

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2006 - 2008

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|
| 1.1 | The Homelessness Strategy | 1 |
| 1.2 | Why Develop a New Strategy? | 1 |
| 1.3 | Achievements Since 2003 | 2 |

2. HOMELESSNESS IN CONTEXT

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 2.1 | National Strategic Context | 4 |
| 2.2 | Regional Strategic Context | 4 |
| 2.3 | Local Strategic Context | 6 |
| 2.4 | Relationship to Other Local Strategies | 9 |

3. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 3.1 | Introduction | 15 |
| 3.2 | Access to Housing | 15 |
| 3.3 | Services and Accommodation | 18 |
| 3.4 | The Significant Gaps in Provision | 21 |
| 3.5 | The Nature of Homelessness in Solihull | 21 |
| 3.6 | External Review | 30 |
| 3.7 | Performance | 31 |
| 3.8 | Consultation | 32 |
| 3.9 | Assessment of Trends and Risks | 42 |

4. SOLIHULL'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 4.1 | Introduction | 46 |
| 4.2 | Homelessness Strategy: Objectives and Aims | 46 |
| 4.3 | Interagency Partnership Working and Consultation | 46 |
| 4.4 | Strategic Elements | 47 |
| 4.5 | Funding | 56 |
| 4.6 | Managing, Monitoring and Review | 56 |
| 4.7 | Action Plan 2006 – 2008 | 58 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1: | Housing in Solihull - Key Facts and Figures | 7 |
| Table 2: | Key Strategies with Linkages to the Homelessness Strategy | 11 |
| Table 3: | Solihull Housing Register | 16 |
| Table 4: | Homeless Applications | 18 |

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Table 5: | Principle Homelessness Services and Resources | 19 |
| Table 6: | Supporting People Priorities | 21 |
| Table 7: | Number of People Assisted Outside SCH | 29 |
| Table 8: | Supported Housing Projects | 34 |
| Table 9: | Respondents by Ethnicity | 35 |
| Table 10: | Hostel Satisfaction | 36 |
| Table 11: | SCH Satisfaction | 37 |
| Table 12: | Services to Assist Moving to Permanent Accommodation | 38 |
| Table 13: | Responses | 39 |
| Table 14: | Strategic Implications for SCH Housing Options Team | 41 |
| Table 15: | Strategic Members of MAHF | 47 |
| Table 16: | Funding Requirement of Strategy | 56 |
| Table 17: | Action Plan 2006 – 2008 | 58 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Figure 1: | Percentage Lettings in North & South Solihull | 17 |
| Figure 2: | The Number of Lettings 2000 – 2005 | 17 |
| Figure 3: | Number of Homeless Applications per annum | 22 |
| Figure 4: | Main Reasons for Homelessness | 24 |
| Figure 5: | Reason for Priority Need 2004-2005 | 24 |
| Figure 6: | Map of Borough | 26 |
| Figure 7: | Last Accommodation | 38 |

APPENDICES

| | | |
|-------------|---|-----|
| Appendix 1: | Solihull in the Regional Context | ii |
| Appendix 2: | Housing Strategy: Vision and Shortfalls | iii |
| Appendix 3: | Consultation Results | v |
| Appendix 4: | Glossary of Terms | xi |

FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the second Homelessness Strategy for Solihull.

The first Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2003-2008. However, it has been decided to develop a new Strategy now in view of the significant developments that have occurred since 2003. This Strategy will cover the three year period of 2006-2008.

This Strategy has been produced through joint working with a number of other agencies and I would like to express my thanks to them for their commitment and co-operation in this work.

Through wide consultation, Solihull Council has developed a vision for its area as a place *'where well-being, pride and quality of life is enjoyed by all'*.

Consistent with this vision, the Council believes it is very important that homelessness is effectively prevented wherever possible; for those people who become homeless, it is important that there are sufficient facilities to help them, both temporarily and in securing settled accommodation in the longer term.

The vast majority of the previous Strategy's Action Plan has been implemented and has brought significant improvements for homeless or potentially homeless households in Solihull. We are aware however that in many areas services can be further developed and improved and the new Action Plan sets out our specific intentions for this. I will be receiving twice yearly reports on progress against this Plan and these updates will be publicly available on the Council's web site.

In developing this Homelessness Strategy, the Council has consulted with a wide range of people and organisations having a concern about homelessness. There has also been extensive consultation with users of the Homelessness service and homeless people living in supported housing schemes in Solihull.

In delivering the Strategy, the Council relies greatly on the further development and strengthening of partnerships and joint working. I hope that this will evolve further as needs are met, new challenges emerge and fresh views arise from our partners.



Councillor Ian Courts
Cabinet Member for Regeneration November 2005



Homelessness Strategy 2006-2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solihull's first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003. Since this time there have been important developments in the local, regional and national homelessness context. This Strategy has therefore been developed to reflect these changes and take forward further improvements in meeting the challenge of homelessness in Solihull.

The core objective of this Strategy is to prevent homelessness in Solihull and to provide a quality response to those affected by homelessness.

This objective will be achieved through the following four aims:

- To improve homelessness prevention, moving away from 'crisis management' and towards a more preventative approach.
- To meet housing needs through the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation and supported housing.
- To work more effectively with all relevant statutory and voluntary organisations.
- To improve services to customers.

Although there have been many achievements against these since 2003, significant challenges remain if homelessness in Solihull is to be tackled effectively. Although overall levels of homeless applications have fallen from 1471 in 2003/04 to 1094 in 2004/05, the proportion of cases assessed as statutory homeless has remained fairly consistent at 820 (2003/04) and 774 (2004/05).

The main causes of homelessness in Solihull have been consistent over a number of years, and are broadly in line with national and regional trends. For the period 2003-2005 these were:

| Reason for Homeless Application, 2003 - 2005 | % |
|---|----------|
| Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate | 27.0 |
| Relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate | 11.2 |
| Relationship breakdown (Violent) | 16.8 |
| Relationship breakdown (Non-violent) | 7.0 |
| Other (Violence outside the home, return from abroad, homeless in an emergency, sleeping rough in hostel) | 19.8 |
| Mortgage/rent arrears, termination of tenancy, been in institution or care | 18.1 |

A particular pressure on the homelessness service is from 16-17 year olds who are not parents or do not have a care background.

Homelessness is an important issue for Solihull. Solihull's Community Strategy recognises the importance of achieving successful and inclusive communities.

In addition to the local context, tackling and preventing homelessness is an important priority for Government. The ODPM has set challenging targets in relation to homelessness and produced a number of important policy guides. Also the development of regional work in relation to housing, homelessness and supporting people is

significant both in improving the understanding of local problems, in securing capital funding and achieving joint working between local authorities and other providers.

The Homelessness Review (Section 3 of the Strategy) is based on robust data and thorough consultation with relevant organisations and service users.

The Review shows that the problem of homelessness in Solihull reflects the shortage of social rented housing, the difficulty of accessing private rented housing and the high 'entry level' house prices relative to the incomes of those in housing need and vulnerable households.

At the same time the causes of homelessness are many and complex. A wide range of local strategies therefore play an important role in helping to meet the overall aims of the Homelessness Strategy. Solihull Council is committed to being 'One Council' and ensuring people receive excellent services. The contribution of local strategies to maximising the prevention of homelessness and enabling people to succeed in their current home is therefore very important. Where people do need to leave accommodation it is important that this is done in a managed way and that there is continuity with regard to people's access to social care, health and educational services.

There is a range of homelessness services and supported housing provision in the borough and this has expanded following the introduction of supporting people. However there remain significant gaps in provision where attention needs to be focused.

The Review discusses the findings of consultation, relevant external review and the strategic implications that flow from this.

The Review concludes with an assessment of future homelessness trends and risks. Of particular significance here is the pressure that will occur on the social rented sector as a result of the North Solihull Regeneration Programme. The ability to develop new social rented housing in other parts of the borough and ensuring that new policy initiatives (such as choice based lettings) provide homeless and vulnerable people with the support and assistance they need is also very important.

Section 4 sets out the Homelessness Strategy, including a detailed Action Plan.

The Strategy recognises the importance of tackling and preventing homelessness through a multi-agency approach. The content of the Strategy arises from the outcome of the Homelessness Review.

The delivery of the Strategy is primarily dependent on achieving improved co-ordination and working of all organisations and agencies that have an interest in homelessness and housing advice. The need for specific resources to help develop the Strategy is set out.

An Action Plan has been developed that contains specific and measurable targets. The key priorities of the Strategy are to,

- Develop a multi agency monitoring system to highlight the true extent of homelessness in the borough.
- Explore the possibility of providing additional supported housing for young people.
- Continue to assist SCH to provide a Housing Options service based on prevention.

- Support voluntary organisations to continue to provide prevention initiatives in the borough, e.g. Rent deposit scheme and STaMP.
- Maximising the use of permanent & temporary housing in the borough.

The Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis with progress reports on it being publicly available on the Council's web site.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Homelessness Strategy

1.1.1 Homelessness is a key strategic issue for Solihull Council and its partners. Homelessness influences, and is influenced by, a range of other local strategies and plans and is important in relation to objectives set out in Solihull's Community Strategy and the Council Plan.

1.1.2 This Strategy aims to address homelessness in its broadest sense. It does not solely limit its focus to people who make contact with the Council's homelessness service or who are 'statutory homeless'. The Strategy is therefore concerned, for example, to address the needs of those at risk of becoming homeless; people who might have become homeless intentionally, people without a 'priority need' and homeless people in the borough who do not have a 'local connection'.

1.1.3 The Strategy has been developed having regard to other relevant local strategies, recognised good practice and in consultation with homeless people and agencies that work with homeless households.

1.2 Why Develop a New Homelessness Strategy?

1.2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a requirement on local authorities to review homelessness in their area and develop a strategy to effectively tackle it.

1.2.2 Solihull's first Homelessness Strategy was published in July 2003. The Strategy was significant in that it set out the need to move from a 'crisis management' approach towards a more strategic response to homelessness. The Strategy emphasised the prevention of homelessness and developing a wide range of support services to enable people to manage in their homes.

1.2.3 The first Homelessness Strategy was intended to cover the years 2003-2008. However it has been decided to develop a new Strategy now in view of the significant developments that have occurred since 2003. These are:

- The conclusion of the implementation phase of 'Supporting People' arrangements whereby local authorities, Commissioning Bodies and providers are taking responsibility for planning and delivering high quality provision of housing with support.
- The creation of an Arms Length Management Organisation (Solihull Community Housing [SCH]) in April 2004. SCH is responsible for managing the housing service, including homelessness and housing advice services, on behalf of Solihull Council.
- An Audit Commission inspection of the housing service provided by SCH, including homelessness and housing advice services in November 2004.
- The Housing Quality Network, a specialist housing and homelessness consultancy, were commissioned by ODPM to independently evaluate all local authority homelessness strategies in 2004. Their assessment of Solihull's Strategy raised a number of improvements and these have been incorporated into this Strategy.

- The development of a new 'fit for purpose' Housing Strategy for Solihull in 2004 covering the period 2004-2008.
- The publication in 2005 of a West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Homelessness Strategy and a Regional Supporting People Strategy.
- The publication of the Governments Homelessness Strategy, by the ODPM in March 2005, 'Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives'.
- The approval by Solihull Council of plans for the regeneration of north Solihull, in May 2005. This is a 15 year project to transform the areas of Chelmsley Wood, Smiths Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge by bringing about improvements to homes, schools, health facilities, shops, community facilities and environment and job opportunities. The plans have significant implications for the social rented sector in north Solihull.

1.3 Achievements Since 2003

1.3.1 Since the publication of Solihull's Homelessness Strategy in 2003, there have been a number of significant achievements and service developments:

- The delivery of higher levels of permanent affordable housing in 2003/4 and 2004/5 compared to earlier years.
- Opening of a new 9 place supported housing scheme for Young Parents in April 2004.
- Securing funding, detailed planning consent and start on site of a supported housing scheme for women suffering domestic abuse. This will open in Summer 2006.
- Securing additional affordable accommodation with support for people with learning disabilities.
- The introduction of a mediation service, provided by RELATE for households made homeless or threatened with homelessness due to relatives or friends no longer being willing to accommodate them
- Commissioning St.Basils to carry out its 'StaMP' project (Schools Training and Mentoring Project) in local secondary schools for Year 10/11 children.
- Publication of a Homelessness Services Directory for Solihull, to ensure all advice agencies have comprehensive and up to date information on available services in the borough.
- The implementation by SCH of a number of important service improvements. These include:
 - The creation of a centralised Housing Options Team, providing improved consistency and sharing of expertise in homelessness administration, housing advice and the allocation of social housing.
 - A customer survey of the homelessness and housing advice service was conducted by an independent research company.
 - Appointment of a Temporary Accommodation Officer in June 2004. Amongst other things this ensures that all people entering temporary accommodation access essential services such as health and education.
 - The provision of emergency packs by a local charity to people accessing temporary accommodation in a crisis.
 - Improving the quality of temporary accommodation, including works to ensure this is accessible for the physically impaired.

- Joint homelessness training to advice workers from SCH and other advice agencies. This has been delivered by Shelter and has focused on legal updates and the prevention agenda.
- Appointment of two Welfare and Prevention Officers, whose primary aim is to prevent homelessness.
- Creation of a Money Advice Team providing free advice to help people manage their tenancies more successfully.
- The launch of Home Starter packs for young homeless people moving into their first secure council tenancy.

1.3.2 All of these initiatives rely on the Council and SCH working effectively with a wide range of partners. These include the Primary Care Trust, Registered Social Landlords, the voluntary sector, and other specialist providers. New initiatives introduced in 2005 and later years will be dependent on good partnership working.

1.3.3 A summary of progress against the Action Plan contained in the 2003 Homelessness Strategy is available on the Council website.

Summary

- Homelessness is an important issue for Solihull
- There have been a number of important changes since the first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003, meaning that a new Strategy is needed now
- Since 2003 there have been many achievements but significant challenges remain if homelessness in Solihull is to be tackled effectively

2. HOMELESSNESS IN CONTEXT

2.1 National Strategic Context

2.1.1 The broad aim of Government policy is to:

'Create prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities for the 21st century, places where people want to live, that promote opportunity and a better quality of life for all'.

2.1.2 National policy in relation to homelessness is to tackle homelessness more effectively and offer a wider range of preventative measures. The Government has introduced important targets to sustain reductions in rough sleeping at one third of 1998 levels, or lower, and end the use of 'Bed and Breakfast' hotels for homeless families with children, except in short-term emergencies.

2.1.3 In March 2005 ODPM published its National Homelessness Strategy 'Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; changing lives'. This sets out the Government's plans on reducing homelessness further and halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010.

2.2 Regional Strategic Context

2.2.1 Solihull is a part of the West Midlands conurbation and is situated between the cities of Birmingham and Coventry. Solihull's other local authority neighbours are North Warwickshire, Warwick, Stratford-Upon-Avon and Bromsgrove. Appendix 1 shows the position of Solihull in the wider region.

2.2.2 The West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy was approved by the Regional Housing Board, the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the ODPM in June 2005. It covers the period to 2021.

2.2.3 The Regional Housing Strategy identifies key priorities for the West Midlands and ensures effective linkages with regional economic and planning strategies. The Strategy defines sub-regional 'Housing Market Areas' (HMAs) and provides a basis on which decisions on housing capital investment can be made.

2.2.4 Significantly for the purposes of this Homelessness Strategy, the Regional Strategy notes that Solihull has one of the most severe affordability problems in the region and is one of six areas in the region identified as a 'homelessness hotspot'.

2.2.5 The Regional Housing Strategy is based on a comprehensive evidence base and supported by associated strategies. The two significant ones in relation to Solihull's Homelessness Strategy are the Regional Homelessness Strategy and the Regional Supporting People Strategy. The full range of regional work is available at:

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=66>

2.2.6 The key points emerging from the Regional Homelessness Strategy are that:

- The majority of homeless households need access to decent affordable accommodation

- Homelessness prevention is emphasised
- There is a need to address peoples wider support needs by engaging with health, social care, employment and criminal justice services
- Official homelessness figures are likely to only be the tip of the iceberg as many people at risk of homelessness may not apply as homeless to local authorities

2.2.7 The Strategy notes that there appears to be some difference in the way the 'gate-keeping' role is being played by local authorities, with different percentages of homeless applications being accepted as being in priority need.

2.2.8 Birmingham is the West Midlands regional hotspot for homelessness, but in the 'Central HMA', Solihull (along with Sandwell and Telford and Wrekin) stands out as regional hotspots and foci for homelessness presentations. Regionally levels of acceptances are in excess of regional and national averages in Birmingham, Solihull, Stoke, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.

2.2.9 Of particular concern within the Central HMA is homelessness amongst three groups. These are youth homelessness, BME homelessness and homelessness amongst both refugees and failed asylum seekers.

2.2.10 Noting the plans for housing market restructuring across the region, the Regional Homelessness Strategy says that the impact of clearance and new development on access to housing for socially excluded groups must be carefully monitored and assessed.

2.2.11 The Health Impact Assessment for the Regional Homelessness Strategy identified a number of important issues to be addressed in relation to homelessness management. Examples of such issues include:

- Joint working between local housing, health providers and the voluntary sector to achieve shared outcomes of reducing homelessness and improving the health of homeless people.
- Improvements to healthcare for homeless families in temporary accommodation and improvements to access to primary care for homeless people. Examples of primary care improvements include initiatives such as reshaping existing GP services, providing health outreach, implementing a hospital discharge policy to include accommodation and informing other agencies how homeless people can register with a GP.

2.2.12 As part of the work to develop the Regional Housing Strategy, a Regional Supporting People Strategy was also commissioned.

2.2.13 The Strategy notes the importance of improved partnership working (between housing and care functions, for example) and joint working within and between Administering Authorities (AAs).

2.2.14 Shared approaches between AAs provide opportunities for:

- Assessing the regional impact of local decisions or proposals to meet supported needs.

- Information sharing and benchmarking.
- Resource sharing to commission services having a regional or sub regional importance.

2.2.15 The significant points of the Regional Supporting People Strategy in relation to this Homelessness Strategy are:

- Tackling homelessness effectively for some people in need requires the effective provision of support and care services.
- Capital investment must be prioritised to the development of services to meet gaps identified in local Supporting People Strategies and the Regional Strategy. Capital and revenue funding alignment is needed to provide sustainable Supporting People programmes.
- The implications of housing market restructuring proposals on people with support needs must be carefully assessed.
- The importance of securing permanent affordable accommodation for people when they are ready for independent living.
- The importance of floating support and other more independent forms of accommodation whilst also ensuring this accommodation is part of a balanced community and not 'ghettoised'.

2.3 Local Strategic Context

2.3.1 Solihull is a polarised borough with regard to its socio-economic profile. Although the traditional image of the borough is one of relative affluence, the areas of Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge and Smiths Wood have a very different social and economic context and, according to the 'Index of Deprivation' are within the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the country.

2.3.2 Table 1 summarises some important population and housing facts relevant to homelessness in Solihull.

Table 1: Housing in Solihull - Key Facts and Figures

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Population: 199,517 (21% of people are aged 0-15, 62% aged 16-64 and 17% 65 and older) | |
| An ageing population. Between 1991 and 2001 the percentage of persons aged 75 and over increased from 5.9% of the population to 7.6%. Population projections for the borough show that persons aged 65 and over will increase as a percentage of the population, reaching 23.5% by 2027 | |
| Number of Households: 80,930 | |
| BME population (2001): 5.4% (2.9% in 1991) | |
| Households living alone: 25% (5.5% in 1951) | |
| Homes Owner Occupied: 78.0% | Rented from the Council: 13.6% |
| Rented from a private landlord: 3.6% | Rented from a RSL: 2.6% |
| Miscellaneous: 2.0% | |
| The average household income is £26,082 | |
| The average property price in Solihull was £230,350 (Land Registry, September 2005) | |
| Minimum 'entry level' house price £90,000 | |
| The average weekly private sector rent in the West Midlands is £117 (RICS January 2005) | |
| The average weekly RSL rent in Solihull is £62.43 (CORE, 2005) | |
| The average weekly Solihull Council rent is £52.80 (April 2005) | |

2.3.3 Further background information on Solihull is available in the Council's Housing Strategy 2004-2008 (www.solihull.gov.uk/policies/housing/strategy), and more generally on the Council's web site at www.solihull.gov.uk/about/facts/default.htm.

