

Part 1 Review of Homelessness

1 Introduction

This is Slough's second Homelessness Strategy and covers 2008 to 2011. It has been developed from reviews of the earlier 2003 strategy and outcomes achieved, the 2005 Homelessness Strategy update and from current information and data about homelessness in Slough. The Strategy also develops stakeholder's views and the outcomes of the Slough Homelessness Conference in July 2008.

This new strategy builds on the achievements so far, takes account of changing national, regional and local housing issues, and reflects the growing pressures on the housing market and for individuals during the current economic downturn. In identifying current and likely future levels of need the strategy seeks to establish the services and resources needed to tackle homelessness effectively. It sets out the actions and priorities that the council and its statutory and voluntary partners must work together on in order to meet the Strategy's three objectives

- Tackling housing need that often leads to homelessness
- Increasing supply and access to good quality and affordable housing
- Ensuring there is adequate advice and support to prevent homelessness occurring

The challenge remains one of reducing homelessness in an area of high demand and cost of housing, insufficient stock and the additional pressures brought about by the wide ranging affects of the economic decline.

1.1 National and regional context

In 2005 the Government published Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives - a strategy for tackling and reducing homelessness. It acknowledged the fall in new cases of homelessness, levels of rough sleeping and end of the use of bed and breakfast for temporary housing of families. It set out the need to now stop the use of bed and breakfast for 16/17 year olds and aimed to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010 by

- preventing homelessness
- providing support for vulnerable people
- tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness
- support to move away from rough sleeping
- providing more settled homes

Registered Social Landlords as key partners were encouraged to co-operate with local authorities in preventing homelessness and putting prevention and tenancy sustainment as operational and strategic priorities in the Housing Corporations strategy Tackling Homelessness (2006).

Housing related support through the Supporting People Programme helps to reduce homelessness by providing services to vulnerable and excluded people. The national strategy Independence and Opportunity (2007) looks to build on successful local partnerships and deliver effective outcomes through the Local

Area Agreements. (see appendix for a list of relevant national strategy and policy documents)

1.2 Local Context and strategic links

Slough's housing strategy links and supports a number of key local strategies.

1.2.1 Slough's Sustainable Community Strategy – Proud to be Slough 2008 recognises the impact of homelessness and poor housing conditions on the environment of Slough. To ensure that housing meets the needs of residents, the key housing priorities within the Strategy are to:

- increase choices for homeseekers
- offer sustainable housing options
- and have a resettlement service that supports clients to successfully maintain their tenancies and prevent the risk of homelessness, isolation and social exclusion.

1.2.2 The preventative approach of the original 2003 Homelessness Strategy was confirmed in Slough's Housing Strategy 2005-10. Prevention to reduce the causes of homelessness through tackling housing need rather than increase resources to speed decision making or bringing in more temporary accommodation was the preferred option and one of the five Housing Strategy priorities.

1.2.3 Slough's Supporting People Strategy 2005-10 is focussed on delivering high quality housing related support services that meet the needs of vulnerable people. The key themes of this homelessness strategy directly support that objective.

1.2.4 This updated Homelessness Strategy has important links to wider strategies in social care, community safety, planning and health as well as focussing other housing needs work streams such as temporary accommodation strategy, advice and resettlement services. It also supports other work streams in private sector housing around the supply and quality of rented stock.

1.3 Review of homelessness 2005

A review of the first Homelessness Strategy was undertaken in 2005. This was in response to significant progress on the strategy implementation plan and delivery of outcomes. There was also an identified need to engage on a more practical level with partners, stakeholders and a wide range of other service teams. In 2005 the Council's Housing Strategy through to 2010 was also published and set challenging targets for homelessness prevention.

1.3.1 There was a positive impact on homelessness through the implementation of the new Allocations and Housing Register policy in 2004. A main objective of the policy was to prevent homelessness by tackling the housing need that drives it. The Housing Register became the most effective homelessness preventative tool. The banded scheme reflected

the degree of housing need and enabled identification of household categories who had been over-represented in homeless figures.

1.3.2 The preventative and support focus of the strategy had also seen positive outcomes arising from a new housing advice service which included a dedicated young persons worker, housing options approach, dedicated Housing Benefits Officer and resettlement services to families. The supply element of the strategy was addressed by the creation of a private sector co-ordinator post to increase access to private rented accommodation and a housing initiatives officer to make best use of social housing stock through under-occupation transfers and maximising nominations to mobility and low cost stock home ownership. The supply and range of supported housing has increased whilst the demand for temporary accommodation has been reduced.

