

Report to: Community Protection Panel

Date: 21st July 2008

Subject: Wigan's Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013

Report of: Director of Environmental Services

Contact officer: Michelle Price 01942 828806

Purpose / summary: To present the new Draft Homelessness Strategy and to invite comments

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: Alternative options have been considered within the development of the strategy.

Recommendation / decision: To consider the proposals within Draft Homelessness Strategy and make any appropriate comments.

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision.

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	None at present
Staffing:	None at present
Policy:	Housing Strategy
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes
Wards affected:	

Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?

No

If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?

Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?

A diversity impact assessment is not enclosed at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered when producing this report.

Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?

A diversity impact assessment is enclosed.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **N/A**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **N/A**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No ***

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x		x
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
	2 nd June – 2 nd July 08		July 07-July 08
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
21.7.08	TBC	TBC	

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
A Place for Me Homelessness Strategy	Cabinet	2003	Housing Strategy

Proper Officer Martin Kimber

Date 1/7/08

1. Background:

- 1.1 “A Place for Me” 2003-2008 was Wigan’s first homelessness strategy. The strategy has been reviewed annually to take into account new issues and challenges as they have arisen, but as it is 5 years since it was first produced, a new baseline strategy has now been developed that takes into account both the significant progress that has been made and Wigan’s current housing climate.
- 1.2 Significant achievements have been made over the past five years in improving homelessness services in the borough. However this has taken place alongside a major shift in the housing market and the main housing issue today is that of a shortage of affordable housing for rent or sale with fewer housing opportunities arising. Whilst efforts are being made to increase the supply of affordable accommodation, demand for homelessness services continues at a sustained level. Homelessness is therefore featured as a priority within the LAA process.
- 1.3 In order to inform the new strategy a comprehensive review of homelessness has taken place. This Review has enabled a full understanding of the trends and causes of homelessness in the borough and provided the basis for the development of the new strategy.

2. Proposals:

- 2.1 The new strategy has been developed in full liaison with the Homelessness Forum, service users, wider strategic partnerships and all organisations that have some input into tackling the causes of homelessness, not just its symptoms.
- 2.2 Through this consultation, an overarching aim for the strategy has been developed:

“To prevent homelessness by tackling the main causes within the Borough and minimise the impact of its effects”

It is proposed that this will be delivered through a SMART action plan focusing on:

Prevention:

- Tackling the causes of homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity by targeting intervention at those at greatest risk of becoming homeless and developing better mechanisms / information to ensure people access appropriate timely advice.

Accommodation

- Improving the range of housing options for those at risk of homelessness by developing new affordable homes, making best use of existing stock and providing better information on how to access it.

Support:

- Improving the range of support options for those at risk of homelessness by developing new services, making best use of existing services and providing better information on how to access it.

Excellent Services:

- Strengthening the partnership role of the Homelessness Forum in tackling homeless, raising standards, delivering measurable quality & seamless services to clients, providing a co-ordinated approach to tackling homelessness.

- 2.3 Key targets have been proposed that demonstrate a step change improvement in reducing the use of temporary accommodation, increasing homelessness prevention and ceasing to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation (unless in exceptional circumstances).
- 2.4 The draft strategy is now out for consultation to all the various groups with final amendments to be made by 4th August 2008. Following on from this a finalised strategy will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then finally Cabinet for approval
- 2.5 A copy of the draft strategy is attached at Appendix A and members of the Panel are invited to make comments on it.

3. Conclusions:

- 3.1 The Draft Homelessness Strategy has been developed via significant consultation processes to address homelessness issues in Wigan and it is hoped that this will make a significant contribution to reducing this issue over the next few years.

Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Housing Strategy

Policy/Service Area: Housing Strategy : Homelessness

Person Completing Form: Peter Layland

Date:

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race	Yes		Disability	Yes	
Ethnicity	Yes		Gender	Yes	
Age	Yes		Religion		No
Class	Yes		Sexual Orientation		No

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems? Yes

The Homelessness Review (Appendix C within strategy) set out the current issues in Wigan. The Homelessness Strategy seeks to overcome these disadvantages.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

The starting point for the development of the strategy was the Homelessness Review. This involved data analysis and extensive discussions with partners within the Homelessness Forum and other stakeholders over a 12 month period.

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

The purpose of the strategy is to tackle disadvantage. Specific actions include better co-ordination of services, a greater emphasis on prevention, more affordable accommodation and support.

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Yes

Timescale	2008 - 2013
Responsibility	Homelessness Forum
Comments	

Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?

Departmental Service Plan	Environmental Services
Section/Team Plan	Regeneration / Protection
Other (Specify)	Supporting People Commissioning Strategy

Date for further review: Will be reviewed annually.

“A PLACE FOR ME”

?? new name??

P1

Wigan Council logo

P2

WHF logo

P3

WIGAN'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2008 – 2013

Produced by:
Wigan Council in partnership with Wigan Homelessness Forum
June 2008

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1. Executive Summary

“A Place for Me” 2003-2008 was Wigan’s first homelessness strategy. The strategy has been reviewed annually to take into account new issues and challenges as they have arisen, but as it is 5 years since it was first produced, a new baseline strategy is now required that takes into account both the significant progress that has been made and Wigan’s current housing climate.

Building on the success of “A Place for Me” and having considered the main gaps and needs identified by the homelessness review, the Wigan Homelessness Forum has determined that its main objective to be delivered through the new Homelessness Strategy is:

To prevent homelessness by tackling the main causes within the Borough and minimise the impact of its effects

There are four main areas which emerge as the prime drivers for the strategy. These are:-

- Prevention of homelessness by tackling its underlying causes
- Increasing the range of affordable housing options
- Increasing the range of housing support options
- Aiming for service excellence through better partnership working arrangements, clearer mechanisms for accessing advice and support and more secure funding to assist with long term service planning.

Key Targets in the delivery of the strategy are:

- 50% of households that approach advice services are prevented from becoming homeless (by 2013).
- 50% reduction in use of Temporary Accommodation (by end of 2010, using Dec 2004 baseline)
- End use of B&B in all but exceptional circumstances and even then for no longer than 6 weeks (by end 2010)

Wigan’s co-ordinated partnership approach to tackling homelessness is a strength within the borough: The Wigan Homelessness Forum will be used as the main delivery mechanism and will ensure that the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 is effective in producing outcomes that assist some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged households in Wigan.

2. Introduction

“A Place for Me” 2003-2008 was Wigan’s first homelessness strategy. The strategy has been reviewed annually to take into account new issues and challenges as they have arisen, but as it is 5 years since it was first produced, a new baseline strategy is now required that takes into account both the significant progress that has been made and Wigan’s current housing climate.

The Homelessness Act 2002 also requires Homelessness Strategies to be reviewed every 5 years and to include actions that:

- Prevent homelessness;
- Ensure there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are or may become homeless;
- Ensure there is satisfactory support for people who are, or may become homeless, or need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again.

This strategy has been developed using Wigan’s Housing Strategic Planning Process Model ([Appendix A](#)). Using this model, the starting point for this strategy was to evaluate the previous Homelessness Strategy ([Appendix B](#)) and then undertake a Homelessness Review ([Appendix C](#)), which provides a comprehensive understanding of Homelessness in Wigan and has identified gaps and needs which this Strategy will seek to address. The review was started in 2007 and continues to be updated as new data becomes available.

In contrast to the position in 2003 when the first Homelessness Strategy was developed, Wigan’s co-ordinated partnership approach to tackling homelessness is now a strength within the borough; Wigan’s Homelessness Forum is made up of a broad range of agencies and partners that recognise homelessness is an issue that one agency cannot tackle alone. This strategy has been developed in consultation with the Homelessness Forum, service users, wider strategic partnerships and all organisations that have some input into tackling the causes of homelessness, not just its symptoms.

The Homelessness Forum has played a key role in both informing the review and determining the strategic priorities. Whilst issues have changed since the development of the first strategy, the overall aim remains similar to the original:

To prevent homelessness by tackling the main causes within the Borough and minimise the impact of its effects.

3. What We Have Achieved So Far

[Appendix B](#) provides an overview of the most significant achievements delivered by the Homelessness Forum over the last 5 years, across the four strategic themes of the previous homelessness strategy: "A Place for Me". The strategy aimed to tackle and minimise homelessness and the causes of homelessness within the Borough through:

Co-ordinating and facilitating the joint working of all agencies in the provision of a service for homeless or potentially homeless people

Wigan's co-ordinated partnership approach to tackling homelessness is now a strength within the borough; as Wigan's Homelessness Forum and its sub-groups have matured, it is now a true multi-agency partnership, focussed on the delivery of its strategic aims. Much of the success in developing new services aimed at preventing homelessness, providing more accommodation and better support has resulted from this co-ordinated approach. There is a significantly better understanding of and commitment to joint working between agencies in the borough

Preventing the occurrence of homelessness

There have been significant changes in the approach to tackling homelessness in Wigan, brought about by a desire to deal with homelessness more effectively as outlined in A Place for Me and a need to tackle homelessness differently because of the changes in the Housing Market. For a number of years prior to the production of the last strategy, the main housing issue was around managing decline. The supply / demand for social housing was such that if someone presented as homeless, they were often made an offer of permanent accommodation the same day. The main housing issue today is that of a shortage of affordable housing for rent or sale with fewer housing opportunities arising. Whilst efforts are being made to increase the supply of affordable accommodation, homeless prevention is fundamental to addressing demand.

Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or who may become Homeless

New affordable housing has been produced through changes in planning policy; existing housing has been made more affordable through projects such as the Bond Guarantee Scheme. Reviews of the Council's allocations policy and significant increases in the number of nominations to Housing Association vacancies has also helped target housing at those in greatest need. Changes in the Housing Market as outlined above has meant that despite these significant improvements, there is a greater shortage of affordable housing now than in 2003. Whilst the Housing Market currently appears to be in a state of flux, more affordable housing needs to be developed as well as a range of supported housing options for vulnerable groups. A disappointment shared by the Homelessness Forum from the last strategy was the failure to develop the Emergency Accommodation project for single people who become homeless.

Ensuring there is support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

Significant improvements have been made in the amount and quality of support available through accommodation based and floating support services, specialist advice and advocacy services and the development of a specialist health team. Homelessness is now being tackled more effectively, a good indicator of which is a notable 85% reduction in repeat homelessness.

4. Where We Are Now: Needs & Priorities

The main needs and priorities in relation to homelessness have been drawn from the issues highlighted in the Homelessness Review. There are four main areas which emerge as the prime drivers for the strategy. These are:-

Homeless Prevention

- Much has been done to increase the focus of activity on homeless prevention through quality advice and support. However changes in the housing market mean that as housing is more difficult to access, increased focus must be given to preventing homelessness arising, otherwise best efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing will not keep pace with demand.
- The key to effective homelessness prevention is ensuring that the right advice is given to the right people at the right time.
- There is scope to develop new initiatives that target the needs of individual client groups to help prevent homelessness, e.g.: mediation for young people, specialist advice for those who may not currently be accessing mainstream services, such as people with substance misuse problems, offenders or refugees and migrants.

Accommodation

- Changes in the housing market have increased the need to produce more affordable housing.
- Activity in the buy-to-let market has increased and new rates of Local Housing Allowances mean that private renting is now a more affordable option: We need to explore opportunities to make better use of the private rented sector in tackling homelessness in the borough.
- Wigan faces a particularly difficult challenge resulting from the target set by government on the use of temporary accommodation. New ways of responding to homelessness issues are being explored and prioritised in a Temporary Accommodation Reduction Strategy.

Support

- Despite being highlighted as a priority within the last homelessness strategy, the provision of direct access / emergency accommodation remains a significant gap within the borough.
- There is a gap in services that support those with more complex needs.
- Opportunities need to be explored around providing more holistic support linking with the worklessness agenda and promoting greater independence.
- More effective move-on arrangements are needed to make best use of Wigan's scarce resources.

Excellent Services

- New services and partnership approaches have developed as a result of 'A Place for Me'. Development of protocols will strengthen partnership arrangements and result in better quality services.
- Need to develop clearer mechanisms for accessing advice and support services in the borough.
- Some services are at risk and others reluctant to develop new initiatives because of uncertainty of future funding. Need to explore opportunities to attract more secure sources of funding

5. Where We Want To Be: Wigan's Vision

The overall strategic aim or 'vision' contained within the Wigan Housing Strategy is:

"By 2010... we aspire to Ensure that every household regardless of their circumstances have access to an affordable decent home located in a sustainable neighbourhood where they choose to live and where there is good quality of life and access to the best possible services."

The local vision for Supporting People is of:

"A community where the quality of life of vulnerable people is continuously improved through the provision of effective housing related support services which maximise the potential for independence and social inclusion."

Using Wigan's Strategic Housing Planning Process Model ([Appendix A](#)), having considered the main gaps and needs identified by the homelessness review, contributing to the wider strategic visions set out above, the Wigan Homelessness Forum has determined that its main objective to be delivered through the Homelessness Strategy is:

"To prevent homelessness by tackling the main causes within the Borough and minimise the impact of its effects"

More specifically, it will seek to:

- Minimise the numbers of people that become homeless and those that sleep rough
- Reduce the need for temporary accommodation
- Ensure that where the use of temporary accommodation is unavoidable, the accommodation and support is of a good quality, is suitable for peoples needs and helps minimise the impact of the effects of homelessness of individuals and their families.
- Ensure that when people are ready to move on into more independent living, they are able to do so in a timely manner, into suitable, affordable accommodation with appropriate support that helps prevent them becoming homeless again.

