



Homelessness Strategy

2010-2015

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FOREWORD

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. Warwick Districts first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003 and reviewed in 2005. This has been replaced by this Homelessness Strategy. This is a five year Strategy (2010-2015) and places a high priority on preventing homelessness. It builds on the successes achieved since 2003 and seeks to develop and enhance existing services and initiatives through continued partnership working. It sets out a detailed Action Plan involving the Council and our statutory, voluntary and community sector partners to prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and support services for the next five years.

This Strategy has been developed following detailed research and consultation with neighbouring local authorities, statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, stakeholders and service users during the summer of 2008. This has helped build a comprehensive picture of homelessness in the District encompassing the local, regional and national changes that have occurred following the publication of our first Homelessness Strategy.

This Homelessness Strategy incorporates actions to ensure that the Council is complying with the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 by:-

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

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to the Strategy and look forward to working with our partners to meet its objectives.

Cllr Moira Ann Grainger
Housing and Property Services Portfolio Holder

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities to formulate and publish a Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. Warwick Districts first Homelessness Strategy was published in 2003 and reviewed in 2005. This has been replaced by this Homelessness Strategy. This is a five year Strategy (2010-2015) and places a high priority on preventing homelessness. It builds on the successes achieved since 2003 and seeks to develop and enhance existing services and initiatives through continued partnership working. It sets out a detailed Action Plan involving the Council and our statutory, voluntary and community sector partners to prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and support services for the next five years.

1.2. Homelessness in Warwick – Key findings from the Homelessness Review

A Homelessness Review was undertaken in 2008 and the exercise involved some considerable data gathering.

It was imperative that the Council undertook this exercise to establish current and future need and to identify any gaps in service provision. The analysis of the data received formed a sound base from which to work and to formulate the Strategy.

The key findings emerging from the review were:

- Demand for social housing in the District is increasing. There is a high demand for socially rented accommodation. In 2005, prior to the implementation of HomeChoice there were c.2,300 households on the Housing Register. The numbers as at the end of 2009 had increased to c.3,600. However a proportion of these were in Band 4 with no current housing need.
- Local people are finding it increasingly difficult to compete in the local market as incomes have failed to keep pace with rising house prices.
- Mean house prices have increased from £192,342 in 2003 to £233,705 in 2008, an increase of 21.5% (Land Registry).
- During 2008/09 the number of homeless applications made to Warwick District Council dropped from 347 to 313, a decrease of 11%. This was as a result of our housing options approach.
- There has been a fall in the number of homelessness acceptances from 122 in 2007/08 to 83 in 2008/09.
- Whilst homeless applications and acceptances are falling, the numbers presenting for Housing Advice is increasing

- The number of households prevented from becoming homeless is increasing. A total of 202 households had their homelessness prevented in the period 2007-2009.
- The majority of households to whom the Council has accepted a homelessness duty towards are in priority need due to having dependent children.
- Consistently the 4 main causes of homelessness were:
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy or other reasons.
 - Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate.
 - Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner, associated persons, racial or other forms of violence.
 - Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner.
- Affordability, availability and suitability of accommodation are the main issues restricting access to accommodation closely followed by problems with support needs that are too high for accommodation providers to support.
- The majority of the providers cite a need for life skills including budgeting, welfare, cooking, lifestyle, emotional well being and dealing with utilities as the support that clients would need to access accommodation.
- A sample of service users were asked if they required support services. Of those surveyed 44% indicated they required housing support, 19.4% required support with drug or alcohol issues , 12% needed assistance in accessing benefits, 9% assistance with accessing training and education, and 5% had a need for other support for which no clarification was provided.
- A sample of service users were asked if earlier assistance would have prevented their homelessness. 45% advised it would not have prevented their homelessness and 37% said it would.
- Both service users and partner agencies indicated a lack of awareness of the Council's services that are available to prevent homelessness.
- The majority of service users stated that they knew what they need to do in order to seek housing advice.
- The findings of the Homelessness Strategy Review 2008, the national and local policy context as well as research intelligence has helped us to identify the key objectives for the Homelessness Strategy.

1.3 The Five Objectives of the Strategy

Strategic Objective 1 - Ensuring Accessible and Effective Homelessness and Housing Advice Services

- Working towards an Enhanced Housing Options Service by reviewing the Council's Housing Advice Service to increase and improve the range of housing options available and linking these to employment and training advice.
- Ensure that the Homelessness Service is available to deal with emergencies 24 hours a day
- Provide Housing Register applicants easily accessible information on the results of previous bidding rounds, which allows them to make informed choices regarding their rehousing
- Provide clear information on people's housing options to prevent homelessness
- Involve customers in service delivery of this strategy
- Provision of an independent Housing Advice Service for Young People
- Work in partnership with schools to raise awareness of Homelessness
- Establishing links with the emerging communities of Migrant and BME to ensure access to services
- Update Literature for Housing Advice Service
- Develop written information for local Landlords
- Publicise Council Services to Landlords via our website
- Develop procedures for monitoring and benchmarking homelessness activities
- Ensure access to local Advocacy Services for customers

Strategic Objective 2 - Preventing Homelessness

- Target prevention at the agencies who might be the first point of contact for those at risk of homelessness
- Work in partnership with Housing Benefit to maximise Discretionary Housing Payments
- Prevent homelessness amongst those at risk of Domestic Abuse
- Work towards reducing the level of parental evictions
- Investigate ways to provide effective assistance for client groups who fall outside "priority need" categories
- Prevent homelessness as a result of eviction or abandonment from Council and Registered Social Landlord accommodation
- Undertake a Rough Sleepers Count
- Implementation of the Young People's Protocol
- Prevent homelessness amongst Ex-offenders
- Mental Health Protocol
- Develop a clear Protocol for the Council's Housing Management team and Registered Social Landlords with stock in the District on how cases threatened with homelessness involving tenants who are victims of domestic abuse should be dealt with
- Maximise access to the Court Desk Service, Repossession fund and Mortgage Rescue
- Investigate the feasibility of the provision of furnished Tenancies

- Continue to monitor the wider economic trends which may affect levels of homelessness in the District
- Ensure those involved in the prevention of homelessness are appropriately trained
- Provide training for Housing Services and Housing Benefit teams and partner agencies on Housing Advice, Options and Homelessness

Strategic Objective 3 - Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

- Continue to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation
- Review the Council's provision of temporary accommodation to assess suitability and number of units required to meet demand
- Explore the opportunities for developing a Nightstop Scheme, additional Crash Pads and Supported Lodgings for young homeless in the District
- Provision of a Leaving Care Flat to ensure a smooth transition to independent living
- Supporting People Move on Protocol

Strategic Objective 4 - Increasing the provision of affordable housing

- Maximise the provision of Affordable Housing in the District
- Extend the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme
- Improve the way we communicate with private landlords through the formation of a Landlords Forum and Accreditation Scheme
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Making the best use of existing stock
- Investigate the potential for the development of a Foyer for 16/25 year olds
- Review the need and feasibility of supported accommodation for Persistent Youth Offenders
- Provision of a temporary site for Gypsy and Travellers
- Monitor lettings service level agreements with all Registered Social Landlords
- Explore the opportunities for the Council to develop new build properties and remodel existing stock

Strategic Objective 5 - Provide appropriate support for vulnerable people

- Ensure continued liaison with local Supported Accommodation Providers
- Work with Registered Social Landlords to develop new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards in the District
- Develop closer working relationships with the Primary Care Trust
- Maintain the existing Supporting People Services and lobby for new services throughout the District
- Ensure all vulnerable tenants who are dealt with through the Council's

Housing Options Service receive Local Housing Allowance payments direct to their landlords wherever possible

- Create a mobility register of Council adapted properties

1.4 Monitoring and Reviewing

The Strategy's Action Plan will be monitored regularly through the Housing Sounding Board (formerly known as the Homeless Strategy Steering Group). The Group will look at Housing through a holistic approach and will have the overall responsibility for the monitoring and review of both the Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

2.0 DISTRICT PROFILE

Warwick District Council is within the West Midlands region and is one of the five District Councils that form Warwickshire. It is the largest District in the County, with a population of 135,700, residing in 59,356 households. The District has seen the largest percentage increase in its population over the past 5 years, 7,000 people representing a 5.4% increase.

The District contains the four main towns of Warwick, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth and Whitnash and a number of smaller, more rural settlements. However, this population growth masks some variations across the District. In terms of the main settlements, (the towns of Kenilworth, Leamington Spa, Warwick and Whitnash) Whitnash has seen a 15.2% increase in population since 2002 whereas Kenilworth has only seen a 2.6% increase.

There are 59,356 households in the District of which:

- 73.2% are owner occupiers
- 10.5% are privately renting
- 14.2% are occupying affordable housing with the largest landlord being Warwick District Council
- 2.1% are occupying other forms of housing

In terms of population projections, Warwick's population is projected to increase by 31.6% from 2006 to 2031. This is the highest projected increase of all the Districts and Boroughs. This is the highest projected increase of all the Districts and Boroughs with the 65+ age group projected to increase by the largest percentage over the next 25 years.

Over 90% of the population in the District are classed as White British, White Irish or Other White. Compared to the other Districts and Boroughs, Warwick has the highest proportion of those who are of Asian or Asian British ethnic origin, 5.4% compared to the County average of 3.8%. Leamington Spa in particular has comparatively high number of Asian or Asian British residents, and more recently, growing Portuguese and Polish communities.

The development of the M40 had a significant impact on the District, offering commuting opportunities and access for industry. There are also good rail links to the rest of the West Midlands Region and to London. Warwick District performs well across almost all economic indicators; employment rates are high and income levels are above average, but there have been less positive consequences in terms of housing affordability and traffic congestion.

Like other parts of the County, there are pockets of both affluence and deprivation across Warwick District, although the balance is towards relatively low levels of deprivation. The most deprived area (part of Crown ward) features in the most deprived 20% nationally, although the least

deprived communities (particularly parts of Kenilworth) are comfortably within the least deprived 5% nationally.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 shows Warwick District has four Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the top 30% most deprived nationally. The highest ranking SOA is Lillington East, ranked 5,653rd (out of 32,482 nationally) and 15th within Warwickshire (out of 333).

The District does feature as deprived in other aspects of deprivation. In particular, it has 37 SOAs in the top 30% most deprived nationally in terms of barriers to housing and services; this ranking looks at issues such as housing affordability and geographical access to services.

Warwick District has the second highest number of affordable housing completions in the County for 2007-2008 but has the highest unmet need for such housing in the south of the Region. The allocation of new housing for the District is 11,000 houses by 2026.

The perception has always been that the Warwick District area does not have a homelessness problem. However, this is not the case as affordability remains a big issue. The Housing Needs Assessment 2006 identified that the price of an entry level property in the District is £179,856 which would require a single person household to earn £51,387 per annum assuming that they could borrow 3.5 times their income. A two person household wishing to purchase an entry level property would need a combined income of £62,019 per annum assuming they could borrow 2.9 times their income. 52.5% of single earner households earn less than £15,000 pa. 49.4% of two earner households earn less than £30,600 pa. The Council will continue to explore initiatives to increase the supply of accommodation which is affordable to local people.

Homelessness statistics show that there has been a decline in the number of homelessness applications since the introduction of the prevention agenda, although more people are contacting the Council for housing advice. 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.

3.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 National Priorities

Over the last 15 years, central Government legislation and guidance has encouraged local authorities to take a more strategic approach to the provision of housing. This approach has required closer collaborative working across the whole range of housing and related activities. In particular a closer working relationship between housing and planning, to deliver the Place Shaping agenda through a wider understanding of the synergies between housing, planning and economic development.

Since the Homelessness Act 2002 came into force, the prevention of homelessness has emerged as one of the Government's key housing priorities. The Government's strategy for tackling homelessness is outlined in "Sustainable Communities: Homes for All" (2005). This aims to expand housing opportunities for all including those who need support and the most vulnerable in society. It advocates reducing homelessness by offering a wider range of preventative measures and increasing access to settled homes.

