establish an independent support and advocacy service
- Ensure linkages between child protection processes.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Service users are keen to see the development of specialist counselling services for children who have experienced domestic abuse.

They are also keen to see the development of a multi-agency rapid response team for dealing with domestic abuse, and suggested a phone line and drop in centre with the emphasis on people being seen rapidly.

Service users would like to see volunteers working across domestic abuse services who had themselves had experience of domestic abuse.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?		Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Assist in meeting the targets set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy	As set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy Action Plan		As set out in the Domestic Abuse Strategy Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist in delivering the strategy
Agree procedures to deal with joint tenancies where one tenant is committing domestic abuse	Apr 2009 Ongoing every 3 months	Agree procedures with housing associations Monitor number of tenancies affected by domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private landlords Housing Associations Court services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable victims to remain in their own home if that is their preferred choice
Develop agreements with other Local Authorities to work together to assist victims of domestic abuse to move to safety	Sept 2009 Ongoing every 3 months Sept 2010	Agree procedures with members of sub-regional group Monitor number of referrals into and out of the Borough Assess need to widen out to other authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Homelessness Implementation Group Other local authorities Housing Associations Voluntary sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate out of borough moves when this is required
Develop counselling services for children who have suffered or witnessed domestic abuse	March 2009 Sept 2009	establish the number of children in the Borough affected by domestic abuse make recommendations to the Childrens Trust on options to improve support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telford & Wrekin Children & Young Peoples Services CAMHS Health Services Victim Support 	<p>To reduce the effects of domestic abuse on children</p> <p>To assist in reducing the number of children and young people whose need for a protection plan involves concerns about Domestic Abuse</p>
Develop a multi-agency rapid response service to deal with incidents of domestic abuse	Apr 2009	Establish working group, reporting to the Domestic Abuse Steering Group Agree procedures for responding to incidents of domestic abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crime Reduction Disorder Partnership Domestic Abuse Steering Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priority for service users and stakeholders To ensure a speedy and co-ordinated response to incidents of domestic abuse

IMPROVING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE AT RISK OF SLEEPING ROUGH

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness.

2008 marks the tenth anniversary of the Social Exclusion Unit report into rough sleeping, which set out the government's original strategy to reduce rough sleeping by at least two thirds. Nationally the target of a two thirds reduction in rough sleeping was met early in 2001 and this has been sustained - the National 2007 annual estimate of the number of people sleeping out in England on any single night was 498 people; a 73% reduction on the 1998 baseline.

The Government intend to publish an updated rough sleeping strategy later in 2008 which will set out their plans for the next three years. The updated strategy will build upon the approach set out in 1999 and will set out how they can best renew their drive to tackle rough sleeping in today's context, taking account for example of the greater freedoms and flexibilities local government now has and the introduction of the Supporting People programme

It is proposed that the updated strategy will have two main aims:

- To drive rough sleeping down to as close to zero as possible
- To improve opportunities and outcomes for former rough sleepers

In 2007, the government announced a £70 million expansion to the 'Places for change' programme which aims to tackle homelessness through investment in improving hostels and day centres to ensure that they provide, for their residents/ clients, opportunities that will help them move forward into work, independence and settled homes.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

A major landmark since the 2003 strategy has been the establishment of the KIP project by the Salvation Army. Since 2003 KIP has provided information and accommodation services for homeless single people (over 25), a group of people for whom there were previously no dedicated services. Services include

- a drop-in information project with wet room facilities
- access to private rented accommodation to reduce rough sleeping and sofa surfing
- assistance to register and use the Choose Your Home scheme to enable people to access social housing.
- rough sleeper counts and visits to locations where people are sleeping rough.

KIP has undertaken regular counts of people sleeping rough in the Borough, with monthly counts averaging 19 between January and April 2008, rising to 26 in May and then falling back to 0 in July 2008.

Maninplace has been registered as a separate non-profit company to manage KIP's property leasing and management scheme and to access support for the residents. Maninplace will take on the private rented accommodation scheme and seek to provide tailored support to the residents referred through KIP.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

KIP is a voluntary organisation with services provided by 9 volunteers. Although part of the Salvation Army it is dependent on local fundraising. In order to ensure the future expansion and delivery of services for people at risk of sleeping rough we need to:

- Explore options for the development of an information hub
- Explore options for the development of a direct access hostel, building upon the proposals set out in the Council's unsuccessful Places of Change bid.
- Ensure that support is available to help service users to live in the community

WHAT DID OUR SERVICE USERS SAY?

