



# **HOMELESSNESS REVIEW FEBRUARY 2008**

**(To inform the  
Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013)**

# South Cambridgeshire District Council Homelessness Review 2008

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# HOMELESSNESS REVIEW 2008

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires councils to compile a Homelessness Strategy and to renew this at least every five years. South Cambridgeshire District Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003 following a comprehensive review of homelessness and services available within the District. Since that time the actions within the Strategy have been monitored closely to ensure that the key objectives have been achieved.

### Outcomes of the 2003 Homelessness Strategy

- Reduction in the numbers living in temporary accommodation (152 households in 04/05, compared to 57 as at the end of 07/08)
- Reduction in the number of homeless applications (170 in 2005/06, 128 in 2006/07)
- Reduction by almost 54% in the net expenditure of the Council's homelessness services for 2006/07
- Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme became operational in February 2008 and a new Local Lettings Policy approved
- Housing Advice & Options Team restructured in 2007, with an emphasis on increased preventative work
- Young Persons Floating Support Scheme implemented in February 2006 (Cambridge Housing Society)
- The Sanctuary Scheme was established in April 2006 to assist victims of domestic violence
- Floating Support Service extended to clients living in all tenures and service achieved a "B" rating in accordance with the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework
- Increased prevention work including a successful settled homes scheme managed by King Street Housing Society.
- Decision taken not to renew the lease for The Poplars hostel due to increasing void costs associated with the reduction in need for temporary accommodation and value for money
- Surveys undertaken in 2007 of service providers, private landlords, housing associations and homelessness applicants.

The 2003 Homelessness Strategy has achieved its main objectives and now needs to be replaced with a new five-year plan. In formulating the next Strategy, a further Review was undertaken in 2007/08 to help identify any gaps in services and help to redefine the priorities and actions to be taken forward.

In particular, the Review considered:

- the levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the district;
- the existing housing and support available
- the activities and services provided which help to prevent homelessness
- resources and partnership working

## Chapter 2

### Profile of Homelessness in South Cambridgeshire

#### 2.1 The South Cambridgeshire Area

South Cambridgeshire is located centrally in the East of England region at the crossroads of the M11 / A14 roads and with direct rail access to London and to Stansted Airport. It is a largely rural district, which surrounds the city of Cambridge and comprises over 100 villages, none currently larger than 8,000 persons. It is surrounded by a ring of market towns just beyond its borders, which are generally 10–15 miles from Cambridge. Together, Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and the Market Towns form the Cambridge Sub-Region. South Cambridgeshire has long been a fast growing district and in 2003 had a population of over 130,000 persons (bigger than Cambridge itself) and has become home to many of the clusters of high technology research and development in the Cambridge Sub-Region.

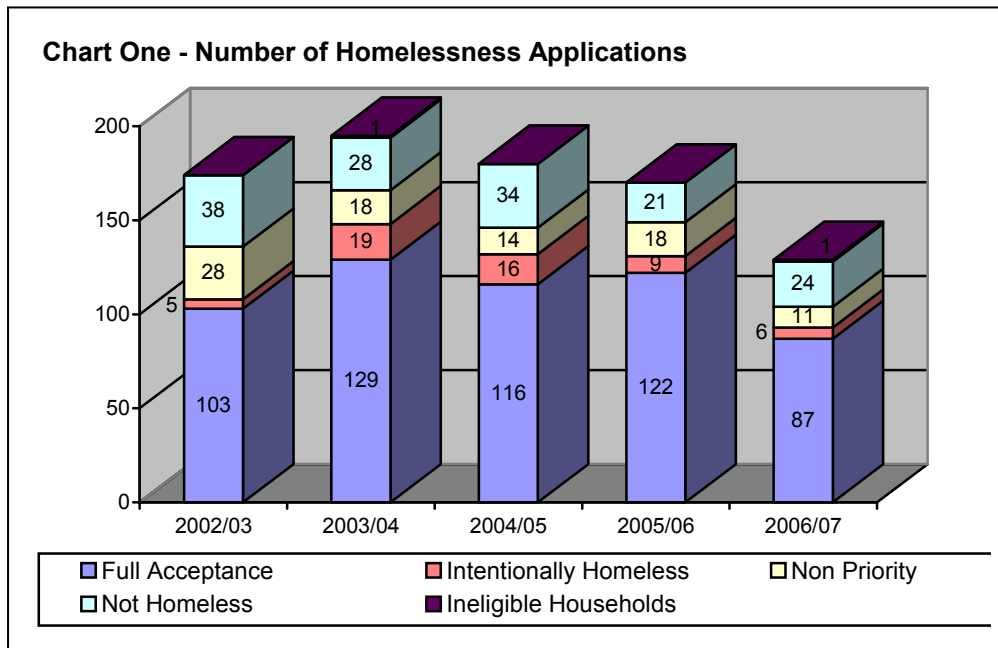
A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was commissioned for the Cambridge Sub Region in 2007. This assessment was carried out to give a clear understanding on the housing market within the Sub Region and the level and type of housing need for the future. From the consultation draft findings of the assessment, it estimates that there will be a 31% population increase by 2021 for South Cambridgeshire; with older people forecasted to show the biggest increase overall in the age groups. The age group 60-74 is expected to increase by over 15,400, a huge rise of around 94% in just 20 years. An even greater increase is projected of over 9,600 for those aged 75+, from 9,150 to over 18,750 residents, a 105% increase. The changes in population by age group clearly pose a number of challenges for supported housing, in particular. It is also estimated that all the Districts in the Sub Region will see an increase in single person households, with South Cambridgeshire forecasted to see an increase of around 13,300 single person households, an 83% increase in just 20 years

From 2006-2021 it is estimated that a further 20,000 properties will be built in the South Cambridgeshire District area. Under the new Local Development Framework adopted in 2007, the amount of affordable housing sought on new planning applications will be 40% or more on all sites of two or more dwellings. However, although there is expected to be an increase in the amount of affordable housing coming forward, the SHMA consultative draft identifies that housing demand for affordable housing will still outstrip supply and estimates that there will be an annual shortfall of 1109 affordable homes each year over the next 5 years.

#### 2.2 Current Levels of Homelessness

A significant number of people make enquiries to the Council's Housing Advice and Options Team regarding their current housing situation. The three main areas of enquiries relate to private renting, the housing register, and the homelessness procedures/route. The number of enquiries received is continuing to increase, with 1071 enquiries recorded for 2005/06 and 1214 for 2006/07. Figures for 2007/08 look likely to be similar to the previous year.

Although the number of enquiries continue to rise, the number of homelessness applications and acceptances has decreased (as shown overleaf) and gives evidence to demonstrate the success of the preventative measures put in place since the implementation of the last Strategy in 2003 – details of which are given at Chapter 4.



Figures collated for the first 3 quarters of 2007/08 indicate that there will be a further reduction in the numbers applying as homeless, which is contrary to the increased figure for those making enquiries with regard to homelessness and their housing options.

### 2.3 Levels of Rough Sleeping

Because of the rural nature of the District and the relatively few numbers of rough sleepers it was not feasible to undertake a proper rough sleeper count across the District on a particular night. It was decided that it would be more practical and useful to obtain local information for each village. Therefore, as part of the Review, all parish councils were written to asking whether there were any known rough sleepers in their parish. From the responses received, there were only three suspected rough sleepers known throughout the District and it is unlikely that these would fall within the DCLG definition when collecting statistics for rough sleepers. Therefore, in conclusion, South Cambridgeshire does not have a specific problem, in proportion to its population, of those sleeping rough in the District and it is unlikely that this will become a problem in the future since rough sleepers tend to migrate to Cambridge City where there are support services/facilities.

### 2.4 Profile of Needs

The homelessness legislation defines 'priority need' categories that determine people who may be vulnerable and at greater risk if homeless. 122 of the 170 households making an application in 2006/07 (72%) were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless (not having brought homelessness on themselves) and in one of the 'priority need' categories. The Council therefore accepted these as homeless with the duty to provide an offer of permanent housing.

The table overleaf outlines the priority need categories accepted over the last five years and show a similar pattern for the period 2002-2007. The highest reason for accepting homeless applications by far is from those households that include

dependent children, followed by those who are expecting their first child. The third priority group that represent 11% of acceptances over the past 5 years are households that include someone who is vulnerable due to mental illness or handicap.

