

Introduction

The Homelessness Act placed a duty on every local authority to develop a Homelessness Strategy at least every 5 years. Since then North Somerset Council has produced two, the latest of which expires in 2011. The Homelessness Strategy 2011-2016 sets out what North Somerset Council and its partners are intending to do to tackle homelessness in the district during the next 5 years. The actions set out later in this document have been developed to help achieve the following:

- Preventing homelessness in North Somerset
- Ensuring that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in the North Somerset who are or may become homeless.
- Securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in North Somerset who are or who may become homeless or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The Strategy places a clear emphasis on the need for effective partnership working. Homelessness is not just about the council's services but also about the need to work with a wide range of agencies and stakeholders. The aims of the Strategy and the actions set out in the action plan have been developed with a number of agencies working in the homelessness field with the process being as inclusive and involving as many agencies as possible. This document will help a wide range of agencies in the development of future initiatives and in the targeting of limited and reducing resources.

The Homelessness Strategy takes into account other strategies relevant to the district and will help to deliver some of the priorities highlighted in the Housing Strategy and the North Somerset Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy.

NOTE:

Due to the current economic position and the diminishing resources available to the public sector, it was recognised in producing this strategy that extending current services or introducing new services would be a significant challenge. Therefore, in this strategy we will focus on improving the way we work, and working closely in partnership, to deliver the priorities in this increasingly challenging environment.

Context

The Council's Housing Advice Team deals with homelessness, housing advice, prevention of homelessness, tenancy relations and the recruitment of landlords to provide housing for homeless people. Since the opening of the Housing Gateway in April 2009 clients have been offered immediate housing advice with follow up specialist advice if it is needed. Clients can also get help with their HomeChoice application for social housing and can place bids on their preferred properties. From the opening in June 2009 to March 2010 there were over 12,000 callers to the Housing Gateway increasing to almost 14,000 for the period April 2010 to February 2011 and out of these for the same period (June 2009 to February 2011) almost 4000 people were provided with housing advice due to a housing problem or needing to move in an emergency.

The key achievements over the life of the last Homelessness Strategy (2007 – 2011) include:

- Co-location of the HomeChoice and Housing Advice Team
- Opening of the Housing Gateway and the launch of HomeChoice
- Housing Benefit Officer co-located within the Housing Advice Team
- Development of a Young People Housing Protocol between Children & Young People Services and Housing to deal with homeless 16/17 years olds, including the co-location of a social worker in the team.
- Dedicated Housing Advice Officer for young people's work described above, who also delivers workshops in secondary schools to prevent homelessness by providing advice and guidance to young people about the realities and consequences of homelessness.
- Short term grant funding secured for Citizens Advice Bureau to run a debt and money advice service from the Housing Gateway
- Woodspring Deposit Guarantee Board now run 2 surgeries per week in the Housing Gateway for clients who the Council do not have a duty to house
- Participation in the National Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Rough Sleeper Count completed May 2008
- Research carried out into the need for a direct access hostel in North Somerset
- Launch of the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group, specifically to implement the actions and objectives of the current Homelessness Strategy
- Established a Mental Health and Housing Interface Group made up of representatives from the Local Authority Housing service, social landlords, the Primary Care Trust and the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership ensuring improved joint working to meet the needs of homeless people with mental health needs.

