



Homelessness Strategy Review Action Plan

Annual Review 2007

Introduction

Breckland Council's Homelessness Strategy 2003 set out the vision for a new, strategic approach to tackling homelessness. The emphasis of the strategy was moving towards the prevention of homelessness and working together with partner agencies to take a holistic approach, recognising that accommodation itself is not the sole reason for people experiencing housing difficulty.

Since the Strategy was adopted the Housing Advice and Homelessness service has fundamentally changed both culturally and procedurally to move away from management of homelessness as a crisis, to the development of services which have focussed on early intervention and flexible, specialist assistance to prevent homelessness occurring.

The Homelessness Strategy Review was produced and adopted in 2006 to reflect the changes taking place in the Homelessness and Housing Advice service and provide a living, working document that directs the future of the service.

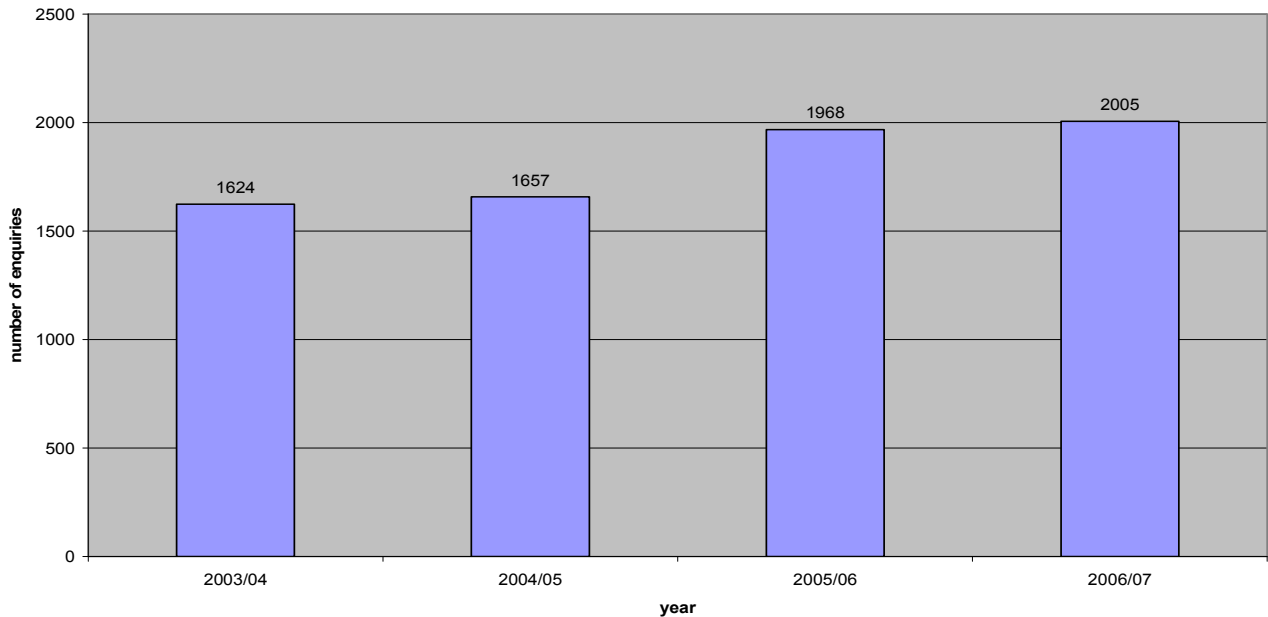
This document is the first annual review of the Homelessness Strategy Review action plan, providing an updated profile of the demands on the Housing Advice and Homelessness service including progress against the 2006 action plan, and setting out the direction of the Housing Advice and Homelessness for the coming year.

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1. Housing Advice Enquiries

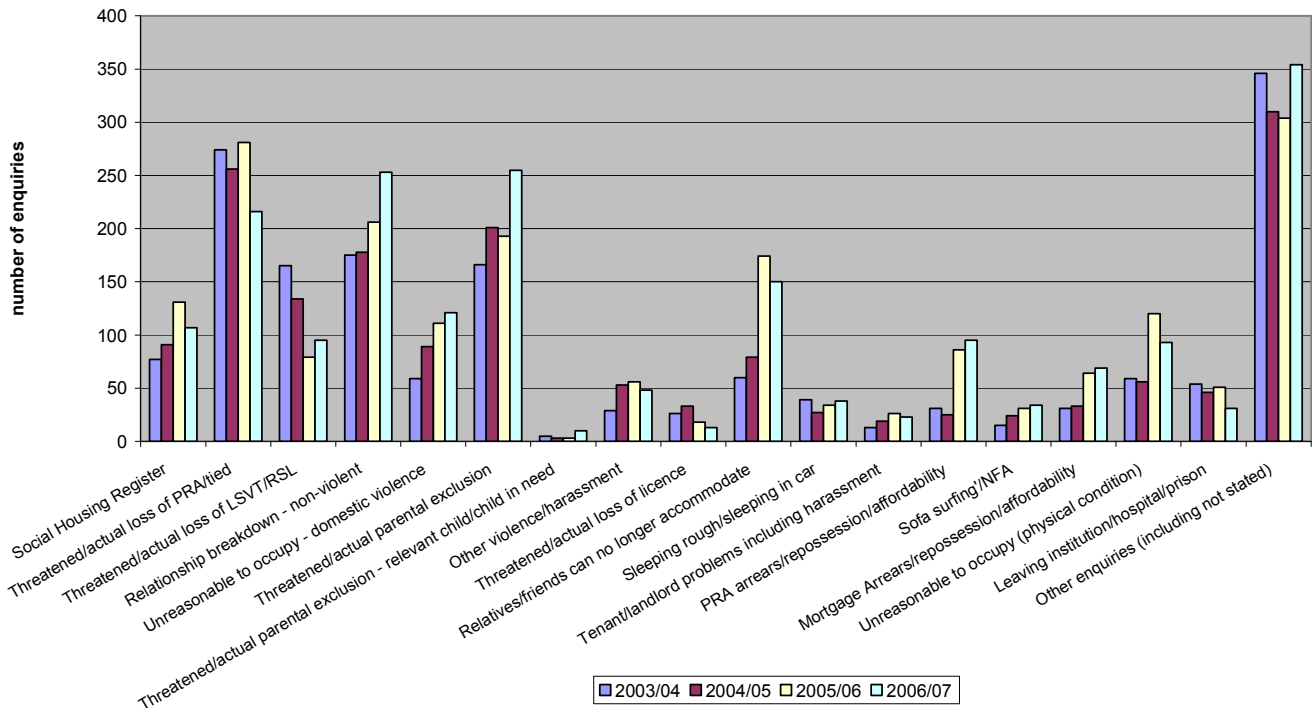
Fig. 1 - Housing Advice Enquiries 2003/04 - 2006/07



1.1 Volume of Enquiries

The number of housing advice enquiries (requests for housing assistance and/or information made by phone, in person or electronically by a customer or agency, which are dealt with in person by a Housing Advisory Officer) received by the Housing Advice & Homelessness Unit is increasing on an annual basis, showing a 20% rise in the number of enquiries between 2003/04 and 2006/07 (Fig.1). These enquiries range from simple requests for information to complex customer circumstances requiring in-depth advice and assistance.