2.3.4 Following wide consultation Solihull's first Community Strategy 'A Place for People' was published in April 2003 and covers the period to 2013. The Primary Care Trust, West Midlands Police, Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, the voluntary sector and business partnership worked with Solihull Council to produce this.

2.3.5 The Community Strategy for Solihull shares the Government's aim for successful and inclusive communities. The Council recognises that the prevention of homelessness and ensuring that accommodation and support is available for people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, makes an important contribution to achieving this shared aim.

2.3.6 Homelessness prevention and the provision of effective responses to those individuals and families who become homeless are relevant to each of these themes. Specifically, the 'quality of life' theme includes the objective of:

'ensuring quality and choice in the local housing market across all tenures, with the availability of sufficient 'decent', 'affordable' and 'sustainable' housing to meet the needs of all the boroughs residents, including those with special needs'.
(Solihull's Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008)

2.3.7 Solihull's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) oversees the delivery of the Community Strategy. The LSP has a number of 'theme groups' to focus on specific parts of the Strategy. The Homelessness Strategy is monitored by the Learning and Inclusion thematic group.

2.3.8 The specific contribution of Solihull Council in helping to achieve the goals of the Community Strategy is set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2003 – 2006. This sets out five Council objectives:

- A brighter future for our children.
- Increasing the quality of life.
- Closing the gap of inequality.
- Treating people as individuals within a diverse community.
- Providing good value services.

2.3.9 Within these objectives eight 'Step Change Improvement Priorities' have been identified. These include,

- Improving educational achievement in all schools.
- Achieve two star ratings from the Social Services Inspectorate for children's services and adult services.
- Deliver the Decent Homes standard for Council housing.
- Deliver physical, economic and social regeneration solutions for the borough, with a particular focus on north Solihull.
- Increase community consultation.

2.3.10 In a number of different ways, achieving the aims of the Homelessness Strategy will therefore make an important contribution to fulfilling the vision of the Community Strategy and the Council Plan.

2.3.11 Solihull Council is committed to providing an effective service for all people who are threatened with or become homeless. A key principle of 'One Council, One Vision' is to make customer improvements by making contact easier and improving services. Solihull Council is committed to being corporate at the point of service delivery.

2.3.12 In particular it is essential that the Council's social care function takes account of the Homelessness Strategy. In Solihull the main ways that this occurs in relation to this Strategy is as follows:

- Joint work with local planning teams within the Adult Social Services Directorate
- Involvement of the Housing Strategy team in the 'Supporting People Core Strategy Group' which reports to the 'Commissioning Body'
- Involvement of SCH in the 'Supporting People Provider Group'

2.3.13 Liaison at operational levels encouraged by the 'One Council' vision (see 2.3.11 above) and strengthened where appropriate by agreed protocols and joint training.

2.4 Relationship to Other Local Strategies

2.4.1 This Homelessness Strategy cannot achieve its aims if it exists in isolation from other local strategies, as homelessness has a strong relationship to many other issues. This is described in more detail in Section 3.

2.4.2 The Council and partners are responsible for producing a range of strategies that have links to homelessness. Solihull Council recognises the importance of these in preventing and tackling homelessness in the borough.

The key important strategies are outlined below:

Housing Strategy

2.4.3 The Strategy sets out the broad housing objectives to ensure that the Council and partner agencies meet local, regional and national policy priorities in the period to 2008. The Housing Strategy clearly sets out the housing vision for the borough (see Appendix 2).

2.4.4 Comparing the vision to the shortfalls, the Housing Strategy identifies five Strategic Housing Objectives:

1. Intervene in the working of local and sub-regional housing markets to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
2. Invest in the borough's housing stock to improve its condition and amenities.
3. Invest in neighbourhoods to promote attractive, safe and healthy environments.
4. Encourage the provision of good quality housing services.
5. Ensure that vulnerable people are supported in the community.

This Homelessness Strategy is relevant to all of these Objectives, and in particular that of ensuring that vulnerable people are effectively supported.

Children and Young Persons Strategy

2.4.5 This Homelessness Strategy recognises the close links to children and young people's welfare. There is a new Statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Children and Young People's Plan for April 2006. This will include clear strategic links to the Homelessness Strategy.

Supporting People Strategy

2.4.6 The delivery of the Supporting People Programme is essential for the continued improvement of housing related support services for vulnerable people.

2.4.7 Solihull is one of 14 'Administering Authorities' in the West Midlands region. The Supporting People Strategy for Solihull was published in 2005 and covers the period to 2008/2009. The Strategy sets out the current range of services commissioned, assesses need and identifies priorities for the future. The Strategy's priorities are clearly outlined in the Homelessness Review.

2.4.8 Solihull Supporting People team are successfully meeting the requirement of the ODPM programme to review all housing related support services in the borough by the 31st March 2006.

2.4.9 As a result of robust monitoring arrangements being put in place expenditure on the Supporting People Grant (SPG) is currently within budget for 2005/06.

2.4.10 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has agreed an inspection programme with the Audit Commission for the Supporting People programme inspectors. The inspection for the Supporting People Team in Solihull will take place in August 2006.

Other Related Strategies

2.4.11 Table 2 summarises the main relationships of Solihull's Homelessness Strategy to other local strategies.

2.4.12 This is not an exhaustive list but does include all the strategies that have been highlighted by the ODPM and other good practice guidance as key documents.



St Basil's STaMP Project in action

| Table 2: Other Key Strategies with Linkages to the Homelessness Strategy | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| NAME OF STRATEGY | DATE OF STRATEGY | OFFICER RESPONSIBLE | KEY STRATEGIC LINKS TO THE HOMELESS STRATEGY |
| Domestic Violence Strategy | 2003-2005 | Domestic Violence Co-ordinator | DV Strategic Group to look for opportunities to protect women in their own homes through provision of alarms, eviction of perpetrators, community support & home safety measures. (Thus reducing the need to become homeless). |
| Local Preventative Strategy | 2005 – 2013 | Children's Strategy Manager | To promote awareness of housing and homelessness amongst young people in Solihull. To work effectively with young parent schemes ensuring residents are aware and can access appropriate services |
| Unitary Development Plan | 2001 - 2011 | Head of Planning Services | To promote the delivery of affordable housing. Policy H4 in the UDP 'First Review' requires developers of strategic and suitable windfall sites to contribute to affordable housing on sites of 0.5 or more hectares or more than 15 dwellings. |
| Sure Start | 2004-2006 | | Sure Start aims to provide children with integrated and high quality services so they can grow up to contribute positively to their communities and society as a whole. This includes better outcomes for all children, reduction of poverty, increased opportunities for parents to effectively participate in the labour market, and better outcomes for communities, including less crime; higher productivity; a stronger labour market; and the building of a society. This assists to ensure tenancy sustainability for a vulnerable group. |
| Health Inequalities Strategy | April 2005 – March 2008 | Consultant in Public Health | The health inequality Action Plan recognises the homeless as a vulnerable group with known health inequalities. It does not have actions specific to the homeless or any other of the named vulnerable groups but proposes an equity audit approach to resource allocation. It is envisaged that now that the Action Plan has been finalised, more specific actions plans would be developed for each of the vulnerable groups. To this end, discussion needs to take place on how to implement the actions for homeless persons. |

| NAME OF STRATEGY | DATE OF STRATEGY | OFFICER RESPONSIBLE | KEY STRATEGIC LINKS TO THE HOMELESS STRATEGY |
|--|---|---|---|
| Empty Homes Strategy | 2003 | Team Supervisor (Community Regulation) | <p>To develop actions to ensure properties are re-occupied to provide housing for those in need.</p> <p>We will work closely with Registered Social Landlords to look at measures for acquisition and/or leasing of vacant dwellings.</p> <p>We will encourage the re-development and the refurbishment of empty homes as a source of affordable homes wherever possible.</p> |
| Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and Forward Action Plan 2005/6 | 1998-2009 10 year Government Strategy. Solihull Teenage Pregnancy Strategy dated 2001 | Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator | <p>Achieve a reduction in the risk of long term social exclusion for teenage parents and their children.</p> <p>Teenage Pregnancy Forward Action Plan 2005/6 This Action Plan now incorporates the 'Every Child Matters' 5 Outcomes, one of which is 'Achieving Economic Well-being' Under this heading the DfES have included this statement: All lone parents under 18 who cannot live at home are provided with accommodation with support to make a successful transition to independent tenancies. Also included in this section is 'All teenage parents are provided with a co-ordinated package of support'.</p> |
| Enabled not Disabled | 2004-2009 | Social Care Policy Manager | Work with housing providers to deliver specialist housing schemes, lifetime housing and better use of adapted properties to meet needs. |
| Anti – Social Behaviour | 2005-2008 | Community Safety Officer | Improving the quality of life for people affected by ASB and creating a safer environment. Homelessness due to violence or harassment from non-associated people is a major cause of homelessness in Solihull. |
| Crime & Disorder Strategy 2005-2008 (Drug Action Strategy is now part of this Strategy) | 2005 - 2008 | Drug Action Team Co-ordinator | The treatment systems need to create good exit routes out of treatment and be well integrated into other systems of care offering wider social support. This includes housing, education, training and employment opportunities. |

| NAME OF STRATEGY | DATE OF STRATEGY | OFFICER RESPONSIBLE | KEY STRATEIGIC LINKS TO THE HOMELESS STRATEGY |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Learning Disability Housing Strategy | October 2003 | Learning Disabilities Team Manager | <p>Identify how many people with learning disabilities are likely to wish to move accommodation in the next 5 years.</p> <p>Working with families in order to reduce need for emergency housing when caring capacity reaches an end.</p> <p>Develop wider range of supported living options to meet needs.</p> <p>Agreed joint working arrangements to ensure people with learning disabilities are not excluded from ordinary housing options.</p> |

Summary

- Homelessness is an important priority for the Government. The ODPM has set challenging targets in relation to homelessness and has produced a number of important policy and good practice guides.
- The development of regional work in relation to housing, homelessness and supporting people is significant both in improving the understanding of local problems, in securing capital funding and achieving joint working between local authorities and other providers.
- Solihull's Community Strategy recognises the importance of achieving successful and inclusive communities. Solihull Council is committed to being 'One Council' and ensuring people receive excellent services.
- A wide range of local strategies can be seen as playing an important role in helping to meet the overall aims of the Homelessness Strategy.



Mason's Way – Waterloo Housing Association

3. HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This Section comprehensively reviews the extent and nature of homelessness in Solihull. The Review:

- Describes the difficulty of accessing suitable housing in Solihull.
- Sets out the relevant services that exist and those that are under-provided.
- Examines the nature of homelessness in the borough, making relevant regional and national comparisons.
- Takes account of specific recommendations arising from external scrutiny that has occurred since the first Homelessness Strategy was published in July 2003.
- Describes the consultation feedback that informed the Review.
- Concludes by considering the likely future trends in homelessness in Solihull.

3.1.2 In reviewing the nature of homelessness in Solihull, regard has been had to information from the following sources:

- Consultation with service users and relevant organisations working in Solihull.
- Data provided on a quarterly basis to ODPM (the 'P1E' return).
- Information from Solihull Council's 'local planning teams' in Adult Social Services.
- Assessments of need set out in the Council's Supporting People Strategy 2004/5 – 2008/9.
- Housing management information on the availability of affordable rented properties from SCH and RSLs.
- Data collected from a number of agencies who work directly with homeless people in Solihull.

3.2 Access to Housing

3.2.1 There is a significant difficulty in accessing housing in Solihull. This can be seen in both accessing social rented housing, obtaining a private rented tenancy and in the level of 'entry level' house prices compared to average household income.

3.2.2 Solihull is a popular residential area. Migration data shows that Solihull has a significant net inflow of households from Birmingham with far fewer leaving the borough for other areas. Proximity to rail and road networks, an expanding economy, a high quality environment and high achieving schools helps to create a high level of demand for housing in the borough.

3.2.3 The principal source of permanent affordable accommodation in Solihull occurs through existing Council properties becoming vacant for re-letting. The typical level of tenancy changes (excluding those transferring between Council properties) is approximately 7-8% a year.

3.2.4 In the period since 1981 there has been a trend towards greater home ownership due to the Right to Buy and new private housing completions. Since 1980/81 a total of

6,779 council properties have been sold through the Right to Buy. Only 25% of homes sold under the Right to Buy in this period have been replaced by new social housing provision.

3.2.5 The Council has good working relationships with RSLs with over 60% of lettings going to nominations from the Housing Register. In 2004/5 year 62.2% of RSL lettings, from a total of 127, went to Council nominees (CORE lettings summary statistics for 2004/5).

3.2.6 The nature of the properties becoming available for re-letting is uneven. For example 2.4% of the Council's housing stock has four or more bedrooms but in the 2004/5 year less than 1% of properties becoming available for re-letting have this number of bedrooms. Conversely, bedsit and one bedroom properties account for 40.5% of the Council's housing but 49% of Council re-lets were of this size. The practical mismatches that can occur between homeless households and dwellings in terms of their size, location and timing often makes it difficult to secure appropriate permanent accommodation for them.

3.2.7 Data on the Housing Register and available supply is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Solihull Housing Register

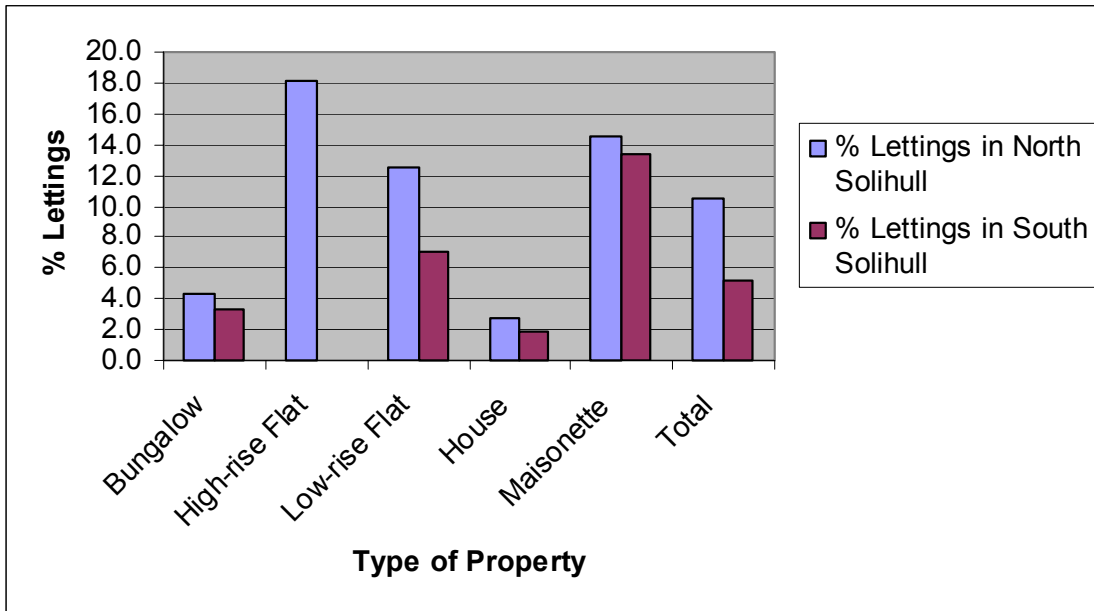
| Bedrooms Needed | Applicant | Existing tenant of Solihull Council | Total | Number of Properties Available for Reletting* |
|---|------------------|--|--------------|--|
| Bedsit/One | 2751 | 587 | 3338 | 568 |
| Two | 975 | 651 | 1626 | 452 |
| Three | 403 | 278 | 681 | 202 |
| Four or more | 50 | 45 | 95 | 8 |
| Total | 4179 | 1561 | 5740 | 1,263 |
| Average Length of Time on Register (at 30.9.05) | 80 weeks | 103 weeks | 91 weeks | |

(As at 30 September 2005)

*Council and RSL social rented properties let during 2004/5

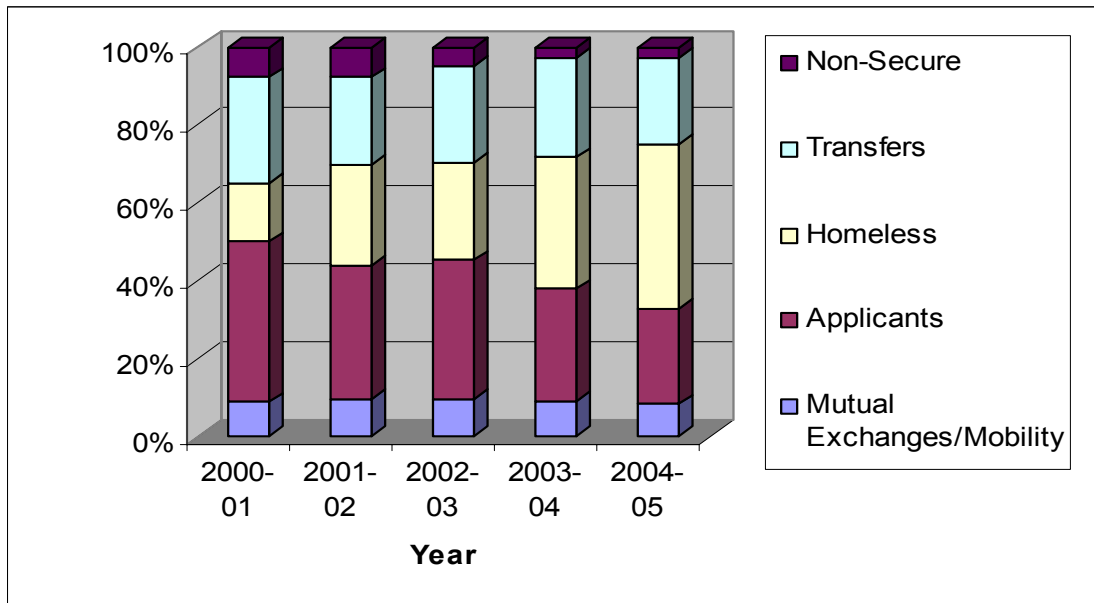
3.2.8 Approximately 75% of Council housing is situated in north Solihull. Properties in the south of the borough tend to become available for letting less frequently and tenants tend to remain in their properties for longer. The graph below shows lettings as a percentage of the Council's stock in each of the areas of north Solihull and south Solihull.

Figure 1: Percentage Lettings as a percentage of stock in North and South Solihull



3.2.9 Over the five-year period 2000 – 2005, the number of lettings to homeless households has increased, and this has had a significant impact on lettings to those on the Housing Register.

Figure 2: The Number of Lettings 2000 - 2005



3.2.10 The proportion of lettings going to homeless households has increased significantly from 20% in 2000/01 to 47% in 2004/05. The proportion of lettings to people from the Housing Register has decreased from 44% in 200/01 to 26% in 2004/05.

3.2.11 There is an important relationship between letting of housing through the Housing Register and homelessness presentations. Each year a significant proportion of the homeless households who are allocated a social rent tenancy are also on the Housing Register.

