

Homelessness Strategy



Housing Department
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Warwick District Council

Homelessness Strategy

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Executive Summary

The Homelessness Act 2002, places a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy for publication by 31st July, 2003. The Strategy must contain a full review of current provisions, endeavour to identify future needs and formulate a strategy to meet those needs. The Strategy must have a full review within a period of 5 years with an annual review of service provision taking place. In addition, the Strategy must contain a detailed action plan to show how the Strategy will be delivered.

The Homelessness Review indicates that a great deal of work has been undertaken in an effort to meet the needs of homeless people in this district. There is a broad range of service provision, offering differing levels of support and accommodation, albeit in relatively small numbers. Some projects are recently operational and, with the addition of the new priority needs categories it will be necessary to review the provision and evaluate current and future needs on an on-going basis. The Homelessness Strategy has been developed by a multi-agency sub-group of the existing Accommodation Group. The Accommodation Group comprises representatives from the Supporting People Team, Social Services, Supported Housing Providers, Health and the Local Authority and meets quarterly to consider levels of demand, type of need arising, future developments and any work arising from these issues.

The review indicates that there is adequate provision in most areas although there are some differences in the priorities identified by the varying strategies. The Supporting People Strategy suggests shortfalls in assistance for people with HIV/Aids, Floating Support for people with mental health problems and support for homeless families. There is little unmet need for people with HIV/Aids and the other priorities identified are being addressed. Further, the Housing Strategy prioritises people with mental health problems, ex-offenders and people with physical disabilities and work is currently being done to meet these priorities. What does emerge from the Homelessness Strategy is the requirement to consider putting additional resources into being pro-active in preventative and outreach work.

It is clear that a thorough review of current provision has been undertaken with quality and accessibility highlighted. Procedures are in place to prevent services being blocked inappropriately, with agreements on levels of service in place to monitor and evaluate the provision.

Additional schemes are being devised to fulfil the duties of the Homelessness Act 2002 and further research will be undertaken to assess the impact of the new legislation. Approval has been given for a Choice Based Lettings Policy to be implemented during 2004-2005 and, again, this will require monitoring to ensure that homeless people gain the priority and choice this offers.

This Strategy demonstrates that all special needs groups have been considered and the structures are in place to recognise and measure new demands.

A relatively small district is disadvantaged by the economies of scale but does have the benefit of being able to create very strong networks to work in partnership to meet the needs of the community.

Introduction

Where, why and by whom?

Warwick District Council

Homelessness Strategy

Area Profile

Warwick District Council is within the West Midlands region and is one of the five district Councils that form Warwickshire. There are four main towns; Warwick, Kenilworth, Leamington Spa and Whitnash with more than forty villages and a total population of 123,900. Based on the 2001 Census, the Office for National Statistics indicates that there are 53,000 households in Warwick. This figure remains unchanged from the year 2000 with an increase of only 2,000 from 1996.

There are 55,093 homes in the district of which 81.5% are owner occupied, 10.7% privately rented, 5.5% affordable housing and 2.3% other forms of housing or empty. The housing market continues to be buoyant, with the Centre for Urban & Regional Studies, Affordability and Housing Need in the West Midlands Region, July 2003 indicating that Warwick District has the highest average house prices in the whole of the West Midlands Region.

Demand across all tenures is consistently high and there are specific problems in relation to land values and availability with the close proximity of Coventry University exacerbating the problems within the private rented sector. Compared to Warwickshire as a whole, Warwick District Council has a higher proportion of people living alone, 10.6% compared to 9.3%, a larger proportion of older people, 19.3% compared to 18% and a higher proportion of ethnic minority residents, 5.6% compared to 3%.

The perception has always been that Warwick District Council area does not have a homelessness problem. The average household income is over £20,000 per annum, which nationally is second only to the Borough of Maidenhead and Windsor, but this district also has recognised areas of deprivation, where the income is less than £7,000 per annum. Homelessness statistics show a steady average of 1000 applications per year which is higher than the other four districts which may be explained by recording methods. All approaches regarding housing advice and homelessness are recorded in order to endeavour to find an accurate assessment of the needs in the district. This method also ensures that the service provides continuity for users with an accurate history of their housing situation.

Land Registry data shows house prices have increased by over 30% since 1998, with the average three bedroomed house now costing £103,000. This is also reflected in rent levels with an average rental of £700.00 per month.

The Corporate Strategy identifies the key issues for Warwick to meet the housing need as:

- To deal effectively with the decision on the future options for managing the Council's housing stock.
- To increase the number of affordable homes in the district.
- To improve the quality of housing.

and this is reflected within the Housing Strategy.

A full Housing Needs Survey was undertaken by Fordham Research in 1998, with a review completed in December 2001. The survey revealed that existing households make up some 70% of households in housing need and most concealed households were single adults. The majority of households in need contained children and were currently living in rented accommodation. If all future housing need is to be met it is estimated that an additional 7,072 affordable homes would be required by 2011.

A full Housing Needs Survey was planned for 2004, in conjunction with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. It has now been agreed that this work will not be commissioned until 2005. The Regional Housing Board are undertaking research into the housing market areas across the region and the scope of the district survey will be dependent on the result of the regional work.

A study of the housing needs of the black and minority ethnic communities, including gipsies and travellers, across the five districts of Warwickshire is currently underway with the results expected at the end of the year.

Purpose and Aims of the Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002, places a duty on all local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy by July 2003. There must be a full review of all current and likely future levels of homelessness in the district, and a detailed survey of current and planned provision to meet the identified needs. The review should also include methods of homelessness prevention together with methods of providing support to prevent people becoming homeless again. A Strategy must then be formulated to ensure that sufficient, appropriate accommodation will be available for people becoming homeless in the district.

The Homelessness Act 2002, also places a duty on Social Services to assist with the formulation and implementation of the Strategy and consideration must also be given to how the objectives can be achieved through joint working with other organisations.

The Homeless Strategy is intended to be a live, working document which will endeavour to show:-

- What we do now.
- What else we need to do.
- How we will do it.

The principle aim of the strategy will be:-

To help people to find the right accommodation for their needs at the right time of their lives.

In view of the changes made by the Homelessness Act 2002 and The Homelessness Order 2002 for amendment to priority categories, it is extremely difficult to accurately assess future demand although this has been attempted. The legislation stipulates that the Homelessness Strategy should be renewed in five years but it is intended that a review should take place annually with a full review occurring in 2008.

Legal & Procedural Framework

Warwick District Council has always taken a broad view of the legal obligations in respect to homelessness and works in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, together with the Homelessness Act 2002 and Code of Guidance.

An ambitious and extensive development programme was devised by the Council following the Green Paper: Quality and Choice, Decent Homes for All, published in late 2000, which indicated that the rights of many homeless people were to be enhanced. The development programme aimed to provide sufficient, appropriate accommodation to fulfil the needs of the homeless people in the district to enable the Council to meet their statutory obligations when the new legislation came into force. Existing provision was scrutinised and a development programme devised with the aim of specialist, supported, housing providers either extending their current services, or developing new services to meet future needs. The projects initiated by this programme included floating support schemes for ex-offenders, extending provision for care-leavers and the creation of a new direct-access hostel for people who are roofless. The programme is now completed with all projects being operational.

“Supporting People” is a central government initiative which came into effect on 1st April, 2003 and aims to ensure that quality housing related support services are provided for people who need help to live in the community. Support services have historically been funded through Government Grants, Housing Benefit and Charities and Trusts. The funding was complex and was not thought to ensure that support services were directed to where they were most needed. Further, there were limited controls of the quality and provision of the support. In consequence of this, the government set out to create county based teams to assess the needs of the area and centralise the distribution of funding which is undertaken by a multi-agency district panel. The Supporting People Teams also have a responsibility to monitor and evaluate both the accommodation and support offered. The opportunities provided by this initiative have been utilised, in conjunction with the development programme, to fund the additional service provision. However, there are serious concerns regarding the level of future funding and the lack of revenue funding for any new proposals. The Supporting People work is currently being inspected by the Audit Commission and it has been made clear that there will be no new money invested. The only method of improving or increasing services will be to distribute the current funding. This presents a very difficult challenge in an area with limited existing resources and a generally high standard of services.

A Best Value Review of the homelessness and housing advice service has been undertaken and an Improvement Plan compiled. Many of the actions in the Improvement Plan show the need for additional resources, some of which cannot be met by “Supporting People”. Alternative methods are continually being sought and it is hoped that the implementation of e:government, in addition to a Business Process Redesign Programme, will release some staff resources.

The Homelessness Act 2002, also refers to the allocation of accommodation and imposes a duty on Councils to give people choice. Warwick District Council have devised a new allocation policy which will do this. Rather than offering properties to the next person on the list, all vacancies will be advertised and people can then apply for the property they would like. Offers would then be made to the person with the highest points.

Where there is a statutory duty to rehouse, people will be given a priority but this will be for a limited period of time. If they have not obtained a property during the period of priority, suitable accommodation will be offered to them. This system will be introduced as soon as a new computer programme is installed and tested which is expected to be end of 2005. The Choice Based Lettings Policy will be operational throughout this district.

Developing the Strategy

The review of current and future needs and resources has been compiled from existing data which includes the authorities Homelessness Statistics, Housing Needs Survey, Housing Strategy and Census information. There has been continuous consultation throughout the development of both the review and strategy with contributions from all the relevant statutory and voluntary bodies working in the district. The draft document was then subject to consultation with elected members, user forums and, again statutory and voluntary bodies, including B.M.E. groups. Shelter have been instrumental in the writing and have given advice and assistance throughout.

The main body of work has been undertaken by a sub-group of the Accommodation Group, which is a long established group that meets quarterly. The group has representatives from all the agencies which provide supported housing for people with special needs, together with members of the Supporting People Team and Drug Action Project. The sub-group has been joined by representatives from Shelter, Social Services and the Primary Care Trust.

It has always been recognised that the surrounding issues, and solutions, to the problem of homelessness are complex and cannot be resolved by one organisation. Consequently, partnership working is key to the Homeless Strategy in this district and can be demonstrated by the development of the strategy where each organisation contributed the section appertaining to their own specialist function.

A full review of services was completed together with an Action Plan which has now been completed successfully with only one item outstanding. It has not been possible to progress additional high support facilities for young people due to the inability to obtain revenue funding. This is now being considered further by Orbit Housing Association and the Young Housing Project.

There is a statutory requirement that a full review of this strategy takes place every 5 years, however, this authority will undertake annual reviews as there is a culture of continuing improvement in this authority. This first, annual review has been conducted by members of the Accommodation Group, many of whom were instrumental in writing the original document.

Supporting People (SP) & Homelessness

Links with the WDC Homeless Strategy

There have always been varying methods of funding for projects offering accommodation and support which included Government Grants, Housing Benefit, Charities, Trusts and latterly Lottery Funding. The projects frequently worked independently and there were no means of ensuring that the funding was directed to the groups in most need. Neither were there procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision.

From April 2003, all the funding has been directed to Supporting People and a countywide Strategy has been developed to ensure that the funds are given to the appropriate groups and the provision will be regularly monitored. This is the first time that a comprehensive countywide approach has been taken for the planned provision of appropriate accommodation, to meet the identified needs of the area, and direct funding to where it is required.

The Supporting People Strategy has been utilised to recognise the gaps in service in this district with the unmet needs forming part of this Homelessness Strategy. There are concerns regarding the security of future funding in view of the Government's intention to find savings to reduce overall costs.

Homelessness & Supported Accommodation

Supported accommodation is an essential part of helping to maintain the independence of vulnerable members of our society, whether it is sheltered housing for the elderly with warden services or shared accommodation for the homeless. It is also crucial in the battle to prevent future homelessness and repeated homelessness by equipping people with the skills they need to maintain their tenancies and independence.

A good example of this would be the provision of supported accommodation and floating support services to young people, or to offenders as well as those at risk of offending. There are also support services available to older people with support needs, not least the Care & Repairs agencies (also known as Home Improvement Agencies), which enable older people to remain in their own homes by providing aids and adaptations, which can speed up discharge from hospital or prevent the need for a move to residential care.