Fig 2 - Reasons for housing advice enquiries 2003/04 - 2006/07



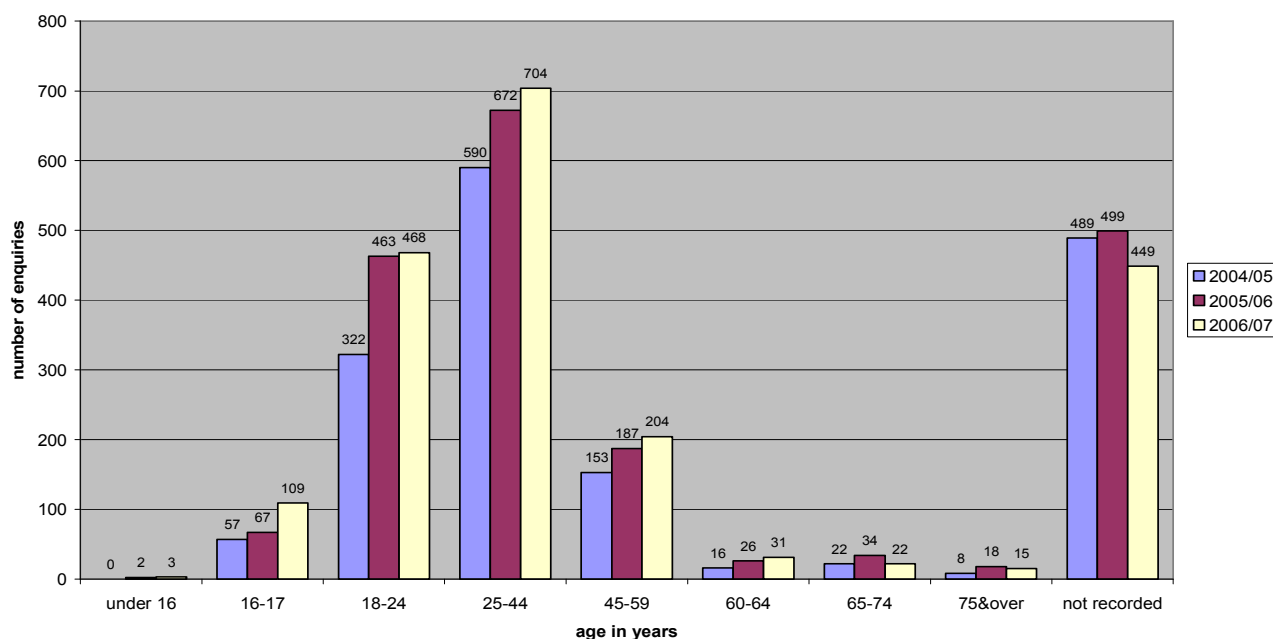
1.2 Reasons for Enquiries

The numbers of housing advice enquiries, usually from young people, relating to parental eviction and other friends/relatives being unable to accommodate has shown a marked increase over the last 2 years, with an increase of over 20% of enquiries relating to parental eviction between 2005/06 and 2006/07. Relationship breakdown, including domestic violence, has also risen as a percentage of enquiries, as has the number of people seeking help due to the physical condition of their properties including overcrowding (Fig 2).

Increased publicity and visibility of the services offered by the Private Sector Housing team, especially among vulnerable members of the community who commonly experience the worst housing conditions, such as migrant workers, can account for a proportion of the increase in reports of unacceptable living conditions. However, the pressure within the housing market, with worrying increases in enquiries relating to the affordability of both rented and mortgaged property has contributed to the number of households living in overcrowded conditions, as they struggle to afford to house themselves appropriately.

A new method of recording the reasons for enquiries has been introduced in 2007, which will record the reason for every enquiry, leading to a more accurate view.

Fig 3 - Housing Advice enquiries by age 2004/05 -2006/07



1.3 Age of customers making enquiries

As expected from the proportion of enquiries relating to parental and relative/friend exclusion, the service is experiencing a marked increase in the number of enquiries from people under 25 years old, particularly those aged 16-17.

Housing options for under 18's are extremely limited because:

- they cannot legally hold a tenancy
- landlords are often unwilling to rent to young people as they are viewed as unreliable
- It is very difficult to arrange receipt of benefits for under 18's
- The Housing Benefit Single Room Rent restriction applies to most childless under-25's which restricts the amount of Housing Benefit to the cost of renting a single room.

- There are limited supported housing options available, and those which do exist are over-subscribed.
- The unaffordability of open market housing particularly affects young people, as they are often on a restricted income

1.4 Availability of social rented housing

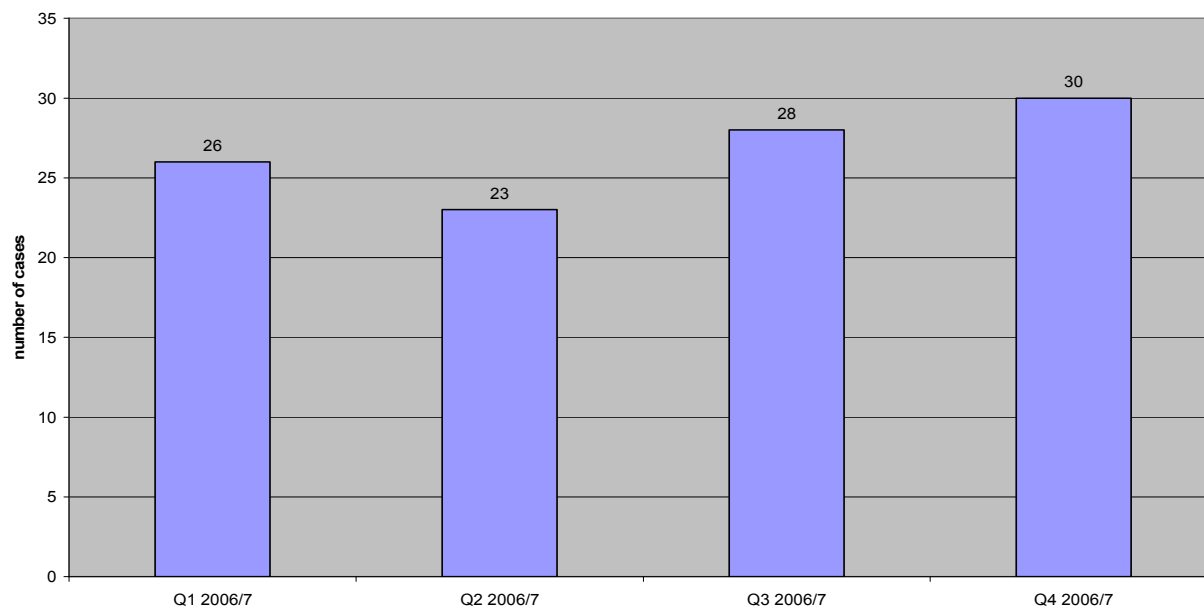
Social Housing also remains inaccessible to many households regardless of age, as demand far exceeds supply. At February 2007 there were 2832 applicants for social housing on the Housing Register, with only 713 available properties throughout 2006/07 in total. Development of new housing stock is still struggling to replace properties lost through preserved Right to Buy and Right to Acquire.

1.5 Conclusion

The Housing Advice and Homelessness service is receiving increased demand year on year. Those seeking help are often people on low incomes and young people for whom housing options are limited, and more needs to be done to meet the needs of this often challenging customer group. The inaccessibility of the housing market for the majority of customers also presents a major challenge to providing affordable and accessible housing options.

2. Homelessness Prevention

Fig 4 - Cases where homelessness has been prevented for >6 months 2006/07



2.1 Homelessness prevention casework

Since the start of 2006/07 we have measured the number of cases where homelessness has been prevented for a period of 6 months or longer through direct work undertaken by our Housing Advisory Officers (Fig 4). This is reported to the Government as a Best Value Performance Indicator.

Only those households who, without this work, would go on to make an application as homeless are counted for this purpose so although the numbers are increasing and reflect well on the work of the team, further work done with those households who might be seen as not having a priority need for assistance under the terms of the legislation are not recorded here.

