

Homelessness strategy



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1. Introduction

This Homelessness Strategy clearly sets out the homelessness problem which exists in East Devon and how we intend to address it. It is our second Homelessness Strategy.¹ It could more usefully be described as a strategy to prevent homelessness and tackle homelessness when it occurs. It is part of a number of strategies that the Council has adopted for housing and fits with the objectives of our overarching Housing Strategy², a copy of which can be seen on our website at www.eastdevon.gov.uk.

This strategy is more than just the Council providing suitable accommodation for people who have become homeless. The actions of partner organisations are important. A significant amount of joint working among statutory and other agencies in East Devon and the wider community of Devon has taken place and will continue to take place in the future.

It is also important to recognise the links between homelessness and other corporate priorities such as providing more affordable housing, domestic violence, crime and community safety, supporting people, and sustainable, safer, and healthy communities.

Many agencies are working closely with the Council to reduce the numbers of people becoming homeless and to provide support to those people accepted as homeless by the Council. This will include working with people to minimise the possibility of them becoming homeless again in the future.

Preventing people becoming homeless in the first place is the key to reducing the impact on individuals, families and the wider community. Increasing the provision of affordable housing is a priority to meeting housing needs, in particular those who are homeless. This strategy identifies the actions being taken and the initiatives to be introduced by the Council, other statutory bodies and agencies, to reduce homelessness in East Devon.

The strategy has been developed with the help of **the Homelessness Strategy Review Group**, made up of council officers and representatives from partner agencies (see Appendix 2)

The aims of the group are to:

- review the East Devon Homelessness Strategy 2003 and current service provision
- develop and recommend a revised Homelessness Strategy for East Devon
- identify, recommend and implement best practice
- prepare an action plan to deal with homelessness in East Devon
- establish monitoring arrangements for the implementation of the strategy.

The action plan (Appendix 1) has been developed jointly by all partners (members of the Homelessness Strategy Review Group) and will be implemented by those partners over the coming months.

¹ East Devon Homelessness Strategy July 2003

² East Devon Housing Strategy 2008-2011 (to be published September 2008)

2. Executive summary

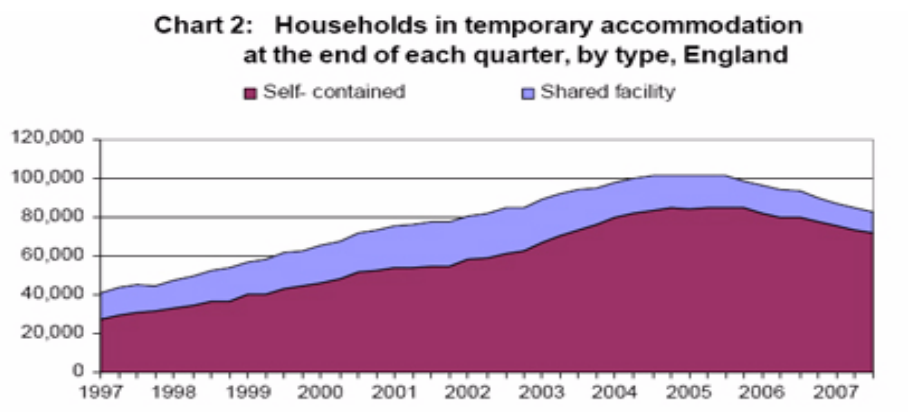
The Homelessness Act 2002 required all local housing authorities to prepare and publish a Homelessness Strategy. This is the second East Devon Homelessness Strategy.

The Homelessness Strategy Review Group, a multi-agency group, was created to review current service provision, consider best practice on homelessness, to commission and endorse a strategic framework to tackle homelessness, prepare an action plan to deal with homelessness in East Devon, and to establish monitoring arrangements for the implementation of the strategy.

The Homelessness Strategy Review Group consulted widely on the review findings and the proposed course of action.

2.1 Context

Nationally 73,000 households were accepted as homeless between April 2006 and March 2007 – a reduction of 22% over the previous year. There were 82,750 homeless households in temporary accommodation as at September 2007, a fall of 11% compared with the same period in 2006. 76% are families with dependent children.



(Source: Government Homelessness Statistical Data)

2.2 The East Devon Picture

In East Devon there were **108 households accepted as homeless in 2007/08 and it is anticipated that around 100 will be accepted as homeless in 2008/09.** The Council had **128 households in temporary accommodation as at May 2008.**

The following gives a comparison of the three main reasons given for homelessness in England, the South West region and East Devon. **(Source: Government P1E Return 2006/07)**

	National	Regional	East Devon
Family, relative and friend exclusions	37%	34%	23%
Relationship breakdown	20%	17%	9%
Loss of private rented accommodation	14%	21%	34%

A significant 'step' reduction in homelessness acceptances in 2007/08 (see page 10 for a comparison with previous year's figures) was achieved locally by:

- improving the homelessness service at East Devon District Council
- introducing a rent deposit/rent in advance scheme
- funding a worker with Young Devon to provide alternative accommodation and prevent homelessness among young people
- funding a worker with Citizens Advice to provide proactive money and debt advice/intervention to people at risk of losing their home
- working closely with other agencies working with homeless households.

There is a Government target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. **The East Devon District Council target is 119 units by December 2009.** To meet this target, a three pronged approach has been adopted by the Council:

- **encouraging those in temporary accommodation to accept the secure tenancy of their current home**
- **tougher action on those who breach tenancy conditions e.g. rent arrears or anti social behavior, leading to possible eviction**
- **direct allocation to homeless households outside the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.**

Further details are given in Section 3.6.

2.3 Strategic Priorities

The Homelessness Strategy Review Group considered that the following key priorities should be adopted by all agencies working with homeless people in East Devon and should be delivered within the next 3-5 years. The detailed action plan (Appendix 1) has been developed by the partners and should be adopted and implemented by each respective agency to ensure that homelessness is reduced in East Devon. The key priorities are to:

- develop and improve partnership working between statutory and other agencies working with homeless households or households at risk of homeless
- significantly increase the provision of suitable social rented housing and other forms of affordable housing
- provide suitable supported accommodation for young people and other vulnerable groups in the East Devon area
- improve the opportunity for households in supported housing or other 'temporary' accommodation to 'move on' to suitable settled accommodation
- increase the opportunity to access the private rented sector
- prevent homelessness and reduce the number of people accepted as homeless
- raise the awareness of homelessness through advice, education and information
- minimize the social and financial cost of homelessness
- establish ongoing strategic partnership arrangements to monitor and review the Homelessness Strategy and action plan.

2.4 Monitoring and Reviewing the Homelessness Strategy

Increasing the understanding of responsibilities, reducing the barriers to joint working and improving service provision across all agencies is key to providing a holistic service to homeless households. It is important that multi-agency working is fostered in East Devon and to this end a single strategic group, the Homelessness Strategy Review Group, will regularly monitor and review the strategy and implementation of the action plan, agree any revisions necessary to meet changing needs or service provision, and be responsible for cross-agency homelessness issues.

2.5 Key Actions and Performance Targets

The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 1) sets out the key measures to be implemented by the partners over the next five years. The performance targets set out are ambitious and challenging, but the partners believe they are achievable.

2.6 Summary and Conclusion

The majority of homelessness acceptances in East Devon are from three main groups:

- people who have been excluded by family and friends
- people losing rented or tied accommodation
- relationship breakdowns.

Homeless prevention measures targeting young people, those losing private rented accommodation and survivors of domestic violence are in place. These include, improved housing options and advice services focusing on homelessness prevention, a more robust investigation and assessment process ensuring consistency of approach, better working relations with partners and agencies working with homeless people, home visits, tenancy sustainment services, a Sanctuary Scheme, Supported Lodgings Scheme and a comprehensive and flexible rent deposit/guarantee scheme.

East Devon District Council will continue to work with Young Devon, Exeter Housing Action Group and other agencies to help prevent homelessness and to provide services for homeless young people. This will help reduce homeless acceptances from young people and will help meet the target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. All agencies should consider the provision of further funding to expand these services to minimise homelessness amongst young people, and to meet current and future demand.

The priority must be to continue to prevent homelessness wherever possible. To this end it is important that Supporting People, the Council and other statutory bodies fund a Devon wide Mediation Service, the expansion of the Devon Supported Lodgings scheme for homeless households, and the provision of emergency/supported housing in East Devon to help reduce the risk of homelessness among young people in our community.

The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords and the private rented sector to prevent homelessness and increase access to social and private rented accommodation in East Devon.

The Council supports Citizens Advice in East Devon to provide proactive debt and money advice and direct early intervention to those at risk of homelessness in the

private housing sector. This work must continue to be funded and targeted at those who are at risk of homelessness because of the anticipated increase in possession action by the landlord or by the mortgage lender over the next few years. Working more closely with private landlords in East Devon must also be a priority in the short term to ensure the market is available to homeless households.

The overwhelming homelessness problem in East Devon is exacerbated by the lack of social rented sector housing and other forms of affordable housing and the inability of agencies, particularly the Council, to meet identified housing need for families and single vulnerable people. Every effort should be made to increase the provision of social rented housing in East Devon and social landlords should be encouraged to meet the housing need of existing tenants by improving, adapting or extending existing accommodation to reduce overcrowding.

3. What is 'homelessness' and an overview of the homeless situation in East Devon

The legal definition of homelessness for England and Wales can be found in the **1996 Housing Act**. In summary a person is homeless if:

- there is no accommodation that they are entitled to occupy
- they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation.

A person is also considered to be 'threatened with homelessness' if it is likely that they will become homeless within 28 days.

Homelessness is one of the single most important issues facing housing in East Devon today, and is driven by a wide range of physical, social and political factors, many of which are not within the immediate control of the Council or indeed any one agency.