Table 4: Homeless Applications

| | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Percentage of Registered Homeless Applicants | 18% | 33% | 47% |
| Percentage of Unregistered Homeless Applicants | 82% | 67% | 53% |

3.2.12 Solihull Council has decided to retain a Housing Register for the allocation of Council housing, concluding that this is an effective method of measuring housing need.

3.2.13 However the Cabinet Member for Regeneration has given approval to develop a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system for the borough. This is likely to be developed in 2006/07 and Solihull will therefore meet the Government's CBL target of all local authorities having a choice based system by 2010.

3.2.14 Private rented housing accounts for just 5.2% of households (Census 2001). The Regional Homelessness Strategy 2005 highlights Solihull as having the smallest private rented sector in the West Midlands region. Rent levels are generally some 15% higher than elsewhere in the West Midland Metropolitan area and market demand is strong, particularly at the high quality end. There is significant demand from company relocations and high earners on short-term contracts, so access to the sector for local people on lower incomes is difficult. The Buy To Let market is very strong in south Solihull. There is also demand for lets in north Solihull, but limited supply. Typical households taking a private let are single people or couples without children or people who wish to rent while selling a home elsewhere before buying locally. There is much less activity on letting to benefit-dependent people. The Council's information shows that many small landlords, rather than large businesses, account for lettings to people on benefits.

3.2.15 First time buyers can find great difficulty entering the housing market, even with former Right to Buy stock. Research by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University for the 2005 Regional Housing Strategy looked at housing affordability in terms of the relationship between income and entry level house prices. This showed that only two areas in the West Midlands had a more serious problem of affordability than Solihull.

3.3 Services and Accommodation

3.3.1 Table 5 below sets out the principal homelessness services and resources that are available in the borough.

Table 5: Principle Homelessness Services and Resources

| Group | Provision |
|--------------|---|
| General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour access to the homeless hostels (16 bedspaces) through SCH 'Out of hours' service for households who are believed to be eligible, homeless and in priority need. • 11 self-contained flats for use as temporary accommodation • Housing Options Team. • A rent deposit scheme established by Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness. • A multi-agency protocol to deal with Anti-Social Behaviour. • Information leaflets on housing associations, accommodation in the private rented sector, and hostels in Birmingham. • CAB and the Chelmsley Advice and Resources Agency provide generic advice services which include housing advice. |
| Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour access to the homeless hostels (16 bedspaces) through the SCH 'Out of hours' service (1 being specifically used for households with no adult males in the family). • Solihull Police Domestic Violence Unit. • A specialist Women's Refuge managed by Birmingham Women's Aid (Due to be open in Summer 2006). • A registered charity for victims of domestic violence (MABL Trust). • 20 place Floating Support scheme for victims of domestic violence, managed by Birmingham Women's Aid. • Rent deposit scheme which assists in obtaining private rented tenancies. • Advice services to tenants of private landlords provided by Solihull Council's Community Services Directorate. |
| Young People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Geraldine Court' and 'Galeno Place' are managed by Bromford Housing Group and provide a total of sixteen flats for vulnerable young families aged 16-29. • Six place 'Floating Support' scheme for young families. • Morris House and Gilson Way, managed by Stonham provide 15 places in north Solihull for single young people aged 17-24. • 5 place Floating Support schemes for single young people aged 16-25. • A 5 place supported housing project at Mildenhall House in south Solihull managed by St Basil's for ages 16-25. • The 6 place Pathways supported housing project – four places for young people leaving care and two places for referrals from the Housing Options Team. • A Training Flat for young people leaving local authority care, enabling them to get practical experience of managing a tenancy. • A 12 place Floating Support scheme for young people leaving or who have left local authority care. |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Learning Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 9 place Keyring floating support scheme to assist people with a learning disability to be housed semi-independently. • The development of a specific housing scheme for people with learning disabilities in the Wharf Lane development, due to be completed during 2006. |
| Mental Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 9 place generic Floating Support scheme which can assist people with mild mental health problems who experience difficulties maintaining a home. • A 22 place support service designed to assist persons with enduring mental ill health referred predominantly by statutory mental health teams. • A scheme which provides self contained, secure tenancies for 17 people with support. |
| Physical and Sensory Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 6 place floating support service to provide support to people with physical disabilities. • A 6 place support service for people who have hearing disabilities. |
| Asylum Seekers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated Asylum Seeker Team. • All NASS accommodation in Solihull is provided in Council owned properties. 91 furnished local authority-owned properties are currently used as NASS accommodation. |
| Drug and/or Alcohol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 24 place Floating Support scheme for people with drug or alcohol problems. • The charity Aquarius provides support and assistance to people experiencing difficulties with alcohol. |
| Offenders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'BORRIS' project assists some ex-offenders in settling into the community. • Morris House is a 9 place hostel for 16-25 year olds. Six places are reserved for referrals from the Probation Service. • Fry Housing Trust provides 29 units of accommodation for ex-offenders. • Provision for 4 places of floating support for high-risk offenders. • Fry Housing Trust runs 2 floating support projects, 1 for mentally disordered offenders and the other for serious repeat offenders. |
| Travellers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 15 place floating support scheme for travellers. |
| BME | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Equalities Officer is playing a major role in incorporating the BME perspective into all new scheme proposals and housing management practices. • An in-depth study of BME housing needs and aspirations in the Eastern Corridor of Birmingham and north Solihull. • A 15 place floating support scheme for BME people. |

3.4 The Significant Gaps in Provision

3.4.1 Although there have been important and welcome additions to the range of housing related support services (particularly floating support) since 2002, there are some significant gaps in provision.

3.4.2 Solihull's Supporting People Strategy highlights a wide range of supported housing priorities for the borough. Those that have the greatest relevance to homelessness are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Supporting People Priorities

| Client Group | Supporting People and Homelessness Priority |
|--|--|
| Young Vulnerable People & Care Leavers | Expand supported lodgings for those who require additional support. Consider the need for a direct access hostel for young people leaving care and other vulnerable young people under 25 years of age. |
| Women at risk of Domestic Violence | Identify suitable move on accommodation which can be supported by the floating support service. Develop culturally sensitive services for women from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Promoting safer homes for women suffering domestic violence. |
| People with HIV/AIDS | Access to good quality mainstream housing with support. Further research to establish the support needs of this group is required. |
| Homeless people – singles & families | Provision of supported accommodation for young people and people dependent on drugs. |
| Rough Sleepers | Continue to monitor the numbers of rough sleepers and ensure there is no significant increase. Improve access to general needs accommodation with floating support to assist tenancy sustainment. |
| Refugees | Continue to monitor trends in settlement of refugees particularly those who are unaccompanied minors. |
| Teenage parents | Monitor the expanded range of provision to ascertain its effectiveness and the nature and level of any outstanding need. |

3.5 The Nature of Homelessness in Solihull

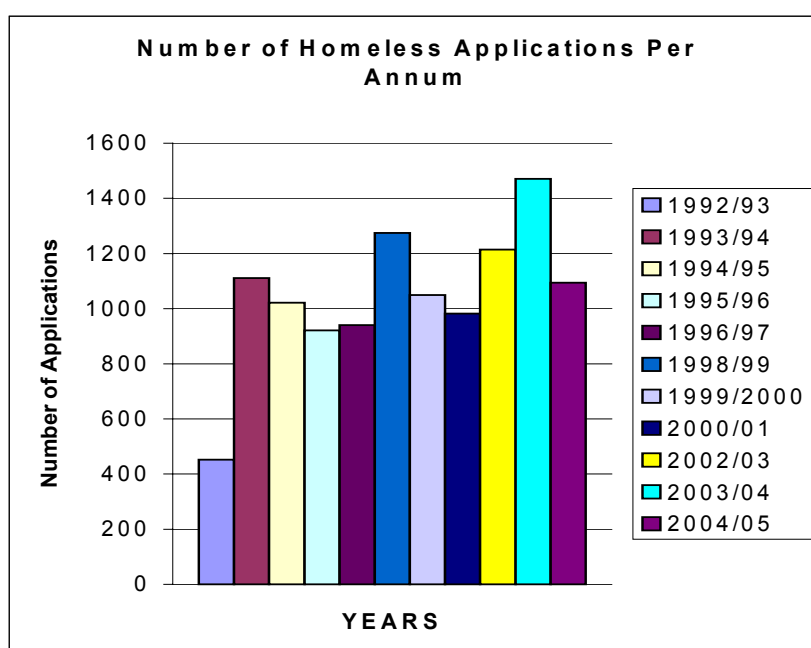
3.5.1 On average 25,000 households apply as homeless to local authorities in the West Midlands each year. Solihull is one of 6 local authorities in the West Midlands where levels of homelessness acceptances are well in excess of regional and national averages.

3.5.2 When compared to its neighbours and England as a whole, Solihull has a higher than average level of homelessness and priority need acceptances. Birmingham City Council is the only local authority with a higher rate per 1,000 population in the West Midlands.

3.5.3 This data suggests that there may be the potential in Solihull to improve the quality of early preventative advice. This could help to reduce the severity of problems giving rise to homelessness and so lessen the number of households accepted as statutory homeless. This information also indicates a need to examine the homelessness assessment process to ensure it incorporates the latest case law. These points need to be set in the context of the fundamental issue discussed in 3.2 above regarding the shortfall of affordable housing.

3.5.4 The overall level of homelessness applications within Solihull has remained relatively stable over the last ten years, see Figure 3 below. There has been a decline in the number of applications in 2004/05, though there has not been a comparable decrease in the number of households 'accepted as homeless'.

Figure 3: Number of Homeless Applications per annum



3.5.5 Homelessness data over the last five years for Solihull show that the main reasons for losing settled accommodation were,

1. Parents or other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate. This has been the major reason for homelessness over a long period and remains responsible for approximately 40% of cases in 2004/05. It has increased markedly over the previous 5 years.
2. The violent breakdown of relationship with a partner. This has decreased markedly since the publication of the first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003. However it still counts for approximately 16% of homeless acceptances. The 'other' category includes people who are homeless due to violence or threats of violence from non-associated people e.g. neighbours, local youths. This is a significant issue and the Regional Homelessness Strategy identifies Solihull as a hotspot for this cause of homelessness.

3. Non-violent relationship breakdown. This continues to be a major reason for homelessness in Solihull and accounted for 7% of homelessness acceptances in 2004/05. This has remained consistent between 7 and 8% over the last 5 years.
4. 'Other' reasons for loss of accommodation. This has grown steadily in recent years and accounts for 19% of cases. This includes people who left their previous accommodation due to violence or threats of violence from people living outside the home. This category also includes people homeless in an emergency e.g. fire or flood, people sleeping rough or living in a hostel.
5. The loss of rented or tied accommodation due to the termination of an assured short hold tenancy or other reasons. Accounts for approximately 11% of homeless acceptances in Solihull. In particular it is a very important factor in south Solihull where there is a very significant shortage of social housing.
6. Homelessness arising from leaving institutional care (such as hospital, prison, a residential home). This is not numerically significant at 4% but is important with regard to ensuring people receive appropriate support and the effectiveness by which the Council works with other organisations
7. Loss of accommodation due to mortgage and rent arrears. Not a significant cause of homelessness (3%). However the Council and SCH need to ensure that if this increases due to a volatile housing market, appropriate actions are identified and actioned.



Young Parent's Scheme – Opened in 2004

Figure 4: Main Reasons for Homelessness

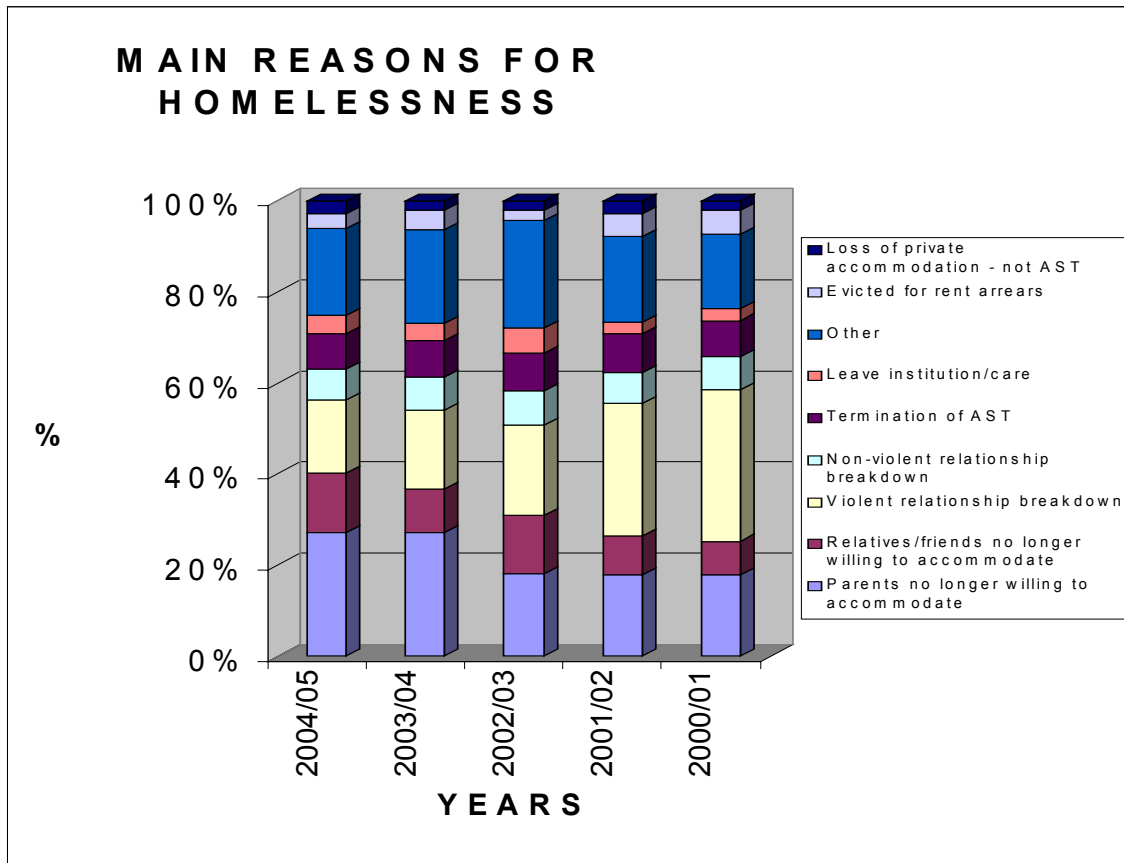
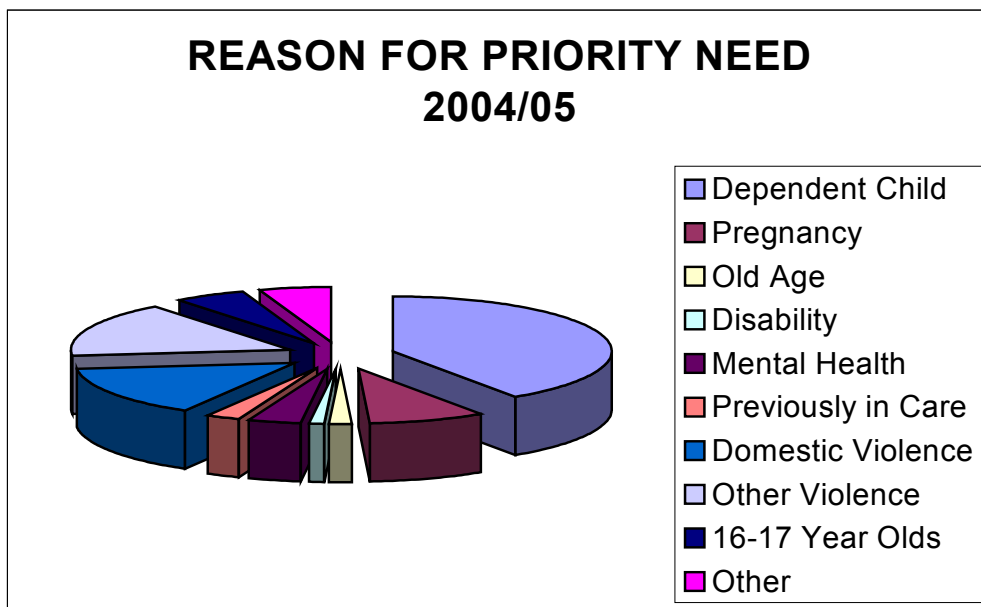


Figure 5: Reason for Priority Need 2004-2005



3.5.6 The P1E return for 2004/05 shows that 31% of households who were assessed as being in priority need were so due to domestic violence or violence from someone who is not an associated person. This appears to be a very large percentage as it equates to 241 households who were victims of threats or actual violence in the borough within 12 months and were deemed as vulnerable as a direct consequence of these threats.

3.5.7 The ODPM has identified Solihull as having 50% of homelessness acceptances to people who were in priority need due to the fact they were deemed as vulnerable. This is the second highest percentage in the region and compares to a regional average of 36%.

3.5.8 The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) dimension of homelessness shows that BME groups are disproportionately highly represented among homeless applicants. In Solihull 7.7% of all homeless applicants were members of BME communities for the period 22/11/04 – 07/07/05. This compares to 5.4% of households in Solihull coming from BME backgrounds (Census 2001).

3.5.9 Non-priority households account for approximately 18% of homeless applications in Solihull (2004/05 P1E return).

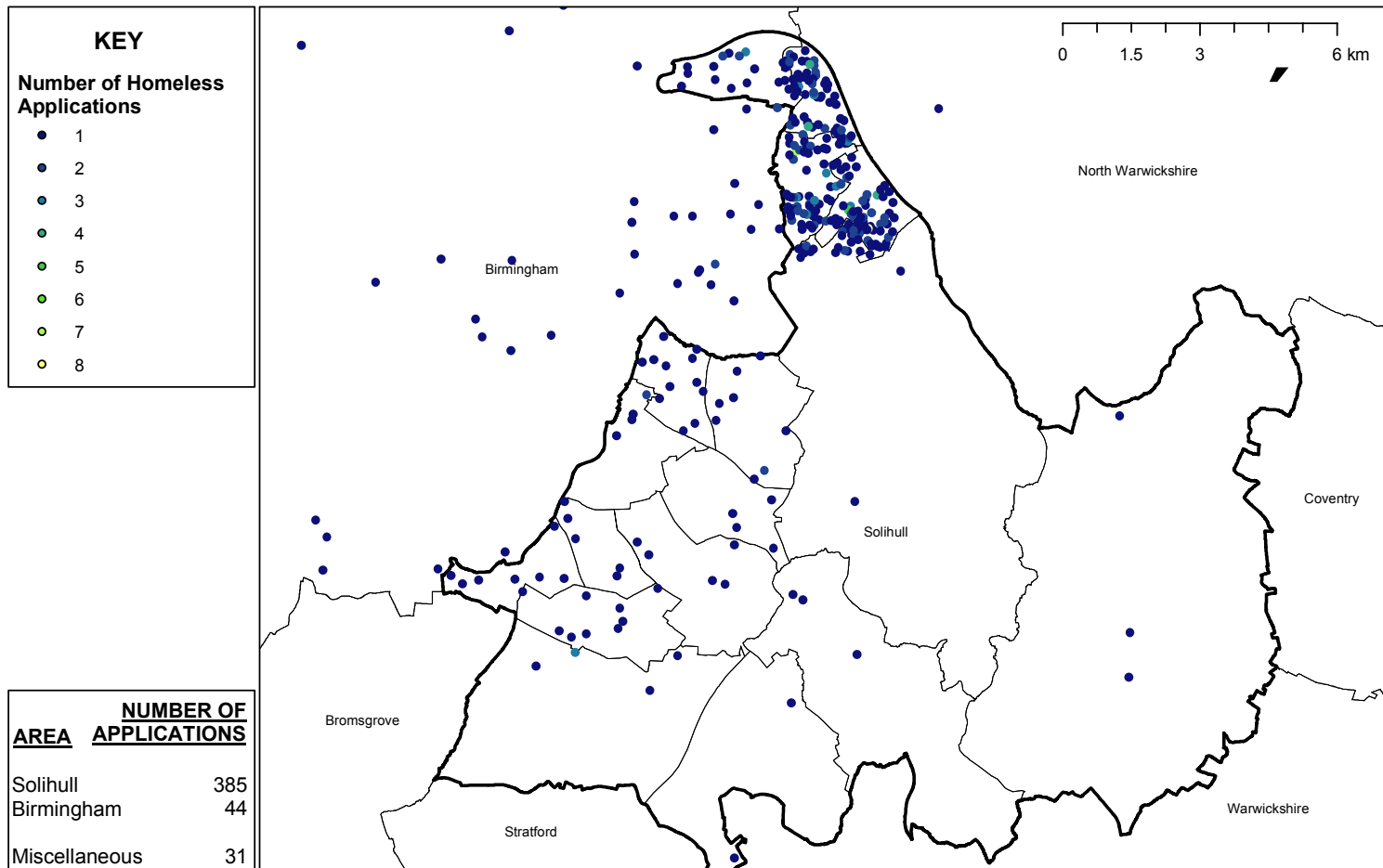
3.5.10 Just less than 2% of homeless applicants receive an Intentionally Homeless decision.