1.3.3 A multi-agency workshop held in March 2005 identified priorities under the three themes of the Strategy and what processes needed to be developed to ensure meaningful progress in delivering the priorities.

Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early intervention and risk management for vulnerable people • managing and sharing information between partners and agencies • maximising access to income and benefits
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • easier access to support • consultation with users • support for young people
Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the quality of hostel accommodation • A review of the impact of evictions from Council stock
processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the best “agency” leads for particular housing issues • Identify easy to negotiate pathways through housing issues/crisis • Information sharing arrangements with partners/agencies • Launch a Homelessness Forum • High levels of ownership to promote joint working amongst practitioners

1.3.4 The newly launched Homelessness Forum looked at the housing issues of families, young people and single people and data on demand, reasons homeless, ethnicity and identified housing need. The work enabled the Homelessness Strategy implementation plan tasks to reflect the ability to now effectively tackle and manage the housing need that leads to homelessness. Priority tasks included:

- Restructure of the Housing Needs team to focus on the key 3 themes of prevention , supply, support and to enhance overall capacity.
- Developing an Advice First approach within the Council’s new Customer Service Centre

- Develop early intervention approach
- Improving access to Young People's hostels
- Reducing evictions and unplanned departures from young people's hostels
- Ensuring new Council tenants have access to appropriate support to aid tenancy sustainment
- Review use of temporary accommodation
- Improving access to the private rented sector
- Make best use of out of borough-housing resources (Housing Initiatives Officer)
- Review use and demand for older people's stock
- Improve support and access to the Housing Register for young People (Young Person's Co-ordinator)
- Improve interagency working and information sharing

1.4 Developments since 2005 Strategy review

- 1.4.1 There have been a variety of events and developments and wider national and local issues that have impacted on the strategy for preventing homelessness in Slough since the strategy review in 2005. All of these have guided, impacted and contributed to the development of this new strategy.
- 1.4.2 Choice options for rehousing have been amended for homeless households owed the main duty:
- One reasonable offer chosen by the Local Authority of permanent housing within 6 – 12 months.
 - Up to three offers of their choice, average rehousing time 3-5 years.
 - Unlimited offers of their choice if they accept a qualifying offer of a private rented home average rehousing time 3-5 years
- 1.4.3 An in-house family resettlement service under the Supporting People Programme now complements the voluntary sector service for single people. Both services assist households that need assistance to access services and sustain their tenancies before and during their tenancies
- 1.4.4 Accommodation and support provider members of the Homelessness Forum and new Registered Social Landlord (RSL) lettings forum have been surveyed recently to understand the issues that may help sustainability of tenancies. The two highest identified priorities were improving on-going support and improving or quickening the Housing benefit process. Other issues identified as significant were:
- Improving the selection/matching process
 - Improving the readiness of the prospective tenants for a tenancy
 - Earlier identification of support needs of new tenants

Other areas suggested for improvement or development included, improving the nominations process and developing a multi-agency approach to supporting social housing tenancies at risk of termination.

1.4.5 In July 2008, a Homelessness Conference was held to review outcomes of first homelessness strategy and review progress made since the 2005 review. The Conference workshops identified under two themes of prevention and support and supply and sustainability, the issues, possible solutions and the most urgent priority.

Prevention and Support for Young People

Highest priority: Housing Benefit – processes, communication and transaction time

- Private rented accommodation – not enough of it or help to access, HB single room rate makes it a less viable option
- Move-on accommodation – lacks a strategy to manage expectation and limited supply
- Tenancy sustainability- appropriate timely support that follows a young person
- Housing advice – consistent and realistic advice that is widely available
- Substance misuse – Access routes to rehab and substance misuse advice are unclear

Prevention and Support for Single People

Highest priority: increasing the supply of temporary and interim accommodation

- Inappropriate placements, unclear access arrangements
- Gaps in range of accommodation – ex-offenders, drug users, disabled people, victims of domestic violence
- Unrealistic and limited housing options assessments

Prevention and Support for families

Highest priority: Extending the length of assured shorthold tenancies

- Shortage of larger homes and unrealistic expectations of homeseekers
- More support where debt triggers a housing crisis
- Exacerbation of housing problems by Housing Benefit issues
- Poor conditions and management in the private rented sector