Research has been able to identify **a range of risk factors associated with homelessness and crisis points which can precipitate homelessness** that make it possible to identify those at risk. These include:

- unemployment
- lack of qualifications and basic literary skills
- young parenthood
- alcohol and drug abuse
- mental health problems
- financial crisis and mounting debts
- previous service in the armed forces
- lack of social support network
- leaving care
- leaving prison
- marital or relationship problems – often linked to domestic violence.

Homelessness is usually caused by a combination of factors as these issues seldom occur in isolation.

Many people understand homelessness and are able to relate to the problems homeless people experience. They can also see the solutions and know how to overcome being homeless. However **“until you actually experience homelessness you cannot truly know what it is like”** (said by a homeless person during the review process).

Many homeless people experience problems with relationships, loneliness, reduced educational attainment (for children), poor physical or mental health, and feelings of exclusion and hopelessness.

Homeless people often live chaotic lifestyles making access to support services difficult and giving a low capacity to deal with bureaucratic processes. Joint assessment across services, rapid referrals and customer focus processes are essential.

Homelessness is expected to grow over the next few years among owner occupiers who are unable to keep up with mortgage payments. This trend is already showing in East Devon. In addition, the growth in the elderly population will impact on public services including housing. However, it is anticipated that the probable increase in demand for housing can be met from good use of the existing housing stock and through the anticipated increase in future housing provision, particularly affordable housing.

When threatened with homelessness many people are able to secure alternative accommodation on their own or with the help of family or friends, but some are not. A significant number turn to the Council for help, but only those that the law define as homeless are 'accepted' for housing, in which case the Council has a duty to provide accommodation. East Devon District Council receives approximately 300 homeless applications per annum and typically accepts a homeless duty towards 110 households per annum.

The financial and social costs of homelessness are huge. In East Devon, **the Council spends around £800,000 each year on direct services for homeless people.** The Supporting People Programme managed by the Devon County Council has a budget of £21million providing housing related services to many people in hostels, sheltered housing schemes, supported housing or their own homes. Across the county over £7million of that budget supports services to homeless people or those at risk of homelessness. East Devon District Council receives around £350,000 from Supporting People to fund services specifically for homeless people (see Section 6.5) Other partners also provide significant financial support for services for homeless people.

East Devon's homelessness problem is not new. Like many areas in the South West, the lack of both settled housing and affordable housing are key factors. Exceptionally high house prices and private rentals force many households on average and below average income to look to the Council to meet their housing needs. The stock of social rented housing has reduced over the last 20 years, but with changes to Right To Buy rules and increased house building a slight increase in social rented housing is currently being achieved.

Partners believe that it is unacceptable that anyone should be homeless in East Devon and this strategy identifies a number of key actions that need to be delivered to ensure fewer people are homeless in future.

3.1 Homeless Service and Prevention Measures

The Council has introduced a number of improvements to the homeless service and a number of prevention measures targeting young people, those losing private rented accommodation and survivors of domestic violence, in particular.

These include:

- improved housing options and advice services focusing on homelessness prevention
- a more robust homeless investigation and assessment process ensuring consistency of approach

- better working relations with partners and agencies working with homeless people
- direct allocations to prevent homelessness
- home visits
- tenancy sustainment services
- a Sanctuary Scheme to help survivors of domestic violence to remain in their own home if they want to
- supported lodgings placements
- a comprehensive and flexible rent deposit/guarantee scheme.

The Council will continue to work with Devon County Council, Young Devon, Exeter Housing Action Group and other agencies to help prevent homelessness and to provide services for homeless young people. This will help reduce homelessness acceptances from young people and will help meet the target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. All agencies should consider the provision of further funding to expand these services to minimise homelessness among young people and to meet current and future demand. A partnership between district councils and the Devon County Council to deliver the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) to reduce homeless acceptances among 16 and 17 year old young people was successful. The target was to reduce acceptances from this group by 50% from 382 in 2005 to 191 acceptances in 2008. The actual acceptances by all Devon district councils in 2007 totaled 202 – a very good achievement!

The priority must be to continue to prevent homelessness wherever possible and this was achieved in 272 cases in 2007/08. This comprised:

- 63 direct allocations
- 118 Rent Deposits
- 56 young people found alternative suitable accommodation or successfully returned home by Young Devon
- 17 cases where Citizens Advice workers prevented or delayed homelessness
- 18 miscellaneous cases that include, for example, security improvements to the home of a survivor of domestic violence, successful mediation with family or a successful home visit by Housing Officer.

To this end it is important that Supporting People, the Council and other statutory bodies fund a Devon wide mediation service, the expansion of the Devon supported lodgings scheme for homeless households, and the provision of emergency/supported housing in East Devon to help reduce the risk of homelessness among young people in our community.

The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords and the private rented sector to prevent homelessness and increase access to social and private rented accommodation in East Devon.

The Council supports Citizens Advice in East Devon to provide proactive debt and money advice and direct early intervention to those at risk of homelessness in the private housing sector. This work must continue to be funded and targeted at those who are at risk of homelessness because of the anticipated increase in possession action by the landlord or by the mortgage lender over the next few years. Working more closely with private landlords in East Devon must also be a priority in the short term to ensure the market is available to homeless households.

The joint working between statutory and other agencies working with homeless people has significantly improved over recent years. There is a consensus about what needs to be done and a willingness to work together in the interest of the household who is homeless or threatened with homeless. Every effort will be made to maintain this good working relationship.

3.2 The Population, Income and Housing Market of East Devon

The Housing Strategy 2008-2011 gives a full picture of the population of East Devon including ethnicity, age profiles and household type.

The key facts are:

- the population of East Devon is estimated as being 131,200 (2007 Office of National Statistics)
- 54% of the population is over the age of 45 - 27% is over 65% and this is expected to rise to 33% by 2024 (Devon County Council)
- the Black & Ethnic minority groups form a low proportion of our population (0.7%)
- the total number of dwellings in the district is 61,200 - 7% are Council owned, 3% Housing Association, 10% private rented and 80% owner occupied (Source:2007 House Condition Survey)
- the average price for a property in East Devon in 2007 was £259,213
- the average private rental charge in East Devon can be estimated by using the indicative Exeter Local Housing Allowances (LHA) for the Exmouth area and the indicative East and Mid Devon area LHA for the rest of East Devon.

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed
Exeter area	£495	£625	£710
East and Mid Devon area	£415	£520	£650

(Source: EDDC Housing Benefit Section publish data on Local Housing Allowances)

- in 2007, the average salary in East Devon was £21,700, but when the income of people who are not in full time work is taken into consideration the average household income is less than £15,000 (Source: Economic Trends Nov 2007).

A large proportion of households in East Devon are not able to access the private housing market. Many are unable to afford the rental charge in the private rental market even with housing benefit assistance. A significant number of households cannot access private rented housing because they do not meet the 'reference' standards imposed by landlords and estate agents. References are standard practice in the private rented sector and the process sometimes includes a level of income that the prospective tenant must have before being considered by the landlord.

3.3 Homelessness - The National and Local Picture - Key Facts

- **The overall number of households accepted as homeless throughout the country has steadily reduced** in recent years, and this is mirrored in East Devon.

	England	South West	East Devon
2004/05	120,860	9,680	154
2005/06	93,980	7,820	183
2006/07	73,360	5,270	113
2007/08	Not available	Not available	108

(Source: Government Homelessness Statistical Data)

- Year ending March 2007 – 73,360 households accepted as homeless by all local authorities in the UK – a national reduction of 22% from the previous year.
- South West region saw a reduction of 33% for the same year. In East Devon the reduction was 39%.
- The figures below show the level of homelessness in East Devon compared to some other Devon district councils for the financial year 2006/07.

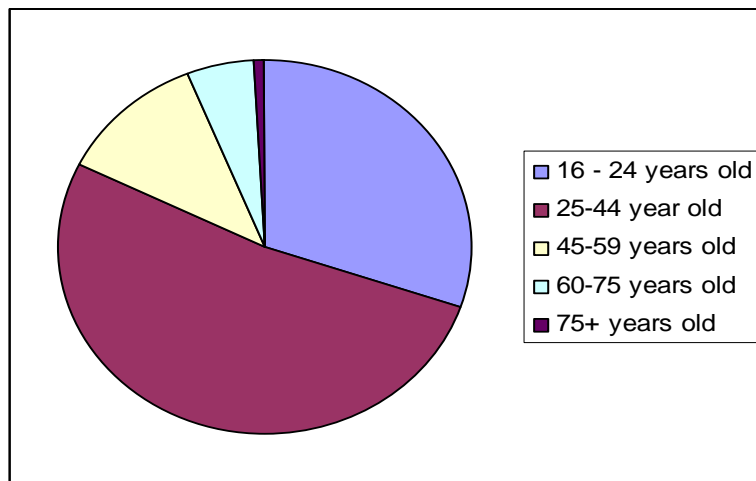
District	Number of Households (Census 2001)	Number Accepted as Homeless (2006/07)	Number per 1,000 Households
East Devon	49,173	113	2.3
Exeter	40,776	183	4.5
Mid Devon	25,326	55	2.2
North Devon	33,764	72	2.1
West Devon	17,961	64	3.5
England	20,451,670	73,360	3.6

(Source: Government Homelessness Statistical Data)

- These figures show that levels of homelessness in East Devon are lower than the national average and similar to most other rural district councils in Devon.
- East Devon District Council receives approximately 300 homeless applications per annum and typically accepts a homeless duty towards 110 households per annum.
- In England in 2006/07 67% of all acceptances were families.
- In the South West region it was 64% and in East Devon 60%.
- **In East Devon a greater percentage of 'single' households are being accepted as homeless than the national and regional average.**

- The same trend is happening with households in temporary accommodation. In the UK there were 82,750 households in temporary accommodation on 30 September 2007 - 11% lower than this time last year.
- **In East Devon we had 128 households in temporary accommodation as at May 2008 – 27% lower than this time last year.** This does not take into account the numbers of households who may be homeless and living with friends or residing in hostel accommodation or supported housing projects in East Devon such as Long Wragg Court in Axminster or St Andrews, Exmouth.
- It is estimated that less than 10 households are sleeping rough at anyone time in East Devon. There is no clear information about the number of households (normally single people) staying with friends or relatives short term (sofa surfing).

