

CABINET – 6 AUGUST 2003

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a new statutory obligation on local housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness within their district and formulate a strategy to tackle homelessness problems.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval for the adoption of the homelessness strategy. The proposed strategy is at Appendix One and the review of homelessness which provides context and informed the development of the strategy is at Appendix Two.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 established the basis of the current statutory response to the problem of homelessness. Whilst this Act has been amended and consolidated on a number of occasions, most recently by the Homelessness Act 2002, the main purpose of the homelessness legislation since 1977 has been to provide a housing safety net for homeless households who are in priority need and who have not made themselves intentionally homeless. The legislation imposes a duty on all housing authorities to consider applications for assistance from people who are homeless, to secure accommodation for priority applicants and to provide advice and assistance to others.
- 2.2 The Homelessness Act 2002 has retained and expanded the concept of the safety net for homeless households but has also introduced some significant changes to the legislation, namely the requirement to carry out a review and formulate a strategy. The Act forms the central part of the Government's approach to tackling homelessness, which was detailed in a report published in March 2002. This report was called 'More Than a Roof' and, as the title suggests, proposed a more holistic approach to dealing with homelessness. The main themes of 'More Than a Roof' are that:
 - (i) Local authorities should take a more planned, strategic and joined-up approach to homelessness rather than a reactive one.
 - (ii) Local authorities and other agencies should develop innovative approaches to tackling homelessness and share best practice.

- (iii) Agencies that deliver services to homeless people should work in partnership to tackle the problem.
 - (iv) More emphasis should be placed on the prevention of homelessness and on sustaining tenancies to prevent homelessness from re-occurring.
- 2.3 There is an expectation that homelessness strategies should be developed in accordance with these themes and also seek to tackle the problem of the use of B&B by local authorities for temporary housing.
- 2.4 The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out specific requirements for the review stating that it must consider:
 - (i) the levels and likely future levels of homelessness
 - (ii) the activities and services provided which help to prevent homelessness, help to find accommodation for homeless people or provide support for them, including support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
 - (iii) the resources available to the authority and to social services, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other agencies for providing these services.
- 2.5 The Act also requires that the strategy must include plans for:
 - (i) the prevention of homelessness
 - (ii) ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless
 - (iii) ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

3. Carrying out the review and developing the proposed strategy

- 3.1 At the start of the review process in 2002, a steering group of representatives from partner agencies was set up to assist in the development of the review. These agencies included Social Services, the Locality Mental Health Team, the Primary Care Trust, partner Housing Associations, the Youth Offending Team, the Probation Services the CAB's and the Supporting People co-ordinator.

- 3.2 All agencies who were believed to hold information on homelessness and resources for homeless people in the district were contacted during the review process to provide as much information as possible for the review. In addition, the Housing Needs Team has access to statutory homelessness statistics and other data on homelessness and housing advice provision.
- 3.2 In order to ensure widespread consultation, the Council hosted the district's first homelessness forum in May 2003. All district Councillors were invited along with a range of stakeholders. At the forum the findings of the draft review were discussed and action points for the strategy were developed.

4. Environmental Implications

- 4.1 There are no implications arising directly as a result of this report.

5. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 5.1 There are links between homelessness (particularly rough sleeping) and crime and disorder (see Appendix 2, page 22). If the strategy is successful in reducing the level of homelessness in the district then there may be a positive impact on crime and disorder issues.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The provision of bed and breakfast and other temporary housing has had a significant impact on Council expenditure in recent years, costing £173,340 in 2001 / 2 and £183,740 in 2002 / 3. It is probable that this spending can be reduced if the strategy is successful in tackling homelessness and the Council meets the Government target on B&B usage. However, the Homelessness Act 2002 has widened the safety net for homeless households leading to a possible upward pressure on homeless acceptances. Additionally, alternatives to temporary housing such as the private sector leasing scheme can also be costly. Therefore, it is impossible to say at this stage what the level of reduction in expenditure on homelessness assistance will be.

7. Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing's comments are recorded at 7.2 and 7.3.
- 7.2 'NFDC continues to tackle the problem of homelessness as one of its highest and most urgent priorities. The authority has initiated over the last 2 years a whole range of self generated policies to deal with the issue. The core problem is a lack of affordable housing and lack of funding from central government. The authority recently rushed through over 1.5 million pounds worth of schemes which I signed off over a period of some 2 months to avoid the effect of the Government's withdrawal of housing grant, this committed this authority to considerable continuing unbudgeted financial commitments every year.'
- 7.2 'This is a recent example of our commitment to secure housing for the people of the district. The strategy essentially highlights schemes that this authority intended to do or is doing in any event. The strategy is a new statutory obligation which although useful is another example of us having to divert resources and officer time to a Government initiative on paper rather than focusing on the core issue of getting a roof over the head of those in need. I recommend that the strategy be adopted to comply with statute, however no amount of strategies will be a substitute for appropriate funding assistance and freeing this local authority to decide the best way forward for a local need.'

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That Members agree the adoption of the homelessness strategy at Appendix One.

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APPENDIX ONE

Homelessness Strategy



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Introduction

Housing is identified as one of the key priorities for New Forest District Council in the Council's Corporate Plan – the Heart of the Forest. The plan states that:

'The need for affordable homes is one of the major issues facing the district.'

The Council's Housing Strategy, which sits underneath the Corporate Plan, focuses on the lack of affordable housing and the need to tackle the homelessness problem in the district. One of the key aims within the Housing Strategy is:

'To prevent homelessness and support and assist people who become homeless.'

The purpose of this Homelessness Strategy is to assist the Council and its partner organisations in meeting these key strategic priorities: tackling homelessness and providing more affordable housing.

The Homelessness Strategy is one of a number of sub-strategies which sit underneath the Council's overall Housing Strategy. The sub strategies provide a specific focus on areas of particular importance.

The context for this strategy was provided by a detailed review of the homelessness problem in the district which was carried out in 2002/3. The purpose of the review was to inform the development of this strategy by providing as complete a picture as possible of the problem of homelessness in the district and the resources to tackle the problem.

Key Findings of the Review

Among the key review findings were:

- Homelessness is estimated to affect around 1,000 households a year in the district
- The levels of homelessness are likely to increase
- The major cause of homelessness in the district is a lack of affordable housing options
- There is a significant shortage of affordable housing in the district and a particular lack of 1 or 2 bedroom properties which are most suitable for the needs of newly forming households
- Secondary causes include a number of personal factors, including domestic violence, relationship breakdown and mental health problems
- Rough sleeping affects a number of people in the district each year.

- Some people in housing need live chaotic lifestyles and are vulnerable to repeat homelessness
- The use of B&B for homeless households has increased substantially since 1997, although there was a reduction in 2002/3
- There are a number of services for homeless people in the district and some areas of good partnership working. However, there are a number of areas where services and partnership working could be improved
- That the five main areas of focus for the strategy should be:
 - providing better information on homelessness
 - preventing homelessness
 - increasing the supply of temporary housing
 - increasing the supply of permanent housing
 - providing support for homeless people

It is work in these specific areas that forms the basis of the following action plan.

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Improving Information on Homelessness

Task	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Completion date
Develop a single data collection form to be used by all agencies which deal with homelessness	Housing Needs, NFDC	All partner agencies	April 2005
Develop a monitoring system to help identify repeat homelessness	Housing Needs, NFDC	All partner agencies	April 2004
Undertake ongoing analysis of applicants who successfully resolve their housing problems after seeking housing advice and those who are unsuccessful and go on to make a homelessness application. This will assist in development of the advice service.	Housing Needs, NFDC		Ongoing
Develop a 16+ accommodation panel to capture better needs information for young people	Social Services, Housing Needs, NFDC	Connexions, It's Your Choice, Night Stop, Partner RSL's, YOT etc.	April 2004

Preventing Homelessness

Task	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Completion date
Consider whether the Council's deposit scheme could be used as a preventative measure rather than a measure to resolve homelessness problems.	Housing Needs, NFDC		April 2004
Consider whether practical support, including the provision of extra security measures could be provided for women who are suffering domestic violence so that they may feel that they do not have to flee their home.	Housing Needs, NFDC	Domestic violence co-ordinator	April 2004
Consider developing the role of the Housing Advice Forum so that it becomes more of a strategic planning group for housing advice provision.	Housing Needs, NFDC	CAB's, It's Your Choice, Other advice services	April 2004
Consider the cost effectiveness of providing adaptations to Council accommodation for individual tenants to prevent homelessness (eg partition walls to provide more sleeping spaces)	Estate Management, NFDC	Housing Needs, Planned Maintenance, NFDC	Ongoing

Preventing Homelessness (continued)

Expand housing advice provision via Tellytalk.	IT services, NFDC	CAB's Housing Needs, NFDC	April 2005
Develop a website to provide housing advice.	IT services and Housing Needs, NFDC		October 2003
Develop a programme of visits to educational establishments to improve the understanding of housing options and homelessness for young people	Housing Needs, NFDC	Connexions	April 2004
Consider, with other authorities in the region, the development of a LAWN type scheme*.	SHOG, Hampshire	Housing Needs, NFDC	April 2006
Consider assertive outreach housing advice provision to tackle homelessness in the private and RSL sector, with Advisers actively negotiating and mediating between landlords and tenants.	Housing Needs, NFDC	Partner RSL's, Private Landlord Forum	April 2004
Improve the promotion of the advice service to raise its profile	Housing Needs, NFDC		December 2003
Provide Connexions training for Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers to improve advice services for young people	Housing Needs, NFDC	Connexions	Ongoing
Consider the benefits of seeking the Community Legal Services Quality Mark for the advice service	Housing Needs, NFDC	CLS Partnership	April 2005
Explore the benefits of further partnership working (eg with drug services, the CLS etc.)	Housing Needs, NFDC	Other partners	April 2004
Consider extending home visits to all homeless cases (except where there is violence) to ensure detailed verification of applications	Housing Needs, NFDC		April 2004
Secure mediation training for Housing Advisers to assist them in preventing homelessness where family or other disputes are the core of the problem.	Housing Needs, NFDC		April 2004
Continue the development of the Housing Needs Service into a housing options and assertive prevention service.	Housing Needs, NFDC		Ongoing

*LAWN is a London-based scheme where local authorities in high demand areas work in partnership with those in low demand areas to provide options for people to move to a different district.

Increasing the Supply of Good Quality Temporary housing

Task	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Completion date
Pump prime an expanded Housing Association leasing scheme using the additional ring-fenced homelessness funding available from the ODPM.	Housing Development, NFDC	Partner RSL's	October 2003
Consider the need for alternative direct or immediate access schemes to work alongside the Nightstop scheme.	Supported Housing Forum and sub-groups		April 2005
Consider the possibility of developing high support housing schemes for people with very challenging behaviour or multiple needs.	Supported Housing Forum and sub-groups		April 2005
Consider the need for a supported lodgings scheme for young people.	Supported Housing Forum YP Sub Group, 16 + Accommodation Panel		April 2005
Investigate the possibilities of developing new housing for temporary accommodation in partnership with RSL's using a private finance model.	Housing Development, NFDC	Partner RSL's, Planning services, NFDC	April 2004

Increasing the Supply of Permanent Affordable Housing

Task	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Completion date
Complete an assessment of future stock options and action the most appropriate option.	Housing Strategic Services/ Finance Services, NFDC	NFDC tenants	July 2005
Increase the supply of land for affordable housing.	Housing Development, NFDC	Planning Services, NFDC	Ongoing
Develop possible new funding arrangements for new affordable housing in the light of the Government's withdrawal of the current funding regime.	Housing Development, Finance Services, NFDC	Partner RSL's	April 2004
Consider the development of cross-boundary sub-regional working with other local authorities to ensure competitiveness in accessing regionally allocated funds.	Housing Development, NFDC	Other LA's, Partner RSL's	April 2005
Explore off-site manufacturing as a means of reducing costs and speeding up delivery.	Housing Development, NFDC	Partner RSL's	April 2005
Propose, in the New Forest District Local Plan, an increase in the percentage of affordable housing on eligible new build sites from 30% to 35%.	Planning Services, NFDC		December 2004
On sites of 15 or more dwellings ensure a minimum of 50% of new build properties are one or two bedroom.	Planning Services, NFDC		Ongoing
Consider alternative mechanisms for increasing the supply of affordable housing in village areas (eg through village trusts.)	Planning Services, Housing Development, NFDC	Partner RSL's	Ongoing

Support for People who are Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness

Task	Lead Organisation	Others involved	Completion date
Review the Joint Working Agreement for young people, ensuring it incorporates all relevant partners and operates in practice.	Social Services	Housing Needs, NFDC, Youth Offending Team	April 2005
Develop a 16+ accommodation panel to consider and tackle the needs of young people with housing problems	Social Services, Housing Needs, NFDC	Connexions, It's Your Choice, Night Stop, Partner RSL's, YOT etc.	April 2004
Consider the need for a homelessness resettlement post and, if appropriate, bid for Supporting People funding .	Supported Housing Forum	Housing Needs, NFDC	April 2005
Consider further expansion of the Floating Support service and, if appropriate, bid for Supporting People funding .	Supported Housing Forum		April 2005
Consider whether Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers could undertake holistic needs assessments to pick up all possible triggers for homelessness.	Housing Needs, NFDC		April 2004

Monitoring Arrangements

This strategy, in line with the other housing strategies, will be monitored on a quarterly basis by Housing Strategic Services Management Team.

A new homelessness strategy will be formulated in 2007/8.

APPENDIX TWO

**A Review of Homelessness
in the New Forest District**

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A Review of Homelessness in the New Forest District

Part I – Background and Context

The Statutory Background to this Review

The Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 established the basis of the current statutory response to the problem of homelessness. Whilst this Act has been amended and consolidated on a number of occasions, most recently by the Homelessness Act 2002, the main purpose of the homelessness legislation since 1977 has been to provide a safety net for homeless households who are in priority need and who have not made themselves intentionally homeless. The legislation imposes a duty on all housing authorities to consider applications for assistance from people who are homeless, to secure accommodation for priority applicants and to provide advice and assistance to others.

The Homelessness Act 2002 has retained the concept of the safety net for homeless households but has also introduced some significant changes to the legislation. The Act forms the central part of the Government's approach to tackling homelessness, which was detailed in a report published in March 2002. This report was called 'More Than a Roof' and, as the title suggests, proposed a more holistic approach to dealing with homelessness. The main themes of 'More Than a Roof' are that:

- (a) Local authorities should take a more planned, strategic and joined-up approach to homelessness rather than a reactive one.
- (b) Local authorities and other agencies should develop innovative approaches to tackling homelessness and share best practice.
- (c) Agencies that deliver services to homeless people should work in partnership to tackle the problem.
- (d) More emphasis should be placed on the prevention of homelessness and on sustaining tenancies to prevent homelessness from re-occurring.

The most significant change to the legislation on homelessness which supports the approach set out in 'More Than A Roof' is the requirement in the Act for local authorities to carry out a homelessness review in their district and formulate a strategy for tackling homelessness. A local authority must review the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the district and all the resources available to prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and support for homeless households. After completing the review, the Council is obliged to formulate and publish a strategy to prevent homelessness and secure that sufficient accommodation and support is, and will be, available for people who are, or may become, homeless.

The Purpose of this Review

This review fulfills one of the new statutory obligations within the Homelessness Act 2002. Its purpose is to provide the most detailed picture ever seen of homelessness in the New Forest. Following publication of the review, the Council is obligated to formulate a strategy to tackle homelessness.

This review considers:

- the levels and likely future levels of homelessness
- the activities and services provided which help to prevent homelessness, help to find accommodation for homeless people or provide support for them, including support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.
- the resources available to the authority and to social services, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other agencies for providing these services.