3.5.11 In order to ensure the Council and SCH understand the location of homelessness applications the location of the last address of people approaching SCH as homeless was mapped. The majority of homeless applications in Solihull came from addresses in the wards of Smiths Wood, Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge. The map below highlights that the significant majority of applications (58%) are from the wards of Smiths Wood, Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge. 25% of applications came from the remaining wards in Solihull, 10% from Birmingham and 6% either with incomplete postcodes or from outside of Solihull and Birmingham.

3.5.12 Although there are fewer homelessness presentations in south Solihull, any housing provision is likely to be in north Solihull. This reflects the distribution of social rented housing in the borough.

Figure 6: Map of Borough

Location of Homeless Applications Received by Solihull MBC
22/11/2004 - 07/07/2005 (By Postcode)



3.5.13 To complete this description of homelessness in Solihull, Sections a) to j) assess the nature of homelessness with regard to a range of vulnerable groups.

a) Childless Young People aged 16-17

- The numbers within this client group are rising. In June 2005 the largest bed queue for SCH properties is for 1-bed flats.
- The number of 16 and 17 year olds approaching as homeless who are not parents and have not been in care is growing.
- The major reason for homelessness in this age group is relationship breakdown with parents or guardians.
- There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are a lot of “sofa surfers” (young people who move between a range of address’s on a regular basis) throughout the borough.

b) Older People (including frail, supported needs, mental health, dementia)

- Older people with a medium to high level of need are assisted in finding appropriate housing by Solihull Council’s Adult Social Services Directorate.
- It is comparatively easy to re-house this age group in the area of their choice because of the wide availability of local authority accommodation for older people in Solihull. However a significant percentage of this accommodation is in low demand bed-sit type accommodation.

c) People with Learning Disabilities

- Adult Social Services assist people with moderate to severe learning disabilities in finding appropriate housing. This group seldom approaches the Council’s homelessness service for assistance under homelessness legislation.
- Plans to meet the housing needs of this client group, from registered care homes and long-stay hospitals to semi-independent living, are laid out in the Learning Disabilities Housing Strategy.
- There is a range of supported accommodation for this client group, but supply at various stages of the need spectrum is insufficient.

d) People with a Physical or Sensory Disability

- The Council’s Adult Social Services assist people with moderate to severe physical or sensory disabilities in finding appropriate accommodation. They seldom approach the Council’s Homelessness Service for assistance under homelessness legislation.
- When a household which contains a member who has a physical or a sensory disability approaches the Homelessness Service for assistance under homelessness legislation, Housing Advisors would work with the Occupational Therapy unit to identify a suitable property and ensure that the necessary adaptations are carried out.

e) Rough Sleepers

- Solihull Council has consulted with a range of organisations on the extent of rough sleeping in Solihull. It is estimated that approximately 6-8 people, mostly older men, sleep rough in the borough.
- An Action Plan will be developed and will include the objective of ensuring that a contingency plan for dealing with rough sleepers is developed involving a number of key agencies. This will ensure that any rough sleepers who are identified in Solihull will receive a service to assist them to access appropriate services including housing.

f) Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- There are approximately 140 asylum seekers in Solihull. The total number of persons with refugee status or extended leave to remain is at present unknown, as a large number of former asylum seekers leave the borough once their refugee status or leave to remain is confirmed.
- Asylum seekers in Solihull are predominantly single males. However a number of these men are joined by their families once they have been dispersed to NASS accommodation in the borough.
- The current NASS contract is to be revised in 2006 which may lead to Solihull Council having a decrease on their current contract.

g) People with HIV/AIDS

- There are no records of any homelessness applications from this client group. However this could mean that some HIV positive people do not declare their illness to the Housing Options Team and are therefore not recorded as such.

h) People with Drug and/or Alcohol Problems

- There are very significant problems in providing appropriate temporary accommodation for these client groups. Hostels throughout the region are increasingly reluctant to admit people who are taking drugs.
- Alcohol and drug misuse can be a major factor in tenancy breakdown.
- Drugs can be a factor in a range of homelessness categories such as young people being asked to leave by parents and or other family members, domestic violence and violence outside the home.

i) Offenders (including those with a mental disorder)

- The numbers within this group are increasing. Higher levels of Home Detention Curfew Orders (introduced to help reduce the prison population) are a key factor behind this increase.
- A major problem can occur when people are released into the community and then do not receive any support. Some return to prison soon after their release.

- The Youth Offending Team assists between 12 to 24 young people aged 16 and 17 each year who cannot return home. Often they “sofa-surf” or are referred to bed and breakfast accommodation in Birmingham.

j) Travellers

- Solihull has a significant number of ‘Romany Gypsies’ of English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish background. The land that their caravans occupy is in the south and rural areas of the borough, is privately owned and permission has been granted. There are no recent records of any applications for assistance under homelessness legislation from this client group.

3.5.14 The data described above is based on people accessing the homelessness and advice service provided on the Council’s behalf by SCH.

3.5.15 In order to supplement this data a letter was sent to key agencies requesting information on the number of homeless people who accessed their services. This data is crude and does not have any mechanism to account for double counting of people who access more than one service to obtain advice and assistance.

3.5.16 Nevertheless the table is of use in showing the numbers of people assisted outside of the SCH role. The table below details the number of clients who have approached agencies during a specified period (each organisation provided statistics for varied periods). The table includes a column that calculates the annual number of people accessing the services who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Table 7: Number of People Assisted Outside SCH

| Organisation | Period of data | Number of Clients | Estimated Annual Number of Clients |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| SMBC 16+ Team | Jan 05 – April 05 | 17 | 51 |
| Birmingham Women’s Aid | 2003/04 2004/04 | 16 21 | 16 21 |
| Fry Housing Trust | 2003 2004 | 63 Referred 31 Housed 107 Referred 47 Housed | 63 Referred 31 Housed 107 Referred 47 Housed |
| Shelter | 2004/05 | 74 Housing Queries | 74 |
| Welcome | November 04 – April 05 | 54 people registered as NFA | 108 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Morris House and Gilson Way | January 2003 - January 2004 January 2004 - January 2005 | 79 Referred 29 Housed 135 Referred 37 Housed | 79 Referred 29 Housed 135 Referred 37 Housed |
| Solihull CAB | April 04- Feb 05 | Housing Debt queries = 208 Actual/threat homeless=142 | Housing Debt queries = 227 Actual/threat homeless = 155 |
| SCAH – Rent Deposit Scheme | 2003 2004 Jan – April 2005 | Referred = 7 Accepted= 5 Referred = 10 Accepted= 3 Referred = 8 Accepted= 2 | Referred = 24 Accepted= 6 |
| Mildenhall House | 2003/04 2004/05 | 35 Referred 8 Housed 36 Referred 9 Housed | 35 Referred 8 Housed 36 Referred 9 Housed |

3.5.17 The table highlights that all of the supported housing projects receive a large number of referrals for potential residents that are unable to move into the projects. This could be because they do not meet the criteria or usually because the hostels have no vacancies when the referral is made.

3.5.18 It is clear that in order to ascertain the true extent of homelessness in the borough it is essential that Solihull explores multi-agency monitoring systems that already exist in other areas. Once an appropriate model has been found MAHF will be tasked with implementing a monitoring scheme, with the support of Solihull Council.

3.6 External Review

3.6.1 This Review has taken account of specific recommendations arising from external scrutiny that has occurred since the first Homelessness Strategy was completed.

Audit Commission Inspection

3.6.2 Solihull Community Housing went through a comprehensive Audit Commission inspection in November 2004; this included the homelessness and housing advice service. SCH obtained a 2* rating with 'promising prospects of improvement'

3.6.3 A copy of the full inspection report is available at:

www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/SCH%20About/sch_our%20performance.html

3.6.4 The Housing Inspectorate identified a number of key improvements that had been made since the 'indicative' inspection in February 2004 and noted a number of strengths of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Service.

- Bed and Breakfast accommodation is not used for homeless households.
- Speed of making homeless decisions with 99% of all decisions being made within 33 days.

- The employment of a Temporary Accommodation Officer to provide support to people in temporary accommodation was identified as a key improvement
- The introduction of a number of preventative schemes

3.6.5 A number of weaknesses were identified and remedying these has been incorporated into the Strategy and the detailed Action Plan (Section 4.7).

- The homeless leaflet describes the out of hours free phone number as the out of hours repairs number, which is confusing.
- An inconsistent approach to record keeping, with different forms being used and not all case files included a clear case history.
- It is unclear who the ultimate decision on homelessness reviews rests with and the Council needs to clarify this.
- There is insufficient kitchen and dining facilities for the number of families in each hostel.
- No criteria in place to determine what type of temporary accommodation should be used for very vulnerable people.
- No consideration has been made to using other forms of temporary accommodation.

ODPM evaluation

3.6.6 The ODPM commissioned an independent evaluation of all local authority Homelessness Strategies and Reviews in 2004. The evaluation for Solihull's Strategy was reported to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, and an Action Plan was developed to deal with the weaknesses identified. The weaknesses have either been resolved in this new Strategy, or prior to its development.

ODPM Homelessness Implementation Team

3.6.7 The ODPM team visited Solihull in November 2004. The purpose was to suggest some areas which might be incorporated into Solihull's prevention strategy. All of the recommendations made have been incorporated into the Action Plan and have been reported to the Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

3.7 Performance

3.7.1 Solihull's situation in relation to key Government homelessness targets is extremely positive.

- Levels of rough sleeping in the borough are kept as close to zero as possible.
- Homeless households have not needed to be placed in 'Bed and Breakfast accommodation.
- The number of people living in temporary accommodation is lower than the national average. On average these households remain in temporary accommodation for significantly less time than in other local authorities.

3.7.2 There are a number of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) that are calculated and returned to the Audit Commission in relation to homelessness and

housing advice. In addition to these, SCH are required by the Council to monitor a number of local indicators.

3.7.3 Performance against key indicators relating to homelessness shows a good level of performance.

3.7.4 In addition the Council performs well on other relevant indicators to homelessness, for example,

- The number of empty Council homes is low. For example at 1 April 2005: 1.87% of properties were void. The average void period for local authority housing in 2004/5 was 11days
- The Council's performance on the accuracy of housing benefit payment calculations and the speed with which changes in circumstances are carried out puts it in the 'top quartile' of local authority performance.

3.8 Consultation

3.8.1 A number of consultation methods have been used to ensure effective user involvement and a wide range of agencies have also been contacted.

3.8.2 The following consultation has occurred:

- An in-depth consultation of service users of SCH's Homelessness Service by an independent research company.
- A questionnaire exercise to capture the views of all people living in supported housing accommodation in Solihull.
- Discussion of the draft Strategy at a Tenants Rights tenants forum.
- Consultation with organisations, both face-to-face meetings and by letter requesting statistical information.
- A half day consultation event to discuss the Review and the Strategy. See Appendix 3 for details of attendees and results.
- A presentation to, and discussion with, the LSP Learning and Inclusion 'wider group'.
- A strategic and operational MAHF meeting dedicated to the development of the Strategy.

3.8.3 These are discussed below. The implications for the Strategy are highlighted.

Service Users

3.8.4 213 customers who have accessed the homelessness service participated in the survey, which was conducted by an independent research company. A combination of questionnaires and telephone surveys were used to gather customer's opinions

3.8.5 A number of positive comments were made by customers regarding the service, for example:

- 76% of customers describe the homelessness officer they saw as helpful, 68% say 'friendly'.
- 80% of clients were satisfied with the initial advice they received.
- 79% felt the officer dealing with their application explained the Council's responsibilities to them as a homeless person well.
- Taking everything into account, 71% were satisfied with the application process overall.
- 81% of clients, either 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the type of accommodation and 80% with the help, advice and information received from their landlord.

3.8.6 The main service improvements are noted below, alongside actions that have been implemented as a direct consequence of the report.

1. The need for an electronic database to record homeless applications was highlighted as a recommendation to improve data collection.

SCH have introduced a Homelessness module on the integrated housing management IT system. Further work is required to fully implement this.

2. Approximately 20% of customers believe that the homeless officers explained their responsibilities, options and time-scales poorly.

Training for Housing Advisors and Homelessness Officers was provided in September 2004 and a comprehensive policy and procedures manual for staff has recently been implemented. Finally, a new customer leaflet will be produced explaining the process an applicant is expected to go through and will be given to them at their initial contact with the team.

3. 26% of customers' first contact with the homeless service was by the telephone and 27% of applicants stated that they found it either fairly or very difficult to contact their designated homelessness officer.

A new duty phone system now operates which is staffed from 9.00am to 5.20pm continuously (4.30pm on a Friday). This number is given to all homeless applicants.

4. 28% of applicants stated they were not aware of their right to a review of the decision. All decision letters clearly state this information, as it is a statutory obligation.

SCH have looked again at the decision letters to ensure that this information is clearly spelt out in a customer friendly manner.

5. Fewer than 30% of customers who received negative decisions felt that explanations of private rented accommodation and hostels were explained well. These would be non-priority households whose housing options are extremely limited.

Historically the service provided to non-priority households has been limited but SCH are now currently piloting a non-priority 'drop-in' service for customers. Also

the information held by the Housing Options Team will be updated and revised regarding these options.

Supported housing residents

3.8.7 In May 2005 the Council circulated a draft questionnaire to the managers of the supported housing projects in Solihull for consultation. Amendments were made to the form, which were then distributed to each scheme.

3.8.8 The questionnaires were distributed to residents, by the hostel managers, who also offered assistance to those people who experienced difficulties in completing the forms.

3.8.9 The consultation responses are significant in helping to inform the Strategy.

3.8.10 The supported housing projects involved in the consultation and the numbers of residents are detailed below:

Table 8: Supported Housing Projects

| Name of Hostel | Provider | Target Group | Number of Residents | Number returned | % Returned |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Dormer & Harris House | Fry Housing Trust | Single Homeless Male ex-offenders aged 17+ | 26 | 25 | 96% |
| Galeno Place | Bromford Housing | Families aged 16-29 with children | 9 | 8 | 89% |
| Geraldine Court | Bromford Housing | Families aged 16-29 with children | 7 | 7 | 100% |
| Highfield Farm | Solihull Community Housing | Priority Need Households, female adults and children only | 7 | 5 | 71% |
| Kingshurst Way | Solihull Community Housing | Priority Need Households including single people | 9 | 6 | 67% |
| Mildenhall House | St Basils | Single Homeless People aged 16-25 | 5 | 5 | 100% |
| Morris House & Gilson Way | Stonham Housing Association | Single Homeless People aged 16-25 | 15 | 7 | 47% |
| | | TOTAL | 78 | 63 | 81% |

3.8.11 The respondents by ethnicity are shown in the following table.

Table 9: Respondents by Ethnicity

| Ethnicity | Number of responses | Percentage |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| White British | 48 | 75% |
| Mixed white & Black Caribbean | 4 | 6% |
| Black or Black British Caribbean | 6 | 10% |
| Black or Black British African | 1 | 2% |
| Black or Black British other Black | 1 | 2% |
| Other Ethnic Group | 1 | 2% |
| No Answer | 2 | 3% |
| Total | 63 | 100% |

3.8.12 It is recognised nationally and in statistics produced by SCH that homelessness disproportionately affects people from BME communities. In regards to people living in temporary accommodation in Solihull, 22% of the sample was none white, significantly higher than the Census figure of 5.4%. Interestingly, not one of the households identified themselves as Asian whereas the Census identified the Asian population of Solihull as 2.54%.

Reason for Homelessness?

3.8.13 Nearly a quarter of respondents were homeless due to leaving prison. This is due mainly to the fact that the Fry hostels provide housing for ex-offenders. The other reasons are comparable with the main reasons for homelessness of households who approach SCH. This highlights friends/family being unwilling or unable to accommodate as the major reason for homelessness in Solihull.

What Services could have Prevented Homelessness?

3.8.14 A majority of respondents, 53%, stated that no services could have prevented them becoming homeless. However, nearly 1 in 4 of respondents, (23%) stated that timely housing advice could have prevented them becoming homeless.

3.8.15 Strategic implication: It is essential that the SCH Housing Options Team and other services are advertised as widely as possible to ensure that by intervening as early as possible homelessness can be prevented.

Move-on options

3.8.16 The expectation of 85% of respondents was that they would move onto either a Council or a housing association property. 12% stated that they would be moving into the private rented sector once they left their current hostel.

3.8.17 Strategic implication: This emphasises the need to ensure that the limited potential of the private rented sector in Solihull is maximised and this becomes a viable housing option for homeless households.

Current Hostel

3.8.18 The table below highlights the fact that the majority of residents consider their current hostel to be either excellent or good.

Table 10: Hostel Satisfaction

| | Excellent | Good | Poor | Very poor | No answer | Total |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Level of support from staff | 38 | 21 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 63 |
| Facilities | 25 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 63 |
| Location | 35 | 25 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 63 |
| Appropriate to your needs | 27 | 32 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 63 |
| Security | 28 | 29 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 63 |
| Overall opinion of hostel | 30 | 30 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 63 |
| Total Responses | 48% | 46% | 3% | 1% | 2% | 100% |

3.8.19 Strategic implication: This underlines the need to continue to work closely in partnership with providers to maintain service quality and achieve continuous improvement.

Approaches to Other Agencies for Advice or Information

3.8.20 Households were asked to indicate which agencies they had approached for assistance as a homeless person. 25% had approached no agencies to assist them when they became homeless other than their current hostel. 54% of people who completed the questionnaire had approached SCH for advice and assistance with housing advice, and an additional 25% had been to Solihull Connect, the Council's frontline customer service.

3.8.21 Strategic implication: Ensure that all advice agencies in the borough understand what resources are available to help homeless people and those threatened with homelessness, and also the purposes of the Homelessness Strategy.

SCH Homeless Service

3.8.22 Only 38% of people living in hostel accommodation in Solihull had approached SCH as a homeless person, prior to moving into their current hostel.

3.8.23 Strategic implication: This highlights the fact that the number of people registered as homeless by SCH is probably only the tip of the iceberg and further strengthens the need to establish a multi-agency monitoring system with agencies who work with homeless households in Solihull to identify the true need.

3.8.24 The table below highlights that approximately 30% of households who approached SCH were unhappy with aspects of the service. It needs to be remembered that a number of these households would have received a non-priority decision and therefore would not be owed the full housing duty.