Service users supported proposals for the development of a hub, with one commenting on their vision of a "drop in centre for activities for homeless people"

Whilst there was support for a comprehensive package of training for rough sleepers, basic information about services was the main requirement.

In general it is felt that there are currently not enough services available for single men over the age of 25.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?		Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?		
Develop a Hub, where single people can go to discuss housing issues and get advice and assistance	Apr 2010	Set up steering group to re-evaluate the proposals in the Council's original Places of Change bid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIP Project • Support workers • Police • Housing associations • PCT • CAB • Service users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a single place where people who are at risk of or are rough sleeping can go to get advice on their housing issues and support. • To prevent rough sleeping • To provide access to a range of services and facilities 		
Develop a pathway through homelessness services for people at risk of sleeping rough		Agree action plan to take forward proposals				
Explore options for support for people at risk of sleeping rough, from homelessness through to living in a permanent home						
Review procedures for ensuring that people are not released from prison with nowhere to live and ensure that a realistic plan is in place for discharge	Apr 2009	Complete review of current procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prison Service • Probation • KIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce the number of people released from prison into inappropriate accommodation or are at risk of rough sleeping 		
Undertake a rough sleeper count every year		Count to be undertaken annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To monitor that the number of people sleeping rough in the Borough is reducing. 		
Develop agreement between Council and KIP for ongoing contribution to funding	Sept 2009	Finalise service level agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that we are contributing to services aimed at reducing rough sleeping 		

WORKING WITH LOCAL HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

'Tackling Homelessness: the Housing Corporation's Strategy' (2006) emphasises that housing associations are key partners in helping to meet Government targets in relation to homelessness, and play a crucial role in preventing and responding to homelessness. It emphasises the need for effective partnership working between local authorities and housing associations. This strategy sets out what the Housing Corporation requires housing associations to do to prevent and tackle homelessness.

Specifically, in relation to preventing homelessness the strategy also identifies a number of other expectations of housing associations including:

- working with local authorities and other agencies to ensure support needs are identified at the outset and tenancy sustainment is maximised
- seeking to address financial exclusion and debt amongst their residents
- ensuring that eviction is only considered as a last resort and have regard to the good practice guide on preventing evictions from rent arrears
- Exchanging information relating to vulnerable people within the Data protection Act 1998.

Since 2004/05 there has been a reduction in the number of overall lettings in the Borough, with only **** socially rented properties being let in 07/08. This drop in lettings represents a substantial reduction in the housing available to both housing register and homeless applicants.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Wrekin Housing Trust, in partnership with the Council, Beth Johnson, Bromford and Bournville Housing Associations, have launched the Choose Your Home scheme for the allocation of social housing in the Borough. The scheme has been developed to deliver a choice based lettings approach in line with the vision set out in **Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (2005)**

Partner housing associations have developed Homelessness Action Plans, to set out their vision for working with the Council to reduce homelessness and housing need in the Borough.

The Credit Union scheme has been extended to assist households who are at risk of being evicted from a housing association property, working with the landlords to address issues of rent arrears and to prevent homelessness.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

With the current shortage of social housing in the Borough it is important that the Council works closely with our housing association partners to ensure that social housing is being used effectively to meet the needs of our customers. In particular, there is a need to:

- Continue to analyse and use the information from Choose Your Home to inform the type and location of future housing developments
- Develop initiatives which offer people in larger houses incentives and opportunities to move into accommodation which is more suitable for their needs.

WHAT DID OUR SERVICE USERS SAY?

Many service users see social housing as the most secure form of housing, and are willing to wait longer in unsuitable or temporary accommodation in order to access housing association properties.