The review must inform the development of the homelessness strategy so that the strategy includes plans for:

- the prevention of homelessness
- ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless
- ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Guidance provided by the Government makes it clear that a homelessness review and the strategy which is developed from it should help to change the ethos of homelessness services, from reactive services to planned and preventative ones. The review and strategy must consider the needs of all homeless people, not just those who are statutorily homeless.*

The review focuses on the issue of homelessness. It is not a housing needs survey but sits alongside the survey to help inform the Council's housing strategies. Similarly, the strategy which will be developed after publication of the review will not replace the Council's housing strategy; it will focus on homelessness and sit underneath the overall housing strategy and other corporate strategies.

* the term **statutory homelessness** will be used throughout this report to identify applicants who are owed a rehousing duty by the Council. Applicants who are homeless through no fault of their own and are classed as being in a priority need group (for example, families with children or people who are vulnerable) are normally owed a housing duty. All other homeless people will be identified as falling under the category of **non-statutory homelessness**.

The Problem of Homelessness: the National and Regional Context

It is impossible to know the true extent of the national homelessness problem as many people do not apply to local authorities for assistance and so are not recorded under the official homelessness statistics. What is known is that homelessness has increased in recent years and continues to do so. The official homelessness statistics show that in 2000/2001, 114,350 of the 252,780 households who applied to local authorities were accepted as being statutorily homeless. Of those who were not accepted, 77,130 (31%) were found to be not homeless, 52,370 (21%) were homeless but not in priority need and 8,930 (4%) were intentionally homeless.

Acceptances by local authorities rose to 118,360 in 2001/2002 and, based on half year figures, are likely to be around 125,000 in 2002/2003. This number of households is believed by Shelter, one of the national homelessness charities, to equate to around 400,000 people.

With regard to provision of accommodation for homeless people, the number of homeless households living in temporary housing secured by local authorities rose by 6,860 to 84,800 in the year to the end of September 2002. The number of households in B&B rose by 1,010 to 13,300 over the same period.

There are no comprehensive national figures for non-statutory homelessness and estimates depend on what particular housing circumstances are considered to amount to homelessness. A second homelessness charity, Crisis, has provided an estimate of 400,000 'hidden' homeless people in England in 2001. This is based on B&B and hostel occupation, squatting and 'sofa-surfing' (the practice of continually moving between the properties of different friends and relatives due to a lack of settled housing.) Some of these households may have previously applied as homeless but been refused by local authorities, and others may not consider themselves to be homeless or needing housing assistance.

As regards rough sleeping, the most extreme form of homelessness, the latest figures from December 2001 suggest that around 530 people sleep rough on any one night in England. A reduction in rough sleeping has been one of the government's main housing targets and this figure is down from 1,850 in 1998.

At the regional level, housing statistics also show high levels of homelessness. In the South East region, which includes Hampshire, 22,540 households were accepted as homeless in 2001, 12% of those homeless in England as a whole. Indeed, the South East, along with London and the South West, has shown the largest increases (of 21%) in homelessness since 1997. At the end of March 2002, 12,070 homeless households in the region were accommodated by local authorities in temporary housing (1210 of these in B&B.)

The upward trend of homelessness in the south is likely to continue and probably worsen. The number of households continues to grow (the latest figures from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister suggest an additional 155,000 households will be formed each year) which will increase the pressure on housing supply, especially affordable housing. Additionally, the Government, as part of its new approach to homelessness, has widened the group of people which local authorities may be obliged to consider as being in priority need, which will increase the level of statutory homelessness.

Other National and Regional Homelessness Policy Developments

As mentioned above (see page 4) the Government's report on the national homelessness problem, 'More Than A Roof' was published in March 2002. This report and the new Act emphasised the Government's focus on homelessness. Additionally, the Rough Sleepers Unit and the Bed and Breakfast Unit were incorporated into a new Homelessness Directorate with a wider remit to tackle homelessness in all its forms. The Directorate has been working actively with local authorities, particularly with regard to a new target which has been placed on local authorities to stop the use of B&B accommodation for families with children, except in emergency situations, by April 2004. Even in emergencies, B&B will be restricted in use to a period of less than 6 weeks.

Another key national initiative is the Supporting People programme. This scheme, backed by legislation, has brought all supported housing projects under one integrated policy and funding framework to replace the previous arrangements for providing housing related support services for vulnerable people. Many people using supported housing services have been homeless and are at risk of future homelessness, so there are clear links between homelessness strategies and Supporting People.

The key policy document for the south east area is the Regional Housing Statement. The statement provides a regional context to assist local authorities in formulating their housing strategies and development programmes. The statement identifies that 'rising homelessness is a major problem' and states that reduction in homelessness is one of nine region-wide priorities. The single most important priority is identified as the provision of more affordable housing; the links between affordability, household formation and homelessness are clearly set out in the statement. These links are also set out in the New Forest District Council's own housing strategy and one of the key district priorities is identified as being the need to increase the supply of affordable housing and minimise homelessness.

Part II - Homelessness in the New Forest

The purpose of this section is to consider the experience of homelessness in the district and to set out the known information on the current and likely future levels of homelessness in the New Forest.

The Experience of Homelessness in the New Forest

Behind every statistic on homelessness, there is a very real human problem. To ensure that the needs of homeless people are at the centre of this review and of any strategy developed from it, a survey of over 70 people who have been homeless in the New Forest in the last two years has been carried out. Whilst the sample size is relatively large when compared to the numbers of accepted homeless applicants, any conclusions drawn from the data for subsets of applicants within that sample must be treated with caution due to the small numbers involved.

In order to obtain information both on the experience of homelessness and on the performance of the Council's homelessness services, the survey focused on people who had applied to the Housing Needs Team. It must be noted that the survey did not consider the needs and experiences of non-statutory homeless households, who may experience poorer outcomes as they are not owed a rehousing duty.

The main reasons for homelessness amongst applicants in the survey were loss of shorthold tenancies (39%) family evictions (32%) and relationship breakdown (26%). These figures suggest that the sample was representative, as these are the three major causes of homelessness in the New Forest (see below, page 19.) Of particular note was the response to a question on current and previous tenure of the applicants; 59 % had never lived in permanent accommodation and the other 41% had recently been living in insecure housing. This demonstrates the close correlation between temporary housing arrangements and homelessness (see below, page 19 for further information on this issue.)

The level of previous rough sleeping amongst the sample was surprisingly high; of the applicants questioned, 12% had been street homeless in the past. There also seemed to be a direct link between applicants who had a care or institutionalised background and rough sleeping. Four out of the five applicants with such a background had been street homeless, a far higher proportion than for the overall sample.

Further links between rough sleeping, institutionalisation and health problems are also suggested by the survey. For example, 20% of all the applicants reported suffering from health problems more serious than common ailments; for people who had slept rough, the number with health problems was even higher, at 55%. The majority of health problems reported in the overall survey was of mental health issues (70%). Only one person stated that they suffered from alcohol or substance misuse problems.

Links between health issues, especially mental health problems, and homelessness are well established (Bines, 1994) so the statistics from the survey are not surprising. However, awareness and understanding of these links at a local level is important as it can help to inform the delivery of services.

Further information from the survey, focusing on the opinions of homeless people about the performance of the Council's homelessness services, is reported later on in this review (see page 48.)

Current and Past Levels of Homelessness in the New Forest District

In this section, the known evidence on the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the New Forest will be set out. As well as the figures for the overall levels and causes of homelessness across the district, statistics, where available, will also be put forward to indicate homelessness at parish level. Additionally, there will be consideration of the available information on homelessness as it effects individual client groups, including non-statutory homeless people.

The most useful information on homelessness is recorded by the Council's Housing Needs Team, the statutory homelessness and housing advice service for the district, which is required to provide statistics to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on the levels of homelessness. This information on statutory homelessness is available from the early 1990's, so it can be useful in identifying trends.

In addition to the statutory homelessness indicators, detailed information on customers approaching the Housing Needs Team for housing advice is also recorded. This information can assist in filling in the gaps by providing some information on non-statutory homelessness. Statistics on advice provision have been recorded since April 2001.

Additionally, contact was made with all of the other agencies in the New Forest who may work with homeless people to obtain additional information, particularly on individual client groups. With some exceptions, the quality and level of information available from services which do not include homelessness as a central function was, unfortunately, very limited, as they are not obligated to report statistics on homelessness.

Figure 1, below, shows the total number number of households who have presented as homeless to the Council over the last few years. Households refused acceptance are generally found to be not homeless (averaging 22% of the total number of households applying), non priority (averaging 6%)or intentionally homeless (on average, 6%.)

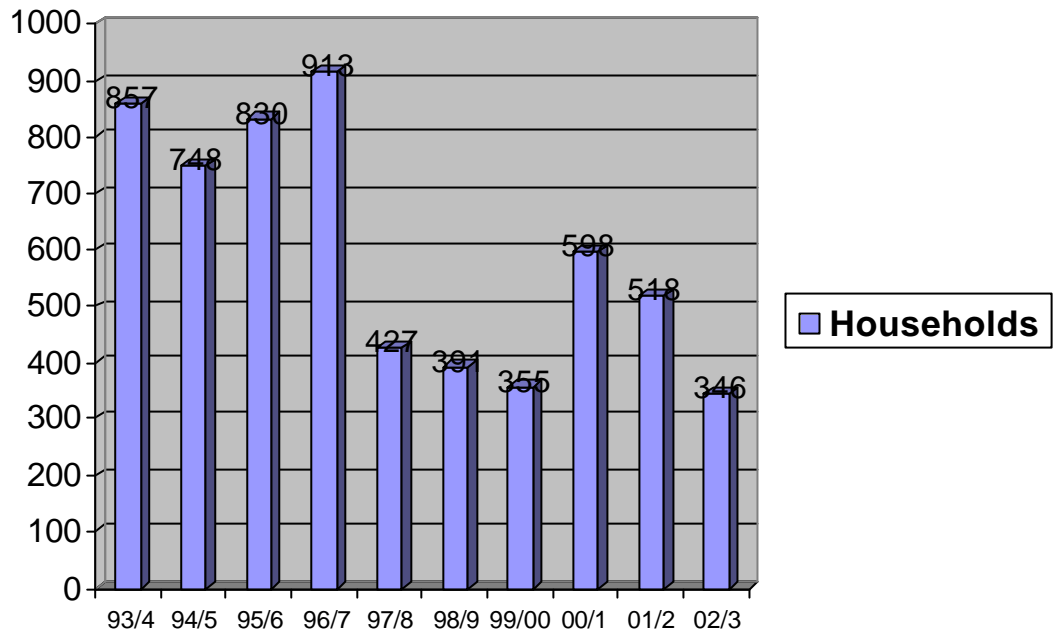


Figure 1 The Number of Households in the New Forest District Applying For Assistance Under the Homelessness Legislation

Figure 2, below, shows the total number of households *accepted* as homeless over the last few years. Generally, the acceptance rate in the New Forest is between 65% and 75% of all applications.

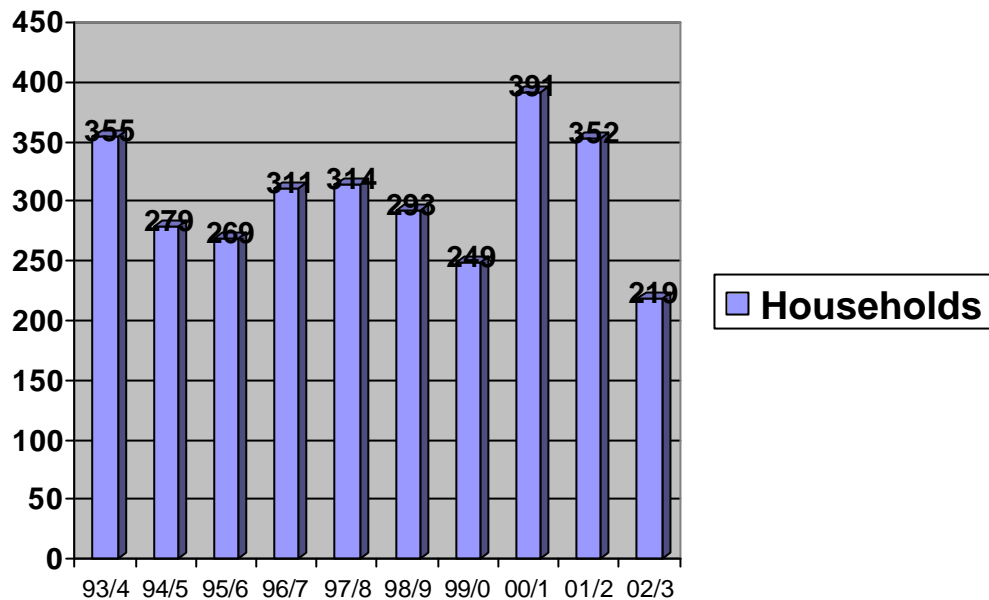


Figure 2 The Number of Statutory Homeless Households in the New Forest

In addition to the figures on statutory homelessness in the graphs above, we know that in 2002/3 there were 665 approaches to the housing advice service from people who stated that they were homeless or facing homelessness. The figure for the previous year was 420. To some extent, this group of people will be distinct from those who make homelessness applications. Those with a homelessness problem who are provided with housing advice are more likely to be in non-priority groups (see below, page 45 for background information on the operation of the advice and homelessness services). However, an unknown number of these may go on to make homelessness applications at a later date, so there will be some double counting between the two statistics.

The other service which homeless people are most likely to make initial contact with is the Citizens' Advice Bureaux. In 2002/3, the CAB's were contacted by 535 households who were homeless or threatened with homelessness. The figure for the previous year was around 650. Again, there will be some double counting between households who also approach, or are referred to, the Housing Needs Service.

It is very difficult to ascertain any meaningful trends from the available data on homelessness. For example, there was a very significant rise in homeless acceptances in 2000/1 and acceptances were high the following year. However, even with a worsening problem of affordability, which is almost certainly the main cause of homelessness in the district (see below, page 19), the number of acceptances reduced substantially in 2002/3.

The overall level of recorded homelessness applications is, to a considerable extent, governed by the Council's response to homelessness. This is because different local authorities record applications in different ways. Some authorities record *every* contact from a person who is homeless as an application; others record as homeless only customers who are provided with a formal written decision. Under the latter approach, those customers who do not make 'formal' applications are generally provided with housing advice and then try to make their own arrangements. Due to Government statistical requirements, New Forest District Council moved from taking the former approach to the latter one in 1997, hence the fall in numbers of recorded applications.

It is also the case that the level of acceptances depends upon the approach of individual local authorities. The Housing Needs Service has made significant changes to the way it manages homelessness applications and housing advice provision in the last year (see below, page 46 for details.) This partly explains the fall in acceptances over the same period.

Another factor which must be considered is the suggestion from recent research that the level of homelessness in rural areas is much higher than official figures suggest (Robinson, 2002). This is because of the possible inadequacy of traditional methods of assessing homelessness in non-urban districts.

What we are clearly able to say, based on the levels of homelessness over the last decade, is that the Council generally accepts around 300 households as homeless each year. Taking account of those who apply as homeless and are found to be **not** in priority need or intentionally homeless, and the numbers approaching the CAB's and the housing advice service stating that they have a homelessness problem, it is likely that around 700 households face homelessness and seek help each year in the district. An additional number of households will be homeless but will not approach any agencies.

From these statistics, we can provide a very rough estimate of the current level of homelessness in the district:

Our best estimate is that homelessness currently affects around 1,000 households a year in the New Forest District.

Likely Future Levels of Homelessness

All of the trends in the local housing market suggest that homelessness will continue at high levels. Indeed, despite the decline in acceptances of statutory homeless people in the last year, there is every reason to expect that homelessness will increase.

Figure 3 below shows the number of households *in need* on the Council's housing waiting list (the Homesearch Register.) Numbers are at record levels and the rate of increase over the two years to April 2003 has been 34 %.