Table 11: SCH Satisfaction

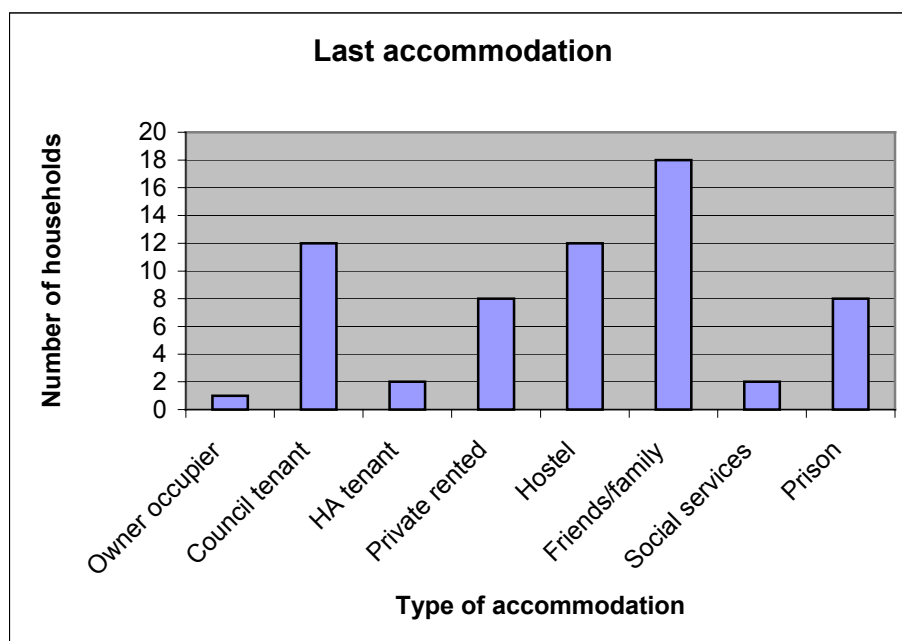
| ANSWER | Very Well | Fairly Well | Fairly Poorly | Very Poorly | Total |
|---|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Explaining its responsibilities to you as a homeless person | 12 | 10 | 2 | 0 | 24 |
| The homeless interview | 9 | 11 | 4 | 0 | 24 |
| Keeping you informed regarding your application | 11 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 24 |
| Explaining the options available to you | 12 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 24 |
| Explaining how long the application process would take | 9 | 10 | 3 | 2 | 24 |
| Overall how well was your homeless application dealt with | 12 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 24 |
| TOTAL | 65 | 49 | 21 | 9 | 144 |

3.8.25 Strategic implication: This highlights the need for improvements that have been outlined in the Action Plan (see Section 4.7) and the need for an on-going customer feedback questionnaire to be administered.

Previous accommodation

3.8.26 The graph below identifies households' previous accommodation prior to moving into their current hostel. 22% of households had previously been a council or housing association tenant. Depending on the reasons for the loss of this accommodation it may have an affect of not being able to readily access social housing when required to move on.

Figure 7: Last Accommodation



Help to Move into Permanent Housing

3.8.27 Households were asked what would help them move into permanent accommodation, and were requested to tick as many boxes as appropriate.

3.8.28 The 5 main services that would assist people to move and their strategic implication are summarised below:

Table 12: Services to Assist Moving to Permanent Accommodation

| 5 main services identified that would help people move into permanent housing | Strategic implication |
|--|--|
| If I was offered housing by the council | Need to ensure those eligible are on the Housing Register and are offered housing advice |
| If I was offered support in my new property | Ensure people who are offered permanent accommodation are aware of the range of floating support available |
| Help to apply for housing by a support/ advice worker | Ensure hostel staff are aware of housing options |
| If I got employment | Raise issue with Access to Employment Group (AEG) |
| If I got help with benefits | Ensure that agencies that provide benefits advice are targeted at people living in temporary accommodation |

3.8.29 A number of action points (see Section 4.7) have been developed as a direct consequence of the questionnaire exercise with people living in temporary accommodation.

Tenants Rights Panel

3.8.30 The development of the Homelessness Strategy and the homelessness service were discussed at a meeting of the Tenants Rights forum in May 2005.

3.8.31 The ideas behind the Strategy were discussed and the benefits of achieving a service based on prevention.

3.8.32 There was discussion over competing priorities of different groups for limited social housing. The Tenants Panel agreed that it is important that the general public understands this and that as far as possible the scope for rumours and myths to build up regarding preferential treatment for different groups be dispelled.

Consultation with Organisations

3.8.33 The Operational MAHF meeting that was held in March 2005 and the Strategic MAHF meeting in April focused on the development of the new Homelessness Strategy for Solihull. These meetings were attended by 29 people representing 16 organisations or Council Directorates.

3.8.34 The meetings focused on the following key questions:

1. What evidence do organisations collect regarding homeless people who access their services?
2. What gaps in services exist, and how can they be filled?

3.8.35 The table below details the responses received from the group and also how the Homelessness Strategy will attempt to tackle the issues identified.

Table 13: Responses

| QUESTION | ANSWERS | STRATEGIC IMPLICATION |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>What evidence is collected?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was clear that organisations collect data in a variety of formats and it would be difficult to 'analyse' the data collectively. | <i>Investigate different multi-agency monitoring systems that could be replicated in Solihull.</i> |
| <i>What gaps in services exist</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The need for 'Night Stop' (a scheme where local families offer young homeless people very short-term accommodation - one or two nights).• More use needs to be made of rent deposit scheme (RDS).• More affordable housing is needed, especially in south Solihull so that people can remain within their local area.• More education of young people needs to be done, to prevent homelessness. | <i>Develop a Nightstop scheme for Solihull by April 2007.</i> <i>Work to develop the RDS.</i> <i>Continue to maximise the use of the UDP to provide affordable developments in Solihull.</i> <i>Continue to support the STaMP scheme in Solihull.</i> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be an exploration of other housing options, including the private rented sector. • Explore bringing abandoned properties back into the market. • Rents in the private sector are often too high. • Young people often find it difficult to access the private rented market. • Debt counselling needs to more prevalent for young people. • The need to expand the Domestic Violence Sanctuary scheme to the private sector. • Direct access accommodation for young people. • accommodation for schedule 1, arson and high risk offenders and people with a mental health need. | <p><i>Develop links with the private rented sector to ensure a viable housing option.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure the effective implementation of the Empty Homes Strategy.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure Discretionary Housing Benefit payments are promoted and the funding utilised.</i></p> <p><i>Investigate the need for a rent in advance scheme.</i></p> <p><i>Promote the existing provision to organisations working with young people.</i></p> <p><i>Re – launch the sanctuary project and role out to all tenures.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to explore the feasibility of direct access hostel provision.</i></p> <p><i>Work with partners to explore feasibility of specialist provision of accommodation for various client groups.</i></p> |
|--|--|---|

3.8.36 In order to supplement the consultation with the Multi-Agency Homeless Forums some key agencies and Council teams were consulted separately. Semi-formal interviews took place based on the following topics:

- What are the main issues faced by your team/organisation when considering homelessness?
- Any ideas on how to resolve these issues?
- Any glaring gaps in service for homeless households in the borough?
- Any protocols or working arrangements required between the Housing Options Team and other agencies or Council Directorates?
- Any actions you would like to see included in the new Homeless Strategy?
- Any services you would like to see investigated, with the aim of securing funding and implementing these services in the future?

Table 14: Strategic Implications for SCH Housing Options Team

| ORGANISATION | MAIN ISSUES | STRATEGIC IMPLICATION |
|---|--|--|
| <p>SCH Housing Options Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hostel provision for 16/17 year olds and people with mental health issues and alcohol/drug issues, preferably emergency access. • Lack of clarity regarding the effectiveness of existing prevention schemes. • Need to consider reviewing existing letters and notices. • Issues regarding the provision of furniture etc for hostels. • Concern regarding the impact of the regeneration initiative on letting to homeless households. • Need closer links to ASB Team. • Expansion of rent deposit scheme to include priority homeless cases. | <p><i>Develop a Nightstop scheme for Solihull by April 2007 & explore supported lodging schemes.</i></p> <p><i>Review current prevention schemes to ensure effectiveness.</i></p> <p><i>Carry out extensive review of all SCH paperwork.</i></p> <p><i>Work with SCH to ensure issues raised are dealt with.</i></p> <p><i>Work closely with SCH to ensure the decanting strategy does not penalise statutory homeless people.</i></p> <p><i>Develop relationship with ASB.</i></p> <p><i>Explore the expansion of the RDS for anybody who wishes to utilise it.</i></p> |
| <p>Asylum Seekers Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure effective housing options for asylum seekers granted leave to remain, or refugee status, who wish to live in Solihull. | <p><i>Develop an information sharing and working protocol between The Asylum Seeker and Housing Options Teams.</i></p> |
| <p>Supporting People Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number of schemes for specific groups. | <p><i>Develop specific floating support schemes for client groups.</i></p> |
| <p>Mental Health Assertive Outreach Team</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of joined up working between providers of Mental Health services and the Housing Options Team. • Lack of appropriate supported housing provision in south Solihull. • Lack of knowledge of Housing knowledge in Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust and of mental health in Housing Options Team. | <p><i>Develop a protocol between Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust to ensure referrals of homeless people with mental health issues are linked into appropriate services</i></p> <p><i>Investigate the provision of additional supported housing for people with mental health problems in the south of Solihull</i></p> <p><i>Develop joint training/ awareness training</i></p> |

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| SMBC 16+ Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of accommodation options for young people aged 16+ | <i>Develop a Nightstop scheme for Solihull by April 2007 & explore supported lodging</i> |
| SCH Money Advice Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure availability of service to all Social Housing Tenants in Solihull Ensure the groups of people most susceptible to debt problems are targeted with appropriate services Early intervention targeting young people, who historically account for a large number of tenancy break downs. | <p><i>Extend money advice service and promote good practice to other RSLs with housing stock in Solihull</i></p> <p><i>Target specific groups of people e.g. young people or pensioners for on-going benefits check and income maximisation</i></p> <p><i>Provide all new tenants of SCH, aged 18-25, information regarding the Money Advice Team at the point of joining the waiting list and at sign-up</i></p> |

3.9 Assessment of Future Homelessness Trends and Risks

3.9.1 Predicting future homelessness is difficult as there are some factors that are hard to anticipate. However there a number of issues that need to be considered when considering levels of homelessness in the borough.

Prevention initiatives

3.9.2 The Council considers that if it is able to put appropriate preventative measures in place the number of homelessness acceptances can be reduced by approximately 10% (70-80 households) per annum. However in order for these to truly reduce homelessness and not just delay the inevitable an effective housing options team will need to intervene at the appropriate time.

3.9.3 Assuming the ability to fund prevention and that no significant change occurs in the external environment, it is therefore likely that the number of households re-housed through applying as homeless will reduce. However a number of these households will see social housing as their only viable housing option and will therefore still be on the Housing Register.

3.9.4 In the event that any of the risks identified below do materialise these are likely to outweigh the reduction achieved through prevention initiatives.

Policy effectiveness

3.9.5 The ability of the Council and its partners to effectively tackle homelessness and its causes will depend to a large extent on the effective implementation of the wide range of strategies shown in Table 2.

3.9.6 Aside from the other risks mentioned in this part of the Review, two policy issues will be particularly important during the period of this Strategy:

- The introduction of a choice based lettings (CBL) system in Solihull is expected to confer some significant benefits relating to customer empowerment. The importance of ensuring that vulnerable and homeless households are enabled to exercise choice has been emphasised in the national debate over CBL. It will be particularly important that the CBL model implemented by Solihull ensures that homeless and vulnerable households are able to effectively 'compete' for properties available for letting.
- The Council is committed to delivering more affordable housing, although there are significant land constraints in the borough. A key issue will be to deliver more social rented homes arising from affordable housing negotiations on 'Section 106 sites'.

3.9.7 If CBL works to improve people's satisfaction with their chosen home then tenancy 'turnover' may reduce. This would reduce the availability of relettings in the social rented stock.

3.9.8 The Council projects that, through its RSL development partners, it will deliver approximately 150 new social rented homes in the period to 2009.

Regeneration Initiative

3.9.9 This area covers the wards of Chelmsley Wood, Smiths Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge. The area will be the subject of a holistic regeneration programme, expected to last in the region of 15 years. This will see a significant restructuring of the local housing market to include a widening of housing choice.

3.9.10 Over the period of the programme, approximately 2500 social rented homes will be demolished. It has been agreed that there will be no net loss of social rented housing, however:

- There will be a significant impact on the letting of properties due to the necessity of decanting households out of the properties earmarked for demolition. This will result in approximately 250 lettings per annum over a 5 year period. This will have an adverse impact on households on the Housing Register and may result in more households approaching as homeless due to the lack of viable housing alternatives.
- There will be time delays between demolitions and re-provision of social rented homes which is likely to lead to increased pressures on the use of temporary accommodation.
- Some home owners who are required to sell their home under the regeneration programme and who cannot afford to purchase another property will have the option of moving into the rented sector. This will place an additional pressure on the demand for social housing.

3.9.11 The statutory duty to secure accommodation will mean that homeless households are unlikely to suffer an immediate detriment under the regeneration programme. However the reductions in social rented housing will have an impact on others on the Housing Register. The additional waiting time may make their circumstances more difficult (for example if they are staying with family or friends) and result in them being more likely to make a homelessness application.

Revenue Funding for Supported Housing

3.9.12 Solihull has a small number of supported housing projects to house homeless people. The availability of revenue funding to deliver supported schemes is a particular concern and could act to delay, or prevent altogether, the implementation of much needed new schemes for vulnerable people. Although Solihull has not enforced any cuts to providers grant for 2005/06 and has paid a cost of living increase, this is unlikely to happen in 2006/07.

3.9.13 The availability of revenue money is likely to have the greatest affect on the ability to bring forward new schemes. Given the time to bring new schemes to completion from initial inception, it is unlikely that this issue will have a significant effect in the period to 2009.

Economy

3.9.14 Solihull's economy has been successful in recent years, there being marked employment growth in the knowledge and service sectors. In common with other areas, the manufacturing base has reduced and there remains a question over the longer term sustainability of that which remains. Only 5% of Solihull jobs are located in north Solihull, compared to 20% of the population. It is estimated that 36,700 additional jobs will be created in Solihull & Birmingham borough by 2015. Of these approximately 25,000 new jobs, predominantly managerial, professional and associate professional occupations, will be created in Solihull. The ability of residents in north Solihull to access these opportunities will be crucial in tackling deprivation and promoting people's ability to meet their housing needs in the market.

3.9.15 Rising mortgage rates could cause problems for people in marginal owner-occupation. Additionally a number of households may be adversely affected by an endowment mortgage shortfall.

3.9.16 The housing market has slowed down considerably over the previous 12 months. However, high house prices will continue to make it difficult for young people and families to set up home for the first time. Historically property prices in the north of Solihull are relatively more affordable; however following the huge increase in property prices these are now reaching an unobtainable level for first time buyers. It is likely that the regeneration initiative will deliver properties that will be sold at a higher market level than properties currently sell for. Additionally as the area is regenerated it will prove more attractive for people wishing to move into the area, and therefore property prices are likely to increase further.

3.9.17 Overall, the Council considers that economic change will not have a significant implication for homelessness in the time period of this Strategy.

Funding for Prevention Work

3.9.18 The ODPM has provided funding to Solihull Council of £37,000 per annum between 2002/3 – 2005/6. With the ending of this funding the Council needs to assess how prevention initiatives can continue through alternative funding. An inability to replace this level of funding will endanger the prevention initiatives discussed elsewhere in this Strategy.

Summary

- The Homelessness Review is based on robust data and thorough consultation with relevant organisations and service users.
- The main causes of homelessness in Solihull are:
 - family and friends being unable or unwilling to accommodate
 - relationship breakdown
 - violence from outside the home
- A particular pressure on the homelessness service is from 16-17 year olds who are not parents or do not have a care background.
- Access to permanent affordable housing is a significant problem for low income and vulnerable households.
- There is a range of homelessness services and supported housing provision in Solihull; however there remain significant gaps in provision.
- The Review notes the findings of consultation, relevant external review and the strategic implications that flow from this.
- Performance on statutory and local indicators relevant to homelessness is recorded and shows that Solihull performs well on these.
- The Review concludes with an assessment of future homelessness trends and risks.

4. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Strategy set out below is based on an understanding of national, regional and local contexts and the issues arising from the Homelessness Review, in particular the extensive consultation that has occurred. The Strategy also seeks to incorporate good practice that has been learned from the ODPM, other local authorities and providers.

4.2 Homelessness Strategy: Objectives and Aims

4.2.1 The core objective of this Strategy is to reduce homelessness in Solihull and to provide a quality response to those affected by homelessness.

4.2.2 This objective will be achieved through the following four aims:

- Improve homeless prevention by early intervention and improved advice and assistance
- Meet housing needs by providing suitable emergency, temporary and permanent accommodation, and also accommodation with support where required
- To facilitate more effective working between organisations providing housing and homelessness services in the borough
- Improve services to customers. This principally makes the connection to the continuing service improvement programme that Solihull Community Housing are working on with regard to homelessness and housing advice. It also includes the services provided by other voluntary and statutory agencies relevant to homelessness

4.2.3 The Action Plan sets out specific targets to help achieve the overall aims. The actions have been aimed to be realistic but stretching with a view to achieving significant improvement in the period of the Strategy.

4.2.4 These aims promote the Housing Vision (Appendix 2) and the Strategic Housing Objectives set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (see 2.4.4). In particular this Strategy supports the Objectives relating to ensuring that vulnerable people are supported in the community and that good quality housing services are provided.

4.2.5 The principal elements of the Strategy in the period 2006 to 2008 are described in Section 4.4 below. Taken together the Strategy aims to achieve prevention by tackling risk factors, prevent 'repeat homelessness' and provide effective services and housing outcomes for homeless people.

4.3 Interagency Partnership Working and Consultation

4.3.1 Solihull Council recognises the importance of tackling and preventing homelessness through a multi-agency approach. The Multi Agency Homelessness Forum (MAHF) has existed in Solihull since March 1995. In 2005 MAHF was restructured to consist of 2 groups. The strategic group is responsible for keeping the Strategy under review and providing a strategic response to homelessness. Its membership consists of a wide range of agencies. (See Table 15)

Table 15: Strategic Members of MAHF

| ORGANISATION | ROLE |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Solihull Community Housing | Head of Housing Options |
| Solihull MBC | Team Manager 16+ Team |
| Harden Housing Association | Development Manager |
| West Midlands Probation Service | Senior Probation Officer |
| Solihull MBC | Housing Strategy Officer |
| Solihull CAB | Manager |
| Bromford Housing Association | Service Manager - Solihull |
| St Basils | Operations Director |
| Connexions | Voluntary Sector Manager |
| Stonham Housing Association | Project Manager |
| Solihull MBC | Commissioning Manager – Adult Social Services |
| Solihull PCT | Consultant in Public Health |

4.3.2 The operational group of MAHF has a larger membership than the strategic group and consists of a wider range of agencies. Anybody working operationally with homeless people in Solihull is welcome to attend these meetings.

4.4 Strategic Elements

4.4.1 Working effectively with partners

The Strategy relies on the contribution of a wide range of partners and other teams within Solihull Council. It is therefore essential that effective working with others is maximised.

- ODPM
 - To continue to complete ODPM 'P1E' quarterly returns accurately and on time.
 - To analyse the P1E data comparing year on year and benchmarking with other local authorities and setting and amending targets as appropriate.
 - Ensure that all good practice material relating to homelessness and housing advice produced by the ODPM is considered and implemented in Solihull as appropriate.

- Audit Commission
 - Work with SCH to implement the Service Improvement Plan objectives.
 - To work closely with SCH to strive towards obtaining a 3* rating when the next inspection takes place in 2007.
 - To work closely with and assist the Supporting People team in the lead up to the inspection programmed for August 2006.