Homelessness in North Somerset

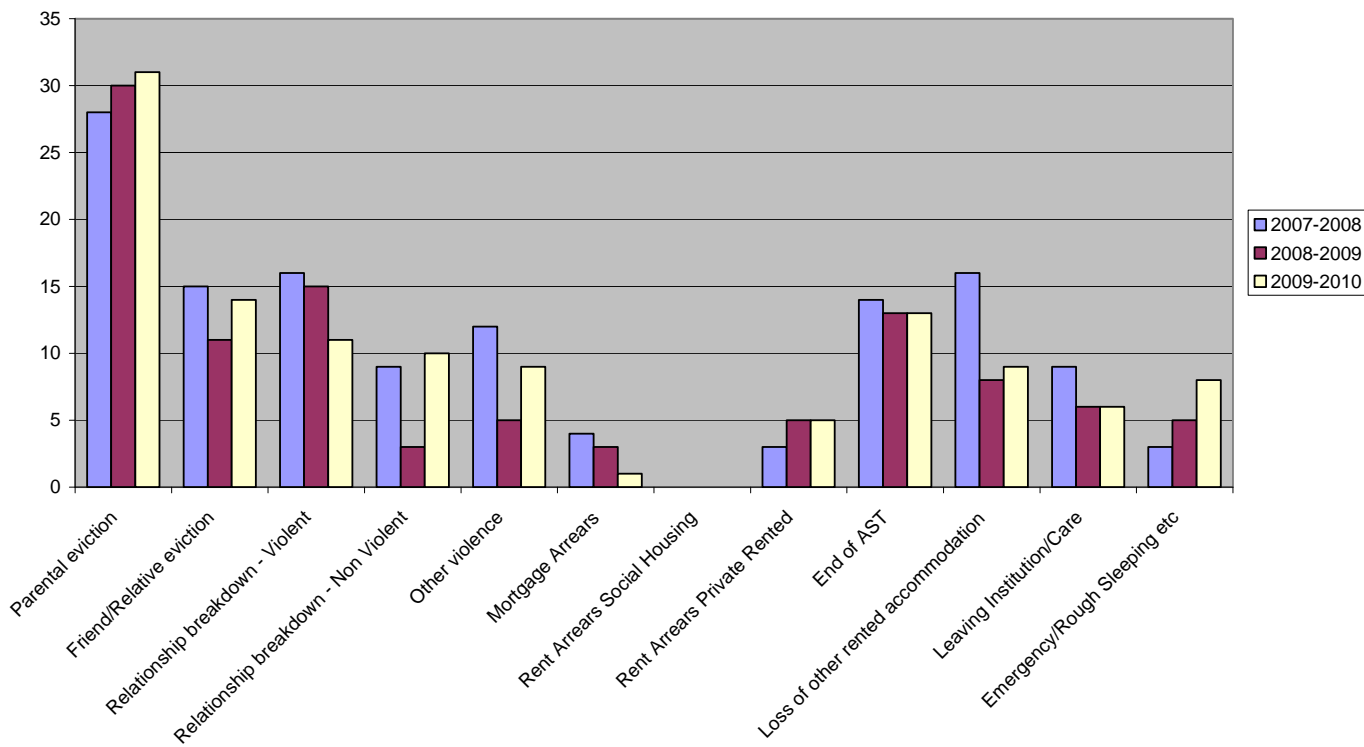
As part of its statutory responsibilities, the Council keeps comprehensive information about homelessness applications it receives. It also records the number of cases that are prevented from becoming homeless and the numbers of clients approaching for housing advice. This information is used to identify areas and issues that need to be prioritised by the council and its partners.

Over the last 3 years there has been an increasing demand on the service as demonstrated by the table below. Whilst actual homelessness applications have decreased the numbers of clients being prevented from becoming homeless or who have received housing advice has increased significantly. It is envisaged that due to the current economic climate and other factors such as changes to Housing Benefit legislation that demand on the service will continue to rise.

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Housing advice	634	1129	1845
Homelessness prevention	455	416	498
Homelessness applications	347	266	189
Totals	1436	1811	2532

The main causes of homelessness in North Somerset for those who are accepted as statutorily homeless are identified in the table below. This shows that over a three year period parent/friend/relative evictions remains the highest cause of homelessness, followed by loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown. There are specific actions in this strategy to try and tackle these causes of homelessness.

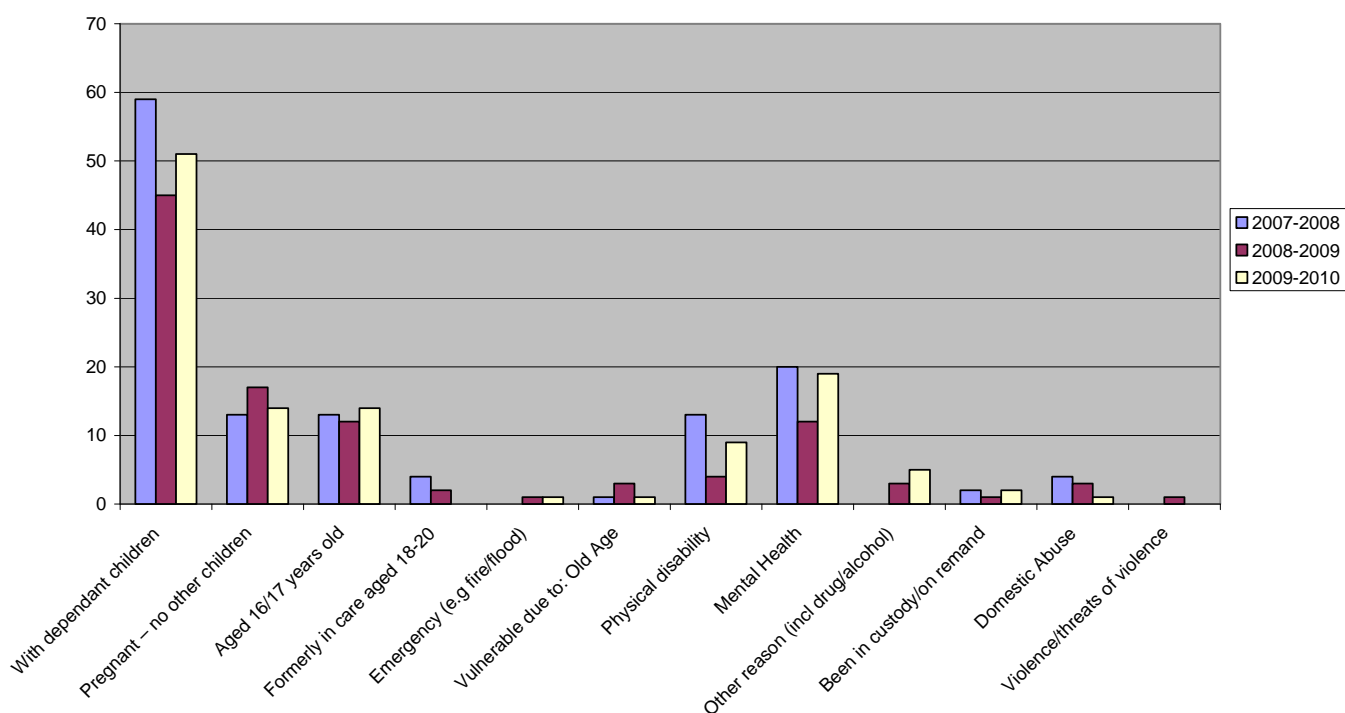
Reasons for Homelessness for Accepted Households