The chart below shows the age range of households accepted as homeless by the Council in 2006/07, and is indicative of the current age range of homeless acceptances.



(Source: Government P1E Return 2006/07)

- In comparison during the last year the Council's rent deposit scheme has supported in excess of 100 households accessing private rented accommodation.

3.4 Reasons for homelessness

The table below gives a comparison of the three main reasons given by applicants who were accepted as homeless in England, the South West and East Devon. The figures show marked differences (Source: Government P1E Return 2006/07).

	National	Regional	East Devon
Family, relative and friend exclusions	37%	34%	23%
Relationship breakdown	20%	17%	9%
Loss of private rented accommodation	14%	21%	34%

- In East Devon a significant number of homelessness acceptances are the result of households losing accommodation in the private rented sector (34% - about 40 households).
- This compares to:
 - Exeter City - 13%
 - North Devon - 31%
 - West Devon - 38%
 - Mid Devon - 27%.
- Differences may be as a result of applicants choosing to access housing through the homeless route rather than considering the alternative choices available to meet their housing need.

The figures show that the Council is accepting as homeless a larger percentage of 'single' households than the national and regional average, but accepting significantly less homeless households whose main reason for becoming homeless is 'family, relative or friend exclusion'. It is believed this is the result of the effective work of Young Devon, Connexions and Exeter Housing Action Group and other partner agencies who are able to provide alternative accommodation options for homeless young people.

The following chart shows the main reasons given by households accepted as homelessness in East Devon in 2006/07 (Source is P1E return)

Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	18
Other relatives or friends no longer or able to accommodate	8
Non violent breakdown of relationship	3
Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	7
Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	1
Racially motivated violence	0
Other forms of violence	0
Racially motivated harassment	0
Other forms of harassment	2
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	11
Rent arrears on local authority or other public sector dwelling	0
Rent arrears on RSL or other HA dwellings	0
Rent arrears on private sector dwellings	4
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)	38
Reasons other than termination of AST	2
Required to leave National Asylum Support Service accommodation	0
Left prison or on remand	1
Left hospital	1
Left other institution or LA care	5
Left HM Forces	0
Other reasons	12
Total	113

(Source: Government P1E Return 2006/07)

3.5 Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

The government target to eliminate the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) type accommodation for families has worked very well with very few local authorities now reporting families in B&B for more than 6 weeks. A similar target has been set by government for 16/17 year olds to be implemented by 2010.

The Council is determined to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, using it only in emergency situations where there is no other form of accommodation available and then for no longer than six weeks.

3.6 Temporary Accommodation

In 2004 the Government set a target for each local housing authority to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. In East Devon this means that by December 2009 there should be fewer than 119 households residing in temporary accommodation owned or managed by the Council. The Council will also aim to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 10% year on year after 2010. As at May 2008 the number in council temporary accommodation is 128 households.

To meet this target the Council has adopted a three pronged approach, contained in our Temporary Accommodation Reduction Plan:

- **Encouraging those in temporary accommodation to accept the secure tenancy of their current home.** If the current accommodation meets a household's housing need and is in an area where they would like to live then it is possible to offer the household the opportunity to occupy the property on a secure tenancy.
- **Tougher action on those who breach tenancy conditions e.g. rent arrears or anti social behavior, leading to possible eviction.** Many households in temporary accommodation pay their rent and meet the obligations and responsibilities of their non-secure tenancy agreement. However, some households do not. To be fair to all residents in our community the Council is treating breaches of tenancy conditions seriously and is now taking appropriate action to either change behaviour or seek possession of the property where appropriate.
- **Direct allocation to homeless households outside the Choice Based Lettings Scheme.** There are occasions when it is possible to allocate an empty property to a household to prevent their homelessness. This is done in all cases where the applicant has a disability or where the household are elderly.

A check on all temporary accommodation will be undertaken every 2 months. Also, to further reduce the number of temporary tenancies the Council will undertake to carry out an options interview with all non secure tenants every 6 months.

3.7 The Waiting List and Choice Based Lettings

As well as those households in temporary accommodation waiting to be housed, there are a significant number of vulnerable households in supported housing, 'emergency' open access or other temporary accommodation in East Devon or other locations in Devon that are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

There are over 4,500 households on the general register for housing (waiting list), as at April 2008, including a significant number of existing tenants who want to transfer to a larger, smaller, or more suitable properties. There are in excess of 1,500 applicants in the Gold band (applicants in urgent housing need) and the average wait to be housed is 4 years. The Council is conducting a review of the Housing Register during 2008/09.

Most of our properties are allocated through the Choice Based Lettings scheme which was introduced in February 2006 and revised in January 2008. The Choice Based Lettings scheme places applicants in Gold, Silver, and Bronze bands, reflecting their priority for re-housing.

Key Facts:

- between 300-350 social housing units (both Council and RSL) become available each year to let
- 50% of this accommodation is only suitable for the elderly or those with a disability, bringing the accommodation available for general needs to about 150-175 units per year
- only 30-40 properties are suitable or available for single households
- 120-135 properties are suitable for families each year
- all households accepted as homeless by the Council have their applications placed in the 'gold' band
- 80% of available social housing units are allocated to applicants registered in the 'gold' band
- the Council policy is that half of the housing allocated to 'gold' band is to be allocated to homeless households.

It can be seen that with:

- 108 households accepted as homeless in 2007/08
- 128 households in temporary accommodation (May 2008)
- about 30 households each year ready to move on from existing insecure, emergency or supported accommodation
- the majority of these households requiring general needs housing

the current supply of social rented housing is not sufficient to meet existing identified demand for settled accommodation.

3.8 Housing need and demand

The demand for social housing arises from many groups including:

- established households already in need
- newly arising need from established households
- households moving into the area
- 'hidden' households emerging as new households within the area
- homeless households housed in hostels and B&B accommodation.

The Exeter and Torbay Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 report has identified a need for approximately 1,200 new social rented units over the next five years.

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2007, and the Housing Strategy 2008-2011, identify a delivery programme of 200 affordable homes each year across the district from 2008-2011 and an aspiration to deliver 300 units a year from 2011-2013. We currently provide about 60 new homes a year so this step change in output would make a significant contribution to meeting the demand from homeless households.

We know that the majority of homelessness acceptances are 'families', from single teenage pregnant women to large extended families. The majority of households in temporary accommodation are 'families'. **The provision of social rented housing must be targeted at 'families'.**

This does not mean that other housing needs must not be addressed. **The supply of suitable accommodation for single people must also be increased.** Settled accommodation is one of the major factors to help reduce re-offending, reduce mental health problems, and increase opportunities for education, training and employment. It is also important to ensure emergency or supported housing provision is freed up and used effectively to ensure residents are able to move on to settled accommodation.

4. Homelessness and the Devon Strategic Housing Group

East Devon District Council works with other Devon authorities on a countywide basis through the **Devon Strategic Housing Group**. The Devon Strategic Housing Group is a partnership of seven district councils, Torbay Council, Exeter and Plymouth City Councils, Devon County Council and Housing Associations.

The Devon Strategic Housing Group has a broad remit and wide-ranging work programme covering all housing issues. In order to ensure some focus the group currently employs and manages an Affordable Housing Coordinator and a Homelessness Coordinator.

The Devon Homelessness Managers Group (DHMG) is a sub group of the Devon Strategic Housing Group. Alongside the Devon Homelessness Coordinator the DHMG is responsible for developing and implementing countywide solutions in line with key objectives in each authority's homelessness strategies. In order to achieve this the DHMG has developed a sub regional action plan on homelessness which can be viewed at www.dshg.org.uk. The current action plan includes:

- developing a quality standards framework for housing advice / homelessness prevention
- developing protocols and effective working arrangements with strategic partners in order to prevent homelessness
- monitoring homelessness trends and sharing best practice
- increasing capacity and skills
- reviewing the Domestic Violence Code of Good Practice.

In addition to the above one of the key areas of work contained in the action plan relates to the Local Area Agreement. The Local Area Agreement contains a priority to 'Improve Housing Options for Homeless and Vulnerable Clients'. This has several work streams including:

- improving access to the private rented sector
- reducing youth homeless
- improving multi agency joint working in relation to clients with complex needs with a view to improving discharge arrangements from institutional settings
- the modernisation of older people's housing support services.

Further information about countywide work can be found at www.dshg.org.uk

5. Homelessness and other landlords

5.1 Homelessness and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

The Housing Corporation in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Housing published a strategy³ to tackle homelessness in November 2006. This encouraged RSLs to work with local authorities to prevent homelessness. The Housing Corporation has agreed to:

- support local authorities in their leadership role to tackle homelessness
- ensure housing associations are fulfilling their statutory duty to work with local authorities to contribute to tackling homelessness
- promote co-operation between housing associations and local authorities in tackling homelessness
- embed prevention of homelessness and tenancy sustainment as one of housing associations' strategic and operational priorities
- promote cross-boundary co-operation, choice and mobility for all households;
- promote better use of existing housing stock
- contribute to reducing homelessness in line with our commitment to promoting sustainable and mixed communities.