"Sustainable Communities Settled homes; changing lives" (2005) sets out a more detailed strategy on how this will be achieved. Specific national targets have been set for local authorities to:

- End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children, except in an emergency, and then for no longer than six weeks
- Keep levels of rough sleepers as close to zero as possible
- Reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010

Most recent good practice guidance has focussed on the prevention of homelessness through:

- A much stronger emphasis on housing advice that is focused on preventing homelessness from occurring wherever possible
- A range of other support services designed to prevent homelessness among households or individuals at risk of experiencing it including:
 - Family mediation
 - Sanctuary Schemes to respond to domestic abuse with the focus on removing the need for victims to leave their existing home to escape a violent partner and causing them to be homeless
 - Rent Deposit Schemes
 - Tenancy sustainment services for households at risk of becoming homeless

Recently attention has focussed on measures to tackle youth homelessness, including:

- A commitment to end, by 2010, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation by local authorities in discharging their homelessness duties to secure suitable accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds
- The availability of family mediation for young people
- A new national supported lodgings scheme providing accommodation, advice and mediation for young people who can no longer stay at home.

The Government has also published various policies and guidance since the last Homelessness Strategy confirming the prevention of homelessness as the Government's key housing priority. These are listed in Appendix 5.

3.2 Regional Priorities

West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005

In June 2005 the West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy was approved by the Regional Housing Board, the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the then ODPM (now the Department for Communities and Local Government -CLG).

The Regional Housing Strategy identifies key priorities for the West Midlands and ensures effective linkages with regional economic and planning strategies. The core aims are:-

- To create mixed, balanced and inclusive communities
- To assist in the delivery of West Midlands' Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS)
- To influence the future development of new housing provision to facilitate and enhance the economic development of the Region
- To address the variety of needs across a range of specific sectors of housing circumstances
- To work towards the success of the two ODPM sponsored Housing Market Renewal Area Pathfinders in Birmingham/Sandwell and North Staffordshire/Stoke and the Regionally identified housing restructuring areas of East Birmingham/North Solihull and North Black Country/South Telford
- To see the Government's Decent Homes standards are met in the municipal, social sectors, and for those in vulnerable circumstances in the private sector
- To achieve social and other affordable housing
- To achieve sustainable access to minimise environmental resource consumption and traffic and improve the quality of the environment

These aims are consistent with and supportive of the vision of the WMRSS, issued in June 2004 "The overall vision of the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable Region,

which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations”.

West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy 2005

The West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy was commissioned by the Regional Housing Board to inform the Regional Housing Strategy 2005 on regional homelessness issues. The Strategy develops a strategic focus for tackling homelessness and developing prevention initiatives throughout the region and ways of tackling them. The purpose of the Strategy is to:-

- Inform the Regional Housing Strategy
- Build on Local Authority Homelessness Strategies
- Incorporate the Government’s Homelessness targets
- Secure involvement of key regional stakeholders
- Initiate a process of change

One of the key recommendations of the Strategy was that a multi agency regional homeless strategy implementation group be established to develop Action Plans in order to promote a collaborative approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in the sub-regions.

Warwick District Council actively works with partners on a County, Sub Regional and Regional basis.

3.3 Sub Regional Priorities

South Housing Market Area Partnership

Up until December 2009 Warwick District Council formed part of the South Housing Market Area (SHMA) Partnership and the objectives developed for the partnership were:-

- Develop and implement standardised data collection and monitoring systems to measure the impact and learning from County wide Homelessness Strategy.
- Share learning and best practice on impacts of sub-regional Choice Based Lettings on homelessness and potentially homeless people.
- Share learning across the region of developing and implementing shared Strategy.
- Further development of joint protocols and supporting materials for hospital and mental health service discharge.
- Set up a liaison structure with mental health services, extend to a County wide setting and share best practice learning.
- Considering the use of Offender Pathway to establish joint protocols for resettlement move on, sustaining tenancies and planned release with local National Offender Management Service providers.

Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership

In late 2009 the Council's Executive took a decision to withdraw its membership of the SHMA in favour of pursuing a new sub-regional housing market with the other seven local authorities in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire (CSWP). This approach was taken to ensure housing issues were closely aligned with the current and emerging spatial planning, transport and infrastructure issues in this sub region.

A new sub-regional housing market area has been formed (CSWP) which has gained recognition as a new area from the HCA and the West Midlands Leaders Board.

Whilst still in its infancy as a housing partnership it is recognised that by working together on housing issues there are opportunities to deliver better results for customers and thereby improving outcomes for homeless households both in the sub region and the region as a whole.

3.4 County Wide Priorities

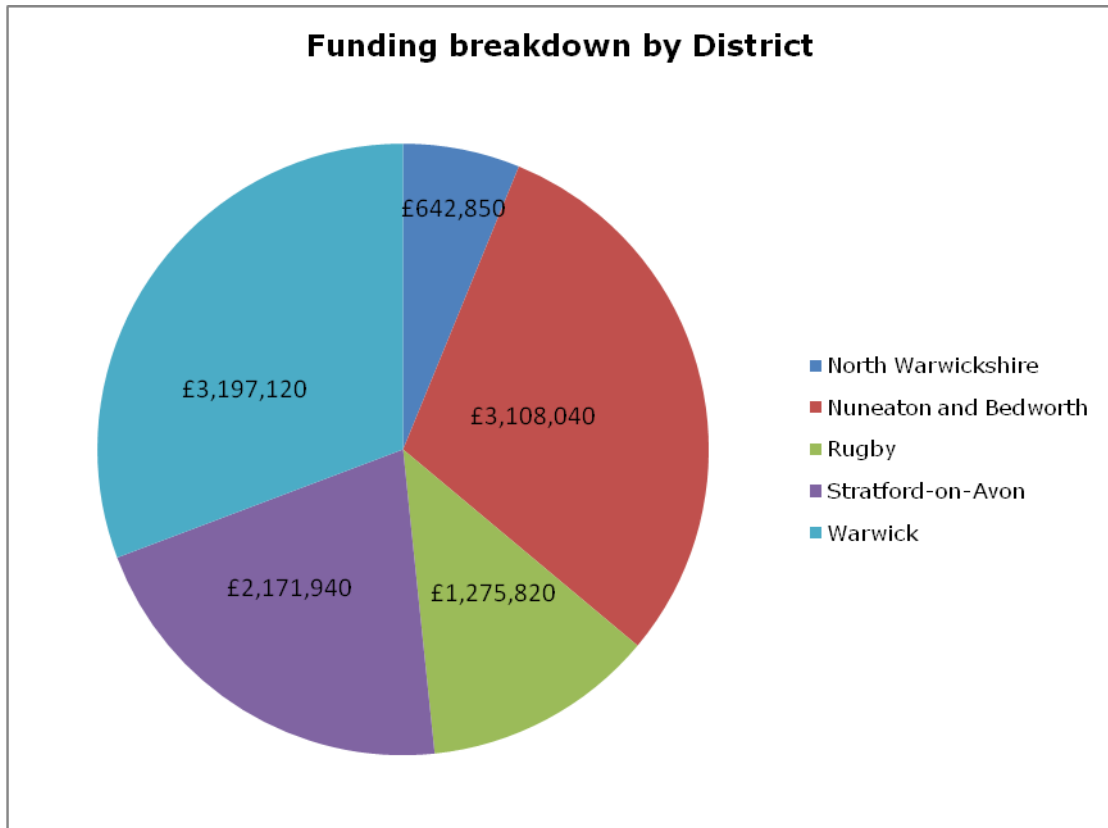
Warwickshire County Council's Supporting People Strategy 2008-2013

Supporting People is a grant programme which enables the provision of housing related support services to help vulnerable people maintain or improve their ability to live independently by delivering high quality and strategically planned support services which are cost effective, reliable, and which complement existing care services.

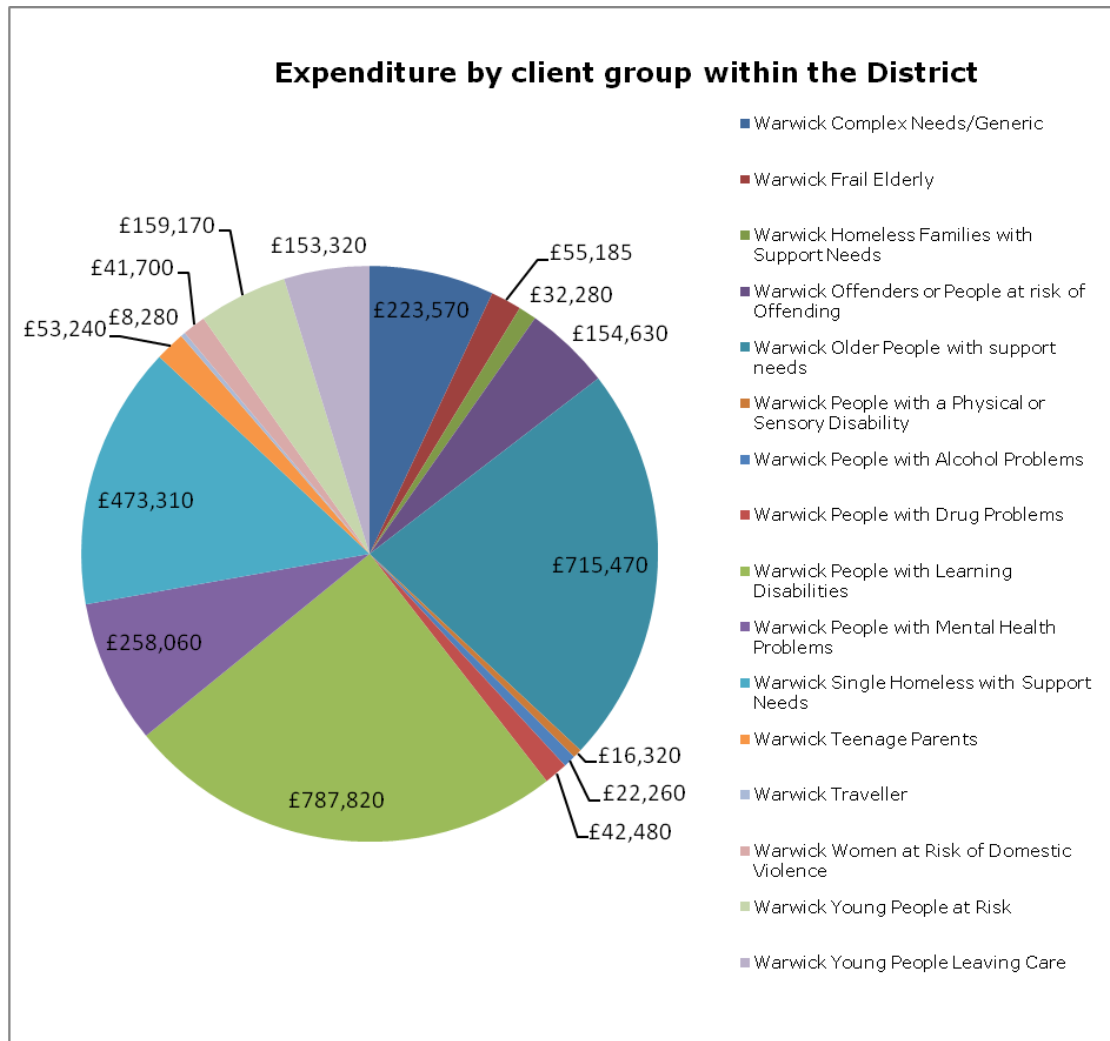
The programme began in 2003 and brought together funding streams from a wide variety of sources including health, probation, housing benefit and social services into one central pot. In Warwickshire the County Council is responsible for administering just under £10.5 million for Supporting People Services. The programme is much more than County Council activity it is a working partnership, made up of representatives from the Warwickshire Primary Care Trusts, Warwickshire Probation, the 5 District and Borough Councils, and the support agencies that provide and rely upon housing

The vision for the Supporting People programme in Warwickshire is to improve the quality of life for vulnerable people through needs led housing related support. The Strategy's overall aim is to provide more people; with the life skills they need in order to live independently, give support to ensure they sustain their accommodation and to be given choice to remain or to return to their own home.