Supply and Sustainability

Highest priorities: Evictions, pre –tenancy support and Housing Benefit related issues

- Evictions generate a new range of problems
- Rent arrears exacerbated by Housing Benefit process
- Consistent and multi-agency approach to ASB
- Strategies for dealing with local area issues
- Identifying and dealing with under-occupation and overcrowding

1.4.6 Recession

Slough's corporate management team have formed an economic task force to ensure that as a Local Authority we are responding to the credit crunch & economic downturn in a coherent and comprehensive manner. In addition front line local services have developed a Recession Watch group

which includes the council's housing needs service, Housing Benefit and Shelter & CAB. This group is monitoring data from the courts, debt services and homelessness and advice teams in order to respond to trends. Already the group have developed an information leaflet to encourage people to seek advice and established themselves as one of the Government's fast track mortgage rescue scheme.

The housing advice service has noted an increase in demand since September 2008. The housing advisors saw just under 700 customers between April 2008 and December 2008. The most common types of enquiry are general housing advice, eviction and parental eviction. These reflect the most common tenancy types of Assured Shorthold and living with parents and link to homeless approaches.

The most common ethnicity is White British and Asian Pakistani. There are more female approaches than males and most females were representing a larger household whilst most males were single households

2 Homelessness in Slough

Homelessness and the number of households in temporary accommodation have continued to fall in Slough, Berkshire and the South East as a whole. Despite significant reductions in approaches, largely due to the new housing register policy and housing options, the causes of homelessness remain the same.

- Parents and relatives evicting non dependent off spring, usually as a result of overcrowding.
- Loss of assured short hold due to the tenancy term coming to an end and landlords not wishing to renew.
- Women and children who become homeless as a result of domestic violence.

A significant number of single people mostly males have also been found unintentionally homeless and vulnerable, largely as a result of mental illness and discharge from prison.

2.1 Key facts and figures about Slough. (Census 2001)

Population data census 2001	Households	As % of households
Single person households	12,434	28%
Families; couple with or without children	20,333	45%
Single parents with dependent children	2,471	5%
Single parents with no dependent children	1,436	3%
Other households	8,313	18%

Ethnicity data census 2001	Population	% of population
White	75,843	64%
Indian	16,719	14%
Pakistani	14,360	12%
Black Caribbean	3,470	3%
Other	8,675	7%

2.2 Homelessness decisions

National statistics show that the number of homelessness acceptances had declined by 60% from 2003 to 2008. In Slough the reduction achieved was 69%, with homelessness acceptances falling to 72 in 2007/08. Homelessness approaches also showed a fall of over 63% over the same period. These figures show how the Homelessness Strategy's preventative and tackling housing need approach have made a dramatic and sustained impact on homelessness in Slough.

Homelessness decisions	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 projected
Acceptances	230	183	130	54	78	72	72
Intentional	66	82	34	36	25	39	63
No priority need	40	61	28	9	34	16	20
Not homeless	81	71	56	48	30	24	21
Not eligible	6	15	8	2	9	4	6
total	426	412	256	149	176	155	210

National projections indicate that homelessness is likely to rise as a result of the economic recession which is predicted to last for two years.

2.3 Temporary accommodation

The council offers a range of interim and temporary accommodation

Number of households in temporary accommodation at year end	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	March 0
Total	313	316	261	258	192	170		118
Of which were in bed and breakfast	22	0	3 (zero families)	0	0	0	0	0
Of which were in shared hostels	61	43	29	22	23	21		22

Use of temporary accommodation by ethnicity (Nov 2008)

	shared	Self contained SBC	Self contained RSL	total
African	3	3	17	23
Asian	3	16	26	45
black other	0	0	3	3
White	10	17	39	66
mixed	2	1	4	7
other				
not known		1	1	2
total	18	38	90	146

2.4 Housing Need and the Housing Register

There has been a general increase in demand for the Housing Register(excluding transfer applicants) since 2003. Accepted homeless applicants are now offered 3 choices of rehousing. An immediate offer based on

location and choice of areas as part of priority band A (additional preference) waiting time up to 1 year, up to 3 offers to applicants waiting in temporary accommodation as part of Band B (reasonable preference) waiting times of 2 to 5 years depending on applicant choices, and unlimited offers and full choice to any applicant choosing to accept private rented accommodation (waiting times 2 to 5 years). However only about 50% of households approaching as homeless were already on the housing register.

