

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010

## Introduction

The 2002 Homelessness Act placed a duty on all local housing authorities to develop a local Homelessness Strategy. Authorities were obliged to initially carry out a review of homelessness in their district to inform the development of the strategy. The first Leeds Homelessness Strategy was published in July 2003 and was designed to cover the period up to August 2006.

The aims of the Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006 were as follows:

- The prevention of homelessness in Leeds
- Ensuring that suitable accommodation is available for all homeless households
- Ensure that effective advice and support services, that contribute towards the prevention agenda, are available for all homeless households

The Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006 also set out ten objectives that were identified as priorities for action over the three year span of the strategy. These were as follows:

- To end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for households with dependent children, except in an emergency situation, and then for no longer than six weeks, by the end of March 2004.
- To reduce the number of households sleeping rough in Leeds to a maximum of ten per night.
- To identify and reduce the main causes of homelessness in Leeds.
- To identify and reduce the level of recurring homelessness in Leeds.
- To reduce the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation in Leeds.
- To develop a housing advice and homeless assessment service on a localised basis.
- To develop and encourage the use of the private rented sector in Leeds, including a rent deposit scheme, primarily for non-statutory homeless households.
- To build on existing improvements in customer care and consultation that have resulted from the Best Value Review of the Homeless Service
- To ensure that the Homelessness Strategy contributes towards objectives set out in other relevant strategies and initiatives.
- To develop a standard city-wide performance reporting regime.

The new Leeds Homelessness Strategy will cover the period 2006 to 2010. Once again the Council initially carried out a review of homelessness in the city which helped to establish progress that has been made since 2003 in terms of tackling

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homelessness and also helped to establish the strategic priorities for the next four years.

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The Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 is designed to follow on from the Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2003-2006. The new strategy will build on the achievements made in the last three years and will respond to the challenges that currently exist.

There is no doubt that a fundamental change has been achieved in relation to the strategic response to homelessness in the city. Three years ago Council-managed services tended to be crisis driven. A homeless assessment would be activated at the point of first approach, and where a housing duty was owed, temporary accommodation would be secured. The customer would then remain in temporary accommodation until they secured their own housing option (often living with friends on a temporary basis) or they were made an offer of social housing. The focus on swift homeless decisions meant that little or no regard was given to identifying opportunities to prevent homeless. The focus on homeless assessment also meant that the Council was primarily focusing on assisting those to whom a housing duty was owed. Three years ago the Council was encountering rising numbers of households approaching as homeless or threatened with homelessness and an accompanying rise in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation.

Since the first Homelessness Strategy was published homeless prevention options have increasingly been considered as an alternative to the crisis driven approach - especially in relation to housing advice services provided by the Council. The result in this change in focus has been a significant reduction in both homeless acceptances (3,000 in the last three years) and in the number of households who are placed in temporary accommodation. This demonstrates the impact of the change in focus of service delivery as other factors such as rising house prices and the contraction in the social housing stock have continued unabated over the last three years. The challenge of the new Homelessness Strategy is to ensure that homeless prevention opportunities are maximised not only in terms of Council led housing advice services but also with housing support services provided by partner agencies.

However it is essential that a focus on homeless prevention does not lead to homeless households being less able to access services. The Council has legal obligations to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and these must be adhered to. For many households it will be not possible to prevent homelessness and in those instances a homeless application should always be taken swiftly and appropriate temporary accommodation secured. The Strategy recognises that it will be important to monitor that standards of service and legal duties are adhered to over the next four years. Clearly other agencies which provide services for homeless households will have a key role in ensuring that the Council are held to account for the services that they provide and the objectives set out in this strategy.

There is no doubt that other factors have also had an impact on homelessness in the city: the review of homelessness identified that Council owned stock has been reduced by over 5,600 units in the last three years and that on average it took a

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statutory homeless household 84 days longer to be rehoused through the Leeds ALMOs in 2005 than it did in 2001. The indications are that the supply of social housing in the city will continue to contract and that homeless households will have to wait longer in the future to be rehoused through a social landlord. A challenge for the new Homelessness Strategy is to ensure that a range of housing options is available for homeless households to maximise their opportunities to be rehoused.

