

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2009 – 2011

Executive Summary

This is the report of the Full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) of Solihull's Homelessness Strategy (2009 – 2011). Its format follows that set out in the Council's corporate EIA toolkit.

The report begins by setting out why the Homelessness Strategy was identified as a function requiring an assessment and provides some background information relating to the requirement on SMBC to have an up to date Homelessness Strategy, the process that should be carried out in formulating a strategy and action plan and the way this has been implemented in Solihull.

The homelessness strategy is an overarching strategy covering the full range of services, policies and procedures provided by Solihull MBC's Housing Strategy Team, Solihull Community Housing, the Care Trust (specifically the 'Supporting People function) and a range of partner organisations working with the Council in terms of both tackling and preventing homelessness.

It would be impossible to provide an EIA for all of these functions so this EIA has concentrated on the evidence collected as part of the homelessness strategy review and the key priorities, actions and areas of service covered by the updated homelessness strategy and action plan. In this way the EIA takes a more general overview of homelessness functions rather than focusing in on any one single element. It does however concentrate on the statutory homelessness and housing advice service delivered by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) on behalf of the Council since this is the area over which the Council has direct control and for which monitoring information is available.

Having concluded that a full EIA should be carried out the process for consultation and data analysis was included in the wider review of the homelessness strategy which was completed over a 4 month period between October 2008 and January 2009. The full EIA was then drafted to take into account information coming out of the homelessness review and key priorities and actions for the new homelessness strategy and action plan as well as analysing available information on the 6 equality strands in more depth. The assessment of equality impacts is set out at section 4 and detailed information on the consultation process is included in section 6 as well as **Appendices A and B** which provide information on the organisations and service users consulted and summarises their responses.

Information to come out of the data analysis and consultation led to 11 specific recommendations which are set out in section 8. These recommendations are then included in an action plan at **Appendix C** which provides a detailed breakdown of how each recommendation will be delivered.

1. Introduction

Solihull MBC has a Statutory Duty¹ to assess the impacts of its functions and to promote equality of opportunity in its communities. Both the Race Relations (Amendment Act) and the Equality standard for Local Government place obligations upon Local Authorities and public sector organisations to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).

The Homelessness Strategy was identified as requiring an EIA through the relevance testing for functions within the Community and Economic Regeneration Division. Through this process the Homelessness Strategy was identified as top priority and therefore included as function to be assessed in year one (between May 08 and April 09) of the 2008 – 2011 cycle.

The Homelessness Strategy was identified as a top priority through this process because:

- It is relevant (to greater and lesser degrees) to all of the 6 equality strands
- Services covered by the homelessness strategy have the potential to impact upon any member of the community
- The homelessness and housing advice service provided by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) deals with a large number of enquiries. During the first 3 quarters of 2008/09 3,295 households approached SCH for housing advice or assistance with homelessness and a further 902 housing options interviews were carried out. Of these 321 households made a formal homeless application and 198 were accepted as homeless².
- Delivering the homelessness strategy and effectively tackling and preventing homelessness makes an important contribution to the key aims of Solihull's Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Council's corporate objectives.
- The homelessness strategy links to several other important agendas in Solihull. These include the well being of younger people, victims of domestic violence and people struggling to cope in the current economic downturn (e.g. debt problems and mortgage arrears / repossession).

An initial assessment / screening exercise for the Homelessness Strategy Review was carried out in October 2008 prior to the review of the existing Homelessness Strategy and action plan (2005 – 2008). It was recommended that the function proceed to a full impact assessment due to the fact that in 4 of the 6 equality strands it was concluded that the function could have a differential impact and that in 2 areas it was concluded that there was insufficient information / evidence to determine whether or not there could be an adverse impact.

¹ Sex Discrimination Act 1975; Disability Discrimination Act 2005; Race relations Act 1976; Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000; Equality Act 2006 (Gender Duty)

² The term 'acceptances' means that the Council has accepted a legal duty to secure accommodation for the household.

It was agreed as part of the initial impact assessment that a full EIA would be completed based on the information available and would include an action plan for improving the evidence base and for monitoring outcomes in relation to equality and diversity.

2. Background

2.1 Background Information

The Council has a statutory duty to provide homelessness and housing advice services within the Borough. In Solihull these functions are delivered on the Council's behalf by Solihull Community Housing (SCH). If any household is homeless or threatened with homelessness they have a legal right to approach the Council to be assessed under the relevant legislation (Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). The homelessness legislation clearly defines the procedures and issues that need to be considered and Communities and Local Government (CLG) produce a statutory code of guidance to assist Local Authorities with their decision making processes.

In addition, the Homelessness Act 2002 placed a legal obligation on all Local Housing Authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their areas and in consultation with local partners and stakeholders to develop a strategy for tackling and preventing it by 31st July 2003. The legislation further requires Housing Authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within five years of the first strategy having been published. Authorities can however carry out reviews and publish strategies more frequently if they wish.

In line with this legislation Solihull's first homelessness strategy was developed in 2003. This was fully reviewed and updated in 2005 and Solihull's second Homelessness Strategy was approved in December 2005 covering 2006 - 2008. The following key priorities were identified through this process:

- Improve homelessness prevention, moving away from 'crisis management' and towards a more preventative approach
- Meet housing needs through the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation and supported housing
- Work effectively with relevant statutory and voluntary organisations
- Improve services to customers

These priorities and strategy action plan covering 2006 - 2008 have directed work around the development and provision of services to homeless and potentially homeless households in the Borough over the last three years. Progress against the action plan has been monitored by a multi-agency steering group and significant progress has been made with the majority of actions included in the action plan either being actioned or on-going.

The updated review and strategy covering 2009 - 2011 has been produced in response to the fact that significant progress has been made in implementing

the current action plan, that there have been a number of important changes in the national, regional and local context since the current strategy was published in 2005 and that an updated Homelessness Code of Guidance was produced in 2006.

Solihull MBC, in partnership with local agencies, has carried out a full review of homelessness. Based on the findings of this review a new strategy and action plan has been developed to take forward further improvements in meeting the challenges of homelessness in Solihull.

The Homelessness Strategy Review 2009 - 2011 sets out the stages in the review process, provides an update on homelessness and associated services available for homeless and potentially homeless households, evaluates the progress made over the last three years and highlights gaps in existing provision. The Homelessness Strategy 2009 – 2011 sets out a new strategy and action plan to address the gaps identified and to guide continued work in this area over the next three years up to 2011.

2.2 Aims of the Function

The homelessness strategy is an overarching strategy setting a detailed action plan for the delivery of services which contribute to both tackling and preventing homelessness.

The core objective of the homelessness strategy 2009 – 2011 remains the same as previous documents and that is to prevent homelessness in Solihull and to provide a quality response to those that are affected by homelessness.

This objective will be achieved through the five key priorities which have been identified through the consultation carried out to inform the homelessness review and strategy and have taken account of housing market conditions, national good practice and built on the priorities identified in the 2006 – 2008 Homelessness Strategy. The five priorities are;

- I. Preventing homelessness through:
 - a) effective housing advice and options
 - b) the provision of timely education and information
 - c) supporting vulnerable people
- II. Preventing youth homelessness & ensuring that a range of housing options are available to those young people in housing need
- III. Meeting housing needs through the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation and supported housing
- IV. Working more effectively with relevant statutory and voluntary organisations to prevent homelessness from occurring and to provide advice and assistance where it does
- V. Improving services to customers

2.3 Perceived Problems with the Function

On the basis of the initial impact assessment and consultation carried out as part of the homelessness review process the perceived problems / issues

associated with the homelessness strategy with regard to equalities are set out below.

2.3.1 Race

- Nationally Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households are around three times more likely to become statutorily homeless than are the Majority White population. While BME households accounted for approximately 7% of the UK population in 2001 they represented 21% of the households accepted as homeless by Local Authorities in 2004/05.
- In every region in England the proportion of homeless BME households is greater than the proportion in the population as a whole (as at 2001 census). For the West Midlands BME households made up 20% of all acceptances (with a further 4% being of unknown ethnic origin) but only 5% of the total population.
- This trend is mirrored in Solihull although to a lesser extent than the region or nation as a whole. For example in 2007/08 8% of homeless acceptances in Solihull were made up of BME households as compared to a total BME population of 5.4% (2001 census). Local knowledge does suggest that there has been an increase in Solihull's BME population since the 2001 census but as there are no reliable data sources to draw on census information from 2001 remains the most robust source.
- National research³ also suggests that there are marked differences in rates of statutorily homelessness between the various ethnic minority groups with people of Black African and Black Caribbean origins being twice as likely to be accepted as homeless as people of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds.
- Research carried out for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Now Department for Communities & Local Government – CLG) by ETHNOS in 2003 and published in 2005⁴ aimed to gain a better understanding of the causes of homelessness amongst BME communities. The research found that BME communities have specific support needs and report poor experience of homelessness services with people not accessing services because of:
 - lack of knowledge of the “system”
 - fear that services may not be sensitive to their specific cultural needs
 - fear of discrimination
 - fear or inability to communicate; and
 - a preference for voluntary, community or other informal support networks

2.3.2 Gender

- Female households are over-represented in homeless statistics and made up over two-thirds (69%) of all acceptances in Solihull in 2007/08 (as either lone parent or single person households).
- The second main cause of homelessness in Solihull is domestic violence (making up 22% of all acceptances in 2007/08). In the majority (if not all)

³ ODPM (2005) Causes of Homelessness in Ethnic Minority Communities

⁴ ODPM (2005) Causes of Homelessness in Ethnic Minority Communities

of these cases women are the victims and as such are more likely to be recipients of the services in place. This could lead to access issues for male victims, especially as certain services are only accessible to women (e.g. the women's refuge).

- National research states that one in six men will be victims of domestic violence during their lifetime⁵ and that at least 40% of victims of domestic violence are men with one in four incidents of domestic violence being perpetrated against a man⁶. In addition practically the same number of men (1.7%) and women (1.8%) were victims of severe force in 2007/08.
- There is currently little support offered to male victims with the Government concentrating the majority of resources on female victims through publicity, the Supporting People Grants system and national performance indicators.

2.3.3 Disability

- Physical and mental disabilities are one of the key areas that need to be considered in assessing a homelessness application since they may make the applicant vulnerable and therefore in 'priority need' of accommodation. The legislation is open to interpretation and the final decision on a case lies with the case worker. As a result some SCH homeless officers could interpret the legislation and accompanying guidance more restrictively than others.
- There are also access issues in terms of ensuring equal access to housing advice and homeless prevention options (specifically where customers do not want to or cannot come into one of the offices in person).