Strategic Role of Supporting People

By introducing a more co-ordinated service planning structure, SP will build on the work already being done by agencies trying to meet the needs of homeless people and prevent future homelessness. This will include input from a wide range of organisations such as Health, Probation, Social Services and Housing.

The key principle in the development of the Shadow (SP) Strategy for Warwickshire (2003 – 2004) is that it does not work in isolation; the priorities identified for future service developments have been established through working closely with partner agencies. In future, all housing related support services developed after 1st April 2003 will have to meet the priorities as outlined in the SP Strategy document, leading to a more effective allocation of resources, rather than relying on local initiative as it has been in the past.

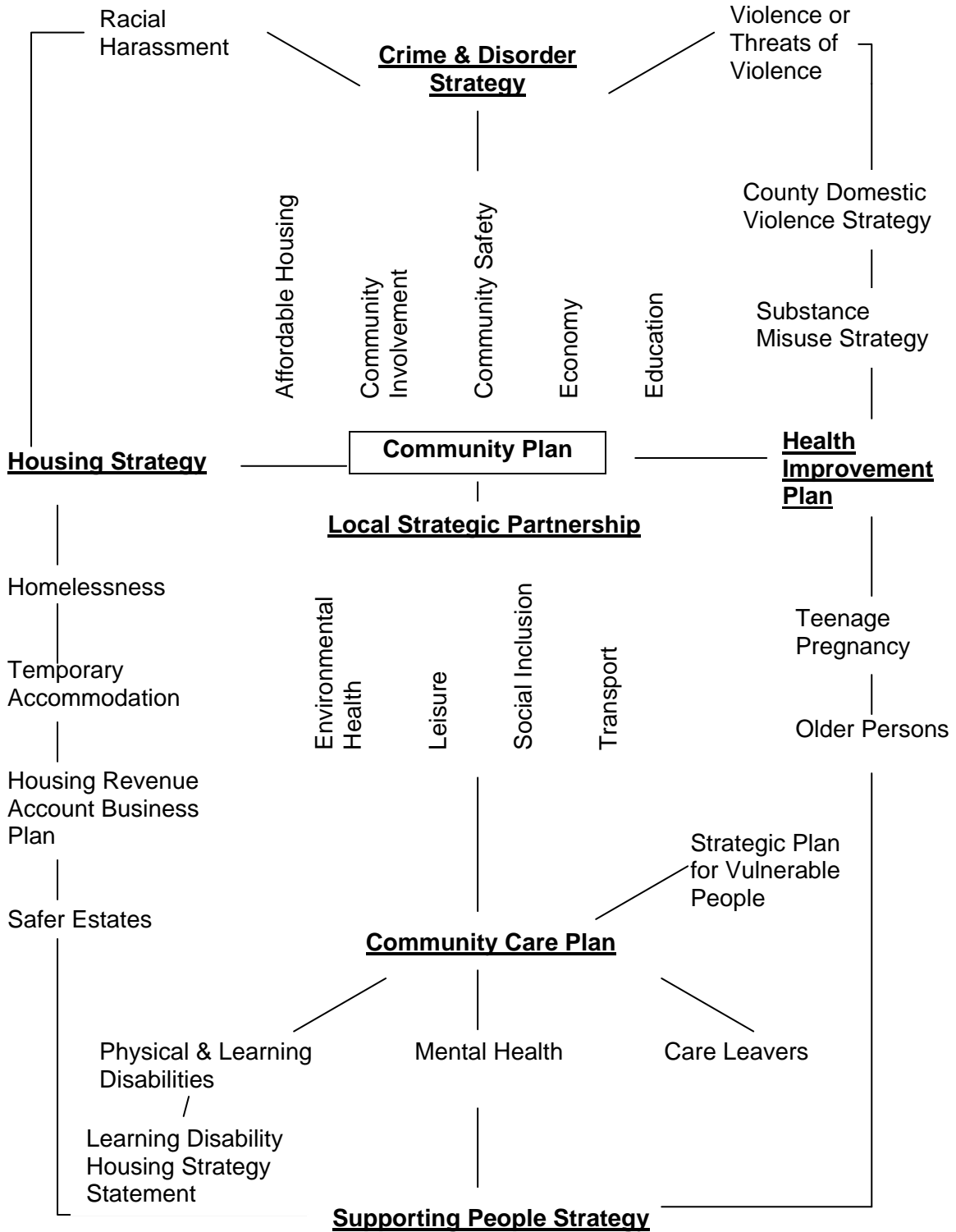
Although the SP Strategy details the housing and support needs of a variety of different needs groups, like care leavers, teenage parents and single vulnerable people, the development of floating support services to homeless families living in temporary accommodation and/or those recently re-housed was highlighted as a priority within the county. Warwick District responded to this with the appointment of a Support and Resettlement worker.

The SP Team will now be commencing work on the 5 year Strategy document (2004 – 2009), to be completed by March 2005. As part of this they will be conducting a countywide supported housing needs survey, which, when coupled with the information already available, will be an important resource in the development of future Homelessness Strategy Statements.

The Strategic Network

This diagram illustrates the range of strategies into which the Homelessness Strategy links. Wherever possible, this strategy has endeavoured to compliment and support the work of others. Two elements require further explanation and, as can be seen from the diagram, the Supporting People element encompasses the whole range of the network. In addition, the Council are developing a Local Strategic Partnership. This group includes key statutory and voluntary agencies and has the task of driving forward the primary aims of the new Community Plan. Central Government considers that Local Strategic Partnerships are the most effective means of pursuing community strategies which accurately reflect the needs of local people.

The Strategic Network



Part 1 **What we do now**

Review of Current Services

The Local Authority Perspective

The Housing Advice Team

The Housing Advice Team has a manager, 3½ generic posts dealing with housing advice, homelessness and the management of the Housing Register. In addition, there is a full-time post of Housing Advice Liaison Officer whose duties include nominations to Housing Associations, management of the Special Needs Register and management and monitoring of the move-on facility for supported housing providers. This allows a central point of contact for all relevant agencies. There are 2 part-time posts managing temporary accommodation, administration and finance, and one full time post of undertaking the support and resettlement of homeless people. An appointment system operates for interviews, to prevent people having to queue, and all interviews are carried out in private rooms to ensure confidentiality. In cases of emergency, applicants will be interviewed on the same day, if this is possible.

The Case Officer manages the application from first approach to determination and allocation of accommodation suitable for the applicants needs. 91% of applications are completed within the target time of 33 days. All applicants requiring advice or assistance are interviewed and the details recorded on a computerised system. This allows accurate records to be held and prevents confusion but does also give a higher statistical result than many other districts who perhaps only record priority categories.

Advice is given on all forms of housing tenure including private sector and low cost home ownership schemes. Referrals are made for specialist advice for example debt management with the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Staff have an annual appraisal and Personal Development Plan to identify training needs. Both external and internal training is given with in-house information briefings on changes in legislation and any new initiatives or projects. An example, recent briefings to all front line staff includes:- “Low Cost Home Ownership Schemes”, delivered by Registered Social Landlords and “Second Chance Housing Scheme”, delivered by Social Services and Christian Alliance Housing Association. Regular external case law updates are provided with staff taking the opportunity to hear specialists in housing law.

Everyone who uses the service is asked to participate in a Satisfaction Survey which is used to identify problem areas and improve the service.

Homelessness Charter and Advice Leaflets are available together with information on all local and national services. The Homelessness Charter offers advice on the local authorities duties in relation to legislation and details the procedure of offering an appointment system and single case officer as point of contact. In addition, target times are given for processing and determining homeless claims. Advice leaflets show basic guidelines for the variety of advice which is offered and includes both Landlord and Tenant regulations. All applicants requesting assistance are given appointment times and interviewed to allow a full assessment to be undertaken. An application is completed by the officer to establish a person's housing circumstances. The same form is used for applications to the Housing Register but the forms are different colours in order to denote that a request for advice or a claim of homelessness has been made. Advice and assistance is then given dependent on

the situation. If appropriate, the application is then placed on to the Housing Register together with details of the homelessness/advice application. This is a computerised system for recording, statistical and allocation purposes.

Should the person only require advice and assistance the records are amended to close the case. Some applicants fall within “non-priority” categories and this means neither they, nor a member of their household, are vulnerable in any way and are therefore no less able than others to find their own property. In these circumstances, the local authority has a duty to offer advice and assistance and this may take the form of negotiating with a landlord, explaining the legal position or referring to a specialist agency for advice. Applicants within the non-priority categories are given an additional 50 points on their application to the Common Housing Register in recognition of their homelessness. This preference is given to all non-priority applicants without the benefit of secure accommodation on condition that a local connection is established and they have not lost their previous home as a direct result of their own actions.

If an applicant’s circumstances place them in a priority category, for instance they may have dependant children, have been in care or be elderly or infirm in any way, the authority has a duty to ensure that accommodation is made available to them. This may be at the expiry of a fixed term tenancy prior to possession proceedings being taken. Priority would be given at an earlier stage, through the Special Needs Register (see page 8), if it would be difficult to access suitable, secure accommodation.

How are Applications Assessed

Extensive liaison occurs with all relevant agencies where appropriate in order to establish an applicant’s priority and future needs. Medical assessments are undertaken by an Occupational Therapist attached to the department and advice is sought when questions of priority, vulnerability and suitability of accommodation arise.

Should an assessment suggest that people require support for independent living, referrals would be made to the appropriate provider. The Council works closely with all accommodation providers in the district and specialist support is available for young people who may not have lived independently, ex-offenders who need help to return to the community and people who have mental ill health. The organisation would then refer through the “move-on” arrangements (see page 8) when support was no longer required. Similarly, floating support would be withdrawn and leased properties transferred back to the local authority with Introductory Tenancies given to the existing resident.

Direct housing is the ideal but temporary accommodation is utilised where necessary. Homeless applicants are housed, in date order of acceptance, through the Common Registration Scheme which accesses all vacant social housing. The Common Registration Scheme is a list of everyone in the district who needs accommodation or wishes to transfer from their existing home. There are 13 members of the scheme including Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations), Charities and Trusts and they contact the Council when they have vacancies. The register gives applicants a points assessment on their housing circumstances and needs and this denotes the position on the list. When there is a statutory responsibility to rehouse i.e. homelessness, unfit properties, extreme overcrowding, the applicants are prioritised. Points are not given but allocations are made in date order of the duty decision being made.

Allocations

There is close liaison with the supported housing providers working in the district with weekly contact advising of current vacancies and move-on arrangements in place for people who have reached the point where they are able to sustain independent living. All agencies are monitored through Service Level Agreements to ensure quality of service provision and demand for specialist services. The Housing Advice Liaison Officer provides a central point of contact for all other housing providers.

The Allocations Policy has been fully reviewed and approval has been given for the introduction of a choice based system which will be introduced in 2004/2005. A Common Registration Scheme already exists, with 13 members, and all participants will move to the new scheme with all vacancies within the district being advertised. The Common Registration Scheme (CRS) has been in operation since 1994 and is used by all the accommodation agencies in the district. Both new applicants and those requesting a transfer are assessed, using the same criteria, and points are given based on housing need. There are no exclusion policies; however, Council owned accommodation is restricted to people who have lived in the district continuously for a period of six months or who travel more than 15 miles into the district to work. These restrictions are not applicable to RSL's but all offers of property may not proceed if the applicant has an existing housing debt. The CRS is complex with a penalty for refusing properties and a much simpler, less restrictive and more open scheme was needed.

The proposed Choice Based Allocations Policy has been developed by a group representing the Council, RSL's, Tenants and an elected Member and is based on the results of a questionnaire to over 3,000 users and potential users.

All affordable housing will be advertised including rented property and low cost and shared ownership properties. A Housing Register will still operate with two bandings. Band 1 will contain all applications from people where there is a statutory duty to provide alternative accommodation e.g. homeless, overcrowding or unfit conditions. If people choose a property it will be given in date order of acceptance of that duty. Band 2 applications will be given a simple points assessment made on their present circumstances which will reflect the "preferred categories" detailed in the Homelessness Act 2002. These include people living in overcrowded or unsatisfactory conditions or people with urgent housing needs.