It is also essential that all customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are given realistic housing advice not only in terms of the availability of social housing in the city but also on alternative housing options and what action can be taken to help them retain their existing home. All stakeholders (whether they are from the Council, a Leeds ALMO or another organisation) have a role to play in offering realistic housing advice.

The new homeless strategy will be set within the context of other wider agendas relating to homelessness and housing need. This was the case for the first Homelessness Strategy: the first five objectives were all set by the DCLG as priorities for housing authorities to tackle. The DCLG has developed other targets that the Council and the new Homelessness Strategy must address such as reducing the number of temporary accommodation placements by 50% by 2010. The time span of the new Homelessness Strategy has been deliberately set at four years to reflect the deadlines for meeting this target and other wider housing related targets such as decency. The first Homelessness Strategy was also developed at the time when the Council's core role in housing services was changing. The establishment of the six Leeds ALMOs in 2003 to carry out the landlord function on behalf of the Council emphasised the need for the housing authority to focus on its strategic role rather than primarily being a provider of housing services. This is a process that has continued over the last three years through Supporting People commissioning decisions and the transfer of the Sheltered Warden service to the Leeds ALMOs.

The aims of the Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 are therefore as follows:

- To embed the Council's core strategic role in responding to homelessness and housing need
- Ensure that customers receive realistic housing advice in relation to their housing options
- Raise the profile of housing advice and homeless services in terms of role in meeting wider strategic objectives
- Gain a better understanding of issues and trends relating to homelessness and housing need in the city
- Maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness
- Maximise housing options available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

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- Give customers choice in relation to the services provided and also the opportunity to express their views on the services they have received

### The City Of Leeds

The Leeds Metropolitan District has a population of 715,402 covering 7217 square miles. It consists of a main urban area, surrounded by towns and many villages; two thirds of the district is green belt. Leeds is made up of many diverse and culturally rich communities with 8% of the population from minority ethnic groups, increasing to 40% in a number of inner city areas. Leeds also has a very high population of young people with 15% of population aged 20-29 years. Just under one in ten households are headed by a lone parent.

Twenty percent of the population (142,715) are aged over 60, of which there are estimated to be 9,167 BME elders aged over 60. Leeds has the highest percentage of older people aged 74 and over who are on means tested benefit.

Over the last twenty years Leeds has transformed into a modern and dynamic city with one of the most varied economies of any UK city. The wealth of the city centre has not spread to all neighbouring communities. Around 150,000 people (20% of the population) live in areas officially rated as amongst the most socially and economically deprived in the country. These areas are characterised by low income, unemployment, low educational achievement, inadequate housing and high levels of ill-health. Part of the Vision for Leeds is to narrow the gap between those benefiting from the prosperity of Leeds and the most disadvantaged.

### Legal Context

The legal duties of a housing authority are set out in Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) and the Homelessness Code of Guidance. The main duties are set out below:

- To provide advice and information regarding homelessness and the prevention of homelessness to any person free of charge: **Section 179**
- To make suitable enquiries into the circumstances of a household who the authority believes may be homeless or threatened with homelessness in order to establish whether they are eligible for assistance and whether any housing duty is owed to them: **Section 184**
- Secure interim accommodation for households who the authority believes may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need pending further enquiries as to whether any housing duty is owed to them: **Section 188**
- Secure suitable accommodation for a reasonable time period and ensure that appropriate advice and assistance is provided to a household in priority need that the authority considers has become homeless intentionally: **Section 190**

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- Ensure that appropriate advice and assistance is given to a household who the authority believes is unintentionally homeless but not in priority need: **Section 192**
- Secure suitable temporary accommodation for an indefinite period for a household that the authority considers is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need: **Section 193**
- The housing duty owed under Section 193 can only be discharged under certain circumstances which are also set out under the same section of the Act. These are as follows:
  - Cease to be eligible for assistance
  - Become homeless intentionally from the accommodation made available for their occupation
  - Accept an offer of suitable accommodation under Part VI of the Act
  - Accept an offer of an assured tenancy from a private landlord
  - Refuse an offer of suitable accommodation under Part VI of the Act
  - Accept an offer of a 'Qualifying Offer' of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy from a private landlord
- Ensure that reasonable steps are taken to assist a household to retain their current accommodation if they are threatened with homelessness and the authority considers that they are eligible for assistance, have a priority need and have become threatened with homelessness unintentionally: **Section 195**
- Respond to review requests relating to a decision made by the authority relating to the duty owed to a household found to be homeless or threatened with homelessness: **Section 202-204**
- Protect the possessions of an applicant to whom a housing duty is owed and it considered there is a danger that the possessions could be lost or damaged because the applicant has no means of protecting the items or for making their own arrangements to store the items: **Section 211- 212**