**Table One – Homelessness Acceptances: Priority Need Categories**

<b>Priority Categories</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>
Applicant whose household includes dependent children	56	67	72	70	61
Applicant who is, or whose household includes a pregnant woman and there are no other dependent children	24	22	17	23	12
Applicant aged 16/17 years old	4	5	9	6	0
Applicant formerly "in care" and aged 18 to 20 years old	0	2	0	1	0
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a person who is vulnerable due to Old Age	0	3	1	0	0
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a person who is vulnerable due to Physical Disability	4	6	8	5	6
Applicant who is, or whose household includes, a person who is vulnerable due to Mental Illness or Handicap	12	19	7	16	8
Applicant who is vulnerable due to other special reason	1	1	0	1	0
Applicant who is vulnerable due to having fled their home because of violence/threat of violence	2	4	2	0	0
<b>Total Homeless Applications Accepted</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>87</b>

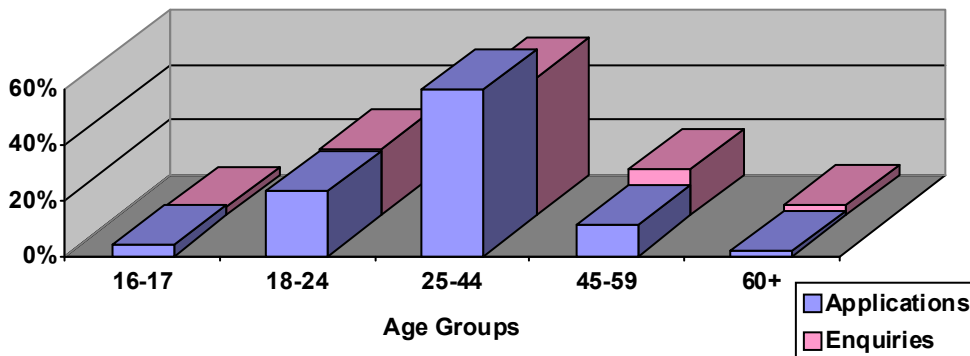
Source: P1E data

#### Breakdown of Homeless Applications and Enquiries by Age Group

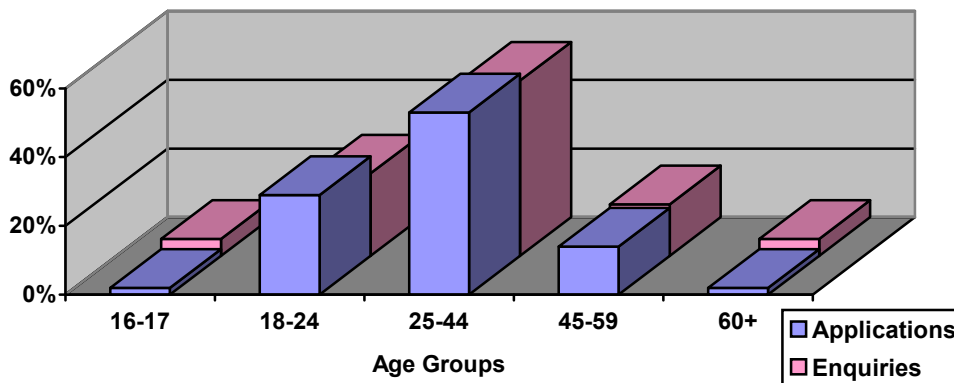
The two charts overleaf show the age groups of those making a homeless application and those making an enquiry for the two years 2005/06 and 2006/07.

The highest age group for both enquiries and homelessness applications are those aged between 25-44, and make up at least 50% of all enquiries and applications. In comparing the number of applications in relation to enquiries, we would expect the number of enquiries to be greater than the homelessness applications, which should signify that once an enquiry has been made and the relevant advice given, fewer applicants should then make a homeless application. However, this is dependent on potential homeless applicants approaching the Council for advice and assistance before they reach crisis point and this is only possible through promoting the awareness of the housing advice and options service. This can be achieved through continual publicity, such as the South Cambs magazine and information on the website and by ensuring that voluntary and statutory organisations are aware of the options available and will signpost applicants at an early stage.

**Chart Two - Homelessness Applications by Age Group Year 2005/06**



**Chart Three - Homeless Applications by Age Group Year 2006/07**



Source: Homelessness Database

**Table Two – Breakdown of all Homelessness Applications by Household Type**

	2005/06	2006/07
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>128</b>
Couple with Children	27%	30%
Single Parent (Female)	31%	31%
Single Parent (Male)	5%	4%
Single (Female)	13%	11%
Single (Male)	18%	18%
Other	6%	6%

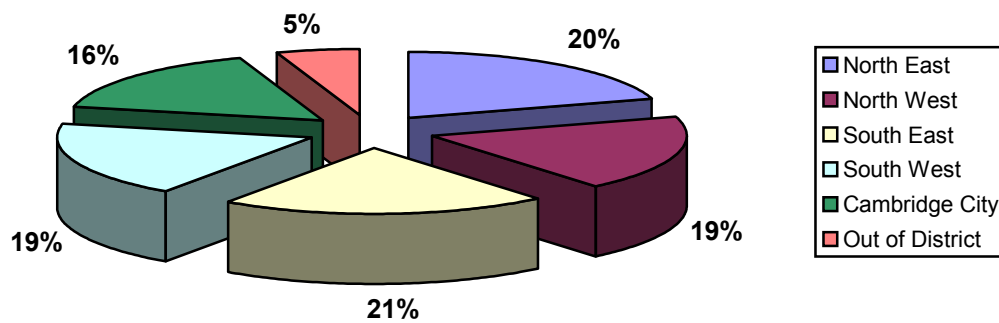
Source: Homelessness Database

The information provided for the two years is consistent and show that the majority have dependant children (63% in 05/06 and 65% in 06/07), with single parents making up at least 35% of all applications received. This highlights the problems faced for those trying to secure alternative accommodation with limited resources within an affluent area such as South Cambridgeshire, where property prices for the lower quartile average at £165,000 for the period Jan-March 2006 and a median average of £210,000. For private rented accommodation, lower quartile rentals in South Cambridgeshire are £450 per month for a one bedroom property, £650 for two bedrooms and £750 for a three bedroom property. (source: *Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 Consultative Draft*).

Looking at data for 2006/07 of where applicants who made a homeless application were currently living, there was little variance within South Cambridgeshire. This

would indicate that there are no specific “hotspot” areas that have particular housing problems or indeed that certain parts of the District were less accessible to the housing service. It is also interesting to note that 16% of homeless applicants were currently living in the City but had a local connection with the District. This could be attributed to the fact that there is a lack of privately rented properties available in the District (8.1% privately rented households in South Cambs compared to 20.6% in the City – *Source: Census 2001*).

**Chart Four - Homeless Applications 2006/07 - By Area**



*Source: Homelessness Database*

## 2.5 Reasons for Homelessness

Looking at the trends over the last five years, parents who are no longer willing or able to accommodate remains the highest reason for becoming homeless for each year. In 2005/06 this accounted for 25% of all acceptances and 23% in 2006/07.

From 2002/03 there has been a slight upward trend each year until 2005/06 of those facing homelessness due to termination of an assured shorthold tenancy.

The three highest reasons for homelessness identified in the last Review undertaken in 2003 were

- Parental Eviction
- Loss of Rented Accommodation
- Relationship Breakdown (violent)

Looking at the percentages for the last two years on the reasons for homelessness, there is evidence that very little has changed in the causes of homelessness for South Cambridgeshire, albeit that the total number of applications and acceptances is decreasing. The third highest reason for homelessness is now joint for Relationship Breakdown for both violent and non-violent categories.



**Table Three – Homeless Acceptances: Reasons for becoming homeless**

Reasons for becoming homeless	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	31	45	35	30	20
Other relative or friend no longer willing or able to accommodate	15	9	7	9	7
Non-violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	14	14	14	13	8
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	13	19	10	14	8
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving associated persons	1	3	1	0	0
Other forms of Violence	2	4	2	2	3
Other forms of Harassment	0	0	2	2	1
Mortgage Arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	4	5	7	3	4
Rent arrears on Local Authority or other Public Sector Dwellings	2	1	2	0	1
Rent arrears on Private Sector Dwellings	0	6	1	4	3
Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	8	12	13	24	18
Other reason for loss of rented or tied accommodation	7	4	10	9	9
In institution or care (e.g. hospital, prison, on remand, etc.)	1	1	1	4	3
Other (e.g. homeless in emergency, ex-HM forces, returned from abroad, sleeping rough or in hostel, etc.)	5	6	11	8	1
Required to leave National Asylum Support Service Accommodation	*	*	*	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>87</b>

Source: PIE data

The main reasons for homelessness within South Cambridgeshire are consistent with the national findings of the DCLG research into statutory homelessness in England for families and 16-17 year olds. [*Source: Homelessness Research Summary No. 7, 2008*]

## 2.6 Ethnicity

### BME Households

BME data currently available does not include information on European Union migrant workers, many of who have moved to the UK since the 2001 Census was carried out. Housing issues for migrant workers and the needs of Gypsies and Travellers are dealt with separately within this section.

The BME population is small and dispersed throughout the district, with no particular pockets with high concentrations of BME communities. Previous Needs Surveys have not identified any particular housing needs for any BME groups. Information currently available does not suggest any significant differences in housing need amongst the BME population of the county or the sub-region compared with the White British population. [Source: *Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 Consultative Draft*]

The most recent BME research from the County Council reached the following conclusion-

- .” All respondents agreed that they had the same needs as other residents in Cambridgeshire and did not want to be seen as a separate group.” (Source *BME Focus Groups-MRUK Research for the County Council-draft report September 2007*)

In looking at the number of homelessness applications received in comparison to population figures, it would appear that there is a higher percentage of non-white applicants (7.1%) approaching the Council as homeless compared to the population (2.9%). However, these figures can be somewhat misleading as the actual numbers are relatively small, with the highest proportion of 2.6% ‘Mixed – other mixed’ ethnic origin translating into only 3 actual homelessness cases, and two applicants (1.8%) of Chinese origin.