Applicants accepted as Statutorily Homeless by Priority Need Group

The graph below shows the priority need groups for all those who the council have accepted a full homelessness duty to over the past 3 years. This demonstrates who the most vulnerable groups are that require assistance. The largest groups to face problems are those with dependant children followed by people with mental health problems and 16/17 year olds. This evidence can be used to shape our services over the lifetime of this strategy.

Applicants accepted for re-housing by priority need group



Homelessness Prevention

Since the Homelessness Act 2002 central government has increasingly encouraged local authorities to become more proactive in tackling homelessness. One of the fundamental reasons for authorities to produce homelessness strategies was to set out proposals for homelessness prevention. The Department of Communities and Local Government define prevention as ‘activities that enable a household to remain in their current home where appropriate, or that provide options to enable a planned and timely move to help sustain independent living’.

Last year (2009/10) over 400 households were prevented from having to make a homelessness application due to the Council adopting a variety of prevention methods. This compares to 117 who were accepted as statutorily homeless. Over half of those prevented from becoming homeless were provided with financial assistance to move into private sector accommodation. Other methods of prevention include helping to resolve housing benefit problems, family mediation and reinstatement of illegally evicted occupants.

Prevention remains one of the keys focuses of the Council's Housing Advice service.

Rough Sleeper Numbers and the need for a Direct Access Hostel

During April 2009 the Council commissioned Redwood Reviews Ltd to carry out research into the need for a direct access hostel in North Somerset. The recommendation for the research came out of the Audit Commission inspection of the Housing services in 2007. It also followed a multi agency rough sleeper count completed in May 2008. No rough sleepers were found on the night of the count. The rough sleeper report conducted face to face interviews with 77 individuals using a day centre (Somewhere to Go) and evening soup kitchens. The following conclusions were made following completion of the research:

1. *Rough Sleeper numbers are low.* From the information gathered during the interviews together with the outcome of the rough sleeper count the report concluded that there may be between 0 and 5 people sleeping rough at any one time in North Somerset.
2. *No evidence of entrenched rough sleeping.* The research did not uncover any evidence of any long term entrenched rough sleepers. Those who stated they were rough sleeping stated that their residence was transient in duration and only temporary.
3. *Rough sleepers are not the main client group of the street services or day centre.* By far the majority of clients using either the day centre or the services providing food are housed.
4. *The importance of Somewhere to Go.* STG has a major influence on preventing homelessness. A significant number of individuals reported that it was specifically the activities of STG that had directly enabled them to access accommodation. In addition to this the majority of people using this service are not homeless. The report concluded that STG provides a 'social hub' for many individuals who may, without the social support and structure that it informally provides, be at risk of losing their accommodation. It is therefore an important resource in preventing homelessness.

Taking into account the above outcomes the overall conclusion of the research carried out did not support the need for a direct access hostel in North Somerset.

Consultation

Understanding the needs and priorities of homeless people and services in North Somerset was essential in the development of this strategy. As such consultation was carried out with clients, partners and stakeholders at various stages in its development.

Consultation for this strategy has included:

- Questionnaires and face to face discussions to establish priorities
- Online consultation
- Themes and priorities and drafts for consultation with internal and external stakeholders and partner agencies
- Specific research and collation of statistical information

Consultation responses were used to shape the priorities in this strategy and to ensure the final strategy reflects the needs of clients and the aims of all homelessness services.

Key Aims

Consultation with a wide range of services has identified areas for improvements for existing services and the future development of services.

The Homelessness Strategy consultation undertaken locally, together with consideration of the government agenda have identified five key strategic aims

- *Maintain and develop prevention activities:*
Current activities which have produced significant results in preventing homelessness in North Somerset need to be maintained and developed over the coming years to help further reduce homelessness across the district.
- *Provide appropriate support services for homeless households:*
Becoming homeless is a stressful experience, so support services for homeless households are essential for helping people to maintain their existing housing, moving towards independent living and help prevent repeat homelessness occurring.
- *Maximize the use of existing housing and increase the supply of appropriate housing solutions:*

Creating access to appropriate housing helps to prevent homelessness. There is a need to increase housing available for homeless households, and to make the best use of what is currently available.