However while service users understand the aims of creating a sustainable and balanced community, many are frustrated by the restrictions of local lettings plans which are in place for some properties and which may prevent people from moving on from temporary or other unsuitable housing if they do not meet the criteria set out in the plan.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?	
Agree a procedure for sharing information about our customers across agencies	Apr 2009	Implement agreed procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Strategic Housing Partnership Legal Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that we are able to offer accommodation which is suitable for individual needs To speed up the time taken to allocate properties
Undertake a review of the Choose your home scheme to include national best practice, models of communication, bidding support services and provision of a small number of homes to be allocated outside the scheme if required	Apr 2009 July 2009	Start review of scheme Report back on findings of review and agree any required policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrekin Housing Trust Housing Associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure the scheme is fair and accessible to all. To provide applicants with easy access and support to enable them to make bids To ensure applicants understand the reasons behind allocation criteria and how they operate and to ensure that allocation criteria are justified. To ensure that we are able to provide accommodation for homeless households in very specific emergency situations
Assist local housing associations to develop, review and fulfil homelessness action plans	Quarterly	Discussion regarding levels of homelessness and updating of action plans to reflect changing priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Strategic Housing partnership Housing Associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage and support all housing associations to play their part in meeting homelessness need and avoiding unnecessary homelessness through evictions by early interventions.
Develop an agreed package of incentives to assist people to move into a home that is more suitable to their needs	April 2010 Sept 2010	Establish Borough's strategy for tackling under occupation and overcrowding Agree package of incentives to encourage tenants to move into more suitable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Strategic Housing Partnership Housing Associations Wrekin Private Landlords Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage and support smaller households who are living in larger properties to move to more suitable accommodation To increase the number of larger properties available to larger households

WORKING WITH PRIVATE LANDLORDS TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

In order to provide more settled homes the Government highlights the need to make greater use of private rented properties to provide settled homes. However there is a need to recognise that private rented tenancies can be insecure and short term and that loss of a private tenancy is one of the top three reasons for homelessness. Prevention schemes should include working more closely with private landlords, for example in securing housing benefit payments and ensuring avoidable loss of tenancies does not arise.

There has been a steady decline in homelessness due to loss of private sector tenancy as a proportion of homeless applications for the period 2004/05 to 2007/08, and this can be attributed to the success of homeless prevention work in this area. However, the loss of assured shorthold tenancies remains a significant problem.

With demand for social housing being high, enabling access to privately rented accommodation as an alternative has been a major focus of the Council's homelessness prevention agenda. However in doing so the Council needs to be aware of:

- Changes in the national economy, and in particular with mortgage rates, which may lead to a reduction in privately rented accommodation as landlords find that this is no longer financially viable
- Increased demand for privately rented accommodation which can lead to an increase in rents, making this type of accommodation unaffordable for many households
- Changes to the way in which housing benefit is paid, which may cause landlords to reconsider renting to households on a lower income who require assistance with their rents
- The privately rented sector is not as well regulated as social housing, which can cause concern for potential tenants who are worried about quality of accommodation and security of tenure.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Homelessness Prevention Fund:

The use of a fund set up to assist in preventing homelessness has been key in reducing the number of households who become homeless in the Borough. The fund was launched in 2006, and has assisted 91 households in 2007/08, at an average cost of £426 per household. Prevention fund monies have been used in many different ways to prevent homelessness from occurring, ranging from help to clear rent arrears through to financial assistance to family members to provide accommodation.

The Family Bond Scheme

The Family Bond Scheme was launched in 2002 to help households to find suitable privately rented accommodation. The scheme assists by providing a bond guarantee to the landlord, which allows families to secure accommodation which they may otherwise have been unable to

afford due to the large sums of money which are required upfront. The Bond Scheme helped to find permanent accommodation for 98 households in 2007/08.

The Substance Misuse Bond Scheme

The Substance Misuse Bond scheme was set up in partnership with the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership to assist people who have previous substance misuse or alcohol problems to access housing. The scheme has a dedicated housing officer, working in partnership with substance misuse support workers to ensure that the housing and support needs of service users are met. 20 households were successfully rehoused through the scheme in 2007/08.

Qualifying Offer Scheme

The qualifying offer scheme has been developed to negotiate longer tenancies for homeless households moving from temporary accommodation in to privately rented accommodation. The scheme was developed to offer faster move on opportunities to households living in temporary accommodation, with the longer tenancies giving people more confidence to move into the private sector. 37 households moved from temporary accommodation into a long term privately rented tenancy in 2007/08.

WHAT ELSE DO NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Although the Council have built up very strong links with private landlords over the last five years, there are several key areas which require further work:

- Tackling overcrowding in the privately rented sector as part of the Council's overall approach to reducing overcrowding
- Addressing concerns over the potential impact of the new Local Housing Allowance
- Increasing confidence in the private sector through landlord accreditation and licensing

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Service users generally feel that private rented accommodation is not so secure enough. The qualifying offer scheme, developed to offer two year tenancies in privately rented accommodation as an alternative housing option, is viewed negatively as people see private accommodation as a second best or even as an option to be taken in desperation.