2.3.4 Sexual Orientation

- SCH do not currently monitor the number of Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual (LGB) people accessing the housing options and homelessness service. Because information is not collected in this area any impacts (positive or negative) are unknown.
- Research carried out as part of a joint project between Shelter and Stonewall Housing⁷ to raise awareness of the significant housing and homelessness issues that LGB people experience suggests that there are a number of problems LGB people face in relation to housing:
 - Young people thrown out of home because of their sexuality
 - Young people suffer physical and verbal harassment inside and outside the home
 - Older people needing care or sheltered accommodation and finding themselves marginalised or ostracised

⁵ Walby, S. and Allen, J. (2004) Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking : Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study No. 276. London : Home Office

⁶ Crime in England and Wales, 2006/07, Nicholas, at al. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/07, July 2007

⁷ Gold, D (2005) Sexual Exclusion: Issues & Best Practice in Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Housing and Homelessness, Shelter: London

- All ages subject to homophobic harassment and violence inside and outside the home
- People suffering same-sex domestic violence, with no appropriate emergency housing provision

The research indicates that most Local Authorities and housing providers do not monitor the sexuality of their clients and do not therefore have a clear picture of how much of a problem there is or how much they respond to clients needs. It is recommended that housing providers should form a picture of the pattern and depth of need and assess the resources currently available to deal with this need and equalities monitoring is recognised as an important method in gaining this information.

2.3.5 Age

- Younger and older people are more likely to be vulnerable. In the homelessness legislation old age is cited as one of the factors that may make an applicant vulnerable and in 'priority need' of accommodation and an applicant aged 16/17 years old or a care leaver aged 18 to 20 years old will automatically be considered in 'priority need'.
- In terms of homeless acceptances a significant proportion are made up of those aged 16 – 24 (42% in 2007/08) and those aged 25 – 44 (46% in 2007/08). 16 and 17 year olds are particularly vulnerable and are a key national priority in terms of tackling and preventing homelessness.
- The numbers of homeless people over retirement age are relatively small with homelessness being concentrated among the younger age groups. However in terms of overall housing need given the ageing population, specifically in the 80+ age group the need for high level care and support is likely to become a key issue for the Borough in the coming years.
- People experiencing homelessness / in housing need are likely to be experiencing different issues according to their age – the majority of 16 & 17 year olds will be facing exclusion from the parental home and the prospect of living independently for the first time whereas older people are more likely to have accommodation or support needs.
- There is the possibility of differential treatment for people from different age groups.

2.3.6 Faith, Religion or Belief

- SCH do not currently monitor the faith or religious belief of people accessing the housing options and homelessness service. Because information is not collected in this area any impacts (positive or negative) are unknown.
- There is a possibility that a lack of understanding of religious and cultural beliefs may mean that in certain cases circumstances leading to homelessness are not fully understood. As a result it would be difficult for the homelessness strategy to identify any gaps in services or areas for further improvement. This is exacerbated by the lack of monitoring information on this issue.
- The national research into causes of homelessness amongst BME communities mentioned above (footnotes 3 & 4) cited faith and cultural beliefs as possible causes of homelessness and as the reason for

differences in the experience of homelessness between different minority ethnic groups. For example the research found that domestic violence was the most common cause of homelessness amongst single female-headed South Asian households. Traditional values around family and community honour encourage the down-playing and hiding of serious domestic problems and these values make it difficult for women to seek help outside the home.

As a result of these findings it was concluded that the Council should do a full EIA to explore these issues further and to set out an action plan for improving the evidence base and monitoring outcomes in relation to equality and diversity.

3. Methodology & Sources of Data

A range of data and other sources of evidence have been used to assist in carrying out this EIA:

- Statutory data returns on homelessness made by SCH and the Council to Central Government (P1E) – these provide data on those people who the Council “accepts” as homeless
- Information / monitoring data collected as part of the delivery of housing options and prevention services
- National research and policy documents relating to the links between the 6 equality stands and housing and homelessness services.
- Relevant legislation and guidance relating to housing and homelessness and Equalities.
- Consultation with a range of partner organisations from the statutory and voluntary sectors carried out as part of the wider package of consultation feeding into the development of Solihull’s third homelessness strategy covering 2009 – 2011. Key stages in this consultation included:
 - Questionnaires completed by households in temporary accommodation
 - Focus groups carried out with people who have used the homelessness service and who have experienced homelessness first hand
 - Consultation with staff delivering the homelessness and housing advice service
 - Meeting held with the Tenant Services Authority and housing association partners operating in Solihull
 - Consultation event attended by a range of stakeholders (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureaux, SCH, Care Trust, West Midlands Probation, Birmingham and Solihull Women’s Aid and a number of housing associations) involved in the provision of services to homeless and potentially homeless households in the Borough
 - Consultation with the CLG’s Specialist Homelessness Adviser for the West Midlands
 - Discussion at the Economic Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Board (January 09)

The initial impact assessment involved a review of the monitoring data available and key findings from national research as well as findings and

recommendations from the EIA's carried out on the homelessness service and the housing allocations function in previous years.

Having concluded that a full EIA should be carried out the process for consultation and data analysis was included in the wider review of the homelessness strategy which was completed over a 4 month period between October 2008 and January 2009. The full EIA was then drafted to take into account information coming out of the homelessness review and key priorities and actions for the new homelessness strategy and action plan as well as analysing available information on the 6 equality strands in more depth.

The Council's Equality and Diversity Officer has provided advice and assistance throughout the process and particularly following the initial assessment and lead up to the full EIA.

4. Assessment of Equality Impacts – Adverse/Differential Impacts Identified and Consideration of Options / Measures to Address

The homelessness strategy is an overarching strategy covering the full range of services, policies and procedures provided by Solihull MBC's Housing Strategy Team, Solihull Community Housing, the Care Trust (Specifically the supporting people team) and a range of partner organisations working with the Council in terms of both tackling and preventing homelessness.

It would be impossible to provide an EIA for all of these functions so this EIA has concentrated on the evidence collected as part of the homelessness strategy review and the key priorities, actions and areas of service covered by the updated homelessness strategy and action plan. In this way the EIA takes a more general overview of homelessness functions rather than focusing in on any one single element. It does however concentrate on the statutory homelessness and housing advice service delivered by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) on behalf of the Council since this is the area over which the Council has direct control and for which monitoring information is available.

This section summarises the key findings of the EIA in relation to the differential impacts that delivery of the homelessness strategy and action plan may have. The differential impacts are summarised in table 10 at the end of the section following a discussion of the local evidence available for each of the 6 strands.

4.1 Race

Tables 1 and 2 over the page set out both homeless presentations⁸ and acceptances⁹ by ethnic group. When taking out cases where ethnicity was not stated it shows that the percentage of people from a non-white British background both presenting and being accepted as homeless has remained relatively constant between 2004/05 and 2007/08. Presentations from BME groups have fluctuated between 6% and 8% and acceptances of people from BME groups between 7% and 9%.

⁸ Those people who make a formal homeless application following all other prevention & housing options having been explored

⁹ Those people who the Council accepts a statutory duty to secure accommodation for (following a full investigation of their homeless application)

When compared to the overall BME population, which for Solihull at the 2001 census was 5.4%, it can be seen that people from a non-white background are slightly over-represented in terms of both presentations and acceptances. This is in line with national trends set out in section 2.3.1 which show that BME households are around 3 times more likely to become statutorily homeless than the Majority White population. Whilst this trend is mirrored in Solihull it is to a lesser extent than the West Midlands region and UK as a whole.

Again reflecting national trends there are differences in rates of statutorily homelessness between the different minority ethnic groups in Solihull. Taking homeless acceptances (table 2) people from a Black or Black British background made up 3% of all acceptances in 2007/08 but as at the 2001 census made up only 0.97% of the total population. People from mixed race groups are also slightly over-represented making up 2% of acceptances but only 1.27% of the population. In contrast the Asian population which is the largest ethnic group in Solihull (making up 2.54% of the population) is slightly under-represented making up 2% of acceptances in 2007/08 and in the previous 3 years just 1% of acceptances.

There is also an issue to note in terms of the number of presentations and acceptances where ethnicity is not stated. In 2007/08 this figure increased to 7% for presentations and 9% for acceptances as compared to the previous 3 years in which it was averaging around 1%-2%. It is not known whether this is because applicants declined to fill in equal opportunities monitoring forms or whether officers forgot to request this information.

Table 1: Homeless Presentations By Ethnic Group								
Ethnic Group	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White	1002	92	1164	93	551	92	372	86
Black or Black British	56	5	39	3	13	2	9	2
Asian or Asian British	11	1	10	<1	6	1	7	2
Mixed	9	<1	21	2	10	2	9	2
Other Ethnic Group	14	1	9	<1	5	<1	4	1
Not Stated	2	<1	4	<1	12	2	30	7
TOTAL	1094	100	1247	100	597	100	431	100

Table 2: Homeless Acceptances By Ethnic Group								
Ethnic Group	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
White	701	91	540	93	283	90	235	83
Black or Black British	46	6	18	3	9	3	8	3
Asian or Asian British	9	1	8	1	4	1	5	2
Mixed	9	1	9	2	7	2	6	2
Other Ethnic Group	8	1	6	1	4	1	3	1
Not Stated	1	<1	2	<1	7	2	26	9
TOTAL	774	100	583	100	314	100	283	100

Source: Solihull MBC P1E statistics

All people approaching SCH who are in housing need or facing homelessness will see a housing advisor to discuss the range of options available to them. Where there is the possibility to prevent homelessness from occurring, or of

finding alternative accommodation in a planned way, SCH will work with them or refer them to partner organisations for the support and assistance they require. An enquiry will only be passed to the Homelessness Assessment Team (and become a presentation) once all possible prevention options have been explored. The Homeless prevention team record the ethnic origin of the lead applicant of all those households that are interviewed. This information has been recorded since April 2008 and the table below sets out the ethnic origin of all applicants interviewed per month since then.

Table 3: Housing Options Interviews by Ethnic Group							
Month	Ethnic Group						Total Interviewed Cases
	White	Black or Black British	Asian or Asian British	Mixed	Other Ethnic Group	Not Stated	
Apr 08	77 (85%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	8 (9%)	91
May 08	75 (82%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	0	2 (2%)	11 (12%)	92
Jun 08	65 (81%)	6 (8%)	2 (3%)	0	0	7 (9%)	80
Jul 08	79 (80%)	3 (3%)	4 (4%)	4 (4%)	0	9 (9%)	99
Aug 08	69 (79%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	0	0	13 (15%)	87
Sept 08	74 (75%)	1 (1%)	6 (6%)	4 (4%)	0	14 (14%)	99
Oct 08	71 (83%)	1 (1%)	0	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	11 (13%)	86
Nov08	62 (86%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	72
Dec08	58 (88%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	0	1 (2%)	5 (8%)	66
Jan 09	91 (70%)	3 (2%)	5 (4%)	1 (1%)	0	30 (23%)	130
Feb 09	61 (73%)	1 (1%)	0	0	0	22 (26%)	84
Mean	71 (79%)	2.5 (3%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	0.72 (1%)	12 (13%)	90

Reflecting the homeless presentation and acceptance figures the majority of interviews are carried out with white households with interviews across the other ethnic groups fluctuating between 1% to 8% depending on the month. When looking at the average across the 11 months, figures are very similar to those set out in tables 1 and 2 for presentations and acceptances. For example on average 3% of all options interviews were carried out with people from Black or Black British households between April 2008 and February 2009. This corresponds to the 3% of acceptances for this ethnic group in 2007/08 (table 2). This is the same for Asian or Asian British households and a slightly higher proportion of people from a mixed race background were accepted in 2007/08 (2%) compared to those attending options interviews. This would suggest that there is no discrimination occurring by officers

between the options interview stage, the presentation stage and being accepted as homeless.