**Table Four – Ethnic Origin by Population and Homelessness Applications**

	Population <i>Census 2001</i>	Homelessness Applications 2006/07
White British	93.3%	88.5%
White Irish	0.8%	1.8%
White – Other	3.0%	2.6%
Mixed - White & Black African	0.1%	0.0%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	0.2%	0.0%
Mixed - White & Asian	0.3%	0.9%
Mixed - other mixed	0.3%	2.6%
Asian Indian	0.5%	0.0%
Asian Pakistani	0.1%	0.0%
Asian Bangladeshi	0.0%	0.0%
Other Asian	0.2%	0.9%
Black African	0.2%	0.9%
Black Caribbean	0.2%	0.0%
Black - other Black	0.1%	0.0%
Chinese	0.4%	1.8%
Other Ethnic Group	0.3%	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Total White	97.1%	92.9%
Total non-White	2.9%	7.1%

As from April 2007, ethnic origin data is also collected, where known, from those making an enquiry to the Housing Options Service. Figures for the first three quarters of 2007 show that 814 enquiries have been made, of which only 246 (30%) gave their ethnic origin. It is anticipated that the collection of this data will improve once the recording system is well established.

Of the 246 enquiries received where the ethnic origin was recorded, the figures show that 87.8% were White British, 6.9% White Other, 4.1% Non White and 1.2% Travellers. (Note: Travellers were not identified separately by the national Census). The majority of the 6.9% White Other ethnic group is from Eastern Europe. Although the majority of enquirers are White British, it would appear that there are a higher percentage of other ethnic groups in comparison to the population figures although the actual numbers are small – (eg. 17 enquirers White Other (of which 9 were from Eastern Europe), 10 Non White and 3 Travellers).

At a corporate level the Council has addressed its commitment to promoting Racial Equality with a full review of its Race Equality Scheme-published July 2006. Our corporate objectives highlight the importance of making services accessible and this is reinforced by 'Improving Customer Services' being made a corporate priority.

A translation service is provided on request for those who need information about any Council services. Assessments are made of all households facing homelessness and where appropriate Floating Support (see page 24) is provided for vulnerable households. In 2006/07 the translation service was not used by the Housing Options Team, however, since April 2007 the service has been used on four occasions for translation into Lebanese, Danish and twice for Polish. No requests have been received to have leaflets translated into another language.

To focus on housing issues for ethnic minority households, a full review of services was carried out in 2006 using the revised CRE Code of Practice for Racial Equality in Housing as a guide to best practice. That review was presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder and an action plan agreed to improve ethnic minority record keeping, provide more equality and diversity training for staff, and to formalise the reporting practices for the monitoring of minority households access to services.

Findings within the Consultative Draft Housing Strategic Market Assessment also highlighted the need for improved monitoring to give a more accurate picture of ethnicity across the sub-region. A regional BME monitoring pilot is currently underway which will involve the Cambridge sub-region.

### Travellers

The Cambridge sub-region Traveller Needs Assessment, published in May 2006, found that – of the 5,000–5,500 Travellers in Cambridgeshire (including those living in houses), over 1,300 are in South Cambridgeshire. This figure equates to 1% of the South Cambs population. Whilst this is lower than earlier estimates (extrapolated from official caravan counts), Travellers still represent the largest ethnic minority in the district. The survey showed that there were fewer Traveller households living in houses in South Cambridgeshire (28) than previously assumed, whilst 250 Traveller households live in caravans.

The results from the survey show that there is a need for between 405 and 535 extra pitches in the sub-Region up to 2010. Of this total, between 110 and 130 pitches are needed for Travellers currently located in South Cambridgeshire. Most Travellers prefer to live on small, long stay sites owned by Travellers themselves and there is very little demand to move into houses.

These findings will now feed into the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to help identify the number of pitches required for each local planning authority in a way that produces fair and reasonable provision for all Travellers across the whole Eastern Region. The RSS proposal submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2008 proposes an

additional 59 pitches in South Cambridgeshire to bring the total up to 274 pitches by 2011-the highest number for any authority in the Eastern region.

To provide a fair and transparent planning framework for future sites in South Cambridgeshire, the Council is currently out to consultation on its Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Document as part of the Local Development Framework process. This does not, as yet, identify specific sites but invites suggestions. Consultation on potential sites will begin in 2008. In the interim, temporary planning permissions have been granted for nine sites.

Travellers on unauthorised sites have seen a massive (over 500%) increase since 2003. The Council's Race Equality Scheme 2005-8 highlights Travellers issues as the highest priority and housing advice and homelessness services are specifically identified as amongst the most relevant in promoting equality of opportunity.

Financial support has been given to the Cambridgeshire Travellers Initiative for the production of a CD for Travellers about the planning process. Planning Enforcement Officers also maintain regular contact with those on unauthorised sites, making information available to them via Tape/CD, such as homelessness advice leaflets, and helping them to access housing & council tax benefits to which they are entitled.

However, although it is recognised that there could be a high risk of homeless applications from Travellers if they are evicted from unauthorised sites, figures from 2006/07 homelessness acceptances show that only one application was received and accepted from a Traveller household.

Access to the service is supported by Travellers Liaison Officers at both South Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council. Access to Housing Options is a preferred route as it facilitates wider choice than Homelessness. The Travellers Liaison Officer has developed and maintained effective working relationships with a wide range of expert agencies that offer specialist services to the Traveller and Gypsy community, ensuring welfare, health and educational needs are met. A review of the role of the Travellers Liaison Officer for South Cambridgeshire will be undertaken in the spring of 2008 to ensure appropriate support is available.

### Migrant Workers

As part of the SHMA, research on migrant workers in the Sub Region is currently ongoing. Although it is only possible at this stage to monitor the number of inflow information on migrant workers through the National Insurance Registration Scheme, it does show that the numbers registering in South Cambridgeshire has grown significantly (45%) between 2002 and 2006, totalling 940 workers registering in 2006/07. However, this information does not show how many people are leaving or whether or not people are coming as individuals or with dependants.

On looking at the nationalities of those registering, there appears to be a majority step change from 2004 to mostly Polish registrations.

**Table Five – Countries with the highest number of people registering**

	Country with highest number of Registrations	Number	% of all Registrations in South Cambridgeshire
2002/03	Philippines/Australia	70	11%
2003/04	Philippines/South Africa	60	10%
2004/05	Poland	130	14%
2005/06	Poland	250	22%

*Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 (consultative draft)*

From the number of enquiries received for the current year 2007/08 and the need to use the translation service on four occasions, it would appear that the Housing Options Team are receiving more enquiries from Eastern European nationals. Whilst there is insufficient data at this time to properly map needs, the research already undertaken would indicate that the numbers approaching the Council for housing advice will continue to increase and possibly translate into homelessness applications as more become eligible for assistance and look to settle in the UK.

### Asylum Seekers

South Cambridgeshire District contains the Immigration Reception Centre at Oakington that can accommodate up to 470 Asylum Seekers. For those that are found eligible for support the NASS (National Asylum Support Service) assists detainees with travel, subsistence and accommodation. Accommodation is provided throughout the country in identified dispersal areas. As South Cambridgeshire already has a severe lack of housing in the District and has no existing support networks for Asylum Seekers, it is unlikely that Asylum Seekers will be dispersed to the area. Since the establishment of the Immigration Centre in March 2000, this has had no impact upon the Housing Advice/Options Team.

The Local Authority Social Services Department have a responsibility to provide support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This is currently putting immense pressure on the 16+ Team, OCYPS (Office of Children & Young People's Service, Social Services), who indicate that they currently have 100+ cases throughout the county which is causing severe resource pressures.

Under the Homelessness Legislation, South Cambridgeshire District Council would not have a duty in the future to those Asylum Seekers currently cared for by Social Services where they have no recourse to public funds. However, concerns/issues relating to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children should be taken into account when developing the joint protocol with OCYPS which will cover housing advice, homeless prevention, young people and intentionally homeless families. Information from the P1E forms, show that since April 2004 there have not been any former Asylum Seekers accepted by the Authority as homeless.

## **2.7 Future Levels of Homelessness**

It is anticipated that under the current circumstances, homelessness applications will continue to decrease as the Council increases its pro-active approach to homelessness prevention (see Chapter 4)

However, it is almost impossible to predict future levels of homelessness as there are so many contributory factors that are largely beyond local control, such as house

prices, national policy, population trends and unemployment. Factors that could well affect South Cambridgeshire include:

- The high house prices in South Cambridgeshire mean that many owner-occupiers have to borrow up to their maximum financial limits to be able to obtain a mortgage. Therefore if interest rates increase significantly this is likely to increase homelessness because more households will be unable to meet their mortgage payments. This may similarly impact on Landlords who have mortgages on Buy to Let properties that may be forced to sell, increasing homelessness and reducing availability in the private sector rental market.
- Following the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance in April 2008, this could have an adverse impact on the numbers presenting as homeless. The Government is looking to change the way in which housing benefit is paid to private sector tenants and initial indications from Government suggest that those living in the necklace villages surrounding Cambridge City would be most affected, as the predicted LHA for these areas would not be sufficient to meet current rents and tenants would have to find the remaining amount or seek cheaper rented accommodation.
- Current trends would indicate an increase in the number of Eastern Europeans coming to work in South Cambridgeshire, which could have an adverse affect on the numbers approaching the Council as homeless.
- The number of unauthorised traveller sites within South Cambridgeshire remains a high priority for the Council.