Service users would like to see an active programme of integration for people in temporary accommodation, such as links made with the local community centre, and that when making placements consideration of children's need for continuity in schooling and proximity to family and friends should be taken into consideration.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?	
Develop agreement for private landlords to advertise their properties through the Choose Your Home scheme		N.B. Di North states this is already done thru Open Door – is this still an action? Should this be around T&W assisting accredited landlords to advertise directly thru CYH/Open Door without having to agree to Open Door managing the property?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHT • Wrekin Private Landlord Association • All Private landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier access to private sector lettings
Ensure that private landlords are represented at Homelessness Strategy meetings and identify a private landlord champion	Quarterly	Invite landlord representative to quarterly meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrekin Private Landlord Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that our homelessness strategy is informed by their expertise and that private landlords are aware and engaged in homelessness prevention
Review the Accredited Letting Agent Scheme	Apr 2011	Update and relaunch Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrekin Private Landlord Association • All private sector landlords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Properties meet required standards
Expand on work currently undertaken with private landlords to develop more flatshares	Sept 2009 Dec 2009	Agree requirements of flatshare properties Agree marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrekin Private Landlord Association • All private sector landlords • Telford & Wrekin Housing Quality & Renewal Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase privately rented housing options for single people
Develop a set of minimum standards for accreditation of private sector properties, to include access to repairs services equivalent to those provided in socially rented accommodation	Sept 2009	Agree and launch accreditation standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrekin Private Landlord Association • All private sector landlords • Telford & Wrekin Housing Quality & Renewal Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase confidence in the quality and regulation of privately rented accommodation
Ensure that move to Local	Apr 2009	Review trends in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that landlords are confident to rent

<p>Housing Allowances does not impact adversely on homelessness</p>		<p>private sector renting following first year of Local Housing Allowance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Needs • Housing associations and other landlords • CAB and other agencies working with homeless service users • Supporting People 	<p>properties to vulnerable households and households on lower incomes</p>
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DEVELOPING LONGER TERM HOUSING SOLUTIONS

The Green Paper **Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable (2007)** sets out the government's vision that:

'everyone should have access to a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work.'

A key plank of Government policy is to provide more settled homes through improving housing supply. The Green Paper outlines that whilst housing supply has increased substantially in the last few years it is still not keeping up with the rising demand from our ageing, growing population. A new national housing target for 2016 of 240,000 additional homes a year has been set to meet growing demand and address affordability issues.

Within the WM Region, seven Growth Points have been announced which together, are expected to deliver 82,800 homes by 2016. This includes Telford within the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region. The West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy (2005) identifies that one of the three key factors in family homelessness is the lack of affordable housing options. One of the core aims of the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy (2005) is to achieve social and other forms of affordable housing.

The New Performance Framework for Local authorities and local authority partnerships includes indicators relation to: Net additional homes provided (NI 154) and the number of affordable homes delivered (NI 155) and the Supporting People Strategy acknowledges the need to increase the supply of and improve access to settled accommodation for a range of vulnerable client groups including homeless households.

A key strand in providing more settled homes is to make the best use of existing housing stock. The Housing Corporation in its homelessness strategy outlines that it will encourage housing associations to make best use of its existing stock through, for example, tackling overcrowding and reducing under-occupation, exploring the scope to convert temporary tenancies into settled homes, and bringing empty properties back into use.

In 2007 the Government launched its Overcrowding Action Plan which outlines progress so far in tackling overcrowding and actions that will need to be taken.

The government has also emphasised the importance of developing 'Move on Plan Protocols' which will provide local authorities with a better understanding of move on need and allow them to overcome a range of barriers through formal partnership with the voluntary sector and the development of a jointly owned, solution focussed action plan with associated targets for increasing move on..

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Borough has seen a range of new developments over the last five years, including affordable, sustainable and mixed tenure homes at

- Lightmoor
- Millennium Community (East Ketley)
- Lawley
- Newport
- Beverly
- Telford Town Centre

The Council have developed a strategy to reduce the number of properties which stand empty in the Borough **check figures with Chris**

The Council, in partnership with English Partnerships, established the Integrated Housing Project in January 2008 to deliver sustainable housing growth, address issues of affordability and regenerate existing housing areas, and a long term action plan has been developed to deliver housing growth targets.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

A period of significant housing growth has been planned for, with the aims of developing 13,000 new homes by 2016 and a total of 26,500 new homes in the Borough by 2026.