Housing Register at April 08	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	total
Older people	44	89	66	171	370
1 bedroom	27	170	277	188	1462
2 bedroom	27	563	433	230	1254
3 bedroom	11	547	295	104	957
4 bedroom +	2	173	34	21	230
total	111	2342	1105	714	4273

The effects of the preventative approach and restructuring of the Housing Register and revised allocations policy are clearly shown below in the profile of homelessness applicants waiting for housing (HR) and rehoused (lets). The proportion of homelessness applicants waiting for housing compared to the overall Housing Register has fallen from 13% in 2003 to 3% in 2008. The proportion of lettings to Homeless applicants to overall lettings over the same period has declined by 45%.

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008	
	HR	lets	HR	lets	HR	lets	HR	lets	HR	lets	HR	lets
HL applicants												
1 bed	32	19	35	15	48	6	20	13	19	7	22	9
2 bed	193	62	139	50	89	63	66	37	56	31	47	33
3 bed	97	30	74	23	68	17	73	11	74	13	52	19
4 bed	13	6	21	2	24	2	15	1	8	3	5	2
5 bed	3	0	8	1	10	0	5	2	6	0	11	1
total	338	117	277	91	239	88	179	64	163	54	137	64
% of HL nos to overall HR/lets	13%	20%	10%	15%	7%	14%	5%	9%	4%	13%	3%	13%

All bedroom categories except 5 bedroom have shown a decrease in the number homeless applicants waiting for housing of between 46% and 76%. Over the same period the proportion of 2 bedroom homeless applicants to overall homeless applicants has decreased from 57% to 34%.

Since April 2003 Council housing stock has reduced by 6% to just over 6600 units in April 2008. The reduction in 2 bedroom and in 3 bedroom stock was 8% and in larger sized accommodation by 10%. Housing Association stock in the borough has increased since 2005 by 14% to 3346 properties.

In June 2004 the new housing register scheme introduced choice and unlimited offers to applicants. This has led to a higher level of first time refusals and on average each letting takes 1.5 offers or two out of three offers are accepted first time

Of private rented stock there is a perceived increase in the number of houses in multiple occupation with the potential for poor and overcrowded conditions and chalet style buildings or extensions to the rear of private houses. Many of these may be illegal but tackling these will require a carefully planned approach to avoid sudden and dramatic increases in homelessness. A separate but related strategy to tackle overcrowding is planned as a result of CLG funding

2.5 Achievements 2003-2008

General

- Re structured housing needs section to reflect strategic aims of prevention, support and supply.
- Introduced housing options approach.
- Implemented new housing register scheme abandoning the old points system in favour of 4 bands.
- Implemented increased choice to housing applicants in the selection of their home.
- Revised and implemented a new deposit guarantee scheme
- Re launched the homelessness forum
- Introduced a Social Housing providers forum which is developing protocols to improve joint working

Prevention

- Developed the housing advice service and a specialist young peoples housing worker
- Homeless approaches reduced by 50% from 400 to 200
- Number of registered homeless applicants on the housing register is less than 3% of the total, reduced from 338 to 137
- Zero rough sleeping maintained

Supply

- Introduced allocations panel to improve access to young peoples accommodation
- Revised and re launched deposit guarantee scheme
- Completed first phase of Extra Care schemes providing xx homes for
- Continued to release under occupied family homes
- De designated over 1700 older person's studio/one bedroom homes to general needs
- Completed 805 new build affordable homes
- Completed sales on 41 part buy part rent between April 2008 and December 2009
- Let nearly 600 private sector homes through the guarantee scheme
- Let 3,000 affordable rented homes.
- Implemented a strategy for temporary accommodation.

Support

- Developed a family based resettlement service
- Introduced an annual newsletter for all registered home seekers
- Young peoples housing worker in place
- Housing and Support directory of services published

Part 2 The Strategy

The Vision

The outcomes and measure of success of this strategy are:

- Choice in the selection and tenure of a home and a range of options which will enable those in housing need and homeless households to make informed decisions about their future housing.
- An accessible, sustainable and safe private rented sector working in partnership with the Local Authority to meet local needs.
- An increase in floating support services and a cohesive, multi agency approach to provide a unique body of expertise to encourage the hardest to engage groups to seek and maintain their homes and health.