- *Ensure the use of good quality accommodation for homeless households:*
Central government requires councils to limit their reliance on temporary accommodation when housing homeless households. Accommodation used to house homeless people needs to be of good quality
 - *Ensure value for money and effective partnership working:*
Given the current financial climate there is a need to ensure that existing resources are used in the most efficient and effective way and that good partnership working arrangements are in place to tackle homelessness and to maintain current services.
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Key challenges

There are many challenges facing the Housing Advice service over the life of this strategy. A key challenge will be the delivery of services that meet identified needs in an economic climate where there will be less resources available to the council and its' partners. There is already a very high and increasing demand for our Housing Advice service. In particular, the number of callers to the Housing Gateway has far exceeded the levels that were initially anticipated. Predominantly, this has been due to the launch of HomeChoice North Somerset as well as the service becoming more widely known.

This strategy has been developed at a time when service providers across the North Somerset Partnership face extensive cuts in funding, as announced in the October 2010 Spending Review. North Somerset Council alone faces a 30% reduction in funding from Government over the next four years. At the same time, we know that the demand for services for homeless people will continue to increase. This means that, as a partnership, we will face some tough decisions as to how we prioritise the funding available to us in the future. The strategy must be viewed in this context and all improvements that we aim for will be dependent on resources.

The strategy has also been developed in the context of the national government's ambition to create a 'Big Society', in which partners across sectors will build new relationships with local communities, enabling them to take greater responsibility for meeting their own local needs. Partnership working will be vital, as no one agency can meet the needs of homeless people in North Somerset on their own.

Resourcing new initiatives to tackle and prevent homelessness will also be challenging in the future in an environment where there are less public resources. Looking for ways to reduce and manage the demands on the service ensuring our services are targeted on those in most need will become even more important in the future.

In addition to the above risks there are also challenges facing Supporting People services. The Supporting People grant for housing related support was recently subsumed into the general grant given to local councils. This means determining priorities for use of these funds now falls solely to North Somerset Council. The funding was also reduced by 22% in this process but will continue to be contracted out through 38 providers to supply 71 services for vulnerable people living in the community, following 'cost saving' measures introduced. There will inevitably be further pressure on these resources in the future and we will need to work closely with the Supporting People Team to ensure we are best placed to be able to address the needs of homeless people. Setting service priorities will be devised through a new Supporting People and Commissioning Strategy, which will be reviewed annually thereafter.

Another challenge facing the service over the period of this strategy is due to the changes to housing benefit announced as part of the Welfare Reform bill. The changes are being phased in over the next 3 years but could have a significant impact on housing need and supply. Specific actions have been included later in the strategy to tackle this. The Council is working closely with its partners and landlords to try and predict the impact and to put in place suitable safeguards to minimise them.

Overcrowding in both social and private tenancies has always been a challenge for housing authorities due to a lack of large family homes however the Housing Act 2004 strengthened the duties placed on local authorities when overcrowding is identified. In addition to this moving families to larger accommodation is also going to prove very difficult due to the new LHA restrictions capping payments at the 4 bedroom rate in the private sector.

In recognising the particular difficulties faced by large families finding suitable accommodation, we will look to find innovative solutions to maximise the availability of larger properties. This will include encouraging housing associations to look for opportunities to extend or enlarge existing homes and balance development with larger homes to meet the needs of their tenants. We will always follow the Lacors guidance [Regulation of "crowding and space (2009)] in residential premises and endeavour to find satisfactory solutions without causing alarm or distress while discharging our statutory duty.

In response to the public health white paper, we recognise that the threat of homelessness or limited security of tenure will cause a great deal of anxiety and stress to vulnerable households which can lead to ill-health and stress related conditions. We will strengthen the information available to support overcrowded households and work with the health authorities to target support to reduce the health effects of over-crowded dwellings. Minimum standards will be rigorously applied to sub-division of dwellings and appropriate comments made on planning applications.

Specific actions to tackle overcrowding have been included in the Homelessness Strategy action plan

Equality and Diversity

North Somerset Council is committed to promoting equality on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. We aim, working with our partners to build safer and stronger communities where diversity is valued and everyone has equal chances to live, work, learn and feel part of the community, free from discrimination and harassment.

This strategy is aimed at improving homelessness services for all residents in North Somerset and as such no group should be adversely affected or disadvantaged as a result.

To ensure systematically that equality is taken into account, a full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on the strategy. This is to ensure that our services are accessible to all our potential users, and to identify any actions needed to address any potential inequalities in access or take up of services by all people within our communities. Equality and Diversity training is mandatory for all Council staff.

The following sections will highlight the Council's priority outcomes and how we aim to achieve them.