It is important that consideration is given to these factors and preventative measures incorporated into the new Strategy and Action Plan.

## Chapter 3 - Existing Housing and Support

### 3.1 Temporary Accommodation

In January 2005, the Government set all local authorities a target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010. The numbers in temporary accommodation have consistently reduced each quarter during the last year and exceeded the milestones set locally. This is as a result of the housing advice and homeless prevention work, including a settled homes scheme facilitated through private sector leasing arrangements. There is also a clear intention amongst staff to identify areas of concern and take action to rectify them, and to develop new initiatives and methods of working that not only reduce the numbers in temporary accommodation, but also provide better rehousing solutions and options for people in housing need.

**Performance Indicator SH 329:**

*Reduce The Number of Households in Temporary Accommodation*

2005/06 Actual: 148

2006/07 Actual: 112

2007/08 Actual: 57 (Year End Annual Target: 95)

The main forms of temporary accommodation available to the Council are a private sector leasing scheme provided through King Street Housing Society, temporary

tenancies provided within our own stock and hostel accommodation. The following table shows the proportions occupying different forms of temporary accommodation.

**Table Six – Temporary Accommodation Occupancy**

Type of Temporary Accommodation	Number of households residing in this type of temporary accommodation on 30 <sup>th</sup> March 2007	Proportion
Bed & Breakfast	0	0
Hostel	23	21%
Private Sector Leasing Scheme	47	42%
SCDC Stock	30	27%
Other RSL Stock	9	8%
Other	3	2%
<b>Total</b>	112	100%

#### Bed & Breakfast Accommodation

The Council has significantly reduced the use of bed & breakfast accommodation over recent years. This is accepted to be both unsuitable and a very expensive source of temporary accommodation. In 2005/06, over £40,000 was spent on bed & breakfast accommodation. In 2006/7 this reduced significantly to £2,600 and to date in 2007/08 there have been **no** placements in bed & breakfast.

#### Hostel Accommodation

The Council currently has three hostels that provide shared temporary accommodation for statutorily homeless households, and Sanctuary Hereward Housing currently manages these. Two of the hostels are owned by the Council, namely Robson Court and The Bungalow, with The Poplars being leased from Histon Baptist Church. Sanctuary Hereward Housing undertakes satisfaction surveys with new residents of the hostels and the vast majority find the facilities and overall conditions good or adequate.

**Table Seven– Hostel Accommodation**

Hostel	Shared Facilities
The Poplars, Histon (7 rooms)	All have en-suites and residents share kitchen and laundry facilities and communal lounge
Robson Court, Waterbeach (16 rooms)	Each room has a kitchenette and microwaves are permitted. Residents have their own separate toilet and sink. They do share bathing, laundry, kitchen and lounge facilities.
The Bungalow, Sawston (4 rooms)	One room has an en-suite shower. The others share all facilities

During 2006/07, 36 households moved into hostel accommodation. Ten were single households, 23 were households with one child and three households had more than one child.

Research into the effects on living in shared temporary accommodation indicates that such living conditions, alongside the uncertainty of their situation, can impact both

physically and mentally on homeless individuals and families. The lack of privacy and space to play can have a detrimental effect on families and children.

When compared to other forms of temporary accommodation, such as the private sector leasing scheme, it is clear that the hostels are an expensive form of temporary accommodation, which is not giving value for money taking into account the quality of the accommodation.

Temporary Accommodation	2005/06	2006/07
Hostel	£78,900	£85,150
Private Sector Leasing Scheme	£142,300	£44,500*

*\*The cost of providing the private sector leasing scheme has significantly reduced due to the introduction of a new method of management fee collection. Where possible the rents have been increased to incorporate the management fee, whilst still ensuring the rent remains affordable.*

Whilst the overall numbers in temporary accommodation are reducing, the Council's performance in relation to the average length of stay in hostel accommodation is unfortunately significantly over our target. Actions have been taken to try to address this, including amendments to the previous Lettings Policy, prior to the introduction of choice based lettings. However, the main reason for the length of stay is the lack of available two bedroom properties.

**Performance Indicator BV 183b:**

*Length of Stay in Hostel Accommodation*

2005/06 Actual: 29 weeks

2006/07 Actual: 34.90 weeks

2007/08 Q.3 Actual: 30.91 weeks (Year End Annual Target: 24 weeks)

In June 2007, a report was presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder to identify service needs for future hostel provision, where it was agreed

- Not to renew The Poplars lease when it expires in March 2008, given the current and increasing costs associated.
- Carry out further investigative work into the long term options via a hostel re-provision strategy which will look at the following options:
  - Continue with the current arrangements with Hereward Housing in respect of Robson Court and the Bungalow.
  - Remodel Robson Court to provide more appropriate self-contained provision
  - Continuation of the Bungalow in its current form
  - Identify new purpose built provision
  - Investigate the ownership and management arrangements for these measures

Discussions are currently underway regarding new provision on some of the larger sites coming forward for development, i.e. Northstowe. Further work on the remodelling of the existing hostels will not be progressed until the outcome of Housing Futures (the possible transfer of Council stock) has been decided.

Private Sector Leasing Scheme

King Street Housing Society provides independent accommodation through a Private Leasing Scheme with South Cambridgeshire District Council. Under the scheme,



there are two types of accommodation provided, one being on a temporary basis upon acceptance of a homeless application, and the other offered as a settled home under an assured shorthold tenancy.

Although the provision of temporary accommodation under the Private Sector Leasing Scheme was seen to be the best type of temporary accommodation available for families with school age children, this did have an adverse affect on the time spent in temporary accommodation, with some living temporarily for over 2 years before being offered suitable alternative accommodation. Although applicants were allocated a higher number of points for being homeless, it did not always give them the highest priority, due to the high number of households in temporary accommodation and the additional points awarded for other types of temporary accommodation which included shared facilities. The accommodation was also limited as to where King Street Housing Society had homes available, as many landlords are reluctant to let to homeless households. This often meant that families had to move away from their existing network of schools, family, and work. etc. Homeless applicants also have less choice over their permanent rehousing as they must identify at least 25 villages in which they would accept a permanent home.

The settled homes scheme is seen as a much more attractive option and pro-active in preventing homelessness. Applicants do not have to go down the homeless route, therefore not facing the stigma associated with becoming homeless. They have a wider choice of where to live and security in knowing they have an assured shorthold tenancy, that is more likely to be renewed as King Street Housing Society have longer term leases with the individual landlords. It is important that the Housing Options Team start working with potentially homeless applicants as early as possible, as this allows officers more time to try to secure a settled home in an area of their choice. All rents are within local reference rent levels (to be reviewed with the introduction of the Local Housing Allowance). All applicants who take this option are able to remain on the housing register and have more choice over their permanent rehousing.

The Settled Homes initiative was implemented in February 2006. At that time there were 80 households accepted as homeless and living temporarily under the private sector leasing scheme. All applicants were written to, giving them the option to convert their temporary tenancies, with 14 households taking up this offer. As at the end of December 2007, there were 63 households accommodated under the Private Sector Leasing Scheme, of which 25 were housed temporarily following a homeless application.

#### Council Properties Let On Non-Secure Tenancies

Temporary accommodation within the Council's housing stock is used when necessary and is a preferable option ahead of bed & breakfast accommodation. However, the use of this type of temporary accommodation is kept at a minimum and would normally be the difficult to let properties, unless there was an urgent need for temporary accommodation due to high demands or a specific need.

During 2006/07, 31 temporary licences were allocated to homeless households, of which 7 have since been converted to a secure tenancy.

Previously, Council stock identified for redevelopment has also been used as temporary accommodation whilst the properties await demolition. However, the programme for redevelopment is now well underway and the availability of this type of temporary accommodation will decrease as the schemes start on site. As from March

2008 two homeless households are temporarily housed at The Windmill Estate, Fulbourn and one household in an Airey property at Longstanton.

### Other Accommodation/Specialist Support

Specialist temporary accommodation is provided mainly within Cambridge City, as it is close to facilities, transport links, education etc. Although South Cambridgeshire does not have specific nomination rights to most of the specialist schemes, allocations can be made via referral, mainly through the Joint Allocations Panel. In 2006/07 one applicant was referred to the Peter Maitland Court Young Parent & Baby Scheme and in the first six months of 2007/08 one referral to the Cambridge Women's Aid Refuge. The Council does have nomination rights to the YMCA for 10 bed spaces, as well as joint nominations with the City Council for an emergency bedspace, all of which are well utilized. It should be noted that referrals/nominations can only be made when accommodation is available.