The Housing Corporation has asked all RSL's, either on their own or in partnership with other local associations, to consider preparing homelessness action plans, setting out how they will work with local authorities to tackle homelessness. These plans should link to local and regional housing and Supporting People strategies, and form an integral part of overall lettings strategies. The plans should include:

- agreed nomination requirements
- targets for contributing to meeting the Government's 2010 temporary accommodation reduction target
- measures to address the needs of vulnerable people
- measures to address the needs of black and minority ethnic households
- prevention of tenancy breakdowns through housing advice or mediation, and other approaches;
- measures to tackle homelessness amongst client groups that do not easily fit within established arrangements, such as ex-service people, and other groups such as ex-offenders, gypsies and travellers and single homeless people
- move on from hostels and supported housing
- consideration of the case for identifying a Homelessness Champion at a senior level within their organisation to promote delivery of any action plan
- engaging with local authorities, voluntary and community groups to ensure they are taking account of the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) households. (In particular, we expect large mainstream associations to involve BME-led housing associations or community organisations in their area to create better understanding of problems and to ensure that interventions are prioritised and relevant.)

³ 'Tackling Homelessness' Housing Corporation Strategy, Housing Corporation 2006

5.2 Homelessness and Private Landlords

The loss of private rented sector accommodation is one of the main causes of homelessness in East Devon. It is also a source of settled accommodation for those in housing need. Access to this type of accommodation is difficult for those on low incomes or those in receipt of housing benefit – see section on Homelessness and Housing Benefit.

The Council and other agencies need to engage with the landlords and estate agents in East Devon to maximise the opportunity for people who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to access private rented accommodation where that is required and when it is suitable.

Lifecare Solutions Ltd provides support accommodation for homeless households accepted by the Council that require temporary accommodation. A total of three properties providing 27 units of accommodation are located in Honiton and Exmouth. This type of accommodation is part of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio.

6. Homelessness and specific client groups

6.1 Homelessness and young people

- 3% of the population are care leavers aged 16-20
- nationally 8% of homelessness acceptances are within this age group
- in East Devon the majority of those people that have been excluded from home and accepted as homeless in 2006/07 were young people (this may often be linked to domestic violence occurring in the home)

Many approach the Council and other agencies for advice and assistance. Some are accommodated by friends and relatives. In addition young people leave care. The Council and partners help prevent homelessness, provide alternative accommodation options and enable some young people to return home. During 2007/08 38 young people (16-24 year olds) were accepted as homeless.

Joint working by many agencies has enabled a significant reduction in homeless acceptances of young people in Devon (see Section 3.1).

Devon County Council and other Devon Local Authorities are currently reviewing the success of services to prevent youth homelessness and whether to continue funding them in future. A Devon wide Local Area Agreement is being developed and will probably include a priority to "improve housing options for the homeless and vulnerable clients". This will include outcomes that:

- increase access to the private rented sector
- improve the accommodation options for those being discharged from institutional settings
- build on the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) partnership work which has taken place to prevent youth homelessness
- improve outcomes for people with complex needs.

There needs to be a 'continuum' of care and service provision for young people provided seamlessly and jointly by agencies. It is often too big a transition to go from leaving care or being excluded from home to independent living and managing a tenancy. Some young people are capable of doing this but many are not. Many services are not accessible to young people who have substance misuse problems or high support needs.

The key local priorities for young people are:

- provision of 'supported housing project' (possibly Foyer type scheme)
- provision of 'emergency' direct access accommodation
- provision of accommodation based services for those with high needs and chaotic lifestyles
- provision of move on accommodation
- provision of 'assessment' and 'trainer' accommodation for young people
- provision of 'mediation' service to help reduce the number of young people being excluded from home or to help young people re-engaging with their families

- continue the provision of the services for young people by Young Devon, Nightstop, Smartmove, Women's Aid Safe Project and other supported lodgings scheme
- continue with the Supporting People funded floating support service provided by Carr-Gom
- provide intensive joint support to sustain tenancies
- increase willingness and flexibility between agencies to work together in the interest of young people.

The success of this strategy in tackling homelessness among young people will be measured by:

- a reduction in the number of young people approaching as homeless
- an increase in the number of move on accommodation units available
- a reduction in the number of children and young people being accepted as vulnerable
- a reduction in the number of evictions from supported accommodation
- improvements in the chances for young people to progress independently with their lives.

6.2 Homelessness among older people, and those with a physical disability and a sensory impairment

Older people in East Devon are a significant and growing proportion of the population. It is estimated that 27% of the population are currently 65 years and older, and this will rise to 33% by 2024. The Social Services Strategic Programme 2004-2008 identifies a number of actions that relate to housing and preventing homelessness among older people, those with a physical disability and a sensory impairment.

Homelessness among these groups can and should be prevented wherever possible. Keeping people in their existing home by providing adaptations or services to maintain independence must be the priority. However, there are occasions when it is not possible or desirable to maintain a household in their existing accommodation and the Council will continue to work closely with Devon County Council Adult and Community Services and Devon Care and Repair to meet housing need.

Helping a household to move to a smaller home (downsizing) is and will continue to be a priority for the Council. 25 households were assisted in this way during 2007/08. RSLs will be encouraged to introduce and fund schemes to enable under-occupation in their properties to be reduced.

It is a priority within the Council's Allocation Policy to enable those who require accommodation and support to access sheltered housing. Direct allocations are used regularly to prevent homelessness and eliminate the need for older people and those with a physical disability and/or sensory impairment to have to go through the homelessness route. In 2007/08 20 clients were helped in this way.

6.3 Homelessness, offending and community safety

The cost of keeping an individual offender in the prison system is in excess £40,000 per annum. The cost of supervising an offender within the community is in excess of £4,000 per annum. In addition, there are further costs associated with the Criminal Justice System including enhanced Probation supervision interventions, Youth Offending Team, Police, Social Services and other agencies. There are also costs associated with specific accredited rehabilitation programmes, substance misuse treatment programmes, and the provision of health and mental health services. It is not unreasonable therefore to conclude that the real cost of the service provision required for an individual offender is in excess of £100,000 per annum.

Appropriate housing is a key component in reducing re-offending. Many offenders do not access housing related services easily, particularly through the homeless route. Many offenders are not considered to be in priority need and many will fail the test of 'intentionality' (see 'Definitions' for detailed explanation).

The Council works closely with Devon and Cornwall Probation Area by participating in the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi Agency Risk Assessments (MARAC) in providing settled accommodation for a number of offenders each year. During the last 12 months the Council has been working with PORCH, an agency that provides coordinated support to Priority Prolific Offenders (PPO's) released in the Exeter, East Devon and Mid Devon areas, to secure settled accommodation for offenders in an effort to reduce their offending behaviour.

It is important that the Council continues to work strategically with agencies working with offenders who may be at risk of being homeless and where accommodation could significantly improve the chances of reducing re-offending behaviour. It is also important that the Council provide settled accommodation to facilitate 'move on' from hostels and supported housing projects.

In order to achieve the specific Local Area Agreement objectives, it is vital that agencies work collaborative and link with the 'Reducing Re-offending Action Plan' (RRAP), so that the housing and support needs of ex offenders are met, and the level of re-offending is significantly reduced. In 2007/08 6 clients from these groups were allocated housing.

6.4 Homelessness and substance misuse

"There is still a group of people with complex needs who are not benefiting from services because their lives and engagement with services are too chaotic. These adults continue to face poor outcomes in the form of offending, long-term mental and physical health problems, poor family relationships, continuing substance misuse, worklessness and deprivation"⁴ (HM Government, September 2006).

The report quoted above details the impact of social exclusion in England and in particular those who are amongst the most socially excluded in society.

⁴ Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion, HM Government, September 2006

The Supporting People Strategy⁵ emphasises the need for individuals to have the life skills they need to live independently, such as cooking and budgeting, and that they be given support in gaining and maintaining settled accommodation and to identify training and job opportunities. These are areas, in addition to housing, which the Drug and Alcohol Action Team's (DAAT) service users consistently cite as being of high importance if they are to remain drug free and integrate into the community.

The Devon DAAT held a range of consultation events in November 2007 with service users and stakeholders. One of the highest priorities to come out of each of these meetings was to improve access to housing and housing related support for drug users and a very clear recognition of the impact housing status has on treatment outcomes.

In 2006 Shelter produced a report 'Safe as houses'⁶ on housing drug users, from which the following two quotations are taken:

"...drug misusers without housing or with housing problems have difficulty sustaining or entering drug treatment. Equally, those leaving drug treatment or custody without suitable housing and support are likely to relapse and may re-offend or become involved in anti-social behaviour. The provision of housing and housing support is, therefore, crucial to the effective resettlement of any drug misuser."

"There is a clear relationship between homelessness and drug use. Reviews of homelessness among single people have identified a number of risk or trigger factors for their homelessness, including drug use. Other studies indicate that the experience of homelessness may in itself precipitate increased drug use."

A rough sleeper in Devon said: "They don't care about us. If I had a choice I would be in a flat and staying clean. As it is I have to keep warm in order to stay alive and safe. It's hard."

