

Appendix one...

Review of housing needs and homelessness from 2003 – 2008

Introduction

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

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

It should be noted that in reviewing Homelessness statistical information and quantitative data, further work will be carried out assessing the support needs of socially excluded groups including vulnerable people experiencing homelessness in Herefordshire. The Supporting People commissioning plan is to be completed very shortly. With this in mind, the Homelessness Strategy includes provision for further work to be undertaken on assessing the gaps in provision and needs of all the vulnerable groups in Herefordshire. However the

HSIG recommended that a number of consultation events should be conducted for service users and stakeholders to assess the gaps in services utilising the statistical information that has been obtained. These results have been considered throughout this review and Strategy and it is believed that the sample sizes of consultation provide robust findings.

Consultation considerations

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

What has been achieved so far?

Reconfiguration of Herefordshire Council's Homeless Service.

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

Prevention Fund

Cabinet approved this funding in 2005 with the key objective of preventing homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast in the County. The Prevention Fund provides the facility to the Homelessness Team to 'offer' financial support to homeless or potentially homeless citizens. The funds may be used for a range of solutions including rent deposits, goodwill payments to relatives to maintain accommodation, storage of furniture, kennel fees, the payment of rent arrears and many other solutions in order to prevent a person from becoming homeless. Much of this money is paid to clients as a loan but can offer a second chance to help them secure accommodation.

Affordable Housing

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

Housing related support from Shelter

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

service in response to emerging needs. It is envisaged that the re-specified service will work with both families and single people.

Mediation Scheme for 16/17 year olds

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

The Sanctuary Scheme

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

Schools Education Project

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

RSL Homelessness Prevention Protocol

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

Hospital Discharge Homelessness Protocol

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

Home Point – additional partners

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

Home Point Video “talking guides” and SMS bidding

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

Gypsy and Traveller Officer at Shelter

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

Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment

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

Empty Property Strategy

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

Mortgage Rescue service

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

Rural Housing Enabler (RHE)

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

West Housing Market Assessment (WHMAs)

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

Herefordshire Housing Needs Assessment 2005

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

Citizens Advice Bureau

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

Mental Health Accommodation Development Officer

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

Care Leavers' Protocol

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

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

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

Move on Accommodation for Young People

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

Levels of Homelessness

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

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

The various prevention activities carried out by the local authority and support agencies to reduce levels of homelessness are detailed throughout the various sections in the Homelessness Strategy. These activities along with the use of the prevention fund to 'offer' financial support to homeless or potentially homeless citizens will enable the local authority to maintain homelessness at a reasonable level.

Levels of Intentional Decisions

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

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

Table 1 – Number of Homeless applications and acceptances

Year	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Applications	608	591	719	598	236	358
Acceptances	417	490	510	416	148	206

Table 2 – Number of applicants found intentionally homeless

Year	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Found intentionally homeless	21	20	28	42	39	41
Found intentionally homeless as a % of Homeless applications	3.5%	3%	4%	7%	17%	11.45%
Applications	608	591	719	598	236	358

Levels of Repeat Homelessness

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

Table 3 – Number of repeat homeless cases

	Total
2004/2005	12
2005/2006	12
2006/2007	8
2007/2008	3

services from Supporting People, Mental Health, Women's Aid, SHYPP and the Local Authorities prevention team. However it is the

aim of this strategy to reduce the numbers of repeat homelessness cases further, the actions set out in the section "excluded from services" within the Homelessness Strategy and the other need groups aim to deal with some of the sub issues that relate to repeat homelessness in an attempt to maintain or decrease the numbers in this group further.

The Main Reasons for Priority Need and Accepting Homelessness

The largest reported group in 2007/2008 is from applicants with children and pregnant, this issue is addressed within the two need groups: Homeless Families and Teenage Parents within the Homelessness Strategy. It has been noted within the section that a teenage pregnancy strategy is required, particularly focussing on the age of the pregnant women and if move-on accommodation should be an option available in the County for these young women if applicable. The increase within the 16 – 17 year old category has been addressed in the relevant sections within the Strategy, particularly in light of the CLG target of reducing homelessness and its effects amongst this group. For more info see Table 4.