The recently announced National Affordable Housing Programme for 2008-11 has seen the largest ever allocation of Housing Corporation money to enable the development of new homes in the Borough. The Council has helped to attract almost £12.8 million of external funding to support the development of around 474 affordable homes in the period 2008-13 by housing association partners.

Although a further £2.1 million investment has already been secured for 2011, the impact of the current economic slowdown is creating increasingly difficult housing market conditions which will continue to be monitored. The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Telford & Wrekin (2007) estimates an annual affordable housing annual shortfall of 745 units of affordable housing (made up of 405 units of social rented housing and 340 intermediate housing)

Overcrowding has been recognized as a national issue, and the Council and it's partners need to develop effective strategies to make the best use of the Borough's housing stock to prevent overcrowding leading to homelessness.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Service users expressed an interest in being involved at the design stage of new houses, with a view to feeding in to the final layout and "feel" of new homes.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?		Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Use findings from the Government's Overcrowding Self Assessment Toolkit to develop an overcrowding strategy	Apr 2009	Finalise draft strategy and action plan for agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Housing Partnership • Telford & Wrekin Housing Quality & renewal Team • Telford & Wrekin Housing Strategy & Development Team • Housing Associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have an accurate picture of the number of households living in overcrowded accommodation • to have an accurate picture of what accommodation we need to be developing in the Borough
Pilot options for assisting households to extend their current home to address any overcrowding issues	Apr 2009	Complete and review pilot with housing associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Associations • Housing Quality & Renewal Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find effective alternative ways of tackling overcrowding
Develop Foyer accommodation for young people	Apr 2011	Complete scheme construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telford & Wrekin Housing Strategy & Development Team • Beth Johnson Housing Association • Service providers • Commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide specialist accommodation with direct links to employment and training opportunities
Review options for provision of move on accommodation, using the MOPP model developed by Homeless Link	Apr 2009 Jul 2009 Ongoing every 3 months	<p>Complete audit of move on using MOPP toolkit</p> <p>Develop and agree action plan for increasing move on opportunities</p> <p>Report on number of people moving on from supported housing services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers • Housing Strategy, Development & Supporting People Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To accurately identify the barriers which are preventing people from moving on from supported accommodation • To reduce the demand for temporary accommodation caused due to supported housing being blocked by people unable to move on into permanent accommodation

IMPROVING LIFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUSTOMERS

The Government's five year strategy to reduce homelessness, "Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives" (2005) , emphasises the need for a holistic, integrated and co-ordinated approach to tackle the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness, and looks beyond the provision of housing to the wider range of services and support which are required by individuals. There is recognition that people who are homeless or in temporary accommodation are more likely to suffer from poor physical, mental and emotional health than the rest of the population, which can be a contributory factor and a cause of homelessness. It also acknowledges that in order to tackle homelessness effectively a wide range of agencies need to be involved.

Work is a key route out of homelessness. Gaining skills or accessing training leading to sustainable employment can help to prevent homelessness. Yet being homeless is in itself a barrier to work, and people who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation often face other issues or have additional needs which combine to act as multiple barriers and mean they are much less likely to enter work than the general population.

Tackling the 'no job-no money-no home' vicious circle is a less well developed aspect of homelessness prevention and may account for the limited impact of housing based solutions in some cases. Meetings with potential partners in the employment and skills training area have identified the scope to strengthen the links between homelessness services and opportunities to access employment.

Poor health is also often associated with homelessness, and can impact significantly on people's abilities to successfully maintain a tenancy. As well as dealing with health problems, homeless households are often less able to pay attention to their wider health needs, such as exercise and healthy eating, as these seem less important than dealing with their immediate housing needs.

Households experiencing homelessness are often not able to access a wide range of leisure activities, with the main barriers being adequate childcare and transport.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

The Council has developed the STARS scheme, which provides accommodation for young homeless people linked to education, employment and lifeskills training. The scheme works to address the wider needs of residents to prepare them to move on successfully into permanent accommodation.

The importance of expanding employment and training opportunities to homeless people is recognised, and the Council have agreed to work in partnership with other Councils in the West Midlands region to develop new initiatives to increase these opportunities.