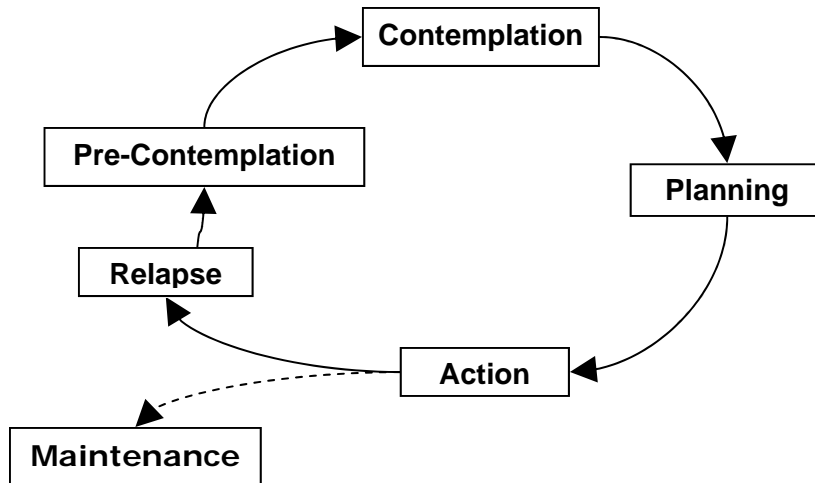
Several factors compound the difficulties for problematic drug and alcohol users in accessing accommodation:

- many are deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless if they have lost accommodation due to alcohol or drug use and are thus ineligible for help from district councils
- the interpretation of the term "vulnerable adult"
- the arrest and imprisonment of 2 members of staff at the Wintercomfort Centre in Cambridgeshire for "knowingly permitting or suffering" the supply of drugs on the site has given rise to misguided concern amongst many landlords (Social and Private sector) about the legality of housing someone who uses illicit drugs
- rent arrears, 'poor' accommodation history, and high rent or guarantee deposits pose a block to many people on low incomes or in receipt of benefits, indeed many landlords refuse applications from benefit recipients

⁵ Independence and Opportunity, Our Strategy for Supporting People, Communities and Local Government, June 2007

⁶ Safe as Houses – An Inclusive Approach to Housing Drug Users. Shelter. February 2006

- geography of Devon - over 90% of Devon is classified as rural with approximately 30% of Devon's population living in rural areas (this results in a very sparsely populated County, with low density ratios⁷)
- the range of provision does not necessarily match the continuum of need, ie high level support in accommodation based projects to floating support and on to independent living
- the range of provision does not necessarily match the Cycle of Change⁸ – see figure below – in terms of the individual's journey through the treatment system.



Drug and alcohol treatment is not an easy process for the individual as it challenges life styles, choices made and levels of personal responsibility. Hence an individual may become “stuck” in a particular point in the treatment pathway for some periods of time before being able to move on in his or her own personal cycle of change. There is evidence to suggest that many drug users need up to 7 or 8 attempts at treatment spanning a number of years before finally becoming truly ‘drug free’.

Clearly there is a need for accommodation provision to be available for those who wish to become or stay free of drug and alcohol, but such provision must begin to understand that people meet various life events which can challenge someone's best intentions and give rise to crises. The pragmatic response is to work in a multi-agency manner, wrapping appropriate services around the individual to support them through the difficulties and helping them back onto their path.⁹

This will involve:

- identification of the agencies/services need to support the individual
- focussing on the needs of the person rather than those of the agencies
- negotiation and action planning with the individual

⁷ Devon Rural Profile 2006. Devon Rural Network and Devon Strategic Partnership on www.devon.gov.uk

⁸ Prochaska JO, DiClemente CC. Transtheoretical therapy: towards a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy Theory Res Prac* 1982

⁹ Devon LAA27 – Multi-Agency Working Theme. May 2008

- information sharing
- clear pathways into support services.

Any strategy to meet the needs of drug and alcohol users must reflect the cycle of change to ensure that provision exists to enable people at differing points of the change cycle to access appropriate accommodation. They need to be able to do this without the fear that they will be judged, or prejudged, according to their drug use, lapses or maintenance. This will only begin to work well when all agencies are able to cooperate more effectively.

6.5 Housing and Supporting People

Supporting People (SP) is a programme which pays for housing-related support services. It enables adults who need housing related support to live independently in the community. It is administered by Devon County Council in partnership with the local district councils, the Devon Primary Care Trust and the Devon and Cornwall Probation Service.

Within a budget of roughly £21million, Devon Supporting People spends around £7million on homeless services for a wide range of client groups across the county. There is an expectation that Supporting People funded services in Devon are open to referrals from across Devon but the access and referral processes, and often the administration of waiting lists, limit the opportunity for the Council and other agencies to access suitable supported housing within appropriate timescales to prevent homelessness. Around £1.7million is spent in East Devon and some of that funding is provided for specific client groups such as those with mental health problems. For example in East Devon funding is provided for a supported housing project in Exmouth and for a floating support service provided by a housing association.

Devon Supporting People is awaiting the outcome of consultation on the recently drafted Strategic Review of the Homeless Sector¹⁰.

East Devon receives around £350,000 of funding specifically for homelessness, primarily to help homeless single people with support needs, young people at risk of homelessness and women at risk of domestic violence. For example Supporting People helps fund a supported housing project run by a housing association in Axminster for young people. A large proportion of this funding provides a floating support service by Carr-Gomm that helps people maintain existing accommodation, provides skills to enable people to live independently and general support services.

The funding of services in East Devon must be maintained and increased to enable the priorities identified in this strategy to be implemented.

¹⁰ Strategic Review and Commissioning Framework for Devon Supporting People Homelessness Sector 2009/10 - 2011/12, Housing and Support Partnership May 2008

6.6 Homelessness and mental health

There are currently two residential care homes, one in Honiton (five beds) and one in Exmouth. Alexandra House, Exmouth also provides accommodation for people with low level mental health problems. Supporting People funded provision is also available elsewhere in Devon particularly in Exeter. Mental health teams can access some housing directly via Housing Associations.

Currently, there are two community mental health teams in Honiton and Exmouth, with a floating mental health support service. A strategic move towards more floating support, but still with some accommodation based support, is proposed.

Community Mental Health Teams ceased to exist from 31 March 2008. The service has been re-organised around need to deal with:

- urgent inpatient requirement
- common and frontline (lower) need
- recovery and independence

Many public services eligibility criteria determine access to services. A lot of people with mental health problems do not meet thresholds to enable them to access appropriate services and this increases the risk of homelessness.

The South West region has specialist mental health provision within the prison service and so attracts referrals from other areas of the country. Therefore there are a disproportionate number of inmates with mental health problems. It is estimated that 40% of ex offenders have mental health problems and a significant number are now being managed in the community as there are fewer secure beds in secure accommodation.

The Community Mental Health Team and the Council are developing a better mutual understanding of homelessness and vulnerability with regard to people with mental health problems.

The key priorities are:

- a requirement for more supported lodgings with landlords who are able to cope with young people with high levels of need
- to increase access available for rent deposit schemes
- to increase preventative work for those who fall below the threshold for referral to Mental Health services
- to raise awareness of the need for Mental Health Services to work with support and housing services to prevent homelessness and support tenancy sustainment
- the need to develop and implement an integrated assessment process (this would allow statutory and voluntary agencies to engender trust to reduce duplication and improve joint working)
- to develop a shared risk tool (need for all partners to be aware of how risk is managed in respective agencies and explore risk management across them)

- to develop a protocol regarding the sharing of information for the purposes of more effective joint working and better outcomes for people with mental health needs
- to map resources across Devon for homeless people including drop ins, hostels, advice and support
- to have one point of access to housing related support and information on the choice of services and options available, similar to the Torbay model.

6.7 Homelessness and health

Homeless people experience some of the greatest health inequalities and have been identified by the Government as an extremely vulnerable group and therefore a priority for local action. Work to reduce health inequalities involves addressing the root causes of ill health including people's living and working conditions in addition to improving local health services. The Devon Primary Care Trust and Devon Partnership Trust and key partner organisations have a central role in both preventing homelessness and providing health services for homeless people in East Devon.

A large proportion of people sleeping rough suffer mental health problems, have a drug or alcohol problem, have poor physical health and are more likely to kill themselves than the general population.

These health issues are not confined to just those who sleep rough. Families living in temporary or unsuitable accommodation also experience physical and mental health problems because:

- overcrowded, cold, damp and unsanitary conditions are highly conducive to physical and mental health
- homeless children are twice as likely to be admitted to hospital as a result of accidents or suffering infectious diseases
- behavioural problems are higher amongst homeless children
- mental health problems are higher among homeless mothers and children.

The Council and other partner agencies will work closely with the Primary Care Trust, General Practitioners and Health Visitor Service to ensure these issues are addressed.

6.8 Homelessness and domestic violence

There has been a significant improvement in working relations between agencies working with victims of domestic violence over the last few years. East Devon Domestic Violence Forum meet regularly and the Council liaises closely with Woman's Aid, Against Domestic Violence and Abuse, the Domestic Abuse Safety Unit and Police, who together provide accommodation, advice and support to survivors of domestic violence.

There is a Devon wide Code of Good Practice that all local authorities in the county have implemented. This is to ensure that a similar level of service provision is accessible to all service users across the county.

Research conducted by the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser with service users identified some barriers to accessing services, what worked and what did not work, how helpful (or not) agencies were, and how the Council and other agencies could improve their services to survivors of domestic violence. The views of service users need to be considered by agencies and introduced where possible.

The Council has trained and dedicated housing officers who deal with homeless presentations and applications from survivors of domestic violence. A 'sanctuary' scheme in East Devon has been operating for a year. This enables victims to remain in their home with additional security measures and support where this is appropriate.

The key priorities are to:

- maintain the existing service provision by the above named agencies
- improve joint working between all agencies in East Devon
- increase the accommodation provision in local refuges
- ensure survivors are given information about Women's Aid outreach services to help prevent the need for families going into a refuge
- identify the services required for those victims with high support needs, because of drugs, alcohol, and/or mental health issues and who may not be able to access a refuge
- increase the opportunity for teenage male children to access accommodation with their families at refuges
- provide both interim and settled move on accommodation
- provide an opportunity for domestic violence victims to be interviewed by female staff
- promote positive action against perpetrators of domestic violence
- enable victims to access legal remedies such as non molestation orders and injunctions more readily
- ensure housing or homeless applicants are kept informed of progress and updated regularly.

6.9 Homelessness and learning disability

The Learning Disability Health and Social Care Partnership provides services across East Devon. The partnership is led by Devon Social Services and involves Social Services the Devon Partnership Trust and the Primary Care Trust in Devon. The partnership aims to provide people with a learning disability and their carers with a "joined up" service and a single point of access.