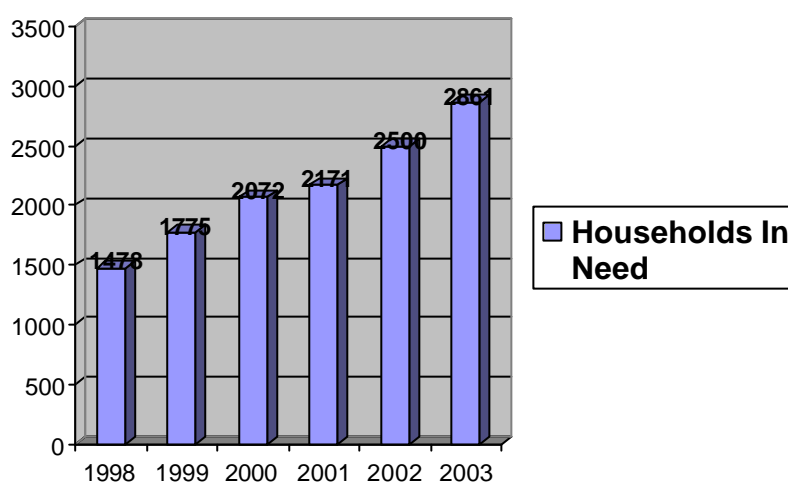


Figure 3 Number of Households In Need on the Homesearch Register

Whilst population estimates for the district forecast a decrease of 3,549 people in the ten years to 2011, suggesting that housing need may not continue to rise at the same rate, the total number of households is actually forecast to grow at just over 1% during the same period.

Of those in need on the waiting list, 22% live in assured shorthold tenancies and 28% live with relatives or friends. We know that these two groups are those most likely to be vulnerable to homelessness because of the insecure nature of their accommodation (see below, page 19.)

The Housing Needs Survey, which was carried out and published in 2001 provided an estimate that 2,660 concealed or new households will be forming within the district between 2001 and 2004. Of these, 92% were children of existing households and 95% were on incomes below that needed to purchase a property. Only 6% of this group were registered on the Council's housing waiting list which indicates that there are many more households vulnerable to homelessness than suggested by information from the Housing Register.

The high numbers of applicants in need and of new or concealed households may not in itself indicate continued high levels of homelessness if the turnover of affordable stock is able to tackle a high enough proportion of that need to keep the waiting list moving. However, the number of lettings has declined since the late 1990's as Figure 4 below, shows.*

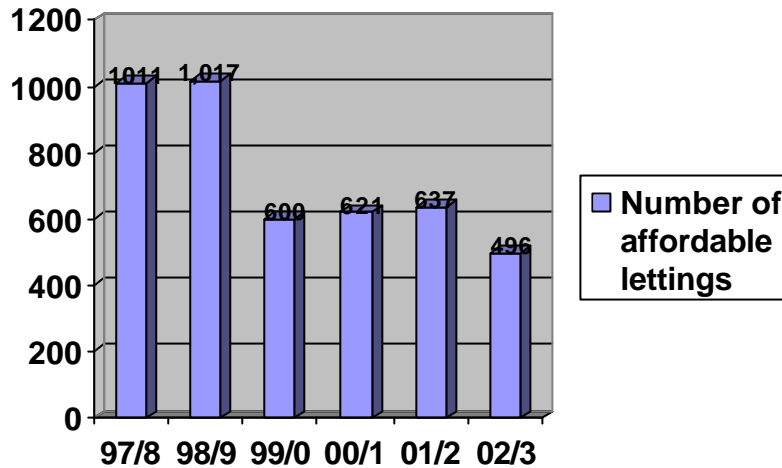


Figure 4 Number of Lettings of Affordable Housing in the New Forest District

A significant proportion of lettings each year arise because of the new build programme (usually between 20 and 30%.) Unfortunately, the forecast for new starts over the next few years suggest that new developments will contribute less to the availability of lettings and that therefore the overall turnover of stock will decline.

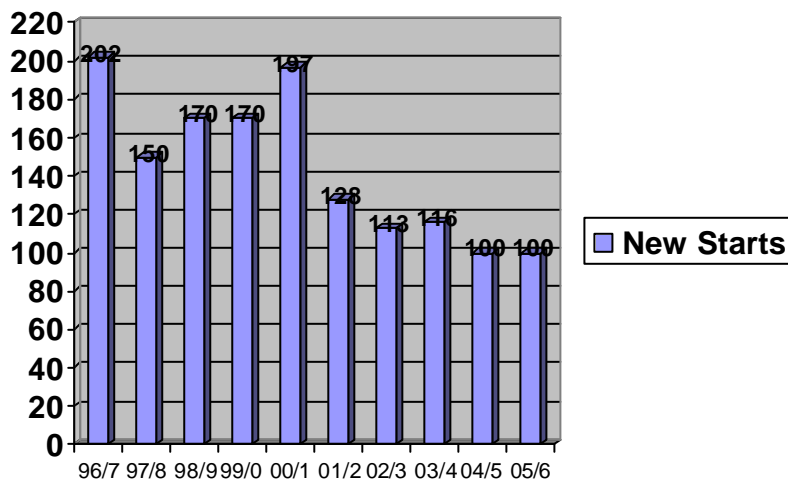


Figure 5 The Number of Affordable Housing New Build Starts

* note that up until 2002/3, the Council recorded the number of nominations, not actual lettings. A number of nominations are refused, so the figures before this year overstate the number of vacancies, probably by around 20%.

Forecasting the level of new build is problematic, especially as the Government will shortly be changing the way that resources are allocated for affordable housing. However, the stage may soon be reached where levels of new starts are only just enough to replace the annual loss of stock through the Right To Buy. Figure 6, below shows Right To Buy sales in the district. Interestingly, sales are falling probably because the issue of affordability is also damaging the prospects of low income households being able to buy.

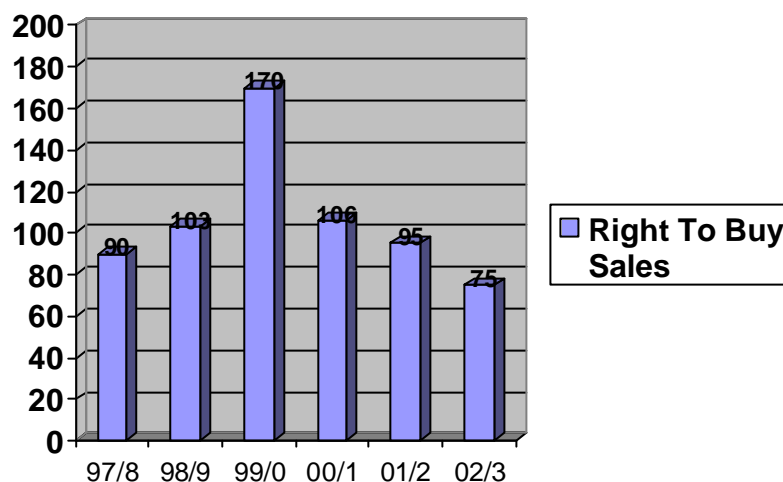


Figure 6 The Number of Right To Buy Sales in the New Forest District

A number of Housing Association properties will also have been sold because of similar schemes for Housing Association tenants. The number of sales in that sector is unknown.

Information from the Housing Needs Survey provides the best estimate of the need for affordable housing in the district. Based on a supply of affordable housing of 690 lettings per year, which is considerably higher than the likely number of lettings over the next few years, it was estimated that the annual need for affordable housing is 1,399 units, meaning that there is an overall annual shortfall of lettings of more than 700. The Housing Needs Survey also showed that there is a lack of 1 and 2 bedroom properties in the district. This is a crucial issue as the vast majority of newly forming households which are most vulnerable to homelessness require smaller properties.

With current and projected future levels of need and an expected decline in turnover of affordable stock, it is inevitable that homelessness will be a significant and probably growing problem for the foreseeable future. National and Regional trends are also suggestive of an increasing problem (see above, page 6.)

Unfortunately, it is impossible to be precise about the likely future levels of homelessness as there are too many uncertain factors. For example, a sudden economic downturn may lead to greater unemployment which can contribute to homelessness. On the other hand, if this led to a reduction in the cost of housing in the private market, there may be some beneficial effects.

What we can say is that a decline in the overall numbers of homelessness in the district is extremely unlikely and that all of the indicators point to a worsening problem. Improving and developing services which help to prevent homelessness will have some beneficial effect, but the level of housing need and of households vulnerable to homelessness is so great that only a very significant increase in the supply of affordable housing can hope to alleviate the situation.

Our best estimate is that homelessness will increase and affect more than 1,000 households each year in the New Forest.

Homelessness in the Communities Within the New Forest

The table below, figure 7 shows the number of acceptances of homeless households based on the area of origin over the last few years.

	96/7	97/8	98/9	99/0	00/1	01/2	02/3
Fordingbridge	10	18	12	11	11	12	3
Hythe / Dibden/ DP	31	56	35	30	56	45	27
Lym'ton / Pennington	25	24	25	24	47	48	26
Marchwood	4	4	6	5	12	6	8
New Milton	31	28	39	40	42	40	28
Ringwood	23	20	23	17	32	18	9
South Waterside	33	30	31	23	17	29	26
Totton / Eling	47	63	58	40	85	72	37
Rural and non NFDC	73	69	64	89	89	82	55

Figure 7 Number of Homelessness Acceptances by Geographical Area

Information is also available at parish level on housing advice contacts. The table below provides information on advice contacts by geographical area*, including the number of clients facing homelessness.

	2001/2	2001/2	2002/3	2002/3
	Contacts	H'less	Contacts	H'less
Fordingbridge	77	18	29	19
Hythe / Dibden /DP	171	66	103	69
Lymington / Pennington	167	60	87	64
Marchwood	29	15	20	12
New Milton	283	92	94	63
Ringwood	134	45	49	34
South Waterside	115	27	68	27
Totton / Eling	264	106	120	72
Rural	270	105	160	116

Figure 8 Housing Advice Contacts by Geographical Area

* The figures for 2001/2 are for the 16 month period from April 2001 and the figures for 2002/3 are for the 8 month period after August 2002.

The CAB's keep statistics on homelessness and housing problems at local office level. The table below gives information on the number of contacts with a housing problem and the numbers of those who were homeless or threatened with homelessness. New Forest North includes Ringwood, Fordingbridge and Totton.

	2001/2	2001/2	2002/3	2002/3
	Contacts	H'less	Contacts	H'less
Lymington	1170	246	981	206
New Milton	582	113	541	92
Ringwood /F'dingbridge	751	112	NA	NA
Waterside	558	107	598	97
Totton	369	66 (est.)	NA	NA
New Forest North	NA	NA	1056	140

Figure 9 CAB Housing and Homelessness Contacts

The tables below summarise homelessness data, population data, information from the Homesearch Register and turnover of affordable stock for each major settlement area.* All of the figures are for 2002/3.

Settlement	Population	H'less Advice Contact	Statutory H'less	Number on Register	Stock turnover	H'less per 1,000 pop.
Fordingbridge	5,875	29	3	375	23	0.51
Hythe / Dibden /DP	20,561	103	27	864	62	1.31
Lymington / Pennington	14,629	87	26	621	64	1.77
Marchwood	5,925	20	8	662	13	1.35
New Milton	24,725	94	28	805	99	1.13
Ringwood	13,699	49	9	580	27	0.66
South Waterside	14,281	68	26	319	66	1.82
Totton / Eling	27,904	120	37	1014	58	1.32

Figure 10 Homelessness and Housing Need by Geographical Area

These figures are only for one year so should be treated with caution. The table suggests that Ringwood and Fordingbridge are less pressured areas in terms of homelessness. However, stock turnover in Ringwood is the lowest in the district when compared to head of population (and second lowest against numbers on the register) and outcomes for homeless people in this town are often very poor, with applicants having to move out of the town and then waiting for long periods in temporary housing. It may be that these poor outcomes are acting as a check on homelessness, preventing parental evictions.

*Numbers on the register are approximate figures as at 31 March 2003

The Causes of Homelessness in the New Forest

According to the Government report on Homelessness, ‘More Than a Roof,’ homelessness is generally caused by structural housing market factors, personal factors which affect the individual, or a combination of the two. These effects can be seen in the New Forest district. The high numbers of applicants in need on the housing register is indicative of problems of affordability in the local housing market. Indeed, we know from the Housing Needs Survey that households will need an income of at least £30,000 per annum to purchase the cheapest properties in the district. That places owner-occupation outside the reach of 95% of newly forming households in the New Forest. The long wait for affordable housing means that many concealed households are remaining at home with parents for longer than is sustainable. It is in this situation that personal factors may interact with structural ones so that tension at home, because of long waiting lists, causes a breakdown in relationships which can lead to family evictions.

Other causes of homelessness may be solely personal – for example domestic violence and mental health issues. These personal factors may be ‘one-off’ incidents or there may be a pattern of different issues throughout a person’s life which leads to homelessness. Appendix one consists of a list of all the known factors which research has suggested can increase the risk of homelessness.

The table below shows the known primary triggers for statutory homelessness in the New Forest over the last few years*. There is a considerable amount of consistency amongst many of the causes of statutory homelessness. For example, there has been very little variation in the percentage of applicants accepted because of relationship breakdown. Other causes reflect trends in the housing market. For example, the decline in acceptances due to mortgage repossession is undoubtedly due to low interest rates in recent years.

	96/7	97/8	98/9	99/0	00/1	01/2	02/3
Family or friend eviction	122 (39%)	82 (26%)	89 (30%)	72 (29%)	116 (29%)	134 (38%)	83 (38%)
Violent R’ship B’down	36 (12%)	37 (12%)	33 (11%)	36 (14%)	60 (15%)	47 (13%)	28 (13%)
Non Violent R’ship B’down	14 (5%)	25 (8%)	24 (8%)	28 (11%)	36 (9%)	38 (11%)	26 (12%)
Mortgage Arrears	24 (8%)	21 (7%)	15 (5%)	9 (4%)	12 (3%)	2 (1%)	4 (2%)
End of shorthold tenancy	52 (17%)	79 (25%)	78 (27%)	51 (20%)	67 (17%)	64 (18%)	45 (21%)
End of other tenancy	35 (11%)	37 (12%)	28 (10%)	27 (11%)	45 (12%)	36 (10%)	13 (6%)
Leaving institution / care	7 (2%)	16 (5%)	5 (2%)	9 (4%)	16 (4%)	7 (2%)	5 (2%)
Others		10 (3%)	18 (6%)	14 (6%)	33 (8%)	23 (7%)	15 (7%)

Figure 11 Main Causes of Statutory Homelessness in the New Forest District

* All percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest percentage point.

Figure 12, below, shows more clearly the main recorded causes of homelessness. The figures are for 2002/3.

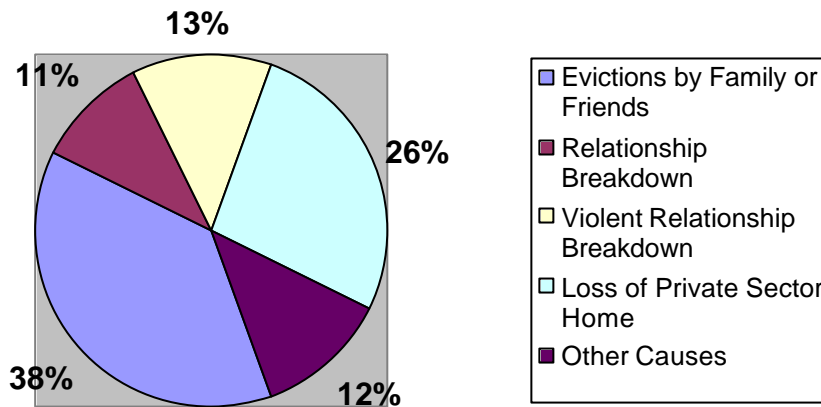


Figure 12 Causes of Statutory Homelessness in 2002/3

Of particular interest is the trend in recent years of acceptances of homeless applicants due to evictions by family or friends. This has always been the single most important reason for statutory homelessness in the New Forest. In 1996/7 and in 2001/2, it accounted for nearly four acceptances in every ten. Evidence from research suggests that this reason for homelessness is the one causal factor which is the most likely to be preventable (Gale, 2002) especially where evictions are by parents (74% of all of these family / friend evictions in 2002/3 were by parents.)