Priorities

Following initial consultation the following areas have been identified as needing to be prioritised within this strategy. The bullet points under each heading have been identified as the key issues that need addressing for each priority area.

1. Private Rented Sector Engagement:

- High levels of homelessness approaches from people who have been served notice on their privately rented tenancy.
- At the time of the 2005 Private Sector Stock Condition survey, 37% of private sector homes in North Somerset did not meet the Decent Homes Standards. If properties do not meet this standard clients could become homeless due to their property being unreasonable to continue to occupy.
- Future reductions in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels overall which may lead to problems of affordability in relation to individuals' housing costs.
- Private sector landlords may leave the market for a variety of reasons (repossession, increase in capital gains tax, Local Housing Allowance caps), which would lead to a reduction in the number of homes available for those in housing need in the district.

2. Parental/Family Evictions:

- Statistics show that this is the main reason why people approach North Somerset Council for help as homeless
- The proposed increase in Local Housing Allowance non-dependent charges could lead to an increase in family evictions

3. High levels of homelessness in the 16-25 year old age group:

- The Housing Advice Team has seen an increase in the numbers of young people approaching as either homeless or for housing advice.
- The main reasons for the approaches are: not getting on with step parents, an increase in anti-social behaviour in Young People leading to family breakdown and subsequently being asked to leave, not being able to find work and parents' benefits ceasing when the young person leaves school.
- Proposed increases in Local Housing Allowance non-dependent deductions could increase homelessness
- Difficulties in obtaining guarantors for under 18 age group
- Housing Benefit restrictions for young people under the age of 25 (due to rise to 35) makes a lot of accommodation in the North Somerset unaffordable
- Supporting people accommodation providers have reported an increase in the numbers of young people with mental health needs

4. Supporting People through the Recession:

- We have seen increased enquiries from people who are worried about paying their mortgage (due to redundancy, reduced hours etc.) in extreme cases people can face homelessness due to the economic recession and multiple debts.
- During 2009, 180 mortgage possession claims leading to possession orders were made at Weston-super-Mare court
- The increase in VAT to 20% has increased household costs, which will be a particular challenge for those on low incomes
- Local Housing Allowance entitlement for working age people in social housing will change to reflect family size, which may mean that people will need to downsize their properties to avoid rent arrears

5. Mental Health Services:

- Unplanned hospital discharges can result in people with mental health difficulties being placed in unsuitable accommodation
- There is a lack of suitable housing available for some of this client group
- The multi-agency protocol needs updating
- It can be difficult to meet the needs of clients with dual diagnosis (mental health and alcohol/substance addictions).
- Some accommodation is only available for referral via Avon and Wiltshire Partnership services

6. Housing Options for Other Vulnerable Groups:

- In North Somerset there is an ageing population.
- In 2008 there were 40,200 people aged 65 and over living in the district. This population is expected to increase to 60,300 by 2025.

- In North Somerset approximately 500 people with learning disabilities live at home with parents or carers. Another 234 people with learning disabilities live in residential care
 - Offenders and drug/alcohol clients often fall into a vicious circle of homelessness and crime. There is a need for settled suitable housing to help reduce this
 - The Housing Act 2004 placed greater duties on local housing authorities to take action and resolve issues regarding overcrowded properties
 - Housing Benefit cap at the 4 bedroom rate means that some families could remain overcrowded or risk living in unaffordable accommodation.
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Actions

In this section we set out the solutions we already have in place to deal with the identified priority areas above and those that will be prioritised in the future

Priority 1: Private Rented Sector Engagement

- Carry out research into the role the private sector plays in meeting housing demand and investigate intervention techniques to improve quality and security of tenure for its tenants
- Analyse the reasons for loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies and investigate solutions to address these
- Review the potential to expand the accreditation schemes for the private rented sector
- Carry out a new Stock Condition Survey of private sector properties
- Support and target action to achieve the Decent Homes Standard in the Private Sector
- Encourage 'Decent Homes Plus' by our private landlord partners
- Provide information, training and advice to landlords
- Review the deposit guarantee scheme
- Provide a toolkit for landlords on how to deal with rent arrears and anti social behaviour to limit the need for eviction
- Carry out a customer survey with local landlords to identify what would encourage more landlords to work with vulnerable clients

Priority 2: Parental/family Eviction

- Continue to make family mediation available
- Continue work with Family Intervention Project to engage hard to reach families
- Explore good practice with other local authorities on working with families
- Work with Locality Teams and housing providers to identify families at risk of breakdown

Priority 3: High levels of homelessness in the 16-25 year old age group

- Continue delivering workshops in schools on homelessness
- Expand housing workshops out to Youth Groups
- Continue joint working with Children and Young People's Services on homeless 16/17 year olds
- Investigate the potential with Supporting People to re-designate services to meet the needs of young people, particularly supported housing
- Support the multi-agency Housing Young People Group to improve joint-working
- Provide tenancy training for young people leaving home
- Develop and launch a Supported Lodging Scheme
- Extend the trainer flat model to non-care leavers
- Recommend a requirement for the Stonham Accommodation Awareness Training Scheme to be completed by a young person prior to any nomination for social housing

Priority 4: Supporting people through the recession

- Continue participation in the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Provide debt advice training for staff to ensure income maximisation
- Continue Citizens Advice Bureau surgeries in Housing Gateway (dependent on funding being available)
- Produce directory of services for frontline staff
- Monitor the effects of the economic recession and its impact on housing need
- Review HomeChoice policy to give priority to existing Housing Association tenants who are facing a shortfall in Local Housing Allowance due to under-occupation in line with proposed Housing Benefit changes
- Continue working closely with housing benefit services and landlords to mitigate the impact on clients due to the changes in the Local Housing Allowance.