In terms of funding breakdown, the chart below shows how the Supporting People funding is split across the 5 Districts in the County.

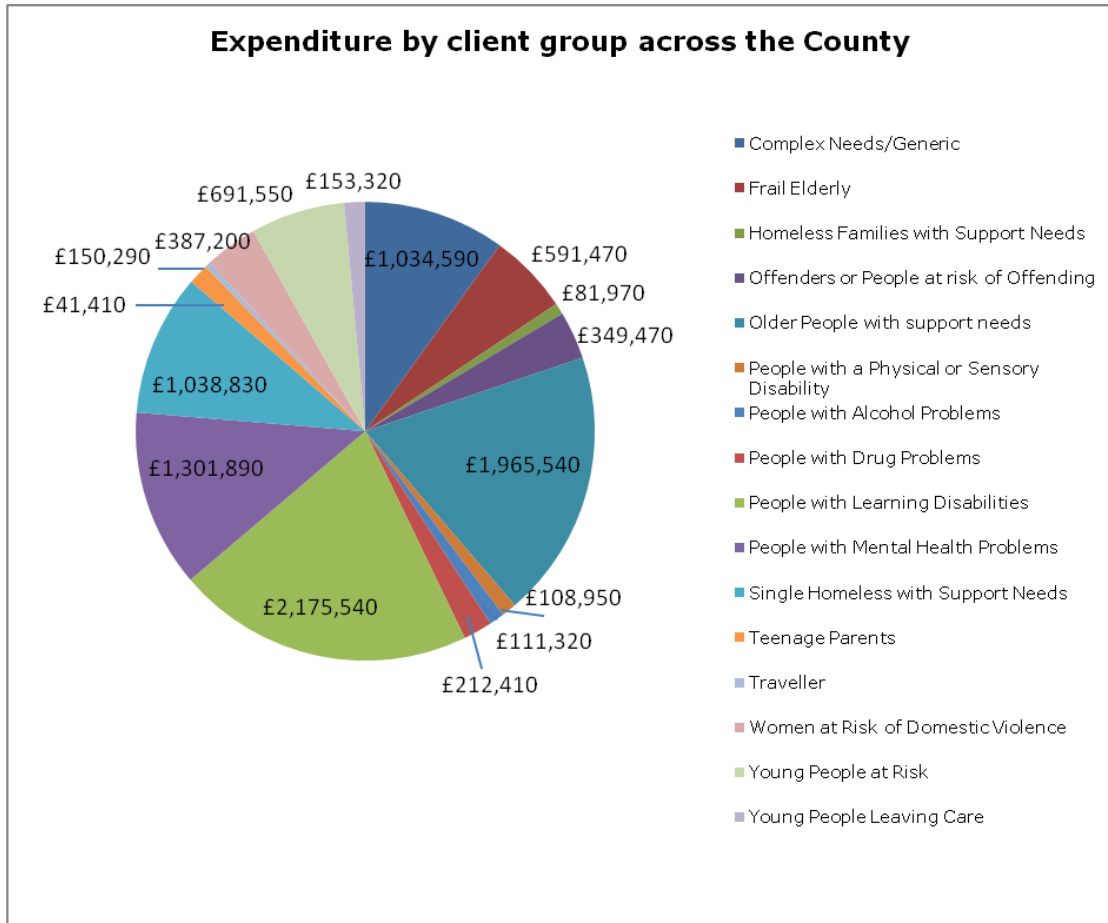


The chart below illustrates how the funding for the Warwick District is distributed amongst the 10 client groups.



By far the greatest expenditure is on homeless families with support needs, closely followed by older people services.

This is consistent with the County wide picture where expenditure is greatest on these 2 client groups.



Appendix 1 provides a detailed breakdown of Supporting People funded services in the Warwick District.

When Supporting People was set up in 2003 the funding was ring fenced for Councils to be spent in line with guidance. However, from 2009/10 the Supporting People ring-fence was removed and the funding paid into the Area Based Grant. The financial changes pose a risk to current and new services identified, as Supporting People services will have to go through a bidding process for funding with the consequent risk of funding going into other services unconnected with Supporting People.

In order to ensure Supporting People services are delivering services that are required and providing value for money within the new financial regime, a series of strategic reviews have been completed in 2009 and further reviews are planned for 2010.

Aims of the Strategic Reviews

The Supporting People Commissioning Body decided that housing related support services needed Strategic Reviews to look at different ways to provide support that meets the needs of vulnerable people in the future, ensuring that these services are delivered within the strategic framework of both national and local priorities. The Strategic Reviews aim to help determine the options and reshape the future delivery of housing related support services and be expected to establish the level of need related to

current provision levels to ensure that services reflect identified need. To help deliver these aims the Supporting People programme has put in place national, compulsory standards that service providers are required to achieve. In addition to this the Strategic Reviews will help identify where there are gaps in service, highlight cost variations across services, look at different models of service delivery and look at the appropriateness of the current service provision.

Intended Outcomes of the Strategic Reviews

The Commissioning Body wants to achieve a commissioning plan for the future of housing related services that aim to:

- Identify the most effective way to deliver services that would promote independence, offer real choice and be focussed on the individual needs of people.
- Make a significant contribution to meeting established national and local priorities set out within the strategic framework and objectives of Warwickshire's Supporting People 5 year strategy.
- To be able to commission high quality and cost effective services that meet demands.
- Look at opportunities of jointly commissioning services.
- Contribute to the wider strategic context and preventative agenda by commissioning services that deliver outcomes linked to the objectives of local and national strategies and partner agencies.

The strategic reviews will be completed for the following client groups:

- Learning Disability
- Older People (inc Frail Elderly)
- Mental Health
- Offenders
- Substance Misuse
- Young People (all groups)
- Domestic Abuse Victims
- Homeless -
- Generic/Complex
- Physical & Sensory

Warwickshire Local Area Agreement

Local Area Agreements (LAA) are three year agreements that set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central Government, represented by Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), and a local area, represented by the local authority and other key partners through the Local Strategic Partnership, such as the Police, PCT and Private Businesses .

The vision for the Warwickshire LAA is to make a real and lasting difference to the well being of people living in Warwickshire, and is

structured around four blocks and fifty three outcomes. The blocks are aligned with the ones set at a national level but reflect the issues at a local level and are as follows:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise

Each block has a set of outcomes to meet the overall theme of "Narrowing the Gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the county" this is supported by three main aims of:-

- Listening to Warwickshire,
- Narrowing the Gap, and
- Improving Access to Services.

The Stronger Communities block aims to create strong and cohesive communities through the empowerment of people to have a greater say on how they are governed and services are provided. Two of the outcomes of this block are to create fair, tolerant and cohesive communities and to meet local housing needs.

Warwickshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2008-2011

Warwickshire has traditionally provided a range of services for families experiencing domestic abuse and has continued to keep pace with the changing focus on responses whilst maintaining a strong support base for victims and their children.

The Strategy was formulated in partnership and has four key objectives that emerged through consultation, best practice, needs analysis and experience:-

- Safety and Support - to ensure that safety and support needs for those experiencing domestic abuse are met through well-resourced, safe, accessible services
- Protection and Justice- to ensure that perpetrators are both supported to change their behaviour and held accountable through a co-ordinated response, which does not compromise the safety of victims and children.
- Prevention and early intervention – to reduce incidents of domestic abuse and ensure that it is confronted and challenged so that victims, perpetrators and families can access services earlier.
- Children and young people – to ensure children and young people who have witnessed domestic abuse are able to access appropriate services and that children and young people are given the skills to build relationships based on respect and equality.

3.5 Local Priorities

Corporate Strategy 2008-2011

The Council's Corporate Strategy 2008-2011 sets out the Council's vision "Warwick District: a great place to live, work and visit". The Strategy sets out the Council's mission as "Building upon Excellence, to become World Class by 2012".

Housing has been identified within the Strategy as one of the Council's seven key objectives. The aim being to improve housing services efficiency to meet the housing need in the District. To achieve this three priorities have been set:-

- To maximise affordable housing provision
- To use current stock as effectively as possible
- To reduce rent arrears

Core Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Options, requires Warwick District to provide 10,800 new homes up to 2026. In addition to this there is a potential allowance for meeting some of Coventry's housing requirement to the south of the city.

The Council is preparing its first ever Core Strategy which will set the framework for managing this future growth and development of the District up to 2026. The timetable for its production can be found on the Council's website in the [Local Development Scheme](#).

As part of the preparation process, the Council consulted the public in 2008 on the "Issues" which the Core Strategy must address and the "Options for Growth", and in 2009 on the "Preferred Options" for how the Council manages future development in the District. Details of these consultations can be found on the Council's website. It is anticipated that the Core Strategy will be adopted in 2011.

Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026

The Strategy has been published by the Warwick Partnership. This is the Local Strategic Partnership for the District, which is made up of representatives from a range of organisations across the voluntary and community sector, and the public and private sectors.

The partnership has developed the Strategy from:-

- Existing Plans and Strategies
- What key stakeholders said at public consultation events were the top issues
- Facts and figures as to what has improved and what still needs to be done
- The top priorities identified in the County wide Area Agreement

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that we work in partnership to improve the quality of life for every resident in Warwick District by tackling the issues that matter most to people such as crime, improving health and well being and protecting the environment. It's about improving the quality of life for every resident in Warwick District and all the key elements such as housing, employment, education, health, children, young adults and older people are picked up under 4 main themes:-

- Safe Communities
- Health and Well Being
- Housing
- Economy, Skills and Employment

The overall goal of the Strategy is to make things better and to this end underpinning these themes, the priorities which relate to the Homelessness Strategy are:-

- Everyone's housing needs are met
- Meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Reduce and prevent homelessness
- Make homes sustainable
- Support independent living
- Everyone is able to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and sense of well being
- Citizens are actively engaged in decision making and participate fully in community life

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for Housing related issues for the District. The actions identified within the Strategy will be the responsibility of the District Council, partner agencies and stakeholders to ensure the targets and objectives are met. Partnership working is fundamental in providing housing related services on a local, regional and sub-regional basis.

The Council is in the process of reviewing its existing Housing Strategy and will be completed in 2010/11.

Registered Social Landlords – Homelessness Strategies

The Housing Corporation (now known as the Homes and Community Agency -HCA) published its 'Tackling Homelessness Strategy' in November 2006. As a result of this publication Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have a legal duty to co-operate with local authorities to offer accommodation under local authority allocation schemes and to help them carry out their statutory functions under the homelessness legislation. As a result of this some of our partner RSLs have developed their Homeless Strategies or are in the process of producing one. Bromford Housing Group and Jephson Housing have worked closely with the HCAs Homeless Action Team to produce Homeless Strategies. Other RSLs such as Orbit

Heart of England and Servite Homes have both produced Financial Inclusion Policies to minimise the threat of homelessness.

The underlying themes across all these organisations in relation to homelessness prevention are to:

- Reduce the number of evictions
- Continue to support partners
- Continue to build new homes
- Work and support our partner's Homeless Strategies

As part of this Strategy's Action Plan we will continue to work closely with our RSL partners to increase the supply of affordable housing and formalise the referral arrangements to the Housing Advice Team when a RSL or Council tenant is threatened with homelessness. This will be implemented by jointly producing a pre eviction protocol with the aim of preventing homelessness.

4.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Local authorities have a duty to find accommodation for the homeless under part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Under the 1996 Act, local authorities have responsibilities to those who they have reason to believe are either homeless or threatened with homelessness. A person is homeless if he or she has no accommodation in the UK, has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or has accommodation but where it would be unreasonable for him or her to continue to occupy it. A person is threatened with homelessness if he or she is likely to become homeless within 28 days.

If a local authority has reason to believe that a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness, it is required to make inquiries and decide whether it owes the applicant a duty to find accommodation for him or her. In each case Local Authority staff need to conduct assessment interviews to determine whether each applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless, in "priority need" and not intentionally homeless. If an applicant meets these criteria, the local authority has an immediate duty to secure accommodation for him or her and for anybody who normally resides with them.