This means we need to achieve:

- An increase in supply across all tenures and the introduction of an advert and bid scheme
- A reduction in the number of households in housing need including those who are overcrowded or sharing.
- A sustained reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping.
- A multi agency approach to delivering support against a formal and holistic needs assessment

There are three strategic priorities to achieve this vision

1. Preventing homelessness
2. Providing more homes
3. Providing support for vulnerable people

Strategic priority 1: Prevention of Homelessness

The previous homelessness strategy addressed the main causes of homelessness and these were and remain;

- Loss of short hold tenancy,
- Loss of home through violence or relationship breakdown
- Parents or relatives evicting.

3.1 Preventing Homelessness by improving Choice and Access to the Housing Register

The housing register and Allocations scheme has been an effective tool in preventing homelessness. We know only around 50% of homeless households are registered for housing before approaching.

Homeseekers on the register have a range of options and choice in their future tenure and location. The 'additional' and reasonable preference' bands have been used strategically to encourage households to avoid homelessness through a process that offers options and incentives whilst not disadvantaging those who do chose the statutory homeless route.

3.2 Demand.

Demand for affordable housing is increasing steadily and has risen since June 2004 from around 3,200 homeseekers to just over 5000 in December 2008. nearly 2000 registered homeseekers are single

Earned incomes of those living in the Borough remains low and owner occupation is elusive to many homeseekers as property values are comparatively high and rent levels are increasing as a result of Local Housing Allowance which uses a broad market area assessment to determine rent levels.

3.3 Preventing Homelessness through Housing Options

The housing needs section has adopted a housing options approach and this, along with widening the eligibility criteria to include shorthold tenants on the housing register, has made positive inroads to reducing the number of homelessness acceptances and approaches.

We have been able to extend the choice of tenures to homeseekers through; Homebuy, part rent part buy, intermediate rent and private sector assured shortholds obtained through the deposit guarantee scheme. Between April and December 2008 130 homeseekers in housing need opted for the deposit scheme.

Both the housing advisor and housing assessment officers apply housing options to their client groups. The assessment team offer a housing options assessment to all home seekers in the reasonable and additional preference bands as a means of early intervention to prevent homelessness amongst those in the greatest housing need. These options are still available during a homelessness assessment.

The housing advice team as well as dealing with a broad remit of housing issues also offer options to households who are not yet threatened with homelessness and or are not in a priority need category

We will also:

Extend further choice in rehousing through implementation of an advert & bid lettings system by 2010.

The Housing Advice team Shelter and CAB are completing a protocol from the National Housing Advice Service (NHAS) on information sharing services which will benefit customers and staff.

Use the funding from Communities and Local Government department we will develop a strategy which tackles overcrowding, one of the drivers of homelessness.

3.4 Housing Benefit

The efficiency and accuracy of the housing benefit service is critical in encouraging landlords to let their properties through the deposit scheme and to low income households generally. As of February 2009 ninety households had applied for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and in the region of £13,000 had been committed of a total budget of £28,000.

The introduction of Local Housing Allowance in April 2008 which pays a higher rent level than housing benefit as the allowance is based on an average rent taken from a broad market area. As a result of higher payments the number of requests for DHP has reduced and no requests have come from tenants on local housing allowance

We will also

Improve communication between HB and customers as there is some anecdotal evidence that HB delays cause homelessness or hardship

There is also a lack of awareness amongst customers as to how the benefit regulations are interpreted locally. In particular the vulnerability assessment for LHA and overpayment shortfalls

Access to DHP needs to be more widely promoted.

3.5 Recession

Key front line services in the Borough are monitoring the impact of the recession. The council, citizens advice bureau and Shelter all offer debt and welfare advice and have reported a marked upward trend in approaches for assistance. This group, in partnership with the Slough economic task force, will maintain a high level of communication with customers across the Borough through leaflets and websites to ensure they seek advice early

3.6 Preventing Homelessness through Mortgage Rescue

The government has developed a mortgage rescue scheme with the aim of assisting 6000 households across the country to retain their home. Slough is a fast track authority and will be supporting households, who meet the criteria, to retain their homes

3.7 Statutory Homelessness

The main causes of homelessness remain the same as national trends: parental eviction, loss of assured short hold tenancies and violence.