15 units of floating support provided by a specialist BME Housing Association (Ashram Housing) are available to provide support and advice to help people from BME communities in Solihull to maintain their tenancies and live independently.

The services and initiatives covered by the homelessness strategy extend beyond housing options interviews and taking and processing homelessness applications. In response to government policy and best practice a range of homeless prevention initiatives have been introduced since the original homelessness strategy was published in 2003. Access to these services is available through the housing options / prevention team and signposting through partner organisations. Monitoring by ethnicity varies between these projects and there is not therefore sufficient information to assess access by ethnic group.

4.2 Gender

Table 4 below sets out the household type of those accepted as homeless over the last 2 years (prior to 2006/07 this information was not measured).

Table 4: Household Type of those accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless & in priority need (Not Measured in 2003/04, 2004/05 or 2005/06)				
Household Type	2006/07		2007/08	
	No.	%	No.	%
Couple with or expecting dependent children	40	13	36	13
Lone parent household with or expecting dependent children – Male Applicant	10	3	10	4
Lone parent household with or expecting dependent children – Female Applicant	170	54	157	55
One person household – Male Applicant	35	11	32	11
One person household – Female Applicant	37	12	39	14
All other household groups	22	7	9	3
TOTAL	314	100	283	100

Source: Solihull MBC P1E statistics

The homelessness legislation sets out certain categories of applicants who are in 'priority need' of accommodation and one of these categories is households with dependent children. Reflecting this households with dependent children account for over two thirds of all acceptances over the last 2 years (70% in 2006/07 and 72% in 2007/08). The proportion of households with dependent children accepted as homeless in Solihull is slightly higher than the national average which was 65% in 2006/07 and 68% in 2007/08 and the trend has been increasing over recent quarters. Of those households with dependent children over half were lone parents and within this the majority were female lone parents. Single person households made up just under a quarter of acceptances in 2006/07 (23%) and exactly a quarter of all acceptances in 2007/08. The distribution of males and females was fairly even with just 1% difference in 2006/07 and 3% in 2007/08.

In total (and excluding couples and other household groups) females (single and lone parents) made up 69% of all acceptances in 2007/08 as compared

to 15% of men. This reflects the priority need accorded to households with children and the fact that a much higher proportion of lone parents are female. It can be seen when looking at single person households that the percentage of males and females accepted is much more even.

Another key issue relating to gender is domestic violence. In Solihull domestic violence is the second main reason for homelessness and as the table below shows the proportion of homeless acceptances resulting from domestic violence has increased over the last few years (despite a fall in real numbers).

YEAR	Number of homeless acceptances	DV is main Cause of Homelessness	% of Homeless Acceptances due to DV
2007/08	283	61	21%
2006/07	314	57	18%
2005/06	583	91	16%
2004/05	774	125	16%
2003/04	820	143	17%

In the majority of these cases women are the victims and as a result are more likely to be the recipients of the services in place. There are a range of services in place for female victims of domestic violence in Solihull. These include an 11 bed refuge for women at risk of domestic violence and 30 units of intensive floating support (to help support victims living in the Community) provided by Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid.

There is also a sanctuary scheme available which provides victims with the opportunity to remain in their current home where they chose to do so by guaranteeing their security through assessing the property and fitting a range of safety measures depending on the level of risk posed to the client and their individual preferences. The scheme is a partnership between the Council, SCH, the Police, the Fire Service, Women’s Aid and a range of other local stakeholders. 45 sanctuary schemes have been completed since the scheme was launched in June 2006 and all have been for female victims. The scheme would be available to male victims if they approached the prevention team for help and assistance but there have so far been no applications from men. A questionnaire is sent to the recipient of the service immediately after they have had the security measures fitted in order to monitor service user satisfaction with the scheme. So far 81% of customers have returned the survey with 54% rating the service as excellent and a further 17% as good.

As highlighted in section 2.3.2 the vast majority of services, support and funding for services and support for victims of domestic violence are aimed at women. Research does however suggest that men do suffer from domestic violence and in fact Home Office figures for 2007/08 show that 6.4% of men in England and Wales between the ages of 20 and 24 say they were victims of domestic violence over the last year compared to 5.4% of women. Key issues identified for male victims include their concern with leaving their children with a violent partner and a sense of shame and embarrassment about their situation¹⁰.

¹⁰ ‘Male Abuse is being ignored’ (10/02/09), http://news.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/hi/health/newsid_7878000/7878698.stm

4.3 Disability

As part of the homelessness legislation a person is assessed according to whether or not they are in 'priority need' of accommodation. Part of this test relates to whether they are vulnerable because of physical or mental disability and the test relies on the interpretation of each case worker based on all of the supporting evidence available (e.g. medical notes, reports from an occupational therapist etc). The table below shows the proportion of people accepted as homeless over the last 5 years as a result of either mental or physical illness / disability.

Priority Category	2003/04 (%)	2004/05 (%)	2005/06 (%)	2006/07 (%)	2007/08 (%)
Vulnerable – mental illness or disability	6	4	10	5	10
Vulnerable – physical disability	4	1	6	4	6

More people have been accepted as homeless as a result of mental illness or disability over the last 5 years than physical disability with the former fluctuating between 4% and 10% and the later between 1% and 6%.

There are a range of services available for people with disabilities (both physical and mental illness) in Solihull and these are set out in table 7 below.

Client Group	Current Provision
People with a physical or sensory disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 units of floating support provided by Bromford. 6 units provide support to people with physical disabilities and 5 for people with sensory impairment and additional needs. Whilst there are no specialist supported accommodation schemes in the Borough, need is met through aids and adaptations and floating support (where necessary), assisting people to live independently.
People with mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 units of supported accommodation across 3 schemes (20 units provided by Solihull Care and 8 by Solihull Mind) 48 units of floating support provided by Accord (10 units) and Family Care Trust (38 units) for people with enduring mental ill health and the majority are referred by statutory mental health teams.
Older people with support needs inc frail elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a link between physical disability and age and older people are therefore more likely to require services to help them live independently or in a supported environment in order to avoid homelessness. Reflecting the traditional role of providers 83% of all housing related support in Solihull is for older people. There are 626 units of accommodation for older people in the Borough (this includes fixed location alarm services) A further 1438 units of floating support are provided through SCH's Safe & Sound project. This includes regular personal contact, an emergency on call service, an annual home safety check and the ability to provide different levels of support based on need.
Mentally disordered offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 units of floating support provided by Fry Housing for offenders with mental health support needs.

In terms access issues all offices are easily accessible (DDA compliant) and the homeless prevention team offer home visits and advice over the telephone where it is not possible for someone to visit the offices in person. In addition there are plans to develop digital TV services and further develop the SHO website to increase access methods for customers.

4.4 Sexual Orientation

There is no local data relating to the needs of Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) people accessing the housing options and homelessness service.

4.5 Age

As table 8 shows the majority of those accepted as homeless are aged between 16 – 24 and 25 – 44. Across all years over 85% of those accepted as homeless were aged either 16 – 24 or 25 – 44. As at 2001 census only 9% of the population of Solihull were aged 16 – 24 and 27% of the population aged 25 – 44. This shows that younger households (and particularly those aged 16 – 24) are over-represented in homeless acceptances and a key priority of the homelessness strategy is therefore tackling and preventing youth homelessness.

People aged 60 - 64, 65 – 74 and 75+ make up a very small proportion of those accepted as homeless. Combined totals have remained relatively constant over the last 3 years at between 3% and 4%. This age group are likely to have differing housing needs and whilst they may not be facing homelessness may need to talk to the prevention officers to explore their options (e.g. downsizing to a smaller property, having aids and adaptations fitted to help them live independently etc).

Table 8: Age of those accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (not measured in 2003/04 or 2004/05)

Age Category	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
16-24	270	46	142	45	120	42
25-44	246	42	126	40	129	46
45-59	47	8	33	11	26	9
60-64	7	1	3	1	4	1
65-74	8	>1	4	1	3	1
75 & Over	5	<1	6	2	1	<1
TOTAL	583	100	314	100	283	100

Source: Solihull MBC P1E statistics

One of the Council's key objectives is to ensure a "brighter future for our children and young people". This is particularly relevant to homelessness given that 16 – 24 year olds have made up almost half of all homeless acceptances in Solihull over the last 3 years.

Young people experience a multitude of problems including truancy, exclusion, not being in education, employment or training, disputes with their families, violence and lack of confidence. As a result of the diverse range of issues there is a need for a joined up approach to the provision of services and support. The Council and SCH have therefore been working with a range

of partners to meet the housing needs of young people and prevent their homelessness wherever possible. Key activities include:

- The appointment of a youth homelessness prevention officer to work with 16 and 17 year olds to prevent homelessness and assist in planned and supported moves
- 3 SCH prevention officers have been trained to provide mediation so that they are able to reduce homelessness arising from parent, relative or friend eviction (one of the main reasons for homelessness amongst young people in Solihull)
- The development of a joint protocol between SCH and Education and Children’s Services for the assessment of the housing and support needs of homeless 16/17 year olds
- Working with Education and Children’s services around issues such as corporate parenting and the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework for young people
- Vulnerable young people have a high priority in the Solihull Home Options Scheme so that they are able to access permanent accommodation when they are ready for independent living
- The introduction of a “crashpad” on a pilot basis to provide emergency direct access hostel accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds
- A new supported housing scheme for young people will be opened in the Autumn of 2009 (Stonham Housing Association) and there are plans to redevelop and expand an existing supported housing scheme for young people in 2009/10 (St Basils)
- The Housing Strategy Officer chairs the accommodation sub-group for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The group aims to develop a range of accommodation options for UASC which includes in-borough provision and feed into the UASC strategy group which provides a strategic overview for the provision of services to UASC. As part of this work 2 units in the new supported scheme for young people (at Yorkswood House) will funded by the UASC team.

One significant issue to emerge from consultation with partners was the need to concentrate resources on working with young people, providing education, information and support to help them avoid homelessness and deal with the range of issues they face.

Table 9 provides further details on the range of supporting people funded services in place to assist both younger and older people in the Borough.

Table 9 – Supporting People Funded Services for Younger & Older People in Solihull	
Client Group	Current Provision
Older people with support needs inc frail elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting the traditional role of providers 83% of all housing related support in Solihull is for older people. • There are 626 units of accommodation for older people in the Borough (this includes fixed location alarm services) • A further 1438 units of floating support are provided through SCH’s Safe & Sound project. This includes regular personal contact, an emergency on call service, an annual home safety check and the ability to provide different levels of support based on need.