Local authorities owe a lesser duty to applicants who are not in priority need or who are intentionally homeless. In some circumstances, local authorities must help these applicants find temporary accommodation for a period long enough to allow them to find their own accommodation. They will also be under a duty to provide them with advice and assistance in finding their new accommodation. Information and advice about homelessness and housing options can be provided by the Local Authority and also external agencies. However, it is essential that the advice and assistance provided is up to date and robust.

Where an applicant is threatened with homelessness and meets the above criteria, local authorities have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the accommodation remains available for his or her occupation.

The Homelessness Act 2002 shifted the emphasis away from crisis management to preventing homelessness. Local authorities are required to carry out a Homelessness Review and then draw up a Homelessness Strategy which should be periodically updated. These Homelessness Strategies should include measures to prevent homelessness, ensure that sufficient accommodation is available for the homeless, and to provide support services for people who may become homeless.

4.1 Priority need

The homelessness legislation categorises certain groups of households as being in "priority need". These are:-

- Households with dependent children
- Pregnant women or those with whom a pregnant woman resides
- People who are vulnerable due to old age, mental illness, handicap, physical disability or other special reason
- Households rendered homeless or threatened with homelessness because of a disaster such as fire or flood.

In 2002, these priority needs categories were extended under the Homelessness (Priority need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to include:-

- 16 and 17 year olds
- Care leavers under the age of 21
- People aged 21 or over who are vulnerable as a result of having looked after, accommodated or fostered
- People who are vulnerable as a result of having been a member of the armed forces
- People who are vulnerable as a result of having been in custody or detention
- People who are vulnerable as a result of leaving accommodation because of violence or threats of violence likely to be carried out.

5.0 PROFILE OF HOMELESSNESS IN WARWICK DISTRICT

5.1 Decisions and Acceptances

As can be seen from the table below the number of applicants owed the main homelessness duty has been steadily falling since 2007/08. This can be attributed to the change in the way the Housing Advice Service is delivered.

Since 2006 there has been a greater focus on housing options and prevention. Each case is now assessed according to individual need as opposed to a reactive service that assesses cases purely through Part VII of the homelessness legislation.

Making this change involved a significant cultural change for staff. It took well over 12 months to embed this new way of working and both customers and staff are now reaping the benefits of this approach.

This housing options approach has also seen a reduction in the total number of homeless applications and decisions. This in turn has resulted in reductions in the number of people in temporary accommodation including bed and breakfast. As this approach continues and is developed further levels of homeless applications and acceptances can be expected to fall further whilst homelessness prevention will increase.

Number of decisions by household type for the year:			
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	100	122	83
Eligible, homeless and in priority need, but intentionally so	38	61	38
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	28	21	59
Eligible, but not homeless	109	132	129
Ineligible	8	11	4
Total Number of Decisions	283	347	313

Source P1E – Warwick District Council

Household Types

Applicant Households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need for the year:			
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Applicant who is homeless because of emergency (fire, flood, storms, disaster, etc.)	0	0	0
Applicant whose household includes dependent children	77	92	57
Applicant is, or household includes, a pregnant woman and there are no other dependent children	9	15	6
Applicant, or a member of their household is vulnerable as a result of: - old age, physical disability, mental illness or disability, drug dependency, alcohol dependency, former asylum seeker, young person under 18 years old	10	14	15
Having been "in care"	0	0	2
Having served in HM Forces	0	0	0
Having been in custody/on remand	1	0	0
Having fled their home because of violence/threat of violence	3	1	3
<i>Of which:</i> a. domestic violence	3	1	3
Total Number of Households owed a duty	100	122	83

Source P1E – Warwick District Council

Main Reason for Homelessness

Main reason for loss of last settled home for applicant households found to be eligible unintentionally homeless and in priority need for the year:			
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	37	35	23
Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	6	8	7
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	10	11	9
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner, associated persons, racial or other forms of violence	13	13	11
Harassment, threats or intimidation, racial or other forms of harassment	0	0	0
Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	2	2	0
Rent arrears with Local Authority, Registered Social Landlord or Private Dwelling.	1	0	2
Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy or other reasons	30	51	29
Left prison/on remand, left hospital or left other institution or LA care	0	1	0
Other reason for loss of last settled home:- Left HM-Forces	0	0	0
Other reason (e.g. homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel, returned from abroad)	1	1	2
Total	100	122	83

Source P1E – Warwick District Council

The acceptance of the main homelessness duty was most prevalent amongst households with dependent children.

Consistently the 4 main causes of homelessness were:

- 1 Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy or other reasons.
- 2 Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate.

- 3 Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner, associated persons, racial or other forms of violence.
- 4 Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner.

Repeat homelessness among families with dependent children has been zero for a number of years. It is however, common among single people and particularly young people or those with chaotic lifestyles. Though such cases rarely appear in official statistics as this client group tend not to present to the Council.

It is acknowledged that these statistics do not represent the full extent of homelessness within the District. There are significant groups (young people, those with addictions, those with mental health, rough sleepers) who do not present to the Council for assistance. More information needs to be gathered on hidden homelessness and this will be addressed through this Strategy's Action Plan.

It is also recognised that a greater understanding is needed as to the root causes of homelessness behind the headline reasons. For example, better intelligence is required to ascertain why landlords are serving notice to quits on assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector but then re-letting these properties. Earlier intervention is required and again this will be addressed through the Action Plan.

6.0 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003-2008 ACHIEVEMENTS

6.1 HomeChoice - Choice Based Lettings Scheme

The 2000 Housing Green Paper laid the foundations for Local Authorities to apply choice for applicants applying for housing. The Government's intention is that by 2010 all local authorities must offer applicants choice, and set down a requirement within the Homelessness Act 2002 for all Local Authorities to provide information within their rehousing policies on options for choice. The CLG's five year housing plan, Sustainable Communities: Homes for All published in January 2005, sets out the Government's plans for taking forward its Choice Based Lettings (CBL) policy.

The theory underpinning CBL is that it will create more stable communities by giving people a choice and stake in where they live.

In November 2005 the Council introduced a CBL Scheme called HomeChoice. This represented a fundamental change in the way in which social housing was allocated by giving applicants on the housing register an active role in choosing where they want to live. Local Authority and RSL owned properties are advertised on a fortnightly basis and applicants are required to express an interest in the properties and areas they are seeking to be re-housed in.

The Housing Register at the time of implementation consisted of Two Bands. Band 1 contained all applications from people whom the local authority owed a statutory duty to re-house and Band 2 applications were assessed using a points system based on their circumstances.

A review of the Policy in 2007 and 2008 which involved consultation with service users, partners and stakeholders, illustrated that the way the Policy was framed actually encouraged people to present as homeless as they would be given overriding preference over all other applicants on the Housing Register. The revised Policy that was introduced in September 2008 now has Four Bands as well as quotas. Under the revised Policy higher priority is given to those households who are unintentionally threatened with homelessness and would be in priority need.

Band 1 is for those households assessed as having a high housing need, Band 2 is for medium need, Band 3 low need and Band 4 no housing need with the exception of owner occupiers. Within each Band is a set of criteria and depending on individual circumstances applicants are banded accordingly. (See Appendix 2)

Band 1 applicants are only permitted to bid for those properties with a Band 1 preference, Band 2 applicants can bid for Band 1 and Band 2 preference properties, Band 3 and Band 4 applicants can bid for all preference properties as long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

Quotas for lettings to Bands 1, 2 and 3 were introduced, to enable a greater spread of available properties to each band. 50% of properties are advertised for Band 1, 30% for Band 2 and 20% for Band 3.

The table below shows that as at the 31st August 2009 the total number of applicants registered on the Common Housing Register was 3448. It also sets out a breakdown of the advertised properties within each preference band and the actual allocations per band in the period 1st September 2008 to 31st August 2009.

Band	Numbers on the Housing Register	Number of properties advertised in each band	Number of properties allocated by band
1	18	291	85
2	326	146	159
3	1399	44	183
4	1692	0	5
Total	3448 *	481	432

* Of which 13 are 16/17 year olds

In this period a total of 481 properties were advertised within the quota system. Of the 481, 291 had a Band 1 preference but of these only 85 were actually allocated to Band 1 applicants. This can occur for a number of reasons, for example, there were fewer applicants in Band 1 than the allotted number of properties with a Band 1 preference; the applicants in Band 1 did not meet the letting criteria for the advertised property, and applicants in Band 1 may choose not to bid for certain property types.

The discrepancy in the number of lettings compared to the number of properties advertised is due to some still being under offer as they may not be immediately available to move into and occasionally properties may be withdrawn from letting after being advertised. This may occur in circumstances where for example, the outgoing tenant has withdrawn their notice during the bidding round, resulting in the property no longer being available.

Appendix 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of the number of properties advertised and allocated by size and type.

Since the revision there has been a more equitable spread of properties let across the Bands. As a result less people are approaching as homeless as their housing need is being met through the Housing Register before they reach crisis point.

From the outset both the original and revised policies have granted the highest priority to applicants that are ready to move on to more independent living from supported accommodation within the District. This has helped in preventing the silting up of supported accommodation, and ensuring that people are housed appropriately according to their needs. Work is currently ongoing with Supported Accommodation Providers in the District to make the transition from supported housing to more independent living as seamless as possible by engaging the services of the Council’s Resettlement and Support Officer as part of the move-on assessment wherever appropriate.

6.2 Preventing Homelessness – Housing Advice and Options

The Council adopted the “Housing Options” model of housing advice and homelessness prevention in 2007.

We recognised the need to move away from a traditional style of service with Housing Advisers being reactive in their roles to a more proactive customer focused approach. The housing options approach ensures that people are fully informed and able to make the right choice for their individual circumstances.

Housing advice/options interviews are offered to all applicants who believe that they are threatened with homelessness and are conducted at the Council’s offices or in the applicant’s home. Following the interview the Housing Advice Officer determines the most viable options open to the applicant. These can range from remaining in their existing accommodation or securing alternatives such as affordable housing or supported housing or accommodation in the private rented sector

The table below shows the number of households assisted through prevention activity:

YEAR	NUMBERS PREVENTED
2007/08	51
2008/09	75
1.4.09 - 31.12.09	76
Total	202

These primarily consist of households who have been re-housed through the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme, Supported Accommodation and Part VI offers through HomeChoice.

Although progress has been made we acknowledge that further improvements are required to the service. This is highlighted in the

Action Plan and we will be working towards adopting the enhanced housing options approach. An 'enhanced' housing options approach promotes independence, choice, and opportunities by offering personalised advice to anyone in housing need, intervening before the point of crisis. As well as providing advice on the full range of housing options from social housing to shared ownership to privately rented properties, links also need to be made with wider advice on issues such as on employment, debt, drug and alcohol problems, or health to help tackle the root causes of housing need.

The aim is to provide choice, empowerment and the provision of excellent customer services shaped around an individual's needs.

6.3 Rent Deposit Bond Scheme

WDC recognises that a key element of the Housing Options approach is to encourage people to consider using the private rented sector to resolve their housing needs.

In 2006 the Council launched a Rent Deposit Scheme which aims to help households access the private rented sector. Initially the Council provided a cash deposit to encourage landlords to engage with the scheme. In 2007, due to a combination of financial constraints and the introduction of the national tenancy deposit scheme, this changed to a written deposit guarantee to the landlord. The Council pays for any damage when the tenant leaves the property, up to a maximum sum. This has resulted in savings as the payments are less than the deposits that would otherwise have been paid. In certain circumstances the Council also gives consideration to loaning people a month's rent in advance. All applicants are linked into the Council's Resettlement and Support Worker for a minimum of 3 months to ensure that they get assistance with their utilities, housing benefit, and furnishings to enable tenancies to be maintained and sustained.

The scheme is open to people who would be accepted as homeless and in some circumstances to those who are non priority or intentionally homeless.

60 households have been assisted through the scheme in the period 1st August 2006 – 31st December 2009.

However the Council recognises that there is scope to develop better links with private sector landlords and has set this as a future objective.

6.4 Mediation

In 2007 the Council engaged the services of Mediation and Community Services to help reduce the numbers of young people presenting as homeless due to family disputes.