Other important causes of statutory homelessness are relationship breakdown and termination of private sector tenancies.

The short case studies of two homeless households in the New Forest set out on the next page may help to illustrate the typical causes of homelessness in the district, the importance of both structural and personal factors and the interaction between the two. Information has been identified from application and enquiry forms.

Case Study One

Mr A and Miss B

The applicants are both 23 years of age and have a 2 year old son. Miss B works part time and Mr A has full time employment. Both applicants were living separately with their parents before they rented a private sector property on an assured shorthold basis in July 1998. In January 2000, they moved to another assured shorthold tenancy because their original property was in a poor state of repair. Miss B then became pregnant and they left the private sector in July 2000 to live with Miss B's mother as they had concerns over being able to afford to maintain their tenancy when they had the additional costs of a child.

The arrangement at home was relatively stable and Miss B and Mr A applied to go on the Homesearch Register. However, the waiting list is very long and in July 2002 Miss B's mother asked them to leave the house as she suffers from illness and could no longer cope with the additional stress of accommodating a household with a young child.

The Council was obliged to accept a responsibility to rehouse the family. The Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer negotiated with Miss B's mother to allow the family to remain at home for the period of time when they would otherwise be in B&B.

Case Study Two

Mr C is a 25 year old single man. He first became known to the Council in July 2002, at the point of discharge from the Old Manor Hospital in Salisbury. He had previously been a joint Council tenant. However, his marriage had broken down due to his severe depression and alcohol abuse and he had become homeless. Mr C has a previous care background and has slept rough on two occasions. He has poor literacy and numeracy skills.

The Council accepted that Mr C was vulnerable and he has been placed in temporary housing. He receives support from various organisations to help him sustain his tenancy.

Broadly speaking, about two thirds of homeless acceptances in the New Forest each year seem to be primarily linked to structural issues (affordability and lack of affordable housing options) and the rest are most directly attributable to personal factors. At the one extreme are applicants with chaotic lifestyles who face a considerable number of personal challenges, at the other will be stable family units who simply cannot find affordable housing. Between these extremes will be large numbers of people suffering from personal and affordability factors where the combined effect causes homelessness.

The important thing to note with regard to the trigger factors, is that both sets of issues need consideration when looking at ways of preventing homelessness.

Homelessness As It Affects Individual Client Groups

Rough Sleepers

Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness. People who sleep rough are vulnerable to physical or sexual abuse, crime, drug and alcohol misuse and health problems (Social Exclusion Unit, 1997). Indeed, as many as 50% of rough sleepers have been found to have a serious alcohol problem and around 20% are thought to misuse drugs. A disproportionate number of rough sleepers have experience of institutional life (local authority care, prison or the armed forces.)

In 1999, a headcount of rough sleepers in the New Forest was carried out following Government best practice guidelines. Only one rough sleeper was found on that particular night. However, recent research suggests that traditional methods for assessing street homelessness in rural areas may lead to significant underestimates of the true level of the problem (Robinson, 2002).

Rough sleeping is certainly a more significant problem in the New Forest than the headcount suggests. Whilst the statutory homelessness figures do not require the collection of information on rough sleeping, the customer survey did suggest relatively high levels of rough sleeping amongst that client group (see above, page 8.) Furthermore, interviews with a random sample of 202 young people carried out as part of the Housing Needs Survey, indicated that 8% of that group (16 people) had slept rough.

Some statistics are available from the Housing Advice Service. In 2001/2, 22 people who approached the Council for housing advice were sleeping rough. The problem of rough sleeping was most apparent in the 16-18 year old age group (6% of advice contacts were sleeping rough compared to up to 2% for all other age groups.) The geographical distribution of the rough sleepers who contacted the Council was relatively even across the district. Figures from 2002/3, suggest a worsening problem, with 30 rough sleepers approaching the advice service.

Unfortunately, on the currently available information, the exact level of rough sleeping within the New Forest is impossible to ascertain. We know that there is a problem, but not the extent. The geography of the district is an issue; with such large areas to cover, headcounts are unlikely to reveal the true extent of the problem. Rough sleeping is also usually transitory in nature. Of those people identified by the Housing Needs Survey as having slept rough, the majority had done so for less than a week.

Another issue is that until recently, there has been a complete lack of direct access accommodation in the district, and it is likely that people who sleep rough migrate to Southampton or Bournemouth where there are facilities. Indeed, one of the 104 homeless people assisted by the Winter Beds project in Southampton in the winter of 2001/2, was from Brockenhurst. However, the full extent of rough sleeping by migrants from the New Forest is completely unknown.

Families With Children

Households with children or with an expectant woman have always accounted for the majority of statutory homelessness acceptances in the New Forest. Until 1998/9, this client group formed over 80% of acceptances each year. Since then, as applications from other client groups have increased, the level has reduced to around 70%.

In addition to the 258 families with children or with an expectant woman who were accepted as homeless in 2001/2, 210 households of this client group were facing a homelessness problem when they approached the Council for housing advice in the same year. Some of these will have gone on to make a homelessness application at a later date.

Over the last two years, the main triggers for homelessness amongst families with children have been evictions from family and friends (averaging 37%), loss of private rented accommodation (32%) and relationship breakdown (25%). These are very similar to the figures for all homeless households (see above page 19.)

Single Person Households

New households consisting of single persons are one of the main drivers of projected household growth, both in the New Forest and nationally.

With a minimum income requirement of over £30,000 to purchase the cheapest properties in the New Forest (DCA, 2000) most single person households are excluded from accessing the owner-occupied market and so there is a high level of need for affordable housing. Indeed, this group now makes up 33 % of all of the 3384 applicants on the Homeseach Register as at March 31st, 2003.

Whilst single person households are as likely to face homelessness as any other group, possibly more so, the legislation in England does not provide a safety net for single people unless they are vulnerable*. Therefore, the vast majority of single people who face homelessness are not offered rehousing. To illustrate this point, of the 21 applicants found to be homeless but not in priority need in 2002/3, 14 of them (67%) were single people.

* The test of vulnerability has been defined by case law. An applicant is vulnerable if, when homeless, they would be less able to fend for themselves than an ordinary homeless person so that they would be likely to suffer injury or detriment in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects.

Bearing this in mind, and also the general awareness amongst single people that the Council is unlikely to have a duty to rehouse them, the statutory figures for homelessness must significantly underestimate the level of homelessness in this client group.

The most useful figures, therefore, are from the Council's advice service. In 2001/2, 557 single people contacted the Council for housing advice. Of these, 260, (46%) were facing homelessness. Of the non-single person households approaching the advice service, homelessness was reported in 29% of cases.

The important point to note is that for most single people, housing advice is the only immediate help that was available to them to assist in resolving their problems.

Young People

If single people may be more vulnerable to homelessness than other client groups because of their limited access to owner occupation and the private rented sector, the same problems are far worse for young people. To illustrate this issue, the Housing Needs Survey showed that 70% of young people (aged 16-24) had an annual income of less than £10,000.

The Government has long recognised that young homeless people are likely to be highly vulnerable and in the late 1990's, the Code of Guidance on homelessness was amended to recommend that all young people below the age of 18 should be considered vulnerable if homeless. Following the change in guidance, the numbers of young people accepted as homeless increased significantly in 1999/00 and the level has remained high (see figures 12 and 13, below.)

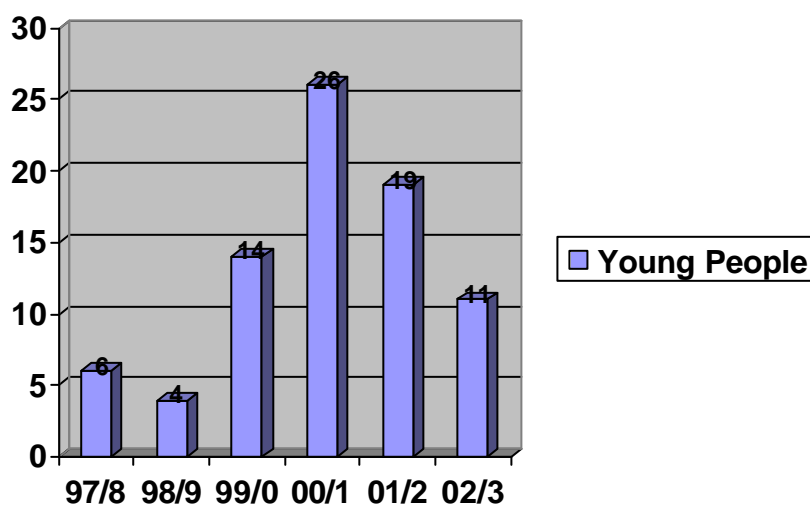


Figure 12 Young People (16-18) Accepted as Homeless

Figure 13, below, shows the number of young people accepted as a percentage of the total number of accepted households.

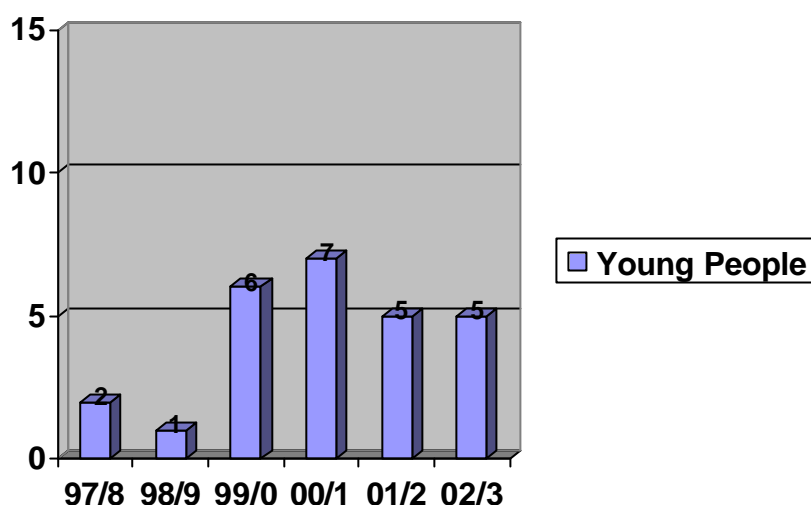


Figure 13 Young People (16-18) Accepted as Homeless As a Percentage of all Acceptances

The guidance on young people was reinforced by a Statutory Instrument in 2002, which requires local authorities to find 16 and 17 year old homeless people to be in priority need. Additionally, young people up to the age of 21 who have a care background are also now deemed to be in priority need. The statistics presented in the graph are therefore more indicative of changes in national policy than in absolute increases in homelessness amongst young people.

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that homelessness is a bigger issue for young people than the statutory acceptances suggest. The Housing Needs Survey questionnaire showed that 15% of the sample of 202 young people (aged 16 – 24) had experienced a period of homelessness. Ten of these 30 people had been homeless on more than one occasion. By far the most significant cause of homelessness in this client group was because of a family row (60%) and two thirds had been homeless for less than one month, which suggests temporary housing problems for many young people. However, we also know that rough sleeping can be a particular problem for this age group, so outcomes when homeless can be poor.

Looking at the statistics on the causes of statutory homelessness amongst young people over the last two years, 74% of applications were triggered by family evictions, far higher than the overall average for this cause of homelessness (37%.)

One of the key agencies working with young people, is of course, Social Services, who have provided an estimate of up to eight homeless young people leaving care in the New Forest each year. Not all will require assistance from the Council.

Information about young people who contacted the Housing Advice service in 2001/2 shows an interesting trend on the interaction of age with homelessness. Of those aged 16-18 who contacted the Council for advice, 70% reported homelessness as a problem (57 households). For 19-25 year olds, the percentage was 40% and for those aged 26-55, it fell to 28%.

Further information on young people and homelessness is available from It's Your Choice, the New Forest advice service for young people. In 2000/01 they gave advice to 80 people under the age of 26 who faced homelessness and in 2001/02, the number was 75.

Another group of young people who may face homelessness are young offenders. Statistics for the New Forest district are not currently available. However, the Youth Offending Team reports a number of problems in Hampshire, for example, young offenders being refused bail or being remanded into custody or care because of a lack of accommodation, no joint working protocols on young offenders in housing need and a lack of schemes which are suitable for persistent or challenging offenders (see also page 33 for information on ex-offenders.)

Indeed, the last point, above, could be said to apply more widely than for challenging young offenders. The Housing Needs Team has to deal with a number of cases each year where the applicant could be said to be 'unhouseable' because of their behaviour and needs. These are often, but not exclusively, young people.

A desktop survey of the case files of young homeless people accepted by the Council in 2002/3 was carried out as part of this review to try to ascertain whether young people were presenting with multiple issues which may have effected their housing situation. Case notes do not always reflect every problem faced by homeless people and the sample was very low, only eight cases, but two young people had drug or alcohol problems and one had been sleeping rough. There was also evidence on three of the files that young people who went on to be rehoused allegedly caused problems to neighbours because of anti-social behaviour. This suggests the possibility of repeat homelessness if the tenancy was not sustained.

At least two of the eight applicants could be described as leading chaotic lifestyles, with a number of different personal issues and a pattern of repeat or particular vulnerability to homelessness.

People With Mental Health Problems

Statutory homelessness of people with mental health problems in the New Forest increased year on year from 1996/97 to 2001/02, as the graph below shows. Whilst there has been a slight drop in 2002/03, the percentage of acceptances has increased so that people with mental health problems now account for around 10% of the total.

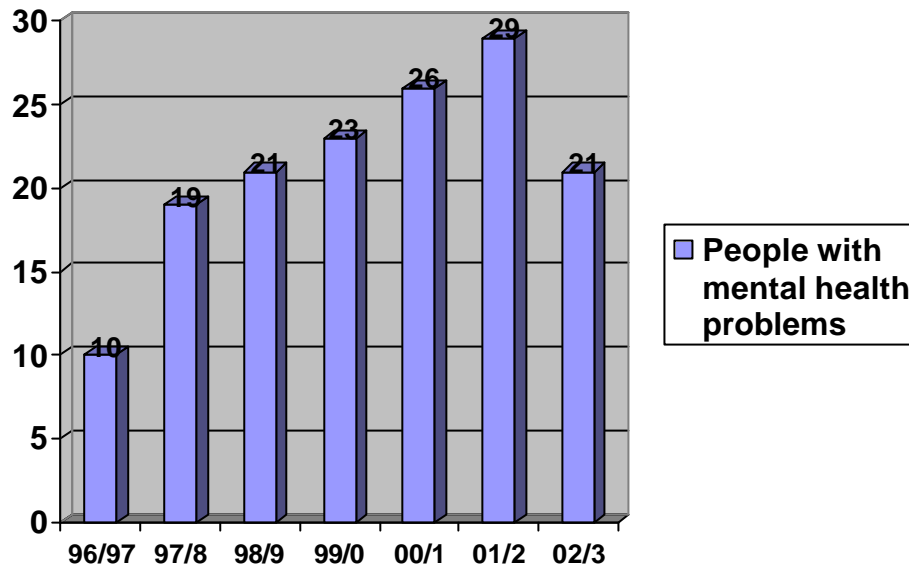


Figure 14 Homeless Applicants Accepted as Being Vulnerable Because of Mental Health Problems

The next graph, shows the number of acceptances from this client group as a percentage of all acceptances.