The options approach is already effectively working to prevent homelessness and these numbers are relatively low and have been for some time. The challenge is to maintain this position with appropriate support for customers to make informed choices about their future housing and increase the supply of private sector housing.

Of the 135 households in temporary accommodation and owed the main housing duty almost 10% were also living in overcrowded accommodation. Undertaking research to understand better the extent, causes and impact of overcrowding in all sectors will inform a preventative approach and may lead to improved housing conditions and sustainable tenures.

Twenty two single vulnerable people were accepted as unintentionally homeless representing 15% of all acceptances in the year but only 1% of the total general needs households registered for 1 bedroom accommodation. The narrow majority of these were vulnerable as a result of a combination of mental illness and substance misuse. Long term settled accommodation is a priority for people in this category of vulnerability.

We need to

Ensure we get earlier indications of housing need amongst single vulnerable client group in order to prevent homelessness whilst still providing the permanent settled solution the main homelessness duty offers.

Review the suitability of available accommodation and support for people with a chronic and enduring mental illness.

Evaluate the benefit of prioritising existing agreed homeless households for rehousing in advance of an advert and bid scheme which will drive some changes to policy.

Evaluate the benefit of a one offer only option for homeless households under advert and bid with an alternative of a private let to reduce costs and time spent in temporary accommodation.

3.8 Preventing Homelessness through pre tenancy training and pre eviction policy.

The number of homelessness approaches applications and evictions from social housing tenants in Slough was zero for the year 2007/8 The level of rent arrears for People 1st is around 3 % of the total debit.

The newly formed Slough Social Lettings Forum has agreed to develop a process for providing better support pre tenancy to prospective tenants. It is intended that this will be available to all new tenants of any tenure as well as to staff responsible for housing options , tenancy management and sign ups.

The forum members have also committed to develop a pre eviction protocol and seek to make it relevant for landlords and tenants who have acquired or let their homes through the deposit guarantee scheme as well as all social housing providers and their tenants in the Borough.

We will develop

a pre tenancy training programme and pre eviction protocol to reduce homelessness and debt across all rented tenures

3.9 Preventing Rough Sleeping

The Council's rough sleeping strategy developed in the mid 1990's has effectively reduced the level of street homelessness in the Borough. Intelligence suggests that on most nights no one is sleeping outside but inevitably on some nights some people will be. The last street count in November 2001 found only one person sleeping outside after midnight.

REAP resettlement agency and Look Ahead Housing and Care hostel are the key providers of services to rough sleepers, along with the housing advice and assessment team in the housing needs section

In winter 2007/8 and 2008/9 Slough has operated a severe weather emergency provision project, bringing bone fide rough sleepers in from the streets when the

temperature dips below freezing. Between November 2008 and February 2009 over 30 people have approached for this service. Although all of these were not rough sleepers, all received advice and assistance to resolve their housing situation.

We will

Revise the strategy for tackling rough sleeping with key stakeholders Look Ahead REAP & SHOC

Begin a multi agency project to provide more appropriate short term emergency accommodation with support in severe weather.

3.10 Preventing Homelessness amongst Young People

CAB in Slough has estimated that families can lose up to £100 a week when a child ceases to be a dependent and or leaves school. Slough has four housing projects dedicated to young people aged 16 to 30. Access to these hostels is via the council's housing register or direct to the provider.

Since September 2008 all allocations are agreed at a multi agency panel and recorded and monitored through the councils allocations data base. A dedicated young peoples housing worker funded through a government grant and based in the housing needs section is working with the Pathways team to establish a clearer housing pathway for children in care from age 16.

The post holder also works with a range of agencies such as the YOT to provide information advice and support to young people directly or through their key workers with the aim of tackling housing need and homelessness.

Between April 2008 and December 2008 the post holder worked with 365 young people aged between 16 and 22. None of these young people were placed in bed and breakfast, only one approached as homeless and 361 of them are recorded as having the presenting issue resolved.

We will

Provide more targeted money advice and information to parents of children of school leaving age.

Develop a joint housing and support policy for care leavers

Seek mainstream funding for the young peoples worker post (to make permanent) for when the CLG grant ends in March 2011

3.11 Preventing Homelessness and contributing to community safety.

An aim of the National Offender Management Service is to reduce re-offending by working with offenders to change their behaviour and addressing the issues that may lead them to re-offend. Stable accommodation is the foundation for successful rehabilitation and for ensuring risk is managed efficiently in the community. Accommodation can provide the anchor for a previously chaotic life and act as a springboard for other crucial steps such as getting and keeping a job, and accessing health care or drug treatment.