The development of outcomes-based individual support plans has ensured that 98% of households living in temporary accommodation are registered with a GP.

Households in temporary accommodation are able to access a range of health initiatives, including programmes on healthy eating and cooking on a budget.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Improving opportunities for homeless households is key in ensuring that they are able to play an active role in the community in which they live:

- Build upon the STARS model to offer training and employment opportunities to all homeless people
- Expand the health initiatives to all homeless people
- Increase leisure opportunities to households in temporary accommodation
- Develop opportunities for service users to work with us to provide support and mentoring

The Putting People First concordat sets the scene for a shared vision and commitment to the transformation of Adult Social Care. Ultimately, every locality should seek to have a single community based support system focussed on the health and wellbeing of the local population, bringing together local Government, primary care, community based health provision, public health, social care and the wider issues of housing, employment, benefits advice and education and training to achieve a complete package of services and support for our customers.

The development of services to meet the vision set out in Putting People First locally will offer many opportunities to improve outcomes for people in housing need through the delivery of multi-agency solutions delivered through a single system which takes into account a range of needs, and housing services in the Borough will need to work proactively to ensure that the needs of our customers are accounted for in the development of this vision.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

Homeless households in temporary accommodation felt unable to access work and training because of a number of barriers. The costs and availability of child care and transport was a key issue.

Feeling unsettled and unable to commit to anything also prevented people from seeking to take advantage of any opportunities available to them:

“I’d rather get my feet on the ground, resettled and then get a job”

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Extend programme of health initiatives for homeless households	Apr 2009 Quarterly	Agree rolling programme of initiatives Report on number homeless households accessing initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHEC • Health professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve health and reduce health inequalities • To assist in delivering the Health and Well-being Strategy
Employ a financial inclusion officer to advise and support homeless people and to signpost people to appropriate specialist services	Apr 2009 Jul 2009 Quarterly	Identify funding opportunities Employ officer Report on outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAB • Support workers • Service users • Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that customers have access to timely and accurate financial advice • To ensure that customers are able to take advantage of schemes to assist them in rehousing e.g. credit union scheme • To make best use of prevention fund resources
Develop an energy advice package for homeless people moving into a permanent home to include information on finding the cheapest supplier and method of payment	Apr 2009	Develop procedure for referral to Health Through warmth project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support workers • Affordable Warmth Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce fuel poverty • To improve awareness energy efficiency and affordable warmth initiatives
Develop a programme of education, training and employment opportunities for all homeless households with transport and childcare facilities	Apr 2009 Quarterly	Extend STARS training and lifeskills programme to all homeless households Report on number of homeless households accessing training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCAT • Voluntary sector • Existing Community training programmes • Supporting People • Housing Associations • Connexions • Schools • Youth service • Service users <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide wider opportunities for homeless people to access education, training and employment in their areas of interest
Develop a concessionary travel and leisure scheme for households in temporary accommodation	Dec 2009	Agree criteria for accessing concessionary travel and leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arriva • Travelink • Leisure services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to assist people who are living in temporary accommodation to access training and leisure opportunities

Employ more people who have experience of homelessness as volunteers and staff in housing services	Mar 2009	Develop links to create work placements for homeless/potentially homeless people with local authority employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service providers • Commissioners • Human Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve training and employment opportunities for service users. • To address an issue raised by service users and to develop skills
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LISTENING TO WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

Developing effective and empowering service user involvement is a key part of many government initiatives.

In the interim review of the Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 focus groups with service users identified a series of recommendations in relation to the allocation and management of temporary accommodation. These focus groups also indicated that service users would be keen to be involved in development of the service if they can be confident that their views will be heard and acted upon.

Groundswell UK - www.groundswell.org.uk - have well established peer training and support programmes to enable homeless people to set up and run their own projects, to increase homeless peoples' influence in policy and decisions making, to increase meaningful involvement in the services they use and ensure that homeless peoples' voices are heard in policy and service planning.

In the development of this strategy the Council commissioned Groundswell UK to secure service user engagement in the strategy process and to make recommendations for longer term user involvement in developing homelessness services in the Borough. The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies has worked with Groundswell UK before in developing the East Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy where a successful model of reality checking the strategy with user groups, separate publication of a Groundswell research report and integration of recommendations from user research into the main strategy document was developed

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE THE 2003 STRATEGY?