This will allow homeless people to choose where they live and have the same opportunities as everyone else. The new scheme will be advertised extensively and the computer programme will be marked to recognise people who may require assistance with responding to the advertisements. This would be provided either by the local authority or the key worker involved with the applicant. Homeless people would be given priority in Band 1 for twelve weeks. If they had not been rehoused during that time, one offer of suitable accommodation would be made.

There are over 2000 applicants on the Housing Register with applications being reviewed annually. The highest demand is for family housing with a rising demand from single people. The revised Allocations Policy allows for under-occupation to try and prevent repeat demand and create settled communities. The Housing Strategy does not support the provision of new one bedroomed properties but recommends single people having two bedrooms to facilitate any change in circumstances.

The Housing Investment Programme shows a total of 412 Council properties let during 2003/2004, 124 being let to homeless. There were 242 lettings to RSL's with 27 being let to homeless.

The Choice Based System does have a restriction regarding applicants who are identified as having previously lost accommodation through anti-social behaviour.

Outreach and Preventative Work

The Authority is centralised but there are contact points in Kenilworth and Warwick with community offices in several areas.

Work has been done to establish the need for outreach housing advice facilities and following a move towards generic working within the Housing Advice team monthly outreach surgeries are provided in Warwick and Kenilworth and a weekly drop-in advice session in Leamington Spa. It is anticipated that there will be an increased demand for additional advice with the implementation of Choiced Based Lettings.

All enquiries, whether by telephone, application, personal visit or other agencies, are referred for a housing advice interview if there was an indication that a homelessness problem could be prevented by advice and assistance. Similarly, any correspondent with relevant difficulties is invited for an interview.

Although staff are trained in a wide range of subjects and are fully informed of the resources in the district, it is still necessary to refer for specialist in-depth assistance. Cases of harassment and illegal eviction are referred to the Council's Legal Department, with one specific officer undertaking all this work, in close liaison with the Case Officer. For the 12 month period to 31st March, 2002 there were 13 cases of harassment or illegal eviction.

It is understood that some people may find approaching the local authority intimidating, or problematic for whatever reason, and an advice service for people under 25 years of age is offered by the Young Housing Project. Enquiries are also frequently made by elected members and the M.P. whose major caseload represents over 600 housing enquiries per year. The M.P., together with Social Workers and Health Visitors, is advised regularly of alterations to any practices and procedures that may affect the allocation of housing or the advice given.

Home visits are made if people prefer or are unable to attend the office. There are also close links with Health Visitors, Social Services and hospitals and visits are frequently made to local hospitals and rehabilitation units.

A 24 hour emergency service is operational from the Council's Control system, (this is a 24 hour service providing a life-line service to elderly and vulnerable members of the community). Requests for assistance are taken and emergency accommodation is provided if appropriate until an applicant can be assessed by a Housing Advice Officer on the next working day.

The authority would wish to be more pro-active in respect of the preventative element of the service, and would be interested in advertising the service, but again there are resource implications.

Rent Guarantee Scheme

A Rent Guarantee Scheme has been operational for 8 years with over twenty families being accommodated within the private sector. This scheme offers Landlords a survey of their property, nominated tenants, a fast track through Housing Benefit and a guarantee of one

month's rent for a six month period should rent arrears occur. Any applicant on the waiting list may be nominated, including homeless, if their application indicates they are interested.

The scheme is beneficial in extending affordable housing provision as properties are only included if the rent is with benefit limits. However, it is administratively expensive in relation to officer time but successful in that further incidence of homelessness is minimal.

Care and Repair

Context and Duties

This authority contracts Age Concern to undertake Care and Repair and there is a close working relationship with both the Housing and Environmental Health Departments.

Review of Present Provision

Care and Repair is available to everyone of 60 years and over, and anyone with a disability. Practical advice is offered to home owners and private tenants who need help with repairs or improvements to allow them to remain in their home.

Short term daily living support is also offered to people over 60 years who may be recovering from an illness or accident, or have been discharged from hospital and are not eligible for Social Services resources.

A "Handyperson Service" is also available, where people are only charged for the cost of materials, not labour, and there is also a Gardening Service.

Home Safety Checks are available to anyone over 55 years of age which aims to identify and make clients aware of hazards both inside out outside their home.

Temporary Accommodation

Temporary accommodation is only utilised if an appropriate long-term solution is not available. Several types of temporary accommodation are used.

- "Homeless at Home"

this classification is used extensively to give potentially homeless people priority for rehousing while they remain in insecure accommodation i.e. staying with friends or relatives.

- Bed and Breakfast

ceased to be used 1st April, 2003.

- Guest Rooms

are fully furnished bedrooms within elderly people's developments. They are accessible through the 24 hour emergency call system and provide safe and secure emergency accommodation for people who may have been subject to fire, floods or violence. Their use is particularly beneficial for elderly homeless.

- Private Sector Leased Properties (PSL)

Five self-contained flats are currently leased from private Landlords. The properties have one or two bedrooms, kitchen, living room and bathroom. Cookers are provided. The properties are inspected when vacant, repaired and regularly redecorated. They have secure door entry systems and health and safety checks are made quarterly. They are centrally situated with close access to all services and any complaints are investigated within 48 hours. Communal areas are cleaned weekly. The private sector leasing is normally let to young people who are without any furnishings, therefore fridges will be placed in the properties and a number of beds will be made available.

- Council Housing Stock

12 self-contained two bed roomed flats have been transferred from general housing stock. Cookers and curtains are provided, communal areas are cleaned weekly and these properties are also situated near the town centre. Inspections occur as above.

- 2 Units of Temporary Accommodation are suitable for wheelchair users, the number of wheelchair accessible properties will be increased with the construction of a ramp at the Council owned properties.

There is an established need for support for homeless people and this is identified as a priority within the Supporting People Strategy. A Support and Resettlement Officer has been appointed to assist homeless people in gaining access to services and ensure a smooth transition to alternative accommodation. The main aims of this post are to help homeless people who need to be placed in temporary accommodation with welfare benefits, educational and health facilities and applications for suitable future housing i.e. Choice based lettings, and to support the move through to suitable permanent housing, preventing a recurrence of homelessness. It will bridge the gap between the authority, homeless families and welfare and benefit agencies and the success will be judged on user satisfaction and any repeated claims of homelessness.

A protocol exists between Health and Housing for the transfer of information on the movement of homeless people.

Special Needs Register

A Special Needs Register operates for people whose circumstances fall outside basic allocation policies. Allocation policies need to be open and easily understood but cannot provide for every situation that arises. Some applicants would not gain a priority in their present circumstances but may need a very specific type of property in the future. For instance, a disabled person may be hospitalised but requires rehousing in 6 months time. The Special Needs Register gives a record of specific cases, and their requirements, and provides a method of planned return or introduction into the community. It also gives an estimation of the number of adapted properties needed within new developments and reduces the problem of bed-blocking. Referrals are made by Social Services and the primary Care Trust where an applicant with a physical disability, learning difficulty or progressive disease may require specialist accommodation in the future. It is very simple and very successful with more than 40 people with Learning Difficulties being housed in the community over the past four years.

Applications to the Special Needs Register are only accepted if priority cannot be obtained through existing policies and the Register is reviewed quarterly by Social Services and the Primary Care Trusts. There are 9 applicants at 30th September 2004, with 13 applicants having been accommodated since 1st April 2004. Consideration is currently being given to providing shared ownership accommodation for applicants on the Special Needs Register.

Equal Access to Services

The Local Authority strives to ensure that all people, regardless of ethnic origin or disability, have equal access to its services. All information can be made available in Braille, on cassette tape or in other languages and this is identified during assessment. It is not cost effective in an authority of this size to have this provision to hand but it is available on request, as are translation services. The offices are accessible to wheelchair users and there are disabled toilet facilities. Some temporary accommodation is also suitable for wheelchair users. Officers also undertake visits to people at home or hospital if they are unable to attend the offices. The Council has established a member led "Equalities Working Group", as a response to the Race Relations Act, to develop an Equalities and Diversity Strategy and reviews of each Business Unit are being undertaken from April 2003 with Housing being within the first tranche of reviews.

The housing review indicates that, at present, only one service area will require a full impact assessment. The Choice Based Lettings policy has been subject to both an initial and an intermediate review and a full review has been programmed following implementation.

The Council have a Corporate Target to reach the Equality Standard Level 3 by 2007.

Housing providers in the district are monitored by the local authority and Housing Corporation in the case of Registered Social Landlords. Service Level Agreements are in place to ensure both equality of access and service provision. Racial Harassment Policies are a requirement.

Managing Risk

The Housing Department are represented on the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel to manage the risk of harm which may be posed by serious ex-offenders residing in the community. There is also a Sharing of Information of Protocol which provides appropriate staff, and other agencies, with a list of people where it has been demonstrated that there is a risk of violence.

The Housing Department is currently reviewing the Emergency Plan following a fire which affected 12 properties. The existing plan worked well, but there are simple, cost effective improvements which have been identified as a result of the emergency.

A group has been convened to draft a corporate policy for lone workers and the Support and Resettlement Officer is taking part in this work.

Statistical Information

1. Actual Figures

Analysis of Statistical Information

(P.I.E. Annual Returns for 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003 and 2003/2004)

1.1 Total Number of Decisions

	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
No. of Decisions	1065	968	944	1101
No. of Acceptances	170	151	188	206

These figures show the total number of homeless decisions made over the previous 4 years. The numbers may appear to be high in comparison to other shire districts and this may be due to WDC recording all approaches from homeless and potentially homeless people.

1.2

Ethnic Breakdown	2000/2001		2001/2002		2002/2003		2003/2004	
	Accepted	Not Accepted	Accepted	Not Accepted	Accepted	Not Accepted	Accepted	Not Accepted
White	153	802	126	661	166	641	180	774
African/ Caribbean	-	13	1	14	4	13	0	22
Indian/ Pakistani Bangladeshi	5	24	3	20	4	19	4	33
Other	6	36	10	45	8	62	19	53
Not Available	6	20	11	77	6	21	3	13
Total	170	895	151	817	188	756	206	895

1.3 Further Detail of Accepted Households

Priority Need within Household	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Household with dependant children	87	91	94	115
Household member pregnant with no other children	20	22	25	37
Household member vulnerable due to:- Old Age	10	8	6	1
Physical Disability	10	5	14	6
Mental ill Health	22	15	17	21
Young Person	7	7	2	10
Threat of violence/violence	8	1	17	6
Having been in 'care'			2	1
Having served in HM Forces			1	-
Having been in custody/ on remand			3	
Other Special Reason	5		5	4
Homeless in an Emergency	1	2	2	5
Total	170	151	188	206

- The main priority category for homeless people is clearly families with children, closely followed by people expecting a child.
- Mental ill health is also a significant feature.

Reason for Homelessness	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/1004
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	41	26	31	60
Other relatives or friends unwilling to accommodate	8	7	14	16
Breakdown of relationship - Violent	18	25	22	13
Breakdown of relationship - Non-violent	14	9	12	15
Mortgage Arrears	5	4	2	3
Rent Arrears LA/RSL/Private	2	2	0	3
Loss of Rented or Tied Accommodation	15	13	25	18
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	31	30	36	31
Leaving Care/Institution	9	10	4	6
Other: (including Rough Sleeping / Returning from Abroad/ Emergency/Form of Violence)	27	25	42	41
Total	170	151	188	206

- The primary cause of homelessness continues to be family and friends no longer willing or able to provide accommodation and this figure gives some indication of “hidden homelessness”.
- Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies has also shown as a principal cause of homelessness, which has increased with their use.
- The number of relationship breakdowns involving violence is significant but very low in comparison to the statistical information held by the Police.

1.4 **Further Details of Households Not Accepted**

	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
Not Homeless	687	706	510	612
Not in Priority Need	205	105	239	276
Intentionally Homeless	3	2	4	1
Not Eligible	-	4	3	6
Total	895	817	756	895

- The high number of applicants who are not homeless have been offered advice and assistance dependent on their housing circumstances.
- Applicants may not be eligible for consideration within homeless legislation depending on their immigration status.