<p>Teenage parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 units of accommodation based support are provided for young families and young single mothers (aged 16 – 25) across 2 young parents’ schemes run by Bromford. • Bromford also provide 6 units of floating support to assist young families to live independently (including helping those moving on from the young parents schemes)
<p>Young people at risk inc those leaving care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 units of supported accommodation for young people are provided by St Basils at Mildenhall House. A further 6 units of accommodation are provided through Bromford’s Pathways Scheme (4 places are for people leaving care and 2 for referrals from the housing options team). • St Basil’ also provided 12 units of floating support for this client group. • In addition Stonham provide 15 units of accommodation based support for young people aged 16 – 25. • When re-developed Yorkswood House will also increase provision for this client group and there are plans to re-develop Mildenhall House to increase provision for young people. • 1 unit on Stonham’s Morris House is currently being used to pilot emergency ‘crashpad’ accommodation for 16 & 17 year olds

4.6 Faith, Religion or Belief

There is no local data relating to the faith, religion or beliefs of people accessing the housing options or homelessness service.

4.7 Identified Differential Impacts & Options to Address

Based on the evidence presented in sections 4.1 to 4.6 table 10 below brings together the main issues identified with relation to the delivery of the homelessness strategy and the possibility of differential impacts according to each of the equality strands. It sets out what measures are already in place to mitigate these possible impacts and recommend further options to address the identified issues.

Table 10 – Differential Impacts & Options to Address

Equality Strand	Identified Impact	Options to Address identified Impacts	
		Already in Place	Recommendations
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People from BME communities may not be aware of the services offered by SCH and other partner organisations to tackle and prevent homelessness – this is especially so in relation to new arrivals or people who do not speak English as a first language • The decision to accept a household as homeless lies with the individual case officers and there may be the potential for adverse decisions to be made on the grounds of race • Not all prevention initiatives / services for potentially homeless households are monitored by the ethnicity and where monitoring is carried out it is not routinely analysed and used to inform future policy development – this results in a lack of awareness of specific causes of homelessness and the support needs of BME groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council & SCH are in the process of raising awareness of the homelessness and housing advice service. A leaflet setting out the range of services provided by SCH and a poster providing contact information are currently being produced for display at a range of community locations and circulated to VCS organisations. • SCH subscribe to translation services so that anyone who cannot speak / read English can access literature and communicate with the team. • There is a formal review process in place which allows individuals and external agencies (e.g. law firms and advice centres) to challenge all homeless decisions. • There are internal management arrangements in place to ensure that officers are interpreting legislation correctly and making sound decisions and spot checks are carried out by the team managers and the Council’s Housing Strategy team to ensure that a fair and equitable service is being provided. • All SCH & Council staff receive equalities & diversity training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to analyse on a more systematic basis the ethnic group of customers accessing the homelessness and housing advice service. Whilst this data is collected it is not analysed on a regular basis. • Based on this information there is a need to identify any gaps in provision / specific causes of homelessness amongst BME groups and to ensure that the relevant support / services are available. • In cases where monitoring is not in place ensure that SCH and partner organisations implement appropriate mechanisms. • Build monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice.

Equality Strand	Identified Impact	Options to Address identified Impacts	
		Already in Place	Recommendations
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female applicants make up the majority of homeless acceptances. Although this reflects the priority need categories in the legislation there is a need to ensure that male applicants are offered advice and support to meet their needs to ensure they are not adversely affected. Services for victims of domestic violence in Solihull are almost exclusively for female victims. This could have an adverse impact on any male victims who would find it difficult to access services or support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All customers facing homelessness / in housing need are offered a housing options interview where their individual circumstances are discussed and a range of housing options offered – this ensures that each customer receives a personalised approach to their problem. All SCH and Council staff receive equalities & diversity training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the launch of ‘Enhanced Housing Options’ ensure that a range of options are offered to meet the needs of all households (including single people not in priority need). Research best practice around the provision of services for male victims of domestic violence and ensure that support services / agencies are advertised locally.
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interpretation of the homeless legislation in relation to ‘vulnerability’ as a result of physical disability or mental illness is based on the discretion of individual officers – this may mean that a household could be more or less likely to be accepted as in priority need due to disability depending on the case officer they are allocated People with a disability may have difficulty accessing the services available (this could be physical in terms of actually going into offices or for people with mental health problems in terms of having awareness of help available and having the confidence to access services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a formal review process in place which allows individuals and external agencies (e.g. law firms and advice centres) to challenge decisions. There are internal management arrangements in place to ensure that officers are interpreting legislation correctly / making sound decisions and spot checks are carried out by the team managers and the Council’s Housing Strategy team to ensure that a fair and equitable service is being provided. The homeless prevention team offer home visits and advice over the telephone and can signpost people needing support to appropriate organisations. All SCH and Council staff receive equalities & diversity training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a need to analyse on a more systematic basis the profile of people with a disability accessing the homelessness and housing advice service and from this to identify any specific needs or areas for further service development. Whilst this data is collected it is not analysed on a regular basis. Build monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice.

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Equality Strand	Identified Impact	Options to Address identified Impacts	
		Already in Place	Recommendations
Sexual Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no local data available to monitor the impact on lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) people and as such there could be adverse impact on this group. National research has identified a range of issues experienced by LGB people in terms of accessing housing and homelessness services and in order to look at this locally there is a need to establish baseline information. 	N/a – adverse impacts are not currently known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the possibility of including a question on sexual orientation on all standard equal opportunities monitoring forms used by the homelessness & housing advice service Once data is available look at any trends / patterns of need, assess resources and set out areas for future service development. Build monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people are over-represented in terms of homeless acceptances and the need to prevent and tackle youth homelessness was identified as a key priority of part of consultation carried out to inform the new strategy. Older people (60+) make up a small proportion of those accessing homeless prevention and advice services but may have differing needs to the younger population. There is a possibility that customers may be treated differently / certain assumptions made about their needs because of their age. At the same time it is likely that needs will differ depending on the age of the customers and services will need to be responsive to these differing needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A range of prevention initiatives and support services are available for young people threatened with homelessness (as listed on page 16) There is a formal review process in place which allows individuals and external agencies (e.g. law firms and advice centres) to challenge decisions. All customers facing homelessness / in housing need are offered a housing options interview where their individual circumstances are discussed and a range of housing options offered – this ensures that each customer receives a personalised approach to their problem. All SCH and Council staff receive equalities & diversity training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of actions in the new homelessness strategy contributing to priority 2 (preventing youth homelessness and ensuring that a range of options are available to young people in housing need) Analyse the age profile of those accessing the homelessness and housing advice service and from this to identify any specific needs or areas for further service development. Whilst this data is collected it is not analysed on a regular basis. From this information identify the needs of different age groups and ensure that services meet these needs. Build monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system.

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Equality Strand	Identified Impact	Options to Address identified Impacts	
		Already in Place	Recommendations
Faith, Religion or Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no local data available to monitor issues relating to faith / religious beliefs and as such there could be adverse impact on this group. Lack of understanding of religious and cultural beliefs may mean that circumstances of individual cases / causes of homelessness are not fully understood. 	N/a – adverse impacts are not currently known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the possibility of Including a question on faith, religion or belief on all standard equal opportunities monitoring forms used by the homelessness and housing advice service Once data is available look at any trends / patterns of need, assess resources and set out areas for future service development. Build monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice.

5. Monitoring Arrangements

The need for effective monitoring is crucial to ensure that organisations are aware of any adverse impacts and are able to respond to needs identified and in turn that the effects of any actions put in place to mitigate identified impacts can be measured.

This EIA has identified two key areas for future development in terms of monitoring:

1. For race, gender, disability and age where information is collected this needs to be analysed on a more regular basis so that trends can be identified and any necessary changes implemented in response
2. For sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief where data is not currently collected measures need to be put in place to look at the possibility of collecting information as part of the standard equal opportunities monitoring forms used by the homelessness and housing advice service.

In terms of the former a full analysis of the data collected on race, gender, disability and age was carried out as part of the homelessness review (2009) and to feed into this EIA. For homeless acceptances quarterly returns to government (P1E's) do record the ethnicity, age, gender and whether the household was accepted due to vulnerability resulting from physical or mental illness / disability. However there are no formal arrangements to monitor or report on these indicators for other service areas e.g. all those who have a housing options interview or those who utilise one of the prevention tools such as the sanctuary scheme. To achieve this it is recommended that a template is produced which sets out all those areas where data is collected and recommends a format for reporting on equalities information on a quarterly basis.

Taking the 2 equality strands where data is not currently collected it is recommended that the Council explore with SCH the possibility of recording sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief. In the EIA of the homelessness service carried out in 2007 it was concluded that sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief should not be monitored due to the fact that it would be impractical, unlikely to yield a high response rate and difficult to monitor accurately. Following advice taken from the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer as part of the consultation for this EIA it is felt that this decision should be reviewed since it would be better to include both categories and give customers the option as to whether or not to complete them. The viability of introducing these categories will be explored with SCH and timescales for implementation agreed. It may be that a pilot is carried out for one service area so that the response rate and any other issues can be evaluated before it is rolled out to all services / standard forms. This will be taken forward as part of the recommendations and action plan accompanying this EIA.

The homelessness team currently record most of their customer information on paper files and excel spreadsheets. This makes it more difficult to monitor delivery of the service and potential impacts in general as well as in relation to equal opportunities and leads to officers spending a lot of time inputting information on to relevant databases. Recognising this there are plans to

implement an IT system for the homeless prevention and homeless assessment teams so that they are able to record and monitor information on one central system. This will hopefully make it easier to monitor service delivery and customer information which will help in the implementation of some of the recommendations made as part of this EIA.

Finally there is a comprehensive monitoring framework to ensure the delivery of the homelessness strategy 2009 – 2011. Table 11 sets out the range of monitoring mechanisms in place for the homelessness strategy. The action plan accompanying this EIA (included at **Appendix C**) has been linked into the Homelessness Strategy Action plan and will therefore be included in this overall monitoring framework.

Table 11 - Homelessness Strategy Monitoring Mechanisms	
Strategic Multi-Agency Homelessness Forum	Meets quarterly. The action plan is updated and progress reviewed at each meeting, taking into account any developments at local, regional or national level.
Operational Multi-Agency Homelessness Forum	Made up of any organisation working with homeless or potentially homeless people in Solihull. Themed meetings and working groups formed to progress key actions or issues as and when necessary and regular updates provided by email.
National Performance Indicators	Within the new performance framework the only national indicator relating directly to homelessness is the temporary accommodation target. Performance will however continue to be monitored through the quarterly P1E returns and snapshot surveys sent out on an ad-hoc basis to capture information on particular service areas. The P1E data will continue to be monitored and reviewed regularly by the Council.
Local Performance Indicators	The 2007 – 2010 LAA Homelessness Stretch target will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure that progress is on target. SCH and SMBC will continue to monitor performance against certain Best Value Performance Indicators relating to housing and homelessness and whilst the figures will no longer be reported to central government they will continue to give a detailed picture and allow comparison with previous years. In addition local performance indicators agreed between SMBC and SCH will be monitored.
Action Plan Update	The action plan will be formally updated on a 6-monthly basis and will be made available on the Council's website as well as being circulated to key partners and members of the homelessness forums.
Reporting to Cabinet Member & Scrutiny Board	Regular reports will be taken to the relevant cabinet member and scrutiny board to highlight progress made against the action plan, to outline key trends and to identify any risks to / resources required for the future delivery of the strategy and action plan.