Key Targets:

Ultimately, the Homelessness Forum, through this strategy aims to reduce the overall numbers of people becoming homeless, but recognises that external pressures such as market forces and wider government policy have a much greater influence. We do however have control over the advice and support people are given to effectively tackle homelessness and its effects.

Wigan therefore aims to:

- Increase the number of households who approach the local authority advice services and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation. "Housing advice services" include external services funded by the local authority. **Target: XX% (Expressed as a percentage of homeless presentations by 2013.** (Based on former BVPI 213)
- Work toward the target set by government for the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by the local authority under homelessness duties. **Target: 19 households placed in Temporary Accommodation under homeless duties by end 2010.** (NI 156)
- Ensure that bed and breakfast is only used to fulfil homelessness duties in exceptional circumstances and even then for the minimum time. **Target: Zero use of B&B for 16 & 17 year olds by 2010, only to be used in exceptional circumstances for all other groups and even then for no longer than 6 weeks.**

6. How We Will Do It

Whilst this strategy has so far outlined Wigan's previous excellent track record of achievement and has set its priorities for tackling the current problems, the key to delivering this is the 5 year action plan set out at [Appendix E](#). This SMART action plan which includes the timescale for the delivery of the Strategy over the next five years, lead responsibility, key partners and milestones, is split into the 4 broad strategic themes:

Prevention:

- Tackling the causes of homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity and continuing to promote a culture change, treating homelessness as preventable, even if this sometimes only serves to delay the need to find alternative accommodation but allows people to move in a more planned way (& avoids the need for temporary accommodation)
- Developing better mechanisms / information to ensure people access appropriate timely advice.
- Targeting Intervention at those at greatest risk of becoming homeless

Accommodation:

- Improving the range of housing options for those at risk of homelessness by developing new affordable homes, making best use of existing stock and providing better information on how to access it.
- Regularly reviewing the quantity, quality and location of temporary accommodation, ensuring it continues to meet individual / diverse needs.

Support:

- Improving the range of support options for those at risk of homelessness by developing new services, making best use of existing services and providing better information on how to access it
- Ensuring services promote independence and are effective in preventing those people becoming homeless again.
- Targeting resources at those in greatest need through effective access and move-on arrangements including the use of the Move-on Plan protocol developed by Homeless Link

Excellent Services:

- Strengthening the partnership role of the Homelessness Forum in tackling homeless,
- Raising standards, delivering measurable quality & seamless services to clients, providing a co-ordinated approach to tackling homelessness.
- Using the Homelessness Forum as the primary vehicle for the delivery of the actions within the strategy, monitoring of performance against the targets and ensuring that both the strategy and homelessness services continues to meet the needs of the borough.

The Homelessness Forum will also use existing subgroups, with representatives from key partner agencies, tasked with ensuring the key strategic aims are met:

- Housing Advice Steering Group
To assist with: Development of quality, timely advice services.
- Young Persons Accommodation Group
To assist with: Addressing housing, advice and support needs to prevent homelessness amongst young people.
- Key Project Steering Group
To assist with: Reducing rough sleeping and social exclusion.
- Housing & Substance Misuse Group
To assist with: More integrated housing and care pathways for drug users engaging in treatment.
- Refugee & Migrants Forum
To assist with: Addressing housing, advice and support needs to prevent homelessness
- Temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast Group
To assist with: Reducing Use of Temporary Accommodation.

The Homelessness Forum will continue to develop partnership links at local, sub-regional & regional levels: Wigan's Homelessness Forum recognises homelessness is an issue that one agency cannot tackle alone or indeed one strategy can tackle in isolation. This Homeless Strategy is a key part of the Borough's Housing Strategy and as such has strong links with the Affordability Strategy, Refugee & Migrants Strategy and Gypsy & Travellers Strategy. It also shares common aims with the boroughs Supporting People Strategy and is intended to inform the borough Advice Strategy which is currently at the early stages of development.

This Homelessness Strategy also has strong links to other agendas including themes around: Financial Inclusion, Tackling Social Exclusion reducing re-offending, Tackling Drugs and Alcohol Harm Reduction, Mental Health, Every Child Matters and Domestic Violence. The Homeless Strategy will be used to inform these agendas and has incorporate them within its review process. Membership of the Homelessness Forum will include key representatives within the above fields.

The Homelessness Strategy will link in with the North West Regional Homelessness Strategy (NWRHS)(2008). Both strategies share common aims around tackling the underlying cause and to prevent homelessness. The NWRHS intends to support local homelessness strategies by sharing good practice and undertaking collective actions across the region, working with other regional bodies to help them to support and strengthen this work and to apply influence to decisions made about resources at national and regional level, particularly the decisions about investment in housing and housing-related support.

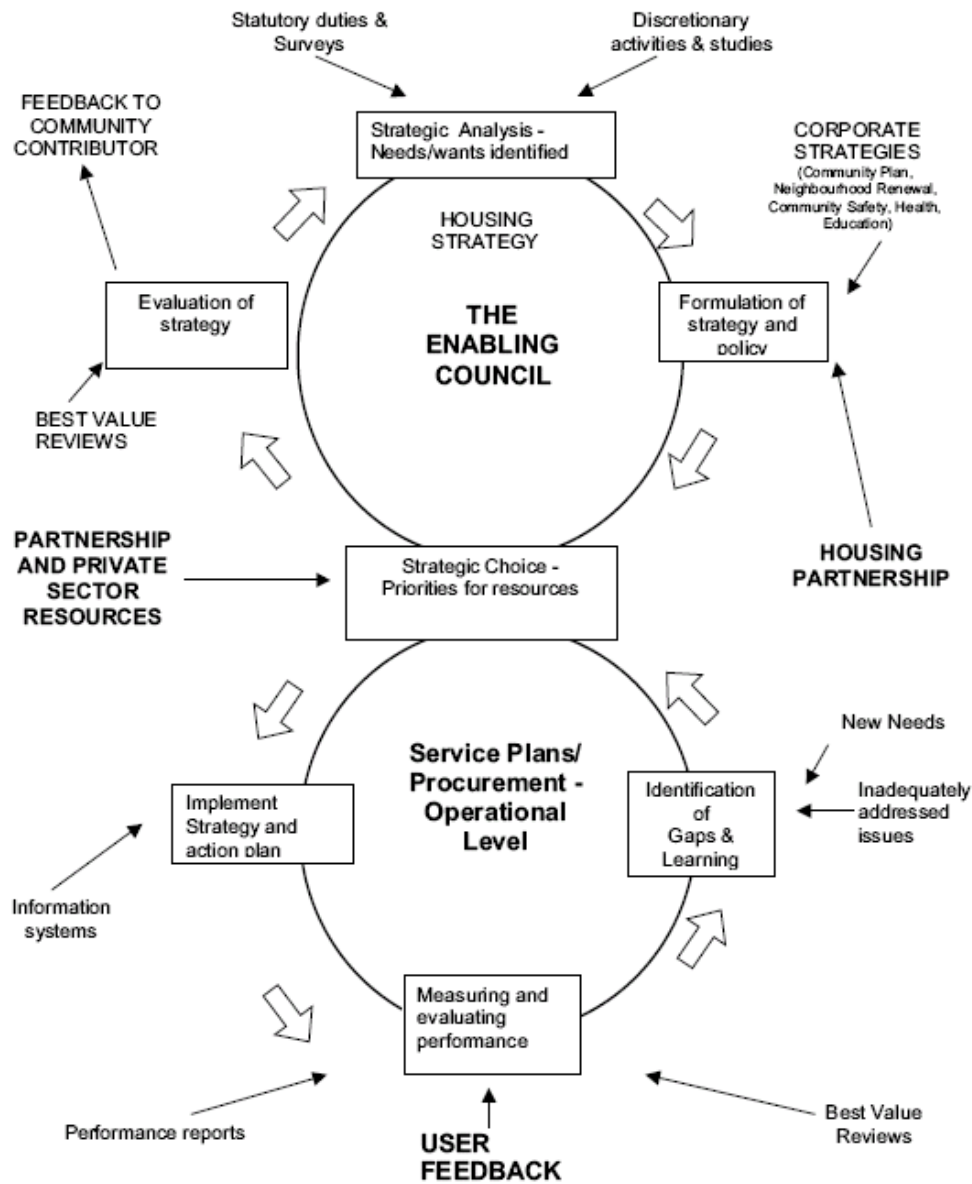
The level of priority the borough has given to tackling homelessness is reflected in the Local Strategic Partnership's decision to include targets on affordable housing and homelessness as priority indicators within Wigan's Local Area Agreement that will be the focus of future activity.

This delivery mechanism will ensure that the Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 is effective in producing outcomes that assist some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged households in Wigan. It will remain a live document in that the action plan will be reviewed and revised annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the borough over the next 5 years.

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The Housing Strategic Planning Process Model



“A Place for Me 2003 – 2007”: Achievements

Appended below is a summary of the achievements delivered by the Homelessness Forum across the four strategic themes of “A Place for Me”:

Co-ordination

- ✓ The Homelessness forum has grown in size, with 67 members from 37 agencies and is focused on realising strategic aims
- ✓ Established sub-groups to tackle specific homelessness issues:
 - Young Persons Accommodation Group – *Co-ordination of services working with young people and acts as a ‘clearing house’ for most difficult to manage*
 - Homeless Advice and Prevention Group – *Co-ordination of services, raising quality standards, improving information to customers.*
 - Key Project Steering Group – *minimising rough sleeping*
- ✓ Separated local authority strategic homelessness functions from operational functions to facilitate a true partnership approach to tackling homelessness.
- ✓ Attracted additional funding as a result of joint approach to tackling homelessness.
- ✓ Developed inter-agency protocols including: Offender Resettlement Scheme, *Housing & Probation, Advice / referral*
- ✓ Developed a better understanding of issues and working practices through regular inter-agency training

Prevention

- ✓ Remodelled the homelessness assessment service (Wigan & Leigh Housing) to deliver a housing options approach and focus on homeless prevention. *XXX households prevented from becoming homeless in 2007/8.*
- ✓ Year on year, significantly reduced homelessness between 2003 and 2007:
 - Reduced homeless presentations by over 20% from 2985 to 2322
 - Reduced homeless acceptances by over 20% from 1109 to 847
 - Reduced repeat homeless from 124 to 18.
- ✓ Developed Out of Hours service provided by trained staff (W&LH)
- ✓ Introduced a Homeless Prevention Fund (W&LH)
- ✓ Trained mediators to prevent parental eviction (W&LH)
- ✓ Developed a Sanctuary Scheme and Target Hardening for those at risk of violence
- ✓ Developed the Offender Accommodation Resettlement Service (English Churches Housing Group) that supports offenders on either side of and ‘through’ the prison gate helping maintain tenancies for people serving short-term sentences, effectively ending tenancies to avoid rent arrears and working with people to develop accommodation plans for release to reduce the number of people leaving prison with no fixed address.

- ✓ Maximised use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to prevent homeless by making rented property more affordable. Wigan is one of the few authorities in the country that not only spends all its grant, but also makes additional contributions from its own budget.
- ✓ Recognised the role Housing Benefit can play in preventing homelessness by providing two-way training between Housing Benefit and Housing staff on issues such as homelessness law, verification framework, Tenancy Deposit Protection, Immigration status, Local Housing allowances etc
- ✓ Employed dedicated liaison officer within Housing Benefit Team to support housing staff and deal with issues to help prevent homelessness.
- ✓ Prevented 54 families becoming homeless through private sector leasing arrangements (Wigan Council, C.A.B., W&LH, SWAP, PPNW, UPM, Happy Homes)
- ✓ Housing Options (C.A.B.) delivered workshops to groups at greatest risk of becoming homeless, aimed at preventing homelessness at the earliest possible point 64 workshops delivered to 402 people.