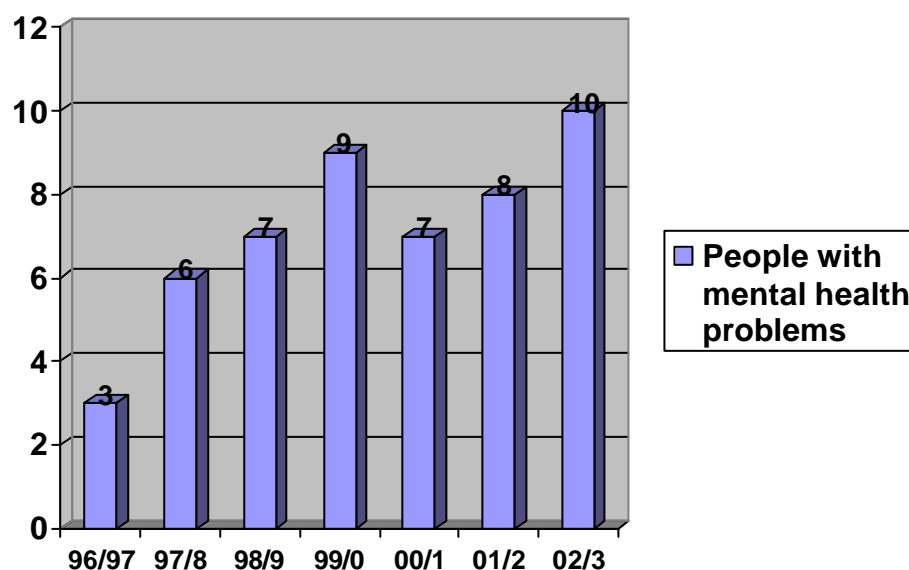


Figure 15 Acceptances of People With Mental Health Problems as a Percentage of all Acceptances

It is not known whether homelessness has actually increased amongst this client group, or whether improved partnership working between the Housing Needs Team and the Locality Mental Health Teams (LMHT's) is the main driver of these increases (see below, page 52.)

The LMHT's deal with a number of homeless clients who do not make a homelessness application to the Housing Needs Team as they require a high level of support beyond that which can be accessed by the Council. During 2002, the LMHT's received referrals, both in the community and on admission, of 24 people who had no accommodation. Around a third of these went on to be placed in supported accommodation funded by social services or into rehabilitation. Others will have been accepted as homeless by the Council.

Typically, the LMHT's find that people living with relatives become homeless on admission because family members feel unable to cope with their support needs. This picture is supported by statutory information on the causes of homelessness amongst people with mental health problems in the New Forest. Over the last two years, 32% of statutory homelessness amongst this client group was caused by family eviction and 27% by relationship breakdown.

The results of the survey of homeless applicants show mental health problems are also suffered by applicants who have been accepted under other priority need categories (see above, page 8.)

A desktop survey of the case files of statutory homeless people who were found to be vulnerable because of mental health problems during 2002/3 was carried out as part of this review. The purpose was to identify whether this client group was presenting with multiple problems which could effect their housing situation. It must be noted that only issues which were drawn to the Council's attention were recorded on file, so it is possible that the incidence of multiple housing issues is higher than the survey suggests.

Of the sample of 20 cases, four had drug or alcohol problems. The same number (but not necessarily the same people) had slept rough previously and there was evidence on four files of previous criminal behaviour. Interestingly, six of the 20 applicants reported suffering from violence or harassment (usually from partners) at some stage in their lives.

At least five of the 20 applicants could be described as leading chaotic lifestyles, with a number of different personal issues and a pattern of repeat or particular vulnerability to homelessness.

Older People

The graph below shows the number of households who have been accepted as homeless and found to be vulnerable because of old age over the last few years.

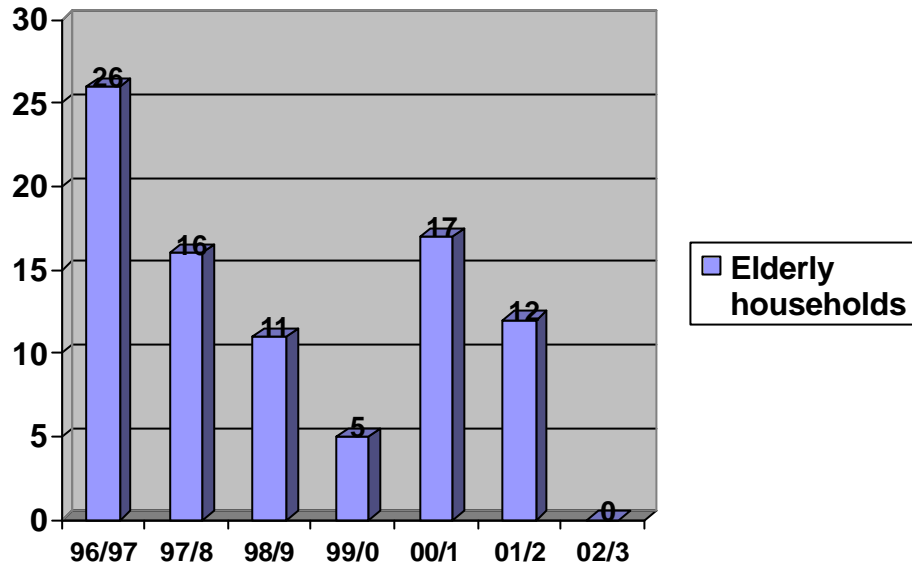


Figure 16 Homeless Applicants Accepted as Being Vulnerable Due to Old Age

The graph below represents the elderly as a percentage of all acceptances. The average national figure for acceptances of elderly people is 4-5%.

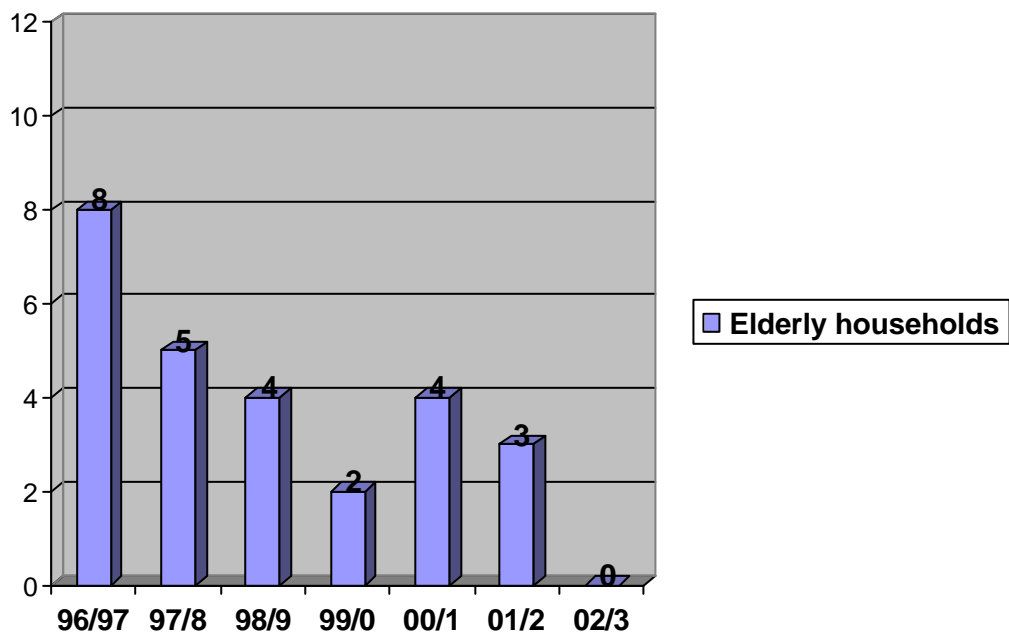


Figure 17 Elderly Applicants as a Percentage of all Accepted Applicants

Since 1998, acceptances amongst elderly people have been relatively low. The probable reason for this is that the Council has difficulties in letting some of its stock for elderly people, particularly bedsits. Therefore, homelessness can often be resolved or prevented by an offer of a bedsit through the Homesearch register.

Additionally, it would appear that elderly people in the New Forest generally have more stable accommodation arrangements than other age groups which make them less vulnerable to homelessness. As part of the Housing Needs Survey, a random sample of 202 elderly people were contacted to obtain detailed information on their housing situation. Whilst incomes were low, 65% had lived in their current home for more than 10 years and only 5% were planning to move in the next 5 years. Issues facing the elderly are often connected with the need for support or assistance rather than insecurity of their current accommodation.

Statistics from the advice service show that 17% of the 135 customers who contacted the advice service in 2001/2 were facing homelessness, which is lower than for other age groups.

People With Physical Disabilities

Data from the Housing Needs Survey suggests that over 12,000 households in the district contain somebody with a disability. It is likely, therefore, that many of the households accepted as homeless by the Council include a member with disability issues. However, these families would not necessarily be identified as part of the homelessness statistics if they also fell into another priority need group (such as families with children.)

The graphs below report on the number and the percentages of acceptances of homeless applicants who were found to be vulnerable because of their physical disability.

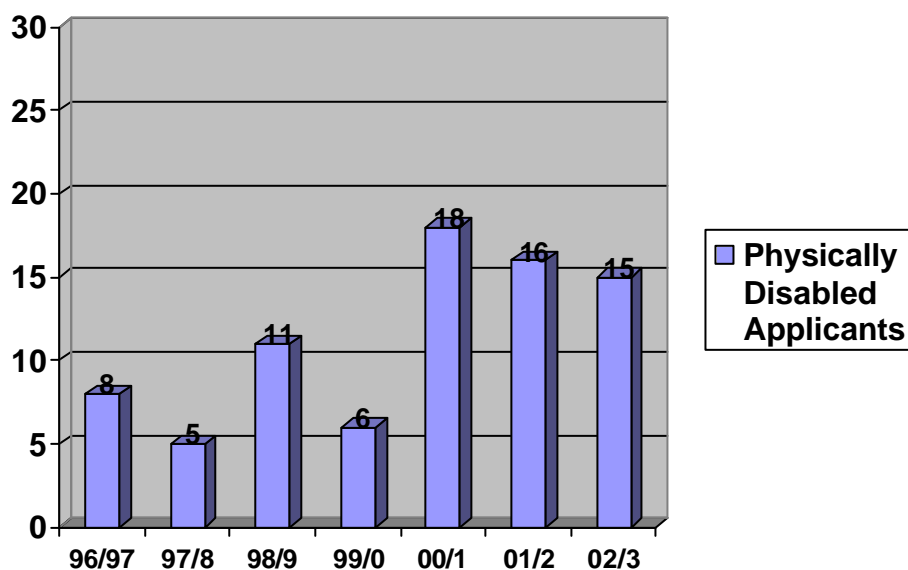


Figure 18 Applicants Accepted as Being Vulnerable Due to Physical Disability

The graph below shows the acceptances of physically disabled applicants as a percentage of all acceptances.

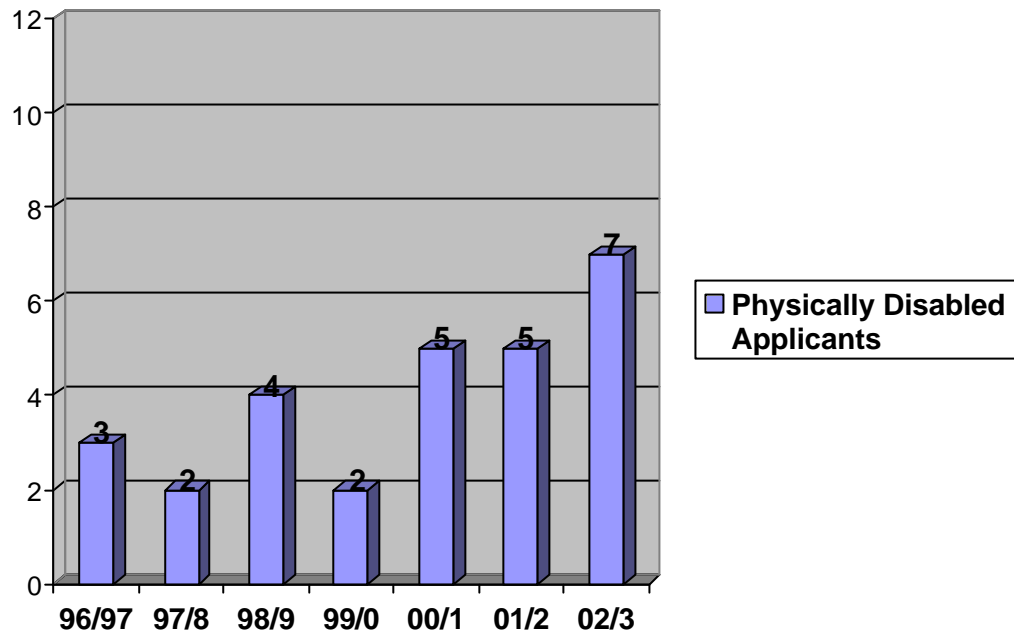


Figure 17 Disabled Applicants as a Percentage of all Accepted Applicants

There is a clear upwards trend in acceptances of people who are homeless and vulnerable because of physical disability. The driver behind this increase is unknown. The main triggers for homelessness of this client group are similar to the causes for all applicants.

People Fleeing Violence

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness in the New Forest. In percentage terms, domestic violence is normally responsible for between 11 and 15% of acceptances.

The graph below shows the actual number of households accepted as homeless due to domestic violence over the last few years. Apart from 2000/1 and 2001/2, when overall homelessness acceptances were very high, the numbers are remarkably consistent.

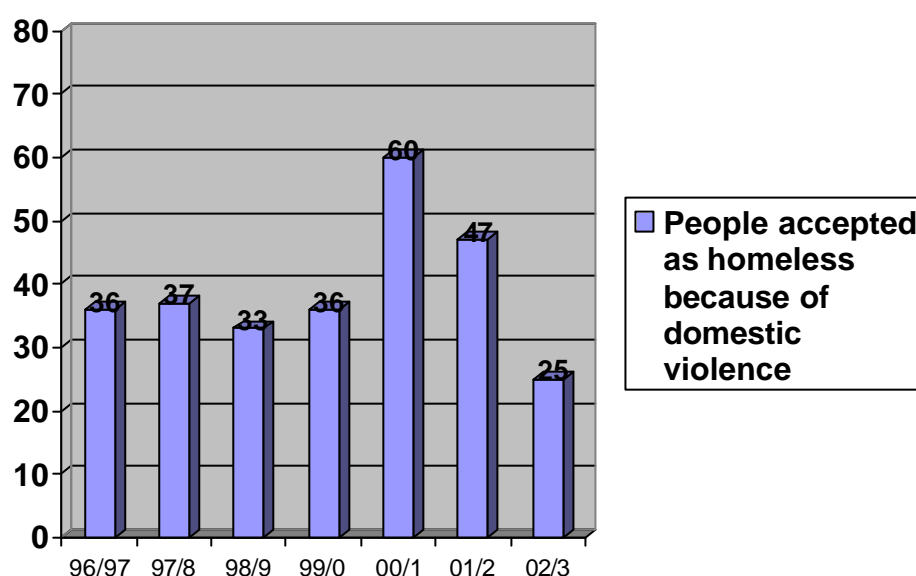


Figure 19 People Accepted as Homeless Because of Domestic Violence

In addition to those accepted as homeless, 44 people who stated they were experiencing domestic violence contacted the Council for housing advice.

The local women's refuge receives over 100 referrals a year, although only 20 to 30% are accommodated (see below, page 43.) Over half of all referrals are from outside of the district, mainly from other refuges.

To provide some context to all of these statistics, the police report around 300 known instances of domestic violence each year in the New Forest.

Other forms of violence or threats of violence (for example, from neighbours) may also contribute towards homelessness, although the official homelessness statistics have not previously required the collection of data on other forms of violence as a cause of homelessness. The ODPM have now changed their reporting requirements and, in the first 6 months of data collection during 2002, one household was accepted as homeless because of other forms of violence.