2. Trends in Homelessness

The trends in homelessness have been examined to establish current need and to try to estimate future demands. The homelessness statistics contain a breakdown of the number of applicants, ethnicity, gender, age, family size and the decisions that have been made on the homeless claim.

This analysis concentrated on applicants who were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need between January 2000 and September 2002. The analysis was produced using "Winchart" Statistical Process Control Software.

Many of the numbers within the breakdown were too small to provide useful information to denote specific trends and it has been necessary to incorporate them. Consequently, there are only two ethnic groups "White" and "Other than White Ethnicity", and applications where the ethnicity was not available have not been included in the specific groups.

Projected Homelessness Trends for applicants who are eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need			
Average Number of Applications	High	Low	Average Annual Number
Per Year	196	145	171
Ethnic Breakdown			
	High	Low	Average Annual Number
White	173	125	149
Other than White	23	7	15

	High	Low	Average per Year
Females under 25 years	53	27	40
Females over 25 years	84	52	68
Males under 25 years	22	7	14
Males over 25 years	63	35	49
Couple with one child	31	13	22
Single parent	48	24	36
One person household	40	15	25

These figures show the average, anticipated numbers and the full analysis shows a relatively flat trend. However, there are monthly peaks and troughs, which do not follow any reasonable or understandable pattern, and these can place short term pressures on the system.

The figures for the types of household have not changed over the period which was studied so this trend also remains stable.

Full report appendix no. 4

3. **Properties**

3.1 Local Authority Housing Properties (30th September 2004) Total 5758
Statistical breakdown, area and property type - see attached.

3.2 Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties within this district Total (awaiting total Jephson)

Statistical breakdown by Association

Housing Association	No. of Properties
Jephson Housing Group	Awaiting Jephson
Orbit Housing Association	1163
Touchstone	84
Warwickshire Rural H.A.	77
Servite Houses	134
Bromford Housing Group	376
Focus Housing Group	8
Raglan Housing Association	22
Ashram Group	17
Total	Awaiting total

3.3 **Right to Buy**

1981 - 2004 3,929 Council properties have been sold under the Right to Buy legislation.

3.4 **New Developments**

The following numbers of new properties are currently being planned:-

Servite	162
Orbit	114
Jephson	110
Bromford	117
Warwickshire Rural	32
Total	535

3.5 Number of Applicants on the Housing Register

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total Households on Register at 1 April	1510	1612	1597	2015	1897	2200
Requiring up to 2 Bedrooms				1470	1281	1633
Requiring up to 3 Bedrooms				444	429	460
Requiring more than 3 Bedrooms				101	169	107

4. Nominations to RSLs

- 4.1 A Common Registration Scheme operates in this district with all affordable housing providers using the same list for both new applicants and transfer requests. Assessment criteria only differs in two elements in that the local authority only accept applicants who have been resident in the area for a period of 6 months, or travel more than 15 miles into the area to work.

There are nomination agreements in place as follows:-

Jephson Housing Group	50%
Orbit Housing Association	50%
Touchstone	-
Warwickshire Rural H.A.	In accordance with Local Lettings Plans.
Servite Houses	-
Bromford Housing Group	100%
Focus Housing Group	-
Raglan Housing Association	-

The applicant at the top of the Housing Register is put forward following a nomination request with the top 5 applicants being referred when a vacancy occurs that is not subject to nomination restrictions.

In reality, most RSL's allow 100% of lettings from the Common Housing Register as some do not have local offices or hold their own waiting lists.

5. Lettings for 1st April 2001 - 31st March 2004.

5.1 Local Authority Lettings

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Total Dwellings Let	745	680	699	366	460	412

5.2 RSL Lettings

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Total RSL Lettings	201	199	201	196	264	242
Households taking up LA nominations to RSL Dwellings	123	144	190	181	232	152

5.3 Lettings to Homeless

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04
Total LA Dwellings let to homeless households in priority need	186	182	111	103	119	124

6. Private Sector

A Private Sector House Condition Survey was conducted in 1997 which determined that overall a total of 2.3% private stock was unfit. This equated to 1,261 dwellings. A further survey is now being undertaken using a larger sample size.

Houses in multiple occupation (HIMO's) are the largest source of poor housing and the Council are aware of 600 HIMO's in the district, together with a further 600 or so student properties which do not fall within this definition.

A Landlord Accreditation Scheme has been devised to address this problem.

Part 2 **The Services we provide**

Families and Care Leavers

(Lyn Unsworth Social Services) Responsibilities

Social Services

Under the Children Act 1989 (Section 17) the Local Authority Social Services Department, following a s17 assessment, has a power to provide assistance to a family which is intentionally homeless or otherwise disadvantaged to help from the local housing authority. However, it remains a matter for the Local Authority to determine how its resources are to be allocated.

In addition, the local authority shall provide accommodation for any child in need within their area who appears to require accommodation as a result of the person who has been caring for the child being prevented from providing him or her with suitable accommodation or care (Children Act 1989: Section 20). In such circumstances an assessment would be undertaken of the child(ren)'s, wishes, needs and circumstances; and all options considered as to how these needs might best be met. The local authority may not provide accommodation under this section for any child if any person has parental responsibility for the child and is willing and able to provide or arrange for accommodation for the child. Any person with parental responsibility for the child may remove the child from any accommodation provided at any time.

The homelessness of a family might also be a factor in relation to the local authority's duty to investigate and make such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. (Section 47, Children Act 1989).

Under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (Section 23B) the local authority shall safeguard and promote a relevant child's welfare (a relevant child is defined as anyone under 21 years of age who has been in the care of the local authority), and unless they are satisfied that his or her welfare does not require it, support him with or maintain him in suitable accommodation. The local authority also has duties under the Act to advise, support and assist a relevant child.

Current Services

In partnership with Warwick District Council and the Christian Alliance Housing Association two specific projects have been established to meet the needs of care leavers. The local authority also has a Service Level Agreement with the Young Homeless Project to support the accommodation needs of care leavers and other vulnerable young people.

Current Data

Current Warwick District projections of **Formerly Relevant** (18 year olds +)

- By end of December 2002 will be 8
- By end of December 2003 will be 15
- By end of December 2004 will be 27
- By end of December 2005 will be 39

There are currently no Relevant Care Leavers in this District i.e. under 18 and out of Care but there are a number of young people Accommodated or on Care Orders under 18 in supported accommodation or in private tenancies.

District Councils

Following the introduction of the amendments to homeless priority groups in July 2002, the local authority have a duty to ensure that suitable accommodation and support services are available for people who are leaving care, or have previously been in the care of the local authority. There is a further duty to all young people under 18 years of age and any other young people who may be vulnerable for any reasons.

Statistics show that 7 young people were considered to be homeless and fall within a priority category for rehousing during the past 2½ years but others may be recorded within the groups of those with mental ill health or physical disability.

Young People and Care Leavers

Context and Duties

Young people who are 16 and 17 are often preparing for independence for the first time. Some have the benefit of a stable and supportive family environment, and some do not. However, all are in need of support and guidance according to their individual situation. In addition young people leaving the care of the local authority have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group, who for various reasons in the past have left the care system without the necessary skills to live independently. This particular group of young people are more likely to lose accommodation and become homeless, as a result of not having the necessary skills to manage their independence. All housing agencies within Warwick District accept the need to provide quality services, delivered in such a way that makes them accessible and understandable to those young people in need. It is accepted that this age group has fewer housing opportunities than a higher age group as a result of a combination of factors. Housing Benefit restrictions and the reluctance on the part of landlords to grant tenancies to under 18s are just two of these.

The Homelessness Act along with the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, in the case of care leavers, now gives 16 and 17 year olds an automatic priority need. Underpinned by an expectation that local authorities, in the shape of the Housing Department and Social Services will work together to look at prevention and reconciliation. A joint assessment procedure has been operational for some years and this was reviewed in 2004.

The Acts and the consequent need for the production of a homelessness strategy also strengthen the ability for services to work in partnership to tackle the incidence of homelessness.

Extending the themes put forward in "More than a Roof" (A report into tackling homelessness DTLR 2002) and "Addressing the Housing Needs of Black and Minority Ethnic People" (DTLR 2002) all services now have the opportunity to establish common goals for the future.

Combined with a commitment to tackle discrimination in housing, the Government has acknowledged "...racism and discrimination are some of the pressures that can lead to homelessness", particularly with young people.

The Young Housing Project

The Young Housing Project came into existence in 1992 as an independent charitable agency working with 16 to 25 year olds who are homeless or in housing need. YHP, since that date, has progressed and developed as a result of the need within the area and also because young people feel they have nowhere else to turn for help once they have accessed the more traditional services.

By embracing our independence, and also the need to work in partnership through the homelessness strategy with other agencies we seek to promote.

Our Vision

Through raising awareness of issues affecting young people and promoting the need for preventative action, we will seek to reduce the incidence of vulnerability and homelessness.

Mission Statement

We believe that every young person has the right to a safe and secure home, and the availability of support services to maintain their independence.

We believe that every young person has the right to be treated with respect and dignity and to be provided with equality of opportunity.

We believe that young people have a right to make informed choices about their future.

Our Aim

To be an influential, independent, local provider of services for young people in housing need. By providing impartial advice, accommodation, and counselling services, we seek to enable young people to move confidently toward independence.

As an agency we will undertake to achieve these ends by valuing the difference and diversity of our clients whilst establishing relationships based upon trust and best practice. The accredited services offered to young people reflect these high standards:

Supported Accommodation Service

Our scheme houses vulnerable young people in a variety of different environments according to their needs. Through partnership with Warwick District Council and Orbit Housing Association we house a maximum of eighteen young people in shared accommodation or single person flats. All young people are supported, to establish their own action plan, by having their own individual key workers. Eventually young people move onto their own tenancy, or take on their flat. It becomes theirs, perhaps the first accommodation they have truly had control over, and often the most important step toward independence.

The Counselling Service

YHP's counselling service was refunded in 2003 with over £220,000 from the Community Fund. This funding was recognition that homeless young people faced many problems that were not solely practical ones. For YHP it was recognition that the emotional stability of vulnerable young people was also important and crucial to their success. Since that date the work has progressed, the service has developed and many agencies now refer their clients for counselling. As a free and confidential service it is now in discussion with other agencies in the District to establish an outreach provision. By offering a counselling provision we undoubtedly increase the ability for agencies to work preventatively.

Private Tenancy Scheme

Now entering its third year, the scheme was originally targeted at facilitating young people's access to the private rented sector. This we did to ensure that young people's options are maximised, but also that they received a highly professional support service at a time when they are most vulnerable. The scheme supports the young person through to independence whilst liaising with the property owner in order to minimise any difficulties. Since it began the scheme has proved to be an alternative and creative way of ensuring that young people get access to the private rented sector.

Nightstop

Supported by Nightstop UK, the scheme is a radical and dynamic alternative to the more traditional aspects of emergency accommodation. Its aim is to remove the need to house young people in a hostel environment by providing them with emergency accommodation in a volunteer host home. This then allows appropriate long-term accommodation to be sought. All hosts are trained, police checked, and supported by YHP staff. The scheme was launched in October 2004 and referrals are young people who are interviewed at daily drop-in advice sessions.

The Advice Service

Many young people's first point of access with YHP, open every day for appointments or drop in. Trained advisors, with the service accredited by the Community Legal service, will advise and assist young people to access emergency accommodation or a longer-term supportive accommodation. Further, welfare rights, debt and housing advice is also available. The evidence of need is indicated when one considers that in 2003-2004:

- 360 requests were received for housing advice
- 389 requests were received for telephone advice
- 739 requests were received for ongoing support
- 74% of these requests were from new clients
- 27% had current health concerns
- 19% had experienced the care system
- 47% were aged 18 or under

Importantly over 60% of young people who come to YHP for help are self referred.

Health

Since 2002 the Young Housing Project has worked in partnership with South Warwickshire PCT to provide a health service to homeless young people. Recent research has indicated that homeless people are more likely to suffer ongoing or chronic health problems, more so

than those who are securely housed; this is further emphasised when considering that those struggling with a chaotic and transient lifestyle often have difficulty accessing treatment through a local surgery. The Young Housing Project has succeeded in bridging the gap between health and housing by ensuring that a qualified professional is on hand to advise young people on matters like healthy diets, anxiety, depression, relaxation, alcohol or drug issues, sexual health etc.