- MAHF
 - Continue to convene the Operational and Strategic Multi-Agency Homeless Forums in Solihull.
 - To provide all organisations and agencies working with homeless people the relevant information and support to ensure quality services are delivered and funding opportunities maximised.
 - To continually develop the strategic linkages and joint working with other organisations that have a role in housing advice in the borough.
 - To conduct an annual survey of all other organisations that have a role in providing housing advice in Solihull to help ascertain priorities and issues to be taken into account by the Council and SCH.

- SCAH
 - To continue to support the provision of emergency packs for homeless people accessing temporary accommodation in an emergency.
 - To work with SCAH on other homelessness initiatives.

- St Basils
 - To continue to support the Schools Training and Mentoring Project (STaMP) to deliver homelessness prevention sessions in Solihull at its current level and seek to expand its scope during 2006/7, subject to resources.
 - Develop close working relationship with St Basils regarding youth homelessness.

- Providers of Housing with Support
 - To assist supported housing providers and the Supporting People team with re-modelling existing services or developing new projects when necessary.

- Other Council Directorates
 - To continue to inform and advise on other relevant strategies and plans developed in other parts of the Council regarding specific client groups so as to ensure that the aims and objectives of this Homelessness Strategy are taken into account.

- To assist other Directorates with specialist knowledge regarding homelessness and housing to improve existing and develop new services.
- To raise the profile of homelessness and highlight the benefits of a cross departmental approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in Solihull.

4.4.2 Homelessness service improvements

The homelessness and housing advice service provided by SCH deals with approximately 1500 enquiries and detailed assessments every year. It is crucial that the service provided is of a high quality and is sensitive to the vulnerable and difficult position that service users are in.

- SCH SLA
 - To continue working closely with SCH to deliver a continuously improving housing advice and homelessness service, focussing on prevention.
 - To monitor and regulate the delivery of the homelessness service through the SLA.
 - To ensure the SLA is effective and, when re-negotiated annually, that it helps to deliver the aims of the Strategy.
 - Consider the applicability of initiatives that can speed up the assessment of homelessness applications, such as Credit Referencing Systems.
- Audit Commission
 - To implement changes recommended by the Audit Commission in November 2004.
 - To analyse the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) produced by the Audit Commission and use the information to work with SCH to improve and develop services accordingly.
 - Ensure the housing advice service meets the requirements for a 3* housing service.
- Equalities
 - A Partial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out on this Strategy when it was at a draft stage. In implementing the Action Plan, and in considering other service developments, the impact of these on disadvantaged groups will be carefully considered. A full EIA will be completed in 2006.
 - Ensure effective monitoring of homeless applications by BME composition, and act on the results if appropriate.
 - Ensure people with disabilities have access to appropriate short term and permanent housing.
 - The development of a Disabled Persons Housing Register will ensure adapted housing is matched to appropriate households.

- Performance Indicators
 - Continue to monitor the performance of SCH against all relevant BVPI's and local performance indicators.
 - Analyse BVPI returns and ensure appropriate action is taken to remedy any issues.

4.4.3 Intentional Homeless

Households found to be intentionally homeless are offered temporary accommodation for a reasonable period in order to give them time to find appropriate accommodation. Advice is provided on how to find accommodation in the private rented sector and the offer of a referral to Social Services for a Children's Act or National Assistance Act assessment to be carried out. In all cases people receive a 'Section 184' letter confirming their position and information on accessing accommodation in the private sector or in single homeless hostels in Solihull or the wider West Midlands region. The rent deposit scheme assists access to the private rented sector and increased choice for non-priority households.

- Ensure intentionally homeless households with children are referred to the Education and Children's Services Directorate for assessment.
- Ensure quality advice and assistance is available to intentionally homeless households so that they can assess other housing options and secure alternative housing.

4.4.4 Non-Priority Homeless

It is important that all homeless applications are assessed consistently and in line with the legal framework for homelessness and relevant case law.

- Legal rigour - use up to date legal case law to make defensible decisions that maintain the integrity of the homelessness process.
- Develop a range of housing options available to non-priority households.
- Explore the expansion of preventative measures e.g. mediation to non-priority homeless.

4.4.5 Early Interventions

Good practice and Solihull's analysis of its own cases shows the great benefit in achieving early interventions. The Strategy therefore aims to achieve effective early interventions wherever possible. These interventions do not necessarily reduce the need for social rented housing but they do help ensure that people have better information and make a move part of a more planned process. As a result they are more likely to make a success of their new accommodation, thereby reducing the risk of 'repeat homelessness'.

- Home visits. The major cause of homelessness in Solihull concerns situations where family and friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate.

- Implement home visits by December 2005 for people made homeless due to being asked to leave by friends or family.
- Reduce the number of people made homeless due to family and friends being unwilling or unable to accommodate.
- Institutional release. When people leave institutional living, they require effective assistance to ensure they can live successfully in the community.
 - Continue close working arrangements with psychiatric wards in Solihull regarding people leaving hospital with no accommodation.
 - Investigate the need to improve information availability for people from Solihull in prison prior to their release within the borough.
- Mediation. Good practice has shown that in many situations, mediation can be effective in preventing homelessness due to relationship difficulties.
 - Continue to provide a mediation service through a specialist organisation and monitor its effectiveness in preventing homelessness.
 - Assess how the role of mediation can be further developed to include earlier interventions targeting people prior to their approaching SCH as homeless.
- Schools work. The 'Schools Training and Mentoring Project' (StaMP) run by St.Basils has shown that it can be very effective in developing young peoples expectations and awareness of housing and in delaying the point at which young people think it appropriate for them to leave home.
 - Support St Basils in providing their STaMP scheme to young people in years 10 and 11 of secondary school.
 - Explore the opportunities to extend the StaMP project to young people accessing other youth related services other than schools, particularly those who left the education system at an early age.

4.4.6 Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector in Solihull is comparatively small and has some quite different characteristics to its counterparts elsewhere in the region (see paragraph 3.2.15) Nevertheless, the Council and SCH are keen to maximise the potential of the private rented market in meeting homelessness needs.

- To work with the West Midlands Landlords Association to develop links with private landlords and letting agents.
- Promote the rent deposit scheme amongst landlord's and letting agencies.
- To consult with private landlords on the benefit of commencing a private landlord forum in Solihull.
- Secure funding to increase the capacity of the rent deposit scheme.
- To communicate with private landlords to improve the likelihood of achieving an early intervention if they are, or considering evicting a household.

4.4.7 Temporary Accommodation

However good the quality of early interventions and prevention work is, it is inevitable that some households will need to spend time in temporary accommodation. There are a number of important issues in relation to temporary accommodation.

- Quality
 - Investigate the use of the ODPM's Hostel Review Toolkit to review current provision for homeless people in the borough in partnership with the hostel providers.
 - Work with the Supporting People review process to ensure that all temporary accommodation meets proper quality standards.
 - Investigate the future use of Highfield Farm as a hostel for homeless people once the refuge is open.
 - Consider the use of private leasing schemes to provide appropriate temporary accommodation in the south of the borough.
- Management
 - Ensure that the Temporary Accommodation Officer in SCH has the resources and contacts to provide an effective service to residents of temporary accommodation provided by SCH.
 - Ensure that temporary accommodation is suited as far as possible to individual households needs.
- Turnaround
 - Consider initiatives to ensure that the limited temporary accommodation available to single people living in Solihull is not 'silted up' due to lack of move-on opportunities.
 - Ensure effective liaison between hostel providers and the Housing Options Team at SCH to ensure bed space availability is targeted at homeless people.
- Linking to other services
 - Continue to ensure that essential services such as health visitors are available to people in temporary housing.
 - Ensure effective referral procedures are in place to ensure appropriate referrals to specialist services.
- Managed moves to permanent accommodation
 - Ensure that any person leaving temporary accommodation is offered a floating support service that meets their needs.
 - To liaise with SCH to monitor the effectiveness of providing a number of furnished flats to homeless people, with clear links to appropriate services.

4.4.8 Tenancy Sustainment (SCH and RSL)

Where people already have secure affordable accommodation it is important that they are enabled to maintain it wherever possible. The Strategy therefore needs to link effectively with social landlords to ensure that this occurs.

- Effective housing management
 - Ensure housing management functions such as resolving neighbour disputes play a role in the prevention of homelessness.
- Money advice
 - To ensure that all vulnerable homeless people are offered the service of SCHs Money Advice Team when they accept their tenancies.
 - Ensure that if a tenant experiences difficulties with their rent payments that money advice is provided at the earliest opportunity.
- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
 - Ensure effective links between the Housing Options Team and Anti Social Behaviour Team to ensure the numbers of people re-housed as homeless due to harassment decrease in line with regional averages.
 - Ensure that effective action is taken against perpetrators of ASB.
 - Work closely with ASB team to prevent homelessness of perpetrator if possible.

4.4.9 Delivering new affordable housing

The Council accepts that there is a significant shortfall in the amount of affordable housing in the borough. Land availability, particularly in south Solihull, makes delivering more affordable housing difficult.

- Registered Social Landlords
 - To use the Council's planning powers (UDP Policy H4) to maximise levels of affordable housing provided on residential sites developed by the private sector.
 - To work with the Council's approved developer RSLs to identify possible sites for the delivery of 100% affordable housing.
 - To work with the Housing Corporation and RSLs to maximise the capital funding for both general needs affordable housing and specialist supported housing schemes for vulnerable groups.

4.4.10 Maximising the use of social housing

Although the level of affordable housing in Solihull is below the regional and national average it does nevertheless represent an important and valuable community asset. It is

therefore important that existing social rented housing is utilised in the best way possible to meet housing need in a sustainable way.

- RSL nominations
 - Work closely with RSL partners to ensure nomination arrangements are fully maximised.
 - Work with RSLs to ensure they re-house a percentage of homeless households following Housing Corporation Guidelines.
- Choice Based Lettings
 - Develop a choice based lettings system for Solihull by 2010 that ensures the interests of homeless and vulnerable households are protected.
 - Investigate the potential for a sub-regional or regional system that meets the needs of Solihull residents.
- Homebuy and shared ownership
 - Continue to work with RSLs to promote schemes to homeless households which provide a viable alternative to purchasing on the open market for appropriate households.
 - Ensure new shared equity schemes provide a range of alternatives to meet the needs of a diverse client group.
- Movement incentives
 - Introduce incentives to households under occupying their homes so that best use is made of socially rented homes.
- Portable Discounts
 - To investigate the scope and benefit of introducing a scheme to provide a grant incentive to encourage tenants of some Council properties to purchase a home in the private sector thereby 'freeing up' a socially rented home.

4.4.11 Maximising funding

The prevention of homelessness is a wide agenda and there are many potential funding streams that help in furthering the aims of the Strategy.

- ODPM funding
 - Ensure that any schemes that have been funded by ODPM funding in 2004/5 and 2005/6 are able to access alternative funding to continue where they have shown to have made an important contribution to Homelessness Strategy.

- Private and charitable funding
 - The Council recognises that there are important sources of funding arising from various charitable and private sources that can help deliver specific initiatives. The Council will work with its partners to help maximise the extent and effectiveness of this funding
- Spend to Save
 - Explore the potential benefits of implementing a 'spend to save' policy in Solihull.
 - Monitor the use by SCH of the prevention fund to ensure its effectiveness.
- Discretionary housing payments (DHP)
 - Ensure that Solihull Council maximises the potential of utilising the DHP funding they receive annually from the Department of Work and Pensions to safeguard the tenancies of those in the private sector.

4.4.12 Addressing the needs of specific groups

This Strategy has recognised that certain groups are more likely to be disadvantaged and vulnerable compared to the general population.

- Continue to joint work with specialist providers and the Supporting People Commissioning Body to ensure specific needs are met in Solihull.
 - Continue to explore the housing needs of specific groups and assist with ensuring the availability of capital and revenue funding.

4.4.13 Regional Homelessness Strategy

Solihull played an active role in the development of the 2005 Regional Homeless Strategy. This has given rise to a Regional Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group. This will be important in regards to:

- Participation
 - To work on the cross sector Regional Homelessness Implementation Group to raise the profile of homelessness and ensure effective implementation of the Strategy.
 - Continue to support and shape the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Strategy.
- Local authority joint working
 - Explore the potential of cross regional or sub-regional working in relation to benchmarking, sharing good practice and, where appropriate, sharing resources.

4.5 Funding

4.5.1 Most of the actions detailed above rely on the contributions of existing 'mainstream funding' and people in existing organisations working effectively to the aims and objectives of the Strategy.

4.5.2 The ODPM has provided Solihull with £37,000 per year between 2002 and 2006 for homelessness initiatives and improvements. On the basis of experience gained since 2002 it is clear that there are a number of initiatives that are valuable and should continue beyond the end of the specific ODPM funding.

4.5.3 With this in mind, Table 16 below sets out four important initiatives that are currently unfunded during the next three years. The possibility of securing funding from elsewhere within the Council and external sources will continue to be investigated.

Table 16: Funding Requirement of Strategy

| Initiative | Funding Required 2006-2008 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mediation | £15,000 |
| Schools work | £105,828 |
| Security works | £30,000 |
| Emergency packs | £15,000 |

4.6 Managing, Monitoring and Review

4.6.1 These outcomes will only be achieved through coordinated action both within the Council and between the Council and a wide range of other agencies. Reflecting the importance of this, the Homelessness Strategy has been endorsed both by the Council and Solihull's Local Strategic Partnership.

4.6.2 Solihull Council has a corporate system of performance planning and individual target setting and performance appraisal. This links to the overall objectives of the Council. The detailed actions relate to the work programmes and personal targets of those with the lead role for these actions thereby ensuring that they are given proper importance and priority.

4.6.3 The Action Plan set out below is 'SMART'. The actions are specific, measurable, achievable and realistic and have a clear timescale. All of the actions are consistent with the overall goals of the Strategy. The actions have been designed to be challenging. Where actions have implications for other agencies and organisations or teams within the Council these have been jointly discussed. This ensures that others are 'signed up' to actions that require their support to achieve successful implementation.

4.6.4 The Strategy Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis,

- At internal management meetings between Solihull Council and SCH.
- To the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on a 6 monthly basis.
- To Strategic MAHF on a 6 monthly basis.
- To the LSP Learning and Inclusion theme group 6 monthly.

4.6.5 The statement of progress against the Action Plan will be available on the Council's web site alongside other relevant material relating to homelessness in Solihull.

4.6.6 At a more general level the Council will monitor evolving government agendas and changing trends in homelessness to ensure that the Strategy is a 'live' document that accurately reflects the challenge of homelessness in Solihull.

4.6.7 This Strategy has been designed to run to the end of 2008. In addition to the regular monitoring the Council therefore intends to carry out an extensive review of the Strategy during 2008 as part of the work to develop the new Strategy for 2009 and later years.

4.6.8 In order to ensure the continuing relevance of the Strategy and Action Plan, additional actions may be developed and implemented during the life of this Strategy.

4.7 Action Plan 2006 - 2008

4.7.1 The full Action Plan for the 2006 – 2008 Homelessness Strategy is shown in Table 17.



St Basil's STaMP Project in action

Table 17: ACTION PLAN 2006 - 2008

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY: IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN 2006 –2008

1. Improve Homeless Prevention

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1.1 | Ensure 5 people living in temporary accommodation in Solihull access employment in 2005/06 <i>Targets will be set for subsequent years once 1st year completed</i> | SMBC Economic Development Job Centre Plus, AEG | O: To ensure people living in hostels are able to access employment opportunities R: Failure of homeless people to access employment will make their experiencing future homelessness more likely | 'In House' resources | Jan 2006 | June 2006 |
| 1.2 | Expand health visitor service provided at Highfield Farm to other SCH temporary accommodation | Solihull PCT SCH Housing Options Team | O: Ensure all households in temporary accommodation have access to health visitors R: Slow initial take-up needs to be increased | 'In House' resources | Monitor December 2005 | May 2006 |
| 1.3 | Provide all new tenants of SCH, aged 18-25, information regarding the Money Advice Team at the point of joining the Housing Register and at tenancy commencement | SCH Money Advice Team | O: To advertise availability of money advice service to young people who are susceptible to repeat homelessness R: Team has limited capacity | 'In House' resources | | December 2005 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1.4 | Identify specific groups of people e.g. young people or pensioners for on-going benefits check and income maximisation | SCH Money Advice Team | O: Ensure at risk groups are targeted to ensure income is maximised R: Engaging with hard to reach young people | 'In House' resources | Renew Welfare Benefits check service in January | April 2006 |
| 1.5 | Extend money advice service and promote good practice to other RSLs with housing stock in Solihull | SCH Money Advice Team | O: Ensure all social housing tenants have access to money advice R: The teams capacity and HA willingness to participate | 'In House' resources | Money advice provided via self help pack | From April 2006 |
| 1.6 | Promote the use of Discretionary Housing Payments to ensure it helps to maximise the prevention of homelessness | Revs & Bens, MAT Housing Strategy Team | O: Ensure qualifying households have access to additional housing payments R: Historically there has been a shortfall in payments | None | Promote at Multi-Agency Homeless Forum | Annually |
| 1.7 | Explore the reasons for a high % of homeless acceptances in Solihull in comparison to the WM and national average | Housing Strategy Team | O: To benchmark our service against neighbouring authorities | None | Analyse data by June 2006 | September 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|--|----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1.8 | Implement Floating Support schemes for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People from BME Communities • Travellers • Mentally disordered offenders • Ex-offenders and people at risk of offending | Supporting People Team | O: Implement new schemes for client groups not previously catered for O: To provide additional provision of floating support to a group susceptible to homelessness R: Difficulty finding appropriate experienced agency to run scheme | Supporting People funding secured | Providers chosen by December 2005 | April 2006 |
| 1.9 | Investigate P1E returns in regards to mortgage/rent arrears evictions to ensure if there is a significant increase due to changes in the housing market appropriate actions are taken | Housing Strategy Team | O: To ensure if there is an up-turn in presentations due to affordability an Action Plan will be devised R: Need to ensure early intervention to maximise success | None | Monitor Quarterly | Annually in June |
| 1.10 | Develop a protocol between Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Team (B&SMHT) to ensure referrals of homeless people with mental health issues are linked into appropriate services | B&SMHT, SCH and Housing Strategy | O: To ensure a quality joined up service for people with Mental Health Problems R: Need to ensure relevant departments sign up to the Strategy & it's implementation is effective | 'In house' resources | Draft protocol devised by August 2006 | Completed by December 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1.11 | Explore Prevention good practice initiatives and assess their potential for Solihull | Housing Strategy, SCH | O: Ensure prevention activity replicates good practice | 'In house' resources | Gather good practice by April 2006 | Report written by June 2006 & annually |
| 1.12 | Review preventative schemes Implemented in Solihull in regards to their effectiveness | Housing Strategy | O: Establish what has been successful in Solihull and learn from any mistakes. | 'In House' resources | Reports written by March 2006 | April 2006 |
| 1.13 | Monitor the expenditure of the SCH Prevention Fund | Housing Strategy SCH | O: Ensure effectiveness of prevention fund | None | On-going 6-monthly | April 2006 |
| 1.14 | Implement Home visits for all appropriate households homeless due to exclusion by friends/family/relatives | SCH | O: Ensure all households homeless due to parental eviction are visited as part of the homeless process R: | 'In House' resources | Prevention Officer in post December 2005 | January 2006 |
| 1.15 | Set a target for reducing repeat homelessness in Solihull | SCH Housing Strategy | O: Ensure numbers of repeat homelessness are monitored | 'In House' resources | Set target May 2006 | May 2006 |
| 1.16 | Monitor repeat homelessness quarterly to ensure target is being achieved | Housing Strategy | O: To ensure target is being achieved | 'In House' resources | Quarterly from July 2006 onwards | Quarterly July, October, January, April |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.17 | Work with St. Basil's to secure funding for STaMP in Solihull | St Basil's External Funding Housing Strategy | O: To ensure STaMP continues to be delivered in Solihull R: The inability to secure adequate funding to ensure the long term viability of STaMP | 'In House' resources | Submit bids from April 2006 onwards | April 2007 |
| 1.18 | Re-launch the Sanctuary Project and roll out to all tenures | Domestic Violence Co-ordinator Housing Strategy SCH | O: Re-vamp the existing scheme to include owner occupiers, private rented sector and RSLs R: Ensuring legal remedies are secured when joint tenants/owners R: Additional funding needs to be secured | ODPM funding | Meeting of steering group by Dec 2005 | Relaunch by July 2006 |
| 1.19 | Re-launch the Mediation scheme provided by Relate and specifically aim at earlier intervention | Housing Strategy SCH Relate | O: To provide a robust successful mediation service for parental exclusions in Solihull R: Mediation service currently provided has not prevented the number of homeless cases expected R: Additional funding needs to be achieved | ODPM existing funding In-house | Meeting in December 2005 | Relaunch by July 2006 |
| 1.20 | Provide 20 new vulnerable tenants of SCH furniture to enhance the chance of tenancy sustainment | SCH | O: To increase chance of tenancy sustainment for vulnerable young people | Funding secured by SCH | Monitor take-up April 2006 | December 2006 |