2.2 Conclusion – Changes in focus and increased resources are producing results

The increase in the number of households where homelessness has been prevented is due to the change in the focus and culture of the Housing Advice & Homelessness Team, including:

- the change in orientation of services away from 'processing' applications as homeless and towards homelessness prevention – with 4 full time prevention officers and only 1.4 working in assessment
- the use of additional resources gained by the team to produce real options for customers experiencing housing difficulties
- the hard work, knowledge and flexibility of the Housing Advisory Officers
- improved partnership working
- increased engagement of specialist agencies offering advice, assistance and advocacy services to ensure accommodation remains sustainable in the medium and long term to customers with complex needs

Examples are given on the next page of the type of successful prevention work undertaken by the Housing Advisory Officers.

Case Study 1

Mr B was due to have his house repossessed the following week. This was prevented through negotiations with his mortgage lender alongside accessing the Intensive Money Advice Service and benefits advice, including an application for Disability Living Allowance.

Case Study 2

Mrs H was finding it impossible to communicate with her adult son who was living with her, and was going to ask him to leave. A referral to the Mediation service allowed communication and son realised he was causing distress. A compromise was reached which allowed him to remain in the family home.

Case Study 3

Mr C was a young man sleeping in a car in his friend's garage. He was found accommodation through the Lodgings Register with the help of the Rent & Deposit Loan Scheme

Case Study 4

Referral to Intensive Money Advice service prevented the revoking of Mr G's lease due to non payment of service charges because illness had reduced his income. The team are still working with Mr G to address longer term affordability issues

Case Study 5

Mr & Mrs E were assisted to successfully avoid repossession after commencement of court action. With our help they obtained a Suspended Possession Order and made an acceptable and affordable arrangement with their landlord to pay their arrears.

Case Study 6

Notification was received from a housing association that Mrs J was due to be taken back to court for possession of the property due to rent arrears of £2,000+ and lack of any payment for two months.

The officer obtained full details of Mrs J's situation – she worked part time but her hours varied and this had affected her housing benefit. In addition to this one of her sons had lived with her and also affected housing benefit entitlement.

Housing Advisory Officer liaised with Anglia Revenues Partnership, Mrs J, the landlord and Mrs J's solicitor to assist with an application to suspend the warrant for possession, which was successful.

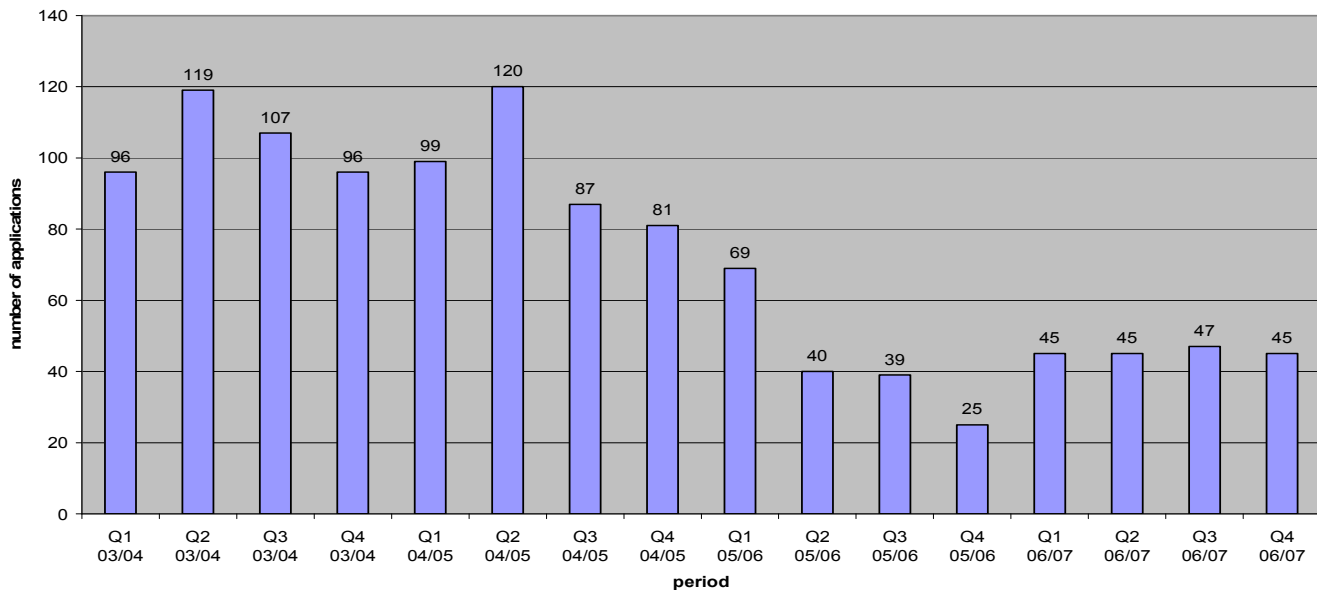
3. Homelessness Applications

3.1 Application numbers

In contrast with the rise in the number of enquiries, the number of applications as homeless has dropped significantly since the end of 2004/05, which correlates with the shift in focus of the Housing Advice & Homelessness Unit towards the prevention of homelessness (Fig 5). The massive reduction in the number of applications during 05/06 reversed slightly during 06/07, and is now stable at around 45 decisions per quarter.

This appears to be partly due to customers approaching us at a stage where their housing difficulties are so complex (including multiple personal needs and multi-lingual difficulties rather than purely housing problems) or so advanced that accommodation has already been lost, that prevention of homelessness is not possible. The small recent increase can also be partially attributed to the growing number of emerging households – young people wishing to or obliged to leave home and live independently.

Fig 5 - Homelessness applications determined 03/04 - 06/07



3.2 Decisions and duties

The number of applications where a decision has been reached to accept a rehousing duty to the household has fallen in line with the overall decrease in applications (Fig 6).

A rehousing duty is accepted where a household's circumstances have been found, after investigations have been undertaken, to fit the following statutory criteria:

- To be eligible for help from public funds
- To be homeless
- To have a priority need
- Not be intentionally homeless
- To have a local connection to the district

This general reduction also applies to households found not homeless.

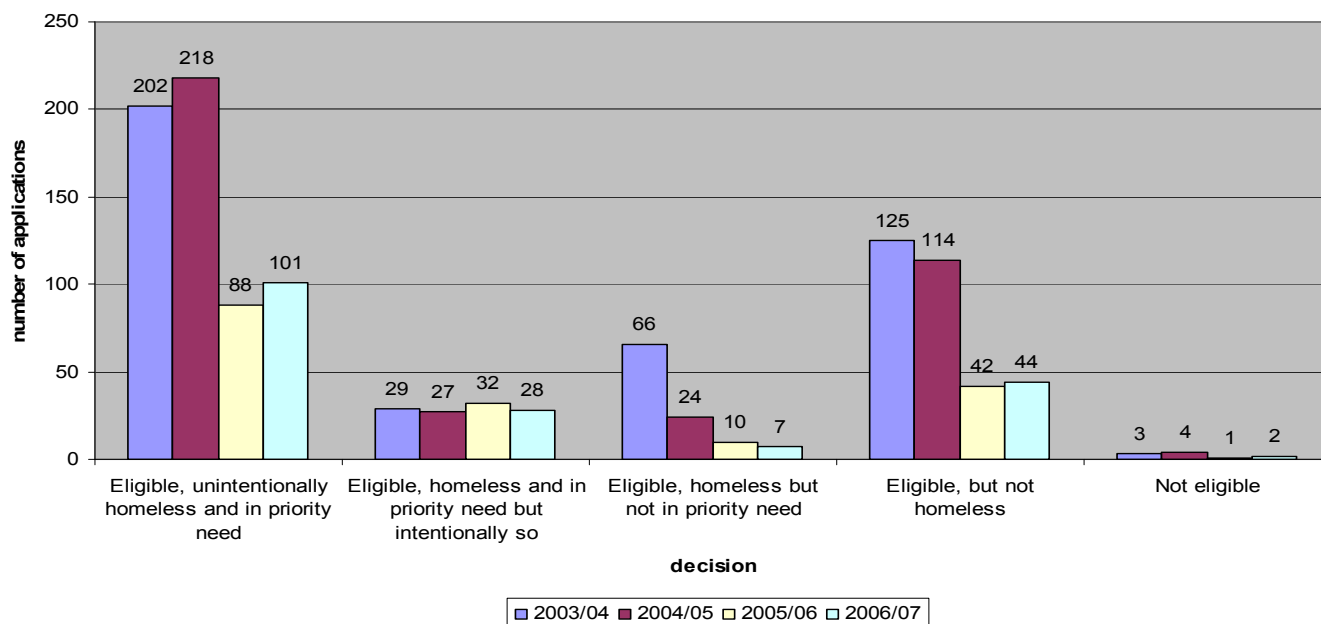
The number of households found intentionally homeless has remained relatively constant over the last four years, and reflects the facts that when people have done or failed to do something which means they lose their accommodation, it is more difficult to intervene and negotiate on