For many people with disabilities, schemes have been developed offering a range of support and accommodation. This can include group housing or paid carers either living in the property or calling to offer practical help relating to, for example, cleaning or finances. Practical help with remaining in their own home could be provided by Social Services or through Supporting People. A support worker with the Learning Disability team covers East Devon.

Throughout East Devon there are about 320 individuals with learning disabilities (people with a recognised IQ of below 70). Some of the individuals will never have mainstream housing needs as they will always require high level supported housing. Others will require support in their existing home and some may require housing either to meet their specific needs or because they need to live independently.

An exercise mapping information about the 14+ age group in East Devon has been carried out. This showed that potentially 29 people below the age of 18 years with learning disabilities may require social rented or other accommodation. A further 49 people are looking for suitable Supported Living placements or move on accommodation of some kind. The Council should work closely with the learning disability team to ensure the provision of timely and suitable accommodation when required.

'Move on' accommodation is very important. Those with learning disabilities may require this form of housing for longer as it takes them longer to learn life skills. Currently there are long waiting lists for this type of accommodation.

Other services may see a few individuals with learning disabilities or those with border line or mild learning disabilities, but are more likely to see those with learning difficulties such as people with dyslexia. There is a need for better understanding and identification of these issues and for providing support such as form filling for example. People try to hide the fact that they cannot read.

It is important that awareness of these needs is raised with workers in all agencies, as intervention at the right time can be very beneficial. We will continue to work with Devon County Council and other agencies to meet housing need and prevent homelessness.

6.10 Homelessness and black and minority ethnic households

The black and minority ethnic (BME) population of East Devon represents less than 1% of the population, below the Devon average. For comparison Exeter City has nearly 2.4% of the population who are BME.

It is important that all potential services users have equal access to homelessness and other services in the community. Services should be tailored to meet individual needs in terms of how best to communicate with people and the delivery of services. A mapping exercise will be undertaken to identify members of the BME community and to better understand how they would wish homelessness services to be provided.

In addition, the Council is carrying out **Equality Impact Assessments** on all strategies, policies and processes to determine their potential or actual impact, to ensure they do not have an adverse impact on a particular group due to their gender, age, race, religion, sexuality, disability or social class. The assessments will also provide the opportunity to promote equality and diversity, as well as good community relations, and help identify positive impacts we may wish to develop further.

6.11 Homelessness and gypsies and travellers

A Devon wide Gypsy and Traveller housing need assessment was conducted in November 2006¹¹. The East Devon Local Plan 1995-2011 (available to view on www.eastdevon.gov.uk) makes brief reference to gypsies and travellers. It states that, in recent years, there has been little pressure to establish new sites for residential mobile homes, although some existing sites have been upgraded or extended.

Proposals for residential mobile homes will be subject to the same policies as other housing proposals but it states that, for the most part, developments are unlikely to prove environmentally acceptable in terms of their visual impact and prominence. However, it also states that permission may be granted as an exception within existing sites for gypsy caravans or in cases of special circumstances. Information used to determine future site provision in East Devon¹² shows a need for an additional nine pitches up to the year 2011.

The Council receives very few homeless presentations (less than two per year) from gypsies and travellers but services should be sensitive to the needs of this group and a flexible approach to meeting housing need will be adopted.

6.12 Homelessness and housing benefit

The Homelessness Strategy Review Group considered that housing benefit (HB) can be a contributory factor to a household's risk of homelessness. For example in privately rented accommodation there may be a shortfall between market rents and the amount of housing benefit the Council is able to pay under the benefit regulations. It is also essential that applications are processed as quickly as possible. In addition, it is felt that the Council should consider privately rented housing benefit applications a priority to help prevent homelessness. The Benefits Service and Housing Service work closely together and claims are fast tracked where eviction action is in the process of being taken. However, further developments in this area could be introduced to prevent homelessness.

There can be a shortfall between benefit entitlement and rent, and the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) can be used to address this. In 2007/8 the Council spent over £46,165 helping 183 households. For 2008/9 the Council has a budget of £47,256. It is essential that the scheme is accessible to those who may be eligible for help. Closer working with Housing Needs and Rental through the referral of likely recipients would help to ensure assistance is available to potentially qualifying households.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has been introduced for new private sector tenancies from April 2008. One of the key changes is the decision to pay housing benefit to the tenant rather than allowing the tenant to decide to pay the landlord direct. The impact of this change in other pilot areas of the country has not been significant.

¹¹ Devon-wide Gypsy and Traveller Housing Needs Assessment, November 2006, Social Research and Regeneration Unit, University of Plymouth

¹² East Devon Gypsy and Traveller Issues and Options Report April 2008

In East Devon there are three main 'broad rental market areas':

- Exeter - covering the River Exe estuary area and Exmouth area
- Mid and East Devon - covering the majority of East Devon
- West Dorset - covering a small area on the eastern side of the district bordering Dorset.

6.13 Homelessness and service users

Exeter University published a report on the 'Views of Homeless and Vulnerably Housed People in Exeter' in January 2008¹³. A survey of over 150 households was conducted in June/July 2007 and the views expressed are relevant to East Devon. The recommendations for future service provision that agencies, particularly emergency/supported housing projects and support services in East Devon, should consider are:

- although it may not be possible to prevent people from becoming homeless, effective early intervention may be possible as long as agencies take action shortly after people first approach them for assistance
- information about services should be readily available
- flexible and responsive services are required to ensure that action can be taken to assist people at the point of need
- making some services available on evenings and at weekends would be a popular addition to current services
- improve access to private sector housing
- improve inter agency communication and collaboration
- improve staff training and support to ensure service users feel respected by staff
- introduce regular, formal feedback mechanisms in order to allow service users to feel more involved in the way agencies are run as well as making sure services are aware of the needs of those who use them.

Although not directly the responsibility of the Council these important issues are being addressed within the action plan (Appendix 1).

¹³ University of Exeter, Homelessness Collaboration Project, Report on the views of homeless and vulnerably housed people in Exeter, January 2008 (www.eci.org.uk)

7. The way forward

The review of homelessness in East Devon and the development of this strategy provide an opportunity to consider existing joint working, information sharing, strategic and operational groups to provide a more coherent strategic and operational framework to manage homelessness issues in future. It is important that this process does not lose the existing benefits of joint working or the commitment and trust that this joint working has developed among statutory and voluntary agencies and providers.

7.1 Proposed strategic working

A single strategic body in East Devon should monitor the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy. It is proposed that the Homelessness Strategy Review Group should undertake this work. There are a number of key agencies that work with vulnerable people and support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and they should be represented on the Homelessness Strategy Review Group.

The link to other 'strategic' groups such as the Local Strategic Partnership, Supporting People Commissioning Body, the Devon Strategic Housing Group and the Wider Housing Strategic Partnership must be strengthened to ensure homelessness issues are given a higher profile.

7.2 Resources

The delivery of this strategy has resource implications for the Council and other partner agencies. The Council has set an objective to reduce the cost of homelessness through its Value for Money statements and efficiency savings. The Council spends over £800,000 on homelessness each year, and the areas of major expenditure are:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Bed and Breakfast type accommodation | £ 60,000 |
| • provision of supported temporary accommodation | £300,000 |
| • provision of private leased temporary accommodation | £225,000 |
| • homelessness prevention – Young Devon | £ 16,000 |
| • homelessness prevention – Citizens Advice Bureau | £ 22,000 |
| • Housing Advice and Options Service | £220,000 |

The Communities and Local Government Department provides the Council with £70,000 each year to help meet homelessness targets to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and prevent homelessness. This income helps fund some of the homeless prevention measures provided by the Council and other partners.

The Supporting People Programme and how funding is used to more effectively meet the needs of homeless people in East Devon is crucial to the success of this strategy.

However, the largest cost is associated with the increased provision of social housing. Government and the Council have approved significant investment in affordable housing in East Devon. The Cranbrook development will secure around

1,200 affordable housing units with a large proportion being social rented housing. Smaller, but significant developments are being considered in the towns and villages throughout the district.

7.3 Targets and performance measures

Government expects all councils to continue to achieve:

- an end to the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children, except in emergencies, and even then for no longer than six weeks
- maintaining or reducing levels of rough sleeping that are two-thirds below the levels recorded in 1998.
- reducing levels of repeat homelessness
- reducing levels of homelessness against main causes
- reducing the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.

In addition Government expects local authorities to:

- reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010
- end of use of B&B type accommodation for young people by 2010.

The Council and partners should adopt the following key performance measures:

- reduce homelessness acceptances to below 100 by December 2010
- maintain a 10% reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances year on year from 2010
- reduce the average time spent by homeless households in temporary accommodation by 50% by March 2010
- increase the current number of homes available to meet housing need to 200 units for 2008-2011 and 300 units for 2011-2013
- reduce the cost of homelessness over the life of this strategy by 30%
- reduce levels of homelessness against main causes e.g. family and friends exclusions, loss of private rented sector tenancies, and relationship breakdowns
- reduce the average time taken to process a new housing benefit claim 10% by 2009
- fully use the available funding for Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness.

7.4 Key strategic priorities

In the South West region there are around 5,000 households in temporary accommodation at any one time. Excluding London there are 27,000 households in the UK in a similar position. In East Devon there are 128 households in temporary accommodation as at May 2008. In 2007/08 108 households were accepted as homeless and it is anticipated that around 100 will be accepted as homeless in 2008/09.

Each year approximately 300-350 properties become available to let. Of these, around half are general housing stock suitable for homeless families and single homeless households. Around 50% of general needs empty properties each year are let to

homeless households. Therefore only around 70 homeless households are provided with settled accommodation each year. The figures show clearly that the existing supply of suitable affordable housing is well below that required to:

- reduce the length of time homeless households spend in temporary accommodation
- meet the demand for housing in East Devon
- reduce the length of time residents of emergency and supported housing schemes wait before 'move on' to settled accommodation
- meet the demand from those leaving care and other institutions such as prison.