More / More Appropriate Accommodation

- ✓ Introduced an Affordable Housing Policy with a target of developing an additional 530 affordable homes over a 5 years period (50% rented / 50% low-cost home ownership)
- ✓ Introduced affordable housing requirement for all development of 25 or more units through "s.106" agreements.
- ✓ Developed a Bond Guarantee scheme (C.A.B.) which to date has issued 89 bonds and currently supports 54 households to maintain their tenancy with only 3 claims against the bond scheme since it started.
- ✓ Returned 146 units of accommodation to use as social rented accommodation by withdrawing from provision under NASS contracts and continue to support the private sector in filling the gap.
- ✓ Minimised use of B&B by creating 36 furnished tenancies dispersed across the borough for use as temporary accommodation (helping homeless households maintain social and support networks thus minimising impact of homelessness)
- ✓ Although numbers rose, maintained low use of temporary accommodation (Wigan is 14th largest LA in country, but only 154th highest for use of temporary accommodation).
- ✓ Improved access to Social Housing, targeting those in greatest need by reviewing the Council's Housing Allocation Policy.
- ✓ Maximised use of nominations to RSL stock: 100% vacancies of Arena Housing and Riverside Housing and 50% of all other RSL stock let via the Council's Choice Based Lettings system,
- ✓ Secured funding for additional 14 units of supported accommodation for people recovering from mental health problems.
- ✓ Successful bid to the CLG for funding to develop a Gtr Manchester Choice Based Lettings Scheme

More / More Appropriate Support

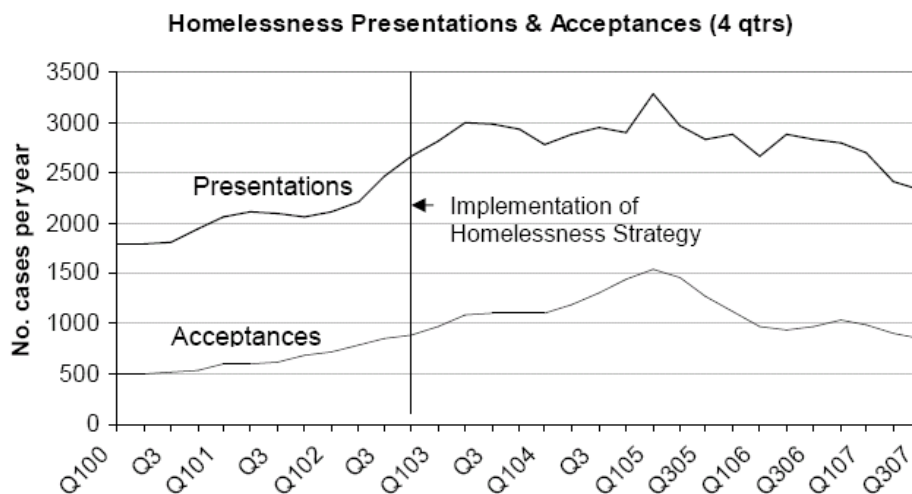
- ✓ Developed strong partnerships between health and housing: The Specialist Health Visitor for Homeless and Vulnerable People provides regular sessional work at supported housing and rough sleeper drop-in and has secured funding to develop a team which includes a C.P.N. and is supported by a dedicated G.P.
- ✓ Developed a rough sleeper's outreach project (Key Project) which supports approximately 60 clients, rehuses 40 people per year and has helped reduce both the numbers and time spent sleeping rough.
- ✓ Opened night shelters over Christmas and cold weather periods
- ✓ Rainer Intensive Mediation Project set up mid 2006 supporting the boroughs most chaotic young people.
- ✓ Increased provision of floating support for people with mental health problems.
- ✓ Increased provision of floating support for women at risk of domestic violence
- ✓ All SP funded services were reviewed – 59/63 were awarded - contracts/extensions to contracts following a successful service review
- ✓ Over 400 individual service improvements were made as a result of service reviews
- ✓ Service users have been trained to assist the SP team in monitoring the quality of services.
- ✓ Funding from the Housing Corporation to develop a mental health accommodation based project which will enable an additional 8 units of supported accommodation and 6 units for move on. (Adactus / Richmond Fellowship)
- ✓ 4 additional units of accommodation is provided for single homeless people and young people (Adactus)
- ✓ Increased the provision of floating support is being provided for young people at risk
- ✓ Closer monitoring on outcomes for service users has led to service improvement, rising from 75% of services were assessed at level C in 2004 to 94% in 2007. Rainer and Coops Foyer have been awarded level A in various areas of the Quality Assessment Framework.
- ✓ Increased number of on in a planned way from short term accommodation based services
- ✓ Allocated additional Supporting People resources to tackle homelessness.
 - Funding the Offender Accommodation Resettlement Service for 12 months from Apr 2008
 - Funding more floating support for single homeless people for 12 months from Apr 08
 - Funding more floating support for people at risk of domestic violence for 12 months from April 2008
 - Contributing to Refugee/Asylum seekers service helping prevent homelessness amongst 'legacy' cases.
- ✓ Secured funding for an intensive floating support service for 20 people with complex needs (to start in 08)
- ✓ Service users now involved in the selection of new service providers.

Homeless Review 2008

A comprehensive review of homelessness led by the Housing Strategy Team was started in 2007 and continues to be updated as new data becomes available. This Review has enabled a full understanding of the picture and causes of homelessness in the borough and provides the basis for the development of this strategy. This Strategy will not seek to repeat the data contained within the Review, rather the strategy is a response to the Review findings. The review itself is published as a series of documents covering the range of homelessness issues. The documents, listed in full at [Appendix F](#) include "Housing Needs and Support Assessments" for 15 client groups, Housing Needs Study 2008, Affordable Housing Strategy 2006-10, Temporary Accommodation Strategy, Homeless Trends data.

Scale of Homelessness / trends

The chart below shows that although homelessness continued to rise after implementation of the strategy, when measures put in place began to take effect, the trend reversed and homelessness has now reduced to below 2003 levels.



The graph itself does not tell the whole picture: Although Wigan is the 14th largest local authority in the country (out of 354), it ranks 7th highest for numbers of homeless presentations and acceptances; more than any of the London boroughs. When size of population is taken into account, Wigan still ranks 7th highest for presentations per 1000 households and 11th for acceptances. Wigan performs very well in terms of use of temporary accommodation.

There have been external inflationary pressures generated by changes in the housing market that have never before been experienced in Wigan. Without the work of the Homelessness forum implementing the strategy, this could have resulted in further significant increases in homeless:

- House price inflation means that whereas in 1997, in order to get onto the home ownership ladder, newly forming households would need to raise a mortgage of just less than 3 times their salary, in 2007 this had risen to 5 ½ times.

- As Wigan has a higher rate of owner-occupation than the north-west average (72% compared to 69%) and relatively lower rate of private renting (5% compared to 9%), when affordability becomes an issues, people will be more reliant on social rented housing (20%)
- In 1999/00, 4891 new vacancies arose in the social rented sector compared to 2503 in 2006/7.

In summary, as housing has become considerably less affordable, the nature of the housing market in Wigan is such that people who can't afford to buy are more reliant on social housing. However as fewer people move out of social rented housing, less vacancies arise. High house prices do not directly lead to homelessness, but in Wigan it means that when people need accommodation, they are less financially able to resolve out their own housing problems and more likely to become homeless.

Access to Accommodation

The target set by Wigan's Affordable Housing Strategy (July 2006) was for 530 additional affordable housing units to be created over a five year period, sourced from a combination of existing homes (converted, recommissioned, made affordable) and new development. This target was set in line with the shortages identified within the Housing Needs Survey (update) in 2005.

205 additional affordable housing units have been created via initiatives within the current stock. This being via a combination of the development of the Bond Guarantee scheme, the Empty Homes Challenge Fund and socially rented homes being made available for people in need (released from the asylum contract). 14 more affordable homes via the Affordable Planning Policy have been built, 7 more have been provided by Housing Associations using Housing Corporation monies bringing the total to 226 units to date.

Housing Associations in the borough have been successful in recent bids to the Housing Corporation, having been awarded funding for the development of:

- 14 units for people recovering from mental health problems (Adactus / Richmond Fellowship)
- 6 additional units for young mums (Adactus)
- 50 units of rented accommodation at Whelley (Adactus to develop / WALH to manage)
- unit expansion at Elliot Gardens supporting people with early onset of dementia (no funding awarded, but approval to expand given)
- 8 units under the Home Ownership for People with Long-term Disabilities scheme (HOLD) Adactus & Great Places.

A further 27 units have been agreed via Section 106 agreements which are either on site or due to start shortly. Thus total of pipeline schemes (agreed but not yet completed) is a further 155 units.

Reviews of the Councils allocations policy and significant increases in the number of nominations to Housing Association vacancies has helped target housing at those in greatest need however changes in the Housing Market as outlined above has meant that despite these significant improvements, there is a greater a shortage of affordable housing now than in 2003. Whilst the Housing Market currently appears to be in a state of flux, more affordable housing needs to be developed.

The introduction of Local Housing Allowances is welcomed in so much that the rates are around 20% higher than those under the Housing Benefits system and as such private rented accommodation is now more affordable than it was. There may be opportunities to make better use

of the private rented sector in tackling homelessness, however there is concern amongst members of the Homeless forum that some of their clients may not take advantage of the Safeguard Policy that allows rent to be paid direct to the landlord where tenants are considered vulnerable. The LHA also discriminates against those with support needs who need an additional room for a carer whether part, full or whole time. The room criteria only acknowledges people who live in the property as their only or main home, not employees (paid or voluntary) who need to sleep in.

Homelessness Advice

The previous homelessness review stated that “the extent, accessibility, comprehensiveness and independence of advice for both housing matters in general, and homelessness in particular, is identified as inadequate”. The Wigan Homelessness Forum has long since recognised the role of quality and timely advice in homelessness prevention. Key advice agencies within the borough are active members of the Forum and the area was viewed as so crucial in improving homelessness services that a separate steering group was established. Updates from this group are now fed back to the Homelessness Forum.

As a result of the last Homelessness Strategy, significant progress has been made in the provision of advice. Headlines include:

- Developed a Homelessness Advice Directory (Wigan Council)
- Developed Out of Hours service provided by trained staff (Wigan & Leigh Housing)
- Employed dedicated liaison officer within Housing Benefit Team to support housing staff and deal with issues to help prevent homelessness (Wigan Council)
- Delivered series of Housing Options workshops to groups at greatest risk of becoming homeless (C.A.B.)
- Developed Wigan Bond Scheme, which carries out tenancy workshops to ensure individuals are aware of their rights and responsibilities. (C.A.B.)(more detail below)
- Agreed set of service standards and associated protocols to which members of Forum signed up to. (Homelessness Forum)
- Regular inter-agency training now takes place. (Homelessness Forum)
- Developed targeted advice for Offenders (ECHG), Rough Sleepers (Key Project - Queens Hall Help Committee) and people with learning disabilities (Wigan Council)

Consultation

Despite significant improvements, access to homelessness advice continues to be a concern for both customers and agencies. Consultation with clients and agencies carried out during the Homelessness Review 2008 as well as some more focused consultation on general advice highlighted the following concerns:

- People need advice at earlier stage rather than at time of crisis.
- Access to advice is an issue, agencies and the public are not sure who does what.
- It is often those most in need do not access advice due to embarrassment, stigma or accessibility.
- Gaps in specialist advice need addressing

- Having to visit number of different agencies, be passed around, fill out forms and tell story again and again was difficult.
- No relevant advice strategy for the borough.

This was further highlighted when at each of three recent events aimed at setting up a “Housemates” scheme for people with learning disabilities, almost all those that turned up were seeking housing advice, not a housemate, but didn’t know where else they could go.

This feedback has been recorded and fed into the Homelessness Strategy action plan.

Advice: Supply & Demand

“Advice” is provided in a variety of ways in the borough, either through general drop-in or targeted specialist advice:

Housing Enquiries/ Casework in Wigan

Demand for housing advice appears to be high; whilst enquiries via the C.A.B. are reducing (it is not known how many of those in the table below relate directly to homelessness advice or alternatively housing advice that may then have prevented homelessness), the number of clients given ongoing support through casework is increasing along with targeted and specialist advice. The number of clients represented by CAB at Wigan & Leigh County Courts in Mortgage claims has risen significantly and the amount of debt that this equates to has almost doubled since 2005/6.

Citizens Advice Bureau – Clients given advice

	Housing Enquiries			Casework			Mortgage Arrears – County Court Representation	
	New	Repeat	Total	New	Repeat	Total	Clients	Debt
2005-06	1383	248	1631	104	123	227	217	£586,963
2006-07	1515	64	1579	150	190	340	235	£811,017
2007-08	954	52	1006	185	279	464	318	£1,331,894

Source: CAB stats

The mortgage arrears figures relate only to the clients seen at the court help desk in Wigan & Leigh County Courts. The table below details rent and mortgage possession action taken to the County courts in Wigan and Leigh.

Possession Actions in Wigan & Leigh County Court

	Social & Private Landlord Action			Mortgage Action		
	Claims Issued	Suspended Orders	Orders Made	Claims Issued	Suspended Orders	Orders Made
2005-06	1224	669	157	951	320	245
2006-07	1159	449	211	1310	489	362

Source: www.dca.gov.uk/statistics

See [Appendix F](#): “Glossary” for explanation of terms

No data is available yet on court action for 2007-08, but the increase in advice given by the CAB is a good indicator of the likely direction. Although the numbers accepted as homeless by the Council because of mortgage arrears has seen a slight reduction over the last 3 years this data does not provide the full picture. As outlined earlier, one of the main reasons for homelessness in Wigan is relationship breakdown; the effect of this is often that those who own their own home with a mortgage can no longer afford to maintain payments on that mortgage and then become homeless or threatened with homelessness

Shelter (cases opened)

	Total opened	Of which homelessness	Of which mortgage arrears	Of which landlord possession	Of which rent arrears
Jan – Dec 2005	414	114	9	63	44
Jan – Dec 2006	326	93	14	31	20
Jan – Dec 2007	287	93	4	28	8

Whilst the figures from independent advice agencies above may show that reducing numbers are accessing housing and homelessness advice, this does not necessarily mean that fewer people require assistance. The numbers of mortgage arrears and court representations cases carried out by CAB has increased and yet these would be recorded as debt cases rather than housing issues. This suggests that figures are higher than actually recorded. Furthermore their housing casework has almost doubled in the last few years which demonstrates that homelessness cases are becoming more complex and less easy to resolve at the initial stages. Given the reducing capacity following funding reductions, agencies are in the situation that demand for their service is at the absolute maximum that they can cater for. CAB do not currently advertise their general advice service in the local press, only for specific groups, as they are unable to cope with a marked increase in demand. Figures for both CAB and Shelter are also unable to capture the number of people who are unsuccessful in accessing their services due to not managing to get through on busy telephone lines or failing to wait in queues for “open door” advice sessions managed through a triage process.

The Housing Aid Team (WALH) who were effectively gatekeepers for fast-track access to social housing have rebranded as the Housing Options Advice Team and now focus more of their efforts on homelessness prevention work, offering a range of housing, advice and support solutions.