their behalf. Poor conduct of prior tenancies also makes alternative housing options, particularly the private sector, more difficult to access for these households.

The number of applications which resulted in a decision of 'not in priority need' has declined significantly over the last two years. This is due in part to:

- more options being available through the service to solve housing difficulties, meaning people do not see making a homelessness application, even when they have been advised there is little likelihood of it not succeeding, as their only chance of housing, and;
- clear and realistic advice from a Housing Advisory Officer before an application is made, setting out the application process and the levels of investigation undertaken, as well as assisting the customer to resolve their housing difficulties.

Fig 6 - Outcomes of homelessness applications 03/04 - 06/07



3.3 Reasons for Homelessness

For applicants to whom a rehousing duty has been accepted, the main reasons for homelessness (Fig 7) reflect the main reasons people approach us with housing enquiries (Fig 2):

- Eviction by parent or relative/friend
- Relationship breakdown
- Loss of private rented accommodation

Most categories are decreasing numerically in line with the overall decrease in applications and acceptances, but there are several worrying trends.

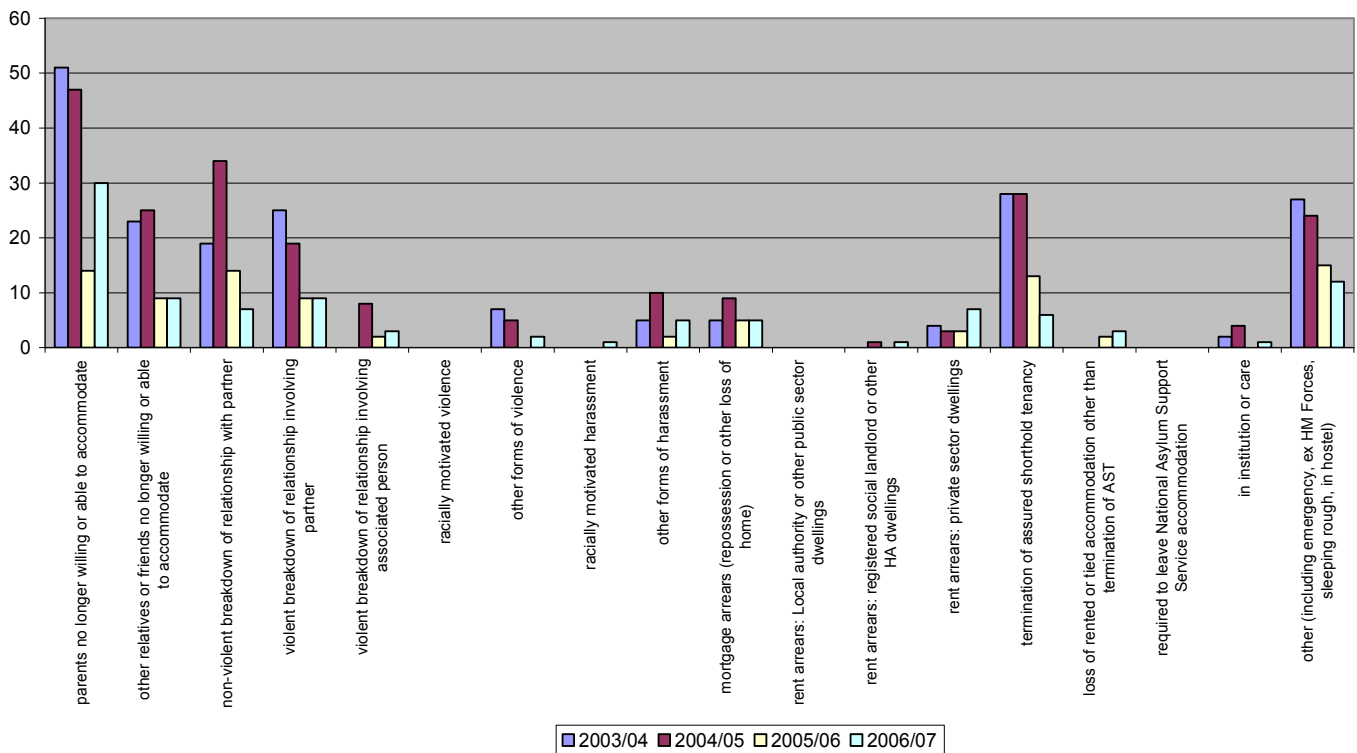
The largest area of growth in Breckland has been parental eviction, which doubled between 2005/06 and 2006/07. It is predominantly people under 25 who experience this situation, and increasing numbers of single young people, young single parents and pregnant young women are being excluded from their family home.

Rent and mortgage arrears in private sector dwellings as the main reason for homelessness is increasing, which also mirrors the trend in housing advice requests (Fig 2).

The increasing unaffordability of private sector homes, and the shortage of social housing may also have a bearing on the parental and relative/friend eviction figures, as more young people are remaining at home past the time they would normally move into independent living, simply because they cannot afford to do so.

The number of applicants accepted where the main reason for homelessness is loss of rented or tied accommodation other than Assured Shorthold tenancy is increasing, although the numbers remain small. This is due in the main to workers experiencing loss of work, leading to the loss of accommodation tied to that work.