Key outcomes already in place as a result of the original focus groups are:

- Support is offered to those in B&B through weekly visits from support workers, Support Plans are followed through when the temporary accommodation changes, with future visits dependent on individual need.
- Tenancy management officers feedback information at house meetings and ensure that if repairs or other issues are raised by residents, their receipt is acknowledged and details of actions to be taken will be provided in writing.
- Tenancy Management officers produce a sign up pack explaining the availability of temporary accommodation and how it is allocated and with information on choice based lettings.
- 2 'Vulnerable Applicants Support Workers' have been appointed to link up with people in temporary accommodation to ensure that they make best use of the choice based lettings scheme.
- Literature has been produced detailing clearly the different contact details and job roles of case workers, tenancy management officers and support workers.

WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Groundswell made a number of recommendations to support client involvement;

- Facilitate one to one support from support workers together with regular focus groups to provide the basis of engagement with service users.
- Extend opportunities for involvement to homeless users receiving services from KIP and STAY and others who are homeless but not in receipt of council services.
- Establish a properly resourced User Forum
- Develop a range of mentoring opportunities, and other employment opportunities, including ex-homeless people talking to young people about their experiences.
- Client should be assured of there not being comeback on them if they give their views or get involved. Robust mechanisms should be developed to protect clients from comebacks including appropriate grievance procedures.
- Residents (service users) meetings should be encouraged, and supported where possible in, all provisions for people experiencing homelessness.

WHAT DID SERVICE USERS SAY?

The comments and suggestions made by service users have been instrumental in the development of this strategy, and have been included throughout the strategy document. Full details of the service user involvement work undertaken during the development of the strategy can be found in the Groundswell UK report – [Borough of Telford & Wrekin Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 Client Consultation Report](#)

As well as the interviews and focus groups which Groundswell UK facilitated with service users, the Council held a series of multi-agency workshops to discuss and develop the action plan for the new strategy, and were particularly pleased with the number of service users who actively participated in these workshops and their subsequent feedback:

“I believe that this was a positive way to talk about your problems and issues”

“I enjoyed this event because I have found out a lot about being homeless”

“Was very interesting and felt I could speak my mind”.

CONTRIBUTING TO TACKLING HOMELESSNESS ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS

The West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy (2005) is designed to help reduce homelessness in a number of ways; in particular by influencing policy and investment in housing at a regional and sub-regional level and by encouraging more effective joint interventions across the region. A Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group (RHIG) has been established to take forward the implementation of the strategy. This group has cross sector/boundary representation including lead officers from each of the Housing Market Areas, Government Office for the West Midlands, Business in the Community, Job Centre Plus, West Midlands Voluntary Sector Housing Network, National Housing Federation, Housing Corporation and Supporting People regional leads.

One of the key tasks of the RHIG is to develop sub-regional action plans to promote a collaborative approach to tackling and preventing homelessness across the housing market areas in the region. Telford & Wrekin are part of the C3 Central Housing Market Area which also includes Cannock Chase, Dudley, Sandwell, South Staffordshire, Walsall and Wolverhampton councils.

Five priority actions have been identified in the sub-regional action plan for the C3 Housing Market area:

- Carry out a sub-regional presenter survey to collate information from a range of partner agencies concerning homeless people who have approached them for assistance
- Develop sub-regional approaches to maximise sustainable use of the private sector accommodation
- Commission sub-regional approach to service user involvement, including development of peer researchers
- Develop links with agencies to ensure that homeless and potentially homeless people are able to access bespoke training and personal support to enter sustainable employment and to progress in the workplace
- Develop links with the business community to promote work placements for homeless/potentially homeless people

The West Midlands Homeless Strategy is currently being refreshed to reflect the changing priorities nationally, regionally and locally.

What needs to be done?	When does it need to be done?	Who will help us?	Why does it need to be done?
Represent the Borough on the Regional Homelessness Strategy Group and share the information from that group with local partners	On-going		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inform and influence the implementation of the regional Homeless strategy, sub-regional action plans and service delivery within the region. • To keep local partners informed and feedback their views
Successfully deliver the five actions set out in the sub-regional homelessness action plan, in partnership with the following Local Authorities:	Targets outlined in sub-regional plan to be met by April 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C3 Central housing Market area Local Authorities: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To deliver the Regional Homelessness Strategy
Act as Regional Homelessness Champions to assist other Authorities in the region to tackle homelessness	On-going		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share good practice

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