### Best Value

In common with other local housing authorities Leeds City Council is subject to a number of Best Value Performance Indicators that are set by the Audit Commission and the DCLG. These are as follows:

**BVPI183a** - Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (number of weeks).

**BVPI183b** - Average length of stay in hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (number of weeks).

**BV202** - Number of rough sleepers identified.

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**BV203** - The percentage change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year.

**BV213** - Households, who considered themselves to be homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom case work intervention resolved their housing difficulty.

**BV214** - Proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years.

**BV225** - Reduction in the percentage of cases accepted as homeless due to domestic violence that had previously been re-housed in the last two years by that local authority as a result of domestic violence.

Leeds City Council has also developed a number of Local Performance Indicators to identify performance against local priorities on homelessness. These are as follows:

**LKIHAS4** - Number of homeless acceptances made.

**LKIHAS5** - The number of homeless acceptances made where the homeless reason is parental eviction.

**LKIHAS6** - The number of households with dependent children who are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than three weeks.

All Councils are judged on an annual basis on the quality of services they provide under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework (CPA). Best Value performance indicators are becoming increasingly important in the assessment made by the Audit Commission in the CPA framework. In relation to homelessness, Best Value performance indicators 183a and b and 214 are currently part of the CPA framework. The performance achieved by Leeds City Council is judged against upper and lower thresholds of other authorities performance collated by the Audit Commission. The upper threshold represents the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of performing authorities. The lower threshold represents the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. Following the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Leeds City Council retained its status as a four star authority. Performance relating to the three BVPIs was significant in the award made to the Council. Helping the Council to retain its current four star status will be an integral element of the new Homelessness Strategy. The strategy will set out how the Council intends to achieve upper threshold performance for as many performance indicators as possible and how in all circumstances the Council will ensure that performance does not fall into the lower threshold on any performance indicators.

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Services for homeless households make a significant contribution to a range of national and local strategic priorities. At a local level the Leeds Homelessness Strategy reflects and contributes to the aims and objectives set out in the Leeds Community Strategy: Vision for Leeds 2004 to 2020. The Leeds Homelessness Strategy recognises that the Vision for Leeds is the key local strategic driver. The Vision for Leeds is the plan developed by the Leeds Initiative (the local strategic partnership of public, private community and voluntary sector partners) of how Leeds should develop over the next 15 years. A particular emphasis is placed in the Vision for Leeds on tackling inequality and deprivation that is still apparent in a city where many people have enjoyed greater economic prosperity and stability in recent years.

The Vision for Leeds aims to ‘narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city’. Homeless services are generally accessed by vulnerable people who would be incorporated into accepted classifications of the most disadvantaged members of society and who invariably live or previously lived in the most deprived areas of the city. People who are dependent upon means-tested benefits, those who are subject to violence or abuse in their home, older people, those with mental health issues or learning or physical disabilities, people with dependency issues, people in contact with the criminal justice system, young people leaving local authority care.

Services for homeless people contribute to meeting the Vision for Leeds aim to ‘narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city’ by:

- providing services that respond to emergencies and averts crisis in relation to housing and other support needs
- providing services that prevent loss of accommodation and therefore maintain vulnerable people in the wider community
- providing services that help vulnerable people to be reintegrated back into the wider community after periods of residence in supported housing or institutions such as prison, hospital or local authority care

The Homelessness Strategy will also contribute to the Leeds City Council Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan is the Council’s response to the priorities set out in the Vision for Leeds. The Homelessness Strategy will contribute the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan:

| Corporate Plan Priority   | Contribution of Homeless Services  |
|---|--|
| All communities are thriving and harmonious places where people are happy to live | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preventing homelessness and enabling people to maintain accommodation in areas where they want to continue to live</li> </ul> |