Their efforts have seen homelessness preventions more than double with 120 homelessness cases prevented in 2006/7, rising to 272 preventions in 2007/8. Homelessness prevention is measured by BVPI 213 which records the number of cases prevented per 1000 population. In 2006/7 WALH recorded their performance as 1 (although a definition change unfortunately meant that this had to be officially reported as 0). The improvement in prevention work means that performance for 2007/8 is reported as 2.1. Targets set for future years will feature within the overarching targets of this homelessness strategy.

Targeted Advice

Specialist, targeted advice has made a significant contribution to tackling and preventing homelessness in the borough, all of which have been established because of the previous homelessness strategy:

- **Bond Scheme:** Since its launch in August 2005, the Wigan Bond Scheme has issued 89 bonds and currently supports 54 households to maintain their tenancy with only 3 claims against the bond scheme since it started. Integral features of the service are the tenancy workshops that are carried out prior to any individual being issues with a bond guarantee. Since the scheme

began (including asylum 'legacy' cases) there have been 61 workshops carried out covering 369 clients. These workshops offer specific advice and information about the rights and responsibilities of being a tenant and equip individuals with the knowledge they will need to successfully maintain their tenancy. Whilst these figures do not provide any information on numbers seeking housing advice, it does show the potential that housing advice can have in terms of homelessness prevention given the minimal number of claims against the scheme.

- The OARS team received 89 referrals to its service in 2007/08 accepting 57 people onto the scheme and supporting them through the prison gate into settled accommodation.

Gaps

Shortages in supply of accommodation are relatively easy to measure as referrals that are refused as a result of lack of vacancies are recorded by agencies; it is difficult to clearly assess levels of need for advice as no similar measure exists. Consultation with individuals and agencies rates very highly the need for more quality, timely advice services. Many people cite the lack of a 'one-stop housing advice shop' as being a major gap in services in the borough, however to be a true one-stop service, it needs to be far wider than housing and homelessness. To tackle homelessness effectively, the causes of homelessness need to be tackled, not just the symptoms. In addition to housing and homelessness advice, the service should therefore be able to deal with family, criminal and civil law, welfare advice, specialist advice around criminal justice systems, access to housing, support and community care etc. Such a project is beyond the terms of the Homelessness Strategy and as such the problem appears to be the lack of an overarching advice strategy for the borough.

Whilst the specialist advice services developed over the last 5 years have proven invaluable, their biggest threat is the lack of long term funding. Many members of the homelessness Forum have expressed frustration that often there is money available for short-term pilot projects, but relatively little available for tried and tested services. Each of the services are operating on a year to year basis and as a result are unable to cope with any additional demand. The various projects are now exploring more creative ways of securing funding, e.g. the bond scheme considering becoming a social enterprise project, the OARS team seeking cross-authority funding and the Key Project have linked up with Green Pastures who have now secured (non-registered) housing association status with Housing Benefits allowing additional income to be generated via rental income for the people they support.

Hard to reach Groups

Discussions with agencies during the homelessness strategy review suggested that local culture means that often those most in need do not access advice due to embarrassment, stigma or accessibility. Others do not necessarily realise that they need advice until the situation has reached crisis point.

Work has been done to address such issues for hard to reach groups with surgeries taking place in numerous locations in the borough. However these sessions are expensive for agencies to run given that many are experiencing reducing capacity due to funding issues. Work is being done to address this issue and CAB has recently made a bid for funding to establish video links to carry out surgeries in locations in the borough. Some specialist surgeries also are also carried out by WALH for particularly at risk groups within Drug and Alcohol services, Probation and YOT.

Although some homelessness is inevitable and no amount of advice would have prevented it, there are some individuals or families that, if they had accessed advice services at an earlier point may have been able to prevent their eventual homelessness.

Some of the groups traditionally branded as hard to reach, e.g. rough sleepers, offenders etc are often very easy to reach, but their needs and demands aren't always compatible to what mainstream services can easily deliver and some are then barred from accessing services because of their behaviour. The main role of the Key Project is to work with the most chaotic and marginalised individuals who are sleeping rough or who are at risk of doing so, helping them clients engage with other services that can suitably address their issues, i.e. substance misuse, mental health, benefits advice and housing. Equally, the work also involves working with services to help them deliver services that are more compatible with the needs of this group. The Key Project are about to open their new drop-in centre at the Bricklayers Arms which will enable services to hold regular surgeries.

Way Forward (advice)

Quality, timely advice is the key to homelessness prevention; whilst there has been significant improvement in advice services delivered in the borough over recent years, there is room for further development that help prevent homelessness further:

- **Housing Advice Steering Group:** The role of the Housing Advice Steering Group in relation to the Homelessness Forum needs to be strengthened: all members of the Forum have an integral role to play in homelessness prevention, as do wider partners, however it is the role of the HASG to develop this further e.g. through supporting the development of a wider advice strategy, ensuring working practices of partners are not contributing to homelessness but helping to prevent it.
- **Early intervention and identification:** Early intervention is key to maximising the impact that advice agencies can have in preventing homelessness, however many clients only seek advice once the situation has reached crisis point and opportunities have been missed. Mechanisms need to be developed to flag up opportunities for intervention and agencies need to establish (through training if required) the level of advice required, i.e. General or specialist and then either provide it (where trained to) or signpost or refer that person on to a specialist advice agency that can assist to ensure homelessness only arises if all other opportunities have been exhausted. Awareness raising amongst 'Problem Noticers' working across Wigan (such as Health Visitors, GP's etc) about the advice options available in the borough would mean that problems could be raised and possibly resolved at a much earlier stage.

In addition, given the rise in the number of mortgage possession proceedings and the more recent changes in the financial climate, more work needs to be undertaken around prevention of homelessness for those falling into mortgage arrears, including exploration of the potential to develop mortgage rescue schemes and raising awareness of the risks involved in private mortgage rescue schemes that purchase property from those experiencing mortgage difficulties and then rent it back to them on assured shorthold tenancies.

- **Protocols:** Several protocols are in existence to cover at risk groups e.g. offenders, some need to be revisited and others developed (e.g. young people). In addition to protocols between agencies however, it is the role of the Forum to ensure that those not covered by specific protocols are not excluded from advice and assistance that they require.
- **Joint working:** Members of the Homelessness Forum are committed to preventing homelessness for the benefit of their customers. Advice agencies are key to this process and it is integral that they offer independent advice to clients to empower them with useful information that is for their benefit. Wigan Homelessness Forum is keen to encourage productive liaison between advice agencies and local housing providers to give the best solutions for tackling people's housing problems. To fortify this, some members of the Forum are to sign up to

National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) joint working agreement as a way to generate acceptable solutions to prevent people losing their homes and assist them in resolving their housing issues.

In addition to this, more training and awareness raising amongst agencies is required so that partners are aware of services currently being provided that may be able to assist their clients in terms of advice.

- **Funding:** Support needs to be given to services exploring alternative more secure funding streams. The use of short-term funding remains the only option for the development and expansion of some advice services: as bids for such funding often involve short deadlines, proposals need to be drafted at an early stage and put on the shelf to ensure opportunities are not missed. Members of the advice steering group have highlighted that a worker involved in a co-ordination role would be extremely beneficial for housing and other advice agencies in the borough.
- **Advice strategy:** As previously acknowledged, there is a noted lack of a current advice strategy in the borough. It is essential that a new strategy is devised catering for general advice but also focussing on specialist advice provision for vulnerable groups. Members of the Homelessness Forum sub-group focusing on advice should ensure that it is involved in the development of the borough wide strategy and that homelessness and vulnerable groups are a clear focus within it.

Support

The focus of Wigan's Homelessness Strategy is to prevent homelessness and its causes and one of the key components of prevention is support for homeless people to obtain and successfully sustain their own accommodation.

Wigan's Supporting People strategy highlighted the following client groups as priority within the borough:

Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
People with drug problems	Homeless families	Offenders
People with alcohol problems	Women at risk of violence	Older people with mental health problems
Complex needs	People with physical disabilities	People with HIV
Single homeless	People with mental health problems	People with learning disabilities
	Older people with support needs	Refugees
	Young people at risk	Teenage Parents
	Frail Older People	Travellers

The Homelessness review (2008) has focused on these specific groups and how they are able to access support when required. As part of the consultation process for the Homelessness Strategy, agencies and service users emphasise need for more of everything, but the biggest were seen as:-

- Support services for families should cover all tenures – will help with move on from TA
- People with low level support needs may not get any support

- No supported accommodation services for people with complex needs / learning disabilities
- Timing of support is key. The most chaotic often (over 25) seen as too difficult to manage & don't get any support.

A full review of short-term accommodation and floating support services was begun in 2007 and will be completed in 2008. Findings from this review are attached at [Appendix D](#): "Supply & Demand for Short Term Accommodation & Support".

Key issues include:

- We have a clear gap in provision of support for those with more complex needs
- Numbers of clients able to access services in the year is reducing, with utilisation figures increasing. This means that clients are not able to access services as they are already at full capacity and the lack of available move-on accommodation means that fewer clients are moving out.
- A shortage of affordable housing in the borough has effected all those applying for housing. A reduction in turnover of available Council properties from almost 5000 in 1999/00 to less than 2,500 last year has meant that all those seeking longer term housing options have encountered difficulties in accessing accommodation, not just clients in receipt of support.

Supply

There are 148 short term accommodation spaces in the borough and 153 floating support spaces, of which, there are:-

- 6 direct access emergency accommodation spaces
- 11 refuge spaces and up to 15 floating support places for victims of domestic violence
- 62 accommodation spaces with emergency access for nomination from local authority
- 51 spaces dedicated to accommodate males and females age 16-25
- 10 spaces dedicated to accommodate young pregnant females/with children
- 40 floating support spaces dedicated to 16-25 year olds

However, these headline figures do not provide a conclusive picture alongside dedicated services for specific vulnerable groups there are other support services funded that cater for all groups. This means for example that although there are just 11 domestic violence refuge spaces available in the borough, victims of domestic violence may also be accommodated in other supported housing schemes.

Research that formed part of "Homeless Places: The Uneven Geographies of Emergency Provision for Single Homeless People" highlighted top and bottom ten towns/cities according to provision of direct access bedspaces per 1000 population. Although the report indicates Luton has the lowest provision with just 0.2 spaces per 1000 population, Wigan has a similar ratio.

[Appendix D](#) lists all short term supported accommodation and floating support services in the borough, outlining capacity, client group, numbers accessing and utilisation for the past three years as well as general information about the types of clients that are excluded from each service.

Demand

Demand is clearly high and analysis of numbers accessing support demonstrates this. 569 clients accessed supported accommodation in 2006/7 (compared to 694 in 2005/6). However utilisation was up in 2006/7 with almost all services having between 95 – 100% utilisation, suggesting that people are receiving support for longer. A pilot of refusals for services carried out in 2007 also demonstrated that quite high numbers were being refused because services did not have space/capacity to accommodate. Wigan has an affordable housing problem and it appears that it has become more difficult for people to move on. Work has been done to ease the flow by making changes to the allocations policy, increasing nominations and striving to work more closely with private landlords but more detailed work is required to totally understand the issue.

Refusals

Some services refuse applicants on a case-by-case basis whilst others clearly state the types of clients that they are unable to accept. A more in-depth refusal analysis pilot (Jan – Mar 07) demonstrated that in a three month period:

- Significant number of those fleeing domestic violence unable to access refuges due to lack of space (65 in one quarter for one agency), resulting in placement in non-specialist accommodation.
- Complex needs are one of the main reasons for refusals
- The nature of offences of individuals led to a number of refusals.

Qualitative aspects of the Homelessness Review carried out with agencies identified that whilst supported housing projects tried to give a definitive indication of the type of client that a service will accept/ refuse the balance of clients within a scheme at any point can effect whether or not a new admission can be accepted – i.e. the needs and risk of the prospective client need to be balanced against the current mix of clients already resident and can this be managed. It has proven very difficult to clearly define an exact measure of the levels of risk and need that agencies are able to accept from clients for this reason; this is a fluid process that alters with every new application/ admission/ move-on.

Conclusion

As part of the review of supported accommodation and floating support we have tried to map out services whose core function is around homelessness. Although difficult to create a definitive map, attached at [Appendix D\(ii\)](#) is a graph which agencies helped to develop showing services, the client groups they support and the level of need/risk they can manage.

Whilst a pilot exercise has been carried out, further work is required to give a true picture of referrals and refusals patterns in the borough. The results from this initial pilot are useful for the purposes of the Homelessness Review 2008 but are clearly not conclusive as they do not cover all agencies. The review of supported accommodation due to be completed in 2008 will revisit this matter and establish some clear monitoring procedures to provide an accurate picture of supply/ demand of support. The most significant gap in the borough in terms of supported accommodation is the very low number of direct access emergency accommodation bedspaces for single homeless.

Temporary Accommodation

Reducing the use of temporary accommodation is embedded as a national and now a local priority. The Government's Homelessness Strategy 'Sustainable Communities: settled home; changing lives' requires every local authority to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation by half by 2010.

Given the size of the population of the borough and the profile of the housing stock, Wigan currently performs very well in terms of use of temporary accommodation. Although Wigan has high levels of homelessness whether measured in terms of pure numbers or as a proportion of the population, it ranks only 121st for actual numbers in Temporary Accommodation and 232nd for numbers in temporary accommodation per 1000 population. Expressed in percentage terms, the '65' households in temporary accommodation at December 2007 represents less than 0.06% of Wigan's population compared to a figure of just under 0.08% for the north west and just under 0.38% nationally.

As set out earlier in this strategy, Wigan has taken positive steps to in addressing homelessness through a greater focus on prevention, however temporary accommodation use continues at a sustained level. Wigan now faces the challenge of addressing this issue but it must be noted that a realisation of the 2010 target is of 19 will be extremely challenging.