Priority 5: Mental Health Services

- Continue with regular Mental Health & Housing Interface Meetings
- Ensure on-going Inter-agency training
- Regularly refresh the Mental Health and Housing Protocol
- Investigate jointly procured accommodation for clients with mental health and other complex needs and those being discharged from hospital
- Jointly commission for services for homeless people with dual diagnosis (mental health and substance misuse)
- Closer working with North Somerset G.P's

Priority 6: Housing Options for Other Vulnerable Groups

- Work with internal and external partners to improve delivery of housing options to people with learning disabilities
- Review multi-agency protocols for preventing homelessness in specific needs groups
- Ensure staff are fully trained in housing options for older people
- Investigate the need for wet houses
- Ensure all new housing staff are adequately trained in Domestic Abuse
- Continuing commitment to Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)
- Investigate the need for Extra Care Schemes for adults under the age of 55
- Provide tenancy advice/training for Offenders/Drug and Alcohol clients to maximise chances of holding down a tenancy and reduce evictions. This in turn could help reduce on-going crime
- Work with Housing Associations and developers to encourage building larger properties and to look for opportunities to extend existing homes to help large families.
- Work with health authorities to raise awareness of possible interventions for overcrowding.
- Publish minimum standards in conjunction with the planning department and take enforcement action where necessary

It is unlikely that there will be additional resources to develop services and the actions outlined above. Multi agency working is essential throughout the life of this strategy as the council will be unable to meet the needs of homeless people by working alone. Any solutions requiring additional financial commitments will be dependent on funding being available. We will work closely with partners to look at the potential to pool existing resources and to bid for any additional funding opportunities that may become available.

Links to the Housing Strategy

The 5 key aims of the Homelessness Strategy 2011 to 2016 mentioned earlier in this document will contribute to the priorities in the Housing Strategy as follows:

Housing Strategy Priority Outcome	Homelessness Strategy Aim
Delivering homes, developing communities	Maximize the use of existing housing and increase the supply of appropriate housing solutions Ensure value for money and effective partnership working

Better homes, better places	<p>Ensure the use of good quality accommodation for homeless households</p> <p>Provide appropriate support services for homeless households</p>
Greater opportunity, greater choice	Maintain and develop prevention activities

Delivery and Monitoring

The action plan forms a vital part of the Homelessness Strategy. This defines the actions to be progressed as a consequence of the consultation that has been undertaken. The action plan addresses the issues and concerns that have emerged as a result of the initial consultation process.

The action plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Strategy Implementation Group. It is expected that some of the actions will evolve over the lifetime of the strategy and this group will agree any such changes. This group will report to the Strategic Housing and Planning Group.

An annual report will be produced to detail the progress made with the priorities agreed within the strategy. The report will be published on the council's website to ensure that residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback on the strategy and progression towards the agreed priorities.

Regular reports on performance indicators are monitored through the Departmental Leadership Team, Corporate Management Team and also to elected members through the Scrutiny Panel and Executive. Performance is also monitored by the North Somerset Partnerships Health and Well Being Board who have identified tackling and preventing homelessness as a key priority.

Action Plan

Priority/Aim	Specific Action	Target Date	Resource	Lead	Performance Measure
Private Rented Sector Engagement					
To reduce the number of households becoming homeless from private sector tenancies	Carry out research into the role the private sector plays in meeting housing demand and investigate intervention techniques to improve quality and security of tenure for its tenants	March 2013	Existing resources and Housing , Planning Delivery Grant	Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team /Private Sector Housing Team/Housing Advice Team	Research completed and evidence used to inform policy and services
	Analyse reasons for loss of Assured Shorthold tenancies and investigate solutions to address these	March 2013	Existing resources	Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team/Housing Advice Team	Report to HMT Analysis complete and new measures in place if appropriate
	Review the accreditation and licensing scheme for private rented sector	Ongoing	Existing resources	Private Sector Housing Team	Reduced approaches from households stating accommodation unsuitable due to disrepair
	Support and target action to achieve the Decent Home Standard in the Private Sector	Ongoing	Existing resources	Private Sector Housing Team	Increased in no. of homes in private sector achieving this standard
	Provide information, training and advice to private sector landlords	Ongoing	Existing staff resources, homelessness strategy budget	West of England partners/Housing Advice Team/Private Sector Housing Team	Report to HMT Information/training programme