6. Consultation

Formal consultation was carried out as part of the wider review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and this EIA has taken into account the information gathered as part of the process.

The homelessness review (2009):

- Provides an update on homelessness and housing need in Solihull
- Summarises changes in the policy context at the national, regional and local level
- Reviews the effectiveness of the homeless prevention and housing options schemes which have been undertaken and developed since 2003
- Provides feedback from partners and agencies about current homelessness issues and services
- Reviews service user satisfaction with housing services in the Borough and consider any changes needed
- Reviews the appropriateness and suitability of services provided for vulnerable households
- Advises on the implementation of new initiatives and progress of existing schemes to maximise homelessness prevention, provide support to homeless and potentially homeless households and to maximise the supply of affordable housing
- Updates action plans covering the steps that have been taken to meet the initial strategic objectives laid out in the 2005 strategy and set out actions for the future.

In order to meet these aims the following key activities took place between October 2008 and January 2009:

i. Multi Agency Homelessness Forum

Both the operational and strategic forums have been involved in evaluating progress and identifying issues that need to be developed through the new strategy and action plan. In particular the strategic Multi-Agency Homelessness Forum, at their meeting on 6th October 08, worked through the 2006-08 action plan, providing a final update for each action and where actions had not been completed agreeing whether or not they should be carried forward. Member organisations on each group can be seen at **Appendix A**.

ii. Data Collection

An updated needs analysis has been carried out which analyses in depth the numbers and types of homelessness enquiries received by Solihull MBC. It also takes into account information from other organisations wherever possible and provides wider analysis of the local housing market.

iii. Service Mapping

A summary of all the services available to provide accommodation and support to homeless and potentially homeless households has been carried out. This has enabled the strategy to highlight and address gaps in current provision.

iv. Stakeholder Consultation

In order to capture the views of statutory and voluntary agencies providing services to homeless and potentially homeless households in the Borough a feedback form was circulated to all those agencies involved in the delivery of services to homeless or potentially homeless people, in the provision of services that can contribute to preventing homelessness or who have resources for securing accommodation or housing related support.

Completed surveys were returned and a summary of the responses / key points were included with the feedback from the consultation event which can be seen in **Appendix B**.

v. Consultation Event

A stakeholder consultation event was held at Solihull MBC Civic Suite on Monday 1st December 2008. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the development of the new strategy and to involve partners in setting the priorities for the strategy over the next 3 years.

Organisations represented at the event included local housing associations and support providers, Social Services, Solihull Care Trust, Chelmsley Wood, Shirley and Solihull CAB and a range of other local and voluntary agencies. In addition a range of Solihull MBC and Solihull Community Housing Officers were in attendance. A full list of the range of organisations represented at the event can be seen at **Appendix A**.

Delegates took part in workshops defining key priorities for the new strategy for the next three years in the areas of supply of temporary and permanent accommodation, homelessness prevention and provision of supported accommodation and services.

The feedback and results to come out of the event have been used in defining the priorities for the strategy and in taking forward both the monitoring and delivery of the strategy and action plan. For a summary of the key priorities to come out of this consultation event refer to **Appendix B**.

vi. Service User Consultation

In order to capture what is working and what is not working in relation to actions to tackle and prevent homelessness from a customer service perspective various methods of service user consultation were carried out.

In order to understand in detail service users underlying views and perceptions on the services that they have received focus groups were carried out with residents in several of the Borough's supported housing schemes. In addition a structured questionnaire was distributed to all residents in temporary accommodation provided by Solihull Community Housing (SCH) to get the views of those who had been through the formal process of making a homeless application.

The results of the service user consultation are set out in greater detail in **Appendix B**.

Service users completing the structured questionnaire were asked to complete a personal details form which asked them to indicate their gender, age, ethnicity, whether they had a disability, their faith, religion or belief and their sexual orientation. As the questionnaire was only completed by 8 people it does not provide a representative sample and the potential to carry out any meaningful analysis by the 6 equality strands is therefore limited. It is however worth noting that all 8 respondents were happy to provide equalities information and even in the case of sexual orientation and religion, faith or belief all 8 people responded. Overall responses to the survey were positive. 3 respondents did state that their temporary accommodation was poor but all 3 were staying in hostel accommodation (Yorkswood House and Highfield Farm) and it has been recognised by the Council that this accommodation does not provide appropriate modern facilities. Since the time of the survey 1 of the units (Yorkswood House) has been closed down and there are plans to close Highfield Farm later in the year.

vii. Housing Association Meeting

A Housing Association meeting was held on 27th November 2008 to consider the requirements of the Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy and to look at how Housing Associations could contribute to tackling and preventing homelessness in Solihull. The meeting was attended by the main stock holding Associations in the Borough as well as a Specialist Advisor from the Tenant Services Authority.

viii. Consultation with Frontline Staff

All staff delivering the homelessness service were asked to consider, based on their work with customers facing homelessness, the key causes of homelessness and housing need, any particular gaps in current provision / options available to homeless households, any information that should be taken into account in the review and any additional initiatives they felt would help to prevent homelessness. These issues were discussed at the homelessness team meeting on Wednesday 10th December 2008 and key points to come out of this process are summarised in **Appendix B**.

The full range of comments made by the partner organisations and service users consulted can be seen in **Appendix B**. The key points made in relation to equality and diversity were:

- Housing advice and prevention services should be advertised more widely and more people encouraged to access services at an early stage – there is a need to ensure that all residents are aware of the services on offer (and within this to cater for new arrivals to the Borough and people who do not speak English as a first language)
- Related to the last point the need to carry out more pro-active work within the community e.g. advertising services and linking in with other service providers
- Focus on preventing homelessness and addressing the housing needs of young people (through education, information and housing options)

- Provide additional support and accommodation for vulnerable groups (including victims of domestic violence, people with physical or sensory disabilities and people with mental health problems)
- Gaps were identified for single people aged over 25 (those people that do not fall into any of the priority need categories)
- The need to explain the processes and the legislation to customers so that they understand what is happening (especially where customers do not speak English as a first language or where people have recently arrived in the Country)
- Ensure better links between agencies and offer a range of communication methods to service users and partners
- The need to improve data sharing / evidence collection to capture those people who do not approach the Council / SCH (and who are therefore not included in monitoring information)

The issues raised through the formal consultation along with the points to come out of the data analysis were used to inform the final homelessness strategy priorities and action plan.

7. Publication of Equality Impact Assessment

This EIA has been reported to and approved by the Community & Economic Regeneration Divisions Diversity Champions Group. Following this the full report will be published on Solihull MBC's website at:

www.solihull.gov.uk/policies/homelessnessstrategy.htm. Copies will also be circulated to partner organisations and made available upon request.

8. Conclusions and Future Actions / Recommendations

Taking into account the data analysis and consultation used to inform this EIA several recommendations have been made to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity and to mitigate the effects of the adverse impacts identified in section 4.

1. Ensure that services are accessible to all residents of Solihull and raise awareness / carry out more pro-active work within the community and with partner organisations in both the statutory and voluntary sector to facilitate this process
2. Agree formal arrangements with SCH for monitoring equalities and diversity information that is already collected (i.e. race, gender, age and disability) on a regular basis and ensure that relevant support / services are available to address any needs identified
3. Identify any services where information is not already collected and introduce monitoring arrangements
4. For sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief work with SCH to look at including this information on the standard equal opportunities monitoring form and agree a timetable to implement any agreed changes

5. Build equal opportunities monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice
6. Provide a range of housing options to meet the needs of all potentially homeless households in the Borough
7. Look at Best Practice around the provision of support and services for male victims of domestic violence and ensure that support services are advertised locally
8. Prevent youth homelessness and ensure that a range of options are available to help young people in housing need
9. Recognising the fact that not all homeless / potentially homeless households approach the Council for advice and assistance work with partners in the statutory and voluntary & Community sector to capture data across the Borough and present a more detailed picture of homelessness
10. Look at the provision of additional support and accommodation for vulnerable groups
11. Ensure that the homelessness legislation and associated processes are explained to customers in plain English so that they know what to expect

An action plan has been developed to provide a detailed breakdown of how each of these recommendations will be delivered. This can be seen at **Appendix C**.

Whilst this EIA has shown no evidence of discrimination in respect of the homelessness strategy it has highlighted several areas where there is the possibility for adverse impacts and in certain cases that the lack of any local information means that there is insufficient information to clearly demonstrate that discrimination is not occurring. Implementation of these recommendations will ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted, that possible adverse impacts are mitigated and that there will be the information available to fully assess the impacts in relation to sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief.

**Representatives on the Multi Agency Homelessness Forums
(Strategic & Operational):**

Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
Bromford Housing Association
Chelmsley Wood CAB
Fry Housing
National Offender Management Service (NOMS)
SMBC Housing Strategy
SMBC Education & Children's Services
SMBC Youth Offending Team
SMBC Integrated Youth Services, Solihull Connexions
Solihull Care Trust, Supporting People Team
Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)
Solihull Community Housing
Solihull CAB
St Basil's
Stonham Housing Association
West Mercia Housing
West Midlands Probation Service
Anybody working with homeless / potentially homeless people in Solihull is able to attend the operational group and a range of other local organisations have therefore attended meetings on an ad hoc basis over the last five years

**Organisations in Attendance at the Homelessness Strategy Consultation
Event (01/12/08)**

Aquarius (Alcohol & gambling related problems)
Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid
Bromford Housing Association (Bromford Support)
Chelmsley Wood CAB
Fry Housing
Harden Housing
Keyring Living Support Networks
Midland Heart
National Offender Management Service (NOMS)
Shirley CAB
SMBC Income & Awards Team (Strategic Services)
SMBC 16+ Team (Education & Children's Services)
SMBC Youth Offending Services (Community Services)
SMBC Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's Team (Education & Children's Services)
SMBC Connexions (Education & Children's Services)
Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)
Solihull Community Housing
Solihull CAB
Solihull Care Trust Supporting People Team
St Basils
Stonham Housing Association