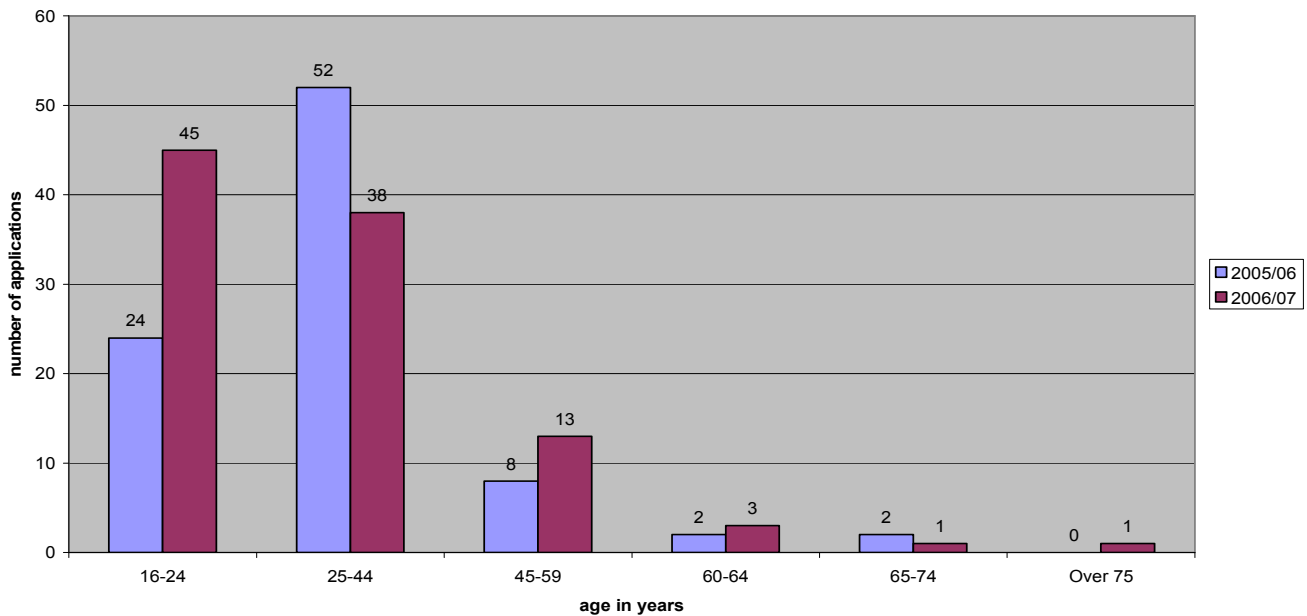
Fig 7 - Main reason for loss of last settled home - households found priority need, unintentionally homeless and eligible 2003 - 2007



3.4 Age of homeless applicants

The age of applicants to whom a rehousing duty has been accepted (Fig 8) has shown that the number of acceptances of applicants under 25 years old has increased markedly. This includes both single people and households with dependent children or a pregnant woman. The number of households where the main applicant is between 25 and 44 years old has decreased, and the older age ranges (over 45) has increased slightly, but really only in reflection of the overall slight increase in applications/acceptances during 2006/07. The number of accepted applicants over retirement age is very low, and although many people in this age range are housed in a settled way, there is some concern that awareness and willingness to engage with available help may also be low with older people.

**Fig 8 - Age of applicants found eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need
2005/06 - 2006/07**



Whilst a detailed study has not been undertaken, casework evidence suggests that there are three main reasons for an increase in the number of acceptances of applicants under 25 years old:

- The aforementioned increase in emerging households
- Relatively low incomes in this age group across the board
- Increased demand for social housing equalling reduced capacity to meet demand from those in greatest housing need

3.5 Conclusion – what’s to be done about young people’s housing problems, and how do we make the market accessible?

The most obvious change in demand for services over the last two years is the increase in enquiries and applications from young people.

The predominant reason for seeking help is parental and relative/friend exclusion/eviction, and this can be a particularly difficult area in which to prevent homelessness, due to often deep personal conflict and the consideration of risk to both customer and household. Young people and their complex needs, including extremely limited options with regard to alternative accommodation, require specialist focus and partnership working to resolve.

Many customers have not lived independently before, and lack the life skills to survive in a tenancy without support, requiring targeted services to ensure the tenancy does not fail. The relative shortage of small units of social housing also creates accessibility issues, although this has been recognised and is being addressed in part through the development process.

Another area of growing problems is that of the unaffordability of private rented and mortgaged property. Several interest rate rises and the continuing rise in property prices has left many households who extended their finances to the limit to purchase a property when rates were

lower with real and pressing payment difficulties. Other households are unable to purchase at all:

- Average property purchase price for a 2/3 bedroom house in Breckland
£170,000 (March 2007)
- Average household income in Breckland:
£25,605 (summer 2006)
- Percentage of population of the district earning under £20,000:
52.5%
- On a household income of £20,000 mortgage availability on a standard calculation of 3.5 x income:
£70,000

This means that the majority of households in the district are unable to purchase a family home in many areas in the district.

Mortgage interest rate rises and growing demand has also influenced the rental market, with the average rent for a 2/3 bedroom property in the district being around £550 (May 2007). For those in receipt of Housing Benefit the Reference Rents set by the Rent Office do not reflect the actual cost of renting, leaving a large shortfall in many cases. The private rented sector is the most plentiful and accessible of the options for many customers, but the large deposits and high rents are a barring factor. Work towards making this accommodation more available, affordable, and of a high standard is another area of focus for the Housing Advice & Homelessness service working in partnership with the Private Sector Housing team.

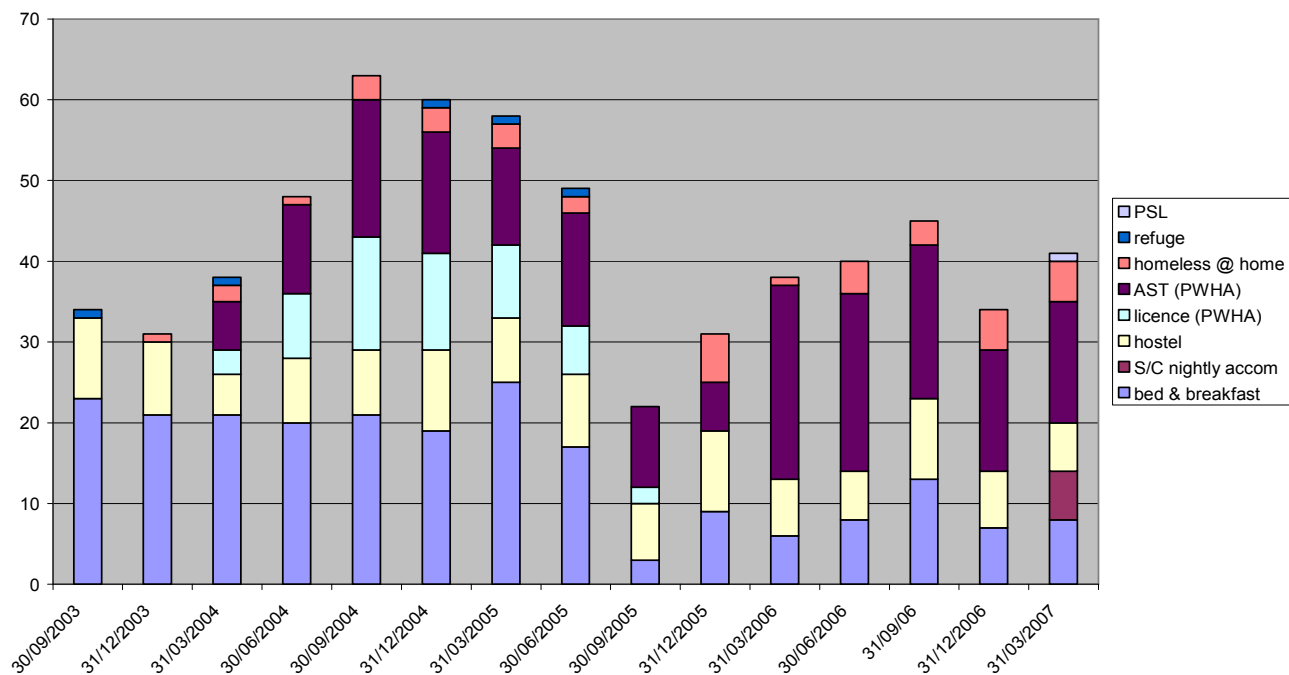
4. Temporary Accommodation

The pattern of temporary accommodation use (Fig 9) reflects the fluctuations in demand from customers making applications as homeless (Fig 5), reducing from a high point of 63 households accommodated in September 2007, to an average of around 40 households in 2006/07.

Despite the increase in applications in 2006/07, use of bed and breakfast has stayed fairly constant, usually remaining at under 10 households housed in this type of accommodation at any one time.