The following table gives a summary of the different types of specialist accommodation and support available mainly in the City, and at page 33 gives details of grant funding provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

**Table Eight – Specialist Accommodation/Support**

<b>Specialist Accommodation/Support - Summary of Service Type</b>
<p><b>Cambridge Women's Aid - Cambridge</b> Provides accommodation and support for 11 women, with or without children. Also provide outreach support to women living in their own homes – By self or agency referral.</p>
<p><b>Cambridge Women &amp; Homelessness Group - Cambridge</b> Direct access hostel with 6 bed spaces. Providing counseling and support. Also provide outreach support for ex-residents – By self or agency referral.</p>
<p><b>Cyrenians - Cambridge</b> Provision of community houses with live-in volunteer workers. Provides support and advice to vulnerable homeless single people with a focus on alcoholics, those over 50 and those with a mental illness. Outreach and resettlement service – By agency referral only. Subject to Cambridge City Council's Reconnections Policy</p>
<p><b>English Churches Housing Group – Victoria Road, Cambridge</b> 74 bed hostel accommodation that provides accommodation to vulnerable single homeless people – By agency referral only. Subject to Cambridge City Council's Reconnections Policy</p>
<p><b>English Churches Housing Group – Willow Walk, Cambridge</b> 22 single rooms providing support and accommodation to vulnerable single homeless people – Referral by Cambridge Street Outreach Team only. Subject to Cambridge City Council's Reconnections Policy</p>
<p><b>Jimmy's Night Shelter - Cambridge</b> Warm, safe night shelter for 25 men and 6 women (separate room for men and women). Provision of supper, shower and laundry facilities. Non judgemental support available - By self referral at the door Subject to Cambridge City Council's Reconnections Policy</p>
<p><b>Emmaus - Landbeach</b> Community living project for 29 single homeless people and residential staff. Self financed through a second-hand business site – By self or agency referral.</p>
<p><b>Castle Project - Cambridge</b> Accommodation - 17 beds in shared flats &amp; supported lodgings Offering support and advice (practical and emotional) to young people on all aspects of their lives – By agency referral only.</p>
<p><b>Railway House – Cambridge (Cambridge Housing Society)</b> Provides accommodation and support towards independent living. 12 spaces for 16-20 yr olds and 4 spaces for 18-23 yr olds – By agency referral only.</p>

**Stonham Housing – Elizabeth Way, Cambridge**

14 bed spaces providing a safe & secure environment whilst service users try to adjust after a period in prison – Referral through either probation or via a Prison Resettlement Officer.

**Whitworth House – Cambridge (Orwell Housing)**

Provides accommodation and support to 13 young single women (16-25) – By self or agency referral.

**YMCA - Cambridge**

Provision of 78 units of temporary supported accommodation offering advocacy, counselling, life skill training, help with health services, keyworking, move-on work and floating support – By agency referral only.

**Young Parent & Baby Project – Cambridge (Cambridge Housing Society)**

Provision of 7 units of temporary supported accommodation. Providing support/guidance on all areas of child care/parenting, independence - budgeting, shopping, cleaning, appointments and social relationships. Continuing support provided after move-on – By self-referral, family, friends or agency.

Move-on accommodation for residents of supported housing is incorporated through the Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme, where priority will be awarded in Band A/B. Further liaison with the YMCA is necessary to identify those ready to move on and help with finding accommodation either through Choice Based Lettings or the Settled Homes Scheme.

The Disability Housing Strategy also sets out a county-wide framework providing a basis from which to develop and evolve the provision of services and support best designed to assist and enable disabled people within Cambridgeshire to achieve and maximize their independence.

The Adult Mental Health Services Strategy for Housing and Related Support aims to alleviate and prevent homelessness for this client group with its emphasis on access to accommodation (including specialist schemes) and support to enable residents to maintain their tenancies.

From the questionnaires recently sent to service providers (see page 29) the lack of suitable accommodation for young single people within the District still remains a real concern.

The Supporting People Programme provides most of the revenue funding for the supported schemes and therefore any new identified need has to be prioritised countywide alongside other schemes within the programme. However, reducing resources in the Supporting People budget make it difficult to implement new initiatives without corresponding savings elsewhere.

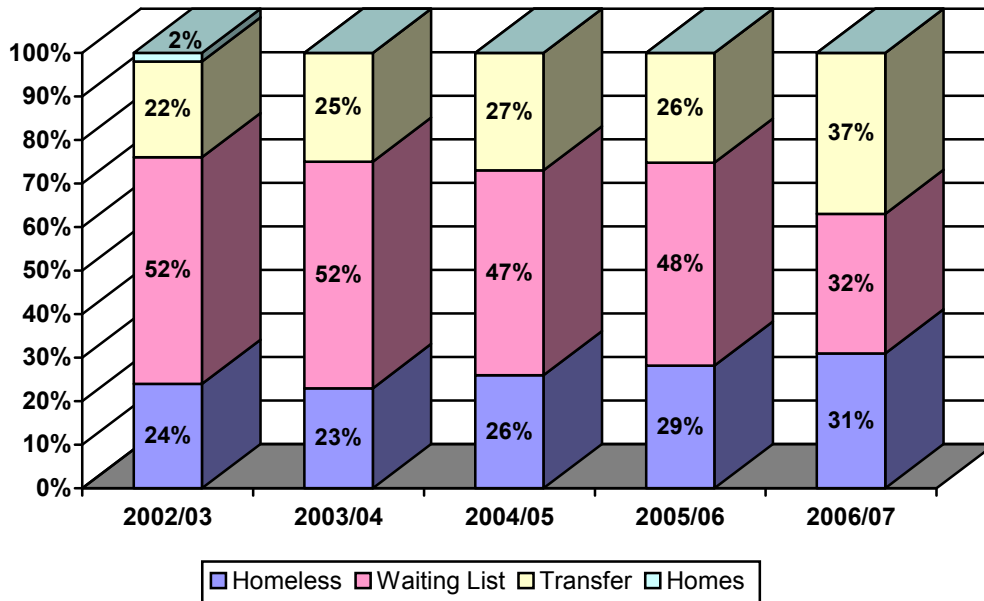
## 3.2 Permanent Accommodation

### Council Housing

As at 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007, 5,804 homes are owned and managed by South Cambridgeshire District Council, of these 1,365 (23.5%) are for sheltered accommodation (this includes 274 sheltered properties that are currently leased under the equity share scheme for the elderly). The Council is currently investigating under Housing Futures the options for transferring its stock, and is currently working towards a tenant ballot following extensive consultation sometime in late 2008 or early 2009.

Over the last five years, on average 340 allocations have been made per annum, 40% of which are generally for sheltered accommodation and would not normally be suitable for homeless households. Chart Five overleaf shows the number of properties allocated by application type that excludes sheltered accommodation lets, as this gives a truer reflection on the distribution of allocations suitable for homeless households. Since 2004/05 the number of homeless applicants allocated a Council property has continued to increase as a percentage of the total allocations for general needs housing.

**Chart Five - Allocations by Application Type - General Needs Housing**

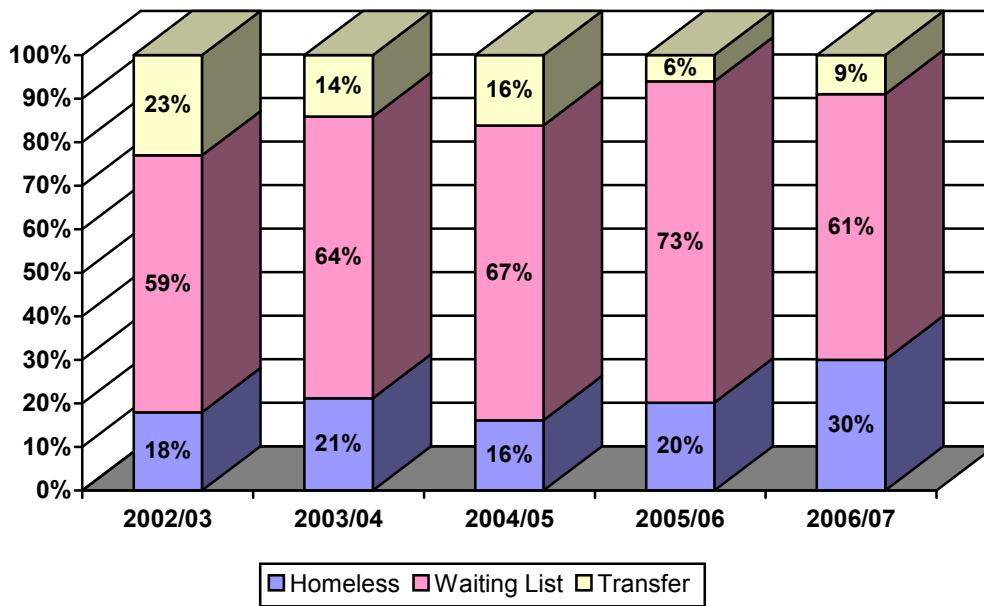


Housing Association/Registered Social Landlords

Information from the 2001 census show that 3.2% of the total housing stock in the District is rented from a housing association or registered social landlord and figures provided by the HIP HSSA statistics for 2007 identify 2,534 RSL/housing association rented properties.

The following table shows the number of nominations made through RSL lettings and the percentage going towards homeless households. Although the majority of nominations go to those on the housing register, the figures for homeless households being allocated an RSL property is continuing to increase – 35 nominations (30%) in 2006/07 compared to 16 nominations (18%) in 2002/03. The actual total number of nominations to RSL’s is also continuing to increase, 88 in 2002/03 and 115 in 2006/07, and this is expected to rise as the strategic growth sites identified start to develop.