Homelessness Strategy Consultation Results		APPENDIX B
Consultation	Description & Main Issues	
Stakeholder Questionnaire: Supporting People Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to address a variety of causes in partnership with a range of partners • The need for a housing related support service for people with alcohol related support needs • Provision of support and assistance / access to services for rough sleepers • Extend the range of housing options for young people (consider supported lodgings as an additional option) • 3 key priorities for the strategy identified as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ensuring homelessness and housing are recognised and prioritised sufficiently by the LSP and Solihull (NHS) Care Trust ii. Prepare for & respond quickly to the changing economic situation iii. Maximise existing housing resource with input & support from other services 	
Stakeholder Questionnaire: West Midlands Probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key causes of homelessness include rent arrears, criminal record and tenancy history, finance, not submitting housing application in advance and the lack of direct access provision in Solihull • Gaps identified as direct access and the current criteria for the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (RDGS) which prevent any non-priority cases from being assisted • The need to improve communication between key agencies • 3 key priorities for the strategy identified as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The provision of direct access accommodation in the Borough ii. Address the need of offenders iii. Extend the criteria of the RDGS to assist non priority cases 	
Stakeholder Questionnaire: Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues based on work with service users include the effect of late payment of benefits / grants to those in need and the criteria for awarding benefits • Suggestion that the RDGS should offer the first months rent as this is what prevents some households from being able to afford to rent privately • Key priorities for the strategy identified as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Work with partners to ensure the prompt payment of benefits / grants ii. Provide extra funding for the RDGS & consider extending to cover the first months rent iii. Responding to the current economic crisis by ensuring timely information and advice to people in mortgage arrears iv. Provide more social / affordable housing 	
Stakeholder Questionnaire: Fry Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key causes of homelessness identified as issues with those leaving custody who are homeless and have rent arrears on previous tenancies • Gaps identified as provision for women over the age of 25, the need for direct access in the Borough and the need for options for people leaving custody / care without accommodation • There is a need to explain the legislation and specifically 'priority need' definitions to service users • There is a need to extend the remit of the RDGS to assist non-priority homeless people • 3 key priorities for the strategy identified as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Work with prisoners e.g. register with SHO whilst in custody ii. The need for hostel accommodation to be available for prisoners on release iii. The need for direct access accommodation for 18+ 	

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>Stakeholder Questionnaire:</p> <p>Bromford Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for increased partnership working between all key agencies. In the young parents schemes there is specifically a need to provide sexual health education to prevent second pregnancies and more generally a need for housing, benefits, social services and domestic violence teams to work more closely together • There is a need for earlier referrals, especially to floating support services so that homelessness can be prevented • Frontline staff need to be aware of the range of services available in the Borough • There is a need to provide suitable accommodation for those people moving out of supported accommodation in order to prevent repeat homelessness • 3 most important areas for homeless prevention identified as <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The need to provide more wide ranging housing advice and options (and for all agencies to be aware of what is available) ii. The need to extend tenancy sustainment and floating support services and to refer people earlier iii. The need for frontline staff to have access to a prevention fund
<p>Stakeholder Questionnaire:</p> <p>Welcome Centre Drug Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key causes of homelessness amongst service users identified as drug misuse and offending / custodial sentences and for those who are in custody arrears that build up on their previous tenancies • Gaps in service provision identified as the private accommodation available, the need for a direct access hostel in the Borough, the need for more help to non priority / single homeless people and the need for increased communication between housing and probation / prison staff • Extending the RDGS for those people who are not in priority need would help more people to access accommodation • 3 key priorities for the strategy identified as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The need for direct access hostel accommodation ii. The need for more social / affordable housing iii. The need for bed and breakfast emergency payments
<p>Stakeholder Feedback @ Consultation Event</p>	<p>All organisations who attended the homelessness strategy consultation event were asked to identify the 3 most important priorities for the strategy. The most commonly identified issues were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to ensure homelessness & vulnerable groups are prioritised in the LSP and Care Trust structures / targets / funding priorities • The need to raise awareness of all the services available and to increase the provision of information to partners and service users through a variety of methods • The need for a specific focus on the needs of young people (specific actions suggested were development of a youth homelessness strategy, looking to extend housing options and specifically to consider supported lodgings, the need to provide education and information to young people to prevent homelessness) • Increased access to the private rented sector for homeless households • The need for some form of direct access accommodation in the Borough • The need for more social / affordable housing that is accessible to vulnerable people • As well as young people specific groups identified as in need of additional accommodation / support were people with long-term alcohol / drug problems, women & children who have experienced domestic violence, people with learning disabilities and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children & Young People

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
Feedback from the Workshops held @ the Consultation Event	<p>In order to explore key issues in depth and to enable discussion / agreement of key priorities amongst partners 3 workshops were held and attendees attended 2 out of the 3 sessions. Top priorities identified by each group were as follows:</p> <p>Group 1 – Homeless Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to increase funding for prevention activities and for organisations to pool resources to increase outcomes • There is a need to focus prevention on young people and this could include a schools education programme, outreach working and a website aimed specifically at young people • Need to ensure the temporary accommodation reduction targets do not have a negative impact on any vulnerable groups • There is a need to develop and make available a range of options and for partner agencies to work closer together joining up housing options with other key services (e.g. health, employment, training, money advice etc) • Ensure better links between agencies and offer a range of communication methods to service users and partners <p>Group 2 – Supply of Accommodation (Temporary & Permanent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for direct access accommodation (within this night stop / supported lodgings may be an option for young people) • The further development of the RDGS would increase access to settled accommodation for those in housing need (need to consider extending the scheme to pay first months rent and the possibility of offering longer agreements e.g. 12 months) • Consider Private Sector Leasing as a method of providing temporary accommodation, thereby freeing up HRA units for permanent accommodation • There is a need to maximise the potential of the national (and possibly local) mortgage rescue scheme to (i) avoid homeless presentations and a call on temporary accommodation and a social rented tenancy and (ii) add to the housing association stock • Explore possible schemes / incentives to bring empty homes back into use • Look at the possibility of extending the movement Incentive scheme to the Housing Association sector • Increase floating support / tenancy sustainment services to promote tenancy sustainability and reduce homelessness / demands on the social stock <p>Group 3 – Services for Vulnerable Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention, accommodation and support aimed at the needs of young people • The supply of accommodation for all vulnerable groups (including access to private rented and other affordable options) • Raising the profile of vulnerable groups & homelessness, particularly in light of the future of the Supporting People funding & LSP etc • Education & information (including schools, courts and working with agencies already providing services to vulnerable groups) • Building on partnership working and looking at how best to combine resources to achieve shared outcomes (in changing economic climate) • Improving data sharing / evidence collection re: non statutory & vulnerable people and combining resources / information across services

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>Service Users In SCH Temporary Accommodation</p>	<p>In order to capture the views of service users a structured questionnaire was distributed to all people living in temporary accommodation provided by SCH over a 2 week period in November.</p> <p>The temporary accommodation support worker distributed the surveys and offered assistance for those who were unable to complete them. The objectives of the questionnaire were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify areas of satisfaction & dissatisfaction with the process • To identify any gaps in provision from a service user perspective; and • To establish service users expectations of the service and future accommodation and support needs <p>The questionnaire was distributed to 25 households and a total of 8 people completed the survey, giving a response rate of 32%. Whilst this is too small a sample to be fully representative of all those who have experienced homelessness it provides a useful insight to the experiences of service users and when combined with information obtained through the focus groups provides both a quantitative and qualitative summary of the key issues experienced by those who have experienced homelessness.</p> <p>A full list of the questions and responses can be found at Appendix 4.</p> <p>In summary the key issues / trends amongst those who responded were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 of the 8 respondents had lost tenancies in the private rented sector and a further 3 had been asked to leave by family / friends • Half of the respondents had been living in private rented accommodation prior to becoming homeless • When asked what could have been done to prevent their homelessness 1 respondent felt they could have put their name on the housing waiting list earlier and another indicated they had financial problems so it could be assumed that debt or money advice may have helped them • All 8 respondents stated they expected to move into a Council or Housing Association property upon leaving temporary accommodation • The 3 respondents who stated that their current temporary accommodation was poor (2) or very poor (1) were staying in hostel accommodation (2 in Yorkswood House and 1 in Highfield Farm) • When asked how well their homeless application had been dealt with 6 respondents stated well or very well, 1 'Ok' and 1 that it had been dealt with very poorly • When asked what would help them to move into permanent housing 3 stated if they were offered a Council or Housing Association Property, 3 if they were offered help finding a job and 2 if they were given help with accessing benefits they were entitled to
<p>Service User Focus Groups</p>	<p>In order to supplement the data collected from the service user questionnaires and to gather more in-depth feedback focus groups were carried out with a selection of residents in some of the Borough's supported accommodation schemes. A standard topic guide was used to guide the discussion but respondents were encouraged to raise any issues they felt were important under each key topic. The standard topic guide can be found at Appendix 5. The following summarises the key points raised in each of the focus groups:</p> <p>Galeno Place & Geraldine Court, Bromford (Teenage Parents)</p> <p>2 service users from Galeno Place attended the whole meeting. They were a couple with a 2 month old baby. They both had experience of staying in hostels. 1 of them had been in care and was allocated their own flat at 16. Due to issues around budgeting and "getting in with the wrong people" he was evicted and had stayed in various forms of temporary accommodation before being allocated a place at Galeno with his partner.</p> <p>2 service users attended half way through the meeting (1 was living in Galeno place and 1 had recently moved out of Galeno and in to her own maisonette). Both girls had been</p>

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>Service User Focus Groups cont</p>	<p>allocated a place at Galeno and moved straight there without having to stay in temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Key Issues raised in the group discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people should not be given their own accommodation without having received the necessary support and assistance so that they “feel ready” to live independently. • There was a general feeling that the model of accommodation and support provided by Bromford at Galeno Place works well for young people since it gave them a safe and secure environment and provides support and social networks to help them get used to living alone. • On the other hand the 2 service users who had stayed in hostel accommodation had had very negative experiences. They felt isolated and threatened and having to share facilities made the situation worse for them. They felt that if temporary accommodation had to be used independent units with support would at least provide privacy and increased security. They also felt that there should be more support provided to people who are staying in temporary accommodation. • In terms of support, help with budgeting and managing money was mentioned several times as a key area in helping people to live on their own. One of the main reasons for 1 of the respondents having lost their accommodation was getting in to debt and not spending their money on paying their rent / buying things for the flat. Other areas included help to cook and to use kitchen equipment. • 2 respondents referred to the emotional affects of being homeless / living in temporary accommodation and felt that counselling had been very positive for them and helped them to deal with their situation and may help others in similar circumstances. • 1 respondent wanted to be able to complete her GSCE’s and assistance in terms of accessing education and securing childcare were important in terms of future support. • There was a feeling that more information was needed for people facing homelessness and specifically people wanted to know where to go / who to speak to. • Respondents emphasised the importance of officers / organisations providing help / assistance to be friendly and approachable. • The support networks formed whilst in schemes such as Galeno are extremely important to the young people and the 1 person who had moved on to live on her own did miss the support available from staff and other residents • When thinking about move-on service users would prefer ground floor / low rise accommodation and all thought that continued support to help them adjust and settle in to their new accommodation was key. • Safety was brought up several times – feeling unsafe was associated with a negative housing experience (in the hostel) and feeling safe and secure were given as one of the reasons the respondents were happy in Galeno. <p>Bromford, Learning Disabilities Focus Group</p> <p>3 service users receiving support from Bromford took part in a focus group facilitated by Bromford Support Workers.</p> <p>The key points raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of support workers in helping vulnerable people to live independently was mentioned several times during the discussion. Important areas of support mentioned included help with dealing with post / letters, help to access services and help with completing forms. All respondents said that whenever they had a problem or wanted help with anything they would go to their support worker • Respondents were generally positive about their current homes (1 respondent had had their home adapted to meet their needs) and overall all respondents said they were happy with where they were living • Location and security were both cited as important factors (local connection to an area was seen as very important as was feeling that the area was safe to go out in)