The introduction of the first Private Sector Leasing properties, and the contracting of six units of self-contained nightly accommodation in Dereham at the beginning of 2007/08 has meant that although temporary accommodation is never ideal, customers can be accommodated in self-contained properties in the district, which is far preferable to shared facilities bed and breakfast accommodation some distance away from their established support networks, employment, schools and services.

Fig 9 - Temporary Accommodation occupancy 2003 - 2007



5. Progress against the 2006 Homelessness Strategy Review Action Plan Targets Achieved

This section details the progress made against the targets set out in the 2006 action plan and additional work undertaken, broken down into the sections shown in the 2006 action plan.

5.1 Prevention of Homelessness & Housing Options - we have:

- Maintained the Housing Advice & Homelessness team 'split' – 4 homelessness prevention casework officers to 1.4 homelessness application assessment officers
- Prevented homelessness for over 100 households in 2006/07
- Commissioned & reviewed a Lodgings Register with Solo Housing
- Entered into a nominations agreement with St Matthew Housing – the main provider of supported accommodation in Breckland
- Expanded the Rent & Deposit Loan Scheme – over 50 households helped to access private rented accommodation since 2004
- Introduced a Homelessness Prevention Fund – to fund innovative officer-led homelessness prevention casework
- Brought 11 empty properties back into use in 2006/07 against a target of 10.
- Led the county-wide 'Sanctuary Scheme' proving additional security works in the homes of victims of domestic and other violence if they wish to remain living there
- Continued to work with Peddars Way HA around tenants suffering domestic violence
- Expanded the 'early warning of eviction' system with Peddars Way HA to include Broadland and Wherry HAs, with others under negotiation
- Reviewed and expanded our mediation service to include a service to people suffering relationship breakdown to enable them to reach an amicable solution, as well as offering a service to negotiate solutions to parental/relative evictions
- Worked closely with the specialist Housing Advisor at Mancroft Advice Project/Connexions to provide family intervention work where parental eviction is threatened.

5.2 Temporary Accommodation – we have:

- Improved the quality and location of temporary accommodation by:
 - Introducing a Private Sector Leasing Scheme – by end 2007/08 10 units should be available across the district as temporary accommodation for homeless families
 - Contracting 6 units of nightly paid accommodation in Dereham as an alternative to out-of-district Bed & Breakfast
 - Working with a 'specialist' provider of nightly paid temporary accommodation for 16-25 year olds who provides support alongside accommodation
- Ensured only 1 family with dependent children has been in bed and breakfast accommodation for over 6 weeks since September 2004
- Secured funding and partner RSL for 12 additional domestic violence unit spaces in Thetford
- Reduced use of temporary accommodation from a December 2004 figure of 68 households accommodated to an average of 37 households in 2006/07
- Continuously monitored temporary accommodation need and reviewed portfolio accordingly

5.3 Research & Monitoring – we have:

- Constantly monitored housing market trends and trends in homelessness applications
- Changed the format of our Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Undertaken a Housing Market Assessment including a Housing Needs Survey – results due mid 07/08
- Undertaken a Stock Condition Survey – results due mid 07/08
- Undertaken a BME Housing & Housing Support Needs Survey – results due mid 07/08

5.4 Support & Advocacy – we have:

- Reviewed & expanded Intensive Money Advice service
- Reviewed & expanded Mediation service
- Continued Older Persons' Advocacy service
- Increased support to YMCA Furniture Project
- Contributed fully to Supporting People Floating Support Review & full engaged with new provider to ensure appropriate and timely support is targeted to relevant need groups

5.5 Resources & Training – we have:

- Carried out an in-house multi-agency course of training sessions with Shelter
- Carried out multi-agency mental health training
- Carried out RSL/Housing Advisory Officer Housing Benefit document verification training
- Carried out interview skills training for all Housing Advisory Officers
- Carried out investigative powers/regulations training for all Housing Advisory Officers
- Carried out personal safety training for all Housing Advisory Officers
- Subscribed to benefits calculation and legal IT packages for use by Housing Advisory officers
- Purchased up-to-date relevant publications for use by Housing Advisory Officers
- Contributed fully to corporate review of Customer Contact Centres

5.6 Consultation – we have:

- Developed & distributed annual Consultation Plans
- Held an Information Day with all district RSLs around homelessness, with speakers from CLG, Housing Corporation and National Housing Federation
- Changed format of Customer Satisfaction Surveys and continued on a monthly basis
- Continued and developed multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Forum – seeking views on all service developments at earliest possible stage
- Set up and sustained a Youth Homelessness Prevention Forum
- Held several Landlord Forums, including two focussed on items of special interest
- Carried out comprehensive fieldwork and consultation for forthcoming surveys
- Carried out a consultation exercise with four 6th form colleges around homelessness
- Carried out quarterly information sessions with portfolio Executive and Support Members

5.7 Maximising Use of Housing Stock – we have:

- Commenced review of Housing Register and negotiations ongoing with preferred bidder
- In 05/06 enabled 56 affordable housing units in the district against a target of 52
- In 06/07 enabled 75 affordable housing units in the district against a target of 60
- Appointed a new Enabling & Projects Officer to drive forward the development of new affordable units against a 2007/08 target of 80 units.

5.8 Information – we have:

- Updated and expanded website content and set regular monitoring sessions
- Reviewed and expanded leaflet content
- Produced comprehensive housing advice leaflet for new communities
- Published regular articles in 'Voice' and local press
- Produced regular landlords' newsletter 'Rental Health'
- Provided regular statistical information to Homelessness Forum

5.9 Accessibility & Standards – we have:

- Researched and successfully piloted text messaging service
- Provided additional appointment-based advice surgeries in Thetford and Dereham
- Contributed thoroughly to the development of Customer Contact Centres throughout the district
- Reviewed out-of-hours service and put rota in place to ensure accessibility
- Produced, monitored and reported against robust service standards
- Reported progress against Homelessness Strategy Review Action Plan to Homelessness Forum and Policy Development & Review Panel 3

5.10 Diversity – we have:

- Carried out a BME Housing and Housing Support Needs Survey
- Produced information in a range of languages including a new comprehensive housing information leaflets
- Worked with the Private Sector Housing team around identifying and meeting the needs of migrant workers
- Increased use of interpreter services – one of the largest users in the authority

5.11 Partnership Working – we have:

- Liaised with Children's Services and routinely requested Childern Act assessments for homeless 16/17 year olds
- Held regular meetings with Peddars Way Housing Association around homelessness prevention and management
- Held a sub-regional information day around homelessness with speakers from the CLG
- Developed nominations agreements with partner RSLs
- Developed relationships with development arms of RSLs
- Attended seminars and conferences to learn of good practice and develop relationships
- Led for REAP on the newly formed Regional Homelessness Advisory Panel
- Worked with REAP partners to identify common areas for action and joint working

5.12 Casework management – we have:

- Adopted fortnightly 1-2-1 meetings between Housing Advisory Officers and Senior Housing Advisory Officer
- Held weekly group meetings around prevention/assessment/rehousing
- Determined 88% of application decisions within 33 working days against a target of 90% (small slippage due to staff absence/recruitment delay and challenging cases)
- Repeat homelessness (where a duty is accepted and the same duty had been accepted towards the same household within the last 2 years) at 2.94% against a target of <10%

6. Progress against the 2006 Homelessness Strategy Review Action Plan Target Amendments

This section sets out targets in the 2006 Action Plan which have either not yet been met, or have been amended in light of service demand and/or delivery changes. Again this is broken down into the main areas of the Action Plan.