Care Leavers Accommodation

In 1996 Christian Alliance Housing Association, in conjunction with Warwickshire Social Services and Warwick District Council, set up a scheme to work specifically with care leavers. Due to the success of the pilot scheme this has now grown and offers support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with staff on hand to deal with issues as they arise. The accommodation is split into eight flats with shared bathroom and young people are moved into Newbold Lodge on a planned basis with a care package built around their individual needs. The property and funding for modernisation were provided by Warwick District Council and placements are bought by Social Services. Various agencies are often working with the same people and places are allocated on the basis of need. (include stats). This project is accessible for wheelchair users. The work that is done involves:

Providing young people, both male and female with the skills they will need to move on to independent accommodation, these include practical assistance, e.g. shopping and cooking, help with budgeting and financial management, obtaining relevant training and employment, advice and support in times of crisis, including developing the personal and social skills they will need.

The work is done closely with Warwickshire leaving care team and other agencies who at times become involved with the young people when it is appropriate.

Residents have their own bed-sitting rooms but share bathrooms and the basement is being converted to provide a contact centre for young people.

Single Persons Accommodation

Binswood Lodge offers 23 units of accommodation for single males and females up to 40 years of age. This project gives people their own room with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities (stats). People may approach themselves or may be referred by other agencies. The "Second Chance" programme is now up and running. This is based at Binswood Lodge and has spaces for five young people. This is a Social Services initiative aimed at helping people who are having difficulty living in the community to return to supported accommodation until they are able to maintain a tenancy. This service also offers floating support.

Organisation	Provision	Support
Christian Alliance Housing Association	23 Shared facilities	High
	5 Shared facilities (mother and baby)	High
	8 Shared facilities (care leavers)	High
Young Homeless Project	12 Shared facilities	Low
	6 Floating Support	Low

Mental ill Health

Context and Duties

A high number of homeless people experience mental ill health of varying degrees and this can be the fundamental cause of their homelessness. The District Council have a duty to provide suitable accommodation for people who are vulnerable due to mental ill health.

Review of Present Provision

Provision for people with mental health problems was identified as a priority within the Housing Strategy and the Mental Health Services had already identified gaps in service and created initiatives to fill those gaps.

Organisation	Provision	Support
Friendship Care	4 Self-contained units for single people.	Non-residential Medium support
South Warwickshire Plato Trust	6 Shared facilities for single people.	High support Outreach Team.
	4 Self-contained units for single people.	Non-residential Low support.
	28 Shared facilities for single people and couples.	Non-residential Low support.
Mid-Warwickshire Mencap	25 Self-contained flats for single people.	Floating support

Predicted Needs

The Supporting People Strategy indicates that the expected range of supply is 25 – 150, with an actual supply of 44. WDC statistics indicate that 74 people were accepted as a homeless priority due to mental ill health during the past 4 years.

Two new floating support schemes are currently being developed (see Part 3) and the Mental Health Services consider there will be adequate provision for the needs in the immediate future. However, this will have to be kept under regular review to ensure that agencies are proactive in this field should a further emerging need become apparent.

HIV/Aids

Context and Duties

The local authority would have a statutory duty to provide suitable accommodation for people with HIV/Aids, as they are considered to be vulnerable, and also to advise of services appropriate for health and support requirements.

This group is pinpointed as a “shortfall” of supply by the Supporting People Strategy who have since acknowledged that there is not an unmet need for this district.

Review of Present Provision

There is no specific provision for this group and the number of people known to fall within this category is extremely low with only an average of one per year. Should an approach be made, the authority does have self-contained temporary accommodation some of which is accessible for wheelchair users. Suitable, settled accommodation could then be secured.

Predicted Needs

As there has been a very low demand in the past, it is not anticipated that there will be any reason for a substantial increase and specialist provision will not be required.

People subject to, or at risk of Violence

Context and Duties

There is statutory duty towards people who are subject to, or at risk of violence. Every effort is made to locate a place of safety and Victim Support assist where appropriate. WDC participate in the Stop Home Assaults Report Everything (S.H.A.R.E.) group. This is a multi-agency group comprising statutory and voluntary agencies, together with legal representatives, who work together to provide a comprehensive service to people who are at risk of violence.

Review of Present Provision

There is a Women’s Refuge offering 5 placements in the district but the national network of refuges are utilised should victims have to move away from danger. People may also gain a priority for rehousing if it is considered unreasonable or unsafe for them to remain in their current home.

The District Council has developed and launched a ‘sanctuary’ type scheme which enables victims and children to remain in their own home, where they choose to do so and where safety can be guaranteed and the violent partner no longer lives within the home. The scheme consists of additional security to any main entrance, doors to the accommodation

and locks to any vulnerable windows. Whenever possible, it provides a safe room in the home, secured with a solid core door and additional locks. The service is only provided when it is the clear choice of the victim and is implemented through partnership with the Police or the voluntary sector who provide additional support to the victim.

The District Council are also developing a “Safer Estates Agreement” which aims to reduce the occurrence of problem areas through a multi-agency approach.

The District Council plays an active part in the Sharing of Information Protocol which alerts agencies to potential risk of harm. They are also represented on the Multi-Agency Protection Panel which is a Police led project to assess, minimise and manage the risk of harm posed by some individuals in the community.

The local authority has the power to act in cases of harassment and illegal eviction. This work is undertaken by the Legal Department with advice and assistance given to both Landlords and Tenants. Legal proceedings would be taken should an illegal eviction occur. (insert stats).

Organisation	Provision	Support
Warwickshire Women’s Refuge	5 Shared placements	Medium

There is also a large multi-agency group, lead by Warwickshire County Council, investigating methods of effective, cross boundary working to address this problem.

Predicted Needs

The figures provided by the Police show the total number of approaches to be 839 for 2000 – 2001; with 115 arrests (figures include Southam [outside this district]). This is then contradicted by the local authority statistics which show only 26 cases of homelessness due to violence during 2003-2004. The inability to accurately predict future needs means this group will require regular review.

Street Sleepers

(Gerald Harding, Salvation Army)

Context and Duties

In view of the relatively low numbers previously identified, it has proved difficult to obtain support for this group even though there appears to be an obvious need with the Salvation Army identifying 13 rough sleepers at Christmas 2002. Funding was not available through the Rough Sleepers Initiative but a grant was received for a Housing Action Project, which has been in operation for three years. Future funding arrangements for this project have yet to be determined by Central Government but it is hoped that it will be continued. The District Council would be under a duty to make accommodation available to any street sleepers who may be vulnerable for any reason and this may include ex-offenders or people leaving the Armed Forces.

Review of Present Provision

There were, until 2003, no direct hostel facilities within Warwickshire and people were referred to projects in Coventry. This was unsatisfactory and often rejected as people do not wish to leave their support networks. In view of the lack of facilities, and increased duties in respect of priority categories for homelessness, a direct access hostel has been established and has been operating since April 2003. This is an extension to the work of the Housing Action Project and underpins all other provisions within the Strategy by offering a facility that provides immediate accommodation and time for an assessment of need to be completed and appropriate accommodation accessed.

Organisation	Provision	Support
Salvation Army	9 Shared facilities	Non-residential Medium/high

Predicted Needs

The use of, and demand for, the direct access hostel will be monitored to evaluate future needs.

Homeless People with General Support Needs

Context and Duties

Many people, with a variety of needs, require some support before approaching independent living. They may be very young or have always lived with family or friends or have suffered a relationship breakdown. Some may have mental or physical disabilities and others may need to acquire skills to allow them to live within the community. In many instances the people may have a priority for rehousing within the Homelessness Act 2002, and may be vulnerable in some way. In addition, people may fall within several specific needs groups and consequently there may be some overlap with several agencies involved giving assistance in differing areas.

Review of Present Provision

The Mayday Trust have two schemes in this district, one for people with a high dependency, the other offering lower support services.

Organisation	Provision	Support
Mayday Trust	11 Shared facilities for single people and families.	Residential High support.
	16 Shared facilities for single people and families.	Non-residential Low support.

Predicted Needs

Statistics indicate that the level of homelessness in the district has remained relatively stable over the past three years. There have been some specific needs emerging and schemes have been created to meet those needs. The impact of the new priority categories has impacted in an increased demand for temporary accommodation, a blockage of supported housing schemes and an identified need for young people's emergency accommodation.

Disabilities

Context and Duties

The Special Needs Register (see page 17 and 18) pre-empts many of the problems associated with accommodating people with physical or learning disabilities. It allows for a planned provision and new developments can be adapted at planning stage for particular individuals requirements.

Review of Present Provision

To date, 43 people with learning difficulties have been housed independently within the community, some in individual tenancies and others sharing joint-tenancies for confidence and self-support. The Supporting People Strategy gives the expected supply of accommodation as 20 – 106, with an actual supply of 59. While the homelessness statistics show 15 people with physical disabilities being recorded for 2000-2002.

The exact number of adapted properties is unknown due to incomplete data but this is being addressed through new IT systems.

Predicted Needs

The Special Needs Register currently has 9 people waiting for appropriate accommodation. Further adaptation of existing stock would have to be considered if the demand grew.

Social Services have identified people with multiple disabilities who need to move from residential care to their own homes in the community and a multi-agency group has devised a new build scheme which allows four, severely disabled people to leave residential units. Working in partnership with Social Services and an RSL, four severely disabled people have moved into purpose-built accommodation.

Asylum Seekers

Context and Duties

A variety of organisations are involved in the accommodation and support needs of Asylum Seekers including the National Asylum Seekers Service, the Home Office and Local Authorities.

Review of Present Provision

The District Councils in Warwickshire have worked closely with the West Midlands Consortium and it has been agreed that provision will currently remain with the Metropolitan Districts. The Shire Districts do not have the appropriate provision for this needs group.

Predicted Needs

Further work would be undertaken should the context change and a multi-agency approach would be taken to ensure the accessibility of services and that appropriate support is in place. WDC does not have any Asylum Seekers resident in the district through the Government's Formal Dispersal Scheme.

Substance Misuse

Context and Duties

This often proves the most difficult group to assist as substance misuse may be the cause, or result, of many additional problems. It can also be the most difficult group to record as substance misuse may not be admitted by the user. The local authority would have a duty to provide accommodation if people came within the homeless priority categories.

Review of Present Provision

The Warwickshire Substance Misuse Initiative records 46 cases for Warwick District for 2001. Their work is county wide and includes advice, assistance and supported accommodation which is provided through a Housing Association Project. The local authority provides 5 units per year to the Probation Service for this group. The Drug Action Team working closely with Probation provide floating support to current tenants who have a history of substance misuse and are in danger of losing their homes working to prevent homelessness, and in providing support to new tenants too. Other supported housing providers, notably Fry Housing Trust, also work with this needs group.

Predicted Needs

The needs of this group will be monitored, in part, through the operation of the direct access hostel.

Older People (by Joan Hicks)

Context and Duties

Britain has an ageing population. There are no reliable figures of the number of older people who are homeless at any given time in Britain, nor is there information about the number of older people who become homeless and are rehoused over a given period. Official statistics only exist for older people who are accepted by local authority Housing Departments for priority housing on the grounds of old age. Figures are only collected of the number of households who are accepted as homeless. Some households may consist of two or more elderly people. There are also difficulties around the definition of older people, some local authorities accept as vulnerable homeless men and women aged 60, while others only include men when they reach the age of 65 years.

Official figures also exclude many older people who sleep rough or stay in hostels and night shelters. They are 'unofficially' homeless. They do not appear on Electoral Rolls or Housing and Social Services lists. Homelessness statistics show 18 people being vulnerable due to age in the last 2½ years. The local authority have a duty to provide accommodation to this group and within homelessness, do not have a blanket policy in relation to age limits.

Older people are a far more diverse group than the younger homeless. Some have been homeless since early adulthood. Some have become homeless, on discharge from the armed forces, following a broken marriage, were itinerant workers e.g. building labourers, merchant seamen or lived with a parent, could not cope when they died and have been evicted from the family home. Still others suffer mental illness, alcohol problems, dementia, learning difficulties.