Around 60% of acceptances each year are 'families' and therefore it is clear that the majority of housing provision should be aimed at providing settled accommodation for this group. However, there is a shortage of suitable accommodation for single households who do not require sheltered housing in East Devon. Thus it is important that the Council and all partner agencies adopt a balanced approach to housing provision to meet identified need.

In addition, it is important to consider the location of social housing provision in East Devon. A significant number of homeless households are from Exmouth and about 30 homeless households are currently accommodated outside this area, because of the lack of suitable accommodation. Housing developments are going ahead in East Devon, but very little provision in Exmouth area. The Council and other agencies must address this issue urgently.

A range of emergency, supported and 'move-on' accommodation should be provided through the Supporting People Programme to meet the needs of specific client groups, in particular young people and those with mental health, drug and alcohol problems.

Most public services 'categorise' people to assist service delivery. This is not helpful to homeless people. Delivering services that respond to people's needs holistically, considering both housing and wider service and support needs, is the approach that should be adopted in East Devon. As well as continuing to improve our joint working, the Council and other partner agencies will consider the possibility of developing a 'single' service for homeless people.

The three main reasons for homelessness presentation in East Devon are:

People excluded by family or friends	23%
Loss of private rented tenancy	34%
Relationship breakdown	9%

The following should continue to be provided or introduced to have an impact on homelessness presentations and acceptances:

- a robust investigation and assessment process
- providing alternative choices and options to 'homeless' route to access settled housing
- funding of Young Devon and Citizens Advice to meet the needs of young people and those requiring debt/money advice/support

- home visits to those excluded from home
- funding of a 'mediation' service to prevent homelessness
- maximizing the use of suitable emergency/supported housing provision in Devon
- providing suitable emergency/supported housing (Foyer type scheme) in Exmouth
- a comprehensive and flexible rent deposit/guarantee scheme
- maximising the opportunity to access private rented accommodation
- the provision of a Sanctuary Scheme
- alternative accommodation options for people other than the usual homelessness route
- provision of 'outreach' and support services to homeless households.

On average households remain in temporary accommodation for more than four years. The Homelessness Strategy Review Group recognises that this is unacceptable. The Council and RSLs are doing everything possible to help but there are not enough homes available to meet the existing demand for social rented housing.

The lack of suitable affordable housing in East Devon is a major problem for the whole community. The inability to access sufficient appropriate settled accommodation for single people, families and individuals with multiple chaotic needs is a major blockage for the Council.

The private rented sector in East Devon is both a problem and a resource. It contributes to homelessness and is an avenue to meet housing need. In the short term we must continue to improve standards in the private rented sector, take appropriate enforcement action where necessary and explore ways of using the private rented sector effectively to meet housing need. We must also encourage people to look to the private sector as a positive alternative to homelessness and before housing becomes a crisis.

There is a need to provide appropriate accommodation with support for specific client groups such as ex-offenders, care leavers and people with mental health, drug or alcohol problems. The lack of accommodation increases the probability of people re-offending or renewing drug or alcohol misuse or exacerbating mental health problems. Without more homes the limited amount of supported accommodation, both in and outside East Devon, will continue to be full, with little access opportunity for 'new' clients. The lack of appropriate accommodation available to agencies providing support, rehabilitation and treatment for specific client groups means that their work is not as effective as it could be.

The Council is working with partners to look at the feasibility of foyer schemes in Axminster (approximately seven beds) and Exmouth (approximately six beds).

The East Devon planning policies include a provision for 40% affordable housing units provision on housing developments through the use of section 106 agreements. This will increase the proportion of social housing in many housing developments, and therefore the number of homeless households able to access permanent housing. We are however very reliant on the planning system to deliver affordable housing opportunities.

Having regard to this review of homelessness in East Devon, the following strategic priorities should be approved:

- develop or improve partnership working between statutory and other agencies working with homeless households or households at risk of homeless
- significantly increase the provision of suitable social rented housing and other forms of affordable housing
- provide suitable supported accommodation and floating support for young people and other vulnerable groups in the East Devon area
- improve the opportunity for households in supported housing or other 'temporary' accommodation to 'move on' to suitable settled accommodation
- prevent homelessness and reduce the number of people accepted as homeless
- improve the awareness of homelessness through advice, education and information
- reduce the social and financial cost of homelessness
- establish ongoing strategic partnership arrangements to monitor and review the strategy and action plan.

8. Summary and conclusions

East Devon provides a variety of services to meet the needs of homeless people. A lot of services are targeted at young people or single people with mental health, drug or alcohol problems. The Supporting People Programme commissions services that meet the supported housing needs of many vulnerable client groups. All agencies in East Devon must maintain and improve existing service provision for homeless households over the next five years.

The majority of homelessness acceptances in East Devon are from three main groups:

- people who have been excluded by family and friends
- people losing rented or tied accommodation, and
- relationship breakdown.

The implementation of prevention measures to target these three groups of homeless people has been reasonably effective and must remain a priority in the short to medium term. The Housing Options and Advice Service, a more robust investigation and assessment process that includes home visits and mediation, increased tenancy sustainment services and a comprehensive and flexible rent deposit/guarantee scheme are some of the prevention measures that must continue to be provided.

In the longer term, increased provision of social rented housing is the priority. The overwhelming homelessness problem in East Devon is caused by the lack of affordable housing and the inability of agencies, particularly the Council, to meet identified housing need. In addition, many single people with drug, alcohol and mental health problems have a housing need. The provision of appropriate emergency, supported and settled self-contained accommodation must be provided to meet this need.

9. Glossary of terms

Affordable Housing - Social rented and intermediate housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Allocation - The way in which tenants are placed in suitable accommodation.

Choice Based Lettings - The scheme through most council housing is allocated.

Discretionary Housing Payment - This scheme provides extra help with housing costs to housing and council tax claimants. The payments are made at the discretion of the local authority, subject to an annual cash limit, in cases where the local authority considers that additional help with housing costs is needed.

Foyer - A place where young people can live safely, receive support and guidance to meet their training and employment needs, and develop life skills.

Gold band - For applicants with an urgent need to move.

Health Inequalities - Differences in people's health between geographical areas and between different groups of people.

Homelessness - See definition in 'What is homelessness' section.

Intentionality is a complex area of law and is defined in detail in the Housing Act 1996. An applicant is intentionally homeless if s/he has deliberately done/not done something as a consequence of which s/he has lost accommodation that was available and reasonable for them to continue to occupy.

Local Area Agreement - Agreements between central government and local areas, agreed at county level. They cover what is most important to that area, including targets to be met.

Local Housing Allowance - A standard allowance paid to a claimant based on the area in which they live and the number of occupiers in the property.

Partners - Members of the Homelessness Strategy Review Group

Priority Need - In some circumstances a person's need for housing may be assessed as so urgent that they take precedent over all other applicants. It is a complex area of law, defined in detail in the Housing Act 1996.

Registered Social Landlord - A voluntary (not for profit) organisation which provides affordable housing to people in housing need and which is registered with The Housing Corporation.

Supporting People - Supporting People is a UK government programme helping vulnerable people to live independently.

S106 Agreements - A legally binding agreement that ensures a developer provides agreed facilities or aspects of a development.

Temporary Accommodation - Accommodation provided on a non secure tenancy.

Vulnerability - The level of risk of harm that an individual may experience either from themselves, other people or their environment.

East Devon District Council Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-2013

The actions set out below are 'new'. The actions may, but are not intended to, replicate actions already included in other strategies, plans or policy documents developed and published by other agencies,

Abbreviations:	RSL	Registered Social Landlord	PSL	Private Sector Leasing
	DCHA	Devon & Cornwall Housing Association	TA	Temporary Accommodation
	EDDC	East Devon District Council	ADVA	Against Domestic Violence & Abuse
	DAAT	Devon Drug and Alcohol Team	HSRG	Homeless Strategy Review Group

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
1. STRATEGIC ITEMS						
1.1	Significantly increase the provision of social rented accommodation in East Devon	EDDC	April 2008	July 2013	Targets - 200 units each year from 2008-2011 and 300 units from 2011-2015	Reduced use of TA and reduced waiting times to be re-housed.
1.2	Set up bi-annual meetings of Homelessness Strategy Review Group	EDDC	October 2008	July 2013	Regular HSRG meetings	More effective joint working, ensuring that targets in action plan are met
1.3	Undertake an annual survey of the users of the Homeless Service	All	October 2008	October 2012	Annual survey informs service delivery	Better understanding of service provision
1.4	Publish directory of services available to homeless people in East Devon	All	December 2008	March 2009	Directory published and available to users and agencies	Better understanding by clients of service provision
1.5	Record and analyse, on an ongoing basis, those households who require housing and who are not accepted as homeless by the Council	All	April 2008	July 2013	Information on unmet need	Improved service delivery