Whilst the government target focuses purely on numbers in temporary accommodation, of equal if not greater importance is that the accommodation and support is of a good quality, is suitable for peoples needs and helps minimise the impact of the effects of homelessness of individuals and their families

The accommodation and support provided is of a good quality and is generally suitable for peoples needs. 29 units are in purpose built self-contained supported accommodation. The remainder are ordinary flats and houses that have been furnished for use as short term accommodation. The properties are dispersed across the borough to ensure that when people do become homeless, the impact is minimised. Around half of those in temporary accommodation are families with children; the remainder are single people and couples who are considered as being vulnerable.

The use of B&B is low and when it is used, it is only for a very short period; (At the time of writing this strategy, there was no-one in B&B). Wigan has reduced the use and cost of B&B and is used as an absolute last resort. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that B&B is generally less suitable than other forms of temporary accommodation. Wigan has informally adopted the Bed and Breakfast Information Exchange (BABIE) grading system (operated by the London Boroughs) which places B&B establishments in one of five grades A to E. The grading is dependent upon a wide range of considerations and detailed factors relating to the facilities and the services provided by an establishment. Wigan Council does not approve the use of accommodation that falls below level C for homeless placements, but more could be done to ensure quality standards are maintained when B&B is used as temporary accommodation outside the main homelessness duty.

An issue that impacts on the use of temporary accommodation is the provision of other forms of emergency accommodation. As outlined above, there are only 6 units of emergency accommodation in the borough for single people who become homeless (priority need or otherwise), no alternative emergency provision for those recovering from mental health or substance misuse problems and below average provision for women fleeing domestic violence. More work needs to be undertaken in developing alternative options.

Needs of Individual Groups

Homeless Families

Relationship breakdown accounts for almost a quarter of all homelessness acceptances and amongst families with children, non-violent relationship breakdown accounts for 13% (6% nationally for all groups) of homelessness acceptances and violent relationship breakdown 15%. (13% nationally for all groups). A further 28% of families with children were homeless because their parents or relatives were no longer willing to accommodate them.

Just over half of those in temporary accommodation are families with children. The accommodation and support provided is of a good quality and meets the needs of families. The accommodation is a mix of purpose built self-contained supported accommodation and ordinary flats and houses that have been furnished for use as short term accommodation. The properties are dispersed across the borough to ensure that when people do become homeless, the impact is minimised, enabling families to maintain their social and support networks, access to schools & employments etc. Support is offered to all homeless families, irrespective of the form of temporary accommodation they occupy. Whilst one of the key targets of this strategy is to reduce the use of temporary accommodation, the mix of purpose built and dispersed furnished tenancies needs to be considered.

The impacts of homelessness can be further reduced by homeless prevention work, even if this is only serves to delay the need to find alternative accommodation, this will help people move into their own accommodation in a more planned way. Quality, timely advice and a wide range of housing options is key to achieving this.

Single Homeless

50% of single people under 25 who present as homeless do so because they say their parents or relatives are no longer willing to accommodate them. For those over 25, loss of rented accommodation is the main reason and accounts for 30% or all presentations. The figures are however distorted as Wigan & Leigh Housing offer homeless interviews to Council tenants threatened with homelessness due to rent arrears as a form of homeless prevention. 96 of 103 single people interviewed in this way were found to be 'not homeless' as a result.

Single people account for over half of all homelessness presentations but only a third of acceptances. Only a fifth of single people who present are accepted as being homeless and in priority need, which means that 80% of single people receive a negative decision. Single people also face greater affordability issues through lower income and reduced entitlement to local housing allowances (which is further restricted for those under 25). Given the size of the borough and the scale of homelessness problems in Wigan, there is relatively little supported accommodation for those whom the Council does not have a duty to house, especially for those over 25. There are only 6 units of emergency accommodation in the borough for 'non-priority' single homeless. This means that homeless assessment process is more likely to be a negative experience for single people than any other group.

Supporting People data indicates that when measure provision against population of the borough, Wigan has a quarter of the regional average and fifth of the national average. Research that formed part of "Homeless Places: The Uneven Geographies of Emergency Provision for Single Homeless People" highlighted top and bottom ten towns/cities according to provision of direct access bedspaces per 1000 population. Although the report indicates Luton has the lowest provision with just 0.2 spaces per 1000 population, Wigan also has the same ratio.

Wigan does not have the full range of housing and advice options available in other areas such as supported lodgings or mediation services that would particularly benefit single people under 25. The Bond Scheme, managed by the Citizens Advice Bureaux on behalf of the Homelessness Forum targets non-priority single homeless (and families who are found to be intentionally homeless), helping them access private rented accommodation, however its capacity is currently restricted because of the amount of funding available. There remains a significant gap in provision in terms of emergency accommodation.

Young People (Including Teenage Parents)

Young people aged between 16 and 25 make up approximately 12% of the boroughs population but 34% of all homeless presentations and almost 36% of homeless acceptances. 54% of 16-24 year olds present as homeless claiming that parents or relative are unwilling to accommodate them; For 16 & 17 year olds, this rises to 70%. Where there is no risk, the first line of enquiry is whether the person can return home, at least on a short term basis to allow for a planned move into their own accommodation. Wider studies have revealed that many young people who present as homeless have often experienced educational and/or family disruption, some have faced violence at home, mental health and/or substance misuse problems and often not in employment, education or training. (*Homeless Research Summary No. 7, Dept for Communities and Local Government, 2008*)

In 2002, the Government changed the definition of people who have a priority need for accommodation to include all 16 & 17 year olds except those for whom local authorities owed a separate duty to under section 23A of the Children's Act (i.e. certain people who had been looked after through the care system). Wigan expected the numbers of 16 & 17 year olds to increase as a result of the changes in legislation, however since 2003/04, the numbers of presentations have fallen by around 70% and acceptances by 77%. 16 & 17 year olds now represent around 2% of homelessness acceptances compared to 9% nationally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the reason for this reduction is a combination of young people with housing needs using other "youth" centred services such as Connexions to assist them and a greater focus of homeless prevention by WALH.

Adactus Housing manage five supported accommodation schemes in the borough specifically for single homeless young people aged between 16 to 25 providing a total of 27 units. Arena Housing manage a foyer for young people who are willing to engage with education or training (24 bedspaces) and Adactus manage a further 10 units of supported accommodation for young mums. Other accommodation schemes are available to those over 18 however these may not always be appropriate in responding to the specific needs of young people. There is a range of floating support services available for young people, but notably Rainer provide intensive support for the most chaotic young people who have often been through the care system or are known to the Youth Offending Team. [Appendix D](#) provides further details of supported housing available.

Whilst there is a range of supported accommodation services for young people, demand outstrips current capacity. Managers of the supported housing schemes whose clients are ready to move on and agencies whose clients may not be suitable because they are too difficult or too vulnerable to manage within a grouped accommodation setting or indeed don't want such accommodation find it difficult to access ordinary tenancies.

From April 2008, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has replaced Housing Benefit for people looking to rent privately who are on benefits or a low income. The new rates introduced now mean

that private rented accommodation is an affordable option for more people. For single people under 25, this is restricted to the equivalent cost of a room in a shared house. This inhibits young people on limited incomes entering the private rented sector with entry levels for a 1 bedroom flat ranging from £300 to £395 per month across the borough, with the “shared room” allowance being just £50 or £60 per week dependent upon location.

For young people attempting to purchase their own property, house price rises in Wigan make this difficult. House prices have increased by over 80% between 2003 and 2007 across Wigan, with entry level properties most associated with first time buyers (terraced house and flats) both increasing by over 125% in the same period. Access to the cheaper properties in the borough would require an income of £20,300 per year. 66% of concealed households (those living with an existing household who have a housing need) would not be able to afford a cheaper property. Similarly, in terms of concealed households entering the private rented market, less than 15% would be able to afford a monthly rent of £300 per month without recourse to LHA (Wigan Housing Needs Survey 2008).

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The Young Persons Accommodation Group is a multi-agency group that focuses on the housing, advice and support needs of young people in the borough and also acts as a ‘clearing house’ for agencies with clients with housing issues they have particular difficulty resolving. Consultation with this group highlighted a particularly strong desire to develop initiatives that may help tackle some of the housing needs of young people. Suggestions included:

- Whilst WALH and Connexions successfully undertake mediation with quite a number of people, this work is often relatively low level, more akin to negotiation than mediation due to time constraints on officers. Increased provision of mediation may assist reduce homelessness further.
- Occupancy of Supported accommodation is high and more is required for young single people and Young Mum’s; however, many of those approaching agencies claiming to be homeless because of tension at home often are not homeless, but may benefit from one or two nights respite in the form of a ‘Nightstop’ that specifically caters for the needs of young people and may help prevent future homelessness. May also be a role for mentors or buddy support.
- The process for applying for accommodation and support needs to be streamlined as currently separate applications are made to every housing and support organisation. People suggested that ideally this would be in the form of a one stop shop approach, but if this is not feasible, a homogenised application / referral form should be considered.
- Better arrangements for accessing (& to prevent losing) accommodation (supported or ordinary) would be facilitated through the development of a protocol between agencies, with a suggestion that the Young Persons Accommodation Group should be used to ensure accommodation that is available is targeted at those in greatest housing need.
- Consideration should be given to the reconfiguration of existing supported housing schemes to cater for young people with different levels of vulnerability or who are more difficult to manage.
- Not all young people are suitable for grouped living arrangements and the dispersed temporary accommodation can offer a better solution to the needs of some young people. The development of a protocol is also needed to clarify who does what in such circumstances.
- Although there is a Supported lodgings scheme in the borough, this tends to provide formal arrangements for members of a young persons extended family or friends of the family to provide accommodation and support. Consideration needs to be given to the development of a wider Supported Lodgings scheme.

People fleeing Domestic Violence

People fleeing Domestic Violence account for 7% of all homeless presentations. Whilst the number of people affected varies from year to year, the ratio of people fleeing violence against all other reasons remains constant. As mentioned above, when house prices are high, people who needing accommodation who are less financially able to resolve out their own housing problems and more likely to become homeless.

Although 30% of people that present as homeless because of domestic violence are found to be 'not homeless' on completion of enquiries, this is because many return home. It is therefore essential that when people do present as homeless, they are offered appropriate support and advice. There are two refuges in the borough that specifically target women fleeing violence, however Supporting People data shows that on average the hostels accept less than a fifth of the people referred to them, the main reason being lack of space. Of the 55 people fleeing domestic violence that were placed in temporary accommodation by W&LH, only 2 were placed in the refuges.

Many women at risk of violence are staying in non-specialist accommodation and current services do not meet the level of demand. Referral data for the refuges suggest high levels of unmet need. Consultation has also indicated that there is a gap in floating support.

Further needs analysis is required to find out the proportion of women moving on from the refuges/other supported housing that need support and the number of people living in ordinary housing needing a floating support service.

In relation to the provision of refuge accommodation, we would seek to undertake a needs assessment in conjunction with other local authorities owing to the number of people who access services in other Boroughs.

Supporting People data shows that services have a high unit cost, owing to the small size of both refuges; one of which is seeking to move to larger accommodation.

Offenders

Amongst those factors critical to the success and effectiveness of the rehabilitation of offenders is the reliance on timely access to stable and secure (and sometimes supported) accommodation, which, according to research, can significantly reduce the risk of relapse and re-offending. In fact, according to the Social Exclusion Unit, it can reduce the risk of reoffending by over 20%¹.

Nevertheless, offenders do face barriers to accessing advice, accommodation and support and for this reason there are a plethora of initiatives and programmes designed to address this. Successful delivery of these programmes dependent upon close collaborative working between criminal justice agencies and a wide range of other statutory and non-statutory agencies which will be called upon to play a crucial role in the criminal justice/rehabilitation process.

Despite the importance of suitable accommodation in tackling re-offending, whilst there is an abundance of data relating to crime and offending in the borough, there is relatively little data available on offenders and in particular, their accommodation needs. The OARS project is a Wigan Council / ECHG initiative that is trying to address this issue by developing better links with local prisons.

Supporting People data indicates that when combined, the number of units of accommodation based services and floating support, within the Borough, is higher than the regional and national average.

Wigan has also developed a number of Advice, Accommodation and Support services initially funded through Invest to Save Money from the HM Treasury which include an Enhanced Bond Guarantee Scheme (CAB / ECHG), Intensive Support and Mediation Service (Rainer) and:

- Offender Advice and Resettlement Service (OARS): Managed by English Churches Housing Group (ECHG), the OARS project is a relatively short term service (normally around 12 weeks) that works both within and outside of prisons to address homelessness and housing issues for offenders. OARS provide support through the prison gate, and then longer term support is provided by supporting people funded support schemes.

The OARS project has identified three main stages and housing issues for offenders;

- maintaining tenancies for people on short-term sentences;
 - effectively shutting down tenancies to avoid rent arrears;
 - working with people to develop accommodation plans for release and reducing the number of people leaving prison with no fixed abode, 'NFA'.
- Offender Resettlement Scheme: The ORS was set up to target Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO's) and others causing higher levels of harm to the community. Individual PPO's almost always have multiple issues, but need to be accommodated in order that those other issues can be addressed. PPO's often face barriers to accommodation arising from their background or experience with housing providers and wider community which the ORS attempts to address. The ORS is an agreement between housing providers and criminal justice agencies for closer working to identify and address multiple risk factors associated with clients to enable them to access tenancies.