People With Drug and Alcohol Problems

Vulnerability because of alcohol or drug misuse is not included as a separate category on the statutory homelessness statistics so the level of acceptances as vulnerable because of this reason is unknown.

Information from the Locality Mental Health Team indicates that 90% of their substance misuse clients are homeless when admitted to rehabilitation programmes. On average, six clients a year are admitted.

The case reviews of young people and people with mental health problems also suggested that around 20% of statutory homeless applicants from these two client groups had drug or alcohol problems.

Ex-Offenders

The Social Exclusion Unit Report, 'Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners' highlighted the link between homelessness and imprisonment and, importantly, homelessness and re-offending (SEU, 1999).

Up to a third of prisoners lose their homes as a result of custody, often due to rent arrears. A survey of 192 offenders carried out by Hampshire Probation Service in 2000 found that 40% of offenders were either homeless or living in temporary circumstances with family or friends.

With regard to re-offending, one unpublished survey cited by the Social Exclusion Unit report suggested that appropriate accommodation can make a difference of over 20% in reconviction rates.

It is also clear that offenders often present with multiple issues. For example, 27% of offenders have a care background, and 71% suffer from two or more mental disorders, compared respectively to 2 % and 4% of the general population. Offenders also tend to have much lower literacy and numeracy skills than average.

With this background of complex needs and issues and evidence of the link between homelessness and recidivism, the Government has extended the homelessness priority need groups to include people who may be vulnerable because of a prison background. Ex-offenders will not automatically be in priority need, and therefore fall into the statutory homelessness group, but may be so if their institutional background renders them vulnerable. A test, defined by case law, is applied to each individual.

Since July 2002, when the Government extended the priority need groups, the Council has been monitoring acceptances of applicants being found to be in priority need due to their offending background. In the first 9 months, no additional applicants were accepted through this route. The number of applicants who actually applied on this basis but were defined as not being vulnerable, is unknown.

Figures on homelessness amongst offenders are available from the Hampshire Accommodation and Advice Service (HAAS) which is managed by Hampshire Probation and provides advice and support to ex-offenders who have been serving sentences of longer than 12 months. In the first two quarters of 2002, HAAS had given advice to 45 ex-offenders with a New Forest connection. Of these, 29 were in unstable or inadequate accommodation. Ten were roofless on release from prison. Statistics from the prison service suggest that around 50 prisoners serving sentences of less than a year are likely to seek housing assistance in the New Forest over a three month period. The majority of these would not be accepted as being in a priority need group.

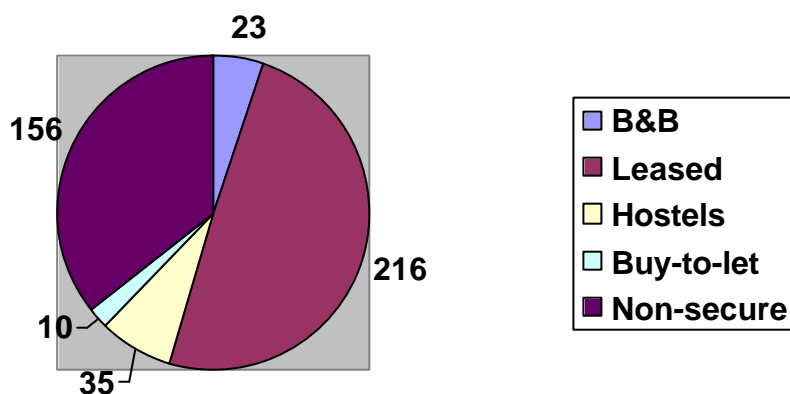
There is another small group of offenders, known as Potentially Dangerous Offenders (PDO's) which should be mentioned. PDO's are offenders who may be at risk of causing serious harm to members of the public. Whilst a PDO who is homeless may not be in a priority need group, the Council may, in exceptional circumstances, decide to treat their re-housing as a priority for community safety purposes. For example, it may be important to the police or probation services to exercise control over the housing options of a PDO and it may be extremely important for them to be clear on where the offender is rehoused. Such cases are rare and governed by a Hampshire protocol (see below, page 54.)

Part III - Accommodation, Activities and Services for People Who Are Homeless or Threatened With Homelessness in the New Forest

The purpose of this section is to provide information on the known resources for preventing homelessness and for accommodating and supporting homeless people in the New Forest.

Accommodation for Homeless People

Applicants accepted under the homelessness legislation as being statutorily homeless are owed a legal duty by the Council to secure accommodation. Because of the shortage of permanent affordable housing, temporary accommodation is usually secured. The Council, through its Housing Needs Service currently supports 440 homeless households in temporary housing. The chart below shows the different types of accommodation used.



Almost half of the accommodation used is provided through housing association leasing schemes, where partner housing associations rent properties in the private sector and then act as a managing agent for the landlord. The Council nominates accepted applicants to be placed in these properties.

This scheme has a number of advantages. Firstly, the accommodation is generally of a high standard. The scheme also allows properties to be rented across the district so that many applicants can remain close to their home communities. On the other hand, rents are set at housing benefit levels, which means the scheme is not affordable for some applicants who are not eligible for housing benefit. The other disadvantage is that some properties are let on a short term basis so that applicants may have to move to other properties.

The other main source of temporary housing is the provision of what would normally be secure Council accommodation, but let instead on a non-secure basis. This source of accommodation can show the same advantages as the leasing scheme and is also cheaper for the applicant. However, the more stock that is used on a temporary basis, the less that can be offered through the Homesearch register as permanent affordable housing. This could have the effect of actually contributing to homelessness by reducing the affordable housing supply. Therefore, the number of such lets has remained constant at around 150 over recent years.

The Council also has access to around 35 hostel places (managed in the main by the Council's estate management service.) Many of these hostels have shared facilities, so they are less popular with customers. However, they remain a useful resource.

The Council has had to rely, in recent years, on B&B. The chart below shows B&B usage over the last decade.

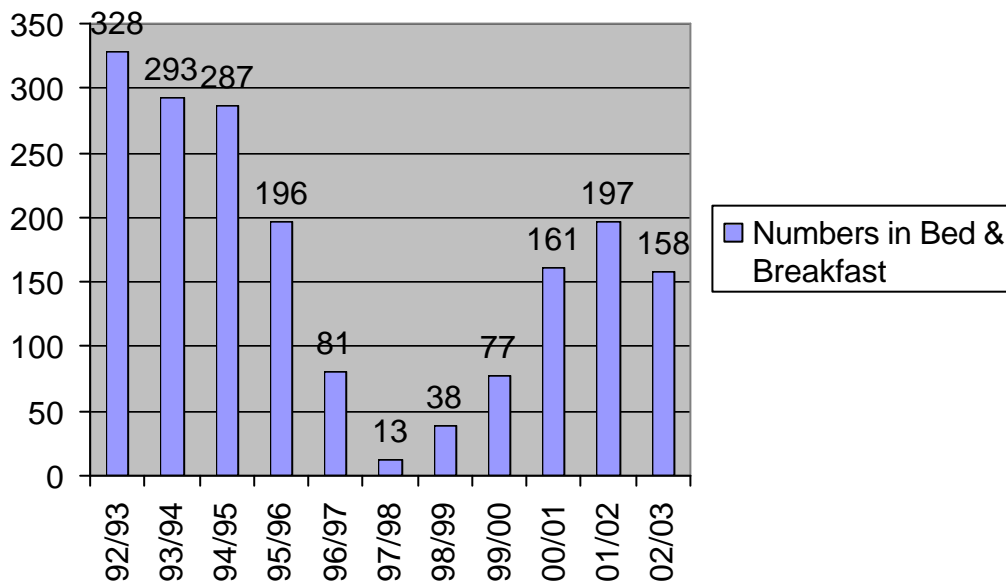


Figure 19 Number of Households Placed in B&B

In practice, most applicants who apply as homeless are placed in B&B at some stage, unless they are able to remain temporarily with family or friends for the period which they would otherwise be in B&B. When an applicant is accepted as homeless, the Council seeks to negotiate a stay with family or friend to avoid B&B placement. Another option which is offered as an alternative is the payment of deposit money to place applicants in the private rented sector. Over 20 deposits were paid in 2002/3.

Generally speaking, B&B is used as part of a staged accommodation process with applicants initially being placed in B&B before moving on to more secure temporary housing and eventually being offered a permanent home. It usually takes many years to reach the end of this process.

B&B is a very costly form of provision for the Council. In 2002/3, the Council spent over £180,000 on B&B and on alternative forms of temporary housing. Additionally, it is known that B&B, because of its very temporary nature and the sharing of facilities, is the least suitable form of housing for homeless households, particularly those with children. Because of these two factors, one of the Council's key housing aims in recent years has been to reduce the reliance on B&B.

There is also significant national concern about the problem, due to the high levels of B&B usage across London and the South East (see above, page 5.) This has prompted the Government to set a firm target to eliminate the use of B&B for families with children except for emergency situations, and then for a maximum of six weeks. This target has to be met by April 2004. It may be backed by legislation.

As part of the Council's Empty Property and Private Sector Housing Strategy, the Council has launched a number of initiatives to increase the supply of temporary housing over recent years, thus reducing B&B usage. For example, we have offered additional money to private landlords to top-up rents above the housing benefit level so that they more closely resemble market rents. The 'Buy-to-let' scheme mentioned in the chart above is another example of an initiative to reduce B&B. Additionally, two more partner housing associations have now been asked to work with the Council to increase the supply of leased properties.

The other approach to reducing B&B usage is to reduce acceptances of statutory homeless applicants by tight gatekeeping and by prevention work (see below, page 46)

As part of the survey of homeless applicants, questions were asked of the opinion of applicants about the accommodation provided by the Council. Of those questioned, 16% had experience of B&B and a quarter of these found that the accommodation did not meet their needs as they had problems with schooling or did not feel the B&B adequate for children. These figures give a higher satisfaction rating than may be expected. However, the Council continually monitors the standard of B&B provision in the New Forest to ensure that the quality is as high as possible. Additionally, placements outside of the area are kept to a minimum.

Of the 35% who had experience of other forms of temporary housing, the satisfaction rating was higher than for B&B, with less than 10% stating that the temporary accommodation did not meet their needs.

A question was also asked of whether the B&B or temporary housing was in a geographical area of choice. Of those questioned, 64% of applicants had experience of B&B or temporary housing and 75% of those stated that they had been placed in an area of their choice. Almost all of those who had not been placed within an area of choice stated that this caused them problems (eg schooling, work, support networks.)

Permanent Affordable Housing For Homeless People

The Housing Needs Team is also the main access point for permanent affordable housing. Almost all vacancies are now let through the Homesearch scheme. Homesearch is an example of a new approach to letting affordable housing, based on giving much greater choice to applicants by allowing them to apply for individual vacancies which are all advertised.

The Homesearch scheme incorporates the majority of affordable housing vacancies in the New Forest, including almost all Council and partner Housing Association stock. Along with vacancies of temporary housing, this amounts to between 400 and 500 lettings a year.

For some client groups, permanent housing can be offered almost immediately, to avoid placements in temporary housing. This is particularly true for elderly people, as there is a relatively good supply of sheltered housing in the district. Indeed, homelessness amongst the elderly is sometimes prevented by a timely offer from the Homesearch register.

Homeless applicants with significant medical or welfare need may also be eligible for additional priority under the Homesearch scheme. There are three priority bands of applicants on the register, and the vast majority of applicants in need (including most homeless people) are placed in the middle priority band. Prioritisation within that band is on a date-order basis and, in practice, around 95% of lettings are allocated to this group in date order. However, those with urgent need can be placed in the urgent priority band which places them ahead of all applicants in lower bands. Depending on the type of vacancy required, a move from this band can be very speedy. All Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers are encouraged to seek additional priority for any applicants with significant or multiple needs to avoid B&B or long stays in temporary housing.

For those who do not get additional priority (the vast majority of homeless applicants) there can be a very long wait indeed for secure housing. There are now nearly 3,000 households in housing need on the Homesearch register and waiting times are ever – increasing. For most areas in the district, the wait for general needs housing is several years.

One way of creating a 'quick fix' to reduce reliance on B&B in the short term would be to place all statutory homeless applicants in the urgent band. However, this is likely to encourage far higher levels of homelessness in the long term and increase B&B usage. The reason for this is that the turnover of stock in the New Forest is so low that if homeless applicants are given overriding priority, they will quickly take all general needs vacancies in the district. This would inevitably provide a perverse incentive to encourage homelessness via parental evictions as that would be the only route into permanent affordable housing.

We know that this would happen because of past experience. In the early 1990's, the Council used a banding system to prioritise applicants which placed homeless applicants in the top band. At a time when housing need was much less than it is now, with a higher turnover of stock, homeless applicants were allocated almost all general needs housing and B&B usage was at record levels, with some applicants remaining in B&B for over a year.

As well as the danger of incentivising homelessness, there are also issues of equity. It would be unfair on applicants that wish to and are able to help themselves by self-placement in the private rented sector or by sustaining arrangements with family or friends to effectively remove any hope of them being rehoused through the Homesearch register by giving priority to those found to be homeless. Additionally, outcomes for statutory homeless applicants, after time spent in B&B, are generally equivalent to outcomes for people remaining in the private sector. For homeless applicants to retain additional priority, simply because they have benefitted from a positive homelessness decision would not be fair on other applicants.

Nevertheless, it is important that homeless people are not penalised because they have become homeless. The Homesearch system, which has been set up to increase choice for housing applicants, should ensure that choice is extended to homeless people and that they are not treated worse than others. At the same time, homeless people need to be encouraged to make best use of the system and to move on into permanent stock as soon as possible, thus freeing vacancies of temporary housing for other households.

There is a degree of tension between these two aims; fairness for homeless applicants against the need to move homeless people into permanent stock as quickly as possible. Under the Homesearch scheme, homeless people are given the same degree of choice as any other applicant. However, their applications are monitored to ensure that, when they have a chance of being successful for vacancies, they are submitting vouchers. If they are not doing so, they are contacted by a Lettings Officer to encourage them to apply. If encouragement fails, then the Council advises the applicant that vouchers will be submitted on their behalf and that, if they are successful, the ensuing offer of accommodation will discharge the Council's legal duties. It is hoped that this approach allows the Council to give homeless people choice, but also to achieve turnover of temporary housing stock.

One other crucial issue is to ensure that homeless applicants register on the homesearch waiting list. In the customer survey of homeless applicants, 96% were on the register. Although this is a high figure, it is important that all accepted applicants access the list to ensure they will eventually move into a permanent home.

Over recent months, the Council has started to monitor the number of permanent lettings going to homeless people to ensure they are getting appropriate access to vacancies. Additionally, processes have been reviewed to ensure that all homeless applicants are placed on the register. On average, homeless applicants are being offered 17% of vacancies. This compares favourably to the percentage of such applicants on the list as a whole (13%.) If sheltered stock is excluded, homeless people are accessing 24% of all general needs vacancies.

A key issue facing the district, indeed, probably the single most important housing issue facing the South East region, is the development of new permanent affordable stock. Clearly, the greater the amount of affordable housing in the district, the more chances there are for homeless people to be permanently rehoused. The Council needs to take further steps to maximise the development of affordable housing.

Other Sources of Accommodation for Homeless People

The Private Sector

As stated above, the private rented sector does have an important role to play. Access to the sector for statutory homeless people is normally via a deposit and / or rent in advance provided by the Council. This scheme has allowed the placement of 59 households in the two years to April 2002 and 43 households in 2002/3. In theory, the deposits are returnable to the Council at the termination of the lease and arrangements are made for the applicant to pay off the loan during the term of the lease, so that money returned by the landlord actually goes to the tenant. In practice, recovery is often incomplete, either because the tenant fails to maintain payment or because the landlord retains some of the deposit. Recovery action or write-off is required in many cases.