After a while all homeless older people present with poor coping and social skills, a deficient support network and multiple health pathologies.

Review of Present Provision

Few older people apply to the Council as homeless. Housing Staff are pro-active and if there is an indication from correspondence or conversation that a homeless situation may occur, contact is made to give advice and assistance.

In general, Warwick District Council is currently in the position of being able to offer accommodation to an older person in priority need as there is a stock of 1,500 sheltered, very sheltered and dwellings designated for older people. This is also the case with other social housing providers in the area. Only rarely do applications reach the stage where an older person is imminently threatened with homelessness.

If an older person does become homeless they are likely to be accommodated temporarily in the Guest Room of one of the Council's Very Sheltered Schemes rather than in Bed and Breakfast or other forms of temporary accommodation.

The Council does not have a set pathway to help homeless older people settle back into the community. An ad hoc arrangement exists within the Council and certain cases are given intensive support by staff working for the District Council's Community Care Management System. This includes key working and liaison with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure that the older person settles successfully into the accommodation offered. Intensive practical support, ranging from form filling to personal hygiene, is provided by this service

which operates 24 hours a day. This support, with other organisations, is then maintained to a greater or lesser degree throughout the older persons tenancy depending on their individual needs.

If an individual does not have a permanent home, then benefits cannot be calculated. The development of an agreed 'pathway' where all agencies worked together would not only smooth the bureaucratic process for older people but would also create some certainty during a time of distress.

The Council has also been proactive in working with Social Services to appoint a jointly funded Occupational Therapist to reduce the waiting list for adaptations to the home. Tenants are therefore more likely to be accommodated in their family home after hospital discharge than have to move to alternative accommodation.

Predicted Needs

With an ageing population, it may not always be the case that the District Council is in the fortunate position of being able to house older people reasonably quickly. The bulge in the ageing population is only just beginning to appear. This coupled with more single occupier households and increasing life expectancy will present a significant challenge to housing providers in the next three to ten years and beyond.

Older people are not always aware of the housing that is available for them. A 'Best Value' Review of Older Person's Services was undertaken during 2001/02. Replies to questionnaires sent to people on the waiting list, to tenants and to clients using the services of the Community Care Management System, indicated that people were unaware of the amount and type of housing that the Council has for older people or other services available.

An action point in the Review was to develop a Marketing Plan for sheltered housing and relevant support services. This Marketing Plan has just been completed.

There is no doubt that the older owner occupiers of the future will have a lower disposable income, 'capital rich and income poor', and more may become homeless because of their inability to cope with independent living, particularly in the case of former Council tenancies when children have helped with the purchase of the home. Resource pressures on Residential and Nursing Home beds will lead to alternative accommodation being sought to house these people.

Warwick District Council's sheltered, very sheltered housing, and designated stock has to be able to provide the higher level of support and care that these older people will require.

While the stock of sheltered and very sheltered accommodation is adequate, it will be important to review the standards of the amenity surrounding this stock with a view to enhancing its attractiveness to older people living in family sized tenancies and encouraging them to move to smaller accommodation.

There is also a case for lowering the age of entry to sheltered housing so that people have a longer time to prepare for changes in their later life.

Elderly Mentally III

A significant number of older people have a serious mental health problem or suffer from some form of dementia.

These individuals tend to be referred to housing via the homeless route??? However, older people with mental health needs have very low expectations of housing and are unlikely to be offered a choice of housing.

Loneliness and social isolation constitute major problems for this group, so the choice of neighbourhood and the provision of social support are vital elements in the success of re-housing individuals in this group.

Equally much of the support required by older people with mental health difficulties, particularly functional illness is not of a specialised kind. Support can be offered by mainstream housing staff, but an element of training and information will be useful in preparing them for this.

It is important for any tenancy offered to this group to be well set up from the start including all forms of support, particularly housing benefit and other monetary obligations.

Supporting People legislation brings new obligations for local authorities, particularly the provision of on-going support planning and testing the performance of services through the Quality Assessment Framework.

Ex-offenders

Context and Duties

The local authority has a duty to ensure that accommodation is available to ex-offenders returning to live in the community. The various statutory and voluntary agencies working within Warwick District have worked together over the last twelve months to ensure that the housing needs of ex-offenders are met whatever their personal circumstances. The Local Authority, the Probation Service, Supported Housing providers and other RSL's are all part of the Accommodation Forum group that meet quarterly to discuss developments in the District.

Review of Present Provision

Obtaining stable, appropriate housing has, and always will be a key issue for ex-offenders and those at risk of offending.

The National Probation Service for Warwickshire operates a Central Accommodation Referral Scheme (CARS) from Head Office where referrals are incoming and outgoing on a countywide basis. The scheme predominately works between providers of temporary supported accommodation and probation officers, but also with other accommodation providers such as local RSLs or the Young Housing Project. Other statutory agencies involved in passing referrals through the scheme are Social Services or the Health Service. CARS is a focal point for agencies such as Probation or other support services from outside Warwick District to approach if their clients are relocating and are knowingly moving into the area without a fixed address. CARS has a comprehensive knowledge of where vacancies are in Warwick District, links with the prisons and the accommodation officer can mediate with ease between agencies to ensure the referral process is handled in an efficient manner.

Orbit Housing Association contributes to the needs of homeless people, some of whom will be ex-offenders, by providing 29 bedspaces across the district. Orbit runs a 15-bedspace space supported housing scheme, and the Fry Housing Trust manage 14 bedspaces on Orbit's behalf as part of their supported housing scheme. Orbit also manages a floating

support scheme with up to 21 units throughout Warwickshire. The scheme promotes independent living and empowers tenants of the scheme to acquire the necessary skills to maintain independence and successful tenancies.

Joint partnership between the Local Authority, Orbit Housing Association and the Salvation Army has resulted in a direct access project being set up for homeless people over the age of 16.

The Fry Housing Trust, Warwickshire Probation Area's Approved Premises are the specialist providers of supported accommodation for ex-offenders. The levels of support on offer from these organisations vary from high support at the Approved Premises to low to medium support. The Probation Approved Premises are technically classed as a risk management resource and can only be accessed by those with a condition of residence, those on licences release from prison or those undergoing bail assessments. This being the case, there is no accommodation available to ex-offenders who require a high level of support and who do not fit the criteria for acceptance at the Approved Premises. The accommodation group meetings have identified this as being a serious issue for the District, and in light of this, the Salvation Army manages a direct access project and the Fry Housing Trust's floating support scheme are able to support high risk ex-offenders.

Organisation	Provision	Support
Fry Housing Trust	9 Shared placements	Medium
	18 Dispersed properties	Low
	12 Dispersed properties	Floating Support
Probation Service	5 WDC self-contained units provided by W.D.C.	Probation requirement

Predicted Needs

The needs of offenders differ due, for example, changes in trends of behaviour or types of drugs available. As a comparison to previous years, there is far more drug related offending apparent, more violent crimes and offending starting at an earlier age. What the District needs to ensure is that we can accommodate people in future years as the trends of offending changes and be able to meet the needs of offenders and ex-offenders.

Floating Support schemes have been developed to support individuals within their own homes for a flexible period of time, tapering the support off when deemed appropriate. These are becoming a favourite amongst voluntary organisations due to being able to help a wider range of people. The Fry Housing Trust, the Warwickshire Housing/Drug Support Scheme and the Young Homeless Project offer such services at present. These schemes are likely to develop further with other organisations possibly starting in the coming years.

Mothers and Babies

Context and Duties

There is a responsibility within homelessness legislation to provide suitable accommodation for mothers and babies who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons.

Review of Present Provision

There are several projects offering differing levels of support to mothers and babies and these are managed by the Mayday Trust (see General Support). There is also a specialist, high support provision offering 5 placements with the Christian Alliance Housing Association working in conjunction with Social Services. Warford Lodge offers bed-sitting rooms with shared bathroom facilities for 5 mothers and babies plus a communal facility which is also used as a contact centre for parents and children.

Predicted Needs

The existing provision is adequate for the current requirements and there is nothing to suggest that the demand will change to alter the situation. However, the Housing Advice Manager attends the Teenage Pregnancy Group and is able to monitor future needs through this group.

Ex-Service Personnel

Context and Duties

This Authority has a policy of giving priority to ex-service personnel who have lived in the area for two years prior to joining the forces. This is now supplemented by the Homelessness Act 2002 giving priority to single people who are ex-service and may be vulnerable; families leaving forces accommodation already have this benefit.

Review of Current Provision

Fulfilling the duty to this client group is achieved through the Common Registration Scheme unless people require supported accommodation, to assist with independent living skills. This would necessitate a referral to the organisation providing the appropriate level of assistance.

Predicted Needs

Following legislative changes, there has not been a notable increase in applications from ex-personnel and therefore it is not thought likely that additional resources will be required.

Part 3 What else we need to do, how and when we need to do it

The Strategy

The Strategic Vision

The principle aim of the strategy will be:-

To help people find the right accommodation for their needs at the right time of their lives.

To achieve this, a holistic approach must be taken to the issue of homelessness as there is rarely a single cause of people's problems, but homelessness is more often a symptom, or a result of other difficulties.

This means that no single agency can resolve the complexity of homelessness and all agencies must work together to find a practical solution to the particular problems that arise.

Results of the Review – a Gap Analysis

Parts 1 and 2 of this document indicate that a full and thorough review of the needs and resources within this district has been undertaken and this is a continuing process managed through the accommodation group. The results of the review indicate that there is a relatively stable level of homelessness which does not, at present, appear to be increasing. This will require close monitoring to assess the demands of the statutory obligations of the Homelessness Act 2002. The Supporting People Strategy recognises a need for support for homeless families together with facilities for people with mental ill health and both these gaps in service have been addressed.

The new Supporting People Strategy, which is to be completed by March 2005, will be taken into consideration as soon as possible as there may be future resource implications depending on the extent of the anticipated cuts in budget.

The principle gap in service is seen to be the scale of the facilities available. Even though there are broad ranges of projects specialising in particular needs groups, with differing levels of support, the numbers are limited.

Multi-agency working is not seen as a barrier and the review clearly shows that it is very successful in this area, partly due to the size of the district. However, problems with cross boundary working are identified in Appendix 4 – The Countywide Perspective. These issues are being taken forward by a multi-agency group who will devise an Action Plan to endeavour to combat the problem areas.

A Best Value Review of Housing Advice and Homelessness was completed in 2002, and the Improvement Plan is now completed. Additional resources were required to undertake some elements of the Improvement Plan and means of accessing these resources continue to be investigated. In the meantime, new initiatives have been devised to endeavour to address particular problem areas. For instance, a weekly "drop in" session now takes place to try and ease the demand on staff and improve the service for customers. Warwick District Council is engaged in detailed Service Area Planning and in producing Team Operational Plans to ensure that any gaps are identified and resources are utilised to best advantage.

Fulfilling the Statutory Requirements and Needs in this District

Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 imposes increased duties on Local Authorities with respect to homelessness and allocation of accommodation.

Allocation of Accommodation

Authorities must offer a choice to all applicants and remove all exclusions to the Housing Register, other than those specified i.e. ineligibility due to immigration status, guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable as a tenant. Preference must be given to various categories of housing need.

This has been achieved by the approval of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for implementation in 2005.

Homelessness

Advice and Assistance

Authorities must extend the provision to give advice and assistance to prevent homelessness.

This has been achieved by:-

- Extending internal and external training.
- Support to specialist agencies e.g. CAB for debt counselling.
- Choice Based Lettings will allow under-occupation to prevent overcrowding and allow tenants' status to change.
- Weekly 'drop in' sessions for housing advice.

Areas for improvement:-

- Earlier intervention is required and the service advertised, but anticipated resource implications cannot be met.
- There is an identified need for outreach work. Monthly sessions operate in Kenilworth and Warwick, but this needs to be extended to other areas of the district.

Additional Priority Categories

Authorities must give priority to:-

- Care leavers between 16 and 25 years and young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years.

- People leaving prison who may be vulnerable.
- People leaving the armed forces who may be vulnerable.