Consultation with stakeholders has highlighted the better working relationships that have now developed between housing and criminal justice agencies as a result of the various initiatives. The main barrier to accessing suitable accommodation for offenders in Wigan is now more about pressures caused by changes in the housing market that affect all groups. Whilst significant effort has been put into planning moves for offenders, there remains a lack of emergency accommodation. The other main concern is around sustainability of services because of the lack of long term funding.

Initiatives that can provide both skills training (targeting PPO's) and rented accommodation through the refurbishment of empty properties are seen as the next step in the provision of suitable accommodation for Wigan.

BME Groups

The 2001 census showed that Wigan had a relatively low BME population. Wigan's information base on BME housing needs was significantly enhanced by the 2003 Housing Needs Survey. Its findings confirm some points within the earlier census information and it also provides some more detailed information:

- BME groups represented 3% of the population within the 2003 Needs Survey, with the largest group being White-Irish. In terms of other individual BME groups the ethnic origin was extremely diverse.

- There were no major concentrations of BME communities within the borough although some of the older housing areas in Wigan show slightly greater numbers than certain outer townships.
- BME household sizes were marginally higher than the rest of the population
- In terms of the type of housing, BME households were more likely to live in terraced or detached housing than the rest of the population. The amenity levels within housing inhabited by BME groups was similar to the general population.
- As regards tenure, BME households were significantly more likely to live in rented accommodation than the rest of the population.
- The income of BME households was greater than the whole population and this was true across the whole income spectrum.
- Whilst their housing facilities were similar to the whole population a greater proportion of the BME population describe their housing conditions as being inadequate (23% as opposed to 14%). The reasons for this were partly due to concerns over the heating of properties and partly because a higher proportion want to move. Interestingly there was a lower percentage dissatisfaction with the property being small from the BME population than from the population as a whole.
- The BME population had significantly higher levels of disability than the population as a whole with the main reason being described as mobility problems.
- BME households were more likely to want to move than the population as a whole, with the major demand for two-bedroom accommodation. In terms of those intending to move out of the borough the key motivation was for better employment (77% as opposed to 38% of the population as a whole) and better access to work. However it was noticeable that other factors such as poor quality housing / neighbourhoods and education were mentioned. Racial harassment was noted by 12% of households.
- In terms of future requirements BME households indicated that a higher proportion of new households would have children than the general population, with two-bedroom accommodation in the owner-occupied sector being the main preference

Wigan, like many other boroughs in recent years, has seen a change in migration patterns of people from abroad mainly through the dispersal of asylum seekers and economic migration. Whilst there is relatively little accurate demographic data available, the number of people from BME groups who present as homeless appears to be in line with demographic trends. What differs is the reason for homelessness. One third of homeless presentations for people who describe themselves as “white: other” (non-British) or all other BME groups is loss of private rented accommodation; more than double the rate for White British. Higher rates were to be expected as the Housing Needs Study highlighted that BME households were significantly more likely to live in rented accommodation than the rest of the population. The other main reason for homelessness is when Asylum Seekers receive a decision on their application granting leave to remain.

Since 2002, Asylum Seekers have been dispersed to the Wigan area as part of the national dispersal of asylum seekers. At its peak in June 2003 there were 921 Asylum Seekers dispersed to the Wigan Borough under the target contract. The numbers as at April 2008 are 433.

All Asylum Seekers in Wigan are housed and supported in the private sector by three private providers contracted by the United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA) . Whilst Asylum Seekers are awaiting a decision on their application, they are well supported: UKBA monitor standards of accommodation and support, via their contract compliance team. Wigan Council has since 2002, operated a “Partnership Policy Framework for the Dispersal and Integration of Asylum Seekers in Wigan Borough”. The framework was recently held up as a model of good practice by UKBA and takes account of both the needs of asylum seekers and the needs of the wider population of the

borough. It ensures that asylum seekers are relatively evenly distributed across the Borough, thereby avoiding undue pressure on public services and consideration is given to factors such as incidence of hate crime and the ability to access services such as health and education etc. Difficulties often only arise when people receive a decision on their Asylum application, whether this is positive (resulting in loss of accommodation and support) or negative (often leading to destitution if 'failed' applicants are not returned to their country of origin)

There are significant deficiencies in data for Refugees and an accurate picture of numbers cannot be formulated. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that small numbers of Refugees remain in Wigan once they have received leave to remain – many leave Wigan for larger cities where established communities exist.

From 5th March 2007, the Home Office began processing all new asylum seekers through the New Asylum Model (NAM). The aim of the NAM is to introduce a faster, more tightly managed asylum process with an emphasis on rapid integration or removal. The expectation under the NAM is that for general cases, the asylum decision will generally be served within 30 working days. Whilst a speedier turnaround of decisions is welcomed by many, it does mean that a greater level of ongoing support is likely to be required than has been provided locally.

UKBA have recently carried out a tender process for Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES). The successful bidder is yet to be announced, however their aim is to support asylum seekers given leave to remain to enable quicker integration and access to education and employment services.

UKBA are currently attempting to clear the backlog of applications made before March 2007, many dating back several years. The project is commonly known as Legacy review. The first phase saw large numbers of families given leave to remain. In order to prevent large numbers of families becoming homeless and requiring temporary accommodation, Wigan started a pilot project of Delayed Eviction; when the accommodation and support funded by UKBA ends, the Council leases the accommodation they are occupying and provides support to help them move into permanent accommodation, thereby preventing homelessness. The pilot is funded through a combination of Housing Benefit, Supporting People and topped up with subsidy from UKBA. Whilst the pilot appears to be very effective, there are doubts over its future viability as it is unlikely that UKBA will continue to fund beyond the very short term.

Future phases of the Legacy review will see different issues being raised as different groups have their cases reviewed. Possible impacts will be an increase in destitution, an increase in priority need single homeless (some with complex needs), asylum seekers "going underground" for fear of being removed leading to a possible increase in illegal working and illegal tenancies (facilitated by unscrupulous landlords and employers).

An accurate picture of the numbers of Migrant Workers is difficult to obtain. The data available relies on Workers registering on the Workers Registration Scheme and acquiring a National Insurance number. The data is out of date as soon as it is published and so cannot be relied on. Again anecdotal evidence suggests approximately 2000 - 3000 Migrant Workers, largely Polish, living in the Wigan Borough.

Housing conditions for migrant workers are largely unknown. Whilst many migrant workers have moved for economic reasons, several have also moved to avoid persecution in their own country.

Subsequently many migrant workers are fearful of public authorities such as the Police or the Council and will suffer in silence rather than ask for help.

Many migrant workers have little choice where they live. Accommodation can often be part of their employment with employment agencies arranging the employment and accommodation with cost for such deducted at source. For the migrant workers that do have a choice about where they live, because they very often earn the minimum wage and can only access private rented accommodation, they choose the cheaper end of the market which in some cases can often be the poorest quality with a poor landlord service. Because migrant workers have fewer legal rights, some employers and landlords exploit this, forcing migrant workers to work and live in unsuitable conditions.

Very often a refugee who is trying to access housing or a migrant worker who is in poor quality housing will not integrate into the wider community until their perilous housing situation is solved. It is difficult to contemplate accessing training or employment or join in with community events whilst in housing crisis.

The Housing Strategy Team is currently leading the development of a Refugee and Migrant strategy. The overall aim is to reduce social exclusion and inequalities in life opportunities by identifying and addressing the obstacles and barriers faced by refugees and migrants. In particular this relates to advice and support, housing, education, health and social care, etc and development of community support networks, contributing the wider strategic objectives around integration and community cohesion.

In housing terms, the issues identified through by the Refugee and Migrant strategy are similar to the needs of other groups identified through the development of Homelessness Strategy, including:

- Better access to good quality housing thereby maximising options for move-on
- Adequate support
- Quality and timely advice

Other work being undertaken to get a better understanding of the BME housing needs includes:

- A borough wide Housing Needs Study is due to be completed in June 2008
- Gypsies and Travellers accommodation and support needs assessment is due to be completed late 2008.

People with Multiple or More Complex Needs

Arising from the consultation with stakeholders involved in the delivery of services to people who are homeless, there is a general consensus that mental health and substance misuse problems are a significant underlying cause of homelessness and that stronger links need to be developed with treatment services.

Various models exist to forecast prevalence of issues; "Paying the Price" is the most recent research into the projected needs for mental health services. It gives details on a number of specific disorders, including depression, schizophrenic disorders and dementia. The findings conclude that the number of people in England who experience a mental health problem within the diagnostic groups studied is projected to increase by 14.2 per cent, broadly in line with the expected increase in population. The report also found that many people with mental disorders are either not in contact with services or are in contact but are not receiving any treatment. It is

estimated, for example, that 35 per cent of those with depression and 51 per cent of those with anxiety disorders are not in contact with services.

However, whilst assessing housing needs starts with demography as it is a universal need, support is only needed by sub-sections of the population. The level of support needed by individuals also varies over time so is more difficult to forecast

The North West Regional Assembly is currently developing the Regional Supported Housing Strategy. As part of this work, they have commissioned consultants to develop a NW needs assessment model which will identify future need projections for all Supporting People client groups. This type of work has not previously been undertaken. The early results, which need to be treated with great caution as they remain un-validated, suggest that Wigan is a net exporter of service users of housing support services and that there is a shortfall in accommodation based and floating support services for socially excluded groups in the North West, with greater emphasis on chaotic and heavy end groups which means a need for more short term housing.

In Wigan, there are only 6 emergency access beds for people over 25 (excluding women fleeing violence and priority need homeless) and no specialist provision for people with substance misuse problems. Supporting People data has also highlighted a significant level of under provision for people recovering from mental health problems. This inevitably has contributed to rough sleeping in Wigan.

More detailed analysis of people found on an early rough sleepers count in Wigan highlighted:

- Most were of white British origin and long term residents of Wigan.
- Two-thirds are known to have a history of drugs or alcohol misuse
- Most, *but not all*, have a history of offending, 20% were known to have a history of violence.
- 80% had previously held tenancies with the Council, none of which could be considered successful: some lasted only a few months, but all had an outstanding debt or had issues with neighbour nuisance (mainly as victim rather than perpetrator). One still had a tenancy but was sleeping rough because of a dispute with a partner.
- 7 were in some capacity known to Social Services, but none currently were receipt of support:
 - 4 previously known to the mental health team
 - 6 known to the Children & Families Team, mainly in terms of support previously given to them as parents: 4 of those 6 have children who are now in care.
- Time spent sleeping rough ranged between a few months and a few years. Most of those that had been sleeping rough for several years have spent various short periods off the streets with friends. None of those found on the night of the count appeared to be entrenched in the rough sleeping way of life; all want accommodation.

The Key Project was initially set up to identify and engage with Wigan's rough sleeping population with the aim of addressing the causes of homelessness through structured activity, signposting to mainstream services, mediating and advocating for them and addressing their many and varied health needs. The structured activity is seen as the most important motivator in addressing the social exclusion causes and effects of homelessness, substance misuse and offending, i.e. stabilising chaotic lifestyles. Due to the problematic nature of the client group however, existing services consider many of the Key Projects clients too chaotic or high risk to manage. This is a two way problem: as many of the individuals have previous negative experience with mainstream services / authority figures and often have trouble communicating effectively with people whom they don't have an existing relationship with.

The development of an emergency accommodation provision is seen as a priority for many members of the Homelessness Forum. However, for people recovering from addiction, the importance of being away from other active substance mis-users is also recognised.

The Supporting People Strategy has used a framework for the prioritisation of future funding. The priority band comprises:

- People with drug problems
- People with alcohol problems
- People with complex needs
- Single homeless people with support needs

Consequently the Supporting People Commissioning Body has decided to fund an intensive floating support service for people with complex needs who have difficulty in engaging with existing services. This would help meet the needs of people in the above groups, but would also address the needs of those people in other bands who also have complex needs especially women at risk of domestic violence; young people and homeless families.

A full review of short-term accommodation and floating support services was started in 2007. Findings from this review are attached at [Appendix D](#): "Supply & Demand for Short Term Accommodation & Support", however one of the key issues is that there is a clear gap in provision of support for those with more complex needs. The next stage is to consider options for re-configuration of services to best meet needs.

Issues revealed through consultation with local stakeholders involved in working with people with substance misuse problems included:

- Service users who have undertaken treatment and received support become motivated in the initial stages, however the momentum can be lost if suitable, stable housing is not available: Former tenancy arrears are often a barrier to accessing social housing for this client group.
- There is concern that the payment of the Local Housing Allowance direct to people with or recovering from substance misuse problems will lead to rent arrears and ultimately homelessness.
- Whilst relationships between housing (advice, accommodation & support) and substance misuse services have improved over recent years and a joint protocol is now in place, there still appears to be an element of agencies working in isolation from each other. A stronger partnership would lead to more effective treatment outcomes.
- Stakeholders have expressed a desire for specialist housing advice / substance misuse worker who could develop a better understanding of the needs and welfare issues of this client group.

The above issues are very similar to those highlighted in research by Homeless Link in the development of their Clean Break toolkit. The toolkit is designed to help agencies create more integrated housing and care pathways for drug users engaging in treatment services and therefore may be useful in tackling some of the local issues.

Health and Homelessness

Homelessness and health issues are clearly interlinked and often one can lead to the other. Research evidence suggests that homeless households experience poorer physical and mental health than others, often exacerbated by their continuing homelessness and poor living conditions. It is also recognised that poor physical or mental health can cause a person to become homeless in the first place. ("Achieving Positive Shared Outcomes in Health and Homelessness", Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate & Department of Health, 2004)

Homeless people often leave health problems untreated until they reach crisis point and then need to rely on emergency treatment or present at primary care services with multiple or entrenched issues. To tackle health inequalities and homelessness, local authorities and health services must work together to overcome barriers to accessing health services for this hard to reach group.