				developed and landlords taking this up	
Review the Deposit Guarantee Scheme	Sep 2011	Existing resources and some project work required to be funded by surpluses	HomeChoice and Housing Advice Team	Review complete	
Provide a toolkit for landlords on how to deal with rent arrears and anti-social behaviour to limit the need for eviction.	Dec 2013	Existing resources	HomeChoice and Housing Advice Team/Private Sector Housing Team	Toolkit developed and distributed Reduction in no. of evictions due to arrears and ASB	
Carry out a customer survey with local landlords to identify what would encourage more landlords to work with vulnerable clients	Dec 2012	Existing staff resources and homelessness strategy budget	Housing Advice Team/Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team	Customer survey completed and subsequent increase in no. of private landlords taking vulnerable households	
Parental/Family Evictions					
Support families who are at risk of breaking down and potential homelessness	Explore good practice with other local authorities on working with families	Dec 2014	Existing resources	Housing Advice Team/Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team	Research complete and evidence used to inform policy and services
	Work with Children and	Ongoing	Existing	CYPS/Housing Advice	Earlier Intervention

	Young People Services Locality Teams and Housing providers to identify families at risk of breakdown		resources	Team	methods in place
High Levels of Homelessness in the 16/25 year old age group					
Reduce the number of 16 to 25 years olds becoming homeless and supporting young people in finding appropriate and suitable housing	Introduce a requirement for the Stoneham Accommodation Awareness training scheme to be attended prior to a nomination for social housing	June 2012	Existing Resources	Supporting People Team/HomeChoice Team	HomeChoice policy updated
	Expand delivery of workshops to Youth Groups	June 2012	Existing resources	Housing Advice Team/CYPS	Workshops being delivered to Youth Groups
	Continue joint working with Children and Young People Services on the 16/17 year olds Housing Protocol	April 2011	CYPS Base Budget/Spend to Save	Housing Advice Team/ CYPS	Base Budget increased Number of 16/17 year olds returned home increased by 10%
	Discussions with Supporting People about potential re- designation of services to young people, particularly supported housing including mental health	Dec 2011	Existing resources	Supporting People/HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team/AWP	Discussions held and New Services in place
	Develop tenancy training for young people leaving home	Dec 2014	Existing staff resources and homelessness	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Training being delivered

			strategy budget		
	Develop a Supported Lodgings Scheme	Dec 2014	Existing staff resources and capital funding identified by CYPS	CYPS/HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Supported Lodgings Scheme available for careleavers
	Extend Trainer Flat model to non care leavers	April 2011	Existing resources	Supporting People/CYPS/Housing Advice Team	Trainer flats available to non careleavers
Supporting People Through the Recession					
Support households affected by the recession and reduce potential homelessness due to repossession/bankruptcy etc	Continued inclusion in the governments Mortgage Rescue Scheme	Ongoing	Existing resources	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Eligible households referred to appropriate agencies
	Debt Advice training for Housing staff to ensure clients income maximisation	Dec 2013	Existing staff resources ASH Training & Development Team	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Training completed
	Re-negotiate Citizens Advice Bureau surgeries in the Housing Gateway	Dec 2011	Existing resources/CLG Grant Funding	CAB/HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Surgeries being carried out
	Produce a multi agency directory of services for all frontline staff	June 2013	Existing staff resources and homelessness strategy budget	Homelessness Strategy Implementation Group	Directory available
	Monitor the effects of the economic recession and its impact on housing need	Ongoing	Existing resources	Housing Advice Team/Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team (D&E) Research and Monitoring Officer	Robust evidence base for mortgage repossessions and prevention work developed

	Review the HomeChoice Policy taking into account Local Housing Allowance reductions for housing association tenants who are under-occupying their properties (new legislation from April 2013)	Dec 2012	Existing resources	HomeChoice Team	New policy in place, reflecting legislation
	Mitigate the impact on clients and housing supply due to changes in Local Housing Allowance legislation	Ongoing	Existing resources	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team, Private Sector Housing Team/Liberata/Landlords	Continued supply of affordable housing available to clients in receipt of Housing Benefit
Mental Health Services					
Improve services to clients who have mental health issues and are in housing need	Continue with regular Mental Health and Housing interface meetings	On-going	Existing resources	AWP/HomeChoice Housing Advice Team	Regular Mental Health and Housing interface meetings taking place
	Carry out inter-agency training	On-going	Existing resources	AWP/HomeChoice Housing Advice Team	Inter-agency training carried out
	Refresh the existing Mental Health & Housing protocol	June 2011	Existing resources	AWP/HomeChoice Housing Advice Team	Mental Health and Housing Protocol refresh complete
	Investigate jointly procured accommodation for clients with mental health and other complex needs	June 2015	Existing staff resources AWP Adult Social Care Supporting People	Preventing and Reducing Homelessness for People with Mental Health Needs Sub-Group Health & Well-Being Partnership Board	More appropriate housing available
	Joint commissioning of services for dual diagnosis	Dec 2015	Existing staff Resources AWP Adult Social Care	AWP/HomeChoice Housing Advice Team	New jointly commissioned services in place