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>Service User Focus Groups cont</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other services mentioned as important support providers were social services, GP's, SCH, Cornerways and Keyring. • 1 area of concern raised with reference to any repairs or adaptations was the need to make sure appointments are kept and work is completed satisfactorily <p>Mildenhall House, St Basils (Young People 16 – 25) 2 service users took part in this discussion which was facilitated by a support worker.</p> <p>Key issues from the discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both clients had become homeless due to issues at home and both expected to live in supported accommodation for between 1 year and 18 months • The clients had been to the Link (advice service provided by St. Basils in Birmingham) and their local housing office for advice support and one of the respondents stated that the Link was the most helpful since “they seemed to understand being homeless was not always your fault” whereas staff at the neighbourhood office were “rude and dismissive” (NB it is not known whether this was a Solihull or Birmingham Housing Office). • It was felt that more information was needed about where to go and who to see for help since there was a feeling that they were being passed around services • It was felt that nothing could have prevented their homelessness since “things happen and you have no control over them so you have just got to deal with it”, instead clearer information about where to go for help would have made the experience easier • Both respondents felt that more information was needed for people in their situation and when asked about housing options one of the respondents stated “I never even knew about home options or how to register or what it was” • It was felt that there was a real need for education for young people: “People need to know more and be educated about the issues around why people find themselves homeless” • Both respondents were happy with the support they received from staff at Mildenhall House and as with the Bromford service users made specific reference to the security provided to them in their current accommodation as well as the fact that the location was good and specifically was close to their college • When asked about the type of accommodation they would like they expressed a preference for a flat in a good location and when asked what they expect they stated “private accommodation” • When asked about support to help them move into permanent housing 1 of the respondents stated they would like “to find out about what bills you have to pay for gas, council tax etc” and another that more information about support services and where to go for help would help them • Both respondents stated that they felt the term “homelessness” had a stigma attached and that they would prefer to be referred to as something else like “unaccommodated” <p>Morris House, Stonham (Young People 16 – 25) Stonham’s Skills for Life Worker carried out an informal client meeting / focus group with their residents.</p> <p>Key issues raised in the discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents had been homeless for a range of reasons which included overcrowding, violence, wanting independence, having nowhere else to go and family breakdown / being forced to leave • When asked about the services and support available it was felt that there was an overall lack of accommodation and this leads to frustration and an overall negative perception of the SCH / housing options in general • It was felt that family mediation may have helped some people but that the effects it can have varies according to the seriousness of the issue • When asked about their current accommodation respondents stated that the

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>Service User Focus Groups cont</p>	<p>accommodation was decent and “safe”, that the support and location were okay and security was good. Respondents however felt that they could not settle in a hostel or make it feel like “home” and that it should not therefore be seen as a settled or permanent option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients felt that they were only given lower levels of accommodation like high rise flats and were not offered opportunities to move to better areas of Solihull • They felt that they should be given higher priority through Solihull Home Options / support to move on and that supported accommodation should not be classed as permanent • It was also felt that more information should be provided on understanding the system (Solihull Home Options) and also about local services and facilities offering help and support • It was felt that more help and support could be provided by SCH when they approached them (several clients had been given a hostel list but had not been provided with further options or advice) and that more help could be provided in terms of completing forms and providing clearer signposting to other agencies that provide help and support <p>Women’s Refuge, Birmingham & Solihull Women’s Aid (Victims of Domestic Violence)</p> <p>The Solihull Refuge Manager facilitated a discussion with women currently accessing services (accommodation and floating support).</p> <p>The key issues raised in the discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents suggested that a dedicated housing officer to do options and homeless interviews with women escaping DV (possibly by visiting the refuge) would be helpful – “someone who knows what we have gone through” • 1 respondent had been upset by the response received to her homeless application, she felt that the severity of the abuse experienced had been questioned and that a more sensitive response would have been appropriate • Another respondent commented on the speed with which she got to see a housing officer and had an offer of a property • It was felt that the time allowed to bid through Solihull Home Options was not long enough • When asked about what type of accommodation they would like priority was placed on safety, quality of accommodation (with 1 respond mentioning the need for a garden for the children) and accessibility (concerns about high rise flats). • In terms of future support needs respondents referred to the need to have someone to call for help and support if things go wrong and the need for on-going support for children.
<p>SCH Homeless Team Meeting</p>	<p>All officers working in the homelessness and housing options service at SCH were sent a feedback form asking them for their thoughts on key issues for the strategy and future development of the service based on their experience of working with customers on the frontline. These issues were then discussed at the December team meeting and key issues are summarised below under the key topic areas covered:</p> <p>Causes of Homelessness and Housing Need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental / family / friend eviction is one of the main causes of homelessness and increasingly this is older children unable to afford their own housing • Domestic violence and relationship breakdowns • Private tenancy evictions (end of AST) and increasingly mortgage repossessions • Chaotic lifestyles, lack of life skills (e.g. financial / budgeting, cooking etc), limited family support and isolation

Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>SCH Homeless Team Meeting Cont</p>	<p>Gaps in Service Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access / hostel accommodation in the Borough • Accommodation both temporary and permanent for single people over the age of 25 • Education programme for schools / information and awareness raising amongst young people • More proactive work within the community (e.g. advertising services and linking in with other service providers) • Overall provision of options and advice to single, non-priority homeless cases • The provision and availability of move-on from supported schemes • The need to provide more support to SCH tenants in crisis, intervening earlier to prevent homelessness • The need to provide a better range of temporary accommodation • Support (accommodation or floating) for people with drug / alcohol problems, mental health problems and people with learning disabilities • Support for people with complex needs (often banned from any hostel / supported accommodation and there is nowhere else for them to go) • Overall support for vulnerable people <p>Information from Work with Customers that Should be Taken into Account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to make renting privately a more attractive option for customers since many are still reluctant to take up this option (specific need to concentrate on sustainment) • Need for help and assistance for vulnerable people who do not meet social services criteria but who are still vulnerable and at risk of homelessness / tenancy breakdown • Provision is concentrated in the North and customers would like more options in the South • Customers would like a longer bidding period since it is seen as unrealistic for them to be matched in 2 weeks (especially where they are waiting for a larger family property) • There is a need to manage customer expectations and provide a clear message about the reality of the situation and accommodation / options available (particularly around offers in the South and for larger family houses) <p>Additional initiatives that May Help to Prevent Homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of the RDGS to cover the first months rent as well as the deposit to help more households access the private rented sector (rent in advance is a big issue amongst customers) • Extension of the RDGS to assist non-priority homeless households (this could be a 2-tier system to provide increased levels of support for priority need cases to ensure they continue to be prioritised) • Developing work with private landlords on a wider scale (e.g. landlord accreditation, SCH being managing agent etc) • Extension of funding for the homeless prevention fund • Exploring Private Sector Leasing schemes to provide temporary accommodation therefore freeing up SCH general needs units • Looking at the way cases of domestic violence amongst SCH tenants are processed • More work with specific cases (e.g. family intervention projects) and intervening earlier to help SCH tenants who are having trouble maintaining their tenancies • Working with schools and colleges to raise awareness of housing / homelessness issues and the consequences for younger people of leaving home / school early • Providing increased support for people with drug / alcohol problems <p>The Key Priorities / Issues for the New Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people – providing education and information to prevent homelessness and working jointly with all partner organisations to assist those young people that are homeless / in housing need (this will include piloting the Joint Assessment Protocol for

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Consultation	Description & Main Issues
<p>SCH Homeless Team Meeting Cont</p>	<p>16 & 17 year olds)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial advice / help to help alleviate mortgage repossession / eviction for rent arrears • Providing more assistance for non priority homeless people to help them access accommodation and support to meet their needs • Widening the use of the private rented sector and making it more attractive to landlords and perspective tenants as a long term option • Tackling education, employment and training issues • Providing more support for vulnerable tenants and intervening earlier to prevent homelessness • Expanding / building on joint working with key partners • Advertising / raising awareness of the services available so that people ask for help earlier, making it easier to work with them to prevent their homelessness

APPENDIX C

Partners Key (Lead Role in Bold Text in the Action Plan)		
AC – Age Concern	HA's – Housing Associations	SCH – Solihull Community Housing
B&SMHT – Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Team	HBT - Housing Benefit Team (SMBC)	SCT – Solihull Care Trust
BSWA – Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid	HCA – Homes & Communities Agency	SHA – Stonham Housing Association
CAB – Citizens Advice Bureaux	HST – Housing Strategy Team (SMBC)	SMBC – Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
CA&RA - Chelmsley Advice & Resources Agency	JCP – Job Centre Plus	UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Team
CST – Customer Services Team (SMBC)	LSC – Learning & Skills Council	VCS – Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
E&CS – Education & Children's Services (SMBC)	MAHF – Multi-Agency Homeless Forum	WMFS – West Midlands Fire Service
EDT – Economic Development team (SMBC)	RHSIG – Regional Homelessness Strategy	WMP – West Midlands Police
GOWM – Government Office West Midlands	Implementation Group	WMPS – West Midlands Probation Service

Homelessness Strategy – EIA Action Plan					
No.	Recommendations to Address Adverse / Differential Impacts Identified	Actions to Overcome Problem / Barrier & Related Action in the Homelessness Strategy (where applicable)	Resource	Lead Role & Key Partners	Milestones & Target Date
1.	Ensure that services are accessible to all residents of Solihull and raise awareness / carry out more pro-active work within the community and with partner organisations in both the statutory and voluntary sector to facilitate this process	<p>Advertise & raise awareness of prevention services, offering earlier advice & assistance to all potentially homeless h/holds</p> <p>Improve the quality of housing options information available to all customers and ensure Solihull Home Options (SHO) continues to be clear and transparent</p> <p>Ensure that all literature is accessible, tailored to meet local need and widely communicated via numerous channels (e.g. websites, leaflets & posters etc)</p> <p>(Ref action 1.13)</p>	Officer Time & Existing Budgets	SCH & HST	<p>Produce customer leaflet on homelessness prevention & housing options & poster advertising SCH housing advice services (March 09)</p> <p>Housing advice & other related literature is available in other languages and formats to meet the needs of all customers (June 09)</p> <p>Housing advice & related info is publicised through all customer access points (June 09)</p> <p>Agree standards in frontline information for SHO customers (September 09)</p> <p>Produce comprehensive homelessness prevention & housing options pack for customers (October 09)</p>