This project provides a constructive conflict resolution service to those in dispute, including for parents and their teenagers. Referrals are received

for young people facing immediate or future homelessness because of family disputes. Through the provision of a trained, impartial, skilled mediator who understands the issues facing both the parents and the young people, the project offers a process which helps all involved listen to and understand each other's points of view, feelings and needs, giving them the opportunity to identify problems and work on them together, finding realistic and workable ways forward.

The objectives of mediation in these cases are to:

- reduce conflict within the family and improve mutual understanding and communication;
- prevent homelessness by enabling young people to stay within the family home or return home where safe to do so;
- allow time and planning for a more supported move out to the most appropriate accommodation for young people unable to remain at home;
- maintain or rebuild longer term support networks.

In 2009 the Council was successful with a bid for LAA Narrowing the Gap funding. This increased the capacity of the project and enabled referrals from agencies other than the Council.

Whilst only a few applicants have successfully returned home on a long term basis, following mediation, a number have been able to salvage relationships with friends and family and in some cases have been able to return home on a short term basis. This has enabled more planned moves, with family support intact.

6.5 Looked After Children & Leaving Care

A protocol between the Council and Warwickshire County Council's Looked After Children's Team (LACT) for the Warwick District was introduced in 2006. The LACT will make a referral to the Council for a young person leaving care (for whom they are responsible), approaching their eighteenth birthday and ready for independent living with continuing support from them. This enables a planned move to be facilitated and ensures appropriate support is in place to help the Young Person sustain any tenancy that is offered.

In 2009 Warwickshire County Council was one of ten local authorities chosen to pilot the Staying Put 18+ Family Placement Scheme, which forms part of the government's Care Matters agenda.

The scheme aims to improve opportunities for looked-after young adults by easing their transition from care to adult life. It aims to do this through provision of a package of care for young adults and carers which will enable teenagers to continue living with their carers up to the age of 21.

6.6 Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation

Placements of families into Bed and Breakfast Accommodation is rare in Warwick District, of those placed in Bed and Breakfast, none have stayed longer than six weeks with the normal stay being for just a small number of days.

A small number of single applicants have occasionally been placed in Bed and Breakfast.

In January 2005, the Government set a target that by 2010 all local authorities should reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households by 50% from a baseline of the 2004/05 figure.

The Council recognises the issues faced by households placed in temporary accommodation and has sought to reduce the number of households in this type of accommodation by offering a wider range of housing options to applicants.

The Council saw a reduction in the numbers living in temporary accommodation from 15 households in 2004/05 compared to 8 at the end of 2008/09. Thereby achieving the Government's temporary accommodation target ahead of the 2010 deadline.

Better prevention work, the use of the private rented sector, maximising supported housing referrals, and changing the HomeChoice Allocations Policy has also helped reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation usage.

6.7 Crash Pad

Working in partnership with Chapter 1, the Council has developed the provision of a crash pad bed space within Binswood Lodge.

The crash pad provides appropriate, temporary supported accommodation to 16-24 year olds who are homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of family dispute while efforts are made to resolve the crisis in a way which enables them safely to resume living with their family/carers or move on to more suitable accommodation.

The crash pad has reduced the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds. Following the success of the scheme discussions are underway between the Council and Chapter 1 to extend this provision.

6.8 Move On Planned Protocol (MOPP)

A review of Move on Protocols for the 5 District and Borough Councils was undertaken in 2008, establishing a Countywide partnership between Supporting People, District and Borough Councils, Registered Social Landlords, Probation and Short Stay Housing Providers. The partnership

focussed on identifying blockages to Move On and developing options for people who are ready to move on from short stay accommodation.

The partnership agreed to ensure that the Move On Protocol would:

- Increase options and opportunities for people moving in to longer/permanent accommodation
- Provide on-going support where required
- Take account of affordability issues
- Focus on tenancy sustainability and the avoidance of repeat homelessness
- Maintain a 'can do' approach

This protocol underpinned a lot of the work that was already ongoing in the Warwick District. We have good working relationships with our Providers and have always been proactive in ensuring measures are in place to enable people to move on from supported accommodation.

In the period 1st April 2006– 31st March 2009 a total of 130 households were successfully housed through move-on arrangements

6.9 Home Visits

Home visits are made by the Council to parents, family or friends that are making a member of their household homeless. In appropriate cases mediation is provided.

Home visits allow for verification of an applicant's household and circumstances and an understanding of the expectations of both parties. By explaining the relevant housing options and outcomes, agreements on personal re-housing plans can be reached, allowing for more planned moves as opposed to crisis intervention.

6.10 Making the Best use of Existing Stock – Tackling under occupation and overcrowding

The Council as a retained stock holder aims to make the best use of existing family accommodation whilst moving older people into more suitable accommodation that meet their needs. In order to achieve this a Tenant Incentive and Resettlement Scheme was introduced in 2008.

The Tenant Incentive Grant Scheme offers a financial incentive to secure tenants of the Council who transfer from a three or four bedroom family-sized general needs accommodation (houses, maisonettes or flats) to a one bedroom property.

During 2008/09 the Tenant Incentive Scheme successfully enabled 10 tenants of larger properties, including one 4 bedroom house and nine 3 bedroom houses to move to smaller more suitable accommodation.

6.11 Affordable Housing Completions

A lack of affordable housing is one of the key underlying factors in causing homelessness.

The Housing Needs Assessment 2006 identified that 821 new affordable housing units were needed in the District each year over the next 5 years. It recommended that 80% of this should be rented accommodation.

In terms of securing housing through the planning system the Council seeks 40% affordable housing on all major development sites of 10 or more dwellings, or 0.25 hectares in the urban area and 3 dwellings in the rural area.

Policy also sets out proposals to ensure that the housing meets identified needs in perpetuity, that intermediate housing is genuinely affordable to those in need, and that contributions in lieu of on-site affordable housing will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. The adopted Warwick District Local Plan (September 2007) sets a target of 100 new affordable homes a year, this has also been adopted as a corporate target.

In the 3 year period between 2006/07 and 2008/09 339 new affordable units were completed. This equates to 113 units per annum, exceeding the corporate target of 100 units per annum.

However, this is expected to fall considerably over the next few years due to a combination of the moratorium and the current economic climate.

The moratorium was in place from September 2005 until February 2009 and its purpose was to restrict the number of permissions granted for housing development on urban windfall sites in order to contain the supply of housing. This followed concerns at government and regional level that levels of housing growth in the District were well above those set out in the adopted West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2004) and could threaten the regional objective of achieving urban renaissance of the major urban areas.

During the period of the moratorium the number of planning applications for affordable housing fell significantly, resulting in less sites coming forward, which would otherwise be starting on site or completed. The true impact of the moratorium will be seen over the next 12-18 months as the number of completions dwindles.

We have recognised the need to develop strong policies to increase the provision of affordable housing. In order to develop new policies a strong evidence base is required. We will commission a new Housing Needs Assessment along with a Viability Study to maximise contributions on all new schemes.

6.12 Warwickshire County Wide Young Persons' Protocol

It was recognised locally that more formal arrangements needed to be adopted between partner agencies when assessing the needs of 16-21 year olds.

The working relationships developed between the Housing Advice Team and the local children's services team was used as the basis to develop the County wide protocol .

The purpose of the Protocol is to ensure that there is a joint assessment framework between Children Services (CS) formerly known as social services and Local Housing Authorities (LHA) in the County for assessing accommodation and support needs of Young People aged between 16 and 21 years and each agency's responsibilities under the requirements of the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

The aims of the Protocol are:-

- To provide a quick reference easy to use guide for front line staff which clarifies the statutory duties and agreed responsibilities under the Protocol of partner agencies
- To establish a system that ensures a seamless service to vulnerable Young People, irrespective of which agency they present to first or which District they live in
- To promote co-operation and joint working between the partner agencies
- To prevent homelessness through proactive early intervention
- To ensure that, through methods such as mediation, reconciliation between Young People and their "excluders" is achieved wherever possible.
- To ensure that Young People are not shuttled between LHA and CS

During the last 12 months the development work has increasingly focussed on processes to provide for joint assessment of homeless 16 and 17 year old young people as a consequence of the May 2009 House of Lords judgement against Southwark Council. This judgement has required a re-evaluation of how local authorities should meet the needs of young homeless people with particular emphasis on consideration of potential duties under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. In essence the judgement confirmed that the primary responsibility for providing for a homeless 16 or 17 year old in need lies with the Children's Act and not the Housing Acts.

Whilst some elements of the protocol are being implemented locally it has yet to receive formal sign off. It is hoped that it will be formally adopted by April 2010.

6.13 Remodelling of the Resettlement and Support Service

In 2007 the Council reviewed its Resettlement and Support Service, which is partly funded by Supporting People.

The remit of the service was initially restricted to those placed in temporary accommodation. The review extended the service to enable support to be provided to households in new or existing tenancies and those who have been or are at risk of homelessness, ensuring successful transition to independent living, tenancy sustainment and homelessness prevention.

6.14 Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as: any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Domestic abuse is rarely a one-off incident and should be seen as a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which the abuser seeks power over their victim. It occurs across the whole of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, disability, religion, class, or lifestyle and income. However, data shows that the majority of domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women.

Crimes committed in the name of 'honour', forced marriage and female genital mutilation are also considered acts of domestic abuse

During 2008 both Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and Specialist Domestic Violence Courts were launched across the County in partnership with the County Council.

The purpose of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences is to reduce repeat offending and increase the safety of domestic abuse victims and their children, at the same time improving the level of professional support they receive.

Fundamental to MARACs is a holistic, joint agency approach to dealing with domestic abuse that addresses prevention, enforcement and victim support. The key principles are:

- Information sharing between agencies
- Assessment of the risk to the victim and children
- Agreeing a joint risk management plan which involves controlling and addressing the offending behaviour of the perpetrator as well as supporting the victim
- Translating the plan into action and holding agencies accountable

The specialist Court Programme aims to provide victims of domestic violence with better support and care in specially equipped courts. These specialist courts offer facilities such as dedicated prosecutors, police and magistrates, fast tracking of cases (so limiting the likelihood of further incidences) and separate entrances, exits and waiting areas so that victims do not come into contact with their attackers.

Domestic Abuse Campaign

Warwickshire Police and Warwickshire County Council jointly fund a County wide Domestic Abuse campaign, launched in June 2008: 'Talk to Someone'. This campaign has seen a 22% increase in hits on the web site.

Sanctuary Scheme

A County wide scheme was implemented in 2007 to enable households suffering domestic abuse to remain in their home if they chose to by having the security of their homes improved, thereby preventing homelessness.

6.15 Extending Debt Advice Provision (CAB)

In 2008 the Council extended debt advice services provides by Citizens Advice Bureau to include applicants presenting for housing advice. Prior to this, referrals were made through Council Tax and Income Recovery Teams. Extending access to this Council funded service has assisted households who do not qualify for legal services commission funding, with money management skills and an awareness of the financial help that is available. This has assisted with homelessness prevention.

6.16 Salvation Army Homeless Action Project

The Salvation Army Homeless Action Project provides a drop in and advice service offering hot meals, toilets, showers, laundry and housing and benefit support and advice. The service was recently extended to Saturday mornings. This has been achieved in partnership with the 'Weekend Friendship Group' which is based at St. Peter's Church and grew out of the Churches Together Poverty and Action Forum.

The project is trying to actively change the culture of the homeless community by encouraging clients to take more responsibility and ownership for the project. With the help of twenty volunteers it has also developed a number of activities such as cooking, art, and gardening to give individuals a chance to shine, learn new skills and build self esteem.

7.0 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW

In order to produce a comprehensive and robust Homeless Strategy that reflected the need in the District, the Local Authority required the assistance of all its partners and stakeholders in the District.

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group was re-launched to take the Review and formation of the Strategy forward in 2008.

The Review was scoped and the exercise involved some considerable data gathering. It was imperative that the Council undertook this exercise to establish current and future need and to identify any gaps in service provision. The analysis of the data received formed a sound base from which to work and to formulate the Strategy.