It is difficult to make a clear assessment of the cost effectiveness of this scheme, as many applicants placed through the deposit scheme are still tenants at the properties for which the deposits were provided and therefore the full process of recovery is incomplete. However, in 2001/2, invoices for around £16,000 were raised and around £6,000 was recovered.

Nevertheless, the deposit scheme is much more cost effective than B&B (where average *weekly* costs are £323 per household).

The private sector will also play a role for non-statutory homeless households. The private rented sector in the New Forest is estimated to make up around 3.8% of all properties (about 2,750 units.) Undoubtedly, some homeless people self-place in the private sector, although no statistics are available. However, affordability is a real issue and for that reason the private sector is unlikely to be a major source of housing for non-statutory homeless households. The Housing Needs Survey suggested in 2001 that the threshold for access to the private sector was earnings of £20,000. This excludes 77% of concealed households. Furthermore, the requirement for substantial deposits and the fact that many landlords are reluctant to accept tenants on housing benefit is likely to place additional restrictions on the role of this sector.

There is one other agency in the New Forest which is known to provide bonds for non-statutory homeless households. This agency is called Open Doors and is based in New Milton, although the project is district-wide. The project actively encourages people to save money to pay for future deposits. In the last two years, Open Doors has provided 40 bonds to a value of more than £14,000. The scheme is part funded by New Forest District Council via an annual grant of £11,750, which assists in paying for the project worker.

Direct Access, Immediate Access, Hostel and Refuge Accommodation

The problem of the lack of immediate access accommodation within the New Forest has recently been alleviated by the launch of the Nightstop scheme. This project, funded by the New Forest Primary Care Trust and developed in partnership with Community First, the CAB's and the Council is targeted at young people aged 16 to 25. The aim of the scheme is to recruit a network of volunteer host households across the Forest who can provide a bed and a meal for a homeless young person for one or two nights. This helps to prevent rough sleeping and provides a 'breathing space' to allow statutory or other agencies to intervene, if appropriate. One of the advantages of the scheme is that hosts can be recruited in every town, thus resolving any problems with accessing accommodation. On the other hand, the scheme only allows clients to stay for a short period and, for safety reasons, applicants with known drug or alcohol problems are excluded.

The only other resources for direct or immediate access housing are outside of the district. The known resources are:

Patrick House Hostel, Southampton	(24 hour, direct access, for men and women over 17 years of age)
St James Shelter, Southampton	(for men and women over 18, open 12 hours from 8.30 am)
Salvation Army, Southampton	(for men over 25 years, open 9 – 5 pm)
English Churches, Southampton	(for men and women)
Rainbow Project, Southampton	(for men and women, 16-25)
Bellevue Road, Southampton	(for men and women)
St Michael's Night Shelter, Bournemouth	(for men and women)
Fortunia House, Bournemouth	(for men and women)
Lansdowne Gardens, Bournemouth	(for men and women)

Further afield, there are additional direct access resources in Winchester, Portsmouth, Andover and Basingstoke. However, schemes outside of the district are becoming increasingly reluctant to accept out-of-district placements as they do not wish to effect their relationship with their own local authority. Therefore, these resources may become inaccessible.

With regard to refuges for women fleeing violence, the New Forest refuge is a very useful, if over-subscribed resource (see above, page 32.) There are six rooms available for women and their families (male children are able to access the scheme up to the age of 14.) Another refuge in the West of the district is due to be opened in the autumn of 2003. Additionally, one of the Council's partner landlords has reserved a supply of six temporary units for move-on accommodation from the refuge. Further refuges are located in Bournemouth, Southampton, Winchester, Eastleigh, Salisbury and Portsmouth.

Concerning other hostel facilities which are not direct or immediate access, there are a few schemes within the district, as detailed below. It must be noted that some of these resources are not solely for homeless people; applicants who are in need but not homeless may be eligible.

Flowerdown, Calmore.	(for women, 16-25)
Ocknell Grove, Dibden	(for women, 16-25)
Thornham House, New Milton	(for men, 16-25)
Johnson House, New Milton	(for men and women over 18)
Blease Court, Lyminster	(seven places for 16-21 year olds)
The Old Bakery, New Milton	(six move-on places, 18-25)

Additional provision is planned within the next 12-18 months for a 12 person scheme for young people in Totton and for two schemes of four places for young people in the West of the district.

Information from Stonham Housing Association which manages the Flowerdown, Ocknell Grove and Thornham House projects shows a high demand for hostels. In 2001/2, there were 86 referrals for vacancies of which 20 were accepted and 18 offered a place. Ten applicants were rejected because their support needs were too high and two because support needs were too low. The main nominating organisations were advice agencies, the Housing Needs Team and Social Services.

Other hostel schemes outside of the district which are useful resources for homeless people and which sometimes take referrals from the New Forest are as follows:

Kingsley House, Southampton	(For men 16-25 and single mothers 16-25)
Carr Gomm, Southampton	(For vulnerable men and women over 18)
Life, Bournemouth	(For single mothers, 16-25)
Rainbow Project, Southampton	(Single or expectant mothers aged 16-24)

Advice and Support for Homeless People in the New Forest

A number of agencies undertake key roles in the provision of advice and support for homeless people in the New Forest.

The Housing Needs Service

The Housing Needs Team performs the Council's statutory duty to secure, free of charge, the provision of advice and information on homelessness, the prevention of homelessness and on allocation of housing. As such, the team is the central homelessness service in the district. Additionally, there are further statutory obligations on the Council to provide or secure the provision of specific advice, assistance and assessment to applicants found to be homeless but not in priority need, or those found intentionally homeless.

The provision of housing advice and homelessness prevention by the Council has undergone significant changes in recent years. In 2000, the Council decided not to renew the housing advice contract with Shelter and advice provision was brought in house. To provide the best possible service with the available resources, the generic role of Housing Advice and Homelessness Officer was created. This arrangement allows the best opportunity for the team of 5 officers to provide advice coverage to all areas of the district. Making the service accessible and ensuring that the quality of advice provided is of a high standard are essential to successful homelessness prevention.

Six local advice surgeries were set up in Fordingbridge, Ringwood, New Milton, Lymington, Totton and Hythe and these take place on a weekly basis, normally as drop-in services. In addition, advice is available by telephone, tellytalk and by drop-in at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst during normal office hours.

As well as information on housing options, the service provides advice in all areas of housing law, including:

- Illegal eviction and harassment
- Rent arrears
- Notices to quit
- Debt
- Benefits
- Homelessness and rough sleeping
- Relationship Breakdown and domestic violence
- Court procedures
- Private sector issues
- Homesearch
- Transfers and exchanges
- Tied housing
- Right to buy
- Repairs and maintenance
- Mortgage issues
- Mobile home issues

In some areas, the service operates more as a 'signposting' organisation, making referrals to other agencies for specific advice (eg on debt counselling, repairs and maintenance etc.)

The generic role incorporating homelessness and housing advice has strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, a seamless service can be provided, with applicants who first seek advice and then may go on to face homelessness, having access to the same officers. On the other hand, a generic service may be said to cause a conflict of interest, with officers having responsibility both for 'gatekeeping' when dealing with homelessness applications and, at the same time, for initial advice to customers who may be facing homelessness. Because of this, homelessness and advice cases are monitored by managers and there is also external scrutiny via the Housing Advice Forum (see below, page 53) The other possible weakness is in the wide scope of the role. As stated above, advice needs to be of a high quality and the danger is that quality could be diluted if the role is very wide. This potential problem is offset by the provision of high quality training (all of the Advisers are Shelter-trained) and monitoring of the advice provided and its outcomes.

Over the last year, the Council's advice service has seen further development. In line with best practice, the service has become more orientated towards providing detailed information on housing options so that customers can, as far as possible, make their own decisions about their future housing situations. At the same time, the advice officers have been tasked with assertive managing down of homelessness acceptances.

What this means in practice is that homelessness applications become one of a range of options for customers to take up, rather than being the initial option for anyone facing a homelessness problem. Customers are provided with individual housing need assessments and Housing Options Packs. Additionally, home visits are undertaken in every instance where there is a parental eviction. The purpose of the home visit is to mediate between the two parties, check that there is no collusion and to be clear on the other options available for applicants. As well as home visits, more detailed enquiries are carried out in each case to ensure that applicants are not making false statements or withholding information when they are making applications. Close monitoring of case work ensures that enquiries are thorough and proportionate.

There may be some concern that the Council is simply resorting to a strong gatekeeping approach to reduce acceptances. However, it is important to note that this new approach to homelessness prevention is being cited as best practice by the Homelessness Directorate. The ethos is to improve housing advice provision, remove the immediate 'treadmill' of homelessness applications and to ensure that scarce resources are targeted at those in need.

Further work needs to be undertaken in developing the advice service, but it is apparent that the acceptance rate and the overall level of acceptances has declined significantly in 2002/3.

Figure 19, below shows the acceptance rate over recent years for all Hampshire local authorities. This indicator considers the acceptance per thousand head of population each year. In 2001, New Forest was the above the Hampshire average acceptance rate of 4.1 households per thousand head of population. In 2002, the Council's acceptance rate fell significantly and is now below the average level.

LA	2001	2002 (1)	2002 (2)	2002 (3)	2002 (4)	2002
Basingstoke	2.4	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.6	2.4
East Hants	3.2	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.6	3.3
Eastleigh	2.4	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	3.0
Fareham	4.0	0.6	1.0	0.8	1.0	3.4
Gosport	7.6	1.3	2.0	2.0	2.4	7.7
Hart	3.6	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.7	4.1
Havant	6.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	4.4
New Forest	5.2	0.9	0.9	0.6	0.7	3.1
Rushmoor	4.4	1.2	1.3	1.5	0.8	4.8
Test Valley	4.4	0.8	1.3	1.2	1.2	4.5
Winchester	2.0	-	-	0.4	-	-

Figure 19 Hampshire Acceptance Rate Per 1,000 Population

One of the problems with housing advice is that it is felt, in itself, to be a 'good thing', but there is little direct evidence of its actual efficacy in preventing homelessness. This is probably because of the difficulty in assessing outcomes, rather than any intrinsic weakness in the approach to homelessness prevention via the provision of good quality advice.

In an attempt to monitor outcomes, each housing advice client is now contacted three months after their initial approach to the Council and questions are asked on what outcomes have been experienced. This new approach is very recent in nature and so definitive results are not yet available. However, early indications are favourable:

74 housing advice clients who were facing homelessness were contacted:

- homelessness had been prevented in 10 cases
- alternative accommodation had been secured in 21 cases
- the housing situation had improved in some other way in 8 cases
- 35 applicants went on to make a homelessness application

As well as housing advice outcomes, monitoring of the views of customers (on the handling of each homelessness case) also takes place. This monitoring only commenced in February 2003, so it is too early to draw any conclusions. However, the viewpoints of the accepted homeless applicants in the customer survey were tested.

87% of applicants felt that their application was dealt with clearly and was fully explained and 88% stated that they were made aware of the contact details of the officer dealing with their case. However, only 65% felt that they were kept up to date with progress on their application.

Applicants were also asked which of the following words best define the Council's homelessness service (results in brackets):

Caring	25%
Professional	18%
Helpful	45%
Bureaucratic	3%
Unhelpful	9%

88% of applicants used positive descriptive words, 12% used negative words.

Generally speaking, this survey is suggestive of a good response from the customer. However, there are one or two areas which need attention, for example, ensuring that customers are kept up to date with progress.

It must also be noted that all applicants in the survey were accepted, so this may give a false positive outcome. However, even for accepted applicants outcomes could often be described as poor – with many B&B placements and lengthy waits in temporary accommodation, so it may be that the results are skewed in a negative direction, with the customer assessing performance on their individual housing outcomes rather than on the service itself. Ongoing monitoring of customers will include refused applicants as well as statutory homeless people.

Finally, an area of homelessness work which needs further exploration in the New Forest is the delivery of advice via the internet. The Council's Homesearch lettings system, which is partly internet based, has shown that 40% of customers use the internet to access information on available homes. This is a far higher proportion than expected. It is important that this tool for providing information to customers is developed so that housing advice provision on line becomes a meaningful service.

The CAB's

The network of CAB's performs an important role, both in the direct provision of housing advice and other advice and in acting as an advocacy organisation for people threatened with homelessness. Advice work includes exploring options with clients facing homelessness, making referrals to other agencies, advice on benefits and legal issues and completing forms.

Advocacy work may lead the CAB's to challenge the decisions of the Housing Needs Team and to support applicants through any appeals they wish to make against decisions. The CAB volunteers can themselves get support from the Bournemouth Shelter-run Housing Aid Centre for this type of work. Other areas of advocacy include negotiating with landlords on rent arrears, and negotiating with the Housing Benefit Team. Occasionally, advisers will attend court with clients.

One area of work of particular importance is debt counselling, and the CAB's are contracted by the Community Legal Service to provide a debt counselling service within the district.

Over 50 customers who approached the Council for housing advice in 2001/2, were referred on to the CAB's, primarily for information on family law and on debt issues.

Health Services

Health agencies which serve the population of the New Forest seek to tackle homelessness in a number of ways:

- Preventing hospital admissions and reducing readmission using community based health and social care services
- Investing in health promotion and public health initiatives and services to prevent and reduce the impact of ill-health, improve the environment and access to education and employment opportunities
- Participation in the Social and Medical Rehousing Panel, the Supported Housing Forum, the Supported Housing Forum Core Group and many of the sub-groups (see below, page 52, for further information on these groups and other partnership working in the district.)
- Funding through Primary Care Trust Health Strategy Partnership Grant schemes such as Night Stop, Care and Repair, Floating Support and Community Development (particularly in Pennington, Calshot and Martin.)

Floating Support and Support Within Housing Projects

Hyde Housing Association, in partnership with Swaythling, Western Challenge and James Butcher Housing Associations, the Council, Social Services and the Primary Care Trust manages the Floating Support service within the district. The service has the capacity to take on up to 50 people needing low or medium support to help them maintain their tenancies and prevent future or repeat homelessness. The importance of this service cannot be overstated. Applicants who need support or who have experienced multiple challenges or issues are known to be more vulnerable to homelessness.

Floating Support can assist clients with the following issues:

- Rent arrears
- Explaining tenancy agreements and rights
- Detailed consultation with tenants
- Advice on welfare benefits and housing benefits
- Advocacy and advice on accessing care / support
- Accompanying tenants to service providers
- Life skills training
- Advice on budgeting and debts

Floating Support is also crucial in actually getting some people rehoused. Landlords may be reluctant to take on tenants with support needs. Access to the Floating Support service can give the landlords the confidence to take on tenants who they may feel to be at high risk of tenancy breakdown, or causing a nuisance to neighbours.

Hyde Housing Association and Stonham Housing Association, the key providers of supported housing schemes within the district, are responsible for the provision of assistance and support to tenants within their schemes. Again, the purpose is to assist people in learning the skills necessary to manage a tenancy. Where possible, tenants are encouraged into lower dependency move-on schemes and then into permanent affordable housing via the Homesearch register.

The Housing Improvements Team and Care and Repair

The Council's Housing Improvements Team helps elderly, vulnerable and low income households to remain in their homes by ensuring the home is safe, suitable and fit for habitation. A key area of work is in providing disabled facilities grants to assist in carrying out adaptations which ensure the suitability of accommodation for disabled people. Without adaptations, some families would face homelessness. The Improvements Team works closely with Social Services to obtain the best outcomes for people in need.

The Care and Repair service, based at Community First and managed and funded on a partnership basis (including the Health Authority, Social Services and the Council's Housing Improvements Team) is an extremely useful resource for supporting older people in maintaining their properties and therefore their homes.

It's Your Choice

It's Your Choice is the confidential information and counselling service for young people aged 12 – 25. Advice on homelessness is only one of the many areas of work covered by the project. Advisers will discuss options with young people facing homelessness, assist clients to write letters or make phone calls, teach budgeting skills, assist in making benefit claims and act as an advocate for young people. It's Your Choice retains close links with statutory agencies to ensure referrals are effective and appropriate.

