

## **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.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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).

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Provision</b>	<b>Support</b>
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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> 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**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
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**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Advice and Assistance	Early intervention. Outreach work	WDC	One Stop shops	2004-6
		WDC	Moving into libraries  New website for information and on-line applications and advice	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	Fortnightly monitoring. Collect data, identify categories, formulate plan.	On-going
		WDC		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