2. Improve Services to Customers

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|--|-------------------------|--|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 2.1 | Develop an exit user survey for all people who have accessed the housing options service | Housing Strategy SCH | O: Ensure homeless households are consulted regarding the service they received R: To ensure costs are minimised it will be internally | In House | Draft February 2006 | Start April 3 rd 2006 |
| 2.2 | Produce an annual report regarding the results from customer feedback, including using information gathered from the exit interview to inform the development of the service | Housing Strategy & SCH | O: To report clients feedback to Cabinet Member & interested parties O: To improve the homeless service by consulting with homeless people R: Sample returned may not be representative of homeless households | In-house | Analyse results Oct 2007. Action plan by December 2007 | September 2007 |
| 2.3 | Investigate the need for a rent in advance scheme or extending the rent deposit scheme to provide this service | SCH Housing Strategy | O: To provide an additional service for homeless households | 'In House' resources | September 2006 explore opportunities | April 2007 |
| 2.4 | Ensure housing advice and other relevant literature is available in other languages | SCH | O: Accessible literature R: None | 'In House' resources | April 2006 | December 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 2.5 | Explore the re-modelling of Stonham Gilson Way to provide a supported housing scheme with higher levels of support | Supporting People Team, Housing Strategy & Stonham HA | O: To meet the need of the borough to provide direct access type accommodation R: Lack of revenue funding | 'In House' resources | Supporting People review September 2005 | April 2006 |
| 2.6 | Ensure the Housing Options Team have an up to date legal knowledge focused on vulnerability assessments | SCH, Housing Strategy | O: Ensure Housing Options Team are up to date regarding vulnerability legislation. | ODPM Funding | Arranged by December 2005 | Training day completed by July 2006 |
| 2.7 | Devise improvement plan to reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation by 2010 | Housing Strategy & SCH | O: To meet the governments target set out in the ODPM's national Homeless Strategy R: Starting from a low base figure may be difficult to ensure 50% deduction | 'In House' resources | Draft Plan completed by January 2007 | April 2007 |
| 2.8 | Analyse ODPM Development Guide 'Tackling Homelessness amongst Ethnic Minority Households' (published Sept 2005) and devise an Action Plan to ensure implementation | Housing Strategy Equalities Officer SCH | O: BME groups are over represented in homelessness statistics R: Ensuring effective implementation | 'In House' resources | Analyse Development guide by Feb 2006. Develop Action Plan by May 2006 | Implement Action Plan by November 2006 |
| 2.9 | Update Homelessness leaflet provided by Solihull Community Housing | SCH & Housing Strategy | O: Make minor amendment highlighted by Audit Commission R: Financial cost of re-printing | 'In House' resources | | April 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|---|--|--|-----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| 2.10 | Update Action Plan @ 6 monthly intervals on the Councils Web-site and report to the appropriate Cabinet Member | Housing Strategy | O: Cabinet Member monitors the strategies implementation Ensure interested parties have access to the up-dated Action Plan. R: Strategy is not periodically updated | 'In House' resources | 6 Monthly intervals | May 2006 then 6 monthly |
| 2.11 | Implement an Electronic Credit Referencing system for the Housing Options Team | SCH | O: To assist homeless application investigations R: The effectiveness of Electronic Credit Referencing Systems | Funding to be secured | December 2005 – choose provider of service | April 2006 |
| 2.12 | Update and improve the Housing pages on the SMBC web-site including information related to homelessness | Housing Strategy | O: To ensure Up dated information regarding homelessness is readily available to residents of Solihull | 'In House' resources | Collect good practice by May 2006 | September 2006 |
| 2.13 | Establish an Action Plan to reduce the number of households made homeless due to violence or harassment from outside the home | SCH Housing Options Team ASB Team Housing Strategy | O: Seek to reduce the number of households homeless due to violence or threats of violence R: Increase in number of violent incidents and harassment | 'In House' resources | Draft plan by June 2006 | Action plan agreed November 2006 |
| 2.14 | Create leaflets for the flats used as temporary accommodation detailing local amenities and services | SCH Housing Options Team Housing Strategy | O: To ensure people in any form of temporary accommodation have information regarding local services R: Units are dispensed and therefore a range of different services need to be mapped | 'In House' resources | Mapping of services by June 2006 | September 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 2.15 | Provide weekly Housing advice sessions to residents of the women's refuge | SCH Housing Options Team | O: Ensure women in the refuge have access to housing advice | 'In House' resources | Discussions to have taken place by August 2006 | November 2006 |
| 2.16 | Ensure that appropriate agencies are approached and involved in the lead up to the opening of the women's refuge | PCT B&SMHT SCH E&CS DV Co-ordinator | O: Ensure appropriate support networks are informed and involved in the lead up to the opening of the refuge R: None identified | 'In House' resources | Meeting in January 2006 & May 2006 | May 2006 |
| 2.17 | Create a referral process between Connexions & SCH for all 13-19yr olds in temporary accommodation | SCH Connexions | O: Ensure vulnerable young people have access to the connexions service R: need to ensure a robust referral system is implemented | 'In House' resources | By March 2006 | July 2006 |
| 2.18 | Carry out a full Equalities Impact Assessment on Homelessness Strategy | Housing Strategy | O: Ensure Homelessness Strategy is assessed on Equality issues. R: R: None identified | 'In House' resources | Initiate process by August 2006 | By April 2007 |
| 2.19 | Carry out a mapping exercise of P1E data and analyse the results in regards to the differences in causes of homelessness in north and south Solihull | Housing Strategy | O: To establish if the characteristics of homelessness are the same across the borough. R: Time consuming exercise | 'In House' resources | Analyse P1E data for 05/06 in July 2006 | Report October 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2.20 | Raise awareness of short term learning, roll on roll off learning and the various colleges and locations | Housing Strategy LSC | O: Raise awareness of learning opportunities to homeless and former homeless people R: Ensure we are targeting people who have expressed an interest in accessing education or training | 'In House' resources | Collect information February 2007 | April 2007 |
| 2.21 | Develop a rent in advance procedure with Revenues and Benefits for Housing Benefit payments | Housing Strategy Revenues & Benefits | O: If a client requires a months rent in advance an organisation who pays it on their behalf can claim it directly from Benefits R: None identified | 'In House' resources | Draft by February 2006 | April 2006 |
| 2.22 | Develop a rigid referral system between Geraldine Court & Galeno Place and The Housing Options Team | Bromford Housing SCH | O: Ensure appropriate referrals within a standardised procedure R: None identified | 'In House' resources | Draft completed by July 2006 | September 2006 |

3. Meet Housing Needs

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 3.1 | Explore the feasibility of developing a Nightstop scheme for Solihull | Housing Strategy | O: To provide additional crisis accommodation for homeless young people R: Revenue Funding. Finding host families & On-going support | Revenue Funding & ODPM funding | Collect information by February 2006 | July 2006 |
| 3.2 | Access the scope for developing other forms of temporary accommodation for single homeless people in Solihull e.g. supported lodgings | Housing Strategy 16+ Team | O: Provide additional capacity for homeless people R: Revenue Funding | Revenue Funding | Collect examples by February 2005 | April 2006 |
| 3.3 | Develop clear links with the private rented sector in Solihull to ensure the Private Rented Sector is a viable option for people in housing need in Solihull | Housing Strategy, Environmental Health West Midlands Landlords Association | O: Develop a housing option that has never been fully utilised in Solihull R: May be difficult to get involvement from Private landlords | 'In House' resources | Start in April 2006 | April 2007 |
| 3.4 | Contact all private landlords in Solihull who rent properties to people in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit | Housing Strategy | O: Build relationships with private landlords R: Private landlords do not have difficulties renting properties in Solihull so need to ensure there are incentives for them to participate | 'In House' resources | Collect details in March 2006 Write to landlords in May 2006 | August 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| 3.5 | Secure funding to increase the capacity of the rent deposit scheme | Housing Strategy, External Funding Team | O: To increase the capacity and make the RDS an option for more households | 'In House' resources | Begin to Submit funding bids in January 2006 | Secure funding by April 2007 |
| 3.6 | Maximise the contribution of the Empty Homes Strategy to meet homelessness pressures | Housing Strategy Public Health Directorate | O: Provide affordable accommodation from empty properties R: Ability to use CPO's; capital funding | Capital funding from 'commuted sums' | December 2006 | April 2007 |
| 3.7 | Assess the scope for using 'Management Orders' and other powers in the 2004 Housing Act | Housing Strategy Public Health Directorate | O: Bringing additional properties in Solihull into use R: Powers ineffective for purpose | 'In House' resources | Initiate process in December 2006 | April 2007 |
| 3.8 | Investigate the provision of additional supported housing for people with mental health problems in the south of Solihull | Housing Strategy | O: To provide appropriate specialist accommodation R: The need for additional revenue funding | Supporting people funding | Scope appropriate sites by December 2006 | April 2007 |
| 3.9 | Agree future use of Highfield Farm | Housing Strategy, SCH | O: To provide appropriate TA for homeless people R: Lack of TA in south Solihull | 'In House' resources | Decision made by March 2006 | Cabinet member July 2006 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3.10 | Open Women's' Refuge | Housing Strategy Harden HA Birmingham Women's Aid | O: provide the 1 st women's refuge in Solihull R: Delayed by unforeseen circumstances | Funding secured | On-site September 2005 | Open September 2006 |
| 3.11 | Explore other Temporary Accommodation options including private leasing & purchasing properties. | Housing Strategy SCH | O: To provide more appropriate TA options for households R: Need to ensure capital receipts from Highfield Farm are re-invested into TA | 'In House' resources | January 2006. Explore options | April 2006 |
| 3.12 | Provide additional self contained Temporary Accommodation in south Solihull | Housing Strategy SCH | O: To provide additional quality Temporary Accommodation in south Solihull R: Ability to secure capital funding | Capital funding required | Identify type of TA in April 2006 | April 2007 |
| 3.13 | Define a quality standard for SCH temporary accommodation, and maintain it | SCH & Housing Strategy | O: Improve the quality of temporary accommodation in Solihull R: Limited changes can be made to the fabric of the temporary accommodation | 'In House' resources | September 2006. Set quality standard | Implement by April 2007 |
| 3.14 | Investigate a 'Spend to Save' policy | Housing Strategy SCH | O: To supplement the Prevention Fund R: Difficult to prove the saving aspects as expensive B&B accommodation is not used | 'In House' resources | Draft report by September 2006 | January 2007 |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|----------------|---|--|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 3.15 | Work closely with SCH to ensure the decanting strategy for north Solihull does not penalise statutory homeless people | Housing Strategy Regeneration Team SCH | O: Ensure adequate number of lettings to meet homelessness need R: Extended time in TA for homeless households | 'In House' resources | September 2006 | Prior to the 1 st Decant in 2007 |
| 3.16 | Develop a Homeless at Home policy | Housing Strategy SCH | O: Formalise current working practices R: Time consuming process | 'In House' resources | Draft July 2006 | September 2006 |
| 3.17 | Explore the potential of working with neighbouring local authorities to develop supported Housing | Housing Strategy | O: To deliver additional supported housing R: Ability to work cross authority | 'In House' resources | Meet Authorities July 2006 | December 2006 |
| 3.18 | Consider expanding the training flat scheme currently in operation with the 16+ team in Education & Children's services | Housing Strategy 16+ Team | O: To provide young people leaving care the opportunity to develop independent living skills R: the ability to secure an appropriate flat | 'In House' resources | Investigate need by June 2006 | September 2006 |
| 3.19 | As the elderly population increases need to consider the specific needs of older homeless people | Housing Strategy Adult Social Services | O: To ensure an appropriate service to provided to older homeless people R: None identified | 'In House' resources | Start analysis of data January 2008 | April 2008 |

4. To facilitate more effective working between organisations providing housing & homelessness services in the borough

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|---|--|--|----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| 4.1 | Ensure Asylum Seekers can access good quality housing advice by developing an information sharing and working protocol between The Asylum Seekers Team and Housing Options Team | Housing Strategy, Asylum Seekers Team, | O: Improved service for a vulnerable group R: Ensuring effective implementation & monitoring | 'In House' resources | Draft by June 2006. Final version by August 2006 | September 2006 |
| 4.2 | Develop a multi agency homelessness monitoring scheme for Solihull | MAHF, Housing Strategy | O: To capture the extent of homelessness in Solihull R: Involves large number of organisations & is a resource intensive exercise | 'In House' resources | Steering group set up April 2006 | April 2007 |
| 4.3 | Explore the feasibility of an ongoing multi-agency monitoring system | Housing Strategy MAHF | O: Monitor homelessness over a long period of time. Detailed understanding of homelessness in the borough R: Resource intensive | Unknown | Analyse snapshot results by July 2007 | October 2007 |
| 4.4 | Develop joint training/ awareness training between SCH's Housing Options Team & Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Team | Housing Strategy & B&SMHT | O: Increase knowledge across departments & develop working relationships | 'In House' resources | Arranged by July 2006 | Completed by December 2006 |
| 4.5 | Involvement in the implementation of the Regional Homelessness Strategy | Housing Strategy | O: Ensure Solihull is involved and maximising it's role in the Regional Strategy | None | Steering convened October 2005 | Quarterly meetings |

| Project | Description | Lead role | Opportunities (O) and risks (R) | Resource implication | Milestones/ progress at | Target |
|---------|--|---|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| 4.6 | Update Solihull's Homelessness Directory | Housing Strategy | O: Ensure the homelessness directory is up-to-date R: May be limited changes in organisations | 'In House' resources | Contact agencies Jan 2006. | April 2006 |
| 4.7 | To conduct an annual survey of all other organisations that have a role in providing housing advice in Solihull to help ascertain priorities and issues to be taken into account by the Council and SCH. | Housing Strategy External agencies | O: Collect up to date information from agencies working with homeless people R: Ensuring sign up from all the appropriate agencies | 'In House' resources | Request data in June each year | September 2006 & then annually |
| 4.8 | Investigate the integration of homelessness services into the Common Assessment Framework | SCH Housing Strategy | O: Ensure joined up service provided to homeless children | 'In House' resources | Establish involvement September 2006 | April 2007 |
| 4.9 | Run at least 5 information sessions to a wide variety of agencies regarding homelessness in Solihull | Housing Strategy | O: To provide information regarding services and the role other agencies can play in preventing homelessness | 'In House' resources | Organise by December 2006 | Completed by June 2007 |
| 4.10 | Develop a multi-agency approach to assisting rough sleepers to access advice, accommodation & support provision if they wish to. | Housing Strategy SCH MAHF | O: To ensure any rough sleeper seeking assistance receives a joined-up holistic response | 'In House' resources | Letter sent: December 2005 Meeting February 2006 | May 2006 |

Summary

- The implementation of this Strategy in the period to the end of 2008 is intended to result in the following outcomes:
 - Improve homeless prevention
 - Improve services to customers
 - Meet housing needs
 - To facilitate more effective working between organisations providing housing and homelessness services in the borough.
- Solihull Council recognises the importance of tackling and preventing homelessness through a multi-agency approach.
- The strategic elements set out in Section 4.4 follow from the outcome of the Homelessness Review.
- The delivery of the Strategy is primarily dependent on achieving improved co-ordination and working of all organisations and agencies that have an interest in homelessness and housing advice. The need for specific resources to help develop the Strategy is set out.
- An Action Plan has been developed that contains specific and measurable targets. This will be monitored on a regular basis with progress reports on it being publicly available.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Solihull in the Regional Context

Appendix 2: Housing Strategy: Vision and Shortfalls

Appendix 3: Consultation Results

Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

Appendix 1: Solihull in the Regional Context



West Midlands Region

Appendix 2: Housing Strategy: Vision and Shortfalls

Solihull's housing markets are efficient and effective

There is a balanced range of homes that meet the diverse needs and aspirations of the community and allow people to exercise choice in where they live

There is adequate supply of affordable housing to ensure that people who cannot buy on the open market can access suitable housing

Housing markets in Solihull make a positive contribution to the social, economic and environmental vitality of Solihull and the urban and rural renaissance of the West Midlands.

Solihull residents live in well maintained homes which meet modern-day expectations

Homes are secure, in good repair, are affordable to keep warm, have modern amenities and are suitable to their needs; they meet the Decent Homes Standard where this is applicable

Homes are adaptable and able to meet a person's lifetime needs; vulnerable and disabled people do not suffer difficulties with their homes, such as access and mobility problems

Solihull residents live in attractive, clean and safe environments

New housing developments respect the greenbelt and the need for open space within the urban area and reuse previously developed brownfield land and buildings wherever possible

New homes are of good quality design and architecture and are environmentally sustainable in terms of energy efficiency and the reduction of waste

The layout of residential environments deters crime and reduces the fear of crime

The use of the housing stock is maximised with a minimum of homes being unoccupied

All homes have good access to employment, services, shops and public open space

All Solihull residents can access good quality housing services and housing advice

Landlord services (management and maintenance) in both private and public sectors are efficient, effective and provide the customer with value for money

Housing advice services are accessible to all, are effective in preventing homelessness and help customers make informed choices about housing

Housing services, including access to social housing, are inclusive, respect diversity and promote equality and social cohesion

Vulnerable people are supported in the community

Solihull residents are enabled to live independently in their own homes wherever possible

An adequate range supported housing accommodation and services is available for those who need it

Good quality and well supported emergency and temporary housing solutions are available

Housing providers and managers are proactive in protecting vulnerable people from harm in their own homes and in other settings

Appendix 3: Consultation Results

A consultation event was held on 7th October 2005, to discuss the Draft Strategy and collect the opinions of various organisations. A list of the organisations in attendance is below.