Whilst much of this role could also be undertaken by the CAB's or the Council, the importance of It's Your Choice is that it focuses on the needs of young people, a group which is vulnerable to homelessness.

In 2001/2, the Council's Housing Needs Team referred 85 clients to It's Your Choice because of their particular speciality.

It's Your Choice has also worked proactively in schools to provide education on housing.

Open Doors

As well as providing deposit bonds for homeless people, Open Doors also provides advice and support in seeking accommodation and in the completion of benefit claim forms. Drop-in surgeries take place at Hythe, Lymington and New Milton.

In 2001/2, the Council made 162 referrals of non-statutory homeless applicants to Open Doors.

Hampshire Accommodation and Advice Service (HAAS)

This service which is based in Southampton is managed and funded by Hampshire Probation and provides advice and support to ex-offenders who have been serving sentences of longer than 12 months. HAAS works closely with Open Doors to assist ex-offenders to secure privately rented accommodation.

Connexions

Connexions provides integrated information, advice, guidance and support for young people aged 13-19, primarily through a local network of personal advisers. Connexions advisers can help to identify the underlying causes of homelessness, ensure a prompt response if there is a housing crisis and make appropriate referrals to other agencies if necessary.

The Connexions service has also organised a conference for young people which included a workshop on homelessness and housing need run by the Council's Housing Needs Team.

Dorcas

Dorcas is a voluntary sector agency which helps to provide furniture for homeless and other low-income households. Dorcas has helped many families move into properties when otherwise they would have had no furniture.

Services Outside of the New Forest

There are a number of services outside of the district which can provide support to homeless people (particularly rough sleepers) who have moved out of the area into the local towns and cities.

These include day centres in Southampton, Portsmouth, Winchester and Bournemouth, where there are facilities for health care, advice on benefits, food etc.

Partnership Working on Homelessness

One of the important tests in assessing the quality of services for homeless people is on the degree of successful partnership working between key organisations. Joint working can ensure better coordinated service provision, integration of services for clients with multiple needs, expanded knowledge and expertise of partner agencies and reduction in duplication of work.

Partnership working on homelessness issues can be split into two main areas; strategic partnership working (mainly concerning policy and strategy issues) and joint working which is directly about individual customers. There may be a degree of overlap between the two, but most partnership arrangements tend to be orientated one way or the other.

With regard to joint working to benefit individual customers, there are two central partnerships on homelessness issues in the New Forest, where the Housing Needs Team works with the Locality Mental Health Teams (LMHT's) and with Social Services Children and Families Teams.

There has been a joint working agreement between Housing Services and the LMHT's for a number of years. The protocol sets down the expectations that each organisation should have of the other and the requirements for joint working on individual cases. A steering group monitors performance and amends the protocol as necessary. In this area, partnership working is strong and the relationship between the LMHT's and Housing Services well established. One of the Housing Advice and Homelessness Officers is tasked with dealing with most LMHT referrals as a speciality and the LMHT is also represented on the Social and Medical Rehousing panel – the group which can award additional priority to applicants on the Homesearch register.

Joint working with the Social Service Children and Families Team is less successful. A Hampshire wide protocol is in existence which was developed by a steering group with New Forest District Council representation. Unfortunately, the performance of joint working in this area has been very patchy, both locally and Hampshire-wide. The purpose of the protocol is to ensure that every young person facing homelessness gets an assessment from both Housing and Social Services. However, Social Services have been unable to prioritise those cases where the young person is not already receiving support from a social worker, so many referrals do not benefit from the agreement.

Concerning strategic partnership working, there are a number of local groups which are either entirely focused on homelessness or consider homelessness issues as part of their remit. These are detailed below:

Supported Housing Forum

This group is an inclusive forum bringing together all stakeholders with an interest in supported housing provision. There are a number of sub-groups tasked with considering the needs of individual client groups. These include young people, elderly people, people suffering from domestic violence, people with physical disabilities, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, ex-offenders and people with substance misuse problems. The sub-groups can bring forward bids for revenue or capital Supporting People funding which are then considered and prioritised by a core group. The core group is responsible for the local Supporting People strategy.

Whilst the focus of this forum and sub groups is on supported housing provision, the links between homelessness and housing support needs are very clear. For example, the Supported Housing Forum has recently enabled the provision of schemes such as domestic violence move-on accommodation, the second women's refuge and additional supported housing provision for young people.

Housing Advice Forum

A 6 monthly meeting of all housing advice providers within the district, including the CAB's, the Council, Floating Support workers, Shelter and voluntary sector agencies. The meeting provides a forum for exchange of information and for scrutiny of the statutory housing services by the CAB's and other agencies.

Housing Partnership Group

A meeting of all providers of permanent and temporary affordable housing, held between 2 and 4 times a year. The group is responsible for helping to develop policies and procedures on the letting of affordable housing, including the provision of a joint housing register and the Homesearch scheme.

Domestic Violence Forum

This group includes all stakeholders involved with providing support to those suffering from domestic violence, including the Police, Victim Support, the Domestic Violence Coordinator, the Women's Refuge, and Housing Needs. It is primarily a forum for information sharing.

Divided We Fall

The Divided We Fall Core Group is incorporated within the Community Safety Partnership and includes representatives from the Police, Social Services, the Youth Offending Team, Housing Associations and the Council. Divided We Fall is responsible for identifying anti-social behaviour and ensuring it is tackled appropriately. The group can agree the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts (ABC's) and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's). These can help to assist in preventing homelessness by reducing nuisance and therefore helping to maintain tenancies, both of the offender and other who may be effected by the anti-social behaviour.

Floating Support Steering Group

A multi-agency steering group for the development, funding and management of the Floating Support scheme.

Night Stop Steering Group

A multi-agency steering group for the development and management of the Night Stop scheme.

Connexions steering group

A multi-agency steering group for the development and management of the Connexions scheme.

Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board

This is a statutory management board for the protocol on PDO's. New Forest Council is one of two local authorities in Hampshire to have representation on the board.

Part IV Towards a Homelessness Strategy for the New Forest

In this part, initial proposals for a strategy on tackling homelessness will be put forward for consideration and consultation. These proposals have been developed after an analysis of the gaps in service provision identified during the review.

Much work has already taken place before and during the preparation of the review; many proposals and ideas which can be speedily implemented have already been actioned, as outlined below.

Whilst more can and will be done to improve services and outcomes for homeless people, it must be made absolutely clear that there is no prospect of the strategy meeting one of the main aims as required by legislation, namely that the strategy should include plans to:

- ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become homeless

The desperate shortage of affordable housing in the district makes this aim impossible to achieve in the foreseeable future. However, steps must be taken to maximise the availability of accommodation for homeless people.

The other two aims of a strategy are more achievable. These are that the strategy must include plans for:

- the prevention of homelessness
- ensuring there is satisfactory support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again

The preliminary proposals outlined below, cover five main areas of work:

- better information on homelessness
- preventing homelessness
- securing temporary housing
- securing permanent housing
- support for homeless people

The last four areas of work which need to be covered by the strategy are clearly priority areas for any strategy to tackle homelessness. The first issue, improving information, may assist in developing future strategies. During the course of this review, it has become apparent that the available information on homelessness is limited in scope and usefulness. Whilst the Housing Needs Team has access to a significant amount of valuable information because of the requirement to complete statutory returns and due to the proactive approach to gathering statistics on non-statutory homelessness, there are problems with:

- limited record keeping on homelessness by other organisations
- possible double counting of homelessness where different organisations do keep records

The development of accurate information systems is essential to a full understanding of the problem of homelessness and to future service provision.

Improving Information on Homelessness

What has been done already

- The collection of statistics on housing advice has been reviewed and all advice contacts are now recorded on a spreadsheet, sortable by household type, housing problems and advice provided.
- ‘Sofa-surfing’ has been specified as a housing register application category to assist in defining the numbers of hidden homeless

What could be done

- A single data collection form could be used by all agencies which may deal with homeless people. The Housing Needs Team could create a database to get an accurate idea of the numbers of homeless people seeking help and to prevent double counting. This work could be extended to the sub-region or all of Hampshire.
- Repeat homelessness applications could be monitored to help identify and prevent repeat homelessness.
- Analysis of applicants who first contact the advice service and then go on to make a homelessness application could take place to ascertain whether any additional advice or help could have made a difference.
- Analysis of applicants who achieve successful outcomes after contact with the advice service – what made the difference?

Prevention of Homelessness

What has been done already

- A second Floating Support Worker post was created in September 2002. The Housing Needs Team is now able to make direct referrals of customers who may need support in maintaining a tenancy.
- The Council's housing advice service has followed best practice in establishing a Housing Options Pack model in the New Forest. Each client now has an individual housing needs assessment and an Options Pack for consideration.
- Links between the Homesearch scheme and the housing advice service have been strengthened. In particular, it has been recognised that information on the Homesearch application forms can indicate threats of homelessness. Where such information is indicated, the forms are now passed to Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers (HAHAO's) for an options interview.
- The New Forest CAB's obtained funding in 2001 through the Legal Aid Franchise scheme to employ two part-time peripatetic case workers in debt and welfare benefits. They play an important part in preventing recurrent homelessness due to financial difficulties and refusal of benefits.
- The Housing Needs Team has reviewed its approach to making homelessness enquiries and now practices 'assertive prevention' including detailed but proportionate investigation work, home visits for all parental evictions, use of a mediation service where appropriate and monitoring of casework.
- It's Your Choice, Connexions and the Housing Needs Team have undertaken some work with young people still in education to provide background information on the housing situation in the district.
- The Housing Needs Team has purchased remote interviewing facilities (Tellytalk) and is now able to provide advice provision on line to customers at the Hythe and Ringwood offices.

What could be done

- Consideration could be given to using the deposit scheme as a preventative measure, rather than the reactive one which is currently only eligible to those accepted as homeless. The costs of such a scheme would need careful consideration.
- Practical support could be given to women who are suffering from domestic violence, including the provision of extra security measures, agreed in liaison with the Crime Prevention Officer. Security measures could be funded from money which would otherwise be spent on B&B.

- The Housing Advice Forum could evolve from an information exchange meeting to a forum for the strategic planning of housing advice to ensure the best use of limited resources.
- Tellytalk could be expanded to provide a service to all local offices.
- The Homesearch web site could be developed to provide information on housing options.
- A full programme of visits to educational establishments could be carried out on a regular basis to improve understanding of housing options for young people and to encourage planning for the future.
- The Council could continue the development of the Housing Needs Team into a housing options service with an emphasis on managing down the expectations of customers that the Council will be able to assist in every case.
- Extend options for people in housing need by helping to develop a LAWN-type scheme for Hampshire.*
- Research the triggers for homelessness in the private sector to assess whether an assertive outreach approach, with HAHAO's actively seeking to mediate and negotiate with landlords and tenants, could be successful.
- The Housing Advice Service could be promoted throughout the district to encourage early contact with customers who may face homelessness
- HAHAO's could be trained as Connexions PA's to improve services to young people
- The advice service could seek the Legal Services Commission quality mark to ensure use of best practice
- Further partnership work could be explored to improve service delivery (eg with drug services, the CLS partnership etc.)
- Extending home visits to all homeless cases (except where violence is an issue) to verify applications in the home.
- Consideration could be given to ways of supporting people who exhibit very challenging behaviour.
- If repeat homelessness is identified as an issue for the district, a target of reducing the levels of repeat homelessness could be set.
- A target of a percentage reduction in homelessness against the main causes could be set.

*LAWN is a London-based scheme where local authorities in high demand areas work in partnership with those in low demand areas to provide options for people to move to a different district.

Increasing the Supply of Good Quality Temporary Accommodation

What has been done already

- Recent new initiatives include:
 - Housing Association Leasing Top-Up Scheme
 - Buy-to-let Scheme
 - Project 2000 Scheme
 - Access to the Private Sector Scheme (rent deposits)
 - Private Sector Top-Up Scheme
- The Night Stop project became operational in February 2003
- The Council has nominated a Housing Benefit officer to deal with lease property tenants
- Private landlord forums have been set up to promote the lease scheme and allow review/improvement
- The council has launched an advertising campaign to identify empty properties and encourage owners to lease to RSLs has been launched
- Renovation grants with a requirement to lease properties to RSLs have been used

What Could Be Done

- Allocation of the additional £27,000 funding allowed by the ODPM (to assist in complying with the greater duties under the new legislation) to partner landlords to enable them to take on a greater number of leased properties.
- Consideration of possible alternative direct or immediate access schemes or a foyer scheme in the district to work alongside the Nightstop scheme.
- The creation of a new build private finance model in partnership with RSLs
- Homechallenge – a RSL owned version of the leasing scheme.
- Consideration could be given to high – support housing schemes for people with very challenging behaviour.
- The need for, and feasibility of, a supported lodgings scheme for young people could be considered.
- The Council and its partner Housing Associations could consider the provision of mobile home parks as an alternative form of TA.

Increasing the Supply of Permanent Affordable Housing

What has Been Done Already

- Provided over 100 new homes in 2002/3
- Supported RSLs in securing £4.7m of Housing Corporation funding for RSLs for new builds in 2003/4.
- Allocated £1.8m of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) for new builds in 2003/4.
- Supported RSLs in accessing new national funding streams for new build, such as Safer Communities Supported Housing and Challenge Funds.
- Consistently achieved the target proportions of affordable homes provided through the planning process on market sites.
- In the Deposit Local Plan, increased the target proportion of affordable homes to be provided through the planning process on market sites.
- Provided affordable housing on sites as an exception to normal planning policy.

What Could Be Done

- The Council could complete its assessment on future stock options and take action to progress the most appropriate option as speedily as possible.
- Review the funding arrangements for new affordable housing in the light of changes to LASHG and more regionally focused capital allocations.
- Increase the supply of land for affordable housing.
- Cross boundary sub-regional working could be developed to ensure competitiveness in accessing regionally allocated funds for new build and support services.
- The Council and its partner Housing Associations could explore off-site manufacturing as a means of reducing costs and speeding up delivery.

Support for People Who are Homeless or Threatened With Homelessness

What has been done already

- The joint working agreement with the LMHT's has been reviewed.
- A second Floating Support worker is now in post and direct referrals can be made by the Housing Needs team.
- Care and repair

What could be done

- Consideration could be given to developing proposals for schemes or methods of support to assist in housing applicants with multiple needs, especially those that are difficult to place.
- The Joint Working Agreement on young people could be reviewed and made to work. Partnership working with the Youth Offending Team could be incorporated into the agreement.
- Proposals for a Homelessness Re-settlement post could be drawn up and a bid made for Supporting People funding. The post would provide specific re-settlement support to any homeless household living in B&B or temporary housing to seek to prevent future homelessness.
- A proposal for further expansion of the Floating Support service could be drawn up, specifically to support young people, and a bid made for Supporting People funding.
- Consideration could be given to holistic needs assessment to pick up all essential triggers for homelessness.

The Way Forward

The consultation period for this review (in draft format) commenced in May 2003 for an initial period of three weeks. The consultation process began with the district's first Homelessness Forum, which was held on the 28th May. All Members and Stakeholders were invited to attend the Forum.

Following publication of this review in June 2003, a strategy based on the action points within this document will be taken to the Council's Cabinet for approval.

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Appendix

Risk factors associated with homelessness

- disputes between young people and their parents
- experience of physical or sexual abuse
- time in local authority care
- learning disabilities
- lack of literacy skills
- exclusion from school or persistent truancy
- young parenthood
- unemployment
- alcohol or drug abuse
- mental health problems
- contact with the criminal justice system
- previous service in the Armed Forces
- marital or relationship breakdown
- experience of violence, including racial and other harassment
- previous experience of homelessness
- lack of social support network