This has been achieved by:-

- Extending a Floating Support Scheme for young people.
- Creating a Floating Support Scheme for ex-offenders.
- Creating a Direct Access Hostel to allow for assessment of need and location of suitable accommodation.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Advice and assistance to prisoners prior to release.

Government Targets

The government has also set targets for the length of time taken to assess claims of homelessness and the reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation (except in emergencies).

Assessing claims – claims must be assessed within 33 days of receipt. 91% of claims met that target for 2002/03 and 93% for 2003/4.

Reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast – an average of 3 applicants occupied B. & B. accommodation during 2001/02. This authority stopped using Bed and Breakfast from 1st April, 2003.

Areas for Improvement:-

- Reduce time taken to process applications by monitoring caseloads fortnightly.
- Undertake an Improvement Plan to raise the standards within temporary accommodation.
- Reduce the number of repeat claims of homelessness.

Service Improvements

The following new services are now operational.

- 2nd Chance Scheme – this scheme has been devised by Social Services and the Christian Alliance Housing Association to return people who are not able to manage independent living to supported accommodation. There will be 5 supported places to assist people to acquire the skills necessary to return to the community and the scheme will commence Spring 2003.
- Floating Support Services – a support service to Orbit Housing Association tenants from April 2003.

- Mid-Warwickshire MIND – a floating support service to 20 Council tenants with mental ill health to assist them in sustaining their tenancies and remaining in the community, operational from April 2003.
- The appointment of a Support & Resettlement Officer in April 2003, to assist applicants in temporary accommodation.
- Ending the lease of some below standard Private Sector leased properties by 2003.
- Provision of emergency packs providing basic supplies. (Funding for the emergency packs is provided by the Building Safer Communities Fund.
- The Drug Action Team are providing floating support to existing tenants to prevent homelessness and to new tenants to assist them in conducting their tenancies.
- Discussions are taking place regarding the provision of a “training flat” to allow people moving through Leaving Care facilities to experience independent living.
- A Bond/Rent in Advance scheme is currently being developed. This scheme will increase access to privately rented accommodation for people who would not normally be able to afford either a bond or a months rent in advance which is the normal requirement of most landlords.
- Working in partnership with Social Services a “Keyring Scheme” is under consideration in order to provide additional support to people with learning disabilities living in the community. Support is provided by a keyring staff member residing in the community.

Stakeholder Involvement

A user satisfaction survey operates to endeavour to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the service. All homeless applicants are asked to participate and the results are analysed monthly. The results are divided between accepted and non-accepted homeless cases to try and gain an accurate insight into the service. The survey is complex and difficult to evaluate.

Stakeholder involvement is broadly achieved within the Accommodation Group. This is a long standing group which meets quarterly to address emerging needs, current problems and future developments. The Accommodation Group identified the need for emergency accommodation specifically for young people. However, revenue funding was not available to fulfil this need. The group comprises all supported housing providers together with representatives from Social Services, Community Health, and Shelter for assistance with particular aspects of work. The five districts of Warwickshire also come together for consultation on countywide cross boundary issues.

Areas for Improvement – Satisfaction Survey Review, to establish a meaningful method of obtaining useful performance data by which to measure the quality of the service. To be completed by October 2004.

Resource Implications

Several areas have been identified where additional resources would be required in order to achieve improvements, particularly in pro-active prevention and outreach work. Restricted resources are problematic for all agencies and, although bids for growth have been denied, other innovative ways of achieving the resources required will need to be investigated.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Review

This document demonstrates a network of agencies and projects working together to meet the needs of homeless people. It will be necessary to continually assess the demands and a flexible approach will have to be taken to meet those demands. The numbers and trends in homelessness will be monitored quarterly by the Accommodation Group, the new projects will be evaluated, and a review of the implementation of the Strategy will be finalised by June 2005.

Consultation

This document has been compiled by a multi-agency group, distributed to all statutory and voluntary agencies working in this district including Registered Social Landlords, elected members and tenants groups and advertised on the WDC website. Very wide consultation has taken place in respect of the Choice Based Lettings Policy and this has included consideration of how the homeless, disadvantaged and vulnerable will access the new systems.

Part 3 What else we need to do, how and when we will do it

Fulfilling the Statutory Requirements and Needs in this district

Service Area	Areas for Improvement	Organisation	Action	Timescale
Allocation of accommodation	Implementation of Choice Based Lettings	Common Registration Group	Project Plan and IT Implementation	2004/5/6
	Prioritisation of homeless applicants	RSLs WDC	Target 25% of lettings to homeless. Currently 40% to reduce backlog	On-going

Homelessness

Service Area	Areas for Improvement	Organisation	Action	Timescale
Advice and Assistance	Early intervention. Outreach work	WDC WDC	One Stop shops Moving into libraries New website for information and on-line applications and advice	2004-6 Current
Additional Priority Categories	Advice and Assistance to prisoners prior to release	WDC Probation	Devise programme	2005/6
Government Targets	Reduce time taken to process applications. Reduce the number of repeat claims	WDC WDC	Fortnightly monitoring. Collect data, identify categories, formulate plan.	On-going On-going
Temporary accommodation Improvement Plan	Raise Standards	WDC	Provide ramped access. Provide beds and white goods. Provide emergency packs for basic needs. Inspect weekly. Health & Safety inspections	On-going

			quarterly. Full re-decoration programme.	
Satisfaction Survey Review	Amended statistics	WDC	Monitor monthly and to the appropriate action	On-going
Young People	Lease flat for training purposes	WDC Social Services	Budget and procedures being drafted	2005/6

See Service Area and Team Operational Plans (TOP) for 2005/6 being drafted).

DIRECTORY OF SERVICES

Age Concern and Care & Repair
25 Clemens Street
Leamington Spa. Tel: (01926) 336612

Community Alcohol Service
9 Augusta Place
Leamington Spa CV32 5EL Tel: (01926) 885000

Benefits Agency
Brandon House
Holly Walk
Leamington Spa Tel: (01926) 302600

Citizens Advice Bureau,
Hamilton Terrace,
Leamington Spa. Tel: (01926) 457900

Council of Disabled People
Forfield Place
Leamington Spa Tel: (01926) 334747

Drug Advisory Service
9 Augusta Place
Leamington Spa CV32 5EL Tel: (01926) 885000

Department for Children, Young People
and their Families
83 Radford Road
Leamington Spa Tel: (01926) 881640

Leamington Christian Mission Tel: (01926) 314158

Mid-Warwickshire MIND
19(b) High Street
Leamington Spa CV32 3AW Tel: (01926) 450745

Rethink
The Old Bank
Coten End
Warwick Tel: (01926) 419227

The Ocean Drop-in Centre,
8-10 Augusta Place,
Leamington Spa. Tel: (01926) 470622

The Police
Hamilton Terrace
Leamington Spa Tel: (01926) 451111

National Debt Line Tel: 0808 808 4000

The Probation Service 1 Euston Square Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 331860
Social Services 56-58 Holly Walk Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 334111
Social Services 16 Old Square Warwick	Tel: (01926) 410410
Social Services 39 Warwick Road Kenilworth	Tel: (01926) 859221
The Sikh Community Centre New Street Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 883129
The Samaritans Shakespeare Street Stratford-upon-Avon	Tel: (01789) 298866
Mid-Warwickshire Mencap 4 Scarbank Warwick	Tel: (01926) 622991
Domestic Violence Unit Stratford Police Rother Street Stratford-upon-Avon	Tel: (01926) 415636
Warwick District Council Riverside House Milverton Hill Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 450000
Mental Health Resource Centre St. Mary's Lodge St. Mary's Road Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 339261
CVS 109 Warwick Street Leamington Spa	Tel: (01926) 881151

ACCOMMODATION AGENCIES WITHIN WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

Warwick District Council maintains a Registration Scheme for people requiring accommodation in this area. Applicants will be required to complete an application form which will register them for accommodation with all the housing providers in the area. The Council and Housing Associations each continue to have their own criteria as to whom they will house but each application will be assessed under the Unified Points Scheme.

CHARITIES AND TRUSTS

Christian Alliance Housing Association Binswood Lodge 44 Binswood Avenue Leamington Spa	Accommodation for Single People Tel: (01926) 335402
Fry Housing Trust Avon House Leamington Spa	Accommodation for Single People and a Floating Support Service Tel: (01926) 425445
Mayday Trust 17 Augusta Place Leamington Spa	Accommodation for Single People and Small Families Tel: (01926) 882808
The South Warwickshire Plato Trust Woodloes House Woodloes Avenue Warwick	Accommodation for People with Mental Health Problems Tel: (01926) 498869
The Young Housing Project 38 High Street Leamington Spa	Accommodation and Floating Support Service for Young Single People under 25 Years of Age Tel: (01926) 883179
The Salvation Army Chapel Street Leamington Spa	Emergency Accommodation Tel: (01926) 883613/450708 or 0800 1692090
Chase Guildhouse Chase Avenue London Road Coventry	Accommodation for Single People Tel: 024 76 302694
Coventry Cyrenians, 7 Raglan Street, Coventry.	Accommodation for Single People Tel: 024 76 228099
The Young Homeless Project The Arches Industrial Estate Spon End Coventry	Accommodation for Unit 15 KOKO Single People under 25 Years of Age Tel: 024 76 715113
St Faiths Shelter 143 Warwick Road Coventry	Accommodation for Women and Children Only Tel: 024 76 502800

Beauchamp House
Coten End
Warwick

Accommodation for Single People
Tel: (01926) 401643

Newbold Lodge
Newbold Street
Leamington Spa

Accommodation for Care Leavers
Tel: (01926) 885491

Warford Lodge
79 Radford Road
Leamington Spa

Accommodation for Mothers and Babies.
Tel: (01926) 336435

Warwickshire County Homelessness Strategy Conference

2nd November 2002

1 Introduction

District Councils in Warwickshire will produce their first Homeless Strategies in July 2003. The main aims of the conference were:

- To raise awareness of the issues.
- To promote good practice across the county.
- To give a county perspective to the individual district strategies.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Summarise the national, regional and sub regional issues.
- Extract the main outcomes from the workshops.
- Comment on how authorities might use the lessons learnt from the conference.

2 Background

2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 introduces a new requirement on local authorities to produce a homelessness strategy. The Act requires local authorities to carry out a homelessness review, followed by the publication of a homelessness strategy. The first strategy needs to be published by July 2003.

2.2 Section 3 of the Act sets out what a homelessness strategy should contain. The focus on the prevention of homelessness signals a change in emphasis away from responding to crisis situations. This includes support for those who have been homeless before to prevent them becoming homeless again. Authorities need to involve other agencies, the health service, social services, the police and the voluntary sector in the design and delivery of their homelessness strategies. Section 1 of the Act enables the authority to require assistance from the social services authority in formulating the strategy and social services must take the homelessness strategy into account in exercising their functions within the district.

3 The National, Regional and Sub Regional Issues

3.1 National

Alistair Jackson, Shelter's Director of Policy noted that the focus was now on the wider picture, building on core reactive work. He referred to the report. "More than a Roof" which states that it is important to understand what the most effective response to homelessness should be and what would prevent people becoming homeless in the first place. Evidence nationally shows that many homeless families, for example were homeless once before.

Alistair said that there was no blueprint for the "ideal strategy". One of the challenges for Warwickshire will be how to quantify hidden homeless people. They are people who may not contact the authority because they think that they will not be helped because they are not in a priority group. He asked delegates if they ask people who run local hostels for information about people they are turning away.

He concluded by saying that national programmes are based on:

- Evidence based policy i.e. what works.
- Links to Community Strategies and Health Improvement Programmes.

It is important to adopt a multi agency approach, recognising that the sum is greater than the individual parts. There needs to be a recognition that one agency on its own is unlikely to solve the problems but a package of measures may do so.

3.2 Regional

Jean Templeton, Managing Director of St Basils outlined the regional position under three main headings:

Overview

Although regional statistics are available, there is not enough analysis below the headline figures. For example, in the West Midlands, there is the highest rate of homeless acceptances outside London. This could be a good thing indicating a high service standard. However, it might also be a bad thing, an indication that advice and assistance services are not adequate.