			Supporting People		
Housing Options for Other Vulnerable Groups					
Increase awareness of housing options for all vulnerable groups	Work with internal and external partners to improve delivery of housing options to people with learning disabilities	On-going until March 2015	Existing resources/LIP	Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team/HomeChoice & Housing Advice	Number of residential placements reduced, increase in alternative provision
	Review multi-agency protocols for preventing homelessness in specific needs groups	March 2012	Existing resources	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Revised protocols in place
	Ensure new housing advice staff are fully trained in housing options for older people	June 2013	Existing resources	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Training carried out
	Ensure all new housing staff are adequately trained in domestic abuse issues	On-going	Existing Training Budget ASS&H Joint Training Budget	HomeChoice and Housing Advice	Reflected in annual appraisal documentation All staff fully trained
	Continue Housing commitment to the domestic abuse Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC)	On-going	Existing staff resources	HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team	Regular demonstrable attendance
	Investigate the need for Extra Care Schemes for adults under the age of 55	June 2014	Existing resources	Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team/HomeChoice & Housing Advice	Research complete and evidence used to inform services
	Provide tenancy advice/training for offenders/drug and alcohol clients to maximise their	Dec 2013	Existing staff resources	Housing Advice Team/ CSDAT ARA Supporting People	Tenancy advice and training in place, resulting in a reduction in

	chances of sustaining a tenancy and reduce evictions. This in turn may help reduce on-going crime				repeat homelessness for this client group
	Work with Housing Associations and developers to encourage building larger properties and to look for opportunities to extend existing homes	On-going	To be negotiated	Private Sector Housing Team/Housing Strategy & Commissioning Team	Larger families able to access suitable accommodation
	Work with health authorities to raise awareness of possible interventions for overcrowding	On-going	Existing	Private Sector Housing Team/HomeChoice and Housing Advice Team	Awareness raising events carried out
	Publish minimum standards in conjunction with Planning and take enforcement action where necessary	On-going	Existing	Private Sector Housing Team/Planning	Standards published

Appendix 1

Consultation Responses

We achieved a wide range of responses to our consultation. We have amended the draft strategy to reflect comments where appropriate. This includes:

- Agreement of the key issues causing homelessness in North Somerset
- The need for close working with private landlords including surveys to try and find out what encourages them to accept vulnerable clients
- The need for support and training for landlords to ensure that they are all aware of their responsibilities
- Due to the increase in mortgage repossession it is important that the Council forge better links with mortgage providers
- A number commented that people with mental health problems and drug/alcohol addiction often fall between services making it difficult to provide appropriate and sustainable housing
- The need to have affective joint working between appropriate agencies to mitigate evictions due to changes to Local Housing Allowance
- There is an increasing need to work with young people in schools and to provide extra support

All of the points raised during the consultation have been considered in the development of this strategy and if appropriate have been reflected in the priorities that have been identified.

We received formal responses to the Draft Homelessness Strategy Consultation from the following:

Members of North Somerset Council
Somewhere to Go
North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau
Woodspring Deposit Guarantee Board
Liberata
Alabare
Domestic Abuse Coordinator
Private Rented Housing Team
HomeChoice & Housing Advice Team
NSHousing
NSHousing Floating Support Team
Connexions
Supporting People Team
Chapter 1
Second Step
Community Safety Drug Action Team
North Somerset Councillor

Appendix 2

Document List

Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments

Housing Act 1996

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/all?title=housing%20act%201996>

Homelessness Act 2002

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents>

Housing Act 2004

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/contents>

Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Central Government Publications

Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnesscode>

Homelessness Prevention: a Guide to Good Practice 2006

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/homelessnessprevention>

Homelessness Strategies: Good Practice Handbook 2002

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/156720.pdf>

Local Strategies and Plans

Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 -2026

<http://www.northsomersetpartnership.co.uk/whatwedo/sustainablecommunitystrategy/index1.asp>

North Somerset Council's Corporate Plan 2008 – 2011

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8E8E9677-D982-4DA9-8468-1AC17DB765E0/0/publication_20080820_CorporatePlan20082011.pdf

Housing Strategy 2010-2015

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3BF8F62A-D8FA-4909-B9AF-CE81C6BC23D4/0/HousingStrategy20102015_0610.pdf

Affordable Housing Delivery Plan

<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Housing/strategiesandpolicies/ahdp/>

Learning Disabilities Housing Strategy

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/EA33B5D5-D91E-4883-B0A6-F2499C7E4A9A/0/strategy_20060925_LearningDisabilitiesHousing.pdf

Older People's Housing Strategy

<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Housing/strategiesandpolicies/Olderpeopleshousingstrategy.htm>

Appendix 3

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