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

Table 4 – Main Reason for Homelessness Priority

Year	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Applicant with children	206	236	245	235	92	129
Pregnant - no other children	49	65	65	55	18	24
Aged 16 or 17	27	36	48	33	5	14
Care leaver aged 18 to 20	6	10	8	11	1	3
Old age	15	17	14	14	4	4
Physical disability	17	13	18	6	6	7
Mental illness or disability	41	51	48	28	9	8
Other special reason	31	18	15			0
Emergency	1	6	4	1	3	0
Previously in care	4			3	0	0
Served in HM forces		2	1			0
Been in custody / on remand		1				0
Fleeing violence	20	35	44	30	10	17
Of which, domestic violence	17	30	37	28	7	16
TOTAL	417	490	510	416	148	206

Reasons for Homelessness

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

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

Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation

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

Table 5 - Main Reason for Loss of Last Settled Home

Year	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	2008% of total
Parents not willing / able to accommodate	90	122	113	97	38	63	34%
Loss of rented accommodation	102	108	104	95	29	42	20%
Relationship breakdown (violent)	77	89	114	103	37	46	19%
Relationship breakdown (non violent)	54	46	51	39	15	22	12%
Other relatives / friends not willing / able to accommodate	34	29	36	19	5	17	9%
Other (emergency, rough sleeping)	19	39	46	18	8	4	2%
Mortgage arrears	11	5	3	8	2	4	2%
Leaving institution / care	12	17	17	16	7	5	1%
Other forms of harassment	13	22	23	19	4	1	1%
Rent arrears	5	13	6	2	3	2	1%
TOTAL	417	490	510	416	148	206	100%

Table 6 – Households in Temporary Accommodation at the end of Quarter 4

Year	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Total households in temporary accommodation at year end	134	193	173	135	133
Numbers included in above but in the Bed & Breakfast category		69	65	23	40
Breakdown of all households in Temporary Accommodation					
Of which are pending or intentional decisions	35	49	34	51	45
Of which are households with children	86	116	117	94	80
Snapshot - Number of families with children in Bed & Breakfast at end of Quarter 4				7	14
Snapshot - Number of 16/17 year olds in Bed & Breakfast at end of Quarter 4					4

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

Homelessness and Prevention Team (Housing Advice Services)

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

The Homelessness and Housing Advice team is based at Herefordshire Council's Garrick House, in the centre of Hereford city. The fourteen members of this team are employed by Herefordshire Council and provide housing advice, signposting and support to vulnerable households across the County. In addition to these duties within office hours, they also provide a nightly out-of-hours and weekend emergency homelessness service on behalf of the Council. This team receive thousands of enquiries a year from members of the public who have a range of housing issues, as well as from other professionals who may refer their clients to the

service for focussed assistance and support. Incoming contacts are made by telephone, email, and in person, if a situation is at crisis point.

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

There are 4.5 FTE Homelessness Prevention Officers in the team, which will be supported by a Senior Homelessness Prevention Officer, who also carries a caseload, and provides supervision and guidance to colleagues on a regular basis. Homelessness Prevention Officers carry out home visits to vulnerable households in the community, usually within a week of receiving a referral from a Housing Options Officer. During this visit the

Table 7 – Homelessness and Prevention Team

Year	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Homeless Applications made to team	608	591	719	598	236	358
Prevention cases completed by team (BVPI)					213	301
Prevention Cases uncounted as not matching exact criteria within BVPI 213					102	50
*Approximate number of Clients that went into temp accommodation or prevention officer was unable to complete case paperwork etc						
Total Cases - through the Homeless and Prevention Team	608	591	719	598	551	709

Homelessness Prevention Officer explains the broader housing context in Herefordshire, and helps devise an action plan, designed to avoid homelessness, and find a suitable housing solution in every case. Prevention Officers are able to call upon the Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund in order to help customers secure housing solutions, and the fund provides help around rent-in-advance, deposits, damages, and rent arrears, together with a range of other incentives designed to increase community stability locally.