We will

Work with the police and probation services to establish a protocol which could provide settled accommodation for some offenders including those who are prolific and high risk and contribute to community safety

Strategic priority 2 Providing More Homes

4.1 Supply of accommodation

The overall number of homelessness approaches and level of acceptances has reduced significantly which would indicate that the options approach including the changes to accessing social housing has been effective. The emphasis therefore needs to be on the supply of homes in order to give home seekers a choice of solutions. If we have sufficient homes we can avoid homelessness.

The total affordable (social housing) rented stock in the Borough is in the region of 6,600 council owned homes and 3,600 RSL homes. The single highest level of demand for affordable housing comes from people in need of 1 bedroom property. We have already de-designated over 1700 homes previously targeted for people aged 50 and 60 years of age but no longer suitable or in demand. As these come available to re-let they will impact on that demand.

The current registered demand for housing is in total almost 50% of the overall social housing supply but only around 10% of this supply becomes available for letting in any one year .

4.2 New Build and Private Sector

The anticipated social housing completions in 2009 will be in the region of 199. Since the last strategy in 2003 805 homes have been built . The council has adopted a garage strategy to build homes on disused and abused garage sites and is also intending to re-provide on two of its homeless hostels sites.

Between April 2008 and December 2008, 420 affordable homes were let and 41 part rent part buy completions achieved, including Home Buy

In addition 130 homes were let in the private sector to households who selected the option of the deposit guarantee scheme. There is also a perceived increase in the privately rented stock as a result of the recession.

4.3 Social housing and choice

We are currently developing, with partners and other social housing providers who have a portfolio in the Borough, a single ,universal nominations agreement for current and new build stock to underpin the common assessment approach we intend to introduce with an advert and bid lettings scheme and to increase the supply of homes to those on the register .

Registered home seekers already have a full choice in the selection of their new home and the majority have unlimited offers, however by 2010 we will be introducing an advert and bid scheme with the intention of including private rented , and social housing for rent part rent and buy and intermediate rents.

We also intend to offer a cross boundary mobility scheme in partnership with RSL portfolio holders

We will

Develop a range of schemes to attract private landlords to let their properties, in good order through the council

Finalise a nominations agreement with social housing providers to let 100% of their stock through the councils housing register and Allocations scheme.

5 Strategic priority 3: Support

5.1 There are currently three resettlement and support services providing floating support in the Borough. One service is dedicated to families one to single people and one based in People 1st offers a service to people aged 60 years or over. They are funded in part or whole by Supporting People, the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund. All are focused on working with clients to sustain their tenancies and achieve the Supporting People programme outcomes.

5.2 There are a number of other support services such as T2 working with people with drugs issues, CASCADE for people with alcohol issues and the police have a mentoring officer for persistent prolific offenders, care leavers these are client and issue specific and are not funded to provide housing related support

We need to

Improve support for older people relinquishing family homes to move to smaller accommodation.

Review services to establish value for money, what capacity they have singly and collectively and if they are achieving the councils and Supporting People strategic outcomes cost effectively.

6. Conclusion

Homelessness is not just a housing issue. It arises as a result of often predictable circumstances and can be resolved ,sustainably by a multi skilled approach which keeps the households needs at the centre and applies a range of appropriate skills and resources in a planned way.

For this strategy and action plan to be effective it requires the support, commitment and involvement of the councils strategic management team and the other agencies listed below to regularly monitor and review its progress and the value for money it seeks to achieve in its preventative approach.

The following signatories support this strategy

Slough Borough Council Chief Executive

Strategic Director for Green and Built Environment

Strategic Director for Community and Wellbeing

Slough Homelessness Strategy Consultation draft Apr 09

Strategic Director for Children's services

Shelter Thames Valley

Citizens Advice Bureau Slough.

Appendices

Action Plan

Slough Homelessness Conference July 2008 – workshop outcomes

List of Associated Documents

South East England Regional Housing Board - report Homelessness in the South East 2007

Slough Supporting People Strategy 2005- 2010

Slough Housing Strategy 2005-2010

Slough Sustainable Community Strategy