- Birmingham Women's Aid
- Carr Gomm
- Solihull Forum/Tenants Panel
- Connexions – Chelmsley Wood
- Disabled People's Network
- Fordbridge Pathfinder Project Board
- Fordbridge Resident's Association
- Fry Housing Trust
- Harden Housing
- North Solihull Voluntary & Community Alliance
- Renewal Christian Centre
- Shaping Health
- Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness
- Solihull Community Housing
- Solihull MBC
 - Asylum Seeker Co-ordinator
 - Community Regulation
 - Housing Strategy
 - Local Strategic Partnership
 - Regeneration
 - Supporting People
- Solihull MIND
- Solihull Primary Care Trust
- Solihull SNAP
- St Andrew's Church
- St Basil's Centre
- Sure Start
- Trident Housing Association
- West Midlands Police

Consultation Results – 7th October

| Consultation Issue | Strategic Response |
|--|--|
| <p>BME Groups There needs to be a greater emphasis on the housing of BME groups, with particular thought on safety and refugees.</p> | <p>Analyse ODPM Development Guide 'Tackling Homelessness amongst Ethnic Minority Households' (published Sept 2005 and devise an Action Plan to ensure compliance with the Guide) (Action Plan 2.8)</p> |
| <p>Citizenship Agenda Raise awareness of Citizenship agenda, with reference to changing cultures.</p> | <p>- STaMP contributes to this. (Action Plan 1.17)</p> |
| <p>Application of the Common Assessment Framework Part of the 'Every Child Matters' programme and encourages a universal approach to helping families and young people. It suggests that all organisations work together and share information, which will include strategic thinkers working with operational workers.</p> | <p>Investigate with SCH the integration of homelessness service into the Common Assessment Framework. (Action Plan 4.8)</p> |
| <p>Communication Communication between agencies and the public is vital in ensuring the success of the Strategy – continual updates to the organisations involved will help the sharing and distribution of information.</p> | <p>Continue to convene the Multi Agency Homelessness Forum. Develop protocols between the Housing Options Team and B&SMHT for people with mental health issues, Connexions for 13-19 Year olds in temporary accommodation, Asylum Seekers Team. Monitoring of the Strategy will be accessible to all via the Council's website. (Action Plan 1.10, 2.8, 2.17, 4.1, 4.2)</p> |
| <p>Forms of Communication Communication with the public is often limited to paperwork. Visual material and consultations could help confusion and explaining jargon.</p> | <p>Agree. Consideration to be incorporated into future consultations and publications.</p> |
| <p>Cross-Authority Schemes These are an option, with neighbouring local authorities working together on a regional level to help ease the development of some projects – i.e. supported housing – which can prove expensive.</p> | <p>Work with the Supporting People team and neighbouring authorities to access working cross-boundary for the delivery of supported housing for homeless households. (Action Plan 3.8)</p> |
| <p>Hidden Homeless There was discussion of problems with people declaring homelessness, due to lack of awareness of what signifies the problem, for example, overcrowding in households.</p> | <p>Develop a monitoring scheme for identifying the hidden homeless. (Action Plan 4.3)</p> |

| Consultation Issue | Strategic Response |
|--|---|
| <p>Life Skills & Education Appropriate education is considered to be a major factor in controlling homelessness. Teaching life skills to children and young people can help minimise future problems in both the north and south of the borough.</p> | <p>Continue to support the delivery of STaMP to year 10/11 pupils in Solihull (Action Plan 1.17)</p> |
| <p>Mental Health There was concern over the provision of additional supported housing for those suffering from mental health problems, in particular accommodation with emergency access.</p> | <p>Investigate the provision of additional supported housing for people with mental health problems in the south of Solihull (Action Plan 3.8)</p> |
| <p>NightStop This initiative has caused concerns, in relation to who people are letting into their homes. A general consensus is that precaution should be taken with this scheme and a full risk assessment should be carried out.</p> | <p>Nightstop is a recognised national scheme and therefore Solihull will ensure that any concerns are raised and dealt with by learning from other authorities. Consultation will also take place with relevant local organisations in undertaking a full risk assessment. (Action Plan 3.1)</p> |
| <p>Private Sector Improvement of the sustainability of the private rented sector can be achieved by educating landlords on their rights and responsibilities, and increasing the capacity of the rent deposit scheme.</p> | <p>We will work to secure additional funding for the rent deposit scheme. (Action Plan 2.3, 3.5)</p> |
| <p>Quality of Housing The importance of housing standards has been highlighted. The regeneration of the north of the borough should be addressing these standards, including child-safe housing.</p> | <p>The regeneration of north Solihull will ensure that appropriate standards for new build accommodation are complied with. The Council will liaise with social landlords to ensure 'void standards' are appropriate. (Action Plan 3.15)</p> |
| <p>Travellers There is an expectation for the Council to provide sites on which travellers can settle. A Floating Support Scheme for travellers will be starting in April 2006. There should also be awareness of Single Medical Assessment for travellers.</p> | <p>A floating support scheme has been commissioned to work with travellers in Solihull. (Action Plan 1.8)</p> |

| Consultation Issue | Strategic Response |
|---|--|
| <p>Voluntary Groups Identify opportunities for working with voluntary organisations within Solihull.</p> | <p>Convene the Multi-agency Homelessness Forum and continue close working relationships with voluntary organisations in the borough. (Action Plan 4.2, 4.3)</p> |
| <p>Young People A higher emphasis on young people was suggested, including a mentoring service through Connexions, updating the Strategy to reflect developments in the 14-19 age group and reviewing the provision for young people with learning disabilities.</p> | <p>Ensure effective linkages into the children's and young persons Strategy and the Local Preventative Strategy (Action Plan 2.17)</p> |
| <p>Money Advice Review the capacity of independent Money Advice services.</p> | <p>To be assessed through the work of the Multi-Agency Homelessness Forum. (Action Plan 1.3, 1.5)</p> |

Consultation Results – 15th November LSP Learning and Inclusion Thematic Group

The Draft Homelessness Strategy was discussed at the LSP Learning and Inclusion Thematic Group held on 15th November 2005. A diverse range of voluntary and statutory organisations, involved in social exclusion and learning difficulties, were present, and the following results were found:

| Consultation Issue | Strategic Response |
|--|---|
| <p>Profile of Homelessness There is a need to raise the profile of homelessness in Solihull and promote existing services</p> | Run at least 5 information sessions to a wide variety of agencies regarding homelessness in Solihull (Action Plan 4.9) |
| <p>Early intervention Appropriate early intervention is essential to prevent homelessness Clear sign posting of services including prevention of Homelessness, Connexions/ Local Libraries /Children’s Services/Social Services Police/ SMBC Homelessness Service & sign posting through strategic partnerships</p> | Need to ensure existing services are advertised and accessible (Action Plan 1.4, 1.17, 4.6) |
| <p>Local differences Need to analyse the differences between homelessness in the north and south of Solihull</p> | Carry out a further mapping exercise of P1E data and analyse the results (Action Plan 2.19) |
| <p>Mortgage/debt issues Concerns that mortgage debt will increase due to a volatile housing market</p> | Analyse P1E data quarterly and develop an action plan if the numbers of homeless households due to mortgage/rent arrears increases (Action Plan 1.9) |
| <p>Planning/developing issues Maximise the affordable housing provision for Solihull</p> | There are clear links between the Homelessness strategy and the Housing strategy. A clear aim of the Housing strategy is to maximise the development of social housing in the borough |
| <p>Voluntary Groups Identify opportunities for working with voluntary organisations within Solihull.</p> | Convene the Multi-agency Homelessness Forum and continue close working relationships with voluntary organisations in the borough. (Action Plan 4.2, 4.3) |
| <p>Crime & Disorder Ensure effective liaison with the Police and other partners regarding homelessness as a result of violence/harassment</p> | It is clear that homelessness due to violence is a key reason for homelessness in Solihull (Action Plan 2.13) |
| <p>Older People As the elderly population increases need to consider the specific needs of older homeless people</p> | Analyse data to ascertain the numbers of older homeless people. Highlight good practice and if appropriate replicate in Solihull (Action Plan 3.19) |

| Consultation Issue | Strategic Response |
|---|--|
| <p>Basic information for customers Need to ensure leaflets and other information for homeless people are available in accessible locations</p> | <p>The homelessness leaflet is due to be updated. Once this has occurred it will be circulated to various organisations providing front-line services for residents of Solihull (Action Plan 2.9)</p> |
| <p>Need for emergency accommodation A need for provision of accommodation that can be accessed in an emergency for single homeless people</p> | <p>The strategy includes a number of action points that are focussed around exploring and providing alternative temporary accommodation options for people in Solihull (Action Plan 2.5, 3.1, 3.2)</p> |
| <p>Private Sector Ensure effective links with the private rented sector and also ensure that effective action is taken regarding properties in disrepair in the private sector</p> | <p>The need to maximise the use of the private rented sector is ingrained throughout the strategy (Action Plan 3.3, 3.4)</p> |
| <p>Funding Ensure funding opportunities are available to local voluntary organisations to provide appropriate services for residents of Solihull</p> | <p>Solihull MBC external funding team are assisting with a number of applications for external agencies (Action Plan 1.17, 3.5)</p> |
| <p>Education There is a need to prevent homelessness through education and learning and we need to target those 14-16 who are outside formal learning</p> | <p>The council has supported and funded St Basils to run their STaMP project to year 10/11 pupils in Solihull. They are also seeking to access harder to reach young people who do not engage with education. (Action Plan 2.9)</p> |
| <p>Mediation & Counselling Mediation and counselling can play a key role in the prevention of homelessness particularly amongst young people being evicted by family/relatives</p> | <p>The re-launching of the mediation service and targeting this at early intervention through partner agencies (Action Plan 1.19)</p> |
| <p>Promote education & training opportunities Raise awareness of short term learning, roll on roll off learning and the various colleges and locations</p> | <p>Ensure households who are ready to access employment/training can readily access current provision (Action Plan 2.20)</p> |
| <p>Empty Homes Ensure that empty properties are brought back into use for the benefits of people in housing need</p> | <p>Maximise the contribution of the Empty Homes Strategy to meet homelessness pressures (Action Plan 3.6) Assess the scope for using 'Management Orders' and other powers in the 2004 Housing Act (Action Plan 3.7)</p> |

Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms

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| Access to Employment Group (AEG) | The Solihull Access to Employment Group (AEG) is a partnership of employment service providers in the borough that work to co-ordinate and develop services to meet the needs of individuals needing support in accessing the labour market. |
| Administering Authorities | Authorities that are responsible for implementing the 'Supporting People' programme within their local area. |
| Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) | This describes a range of problems, including noisy neighbours, vandalism, litter, graffiti and youth nuisance. |
| Audit Commission | An independent body with responsibility for ensuring public money is spent well and promoting improvements in public services. Further information is available at www.audit-commission.gov.uk . |
| Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) | This involves the local authority setting up a wholly owned company, which manages the housing stock and the investment in it. This is Solihull Community Housing (SCH). |
| Birmingham and Solihull Learning Skills Council | The Learning and Skills Councils cover defined geographic areas across England and are responsible for funding and planning post 16 education. More information on Learning and Skills Councils is available at www.lsc.gov.uk . |
| Black Minority Ethnic (BME) | The term 'minority ethnic' refers to groups that are not recorded under the 'White British' ethnic group category. |
| Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) | A national measure of performance set by central government. |
| BORRIS Project | Blakenhurst Offender Rehabilitation and Resettlement in Solihull. This team works intensively with offenders with drug problems, helping them settle back into the community upon release. |
| Care Leaver protocol | The agreement between social care and SCH on what housing and support options should be available to young people when they are leaving care. |
| Central Housing Market Area (HMA) | An area identified in the 2005 Regional Housing Strategy covering the area of the West Midlands central conurbation, including Birmingham, Solihull, Sandwell & Dudley, Telford & Coventry. |
| Choice Based Lettings CBL | Choice-based lettings are based on the Dutch style of advertising and letting homes and aims to give a more customer focused approach to the letting of social housing. |
| Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) | Provides free, confidential, impartial and independent advice to people on areas such as welfare benefits, debt, employment, consumers, housing, relationships and legal matters. Further information is available at www.citizensadvice.org.uk . |

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| Community Strategy | This aims to set out the over-arching vision for an area. The Strategy sets out priorities, how public bodies working in the borough will help achieve these, and how success will be measured. |
| Corporate Management Team | Solihull's Corporate Management Team includes the Chief Executive and all Corporate Directors. They lead on the development of the Corporate Plan. |
| Corporate Plan | The Corporate Plan shows how all services of the Council are aimed at coming together to form One Council One Vision, in terms of satisfying customer needs and meeting the challenges of the future. |
| Crime and Disorder Strategy | Solihull Council and West Midlands Police working in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in Solihull. www.solihull.gov.uk/bestvalue/crime/default.htm |
| Decent Homes Standard | A Government defined standard that requires all local authorities to bring their housing stock to a defined standard by 2010. Further information is available at www.housing.odpm.gov.uk/information/dhg/index.htm |
| Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP or DHB) | Payments made in addition to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit to give more help towards housing costs if these costs are not already met by benefit. |
| Domestic Violence | Domestic violence is violence from a person associated with the victim. The Housing Act 1996 provides that, for the purposes of dealing with domestic violence, a person is associated with another if:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are or have been married to each other • They are or have been co-habitants (e.g. a man and woman living together as husband and wife) • They live or have lived in the same household • They are relatives Domestic Violence is not confined to instances within the home but can occur outside the home from a person with whom the victim is associated. |
| Domestic Violence Strategy | Multi-agency Strategy to prevent, reduce and respond to domestic violence, and give support to victims. |
| Electronic Credit Referencing | A system which checks the previous address of applicants, and can help to speed up the homelessness assessment process. |
| Emergency Duty Team | Social Care and Performance Directorate have a team of people (including social workers) who are ready to respond to any urgent cases within Solihull, 24 hours a day. |
| Floating Support | A scheme in which people living in their own self contained accommodation and have particular support needs, receive support from visiting workers. |
| HomeBuy | The HomeBuy scheme helps people who cannot afford to buy a home on the open market but can afford the long term costs associated with home ownership. It is funded by the Housing Corporation. |

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| Homelessness | Section 175 of the Housing Act of 1996 defines a homeless person as one who:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has no accommodation that they are legally entitled to occupy • has accommodation, but cannot secure entry to it • has accommodation that is a moveable structure and there is no place they are legally entitled to place it • has accommodation but it would not be reasonable for him/her to continue to occupy it |
| Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate | A team within the ODPM responsible for homelessness and the Supporting People programme |
| Housing Quality Network (HQN) | A consultancy agency to promote improvements in the performance, quality and value of housing services. Further information is available out www.hqnetwork.org.uk . |
| Housing Register | The list of people seeking accommodation from a local authority. |
| Housing Revenue Account Business Plan | A plan as to how the Council will manage its income from, and spending on, maintaining and improving its housing stock. |
| Intentionally Homeless | Under Section 191 of the Housing Act 1996, a person becomes homeless intentionally if s/he does or fails to do something in consequence of which s/he ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for his/her occupation and which it would have been reasonable for him/her to continue to occupy. |
| Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) | KLOEs are detailed questions that help inform inspection judgements by the Audit Commission. Housing KLOEs assess and measure the effectiveness and efficiency of housing services. |
| Learning & Inclusion thematic group | A group that is part of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), but specialises in learning and social inclusion. |
| Local Connection | Under Section 199 of the Housing Act 1996 a person has a local connection with the district of the local housing authority if s/he has a connection with it:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • because s/he is normally resident there • because s/he is employed there • because of family associations there • because of special circumstances If s/he does not qualify, a council can refer him/her to an authority where a local connection is established. |
| Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) | A partnership whereby local authorities and central government work with the voluntary and other sectors, with joint working leading to a common objective being more effectively tackled. |
| The Make a Better Life trust (MABL) | The Make A Better Life trust is a registered charity based in Solihull which aims to assist in the provision of support services to victims of domestic violence. |

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| Multi-Agency Homeless Forum (MAHF) | A forum of organisations with an interest in homelessness issues in Solihull. The aim is to bring together people working with homeless households, together with providers of accommodation and housing services in order to understand and tackle issues of homelessness in Solihull. |
| National Asylum Support Service (NASS) | From April 2000 NASS has been given the responsibility for providing support and accommodation to Asylum Seekers aged 18+ while their immigration claim is being investigated. |
| Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) | Central Government Department with responsibility for local government, housing, regeneration and planning, social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal |
| One Council, One Vision (1C1V) | Solihull Council's internal change process in order to make it more customer-focused and increase its ability to meet the challenges of the future. |
| 'PIE' | Mandatory information return. Local authorities must complete and return data on homelessness within their borough to the ODPM. |
| Pathways Project | The Pathways Project is a shared supported housing scheme for young people, which makes use of existing Council dwellings. The purpose is to enable young people to live in a semi-independent housing environment in which they can learn the life skills essential for maintaining a tenancy. |
| Primary Care Trust (PCT) | A freestanding unit of the National Health Service that combines GP's, community nurses, and other advisers, which has powers to commission and provide services to the area they serve. |
| Priority Need | Under Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996, the following persons have priority need under homelessness legislation:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a pregnant woman or person with whom dependent children live; • a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness, physical disability or other special reason; • A person who is homeless as the result of an emergency such as fire or flood. Additional priority need categories were introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 and 17 year olds who are not defined as relevant children under the Children (Leaving Care) Act; • 18-21 year olds who have left local authority care; • People who are vulnerable as a result of violence or threats of violence; • People who are vulnerable as a result of leaving prison, the armed forces or any other institutional setting. |
| Regional Housing Board | Includes members from the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Housing Corporation, Advantage West Midlands, English Partnerships and Regional Housing Partnerships. One of the board's main roles is to develop the Regional Housing Strategy. |
| Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) | Also know as Housing Associations, this term refers to all housing organisations that are registered with the Housing Corporation. |

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| RELATE | A national organisation that offers relationship advice and support. |
| Rent Deposit Scheme | Rent deposit schemes involve providing a deposit to enable homeless people to rent a home in the private sector. |
| Right to Buy | A scheme that allows council tenants to buy their home at a discount off market value. |
| Schools Training & Mentoring Project (STaMP) | Helps and encourages young people to reach their full potential and to increase their confidence and self-esteem. |
| St Basil's | St Basil's is a registered charity working with young homeless people across the West Midlands. They offer both accommodation and support to 16-25 year olds in severe housing need. |
| Shelter | Shelter is a registered charity set up in the mid-1960's following concern from the public as to how the homeless were treated. The money it raises is spent on a national network of housing aid centres and supports projects aimed at reducing homelessness. Shelter is also the national campaign for homeless people. Further information is available at www.shelter.org.uk . |
| Social Exclusion | The extent to which people are excluded or prevented from engaging in society norms and opportunities due to their circumstances. |
| Solihull Community Housing (SCH) | SCH is the ALMO that was formed in April 2004 to manage the Council's housing stock in Solihull. |
| Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness (SCAH) | Solihull Churches Action on Homelessness is a registered charity formed by a group of Solihull churches in 1994. SCAH works in various ways to alleviate the effects of homelessness in Solihull. |
| Spend to Save Policy | Policy whereby expenditure by the local authority saves the need for greater expenditure |
| Standby Teams | Teams that are on call out of office hours to deal with emergencies. Duties include being able to go and open up a hostel or temporary accommodation unit. This can then be used to house a person while their request to be housed under homeless legislation is considered or their circumstances that led to them requiring emergency accommodation have been removed. |
| Supporting People Commissioning Body | A partnership of local housing, social care, health and probation statutory services that commissions support services and advising and approving a Supporting People Strategy. |
| Supporting People Strategy | A Strategy setting out how the Council will implement the Government's Supporting People programme which offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life through greater independence. |

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| Unintentionally Homeless | The term used to describe someone whom, through no fault of his or her own, has become homeless. |
| Unitary Development Plan (UDP) | A statutory plan setting out, amongst other things, the local authorities policy on the provision of housing land and the desired type of housing provision. Solihull's UDP is available at www.solihull.gov.uk/bestvalue/udp . |
| Vulnerable Young Family Scheme | A housing project which provides both housing and support services for young families who might have difficulty managing a tenancy without support. |
| West Midlands Landlords Association | Representative body for private landlords. |
| Women's Aid | A charity that provides advice, support and refuge to women who are victims of domestic violence. For further information go to www.womensaid.org.uk . |