**Chart Six - Nominations by Application Type**



### Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The Council have now agreed to use Choice Based Lettings (CBL) as the best approach for the future allocation of housing across its district, in line with government guidance. South Cambridgeshire has implemented a sub-regional scheme with six other local authority areas covering Cambridge City, Fenland, Huntingdon, East Cambridgeshire, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. A proportion of each authorities/partner RSLs properties will be made available to people from anywhere in the Cambridgeshire sub regional area. This will offer applicants greater choice and ease of movement between local authorities across the region. The move from a points based lettings system to a CBL banding scheme has been under discussion for some months and a Local Implementation Group was created to move the project forward. The name of the new scheme is Home-Link and it became operational from February 2008.

Each local authority has its own Local Lettings Policy, following sub-regional principles, to ensure that applicants are prioritised accordingly based on their housing needs and waiting time.

A key requirement for ensuring the success and fairness of the Home-Link scheme is that all customers can access Home-Link and that relevant support is provided where appropriate. An Access Strategy has been developed in consultation with voluntary, statutory and support agencies to ensure that vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged under the new CBL scheme.

Now that the scheme is operational, Home-Link will be monitored and reviewed to ensure:

- Allocations are made to the customers in most need
- Vulnerable customers are bidding for homes
- Customers are bidding for homes appropriate for their needs
- Specific groups of people are not being inadvertently disadvantaged

Homeless applicants will be monitored to ensure that they are making appropriate bids. If they are still in temporary accommodation after a three month period and have not made any bids, their circumstances will be reviewed and if necessary an offer of suitable accommodation will be made outside of the CBL scheme as a direct let in discharge of the Council's statutory duties.

Appropriate move-on accommodation for those that no longer require residential support is incorporated within CBL, where priority will be awarded in Band A./B.

### Privately Rented Accommodation

Only 8.1% of households in South Cambridgeshire privately rent. This is based on the 2001 Census data although there is some evidence of a national increase in the number of private sector tenants since then.

Using Local Reference Rents calculations for the lower quartile in South Cambridgeshire, an average one bedroom property is approximately £450 per month, £650 for a two bedroom property and £750 for three bedrooms. Based on average rents, people renting in the private sector can expect to pay about a third of their household income on rent per year.

The lack of availability of privately rented accommodation and the high rentals for those even in the lower quartile bracket make privately renting in South Cambridgeshire inaccessible for many. The Local Housing Allowance based on Broad Rental Market Areas to be implemented in April 2008 which will supersede Local Reference Rent, may also have an adverse impact on the availability of privately rented accommodation in South Cambridgeshire for those on low incomes (see page 13).

### Privately owned Housing

The average house price for South Cambridgeshire in 2007 was approximately £247,602 and the average earnings come in at £36,670 per annum. Therefore the average house prices in the District are around 6.7 times the average annual earnings. When the lower quartile prices and wages are compared, house prices are about 7 times the annual earnings. [*Source: SHMA Consultative Draft*]

For many households living in the District purchasing on the open market is therefore beyond their financial resources. The Government has introduced various schemes under the Home Buy initiatives to help people on intermediate incomes access housing. KeyHomes East are the government appointed "one stop shop" for all home ownership schemes - as of December 2007 there were 967 applicants registered in South Cambridgeshire and 92 households have so far been assisted.

### Affordable Housing Programme

Funding for new affordable housing is via the Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programme. In the 2006-08 bid round, South Cambridgeshire was successful in receiving nearly £20.5 million to help fund up to 600 affordable homes, which was the highest allocation awarded for the Cambridge Sub Region.

For the 2008-11 bid round, only detailed schemes were given consideration for funding initially, and additional allocations can be made through regular market engagements within the 2008/11 programme. For South Cambridgeshire, just over £4.1 million has been allocated to help fund 144 affordable homes. In addition, a further £5.6 million

was forward funded from the 2006-08 programme, providing a further 124 homes – a total of just over £9.7M being achieved (268 homes). The overall allocation is an extremely positive result for South Cambridgeshire and continues the high level of success achieved in the last bid round. Further submissions for funding will be requested when schemes are ready to go, such as Northstowe and the Cambridge Southern Fringes.

Estimated predictions on sites already identified anticipate a further 1,600 rented properties and 1,100 shared ownership properties being built over the next 5 years in South Cambridgeshire and that eventually the number of nominations to RSLs will be greater than allocations through the Council's own stock. However, research from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment Consultative Draft identifies that there will still be a shortfall of 1109 homes per annum taking into account the projected increase in newbuild housing.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Homelessness Prevention Activities**

#### **4.1 The Housing Advice and Options Team**

The Housing Advice and Options Team sits within the Affordable Homes section of the Council and is responsible for providing free and confidential advice (including homeless prevention) to local people in housing need, as well as implementing the Council's statutory duties under the Homeless Act 2002.

The Team was restructured in 2007 due to the expansion of the service, which saw the inclusion of the allocations/lettings function, developing the CBL scheme, management of the Traveller sites and an increase in preventative work.

An additional housing advice officer has been recruited and the management structure improved.

Information collated for BVPI 213 on preventing homelessness show that 89 applicants were successfully prevented from becoming homeless in 2005/06, 107 in 2006/07 and 59 in the first 6 months of 2007/08. Due to the prescriptive measures for this BVPI, it is likely that the actual figures on prevention are higher than the figures quoted.

#### Regional Champions

Following the success in being selected as regional champions for the East of England, the Housing Advice and Options Team will be working with other authorities across the region to relay the good practice examples that have been implemented, namely:

- Greater focus on homeless prevention.
- New successful prevention initiatives
- Commitment from staff to address concerns, act on these and develop solutions
- Reduction in temporary accommodation (we have now reached 2010 target for temporary accommodation).
- Good examples of partnership working – i.e. settled homes scheme and young person's floating support service.

As a regional champion, work will involve

- Being a source of advice and assistance to other authorities across the eastern region.
- Peer reviews of similar services at other authorities.
- Conferences, workshops etc to highlight the work of regional champions.

Additional funding of £15,000 has been made available from the DCLG to support this work. This will be used to supplement staff training, allow staff time to carry out the regional champion work and develop new pilot schemes to further aid the prevention work being carried out.

## 4.2 Floating Support

The Floating Support Service has been in operation since 2002 and has proved an invaluable service for many households struggling to maintain their tenancies. In the first few years the scheme was available only to those in Council or temporary accommodation, however as loss of rented accommodation was one of the main reasons for homelessness, it was decided that the scheme should not be restrictive and was opened up to all tenures in 2006, in order to address the greatest needs.

The service is based within the Housing Advice & Options Team and is delivered through the direct employment of two Housing Support Workers and the Travellers and Housing Support Team Leader. Both Support Workers have a caseload capacity of 16 clients each, which is normally at full capacity. The chart below identifies the numbers who have been accepted/assisted during 2006/07:

**Table Number – Numbers accepted/assisted during 2006/07 for Floating Support**

Client Category	Reason for Referral						Total
	Multiple Needs	Rent Arrears	Domestic Violence	Learning Disability	Resettlement	Tenancy Issues	
Alcohol Problems	1	1	0	0	0	0	2 (4%)
Complex Needs	6	3	1	0	6	2	18 (40%)
Learning Disability	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 (2%)
Mental Health	6	0	0	0	1	1	8 (18%)
Single Parent	0	4	1	0	2	0	7 (16%)
Elderly	0	1	0	0	0	0	1 (2%)
Single Homeless	2	1	0	1	3	0	7 (16%)
Care Leaver	0	0	0	0	1	0	1 (2%)
	15 (33%)	11 (24%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	13 (29%)	3 (7%)	45

Many of those assisted have complex/multiple needs and require the support of other support agencies to be involved, such as OCYPS, Connexions, Learning Disability Partnership.

The Floating Support Service is funded through the Supporting People Programme and received £80,000 funding in 2006/07. A review of all the generic floating support



services available in the County was recently undertaken. In terms of general feedback from stakeholders most comments about service delivery were positive and rated as good. More specific comments were reflective of localities and for South Cambridgeshire the Citizens Advice Bureaux commented they felt they were often dealing with housing related support issues and dealing with requests for housing. This issue has been addressed and offers an opportunity to develop closer working links and understanding of the service provided by South Cambs.

An SP Implementation Group has been set up to take forward the recommendations of the Review, which include:

- To carry forward concerns from some stakeholders to the appropriate strategic body i.e. views on the provision of housing and support for young people in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland
- To follow up on the VFM, eligibility, range of costs and performance issues identified.
- This review only covered generic floating support services therefore further investigation and research is required into other ways in which floating support is delivered to enable a better understanding of what is meant by floating support and set the right unit and hourly rates costs for the county.
- Further investigation is required to highlight the need for and determination of specialist floating support services.

### **4.3 Young Person's Scheme**

A young person's floating support scheme has been developed in partnership with Cambridge Housing Society, which is providing an important service to young people and their families who are often living in isolated villages. The service aims to prevent homelessness by assisting young people aged 16-25 to remain living at home or to maintain other living arrangements or tenancies. It helps young people to access services, gain confidence and develop better life chances while remaining in their local communities. The scheme works closely with other young people's services such as Connexions, Community Colleges, 16+ team and detached youth workers to ensure a joined up approach and is funded through the Supporting People Programme.