6.1 Prevention of Homelessness & Housing Options

- Direct Lettings scheme – linked to Supported Lodgings scheme and moved to 2007/08 action plan
- Supported Lodgings scheme – benchmarking underway and to be considered as sub-regional/cross-district scheme in 2007/08 action plan
- Crashpad scheme – linked to supported lodgings and development of young persons' supported accommodation scheme
- Effective arrears recovery system for Rent & Deposit Loan scheme not yet put in place – liaison with Finance underway – capacity/resource issues. Moved to 2007/08 action plan
- Rough Sleepers Action Plan – low priority compared to other customer groups
- Follow-up interviews for households accepted as homeless – capacity issues and relevant BVPI abolished

6.2 Temporary Accommodation

- Target to reduce the use of temporary accommodation by 15% per annum by 2010 reduced to 10% per annum. Still on target for 50% reduction by 2010 as set by CLG, but limited scope for further large reductions following success of 2005/06
- Regular condition inspection timetable – linked to Service Level Agreements with providers and moved to 2007/08 action plan

6.3 Research & Monitoring

- Leeway no longer undertaking Domestic Violence Monitoring
- Explore potential of multi-agency monitoring moved to 07/08 action plan

6.4 Resources & Training

- Provision of equipment in interview rooms linked to corporate CSC Review

6.5 Maximising use of Housing Stock

- Review of use of designated stock and 'incentive to move' schemes linked to Housing Register move to Choice Based Lettings in December 2008

6.6 Information

- Review of standard communications linked to appointment of Principal Homelessness Officer
- Quarterly Landlord newsletter moved to 6 monthly due to maintain content and quality
- Tenant information pack – moved to 2007/08 action plan

6.7 Accessibility & Standards

- Access Strategy linked to corporate strategy development
- Need for local rate or freephone number linked to corporate customer contact role and discussions around Housing's role with the Customer Contact Centre
- Housing Complaint Procedure – corporate procedure in use across the authority

6.8 Diversity

- Diversity Strategy linked to corporate strategy development (BME Housing Needs Strategy undertaken)

6.9 Partnership Working

- Inter-Agency Information Sharing Protocol – moved to 07/08 action plan

7. Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2007/08

Where existing schemes have been successful and are continuing with routine review only or are ongoing research/monitoring/consultation exercises, they have not been specifically included in this plan

Aims	Proposed Future Action	Partner agencies/ lead officer	Time scale	Resource Implications	Action to date
Prevention of Homelessness & Housing Options					
Provide a more efficient, effective, accessible & accountable social housing application and allocation system	Transfer Housing Waiting List by identifying new partner through open tender process, undertaking detailed contract negotiations with preferred partner, and completing a full operational transfer of all functions and staff	BDC/ Preferred Partner	Q3 07/08	Existing budgets	Preferred partner identified – contract negotiations underway
Concentrate resources & develop policies & protocols towards prevention of homelessness	Recruit & appoint Principal Homelessness Officer	BDC SHO/PHO	Q2 07/08	Redistribution of existing staff resources	job description & person specification drafted
Develop & sustain accessible, sustainable & suitable housing options	Assess need for and develop a Supported lodgings scheme in the private rented sector in conjunction with direct lettings & 'Crashpad' schemes. Examine sub-regional potential for all schemes	BDC HSADO/ SHAO	Q4 07/08 into 08/09	Homelessness prevention budget/CLG grant funding	Research underway
	Assess need & feasibility of supported accommodation scheme for young people. Work up project specification	BDC PHO/SHAO/ PEO/HSADO	Q4 07/08	HCorp / Supporting People /other funding	Need established. Development RSLs seeking sites. Visit to developing scheme 07/07
	Put in place effective arrears recovery system for Rent & Deposit Loan Scheme in liaison with Finance Dept.	BDC PHO/SHAO/ HLO/Finance	Q2 07/08	Dependent on identifying & securing additional staff resources and expertise	Meeting held with Finance 04/07
Work towards an accessible and high quality private rented sector	Introduce a landlord accreditation scheme – benchmark current good practice, draft outline scheme, consult fully with Landlord Forum, finalise scheme & launch	BDC PEHO/ HSADO	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	Good practice benchmarking underway
Increase provision of affordable housing in the district	To work towards delivering 165 affordable units per annum by 2010. Target 80 units 2007/08.	BDC EPO/PHO	2010	Main sources: HCorp SHG/ developers contribution & provision /recycled RSL Capital	Negotiations in progress for units to be completed during 07/08.

				Grant/ BDC discounted land	Several schemes well advanced
Maximise number of empty properties bought back into use	To bring 8 empty properties back into use (BVPI)	BDC PEHO/PSH team	Q4 07/08	Grants/loans to property owners & enforcement powers	Actively working with owners to bring approximately 20 properties back into use over time
Temporary Accommodation					
Optimise existing & future use of hostel resources	Redevelopment of John Room House: Agree full detailed project, seek political and planning approval and tender for appointment of contractor	BDC PHO/SHAO/ EPO/HSADO	Q4 07/08	Put-aside capital funding /temporary accommodation budget/ possible Supporting People bid	Project Plan drafted & agreed with SHM
To reduce the use of insecure temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 from 31/12/04	Work towards developing alternatives to temporary accommodation through homelessness prevention options and active casework	BDC PHA/SHAO/ HSADO/ HAOs	Q4 07/08	Homelessness prevention budget/CLG grant	Annual target of 10% reduction set wef 07/08. Currently well on target for 50% reduction.
Ensure no household with children or expectant mothers are accommodated in bed and breakfast for more than 6 weeks	Use all available options to meet this target (BVPI)	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Temporary accom budget/Homelessness prevention budget/CLG grant	100% success in achieving this target during 05/06 & 06/07
Provide 1 domestic violence refuge space per 10,000 population	Work with development partner RSL towards providing additional 12 space refuge in south of district (BVPI)	BDC/develop ment partner RSL	Comp -letion 09/10	HCorp/Supporting People funding	Site & partner identified. Plans drawn up. Pre-planning discussions taking place
Ensure temporary/interim accommodation is of a suitable quality standard and location	Establish a programme to regularly check the quality of interim/temporary accommodation and put in place a service level agreement with each provider.	BDC SHAO/HLO/ HSADO	Q2 07/08	Existing resources	SLA drafted and inspection regime discussed
Achieve targets for reducing use of temporary accommodation	Achieve by use of active homelessness prevention case work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Average length of stay in B&B for families with children/expectant mother – < 3 weeks (LPI) 2. Average length of stay in hostel for families with children/expectant mother - < 6 weeks (LPI) 3. Average number of families with children/expectant mother in temporary accommodation compared with same point previous year – reduction of 10% (LPI) 	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	05/06 achievements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 wks against target of <4 wks 2. 6 wks against target of 9 wks 3. 14.1% reduction against target of 15%
Research & Monitoring					
Develop information-gathering	Explore potential value of common monitoring	BDC	Q4	Existing resources	