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|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Responding to emergency housing situations</li> <li>■ Helping people who have lived in temporary accommodation to be reintegrated into the wider community in areas where they chose to live</li> </ul>   |
| At each stage of life; people are able to live healthy, fulfilling lives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establishing homeless prevention initiatives that respond to the main causes of homelessness in the city such as youth homelessness caused by parental eviction</li> <li>■ Giving people greater choice in the services that are made available</li> <li>■ Responding to emergency housing situations and averting crisis</li> <li>■ Ensuring that the legal rights of households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness are met</li> </ul> |
| Our children and young people are healthy, safe and successful           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognising the impact of homelessness and housing need on children and their development opportunities</li> <li>■ Setting targets to reduce the number of children who become homeless</li> <li>■ Establishing homeless prevention options to help families keep their existing homes</li> <li>■ Ensuring that the legal rights of homeless families are met</li> </ul>  |
| All neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and well maintained            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ By providing services that help people remain or secure accommodation in areas where they choose to live. Recognising that by helping people to do this they are more likely to feel confident and proud in the area where they live</li> </ul>   |
| Leeds is a highly competitive, international city                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A highly competitive, international city is one where all people play an active role in its development – homeless services should help people be reintegrated back into the wider community so that they can make their own positive</li> </ul>  |

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|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | contribution to the development of the city |
|--|---|

**The Leeds Housing Strategy 2005-2010** – Leeds Housing Strategy sets out its vision to ‘create and maintain sustainable and cohesive communities’. The strategy has three core aims:

- to ensure that all neighbourhoods across the city are ‘decent places’ where people want to live
- to achieve decent homes for all Leeds residents
- to tackle difficulties or disadvantages in accessing housing or housing services

The Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 will contribute towards meeting these aims. The focus on homeless prevention will enable more households to remain in their current homes and in their neighbourhoods. The broadening of housing options will mean that homeless households are assisted to find accommodation that suits their needs in areas where they choose to live. Barriers that prevent or impair the capacity of customers to access housing or services will also be considered by the Homelessness Strategy. An example of this will be action to assist customers who are excluded from the allocation of housing, through the right of review, the support planning process and identifying other housing options.

The Leeds Housing Strategy and its contributory strategies are coordinated through the Leeds Housing Partnership. This places strategic direction within a partnership perspective and enables the strategic duties of the council to be recognised while also recognising the importance of partnership working to deliver strategic objectives and desired outcomes. The Homelessness Strategy will be monitored via the Fair Access Strategic Working Group which in turn reports to the Leeds Housing Partnership Executive. It is proposed that a specific sub-group of the Fair Access Strategic Working Group is established for governance purposes and also to foster a greater partnership approach to tackling homelessness.

**Housing Strategy for BME Communities** - The overall aim of the Housing Strategy for BME Communities is to ensure that the services provided by all housing organisations in Leeds meet the differing needs and preferences of the various communities within the city. The strategy has three key themes, which are:

- taking services forward
- responding to needs
- community cohesion, safety and support

The Homelessness Strategy will respond to this agenda primarily through action to gain a better understanding of trends relating to homelessness and housing need in BME communities. This understanding can be used to deliver more effective services in the future.

**The Leeds City Council Lettings Policy** – local housing authorities are legally obliged to develop an allocation scheme that sets out the procedures for allocating

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housing in their district. The scheme should include details of how the authority will enable households to exercise choice or to express preferences about the housing that should be allocated to them. The scheme should be framed to award 'reasonable preference' in the allocation of housing to applicants who fit into certain groups such as homeless households. The scheme should also set out the circumstances when a household can be excluded from the allocation because they are subject to some form of immigration control or due to their 'unacceptable behaviour'. An amended Lettings Policy was implemented in March 2006.

The Leeds City Council Letting Policy sets out the framework for allocating housing to homeless households – these arrangements in part enable the Council to fulfil its statutory obligations to homeless households. The Homelessness Strategy will consider how the Lettings Policy can be used more effectively by delivering the required number of lettings to homeless households but also using the reasonable preference provisions to assist a household to secure housing without having to make a homeless application.

**'Every Child Matters'/Children's and Young People's Plan** – 'Every Child Matters' is a new approach to promoting the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. Its aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

The Council and its partners will be working to gain a better understanding of the needs of children and to tailor services to meet these needs. A Children and Young People's Plan was published in April 2006.