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
2. ACTIONS FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES						
2.1	Undertake bi-monthly occupancy checks of Council TA	EDDC	April 2008	July 2013	Ensure properties correctly occupied and address any problem issues	Improve communication, reduce anti social behaviour and breaches of tenancy agreement
2.2	Undertake an options interview with all non secure tenants every 6 months	EDDC	October 2008	Twice a year to July 2013	Needs of every non secure tenant reviewed twice a year	Increased use of alternative accommodation options Reduced use of TA
2.3	Reduce use of TA by Council by 50%	EDDC	April 2008	December 2009	Target of 119 units of TA by December 2009	Reduced use of TA – meeting government targets
2.4	Maintain homeless acceptances by Council below 100 each year post 2010	EDDC	April 2011	July 2013	Homeless acceptances below 100 each year after 2010	Reduced use of TA – meeting government targets
2.5	Maintain a 10% reduction in use of TA year on year after 2010	EDDC	April 2010	July 2013	10% reduction year on year after 2010	Reduced use of TA– meeting government targets
2.6	Increase the number of PSL units to 40	EDDC	August 2008	April 2010	40 PSL units available for use as TA	Improved quality of accommodation available to homeless applicants
2.7	Phase out the use of 'supported' hostel type accommodation used by the Council as TA	EDDC	October 2009	December 2012	No supported hostel type accommodation used as TA	Less inappropriate TA used Reduced cost of TA
2.8	Make full use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to help prevent homelessness	EDDC	June 2008	July 2013	Full DHP budget spent each year	Prevent homelessness Reduce hardship for low income households in private rented sector

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
2.9	Consider the alternative use of decommissioned sheltered housing in East Devon	All	April 2008	April 2009	Identify those units of accommodation to be decommissioned and what the opportunities are for their use.	Better use of existing housing stock
2.10	Develop and introduce a mortgage rescue scheme	EDDC/DCHA	June 2008	October 2008	Mortgage rescue scheme available	Less homelessness presentation and acceptances
2.11	Ensure funding is secured to enable EDDC tenants to extend/improve property to prevent homelessness	EDDC	April 2009	July 2013	Capital funds available 2008/09. Ensure funds available each year.	Reduce homelessness in EDDC housing stock Reduced overcrowding
3. HOMELESSNESS AND SPECIFIC CLIENT GROUPS						
3.1	Develop emergency hostel accommodation with 4 units for young people in Exmouth	All/ Supporting People	April 2009	July 2013	Emergency hostel accommodation of 4 units available in Exmouth	Improved quality of accommodation and support for young people
3.2	Support vulnerable new tenants to enable them to maintain tenancy in the longer term	All	July 2008	July 2013	All identified vulnerable tenants to be visited within 2-4 weeks of start of tenancy	Decrease in number of vulnerable tenants who lose tenancy within first year
3.3	Develop suitable supported accommodation to allow young people to develop independent living skills prior to own tenancy	All/ Supporting People	April 2009	July 2013	Provide a minimum of 4 units	Increase tenancy sustainment by young people
3.4	Increase the number of Supported Lodging Scheme places available to young homeless people from 4 units to 10 units	All/ Supporting People	April 2009	April 2010	6 additional hosts in East Devon	Better quality outcomes for young people

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
3.5	Develop a 'satellite' Foyer type supported accommodation project in Exmouth providing a minimum of 6 units	All /Supporting People	April 2008	April 2010	Foyer accommodation available in Exmouth	Better quality outcomes for young people Improved employment and training opportunities
3.6	Develop a 'satellite' Foyer type supported accommodation project in Axminster providing approximately 7 units	All /Supporting People	April 2008	April 2010	Foyer accommodation available in Axminster	Better quality outcomes for young people Improved employment and training opportunities
3.7	Commit to not using B&B type accommodation for 16/17 year old except in an emergency	EDDC	April 2010	July 2013	No 16/17 year olds placed in B&B type accommodation	Improved quality of accommodation and support
3.8	Undertake a home visit to all young people excluded from home	EDDC	June 2008	July 2013	Less than 23% of homelessness acceptances are young people	More young people remain at home
3.9	Develop a joint approach to work with homeless people with high chaotic/dual diagnosis need	All /Supporting People	April 2009	April 2010	Joint procedures in place	Better signposting to appropriate services Improved outcomes for service users
3.10	Develop a mediation service for people excluded from home (requires funding and commissioning from SP)	EDDC/ Supporting People	April 2009	October 2009	Mediation service in place and well used	More young people remain at home Less homelessness acceptances
3.11	Research the housing and/or homelessness need for members of BME or minority groups in East Devon	All	October 2009	April 2010	Information available for service users and agencies	Better understanding of housing need Improved/targeted service provision

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
3.12	Work closely with other agencies to provide suitable accommodation for ex-offenders	EDDC/ Probation	June 2008	July 2013	Fewer ex-offenders without suitable accommodation and sleeping rough	
4. HOMELESSNESS AND OTHER LANDLORDS						
4.1	Encourage RSL's to help prevent homelessness wherever possible	RSL's/EDDC	October 2008	July 2013	RSLs have strategies in place to address homelessness issues	Reduced homelessness presentations Better outcome for RSL tenants
4.2	Closely monitor nominations from RSLs to ensure maximise availability of social rented lettings	EDDC/RSL's	September 2008	July 2013	RSLs produce bi-annual returns of nominations	More opportunities to house homeless households
4.3	Work closely with private rented sector to maximise opportunity for households to secure settled accommodation	EDDC/All	May 2008	July 2013	Number of homeless acceptances arising from loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies falls year on year	More homeless households or those at risk of homelessness accessing the private rented sector
4.4	Introduce a Panel of agencies to agree appropriate "move on" from temporary or supported accommodation	All	July 2008	July 2009	Panel set up and agencies agreeing which applicant is ready for move on to available accommodation	Increased access to suitable settled accommodation Improve quality of 'offer' process
4.5	Provide 20% of lettings annually to 'move on' from emergency and supported housing projects in East Devon	EDDC	April 2009	July 2013	20% of lettings to 'move on' from supported housing	Increased access to suitable settled accommodation

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome
4.6	Ensure all agencies know their role in homeless prevention	All	July 2008	July 2013	Raise awareness of their roles in preventing homelessness – what is expected and what can be achieved	Better communication and joint working
4.7	Undertake research with service users to:- a) determine the level of hidden homelessness in East Devon b) determine the reasons for homelessness and differences between national and regional figures	All (coordinated by EDDC)	September 2009	April 2011	Information available to users and agencies Ensure homelessness services are more and developed to meet individual needs	Understand who is homeless or at risk of homelessness and areas of need
4.8	Identify the cost of homelessness to agencies working in East Devon	All	April 2010	April 2011	Costs involved in homelessness collated	Understand the real cost of homelessness in East Devon
4.9	Develop and implement (or use existing) joint risk assessment process for homeless vulnerable people	All	February 2009	October 2011	Joint risk assessment process in place for all agencies	Reduced risk to staff and service users Reduce duplication
4.10	Develop and implement (or use existing) joint assessment process for homeless vulnerable people	All	February 2010	October 2011	Joint assessment procedures in place for use by all agencies	Better joint working Reduced bureaucracy Better outcomes for service users
4.11	Raise awareness of CAB “Court Desk” at Exeter County Court and increase referrals to help prevent homelessness	All	July 2008	December 2008	Posters and leaflets available advertising the court desk	Increased legal support/representation at Court for homeless people

Appendix 2

Homeless Strategy Review Group – Partners

East Devon Primary Care Trust – Public Health
East Devon Primary Care Trust -
East Devon Learning Disability Team
Open Door Centre
Young Devon
Homemaker Southwest
Exeter Homeless Action Group
Children and Young Peoples Trust - Devon Youth Service
Children and Young Peoples Trust – Care Leavers Service
Devon Partnership Trust – Community Mental Health Team
West Country Housing Association
Devon and Cornwall Housing Association
Exeter Woman's Aid
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary
Devon Strategic Housing Partnership
Devon Drug and Alcohol Action Team
East Devon Citizens Advice Bureau
Connexions
Devon County Council – Adult and Community Service
Carr-Gomm
Devon and Cornwall Probation Service
Devon Supporting People
East Devon District Council

Appendix 3

The Housing Needs and Advice Service at East Devon District Council

The Housing Needs team at East Devon District Council deals many aspects of housing advice and options including:

- Homelessness prevention
- The Housing Register
- Allocations, transfers and nominations
- Tenancy sustainment
- Links with the private rented sector
-

If customers wish to rent a council or housing association property in East Devon they need to complete a Housing Register application form. This can be obtained from our offices or from our website on www.eastdevon.gov.uk. A Housing Assistant

will be available to deal with emergencies and people who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

There is a Housing Customer Charter which sets out the standard of service customers can expect from us. A copy can be seen on our website at www.eastdevon.gov.uk.

Customers can expect:

To be attended to within 5 minutes of arriving, if they have a specified appointment time

To be attended to within 20 minutes of arriving, or be offered an appointment, if they call at the offices without a specified appointment time.

All confidential enquiries will be carried out in private.

Letters and emails will be responded to within 10 working days.

If necessary we will visit customers at their home.

All completed Housing Register applications will be processed within 10 working days.

A decision on a homeless application will be made within 33 working days (wherever possible).

If applicants challenge our decision a homeless review will be completed within 56 days.

We will operate an 'out of hours' homeless service to deal with homelessness occurring outside normal office hours.

Complaints

If a customer is dissatisfied with the service received they can raise the issue with one of our Service Managers. If they remain dissatisfied we have a complaints procedure, details of which we will send out on request. Details of the complaint should be given to us by letter, telephone or email.

If, after following the Council's complaints procedure, the customer is still dissatisfied they can approach the Local Government Ombudsman for an independent review.

Tenant Profiling

The Census 2001 and 2003/04 and 2007/07 STATUS surveys provide a considerable amount of information on the East Devon tenant profile. Please see the Housing Strategy 2008-2011 for further details. During 2008 we will be carrying out a tenant profiling exercise to gather more information about the make up of our council tenants.



The Housing Needs Team can be contacted by:

writing to:

Housing Needs Team
East Devon District Council
Knowle, Sidmouth EX10 8HL

telephoning:

01395 516551 during working hours

emailing:

housingneeds@eastdevon.gov.uk

visiting:

**Council Offices,
Knowle, Sidmouth**
Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm

**Exmouth Town Hall,
St Andrews Road, Exmouth**
Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 4.30pm

www.eastdevon.gov.uk