processes to establish needs & trends	processes including benchmarking existing schemes	HSADO/ SHAO	07/08		
Resources & Training					
Provide suitable effective tools to enhance homelessness prevention work	Continue use of successfully piloted SMS text messaging service. Expand use where appropriate and contribute fully to corporate assessment/roll-out	BDC HSADO/ HAOs	On-going	CLG grant – text charges only	SMS service piloted successfully. Recommendation to continue use & research corporate uses approved through ICT Board
	Contribute fully to corporate review of equipment for customer contact centres	BDC SHM/SHAO	On-going	Corporate resources	Fully involved in Thetford redevelopment
	Introduce use of Civica APP (formerly FLARE) system for recording & retrieval of homelessness/housing advice information	BDC PHOs	Q3 at earliest	Homelessness Prevention/CLG grant budgets. Relative benefits to be discussed once final costs clear	Full discussions taken place. Satisfied with product benefits. Implementation delayed due to awaiting supplier product enhancements
Deliver relevant effective multi-agency training	Investigate & implement opportunities for setting up joint training courses	BDC HA/SHAO/ PEHO/ HSADO	On-going	Training budget / recharged costs to other agencies is appropriate	Multi-agency Sanctuary Scheme training held 04/06/07
Consultation					
Provide comprehensive accessible consultation opportunities to customers and key stakeholders regarding policies & procedures	Develop consultation plan for move to Choice-based-lettings and commence consultation	BDC SHM PHO (SE)	Q3 07/08	Existing resources / Housing Register budget	
	Hold Annual Landlord Forum	BDC PEHO/ HSADO	Q3 07/08	Existing resources	
Information					
Provide comprehensive, timely & accessible information to private sector tenants	Draft, consult on and produce Tenants' Information Pack	BDC HSADO	Q2 07/08	CLG grant	Information collected for draft pack & draft underway
Provide comprehensive, timely & accessible information to	Hold Annual Landlord Forum & information session of special interest as appropriate. Produce 6-monthly	BDC HSADO/	On-going	Existing resources/CLG grant	HA 2004 information session

private sector landlords	landlords' newsletter	PEHO			held 16/05/07
	Update & distribute Landlord Guide	BDC HSADO/ PEHO	Q2 07/08	Existing resources/CLG grant	Information collected for updates to guide & draft underway
Provide comprehensive, timely & accessible information to young people	Research & benchmark partnership working to develop outreach/information service for schools & colleges. Develop if appropriate services available.	BDC HSADO	Q4 07/08	CLG grant	Monitoring GNHP project work with view to future involvement
Accessibility & Standards					
Provide and accessible advice service	Research need for additional advice surgeries throughout the district an implement in line with corporate review	BDC PHO/SHAO	Corporate T/T	Corporate resources/existing budgets	Additional surgeries in Dereham & Thetford in place
Ensure rigorous consistent standards are met and maintained	Undertake review of prevention & assessment policies, protocols and procedures.	BDC PHO	Q4 07/08	Existing resources – dependent on recruitment of Principal Homelessness Officer	
Diversity					
Ensure minority groups have equal access to services & housing options	Use information gained from BME Housing & Housing Support Needs Survey to inform policy & service development & partnership working	BDC PHOs/PEHO/ SHM	07/08 & on-going	Existing resources	BME Survey undertaken – results mid 07
	Develop a county-wide Physical & Sensory Disability Housing Strategy	BDC EPO/SHM	Draft Q3 07/08	Existing resources	Draft specification produced
	Monitor usefulness of New Communities housing advice booklet and use to inform future translation/accessibility of information development	BDC HAOs/SHAO /HSADO	07/08	Existing resources	New communities booklet produced in 4 key languages
	Investigate and address the needs of groups other than gypsies & Portuguese	BDC PHOs/SHM	As BME HNS	County-wide resources	
Partnership Working					
Ensure information shared between agencies in a timely & comprehensive manner	Investigate feasibility of establishing Inter-Agency Information Sharing Protocol. If feasible draft protocol	BDC HSADO/ SHAO	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	Information sharing systems/ disclaimers set up with several key stakeholders
Review protocols with partner agencies around case management and nominations to ensure improved services for homeless applicants during	Fully review existing agreements & protocols and implement new where appropriate as part of review and transfer of Housing Register	BDC SHM/PHOs	As HR	As Housing Register review/transfer	Mostly undertaken as part of Housing Register review – nominations to be looked at

assessment & rehousing					separately with RSLs over 07/08
Casework Management					
Monitor number of households where homelessness has been prevented for >6mths as a result of active prevention casework	Target 2006/07 – 2 cases per 1000 households (BVPI)	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Homelessness Prevention Budget / CLG grant / existing resources	05/06: 2 cases per 1000 households against target of same
Determine set % of homelessness applications within 33 working days	Target 2007 – 85% (LPI)	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	06/07: 88% against target of 90%
Determine 100% of review applications within 56 days	Target 2007/08 - 90% (LPI)	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	06/07: 70% against target of 90% - capacity issues addressed through staffing restructure
Monitor number of repeat homelessness acceptances within last 2 years	Target 2007/08 – less than <10% (LPI)	BDC SHAO/HAOs	Q4 07/08	Existing resources	06/07: 2.94% against target of <10%

8. Financial Report

This report sets out the expenditure made against the targets set out in the Homelessness Strategy Review Action Plan in 2006/07 and additional expenditure to support the Housing Advice & Homelessness service during this period.

8.1 Homelessness Prevention Initiatives

The main budgets against which expenditure on specific prevention initiatives is made are Breckland's Homelessness Prevention Budget obtained through the Star Chamber process and the grant funding provided for this purpose by Communities & Local Government. The CLG grant funding is made to each local housing authority at different amounts according to their progress against quarterly P1E indicators, which set out application, decision and temporary accommodation figures, BVPI performance and progress against homelessness strategy action plans.

8.1.1 Breckland's Homelessness Prevention Budget Expenditure

Budget for 2006/07 £80,000
Budget for 2007/08 £60,000

Item	Amount
Solo Lodgings Scheme – part funding 2006/07	£20,000
Solo Lodgings Scheme – funding 2007/08	£22,781
Contribution to HB Discretionary Housing Payments fund	£10,000
Design & print suite of 14 advice & information leaflets	£4,431
Renewal of Westlaw Legal IT back office subscription	£4,800
Provision of unlimited referrals to YMCA Furniture Project 06/07 & 07/08	£5,500
Repairs & rent loss (voids) for Girling House temporary accommodation	£4,317
Equipment for John Room House	£2,640
Older Person's Advocacy Service 2007/08 part payment	£1,800
On-site officer training – Experian credit-referencing system	£950
Lisson Grove benefits calculator back office software subscription	£560
Document translation – New Communities housing advice leaflet	£360
Homeless Link subscription renewal 07/08	£317
Salary part payment – Technical Administrative Officer – March 2007	£338
Independent specialist legal advice – Private Sector Leasing	£200
Mortgage Arrears	£34
Total Expenditure 2006/07	£79,028

NB – numbers have been rounded to nearest £

8.1.2 CLG Homelessness Prevention Grant Expenditure

Budget for 2006/07	£60,000
Budget for 2007/08	£60,000

Item	Amount
Rent & Deposit Loan Scheme	£29,500
Principal Officer Salary contribution 2007/08	£15,000
Homelessness Prevention Fund	£10,000
Solo Lodgings Scheme – part funding 2006/07	£4,750
Intensive Money Advice Service 2007/08	£4,500
Additional referrals to Intensive Money Advice Service 2006/07	£2,000
Norfolk Family Mediation service 2007/08	£4,320
Conference/seminar attendance – officer & members	£2,059
Support – Landlord & Homelessness Prevention Forums & training	£891
Project Management training course – 2 officers	£657
Support & speaker accommodation – CLG Information Days	£737
Homeless Link Subscription renewal 06/07	£307
Advertisement – expressions of interest – PSL scheme	£211
Older Person's Advocacy Service 2007/08 part payment	£200
Literature holders for advice & information leaflets	£109
Subscription to 'Roof' professional periodical	£68
Publications – legal/practice guidance	£23
Total Expenditure 2006/07	£75,332

NB – numbers have been rounded to nearest £

8.2 Temporary Accommodation

This budget relates to expenditure made to external providers in relation to direct provision of temporary accommodation to customers. This mostly relates to Bed & Breakfast expenditure and self-contained nightly paid accommodation.

Expenditure 2004/05	£143,267.62
Expenditure 2005/06	£109,224.61
Expenditure 2006/07	£100,089.11

% reduction in expenditure 2004/05 – 2006/07 = 31%