To obtain all the data a series of questionnaires were used:-

- Questionnaire 1 – The aim was to establish the level and type of services organisations provided to those who had or may have had a housing need. (All organisations were requested to complete this questionnaire).
- Questionnaire 2 – This was to determine the number of service users that approached partner organisations in the year 2006/07, detailing reasons for approach and outcomes. (All organisations were requested to complete this questionnaire).
- Questionnaire 3 – Was completed by RSLs, Accommodation Providers and the Local Authority only and requested information regarding evictions, re-lets and homeless acceptances.
- Questionnaire 4 – This was completed with service users who approached with a housing need for the period 18th – 29th February 2008 inclusive. (All organisations were requested to complete this questionnaire)

7.1 The Key findings of the Homelessness Strategy Review

The purpose of the Homelessness Review as indicated above was to assess current and future homelessness need in the District so that appropriate provision can be planned and provided for.

A variety of data sources were used to inform the review including P1E data, homelessness snapshot surveys involving a wide cross-section of individuals and organisations, which included voluntary groups, the Police, Primary Care Trust, Warwickshire Supporting People, Registered Charities, Registered Social Landlords, Local Authorities, Service Users, Community Groups and Church Groups.

The main findings of the review were as follows:-

- Demand for social housing in the District is increasing. There is a high demand for socially rented accommodation. In 2005, prior to the implementation of HomeChoice there were c.2,300 households on the Housing Register. The numbers as at the end of 2009 had increased to c.3,600. However a proportion of these were in Band 4 with no current housing need.
- Local people are finding it increasingly difficult to compete in the local market as incomes have failed to keep pace with rising house prices.
- Mean house prices have increased from £192,342 in 2003 to £233,705 in 2008, an increase of 21.5% (Land Registry).

- During 2008/09 the number of homeless applications made to Warwick District Council dropped from 347 to 313, a decrease of 11%. This was as a result of our housing options approach.
- There has been a fall in the number of homelessness acceptances from 122 in 2007/08 to 83 in 2008/09.
- Whilst homeless applications and acceptances are falling, the numbers presenting for Housing Advice is increasing
- The number of households prevented from becoming homeless is increasing.
- The majority of households to whom the Council has accepted a homelessness duty towards are in priority need due to having dependent children.
- Consistently the 4 main causes of homelessness were:
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy or other reasons.
 - Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate.
 - Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner, associated persons, racial or other forms of violence.
 - Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner.
- Affordability, availability and suitability of accommodation are the main issues restricting access to accommodation closely followed by problems with support needs that are too high for accommodation providers to support.
- The majority of the providers cite a need for life skills including budgeting, welfare, cooking, lifestyle, emotional well being, dealing with utilities as support that clients would need to access accommodation.
- A sample of Service users were asked if they required support services, of those surveyed 44% indicated they required housing support, 19.4% required support with drug or alcohol issues , 12% needed assistance in accessing benefits, 9% assistance with accessing training and education, and 5% had a need for other support for which no clarification was provided.
- A sample of Service users were asked if earlier assistance would have prevented their homelessness 45% advised it would not have prevented their homelessness and 37% said it would.

- Both service users and partner agencies indicated a lack of awareness of the Council's services that have been initiated to prevent homelessness.
- The majority of service users stated that they knew what they need to do in order to seek housing advice.

The findings of the Homelessness Strategy Review 2008 have helped us to identify the key priorities of the Homelessness Strategy.

The priority client groups agreed by the partnership following the analysis of the review and further consultation with all stakeholders concerned are as follows:-

Young People (16-24)

The Young Homelessness Project (YHP) came into existence in 1992 as an independent charitable agency working with 16-25 year olds.

The closure of this project in August 2007 due to financial reasons has had a detrimental impact on the service provided to young people in the District.

Whilst Orbit Heart of England have taken on the supported housing function previously carried out by YHP, the closure meant that as well as the advice service, the Nightstop and Counselling services were also lost.

In conjunction with its partners the LA is keen to explore the feasibility of a one stop shop where a young person can access a variety of services e.g. children and families, connexions, youth offending, housing, welfare benefits, and health under one roof.

The Churches Together Group and Chapter 1 are working together to try and re-establish a Nightstop Service in the District.

Whilst there is existing supported accommodation in the District for young people this is not adequate to meet the actual need. There is clearly a shortage of supported accommodation for young offenders with high support needs and a general lack of direct access accommodation.

The Council will work with its supported accommodation providers to identify opportunities to enable the provision of Foyer style accommodation. Linking housing with employment and training opportunities.

Based on the success of the crash pad and the evident need for such provision, the Council is working with Chapter 1 to try and replicate this provision in another one of their supported accommodation schemes.

Gypsy and Travellers

Under the Housing Act 1996, a Gypsy or Traveller is homeless if s/he does not have a lawful place to put his or her caravan or living vehicle. Gypsies and Travellers are a recognised minority group and it is acknowledged that there is a national shortage of suitable sites where they can live in decent and appropriate accommodation

The Housing Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to develop and implement strategies to address the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities. In order to develop such strategies Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) were carried out nationally.

In the West Midlands Region six Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments were carried out in 2007. These GTAA's all identified a need for more pitches – 939 residential pitches and 244 transit pitches for Gypsies and Travellers up to 2016 and 118 pitches for Travelling Showpeople up to 2012.

The results of the GTAA carried out in the South Housing Market Area of which Warwick was a member identified a need for 15 temporary pitches and 11 permanent pitches for the District. Currently there are no permanent sites either authorised or unauthorised in the District other than 1 Travelling Showpeople's site accommodating 5 yards.

In order to address this gap in provision the District Council has set up a Corporate Working Group to identify suitable sites. The Housing Strategy Team is working in partnership with the Planning Department and the County Council to identify suitable sites to ensure that the accommodation and support needs of this community are being met. The GTAA and the results of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 3 revision will inform the District's Core Strategy and outline how the needs of this client group will be met.

The Supporting People Programme commissioned a County Wide Floating Support service for Gypsy and Travellers and a Site Warden Service in 2008.

Migrant Communities and BME

There are an increasing number of economic migrants living in the Warwick District, particularly those of Polish and Portuguese origins.

Whilst there is anecdotal evidence that migrant workers are living in overcrowded and poor housing conditions, collation of more robust intelligence is required.

The housing requirements of migrant workers living in the District will be considered as part of the new Housing Needs Assessment.

Mental Health

The Council has identified the need to work more closely with its partners in meeting the needs of those with mental health issues whether it is low or high need.

One of the first steps will be to develop a joint working protocol either locally or on a County Wide basis with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to provide a clear framework to ensure joint working to address the needs of homeless people with mental health issues.

Joint protocols will also be developed for the management of homeless people who are being discharged from mental health in-patient facilities. This will assist in preventing future homelessness by addressing support needs at the earliest opportunity and enabling tenancy sustainment.

The Council will assess the needs of people with mental health issues as part of stakeholder consultation through the Housing Sound Board.

Rough Sleepers

It is perceived there are only a relatively small number of rough sleepers in Warwick District, but there are a far larger number of 'sofa surfers'. These are people who drift between friends (sometimes for years) with the occasional night on the street, before overstaying their welcome and presenting in crisis as homeless. Some then end up in the supported accommodation system or in unsuitable accommodation (overcrowded, poor repair or without basic facilities such as hot water).

Living this lifestyle makes it hard to be in settled employment or training and can often lead into a slow downward spiral of addictions and mental health issues, meaning that when they do access services their needs are far more complex than when they originally became homeless.

Proactively reaching this group early should be a key part of the prevention agenda and could have a significant long term benefit to homelessness in the District.

The Churches Together Group has successfully piloted the provision of a Night shelter on a Sunday night only, working with Bath Place Community Centre. Evening meals and breakfast are provided as well as support. Robust data is being collated to establish whether there is a need to extend this provision.

Working in partnership with the Salvation Army, WDC will make an application to the CLG to undertake a Rough Sleepers in the District in either the autumn of 2010 or spring of 2011. A partnership approach to carrying out the count will be needed which will include our stakeholders and the CLG.

Ex-offenders

While numbers of approaches from this client group are small in the Warwick District, dealing with the specific problems faced by ex-offenders when trying to access housing has been highlighted.

The Council supports the principles underlying the Ministry of Justice National Offender Management Service "Reducing Re-Offenders" pathway on accommodation. The fundamental aim of this pathway is to settle offenders into stable accommodation, as this is the foundation for successful rehabilitation and for ensuring risk is managed efficiently.

To this end a review of the need and the feasibility to develop an accommodation based service for persistent, prolific offenders and those subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), need to be undertaken.

Applicants affected by the Credit Crunch

Whilst there has been a reduction in the number of homeless applications, there has been an increase in the number of households presenting for housing advice in relation to mortgage and rent payment difficulties.

Pro-active early intervention and partnership working with landlords, mortgage lenders providers and the CAB will be essential to preventing homelessness.

In addition to this, the Council will endeavour to ensure an adequate supply of debt and welfare advice services. The Council's Housing Advice Team will be trained in all aspects of possession proceedings, and an introduction to debt advice and welfare benefits.

We will raise awareness of the services available and access to initiatives such as the Court Desk Service, Repossession Fund and Mortgage Rescue Schemes through increased publicity.

8.0 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

An initial equality impact assessment of this Homelessness Strategy has been undertaken. A further assessment will be undertaken 12 months after implementation.

9.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2010-2015

9.1 Our Vision:

“The long-term vision for preventing homelessness in Warwick is to deliver in partnership, high quality accessible services and solutions which link housing, health, training and employment opportunities.”

9.2 The overall aim of the Homelessness Strategy is:

- the prevention of homelessness using the enhanced Housing Options approach
- ensuring that there is sufficient accommodation available to people who are, or who may become homeless
- ensuring there is adequate support for people who are, or who may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again

9.3 Strategic Objectives:

1. Ensuring accessible and effective homelessness and housing advice services
2. Preventing Homelessness
3. Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households
4. Increasing the provision of affordable housing
5. Provide appropriate support for vulnerable people

10. IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group has been renamed the Housing Sounding Board and will meet on a quarterly basis. The Group will look at Housing through a holistic approach and will have the overall responsibility for the monitoring and review of both the Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

It is expected that some actions may evolve over the lifetime of both the Housing and Homelessness Strategies and any such changes will be agreed by this Group and incorporated into the Action Plan.

Key objectives within the Strategy are also monitored through the Corporate Strategy and Service Development Plans.

11.0 RESOURCES

The delivery of this Homelessness Strategy will be resourced through existing resources and through funding provided by Communities and Local Government. Although opportunities for additional funding through external sources will continue to be explored.

In 2009/10 the Council received:

- £30,000 in 2009/10 in Homelessness Prevention Grant
- £20,000 one off payment for the provision of Court Desk Service
- £47,500 one off payment – Repossession Prevention Fund

The resources from central government are vitally important for maintaining services such as the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme, Crash Pad, Family Mediation Services, and partial funding for extra staff resource in order to prevent homelessness.

With the imminent Comprehensive Spending Review it is unclear what future level of central government funding will be forthcoming.

The Council will continue to review resource allocation to ensure that services provide value for money and are the most effective response to current or emerging needs.