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

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

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

“Not enough people to pick up the phones at Homelessness and Home Point”

“More phones please”

“It is difficult to communicate if there are not enough people to pick up the phones “

“More prevention officers please”

Recruitment to vacant posts following a re-structure of the Homelessness team should enable increased capacity to respond to service demands. Service standards have been developed which set out the service standards people contacting the service should expect. This process will be enhanced by further work with the council's Info in Herefordshire one stop shop approach to enable appropriate responses depending on the nature and urgency of each case. A review of customer feedback obtained through the monitoring of compliance with the service standards will further inform the development of service responses. It should also be noted that new procedures have been developed for the team associated with the move to prevention, and a review of table 7 above, indicates that the team are completing a larger quantity of prevention cases.

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

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

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

It is the view of HSIg that a re-evaluation of the staffing numbers is considered along with an IT

system to record the number of cases administered by the team each year.

Supporting People

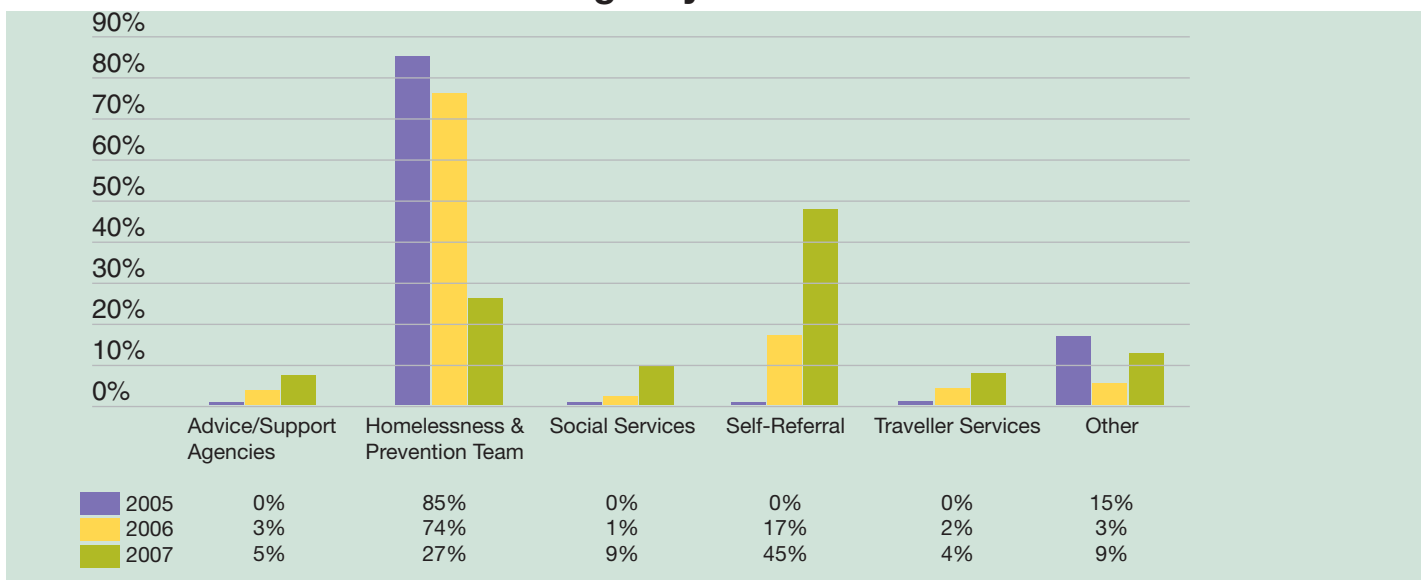
Supporting People currently supports in excess of 3500 vulnerable people to maintain and sustain their independence through the provision of effective housing related support services. Supporting People provides services to vulnerable people throughout Herefordshire. The clients that are supported include homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, women escaping domestic abuse and vulnerable young people. The funding for these services is in excess of £2 million and represents a third of the annual Supporting People grant. In addition to the current services the Supporting people Partnership are considering the introduction of further initiatives including a Rent Deposit Scheme.