This issue has long since been recognised in Wigan and at the time of writing the last homelessness strategy a Specialist Health Visitor for the Homeless and Vulnerable was already working with those living in emergency accommodation and rough sleepers. Huge improvements in accessing health services for the homeless and vulnerable have been achieved as a result of this work and the team has expanded quite considerably in recognition of this. The Specialist Health Visitor has been successful in securing mainstream funding from the PCT and now has a team of 8 staff (with 2 more to be recruited) including outreach workers, support workers, a nursery nurse and a Community Psychiatric Nurse to deal with mental health, substance misuse and dual diagnosis. This team operates across the borough to improve the health and well being of the homeless, travellers and BME groups.

Alongside this positive work however, improvements in working arrangements between the local authority and health services could still be made. 70% of people discharged from hospital in 2006/7 were accepted as homeless. Individuals becoming homeless as a result of discharge from hospital is a crisis situation that could be prevented and resolved in a planned way. It is clear that a hospital discharge protocol would alleviate this problem and serve to prevent such vulnerable people becoming homeless. This is an issue that has been recognised and work has begun across Greater Manchester to develop a cohesive hospital discharge policy. Wigan Council and WALH are closely involved in this process and will look to introduce its operation in Wigan at the earliest possible opportunity.

Supply and Demand for Short Term Accommodation & Floating Support

* refusals taken as a snap shot as part of a pilot – (Jan-Mar 07)

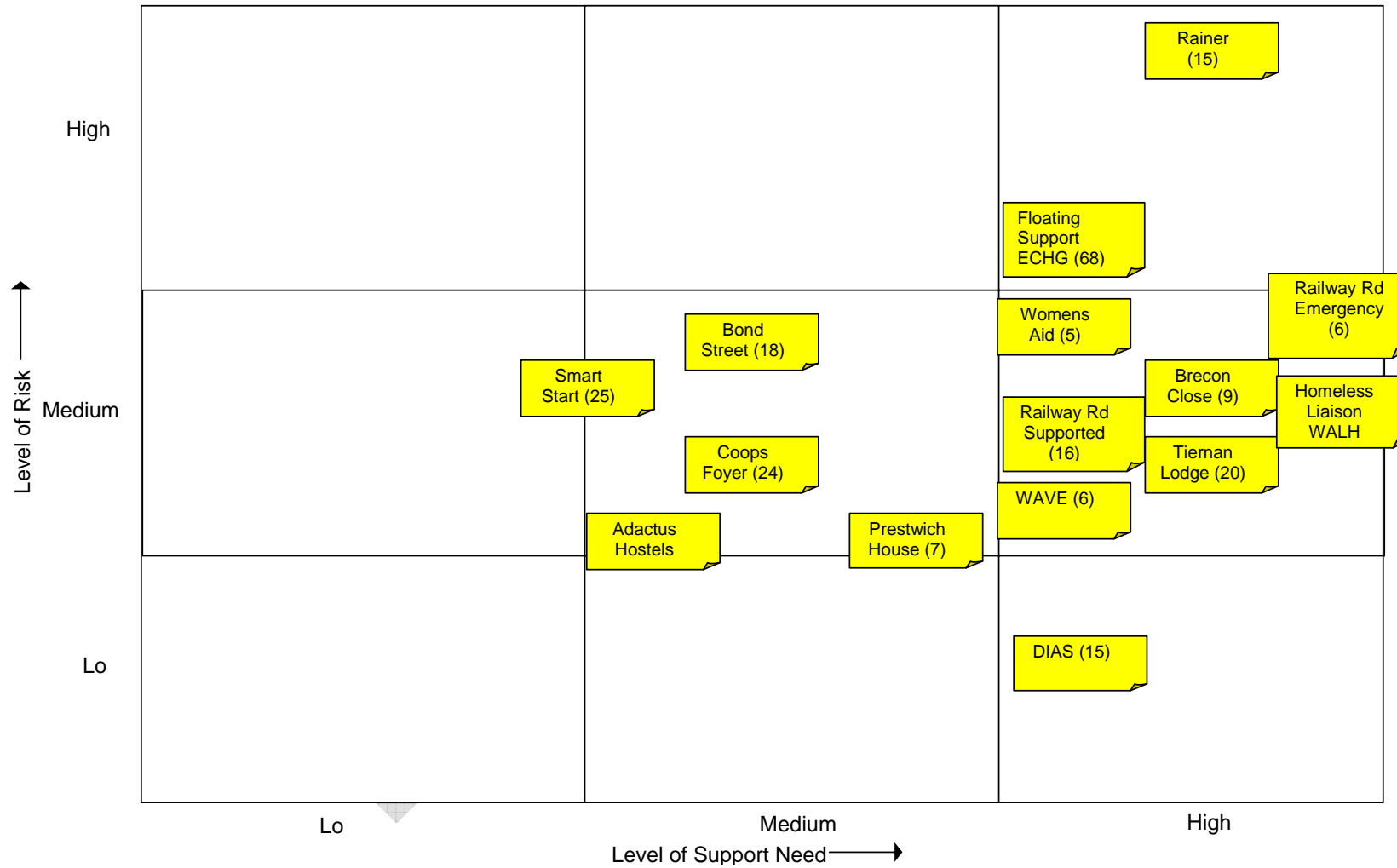
Agency	Capacity	Client	Year	Demand	Utilisation	Refusals *	Exclusions
Female Only							
Bamber Court (Adactus)	10	Female – pregnant or with children (16-25)	2004/5	27 accessed	89.2%		Arson
			2005/6	25 accessed	96.5%		
			2006/7	26 accessed	100%		
WAVE	6 families	Female fleeing violence plus male children up to age 14 (16+)	2004/5	62 accessed	88.6%		-History of violence -Challenging behaviour -Dementia -Those with pets -Offenders
			2005/6	52 accessed	84.9%		
			2006/7	42 accessed	85.3%		
Wigan Women's Aid	5	Female fleeing violence plus male children up to age of 14 (16+)	2004/5	51 accessed	96.9%		-Misuse alcohol -Misuse drugs -Violence -Challenging behaviour -Dementia -Mental Health -Serious offending
			2005/6	60 accessed	94.9%		
			2006/7	30 accessed	95.2%	-No space/capacity (65). (37 of which were out of borough referrals) -family size (2) -multi need (1) -drug use (2) -alcohol use (2) -nature of offences (1) -other (3)	
Male only							
Bond Street (ECHG)	18 (from Jan 07 = 19)	Male only (18+)	2004/5	46 accessed	65.1%		Exclusions - case by case basis
			2005/6	38 accessed	92.1%		
			2006/7	44 accessed	92.8%		

Male or Female – single							
Coops Foyer (Arena)	24	Those willing to engage with training or education (16-24)	2004/5	51 accessed	92.8%	From Dec 06 – Mar 07: -Nature of offences (3) -Evicted previously (2) -Failed to attend (14) -Only want Accom.(2) -Age (2) -Multi needs (2) -Failed to provide references (1) -Other (1)	Exclusions: case by case basis
			2005/6	63 accessed	96.1%		
			2006/7	56 accessed	94.8%		
Railway Road (ECHG)	22 (6 emergency)	(16+)	2004/5	149 accessed	93.1%	- multi needs (1)	Case by case basis although no pets
			2005/6	197 accessed	98.8%		
			2006/7	133 accessed	99%		
Prestwich House (ECHG)	7 (move on from Bond Street & Railway Rd)	Those at risk of offending (18+)	2004/5	12 accessed	97.8%		Case by case basis
			2005/6	9 accessed	99.5%		
			2006/7	Not available	Not available		
Sam Little House (Adactus)	5	Single Homeless 16-25	2004/5	10 accessed	93.4%		Exclusions – arson/ Serious offenders
			2005/6	20 accessed	85.3%		
			2006/7	16 accessed	89.2%		
McCartney House (Adactus)	5	Single homeless 16-25	2004/5	10 accessed	97.9%		Exclusions – Arson/ Serious offenders
			2005/6	14 accessed	94.3%		
			2006/7	10 accessed	96.1%		
Lord Street (Adactus)	5	Single Homeless 16 -25	2004/5	10 accessed	95.5%		Exclusions – Arson/ Serious Offenders
			2005/6	13 accessed	98.2%		
			2006/7	11 accessed	93.1%		
Hough Lane (Adactus)	7	Single Homeless 16 -25	2004/5	29 accessed	87.7%		Exclusions – Arson/ Serious Offenders
			2005/6	25 accessed	79.7%		
			2006/7	10 accessed	85.8%		
Hardybutts (Adactus)	5	Single Homeless 16-25	2004/5	18 accessed	92%		Exclusions – Arson/ Serious Offenders
			2005/6	12 accessed	96.2%		
			2006/7	13 accessed	84.2%		

All groups – hostels for priority need homeless only							
Local Authority Hostel (WALH)	9 households in priority need (from Jan 07 = 15 families)	ALL (priority need only) WALH referral only	2004/5	65 accessed	100.5%	(0)	Case by case basis
			2005/6	49 accessed	96.8%		
			2006/7	58 accessed	97.9%		
Tiernan Lodge (Arena)	20 households	ALL (priority need only) WALH referral only	2004/5	136 accessed	100.5%	-rent arrears (1)	Exclusions – arson, convictions, pets, serious offenders.
			2005/6	117 accessed	96.8%		
			2006/7	140 accessed	97.9%		

Floating Support						
Smartstart (Adactus)	25	Single Homeless and Young Parents (16 -25)	2004/5	46 accessed	108.5%	Exclusions – case by case
			2005/6	46 accessed	109.2%	
			2006/7	42 accessed	110.8%	
DIAS Floating Support	15	Those needing help to move on/ remain in their home from domestic violence	2004/5	18 accessed	100%	
			2005/6	29 accessed	100%	
			2006/7	25 accessed	100%	
			2005/6	232 accessed	102.5%	
			2006/7	189 accessed	100%	
ECHG Floating Support	68		2004/5	95 accessed	100%	Exclusions – case-by-case
			2005/6	117 accessed	98.5%	
			2006/7	53 accessed	100%	
Rainer	15	Young people requiring intensive support	2004/5	56 accessed	100%	Exclusions – case-by-case
			2005/6	58 accessed	102.8%	
			2006/7	53 accessed	91.2%	
Housing Link (WALH)	104	Supports those who need to support to maintain/ access a Council tenancy.	2004/5	252 accessed	104.3%	Exclusions – case-by-case
			2005/6	247 accessed	110.6%	
			2006/7	258 accessed	101.9%	
WALH Homeless Liaison Service	33	Dispersed hostel for priority need homeless	2004/5	280 accessed	107.5%	Exclusions – case- by-case

Supply of Short Term Accommodation: Ability to Manage Client Needs & Risk



Action Plan

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
Strategic Theme: Prevention				
<i>Culture Change</i>				
Promote a culture change across the borough to prevent rather than react to homelessness and deter the use of 'homelessness' as a fast-track route into social housing where people are in housing need rather than homeless.	Undertake joint training, embed in protocols between agencies and convey the message to customers, the need and ability to prevent homelessness through early intervention. Continue to shift role of housing Options Advice Team from 'homelessness assessment' to 'advice & prevention'.	Reduced numbers of homelessness acceptances per 1000 population in line with regional average. Increased number of homelessness preventions per 1000 population (former BVPI 213)	Within existing resources	Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH) / All: 2008-13 WALH: 2008-13
<i>Improving access</i>				
Ensure that the right advice is given to the right people at the right time.	Better co-ordination of existing advice networks through the development of borough-wide advice strategy linking with development of Joint Service Centre. Awareness raising amongst "problem noticers" working in the borough to target at risk groups and those who don't yet recognise they have an issue – linked to promotion of services. Agencies to recognise their role and responsibilities in preventing homelessness through two way training.	Homelessness Forum (HF) involved in development of Advice Strategy Increased number accessing timely advice to prevent homelessness. Seminars & training sessions delivered.	Link in to Community Legal Services funding. Seek funding. Within existing resources	Advice agencies via Housing Advice Steering Group (HASG): Sep 09 Advice agencies via HASG: Jul 10 WALH/ Housing Strategy (HS): 2008-13

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
Remove barriers to accessing homelessness advice.	<p>Develop clearer mechanisms for accessing advice and support, through development of protocols and consider use of common referral forms</p> <p>Produce better information in various formats on advice, housing options and support services available & how to access.</p> <p>Produce better information in various formats that give advice to people at risk of homelessness</p>	Increased number accessing timely & appropriate advice to prevent homelessness.	<p>To be scoped / seek funding if required</p> <p>Within existing financial resources, develop leaflets, website.& other formats</p>	<p>Advice agencies via HASG: Develop plan by: Sep 09</p> <p>HS / All: Apr 09</p> <p>Advice agencies via HASG: Apr 09</p>
<i>Targeted intervention</i>				
Develop new initiatives that target the needs of individual client groups – young people, offenders, complex needs etc.	<p>Develop mediation scheme to prevent more, younger people becoming homelessness.</p> <p>Review success of Sanctuary Scheme and seek to maximise potential.</p> <p>Continue and develop work in schools, prison etc and through surgeries with at risk groups.</p>	<p>Reduced number of parental / family evictions, more planned moves. Indicator: increased no. prevented from becoming homeless (BVPI 213)</p> <p>Sanctuaries created / numbers of target hardening / sustainability of accommodation.</p> <p>Outreach sessions/ surgeries delivered.</p>	<p>Seek funding to train existing and/or employ specialist staff</p> <p>Budget allocated</p> <p>Within existing resources / seek funding to expand</p>	<p>HS / CYPS / WALH via Young Persons Accomm. Grp (YPAG): 2010</p> <p>HS / DV Co-ordinator: Dec 08</p> <p>HASG: 2008-13</p>