People and Place

There needs to be a recognition that there are a number of factors which contribute to homelessness. Jean said that it is important that prevention initiatives begin with young people. A lot may be going on in Warwickshire in connection with life skills training, for example, but is enough being done to connect these initiatives?

Regional Response

The regional partnership includes all the key players and there is therefore the opportunity to influence and take actions. It is important to get homeless needs included in the regional strategy. Jean reminded the conference that the West Midlands is a very diverse region. There are examples of both low demand and pressure for new housing. In some instances it may be more appropriate for Warwickshire to work with counties not in the West Midlands e.g. Northamptonshire.

3.3 Sub Regional

Christine Kerr, Chief Executive of Nuneaton and Bedworth BC talked about homeless needs and trends in Warwickshire. She pointed to a number of common themes in the five housing strategies in the county.

Supply:

- Increasing prices in owner occupied housing.
- Shortage of affordable housing.
- Unfitness in the private sector and limited resources to improve things.

Needs:

- Smaller homes for single people.
- Rising elderly populations.
- Some pockets of low demand.

Homeless trends across the county show some marked differences. Between 1998-01 homeless acceptances fell; (402-339) while nationally they were going up. During the same period, three of the five districts reported an increase in acceptances. Christine noted a number of achievements in response to identified priorities including:

- Cross county, multi agency response to domestic violence.
- Floating support schemes e.g. for single men and young parents.

- A recognition of the link between housing and homelessness and other plans and strategies.

3.4 Supporting People

Kevin Reynolds, Project Manager with the Warwickshire Supporting People Team talked about the role of supported housing in meeting the needs of homeless people and the contribution which Supporting People can make to a joined up approach to homelessness.

- Needs: In Warwickshire, there will be a county wide supported housing needs survey to feed into the Supporting People five year strategy for July 2003.
- Monitoring and Review: For the first time there will be a comprehensive monitoring and review system for the sector.
- County wide approach: The Supporting People strategy reflects county wide priorities and homeless strategies will need to mirror both the current Supporting People Shadow Strategy and the forthcoming 5 year Supporting People Strategy.

4 Workshop Feedback

4.1 Young People

4.1.1 Main Problem Areas

- Lack of suitable accommodation to rent.
- Existing schemes are not flexible enough. This means that follow up is not sufficient to prevent homelessness re occurring.
- “One and only chance syndrome”. Again this refers to the need to recognise that assistance may be required for a range of problems over a period of time.

Other problem areas mentioned were:

- Lack of emergency accommodation.
- Need to improve attitudes towards young people, particularly in statutory agencies.
- There are problems delivering services in rural areas.

4.1.2 What Works.

- Specialist workers.
- Move on and floating support in association with core services.

Other features mentioned were:

- Good multi agency partnerships.
- Mediation arrangements for “estranged” young people.
- Young persons Forums.

4.1.3 Cross Boundary Working

- In the future initiatives will probably only be viable if they are cross county.
- A County wide “Night Stop”.
- Good access to the Supporting People database.
- Provision for 16-18 year old asylum seekers. At the moment, this only exists in Coventry.

Other issues mentioned were:

- Links with the Youth Offending Team (YOT) which is county wide.
- Links with Coventry housing for a.

4.2 Domestic Violence and Harassment

4.2.1 Main Problem Areas.

- Lack of emergency specialist accommodation in the North of the County.
- There are cultural/BME issues. These include language barriers, isolation and access to services.
- There are still some problems with sharing/access to information. This inhibits multi agency action and co ordination.

Other problems mentioned were:

- Under reporting.
- Limited housing related support available to victims. This makes it difficult to break the cycle of abuse.

- Housing not represented on the newly formed Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Team.
- Support for perpetrator varies-limited priority for re housing and access to anger management courses.
- Differing levels of and access to services for victims who are owner occupiers.
- Actions to enforce tenancy conditions can delay a positive outcome for victims.

4.2.2 What Works.

- More reliance on witness statements rather than the victims.
- Development of Domestic Abuse multi-agency teams.
- Develop a harassment policy for Warwickshire by the police authority.
- Use of Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) orders, good behaviour contracts, restraining orders and injunctions.
- Information sharing protocols including housing associations.
- Mutual assistance between Districts to facilitate emergency re housing. Good practice was identified particularly between Nuneaton and Bedworth BC and North Warwickshire BC.

4.2.3 Cross Boundary Working.

- A cross authority approach to re housing perpetrators.
- Development of support/key worker networks throughout the county to play an advocacy role between the individual and the agencies trying to assist.
- The development of joint policies/protocols to address policies, procedures and information sharing.
- Improved housing benefit performance including Liaison with private and social landlords.
- Improved advice, mediation and advocacy services.
- Developing floating support.
- Multi agency assessment and housing representation on the Domestic Abuse Multi Agency Teams.
- Common policies in accessing services.

4.3 Older People

4.3.1 Main Problem Areas.

- Lack of adapted accommodation.

- Problems getting support packages.

Other problems mentioned were:

- Stigma/Image problem. Homelessness not recognised by someone who has a house even though it may not be appropriate.
- No accommodation available for short term letting to address needs such as rehab following hospital discharge.
- Lack of general support in the community. People may be elderly and isolated. They may not have a specific need but nevertheless would benefit from support which would serve a preventative function. Transport can be a specific problem.

4.3.2 What Works.

- Staff commitment.
- Partnership working includes hospitals.
- Joint working and communication between agencies.

4.3.3 Cross Boundary Working.

- A better record of where adapted properties are would be facilitated by a county wide register of adapted properties, linked to choice based lettings.
- Work towards joint policies at a county level.
- Develop floating support schemes.

4.4 Prevention

4.4.1 Main Problem Areas.

- Lack of resources.
- Stigma.
- Fast tracking housing benefit.

Other problem areas mentioned were:

- Not getting cases soon enough.
- Some parents eager for children to leave.

4.4.2 What Works.

- Joint assessment-a multi agency approach.
- Individual support packages.

- Tenancy support workers who would be available from the start of a tenancy and be available to follow up problems at an early stage.

Other examples given were:

- Debt counselling and money advice.

4.4.3 Cross Boundary Working.

- More co ordination particularly with regard to exclusions.
- Community education.
- A county wide housing register for consistency.

4.5 Offenders

4.5.1 Main Problem Areas.

- Lack of accommodation.
- No county wide perspective until Supporting People.
- Group perceived as being undeserving.

Other issues were:

- Difficulties in re settling offenders without the right support.
- Re housing is often available in areas stigmatised as areas of crime and therefore often not suitable for re housing offenders.
- Lack of suitable move on accommodation. This prevents those who are ready being able to live independently and means that places do not become available for those who need them.
- No cross authority arrangements are in place for re locating offenders who may pose a risk in their own community.

4.5.2 What Works

- Floating Support.
- Multi agency working and dialogue.

Other examples given were:

- Accommodation provided by probation gives a good package of support.

- Where move on arrangements exist, (e.g. Warwick DC), they work well.

4.5.3 Cross Boundary Working.

- Housing should investigate whether or not there is a role for housing services in the development of Criminal Justice Centres.
- There is a need to balance the supply of accommodation to this group across the county. At present, accommodation for offenders is concentrated in two areas, Warwick DC and Nuneaton and Bedworth BC.

Other needs identified were:

- Move on arrangements need to be considered on a county wide basis. Offenders in temporary accommodation are often from another area and wish to return there.
- The necessity to re house very high risk offenders away from the areas where their victims live.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Needs Assessment.

Recurrent themes in the conference were:

- The “hidden homeless”, those who do not contact agencies because they do not think they are entitled to any help.
- One of the objectives of the Homelessness Act is to carry out an analysis of need and to implement a strategy to deal with it.

This raises some questions including:

- How will this be done?
- Will additional resources be made available?

5.2 Rethinking Homelessness

A new approach needs to be adopted which views homelessness not, as one of the workshops put it as “a one off event with a beginning, a middle and an end,” but a continuum. This starts with education and

early prevention. If required, it includes a sensitive emergency service. It recognises the need for ongoing support.

5.3 Redefining Homelessness

The homeless brand and the need to change it was referred to by two of the speakers at the beginning of the conference. Examples were given of the difficulties faced by the homeless young people simply because of the perception about them held by the community at large. Stigma was also raised in the workshop on older people and how that stigma may prevent them seeking assistance. It is unlikely that these perceptions can be changed overnight. Nevertheless, there are links to some other conclusions and consideration should be given as to what actions may be taken to gradually change people's views of the homeless.

5.4 Breaking Down Barriers

Another conference theme was the belief that the statutory services put up barriers to the homeless. In the question and answer session at the end, there were two questions about this. The first was about young people's preference to talk to the voluntary sector. The lack of staff time in the statutory sector to carry out interviews was mentioned. Another questioner asked if there were any examples of councils improving access. This raises further questions including:

- What opportunities exist for the statutory and voluntary sectors to learn from each other locally and county wide?
- Are there/should there be opportunities for sharing/swapping staff to facilitate learning and the sharing of good practice.

5.5 Service Standards

One of the questioners at the end remarked that customers should receive the same standard of service throughout the county. Despite the panel's reservations about resources and the need for local variation, there was a recognition that this is an important issue, not least because service standards or the lack of them is often remarked upon in BVR inspection reports. The panel comments included:

- The conference is the first step towards common standards.

- Common (not minimum) standards would be useful.

5.6 A Multi Agency Approach

This was another recurrent theme and a number of good working examples were given.

- How will examples of good practice in parts of the county be extended to other parts?
- If Warwickshire takes steps to introduce service standards throughout the county, will other agencies be brought on board too?

5.7 Implementation and Resources

When summing up the morning session Debby Wheatley made the point that it was pointless having the best strategy in the world if it wasn't implemented or doesn't work. Consideration needs to be given to the best ways of driving homelessness strategies in Warwickshire forward.

Alex Roche.

November 2002

**Comments & Observations – County Homelessness Strategy
Conference 2002**

“Its pointless having the best strategy in the world if it wasn’t implemented or doesn’t work” Debby Wheatley – County Homeless Strategy Conference 4.11.02

Introduction

This document draws together the thoughts of the sub group who organised Warwickshire’s County Homelessness Strategy Conference. Hopefully it summaries our thoughts in respect of the way forward and how we best use the outcomes of the event productively.

Obviously these are not the only issues and certainly not the only solutions but we hope that this is of some use.

Feedback on the day

Generally speaking the majority of the delegates enjoyed the speakers contributions and approximately 94% of the delegates felt that they were able to contribute (to the degree they wanted to) in the afternoon workshops.

Ninety five percent of the delegates felt that the conference should be held again within two years 71% favouring an annual event. A large majority also felt that the event was a useful tool for the collection of information to feed into District Homelessness Strategies.

In addition to the above the event was heralded as an example of good practice in the December edition of the CIH good practice guide.

Possible ways forward

On the day there was a tangible sense that Warwickshire had made a big step forward and the feed back from those attending the event the event seems to support this impression.

The challenge as Debby Wheatley the chair of the event identified is to move productively in a direction that solves some of the problems identified on the day.

Those districts represented on the body that organised the event have agreed that they would like the report to form an appendix to their Homelessness Strategies.

To this end the group that set up the event has given some consideration the ways forward and has set out some recommendations below based on their feelings:

- Where relevant, effective working groups or forum already exist that specifically deal with the workshop areas the report be submitted to these. The outcomes of the workshops be compared to existing strategic objectives and an action plan be formed to begin to address the issues identified. This could include the Warwickshire Domestic Violence Board, Better Government for Older People Group, Probation Accommodation Group etc. etc.
- The completed report be presented to Warwickshire Chief Housing Officers Group in order to be fed into those local Homelessness Strategies, where there was no representation at a strategic level on the Sub Group organising the event.
- The completed report be presented to the Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group or Health, Probation and Social Services.
- Consideration needs to be given to how the issues raised in the workshops looking at prevention of homelessness and issues around sharing of good practice, commonality of service standards etc. etc. should be taken forward, due to the lack of a specific group to address these issues.
- Consideration be given to any future event and how this will be funded and how initiatives resulting from this years event should be reported back to those attending.