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No.	Recommendations to Address Adverse / Differential Impacts Identified	Actions to Overcome Problem / Barrier & Related Action in the Homelessness Strategy (where applicable)	Resource	Lead Role & Key Partners	Milestones & Target Date
2.	<p>Agree formal arrangements with SCH for monitoring equalities and diversity information that is already collected (i.e. race, gender, age and disability) on a regular basis and ensure that relevant support / services are available to address any needs identified</p> <p>Identify any services where information is not already collected and introduce monitoring arrangements</p> <p>Ensure that the homelessness legislation and associated processes are explained to customers in plain English so that they know what to expect</p>	<p>Monitor the quality of homelessness, housing advice and prevention services (Ref action 1.8)</p> <p>Monitor & review existing prevention initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sanctuary Scheme - RDGS - Money Advice - Tenancy Support - Mortgage Rescue - Mediation - Prevention fund & DHP <p>(Ref action 1.10)</p> <p>Improve communication with customers & monitor customer satisfaction with the homelessness service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Produce, update & advertise service standards - Monitor delivery of service standards and feedback to customers - Introduce regular customer satisfaction surveys <p>(Ref action 2.13)</p> <p>Assess the needs of people from BME communities and ensure that the range of homelessness and housing related support services respond appropriately to their needs (Ref action 2.23)</p>	<p>Officer Time & Existing Budgets</p>	<p>SCH & HST, BSWA, WMP, WMFS, SCT, Private Landlords, Support Providers, CAB, VSC & HA's</p>	<p>Complete quarterly spot-checks of the homeless teams (on-going)</p> <p>Monitor quality of service / customer satisfaction in line with equalities information (September 09)</p> <p>Carry out an evaluation of the process for reviewing homelessness decisions, amend and monitor (July 09)</p> <p>Framework for monitoring homeless prevention initiatives agreed (to include equalities monitoring) (March 09)</p> <p>Regular monthly & quarterly monitoring in place (From April 09) & annual review (April 10)</p> <p>Service standards developed, consulted on and agreed (January 10)</p> <p>Customer satisfaction surveys & service standards developed (Mar 10)</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys sent out and results monitored (March 10)</p> <p>Recommendations from EIA implemented & satisfaction monitored (April 09 & on-going)</p> <p>Needs assessment carried out, gaps identified and changes to existing services recommended (October 10)</p>

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No.	Recommendations to Address Adverse / Differential Impacts Identified	Actions to Overcome Problem / Barrier & Related Action in the Homelessness Strategy (where applicable)	Resource	Lead Role & Key Partners	Milestones & Target Date
3.	For sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief work with SCH to look at including this information on the standard equal opportunities monitoring form	Explore the feasibility of monitoring sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief as part of the standard equal opportunities monitoring of homelessness and housing advice services and agree a timetable to implement any agreed changes.	Officer Time & Existing Budgets	SCH, HST & SMBC Equality & Diversity Officer	<p>Identify services where equal opportunities data is currently monitored and any services where information is not collected (as per action 2) (September 09)</p> <p>Agree approach for future monitoring of sexual orientation and faith, religion or belief (December 09)</p> <p>Depending on the outcome of the above pilot new monitoring arrangements, evaluate response and agree long term process (Pilot starting April 10 & evaluated after 6 months)</p>
4.	Build equal opportunities monitoring and reporting mechanisms into the new IT system for homelessness and housing advice	Develop and Implement new IT system (Abritas) for Homelessness and Housing Advice team (Milestone as part of action 1.8)	Officer Time & Existing Budgets	SCH, HST & Abritas	<p>Steering group / work stream set up to oversee implementation (April 09)</p> <p>Ensure that equal opportunities requirements are part of the specification for the new system (April 09)</p> <p>New system launched and information monitored on a regular basis (linked to action 2) (September 09)</p>

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No.	Recommendations to Address Adverse / Differential Impacts Identified	Actions to Overcome Problem / Barrier & Related Action in the Homelessness Strategy (where applicable)	Resource	Lead Role & Key Partners	Milestones & Target Date
5.	Provide a range of housing options to meet the needs of all potentially homeless households in the Borough	<p>Develop a wider Housing Options and Advice Service (linking with other service providers) through the launch and implementation of “Enhanced Housing Options”</p> <p>Increase pro-active partnership working between different organisations in order to enable a more holistic housing service. (Ref action 1.9)</p>	Officer Time & Trailblazer Funding	SCH & HST , LSC, JCP, EDT, CAB, SCT, Connexions, Pertemps, VCS, Sustain, CAB, HA’s, Private Landlords, AC & CA&RA	<p>Work with JCP to link housing and employment advice (March 09 & On-going)</p> <p>Employment Co-ordinate, Debt Advisor & Development Officer in post (March 09)</p> <p>Reporting & monitoring framework agreed (March 09)</p> <p>Service launched (April 09)</p> <p>Regular monitoring & evaluation of the service (From April 09 & On-going)</p> <p>Exit strategy & future provision agreed (April 10)</p>
6.	Look at Best Practice around the provision of support and services for male victims of domestic violence and ensure that support services are advertised locally	Identify the needs of male victims of domestic violence and investigate opportunities for improving local service provision.	Officer Time No resources identified – explore possible funding streams / bid for additional resources	SCH, HST & SMBC Domestic Violence Co-ordinator	<p>Research best practice and resources available in other Local Authority areas (April 10)</p> <p>Liaise with key partners and stakeholders and establish possible data sources / information on level of need in Solihull (April 10)</p> <p>Identify gaps in provision and make recommendations for future service development (September 10)</p> <p>Work with partners to agree approach to delivery, secure funding and develop preferred options (April 11)</p>

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No.	Recommendations to Address Adverse / Differential Impacts Identified	Actions to Overcome Problem / Barrier & Related Action in the Homelessness Strategy (where applicable)	Resource	Lead Role & Key Partners	Milestones & Target Date
7.	Prevent youth homelessness and ensure that a range of options are available to help young people in housing need	<p>Complete the redevelopment of Yorkswood House and Mildenhall House to provide additional units of supported accommodation for young people aged 16 – 25 (Ref action 1.1 and 2.9)</p> <p>Evaluate the 'crashpad' pilot and assess the need for the permanent provision of emergency / direct access accommodation for young people (16 & 17 year olds) (Ref action 1.11)</p> <p>Implement protocol for vulnerable young people between SCH and Education & Children's Services (Ref action 1.12)</p> <p>Work with local schools and colleges to raise awareness of homelessness and housing advice and prevention services</p> <p>Re-launch the homeless education programme to prevent homelessness amongst young people. (Ref action 2.1)</p> <p>Explore the options for the provision of other forms of temporary / supported accommodation for young people e.g. supported lodgings / nightstop (Ref action 2.19)</p>	Officer Time, Existing Budgets & Trailblazer Funding	HST, SCH, SCT & ECS SHA HCA, Support Providers, Connexions, St Basil's, Support Providers, local schools & colleges & Waterloo HA	<p>Redevelopment work complete (Yorkswood House = October 09 & Mildenhall house = September 10)</p> <p>6-month crashpad pilot complete & full evaluation and report produced with options for future development (June 09)</p> <p>Protocol developed and in place & training provided to all relevant staff (January 09)</p> <p>Implementation of protocol monitored (January 2009 & on-going)</p> <p>Monitor the schools attended by 16 & 17 year olds approaching the prevention team (from April 09)</p> <p>Work with partner agencies and local schools & colleges to establish demand & agree approach to delivery (June 10)</p> <p>Deliver education programme in schools (from September 10)</p> <p>Research best practice & temporary accommodation options available in other Local Authority areas (March 10)</p> <p>Carry out options appraisal and work with partners to develop preferred options (November 2010)</p> <p>Starter Homes pilot evaluated and future</p>

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		<p>Provide starter homes and employment / training opportunities for young people (Ref action 2.20)</p> <p>Develop a life skills pre-tenancy training programme for 16 – 25 year olds (Ref action 2.21)</p> <p>Work with internal and external partners to address the range of issues experienced by young people and provide a 'joined-up' service (Ref action 2.22)</p>			<p>options set out (April 2010)</p> <p>Scope extent and focus of life skills programme with partners (February 10)</p> <p>Develop and agree curriculum & launch training programme (May 10)</p> <p>Work with E&CS to ensure that housing is represented in the delivery of Integrated Youth Support Services (April 09 & on-going)</p> <p>Provide housing advice to young people from a range of locations and work with partners to develop formal referral arrangements (August 2010)</p>
8.	<p>Recognising the fact that not all homeless / potentially homeless households approach the Council for advice and assistance work with partners in the statutory and voluntary & community sector to capture data across the Borough and present a more detailed picture of homelessness</p>	<p>Develop a common monitoring system / approach to sharing data about homeless and potentially homeless households with partner organisations (Ref action 2.14)</p>	<p>Officer Time, Existing Budgets & Partner Resources</p>	<p>HST SCH, MAHF, VCS, SCT, HA's, CAB, CA&RA, BSWA & Support Providers</p>	<p>Establish key partners and the data they collect (June 10)</p> <p>Research national and regional good practice around multi-agency monitoring (June 10)</p> <p>Develop a methodology for data collection and pilot approach (October 10)</p>

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9.	Look at the provision of additional support and accommodation for vulnerable groups	<p>Implement hospital discharge protocol with Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health teams to ensure homeless people with mental health needs are linked into appropriate services (Ref action 1.6)</p> <p>Develop and monitor housing options for customers with identified vulnerability and ensure they are supported to engage in the process and to achieve independent living (Ref action 2.11)</p> <p>Prioritise the development of additional support services and housing options for the following vulnerable groups :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offenders - People with alcohol problems - People with physical and sensory disabilities - People with learning disabilities - Victims of domestic violence <p>(Ref action 3.2)</p>	Officer Time, Existing Budgets & Partner Resources	SCH, B&SMHT & SCT Support Providers, SCT, HA's, VCS, Sustain, E&CS, WMPS, Welcome & BSWA.	<p>Agree process with B&SMHT and pilot protocol (From February 09)</p> <p>Agree final version of protocol and monitor delivery (September 09)</p> <p>Engage with agencies and VCS organisations who support clients & map gaps in current provision for customers with identified vulnerability (September 09)</p> <p>Work with vulnerable clients & their family network to achieve independent living (January 10)</p> <p>Develop materials in user friendly formats that support vulnerable client groups (January 10)</p> <p>Prioritise key areas for future development in Care Trust Strategy (April 10)</p> <p>Establish level of need and type of provision required for each client group (April 11)</p> <p>Review existing contracts assessing quality, performance & demand for services (all existing contracts end March 11)</p> <p>Depending on the outcome of the above and the resources available commission services as appropriate (April 11)</p>