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
	<p>Peer awareness raising: involve ex-homeless people as volunteers in giving advice, linking to prevention.</p> <p>Consider potential to create a DVD of those who have been homeless, how to prevent.</p> <p>Use the Clean Break toolkit developed by Homeless Link (Aimed at people with substance misuse & housing issues)</p>	<p>Volunteers recruited and trained.</p> <p>Increased number accessing timely advice.</p> <p>More integrated housing and care pathways for drug users engaging in treatment</p>	<p>Consider options / seek funding / develop DVD</p> <p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>All via HASG: 2010</p> <p>All via HASG: Mar 09</p> <p>Housing & Substance Misuse Group: Mar 09</p>
Seek to minimise mortgage possessions in the borough.	<p>Consider implementation of not-for profit mortgage rescue scheme and ensure advice provision promotes the risks of private mortgage rescue schemes in borough.</p> <p>Liaison with banks/ building societies and courts to prevent wherever possible.</p>	<p>Reduced homelessness acceptances due to mortgage possessions.</p> <p>Reduced cases reaching County Court due to mortgage possessions.</p>	<p>To be scoped / seek funding if required</p> <p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>HS / RSL's / Advice Agencies: Develop plan by: 2010</p> <p>WALH Prevention Team: 2008-13</p>
Seek to minimise loss of rented accommodation in the borough	<p>Work with landlords in the borough to ensure allocation / suspension / eviction policies not having negative effect on homelessness</p> <p>Promote use of Safeguard Policy within Local Housing Allowance arrangements</p> <p>Continue to maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payments</p>	<p>Reduced homelessness acceptances due to loss of private rented accommodation</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p> <p>DHP Grant £52k</p>	<p>WALH / HS: 2008-13</p> <p>Housing Benefits / All: 2008-13</p>

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
Strategic Theme: Accommodation				
<i>Develop New affordable homes</i>				
Develop more affordable housing	<p>Analyse results of 2008 Housing Needs Study to determine future needs of the borough.</p> <p>Use s.106 money in a way that creates mixed development and meets our accommodation requirements.</p> <p>Seek to develop more social rented housing / more affordable housing for sale via partners.</p>	<p>Better understanding of future requirements</p> <p>Increased number of homes built / made affordable</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p> <p>S.106 money</p> <p>Housing Corporation Grant / Private Finance / other</p>	<p>HS: Dec 08</p> <p>HS: 2008-13</p> <p>HS via Affordable Hsg Steering Grp: 2008-13</p>
<i>Make best use of existing stock</i>				
Improve access to current accommodation to produce wider range of affordable housing options	<p>Explore opportunities to make better use of the private rented sector in tackling homelessness.</p> <p>Seek to maximise use of RSL nominations</p> <p>Participate in Regional Choice Based Lettings Pilot: 'Pinpoint'</p>	<p>Increased number of homes made affordable</p> <p>Increased number of Qualifying Offers accepted</p> <p>Available housing is targeted at those in greatest need / Increased number of RSL nominations</p> <p>Opportunities created to cross authority boundaries more easily</p>	<p>To be scoped / seek funding if required</p> <p>Within existing resources</p> <p>To be determined</p>	<p>HS: Develop plan by: Dec 08</p> <p>WALH: 2008-13</p> <p>WALH / RSL's / HS: 2008-13</p> <p>WALH / RSL's / HS: Sep 08</p>

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
	<p>Continue to expand Wigan Bond Scheme</p> <p>Consider how people requiring a room for a carer can access private rented accommodation given LHA restrictions</p>	<p>Increased number of new bonds issues / minimal claims made</p> <p>Discriminatory policy tackled</p>	<p>Seek additional resources</p>	<p>CAB / HS: Dec 2008</p> <p>All via HASG: Apr 09</p>
<p>Ensure accommodation is of decent standard, suitable and provides security (thereby minimising homelessness)</p>	<p>Evaluate potential to roll out current Private Sector Leasing arrangements for wider use.</p> <p>Develop Accredited landlord scheme further (promoting good standards of accommodation and management)</p>	<p>Increased number of homes made available</p> <p>Increased number of accredited landlords recruited.</p>	<p>To be scoped / seek funding if required</p>	<p>HS / RSLs / Vol Sector: Develop plan by: Apr 09</p> <p>HS: Develop plan by: Dec 08</p>
<i>Temporary accommodation</i>				
<p>Work toward the target set by government of halving the use of temporary accommodation by 2010 (Target 19 by end 2010) / B&B only to be used in exceptional circumstances</p>	<p>Develop & implement TA reduction strategy ensuring it continues to meet individual / diverse needs.</p> <p>Develop & implement 'spend to save' policy</p>	<p>Reduced use of TA & Minimal use of B&B</p> <p>Number of cases prevented using Homelessness Prevention Fund budget.</p> <p>Reduced use of TA & Minimal use of B&B</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Determine 'Spend to Save' Budget from existing resources</p>	<p>HS / WALH: Aug 08</p> <p>HS / WALH: Aug 08</p>
<p>Ensure that where B&B is used, meets acceptable standards</p>	<p>Adopt BABIE system and produce an 'approved' list of B&B</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation used meets minimum standards</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>HS / WALH / Aftercare / YOT: Sep 08 & update annually</p>

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
Strategic Theme: Support				
<i>Increase provision</i>				
Develop a holistic approach to tackling homelessness and promote greater independence by developing support projects linked to tackling worklessness through training and employment	Consider opportunities to develop a accommodation / training project based on the 'Recycling Lives' model Consider opportunities to develop a 'self build' or refurbishment of existing / empty properties.	Sustained reduction in rough sleeping	Seek funding via Hsg Corp / NWDA / Private finance / other	HS / Recycling Lives (& Great Places): 2013 HS / PPO manager: 2010
Consider options for provision of emergency accommodation in borough that can also manage people with complex needs	Reconsider proposals to develop an emergency accommodation project and explore opportunity to link with 'Recycling Lives' Project.	Sustained reduction in rough sleeping Reduction in those leaving SP services in unplanned way		HS / Great Places (& Recycling Lives): 2013
Increase range of support options for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.	Develop a wider Supported Lodgings scheme for young people using good practice developed by Aftercare Consider opportunities to develop a supported accommodation based on the Nightstop model Develop an intensive floating support scheme for people with complex / high support needs	Reduced homelessness / repeat homelessness Reduced number of failed tenancies Reduced number leaving SP services in unplanned way Sustained reduction in rough sleeping	Supporting People budget allocated To be scoped / seek funding if required Supporting People budget allocated	Aftercare via YPAG: Apr 09 YPAG: Apr 10 Stepping Stone: Sep 08 Supporting People (SP) / HS:Nov 08

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
<i>Make best use of existing provision</i>				
Complete review of short term accommodation / floating support services (inc. domestic violence & TA projects) & consider options for reconfiguration to best meet needs	Complete work on needs analysis, develop models for reconfiguration & undertake further consultation on proposals Consider alternative uses for temporary accommodation no longer required	More effective use of existing resources / means of tackling homelessness & preventing repeat homelessness Specialist support targeted at those in greatest need	Within current resources. Work will inform future need / financial planning. To be scoped / seek funding if required	SP/ HS / DV Co-ordinator / RSL's: Nov 08 SP / HS / WALH / RSL's: Apr 09
Ensure that when people are ready to move on, they are able to do so in a planned & supported way, releasing resources to others in need.	Develop "Move On Plans Protocol" using the Homeless Link good practice model.	More effective use of resources Increased number of people supported	Within existing resources	SP / HS via SP Providers Forum & Core Strategy Group: Nov 2008
<i>Improve access to and quality of support</i>				
Review access to supported accommodation / floating support	Develop clearer mechanisms for accessing advice and support, through development of protocols and consider single point of application or use of common referral forms	Increased number accessing timely & appropriate advice to prevent homelessness.	Within existing resources	SP via Providers Forum & Core Strategy Group: Apr 09
Ensure referrals made to most appropriate providers	Consider potential role of YPAG as allocation panel for young persons accommodation projects Undertake training and produce better information in various formats (on support services available & how to access.	Specialist support targeted at those in greatest need. Reduced failed referrals / clients leaving services in an unplanned way.	Within existing financial resources Develop new material resources	SP / HS / RSL's / YPAG: Apr 09 SP / HS via Providers Forum: Apr 09

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
Strategic Theme: Excellent Services				
<i>Strengthen partnership</i>				
Improve strategic co-ordination of services	<p>HF to meet quarterly with primary role of monitoring & delivery of Homelessness Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>Formalise role of sub-groups of HF by devolving tasks & feedback to HF.</p> <p>Regularly review membership of HF, ensuring all agencies represented and representatives are able to drive forward change within their organisation</p> <p>Include Homelessness Targets within LAA, raise profile of homelessness issues by regular progress reports to Members & Chief Officers.</p> <p>Continue to develop partnership links at local, sub-regional & regional level</p>	<p>Outputs within action plan delivered & aims of strategy are met</p> <p>Stronger & more influential Homelessness Forum</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Chair of Homelessness Forum / HS / All: 2008-13</p> <p>HS / All 2008-13</p> <p>HS: May 08 & 2008-13</p> <p>All 2008-13</p>
Attract more funding to help deliver aims of strategy and more secure funding to improve stability of agencies & enable longer term planning	<p>Develop bid proposals in preparation for announcement of appropriate funding sources "on the shelf" ready to submit when suitable funding is identified to cater for local needs</p> <p>Pilot development of Bond Scheme & Key Project as Not-for-Profit / Charity / Social Enterprise & consider opportunity to expand / replicate with HF</p>	<p>Able to meet short bidding deadlines & improved prospects of attracting funding</p> <p>Alternative, more secure funding streams accessed</p>	<p>Seek additional resources</p>	<p>All via HF / HS: 2008-13</p> <p>C.A.B / Key Project / HS / All: Dec 08</p>

What we need to do:	How do we will do it:	Desired Outcome:	Resources: Financial/ Human/ Material	Who will lead & when we wish to do it:
	Continue to lobby for more equitable distribution of central government resources (including Homeless Grant, Supporting People)	Outputs within action plan delivered & aims of strategy are met	Seek additional resources	HS / SP / HF: 2008-13
<i>Raising Standards</i>				
Improve quality and standards	Measurable targets monitored via Homelessness Forum.	Increased customer satisfaction.	Within existing resources	HF: 2008-13
Develop protocols to deliver seamless service to clients.	<p>Sign up to National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS) joint working agreement.</p> <p>Develop Young Persons protocol</p> <p>Develop a cross-authority Hospital Discharge Policy</p> <p>Develop & review protocols for other groups vulnerable to homelessness</p>	Multi-agency approach to tackling & preventing homelessness	Within existing resources	<p>WALH / CAB / HS: Aug 08</p> <p>YPAG: Dec 08</p> <p>WALH: Apr 09</p> <p>HF: 2008-13</p>
<i>Ensuring services are focussed on meeting needs of borough</i>				
Ensure Homelessness Strategy continues to meet the needs of the borough	<p>Use Homelessness Forum (HF) to monitor and deliver Homelessness Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>Undertake annual review of progress against aims of strategy, highlighting any new issues that arise.</p> <p>Review opportunities for better consultation with people who are / were homeless.</p>	Homelessness Strategy continues to be relevant & effective in meeting aims	Within existing resources	Chair of HF / HS/All: 2008-13

Glossary & References

BVPI 213: Former Best Value Performance Indicator, the definition of which is: The number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service(s), and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation. "Housing advice services" include external services funded by the local authority.

Claims issued: A claimant begins an action for an order for possession of residential property by issuing a claim in a county court.

Homeless Presentation: A person applying to the authority for accommodation or assistance in obtaining accommodation who the Local Authority believes may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Homeless Acceptance: A person who is accepted as being unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need

Homeless Duty: The duty of the Local Authority to provide accommodation and advice / assistance that follows a Homeless Acceptance.

Local Area Agreement (LAA): a three year agreement, based on Local Sustainable Community Strategies, that sets out priorities for a local area. The new LAA has allowed Local Authorities, and their partners, to choose up to 35 indicators, drawn from the new National Indicator Set (out of 198), that reflect the priorities in their local area that will be the focus of future activity.

NI 156: From April 2008, a single set of 198 National Indicators was introduced by Government which is the only set of indicators on which central government will performance manage local government, replacing all other existing sets of indicators, including Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) and Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators, from 1st April 2008. The definition of NI 156 is: The numbers of households living in temporary accommodation provided under the homelessness legislation.

Priority Need (& non-priority): People who are homeless are in Priority Need if they are or live with someone who is pregnant, or have dependent children or are considered vulnerable. under the terms of homelessness legislation.

Orders made: The court, following a judicial hearing, may grant an order for possession immediately. This entitles the claimant to apply for a warrant to have the defendant evicted. However, even where a warrant for possession is issued, the parties can still negotiate a compromise to prevent eviction.

Suspended orders: Frequently, the court grants the mortgage lender possession but suspends the operation of the order. Provided the defendant complies with the terms of the suspension, which usually requires the defendant to pay the current mortgage installments plus some of the accrued arrears, the possession order cannot be enforced

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