The service has helped 48 young people during its first 9 months of operation. Successful outcomes include: 6 young people have obtained paid work; 8 young people have participated in education or training; 13 young people have reduced their debts; 22 young people are now in their own tenancy; 4 young people have been supported to make contact with external services/groups or friends/family.

A new performance indicator has been established for 2007/08, in line with the LAA, to monitor the number of homeless 16-18 year olds where prevention has worked. The target for 07/08 has been set at 14, with 16 young people having completed the service by the end of September 2007. However, it is difficult to establish measurable outcomes and as from January 2008 monitoring will be implemented using the Rickter Scale tool required by Supporting People. The funding for the young person's scheme is only temporary (secured up to March 2009) and its continuation will be dependent on future decisions associated with the Floating Support implementation by Supporting People.

From the findings of the DCLG national research of 16-17 year olds accommodated in temporary accommodation, it concluded that *"this is an extremely vulnerable group, in need of extensive support, for whom (supported) temporary accommodation could be*

*viewed as a helpful transitional intervention, rather than simply as 'temporary'". These findings support the outcomes already identified through work with the Young Person's Floating Support Scheme and would emphasise the need for the provision of support alongside any temporary accommodation offered to this client group. The findings also stated nationally that homelessness had a pronounced negative (net) impact on young people's economic position, and in particular the very high proportion who were not in education, employment or training. [Source: Homelessness Research Summary No.7, 2008]*

#### **4.4 Cambridge Mediation Scheme**

One of the main causes of homelessness identified is parental eviction. The Cambridge Mediation Service operates a mediation scheme for people that may become homeless due to family disputes. It is recognised that not all mediation work would lead to the person being able to remain in the family home but may provide a 'bridge' between living independently and still receiving support from their family. Where appropriate, the mediation scheme will be the initial contact between parents and child, followed by a referral to the Young Person's Floating Support Scheme offering extra support if needed to help sustain any arrangements put in place.

Funding for the scheme is made available from the DCLG Homelessness Strategy Fund.

Since June 2006, 10 referrals to the scheme have been made, with 6 having a successful outcome.

#### **4.5 Settled Homes Scheme**

As previously mentioned at page 17, the Settled Homes scheme was introduced in February 2006 as an alternative to temporary accommodation through the Private Sector Leasing Scheme. The implementation of this scheme has been vital to the reduction in the numbers living in temporary accommodation.

#### **4.6 Deposit Guarantee Partnership**

King Street Housing Society manages the Deposit Guarantee Scheme in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council. The Scheme helps people who need accommodation find homes in the private rented sector. It does this by offering rent deposit guarantees to landlords on behalf of prospective tenants who cannot afford deposits themselves.

In 2005/06, 30 households have been assisted through this scheme and 31 in 2006/07. The numbers assisted from April 2007 indicate that there will be less take up of this scheme for the year 2007/08 and this could be mainly due to the difficulties finding accommodation with suitable rents and the fact that more people are being assisted through the Settled Homes Initiative.

#### **4.7 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)**

Discretionary Housing Payments can be paid to households to help prevent homelessness. The Housing Benefit section administers this fund and links in with the

Council's Housing Options & Advice Team. The budget for 2006/07 was £24,000 and in 2007/08 is £25,000. The financial circumstances of applicants in receipt of Housing Benefit are assessed. Where an affordability issue is identified and tenants are unable to meet full rent requirements then an application is submitted to Financial Services for financial assistance via the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. The policy for managing the fund is held by Housing Benefit and was developed in consultation with the CAB.

#### **4.8 Sanctuary Scheme/Safe at Home**

The Council's Safe at Home Project is available to all tenures and those placed in temporary accommodation who are experiencing domestic violence. The scheme provides free security checks and mobile panic alarms which are connected to a control centre. Any remedial repairs for security purposes are fast-tracked to enable victims of domestic violence to feel safe and secure in their existing home.

From April 2006 the Sanctuary Scheme was set up to assist victims of domestic violence. The scheme aims to ensure there is a safe room in the victim's house that would ensure safety for at least 30 minutes until assistance is received. The room would be adapted and have a direct link to call for assistance in an emergency. This scheme is being run throughout Cambridgeshire and is funded through the Council.

In 2006/07, four applicants were assisted under the Safe at Homes Scheme. To date one applicant in 2007/08 has been assisted under the Sanctuary Scheme.

#### **4.9 Spend to Save**

As well as the prevention schemes mentioned above, funding is also available through the prevention budget for "spend to save" initiatives. This allows for individual payments to be made for the prevention of homelessness, which would provide a better outcome for the applicant and be more cost effective in the long term. Payments made under "spend to save" could include help with clearing arrears where this would prevent eviction proceedings.

A new initiative is currently being investigated with the CAB to refer applicants for debt advice/counselling on a fee by fee basis.

## **Chapter 5 - Partnership Working and Consultation**

### **5.1 Key Forums**

A better future through partnership is one of the four corporate objectives of the Council and is key to the success of tackling homelessness in South Cambridgeshire, as many homeless applicants have diverse and complex needs. The Housing Advice & Options Team have established good links with many of the support agencies and providers to ensure a joined up approach in meeting the needs of those facing homelessness in the District, and in the wider Sub Region.

Table Nine overleaf lists the key forums that have an input in the development and monitoring of the homelessness service:

**Table Nine – Key Forums**

Homelessness Review Steering Group	Key group involved in the development and monitoring of homelessness in South Cambridgeshire.
Homelessness Strategy Working Group	Small in-house working party convened for a limited time to assist in the review of the new Homelessness Strategy.
Sub Regional Homelessness Group	Quarterly meeting to develop a Sub Regional Action Plan, develop shared working protocols and identify common and emerging themes.
Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference	To assess and manage risk associated with Domestic Violence.
Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements	Multi Agency quarterly meeting to manage risk associated with high risk individual offenders in the community
Priority and Prolific Offenders	Monthly multi agency meeting to discuss individual support/enforcement plans.
Floating Support Inter Agency	Bi Monthly multi agency meeting with support providers to share good practice, discuss client issues, improved communication, networking, training, etc.
Learning Disability Partnership	County group that meets quarterly to share information and good practice, supporting collaborative working to meet the housing needs of adults and young people with learning disabilities.
Disability Strategy Network:	County group that meets every 2 months, all local authorities attend. Most recent focus has been on developing a countywide disability strategy.
Joint Allocations Panel	Monthly panel meeting to prioritise individual young people for allocations to specialist supported housing services.
Hostel Managers Meeting	SCDC & Sanctuary Hereward hold regular meetings to discuss voids, move on, anticipated voids and rent arrears. Enables Housing Options Team to forward plan hostel temporary accommodation, support prevention of repeat homelessness & plan supported move on.
King Street Meeting	SCDC and KSHS fortnightly meeting to discuss voids, anticipated voids, property handbacks, new stock, rent arrears. Enables Housing Options Team to forward plan temporary accommodation and settled allocations and support homelessness prevention.
Russell Street Allocations	Monthly panel meeting to prioritise individual applicants for specialist supported housing services at Russell Street Housing Project managed by Cambridge Housing
Mental Health Accommodation Forum	Monthly meeting to match applicants with Mental Health Illness to available units within specialized services.

## 5.2 Consultation

The consultation activities employed to develop the Strategy included consulting with stakeholders via a questionnaire on the various elements of the housing advice & options service. Surveys were sent out to private landlords, RSLs, service providers and previous customers, and the feedback received has been positive in assisting the Review to identify gaps/shortfalls within the service and prioritising actions for the new Strategy.

All Parish Councils will also be consulted on the Homelessness Strategy under the Housing Consultation Protocol.

The Homelessness Review Steering Group have been involved in the development of the Review and Strategy and met at the outset of the Review process to help identify the key issues to be addressed. The Group involved stakeholders who participated in the previous Review and monitoring of the Strategy, and also those that had indicated through the surveys that they wished to be involved further. A further meeting has been arranged to discuss the findings of the Review and to consult on the draft Strategy.

## 5.3 Outcome of Surveys

In summary, many respondents still felt that there were gaps in services for young people and it was suggested that there was still a need for an accommodation based scheme or perhaps support going into general needs accommodation. Partnership work with the Office of Children & Young People (OCYPS) Service was ongoing to formulate a joint protocol and the 16+ team were in early discussions with Supporting People for revenue funding for a Supported Lodgings Scheme.

Accessibility was also another issue raised by many respondents.

Copies of the surveys and results will be published on the Council's website. A brief summary of the findings for each survey is outlined below:

### Service Providers

69 service providers were surveyed to gauge how well they felt the Homelessness Strategy 2003-08 had been implemented, what they felt the Council could do better and to identify any gaps in services/issues that needed further investigation. A total of 19 responses were received (27% response rate).

The results highlighted the need for more contact with the service providers to ensure they were aware of all the services available and provide early intervention options for those facing homelessness. The Housing Advice and Options Team are hoping to visit organisations, send out leaflets etc and welcome the opportunity to attend any team meetings, etc. to publicise the service.

### Private Landlords

Questionnaires were sent out to 51 Letting Agents who operate in and around the South Cambridgeshire District. The aim of the survey was to identify the willingness of private landlords to engage with the District Council and their attitudes towards letting to those on low incomes/facing homelessness. The response rate for the return of the survey was poor, with 7 responses received (14%).