Shelter statistics for families and single people

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

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

Referral sources to the Shelter agency



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

BME and Migrant Workers Homelessness Statistics

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

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

Annual registrations for a national insurance number doubled for the UK over the past five

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

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

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

Table 10 - BME Information

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

Future Need of Herefordshire Citizens

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

Home Point

The shortage in the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable single people and homeless families is a critical issue nationally. The Local Government Association has predicted that approximately five million people are estimated to be on waiting lists by 2010 across the whole of the country. Consequentially continued effective and targeted programmes of intervention are required to decrease the levels of homelessness. This will need to be balanced by continued initiatives to increase the supply of accommodation, which is affordable to local people.

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

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

Affordable Housing

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

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

Table 11 Home Point Key Data

Year	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Numbers on waiting list	5686	7740	5377	4193	5314
Numbers of priority status applicants (Snapshot)	213	240	288	130	145
Numbers of gold status applicants (Snapshot)	1585	1871	1047	816	955
Numbers of priority status (homeless) housed in a year	368	363	285	246	236
Numbers of total applicants housed in a year	813	772	696	735	795
Average number of properties per week	16	15	13	14	15

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

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

Within Herefordshire, 697 affordable housing units have been acquired or built since 2003 and it is noted that with recent changes to the staff structure in the Housing Needs and Development department, higher targets of affordable units have been set and are likely to result in an increasing number of units being attained in the next 3 years as detailed in table 12 and 13.

The Strategic Housing Service Plan outlines the new supply of housing that will be developed that is accessible to the community, taking account of earnings to house-price pressures within the county. At the date of publication of this strategy, the West Midlands regional spatial strategy preferred option proposes the delivery of 16,600 new homes in Herefordshire between 2006 and 2026. Hereford City has been identified as a new growth point with the expectation that approximately 50% (8,300) of

these new homes will be delivered within the City itself. The above target proposing the delivery of 850 affordable homes over the next 3 years has been agreed as a Local Area Agreement (LAA) target for Herefordshire, slightly above the assumed affordable housing numbers expected to be delivered in the County through the RSS preferred option.

Table 13 – The targets for affordable housing units (to be built or acquired)

	Total
2008/2009	200
2009/2010	300
2010/2011	350

Property statistics

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

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

Table 12 – Number of affordable housing units built or acquired

	Rented	Home Ownership	Total
2003/2004	63	41	104
2004/2005	30	52	82
2005/2006	63	125	188
2006/2007	64	118	182
2007/2008	58	83	141

Economic Information

Unemployment

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

Earnings and affordability

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

Herefordshire was set at 9.40 for 2007, as compared to 6.88 for the West Midlands region and 7.25 for England as a whole.

Housing stock in the County

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

Population

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

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

Local information

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

Financial

A result of the new Homelessness Prevention Fund can be seen within the detail in the table 14. The information reveals a large increase in expenditure in 2006/2007. With many potentially homeless people encouraged to make use of the prevention fund to avert homelessness, at the same time as significantly decreasing temporary accommodation costs. This had led to a dramatic reduction in homeless acceptances from 416 to 148 in that year.

As mentioned in line 2 within table 14, there is a significant decrease in expenditure on temporary accommodation since 2005/2006. This was largely due to the appointment and effectiveness of the new Homelessness & Prevention team, manager and fund. There is a clear correlation between staffing levels in key areas and the levels of temporary accommodation costs. It should be considered, that these costs could continue to be reduced by increasing prevention staff levels further.

Partnership Working

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

Consultation

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

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

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

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



Table 14 – Homelessness and Prevention Expenditure

Year	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Prevention fund			£33,742	£262,737	£168,710
Temporary accommodation	£141,082	£485,353	£1,471,727	£629,923	£599,836