12.0 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2010-2015

12.1 Objective 1 - Ensuring accessible and effective homelessness and housing advice services

Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead Officer	Other Agencies Involved
Working towards an Enhanced Housing Options Service by reviewing the Council's Housing Advice Service to increase and improve the range of housing options available and linking these to employment and training advice	Reduction in the number of homelessness acceptances and the increase in successful prevention cases	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Ability to respond to the needs of our customers through our housing options toolkit	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Obtain feedback from customers of the service to inform the future direction of the service	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Access to debt/finance advice via referrals to Citizen Advice Bureau	Ongoing	Possible additional revenue funding	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	

Ensure that the Homelessness Service is available to deal with emergencies 24 hours a day	Customers can get advice and assistance whenever they need it	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Warwick Response continue to provide an out of hours service for homelessness emergencies	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Warwick Response	
	Ensure regular training for out of hours staff	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Provide Housing Register applicants easily accessible information on the results of previous bidding rounds, which allows them to make informed choices regarding their rehousing	Review standard letters sent with all new registrations to ensure realistic advice and information is provided	Dec 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Conduct an annual review of all applicants on the Housing Register	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Produce quarterly newsletter	June 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Provide clear information on people's housing options to prevent homelessness	Adopt standard housing options interview procedures and checklist for Housing Advice Officers	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Produce an options checklist for customers	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	

	Produce a procedure manual to cover housing advice, homelessness prevention and housing register services, ensuring quality assurance and monitoring	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Produce standard and up to date factsheets and booklets on housing options and prevention, available in other languages and formats as appropriate such as Braille and large print	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Involve customers in service delivery of this strategy	Through Hear By Rights Standards & Equality Impact Assessments	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	Customers
	Ensure customers are representative of the Community and racial equality issues are taken into account	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Update customer satisfaction survey for use within the Housing Options service	June 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Consider other methods of obtaining customer views if low returns on questionnaires	June 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	

Provision of an independent Housing Advice Service for Young People	Establish a Project Board to take forward	2011/2012	Additional Revenue Budget	Housing Advice Manager Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
Work in partnership with Schools to raise awareness of Homelessness	Training completed with Schools	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Establishing links with the emerging communities of Migrant and BME to ensure access to services	Establish the need of the emerging communities	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Ensure access to housing advice and assistance and suitable accommodation in the District	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	
Update Literature for Housing Advice Service	Review and update existing literature	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Update website	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Develop written information for local Landlords	Offering Landlords basic advice on how to run and maintain tenancies can reduce homelessness and advice approaches	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Private Sector Housing Manager	All Private Landlords in the District

Publicise Council Services to Landlords via our website	Increased opportunities for using private sector to meet housing need	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Develop procedures for monitoring and benchmarking homelessness activities	Maintain a wider knowledge of homelessness with partner authorities and gauge our performance/levels of activity against them	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Strategy	
Ensure access to local Advocacy Services for customers	Customers can access impartial third party advice and advocacy on housing issues	Ongoing	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Advocacy Services

12.2 Objective 2 - Preventing Homelessness

Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead Officer	Other Agencies Involved
Target prevention at the agencies who might be the first point of contact for those at risk of homelessness	Identify relevant agencies across the District and provide them with information on prevention services, including advice for rough sleepers	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Attend partner agency team meetings to promote homelessness prevention services	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	
Work in partnership with Housing Benefit to maximise Discretionary Housing Payments	Increase the number of preventions cases assisted through this intervention	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Principal Benefits Officer	
Prevent homelessness amongst those at risk of Domestic Abuse	Continue to promote and take forward the Sanctuary Scheme for Domestic Abuse Victims	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Work towards reducing the level of parental evictions	Continue to implement preventative measures such as home visits on all parental eviction cases, and use of family mediation services	Ongoing	Revenue Budget	Housing Advice Manager	Mediation and Community Services

	Monitor outcomes from Mediation Services to ensure multi-agency referral process	Ongoing	Within existing services	Housing Advice Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
Investigate ways to provide effective assistance for client groups who fall outside "priority need" categories	Investigate and assess good practice elsewhere	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Clear identification of groups involved and appropriate help and assistance offered through HomeChoice, Rent Deposit Bond Scheme and Supported Accommodation		Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Prevent homelessness as a result of eviction or abandonment from Council and Registered Social Landlord accommodation	Pre-Eviction Protocol developed and implemented	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	All Registered Social Landlords in the District
	Improved services for customers threatened with eviction	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
	Reduction in the number of evictions	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Manager/ All Registered Social Landlords in the District	

Undertake a Rough Sleepers Count	Reduce the number of Rough Sleepers to as near to zero	2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
Implementation of the Young People's Protocol	Official Sign Off and Implementation	June 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	Local Authority
	Training for the Implementation of the Protocol	August 2010	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	Children's Services Probation Connexions
Prevent homelessness amongst Ex-offenders	Develop a MAPPA and PPO Protocol that includes information sharing with the Registered Social landlords in the District	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	All Registered Social Landlords in the District MAPPA Coordinator
Mental Health Protocol	County wide draft Protocol completed – lead authority Nuneaton and Bedworth	To be Advised	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager	5 County local authorities Warwickshire County Council
Develop a clear Protocol for the Council's Housing Management team and Registered	Improved services for victims of domestic abuse living in or accessing social housing in the District	2011/2012	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager/Housing Manager	All Registered Social Landlords in the District

Social Landlords with stock in the District on how cases threatened with homelessness involving tenants who are victims of domestic abuse should be dealt with					
Maximise access to the Court Desk Service, Repossession fund and Mortgage Rescue	Increase the number of preventions cases assisted through these interventions	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Investigate the feasibility of the provision of furnished tenancies	Feasibility study completed	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	All Registered Social Landlords in the District
	Establish a Sub-Group to take this forward	2011/2012	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	
	Scheme to be developed	2013/2014	Capital and Revenue required	Housing Strategy Manager	

Continue to monitor the wider economic trends which may affect levels of homelessness in the District	Appreciation of wider economic picture and ability to tailor services to meet emerging needs	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	
Ensure those involved in the prevention of homelessness are appropriately trained	All staff trained in interview skills, customer care, welfare benefit and debt advice	2012	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Provide training for Housing Services and Housing Benefit teams and partner agencies on Housing Advice, Options and Homelessness	Training Programme formulated and implemented	Ongoing	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members

12.3 Objective 3 - Provide suitable temporary accommodation for homeless households

Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead Officer	Other Agencies Involved
Continue to reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation	Bed and Breakfast only to be used in Emergencies for families and 16/17 year olds for no longer than 6 weeks	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	
Review the Council's provision of temporary accommodation to assess suitability and number of units required to meet demand	Decommission unsuitable and units no longer required for temporary use	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	Landlord of temporary accommodation
Explore the opportunities for developing a Nightstop Scheme, additional Crash Pads and Supported Lodgings for young homeless in the District	Viability Study completed	2010/11	Within existing provision	To be agreed when Board set up	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Board set up to take scheme forward	2010/11	Capital and Revenue Funding required to implement schemes		

Provision of a Leaving Care Flat to ensure a smooth transition to independent living	Training flat available for occupation	June 2010	Partnership funded: WDC WCC Chapter 1	Housing Strategy Manager	Chapter 1 Warwickshire County Council Children Services
Assess options for increasing supply of supported accommodation for young parents under 24 years old	Options appraisal completed	2011/12	Possibility of additional capital and revenue	Housing Strategy Manager	All Supported Accommodation Providers in the District
	Increase provision	2014/15			RSLs
Supporting People Move on Protocol	Continue to prioritise move on from supported accommodation	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	5 County local authorities All Supported Accommodation Providers in the District

12.4 Objective 4 - Increasing the provision of affordable housing

Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead Officer	Other Agencies Involved
Maximise the provision of Affordable Housing in the District	Proviso of 100 completed affordable housing units per annum	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy and Development Officer/ Housing Strategy Manager	
	Review the Joint Commissioning Partnership	2010/11	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy and Development Officer/ Housing Strategy Manager	
	Ensure all new developments provide 40% affordable housing wherever possible	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy and Development Officer/ Housing Strategy Manager	
	Appoint consultants to complete a	2010/11	Within	Housing Strategy and Development Officer/	

	Housing Needs Survey for the District and Viability Study		existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager/Senior Planner	
Extend the Rent Deposit Bond Scheme	Promote and advertise Rent Deposit Bond Scheme to increase uptake	2010/2011	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Private Sector Housing Manager	
Improve the way we communicate with private landlords through the formation of a Landlords Forum and Accreditation Scheme	Formation of a Landlords Forum	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Private Sector Housing Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	All Private Landlords in the District
	Agreement with the Landlords in the District to implement an Accreditation Scheme	2013/2014	Within existing provision	Private Sector Housing Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	
Empty Homes Strategy	To ensure that the Empty Homes Strategy increases opportunity for households to access accommodation in the private rented sector	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Private Sector Housing Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	

Making the best use of existing stock	Continuation of the Council's Incentive scheme to assist tenants who are under-occupying to downsize thereby releasing much needed family sized accommodation for those in housing need	Ongoing	Housing Revenue Account Budget Allocated for 2010/11	Housing Manager	
Investigate the potential for the development of a Foyer for 16/25 year olds	Feasibility study completed	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members
	Establish a Sub-Group to take this forward	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/Housing Strategy Manager	
	Scheme to be developed	2014/15	Capital and Revenue required	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/Housing Strategy Manager	
Review the need and feasibility of Supported Accommodation for Persistent Youth Offenders	Feasibility study completed	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sounding Board Members

	Establish a Sub-Group to take this forward	2012/2013	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	
	Scheme to be developed	2014/2015	Capital and Revenue required	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/Housing Strategy Manager	
Provision of a temporary site for Gypsy and Travellers	Identify a temporary site	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/ Private Sector Housing Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	Warwickshire County Council
	Site set up and running	2013/2014	Capital and Revenue required	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/ Private Sector Housing Manager/ Housing Strategy Manager	Warwickshire County Council

Monitor lettings service level agreements with all Registered Social Landlords	Ensure 100% nominations received from Registered Social Landlord partners	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Registered Landlords in the District
	Lettings returns received and monitored on a quarterly basis from all providers in the District	Ongoing	Within existing Provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Explore the opportunities for the Council to develop new build properties and remodel existing stock	Identify sites and complete feasibility studies of the sites	Ongoing	Within existing HRA provision HCA funding	Housing Strategy and Development Officer/ Property Manager/ Housing Manager	

12.5 Objective 5 - Provide appropriate support for vulnerable people

Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead Officer	Other Agencies Involved
Ensure continued liaison with local Supported Accommodation Providers	Liaise with local Supported Accommodation Providers and ensure customers are signposted to them as appropriate	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	All Supported Accommodation Providers in the District
	Ensure our nomination rights to local schemes are taken up to enable appropriate customers to access supported housing where necessary	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager	
Work with Registered Social Landlords to develop new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards in the District	Number of new units of affordable housing built to full mobility standards	Ongoing	Within existing capital provision	Housing Strategy & Development Officer/ Housing Strategy Manager	All Registered Social Landlords in the District
Work Closer with the Primary Care Trust	Explore and identify initiatives to take forward to ensure access to services	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	All Housing Sound Board Members

Maintain the Supporting People existing Services and lobby for new services throughout the District	Continue to play an active role in the Supporting People Strategic Reviews	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Strategy Manager	
Ensure all vulnerable tenants who are dealt with through the Council's Housing Options Service receive Local Housing Allowance payments direct to their landlords wherever possible	Number of vulnerable tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance who have their allowance paid direct to their landlord	2010/2011	Within existing provision	Housing Advice Manager/ Principal Benefits Officer	All Private Landlords in the District
Create a mobility register of Council adapted properties	The mobility register will enable us to match Council properties with adaptations to applicants who need them	Ongoing	Within existing provision	Housing Manager/Housing Strategy Manager	

Supporting People Funded Services in the Warwick District as at 31st December 2009

PROVIDER NAME	PROVISION NAME	PRIMARY GROUP	PROVISION SERVICE TYPE	TOTAL UNITS
Bromford Housing Group	South Warwickshire Floating Support Service	Complex Needs/Generic	Floating Support Service	82
Bromford Housing Group	Countywide Generic Floating Support Service	Complex Needs/Generic	Floating Support Service	76
Abbeyfield UK	Abbeyfield Leamington	Frail Elderly	Accommodation Based Service	10
Abbeyfield UK	Abbeyfield Warwick	Frail Elderly	Accommodation Based Service	10
Jephson Housing Association - Midlands	Huntley Lodge Hostel	Frail Elderly	Accommodation Based Service	19
Warwick District Council	Support And Resettlement Worker	Homeless Families with Support Needs	Floating Support Service	13
Fry Housing Trust	Leamington Supported Housing Scheme	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	Accommodation Based Service	27
Fry Housing Trust	Leamington Spa Floating Support Service	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	Floating Support Service	12
Warwickshire County Council	Youth Offending Floating Support Service	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	Floating Support Service	18