The poor response showed the reluctance from the private sector to get involved. It was fortunate that by working with King Street Housing that firm links had been established with some of the private sector. From those that had responded, the housing advice/options team were planning to visit these jointly with housing benefit, to ensure they knew what services were on offer, information regarding the new Housing Allowance scheme, as well as trying to encourage landlords to rent to those who could potentially become homeless. The Floating Support Scheme was also now available to private tenants and again early intervention was key to preventing homelessness and this message needs to get across to the private sector

### RSL

18 RSLs operating in the South Cambridgeshire District were asked to complete a survey that included identifying potential gaps in provision, how they could contribute to addressing these gaps, as well as highlighting good practice that already exists. A total of 11 responses were received (61% response rate).

From the results it was felt that there was a shift in working practices to work in a more joined up way, which was in line with the Housing Corporation's Tackling Homelessness Strategy.

One area of concern resulting from the survey highlighted the need for further work on developing a joint protocol regarding tenants who are threatened with homelessness. Three housing associations indicated that they had made a total of 8 evictions in the South Cambridgeshire area in 2006/07 in general needs housing. The reasons stated were either for rent arrears and/or anti social behaviour. There were no evictions made for those in special needs housing.

### Customer Satisfaction

From those seeking housing advice and/or made a homeless application between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007, a customer satisfaction survey was sent to 181 random applicants seeking their views on the service they received and how they felt this could be improved. A response rate of 23% was received from 41 applicants.

Headline results include:

78% of respondents felt we were able to provide the information and advice they required.
85% of respondents found staff to be helpful.
87% of respondents living in temporary accommodation found the staff that manages the accommodation to be helpful.
However, 61% of respondents felt that the average time spent in temporary accommodation was too long

The results also highlighted the need to review the current information available to make sure it was more user friendly and accessible to all.

## Chapter 6 - Performance Monitoring

### 6.1 Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

The Action Plan forms a vital part of the Homelessness Strategy. This defines the actions to be progressed as a consequence of the strategic review and will be monitored and reviewed on a 6-monthly basis by the Homelessness Strategy Review Group. It is expected that some actions may evolve over the lifetime of the Strategy; any such changes will be agreed by this Group.

The following objectives that have not been achieved within the last Action Plan for the period 2003-08 are listed below, and where appropriate will be included in the next Plan.

- *Apply for the Community Services Quality Mark for the Council's in-house service*

There had been a change to the Charter Mark and it was now felt that it was more appropriate to concentrate on the Audit Commission KLOES (Key Lines of Enquiries), which enables a gap analysis of the service provided – see page 32.

- *Establish an information sharing protocol with RSLs to enable the early identification of households at risk of homelessness through breach of tenancy conditions*

This will be a priority target in the new Action Plan, with a view to possibly developing a sub-regional RSL Homelessness Strategy.

- *Review the Young People Joint Protocol with Social Services*  
Work is currently underway with the OCYPS which will incorporate this.

- *Provide information leaflets on the Council's temporary accommodation stock which are regularly updated in order to inform homeless applicants of the options available*

Hereward Housing had updated leaflets on facilities/amenities for the hostel accommodation. It was not felt beneficial to provide a leaflet on B&B. More focus on prevention – leaflets available on Settled Homes. A leaflet to be drafted specifically for Young People and a pack would be put together to take to Lettings Agents.

- *Review the Hostel Provision managed by Hereward Housing*

A report was considered by the Housing Portfolio Holder in June 2007 on the options available, where it was agreed to continue the current arrangement with Sanctuary Hereward in the interim until a decision had been made on the transfer of the Council's housing stock. – see page 16.

### 6.2 Value for Money Exercise

The recommendations of a VFM study carried out by HQN identified that more work is needed to investigate the apparent cost differences relating to homeless applications and temporary housing costs across the sub region. It recommends developing a best practice guide to processing homeless applications and the development of customer satisfaction measures for applications and temporary accommodation.

### 6.3 Key Lines of Enquiry – Gap Analysis

A self assessment was undertaken using the Audit Commission’s Key Lines of Enquiry. In order for the Council to achieve an “Excellent Service”, the following actions have been identified which are not already incorporated in the Homelessness Review:

- With all casework clients, follow up verbal advice in writing
- Conduct audit of homelessness decisions to ensure consistent application in line with policy

## Chapter 7 - Resources

### 7.1 Expenditure and Income

The following table shows a comparison of income and expenditure in respect of the Council’s services for homelessness and potentially homeless people since the implementation of the last Homelessness Strategy in July 2003.

**Table Ten – Expenditure and Income**

	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2006/07</b>
Payments for Accommodation (excluding hostel accommodation)	£245,160	£47,479
Storage of Household Goods, etc.	£5,569	£5,361
Provision for Irrecoverables	£1,379	£0
Rent Deposit Partnership Scheme	£11,025	£36,642
Charitable Payment Scheme	£1,617	£29
Prevention Measures (Camps Mediation, Sanctuary Scheme, Spend to Save, etc.)	0	£8,808
Consultation on Homelessness Strategy (CIPS)	£9,995	£0
Staff & Central Support Costs	£94,072	£126,606
Total Expenditure	£368,817	£224,925
Income – Contributions	£20,392	£2,690
Income – Government Grant	£10,000	£40,700
Total Income	£30,392	£43,390
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>£338,425</b>	<b>£181,535</b>

Not only have the figures for homelessness acceptances, numbers in temporary accommodation and preventative measures significantly improved as reported earlier in the Review, the net expenditure in 2006/07 is 46% less than the costs incurred for 2002/03. Prevention is key to the success of the service and an increased budget for preventative measures of £30,000 has been earmarked for 2007/08 and 2008/09.

### 7.2 Hostels

The total expenditure for the provision of hostel accommodation has continued to increase in line with inflation (£78,382 in 2002/03 and £85,146 in 2006/07). However, the revised budget for 2007/08 shows a significant increase of £125,340, which is mainly due to the increasing void costs associated with the reduction in need for



temporary accommodation. It is anticipated that the estimated budget for 2008/09 will decrease to £94,790 following the termination of The Poplars lease.

### 7.3 Floating Support Service

The Floating Support Service is mainly funded through the Supporting People Programme. The total expenditure for 2006/07 was £89,531, of which £80,465 was received from SP and £7,706 through HRA contributions.

### 7.4 Grants to External Organisations

The Council provides grant aid to organisations that offer housing advice and other support to homeless and potentially homeless households. In 2006/07 some difficult decisions had to be made following the Government's announcement to impose a capping limit on the District Council's budgets. Unfortunately, as grants are discretionary these had to be considered as potential savings and it was agreed to reduce future budgets by half. The following organisations were allocated grant funding for 2007/08 at a reduced level to previous years:

**Table Eleven – Housing Grants to Voluntary Organisations 2007/08**

Cambridge Women's Aid	£3,760
Cambridge Cyrenians	£1,250
Cambridge Women & Homelessness Group	£1,630
Cambridge SOFA	£1,000

Community Grants are also available to organisations that benefit residents in South Cambridgeshire, including Citizens Advice Bureaux, support groups, etc. Although these organisations are not specific to housing, many involved do play a role in meeting the diverse needs of homeless/potentially homeless applicants. In 2007/08 a total grant allocation of £87,770 was granted to four CABs and the Cambridge Law Centre, and a further £48,350 went towards funding 18 voluntary organisations, such as Care Network, Connections Bus Project and Cambridge Relate.

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion

In conclusion the Review highlights the change in direction the Council has taken since the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy in 2003. The numbers in temporary accommodation have reduced significantly and the prevention measures put in place have shown huge savings in the overall budgets. The achievements to date have been recognised by central government when it named SCDC as a Regional Champion for the East of England.

However, with the continuing increase in the numbers approaching the Housing Advice & Options service and the possible affecting influences on homelessness in the District, the role of prevention is paramount in ensuring the downward trend of homeless application acceptances. In summary, the following points should be noted in implementing the new Strategy and Action Plan:

- Time spent in temporary accommodation was still too long.
- Although the numbers of homeless acceptances is decreasing, with the release of The Poplars Hostel and the Settled Homes scheme, the availability of

temporary accommodation needs to be considered, in line with the remodelling of the Robson Court hostel and any possible new sites.

- Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate remains the highest reason for becoming homeless.
- Service Providers feel that the lack of suitable accommodation for young single people within the District still remains a real concern.
- Traveller issues are identified as the highest priority in the Council's Race Equality Scheme 2005-08, and highlight the housing advice and homelessness service as amongst the most relevant in promoting equality and opportunity.
- Traveller Liaison Officer Post Review
- The number of migrant workers registering in the District is continuing to increase which could have an impact on the numbers approaching the Council for housing advice and the need to ensure that all information and advice is accessible.
- The questionnaire results highlighted the lack of knowledge from service providers and private letting agencies of the services provided by the Housing Advice & Options Team – actions to be implemented to address this issue.
- Further work needed to be undertaken in the engagement with the private sector
- An information sharing protocol with RSL's should be taken forward in view of the fact that there were 8 evictions from RSL properties in 2006/07
- The new Choice Based Lettings Scheme will need to be monitored carefully to ensure vulnerable applicants are not disadvantaged and the impact on temporary accommodation and homelessness is evaluated.
- Housing Futures – Options Appraisal