English Churches Housing Group	Southfields	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	53
Heart Of England Housing (L.Spa)	Campion View	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	28
Heart Of England Housing (L.Spa)	Landor House	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	33
Heart Of England Housing (L.Spa)	Rene England House	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	28
Housing 21	Charles Watson Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	41
Jephson Housing Association - Midlands	Cawston House	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	19
Jephson Housing Association - Midlands	Montpelier House	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	15
Jephson Housing Association - Midlands	Grange Close	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	24
Jephson Housing Association - Midlands	Whittle Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	39
Midland Heart	Culworth House - Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	35
Raglan Housing Association Limited	Windsor-Portland Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	21

Servite Houses	Servite Houses - John Nash Square	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	39
Servite Houses	Servite Houses - Parmiter House	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	40
Warwick District Council	Designated Dwellings	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	848
Warwick District Council	Acorn Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	44
Warwick District Council	Chandos Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	47
Warwick District Council	James Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	25
Warwick District Council	Yeomanry Close	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	31
Warwick District Council	Tannery Court	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	39
Warwick District Council	Alarm Service With Peripatetic Warden	Older People with support needs	Accommodation Based Service	274
Birmingham Institute For The Deaf	Bid Countywide Floating Support Service	People with a Physical or Sensory Disability	Floating Support Service	20
Swanswell Charitable Trust	Warwickshire Floating Support Service	People with Alcohol Problems	Floating Support Service	23

Heart of England Housing (Hinckley)	Warwickshire Housing-Drug Support Scheme	People with Drug Problems	Floating Support Service	58
Bromford Carinthia Housing Association	Elizabeth Mews	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	4
Dimensions (UK) Ltd	Crown Terrace	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	5
People In Action	People In Action Owned Properties	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	5
Royal Mencap Society	De-Registered Properties	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	10
Way Ahead Support Services	Oakwood Grove Accommodation Based Service	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	6
Way Ahead Support Services	Heath Terrace Accommodation Based Service	People with Learning Disabilities	Accommodation Based Service	9
Essential Futures	Essential Futures Floating Support Service	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	19
Mr L Allen	Mr Lee Allen	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	3
People In Action	People In Action Houses	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	14
Royal Mencap Society	Royal Mencap Society	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	5

United Response Ltd	Warwickshire Outreach	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	2
Way Ahead Support Services	Wayahead Floating Support Service	People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	36
Advance Housing & Support Ltd	South Warks Mental Health Supp Service	People with Mental Health Problems	Accommodation Based Service	39
FCH Housing and Care	Warwick District Supported Housing	People with Mental Health Problems	Accommodation Based Service	3
Springfield Mind Ltd	Mid-Warwickshire Mental Health Floating Support	People with Mental Health Problems	Floating Support Service	20
Chapter 1	Binswood Lodge	Single Homeless with Support Needs	Accommodation Based Service	23
Chapter 1	Nuneaton Link-Up	Single Homeless with Support Needs	Accommodation Based Service	8
Heart Of England Housing (Hinckley)	Beauchamp House	Single Homeless with Support Needs	Accommodation Based Service	15
Mayday Trust	Leamington And Warwick Independence Scheme	Single Homeless with Support Needs	Accommodation Based Service	26
Salvation Army	Eden Villa	Single Homeless with Support Needs	Accommodation Based Service	11
Chapter 1	Warford Lodge	Teenage Parents	Accommodation Based Service	5

Chapter 1	Warford Lodge Floating Support	Teenage Parents	Floating Support Service	8
Warwickshire County Council	Gypsy And Traveller Floating Support Service	Traveller	Floating Support Service	13
WDVSS	Floating Support Service - Countywide	Women at Risk of Domestic Abuse	Floating Support Service	60
Heart of England Housing (Hinckley)	Accommodation Based Service	Young People at Risk	Accommodation Based Service	12
Heart of England Housing (Hinckley)	Young Homeless Project - Floating Support	Young People at Risk	Floating Support Service	5
Chapter 1	Newbold Lodge	Young People Leaving Care	Accommodation Based Service	8

HomeChoice Banding System

The Council will ensure that preference is given to the following applicant categories as set out in S167 (2) of the Housing Act 1996. The five groups of individuals who are entitled to reasonable preference are:-

1. People who are 'homeless', within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996;
2. People who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under certain provisions of homelessness legislation;
3. People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
4. People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
5. People who need to move to a particular locality in the District of the local housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, to themselves or to others.

Each of the five categories of applicants entitled to reasonable preference requires detailed and careful consideration and applicants will be placed in bands as follows:-

<p>Band 1</p> <p>Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 1:</p>
1. Homeless applicants where the Council has accepted a duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
2. Medical Priority is granted in exceptional circumstances, when the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has an immediately life threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by their current housing.
3. People moving on from Supported Housing Projects under agreed referral arrangements between Supported Accommodation Providers and Warwick District Council.
4. Special Agency Referral such as Warwickshire County Council Adult Health and Community Services, Children, Young People and Families Services and Probation. Referrals will be made under agreement with the departments concerned.
5. Extraordinary cases.
<p>Band 2</p> <p>Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 2:</p>
1. Medical and Welfare Priority may be awarded when an applicant or a member of the households current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on their medical condition and welfare but whose need to move is less urgent.
2. Households in priority need and threatened with Homelessness through no fault of their own (This priority will only be awarded where the applicant is co-operating with the Council to try to prevent homelessness).

3. Non-priority, unintentionally homeless applicants.
4. Existing Households who are Council and Housing Association Tenants within the District and who are overcrowded (for bedroom deficiency guidelines – see Appendix 1).
5. Households subject to a Demolition or Closing Order.
6. Existing Council and RSL tenants within the District who are under-occupying their current accommodation by more than 1 bedroom and would move to smaller accommodation that would be more suitable to meet their change in need, thereby vacating a larger social housing property for re-letting.
7. Armed Forces applicants with 3 years or more service and having lived in the District for 2 years prior to joining, within 12 weeks of their discharge date.
8. Succession Cases.
Band 3
Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 3:
1. Households in priority need who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally.
2. People who are neither an owner or tenant.
3. Families with young children under 16 years living on the second floor or above (ground and first floor are acceptable).
4. Applicants lacking or sharing more than one facility for example bath, toilet, kitchen, with another household.
5. Applicants in housing need with or without a local connection.
Band 4
Applicants within the following categories would be included in Band 4
1. All applicants without a housing need with or without a local connection including transfers.
2. Home Owners.

Appendix 3

Breakdown of the number of properties advertised and allocated by size and type between 1st September 2008 – 31st August 2009

Property Type	Advert Preference Band				Total Advertised	Allocations by Band				Total Allocated
	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	
Bedsit	14	1	0	-	15	8	1	4	0	13
1 Bed Flat	63	35	13	-	111	7	26	68	1	102
1 bed Maisonette	1	-	-	-	1	0	0	0	0	0
2 Bed Flats	86	51	21	-	158	32	36	72	3	143
2 bed Houses	38	20	4	-	62	12	29	12	0	53
2 bed Maisonettes	14	4	-	-	18	6	3	8	0	17
3 Bed Flats	4	-	-	-	4	1	1	0	1	3
3 bed Houses	37	20	4	-	61	14	36	3	0	53
3 bed Maisonettes	17	8	1	-	26	1	8	15	0	24
3 bed Bungalows	3	-	-	-	3	0	3	0	0	3
4 bed Houses	13	7	1	-	21	4	15	1	0	20
5 bed Houses	1	-	-	-	1	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	291	146	44	0	481	85	159	183	5	432

Homelessness Strategy Steering Group Membership

- Bromford Housing Group
- Churches Together Group
- Chapter 1
- Community and Voluntary Action
- Connexions
- Fry Housing Association
- Jephson Housing Association Group
- Mayday Trust
- Mediation (MACS)
- Orbit Heart of England Housing Association
- Servite Houses
- Salvation Army
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire Supporting People
- Warwickshire Probation
- Warwickshire Learning Disabilities
- Warwickshire Leaving Care Team
- Warwickshire Children's Services
- Warwickshire Adult Services
- Warwickshire Youth Offending Services
- Warwickshire Domestic Violence Support Services
- Warwickshire Gypsy & Travellers Floating Support Officer
- Warwickshire Police
- Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership
- Warwickshire Drug Action Team
- Warwickshire Primary Care Trust
- Women's Refuge Warwick

Reference Documents

- Statutory Homelessness in England: The experiences of families and 16-17 year olds, Homelessness Research Summary No. 7, DCLG, 2008
- Joint Working between Housing and Children's Services – Preventing Homelessness and its Effects on Children and Young People – Communities and Local Government and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008
- Report on the West Midlands Housing Strategy: Black and Minority Ethnic Communities Synthesis. CURS, University of Birmingham, 2008.
- Evaluating Homelessness Prevention, DCLG, 2007
- Homes for the Future: More affordable, more sustainable, DCLG, 2007
- Tackling Homelessness – the Housing Corporation Strategy, 2006
- Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities, DCLG, Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate, 2006
- Homelessness Prevention – A Guide to Good Practice, DCLG, Homelessness & Housing Support Directorate, 2006
- Preventing Homelessness – A Strategic Health Check, DCLG, 2006
- Sustainable Communities – Settled Homes, Changing lives, DCLG, 2005
- Warwickshire Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Needs Study, Blackaby, B, 2005
- Hostels Review Toolkit, 2005
- Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies – Evaluation and Good Practice, DCLG, 2004
- Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness – Nomination Agreements and Exclusions, DCLG, 2004

Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing	Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to households whose needs are not met by the open market.
Benchmarking	Assessing an organisation's performance by comparing it to that of other organisations of similar size and purpose.
BME	Black Minority Ethnic, term used to describe minority groups recognised as falling under the Race Relations Act 1976.
CAB – Citizens' Advice Bureau	A Citizens' Advice Bureau provide free advice and information to local people, in person or by telephone. They advise on problems like benefits, dent and consumer rights and housing issues.
Communities and Local Government (CLG)	The Government department that deals with housing law, policies and finance.
Corporate Strategy	A document which sets out the overall corporate vision and priorities of the Council.
Discretionary Housing Payments	For people receiving Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit who require further financial assistance with their rent or Council Tax.
Enhanced Housing Options	Enhanced Housing Options is a new way of providing housing advice with a strong focus on employment and training.
Equality Impact Assessments	An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool for identifying the potential impact of a Council's policies, services and functions on its residents and staff.
Floating Support	Floating support is a service that provides housing related support to vulnerable adults to enable them to maintain their independence in their home.
Foyer	Foyer provides accommodation for young homeless people. Unlike hostels, they take an active role in helping their residents gain access to training, education and employment, and to gain independent living skills.
Housing Needs Assessment	A survey that provides detail of an areas housing market, including housing demand, need and future influences such as the economy and transport.
Local Authority	A term used to define a body providing and managing local public services (such as Housing) in a defined area, e.g. District Councils, County Councils and Metropolitan Boroughs.
Local Housing Allowance	Local housing allowance (LHA) is a way of calculating housing benefit payable to tenants who rent from a private landlord.
Mediation	A method of resolving disputes between two parties using a third, external party, known as a mediator.
Plot	A piece of land occupied by one family of showpeople.
P1E	Statistical returns to Communities and Local Government, which includes levels of homelessness in the local authority area.

Registered Social Landlords	A term introduced by the Housing Act 1996 to describe a social landlord that is registered with the Homes and Community Agency. Housing Associations and Local Housing Companies are Registered Social Landlords
Housing Market Area Partnership	Geographical areas defined by household demand and preferences for housing. They reflect the functional linkages between places where people live and work.
South Housing Market Area Partnership (SHMA)	Membership of the SHMA consisted of the 8 Worcestershire District and Boroughs and Warwick and Stratford District Councils.
Super Output Areas	Super Output Areas (SOA) are a statistical geography published by the Office for National Statistics. They are made up of three hierarchal layers: lower, middle and upper that all fit within the District boundary.
Supported Housing	Supported Housing is shared or self contained accommodation provided with support to enable people to live independently within the community and assist them to secure and maintain their tenancies.
Sustainable Community Strategy	Under the Local Government Act 2000, all Local Authorities are required to work in partnership with the community, business, the voluntary sector and other public sector partners to develop a long term strategy to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of their local communities.
Yard	Consists of a number of plots but is owned by one showperson and the individual plots may be leased to other people for their family use.