The Homelessness Strategy will contribute towards the development of services for children in the city in a number of ways. The Strategy will make a definite commitment to improve the standards of service offered to children whose families are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This will be done by setting a commitment to reducing the number of families who need to be placed in temporary accommodation, minimising the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation options, such as bed and breakfast, and improving access to education for children in temporary accommodation. The Strategy will also ensure that families who are excluded from the allocation of housing are assisted to address this issue through legal advice, appropriate housing support and the availability of other housing options. The Strategy will also respond to youth homelessness in the city primarily through the development of the existing mediation service, giving school-aged children better information on available services and their legal rights and the use of additional priority awards to help young people who are not homeless but in housing need to secure appropriate housing. A fundamental principle of the Homelessness Strategy is that wherever possible young people should have a good relationship with their parents, irrespective of whether they live with them or not.

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**Supporting People Strategy** – the Leeds Supporting People Strategy is currently being updated as the Leeds Supporting People Partnership (Commissioning Body) have made a commitment to updating the five year strategy on an annual to ensure that it always reflects the context in which the programme is operating. The Supporting People programme is responsible for the review, commissioning and funding of housing related support services in the city. The aims of the Supporting People programme are:

- Delivering greater choice for clients
- Improving the quality of service delivery
- Achieving value for money
- Building effective partnerships
- Commission housing support services to promote social inclusion

The Supporting People Strategy will be a key partner strategy of the Homelessness Strategy: delivering a range of supported housing services to meet the needs of homeless households and those threatened with homelessness.

- Ensuring that services are commissioned that contribute towards the homeless prevention agenda.
- Putting in place the necessary action to deliver effective and timely move-on from accommodation based housing support.
- Commissioning effective floating housing support services that deliver effective tenancy sustainment and therefore reduce the incidence of repeat homelessness.
- Work in partnership to ensure that supported housing providers and their clients are conversant with their legal rights and the Council's legal responsibilities and duties.

**Safer Leeds/Leeds City Council Domestic Violence Policy** - The core aim of the Safer Leeds Strategy is adopting a partnership approach to reduce the incidence of crime and the fear of crime. The fundamental principle of the partnership is that everyone in Leeds has the right to live their life without fear for their own or other people's safety. The Homelessness Strategy will seek to contribute towards this agenda by strengthening the links between homelessness and community safety priorities. This will primarily be done through work to prevent homelessness caused by domestic violence and other forms of hate crime: the most common cause of homelessness in Leeds. The Homelessness Strategy is committed to broadening the housing options available to people who are encountering domestic violence and hate crime including enabling them to remain in their home if that is their choice.

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The development of a Sanctuary Scheme is part of the drive to reposition housing need caused by domestic violence and hate crime as being a community safety as well as a homelessness issue. Therefore the scheme will be established in partnership with the West Yorkshire Police and representatives from the Community Safety division of the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department.

**Empty Property Strategy** – The Empty Property Strategy recognises that there should always be some empty properties in order to enable residential mobility and the improvement or redevelopment of stock. However in some areas of Leeds the turnover of vacant homes and the number of long term empty dwellings is significantly higher than elsewhere. This can have a significant impact upon the sustainability of such areas with a decrease or stagnation of house prices and the disaffection of communities who live in the areas. The Homelessness Strategy will work alongside the Empty Property Strategy: there is recognition that there is an insufficient supply of housing options for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Opportunities will be identified to use empty dwellings to house homeless households in either temporary accommodation or as a long-term housing option.

**Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme** – The scheme involves the accreditation of private landlords who can demonstrate that they manage their properties effectively, can provide good quality accommodation which meets requisite standards and also comply with their legal responsibilities as landlords. The Homelessness Strategy seeks to promote the use of the private rented sector as a viable housing option to resolve housing need. Part of this approach will be to encourage customers and housing sector professionals to see that the private rented sector is a viable option. The Accreditation Scheme will be a key element of this work.

**Regeneration programmes in Leeds** – There are a number of large scale regeneration initiatives currently in place or in planning. Such schemes support wider regeneration objectives but have housing as a key element, especially in relation to delivering greater tenure diversity in areas where there has been a significant concentration of social housing. Such initiatives support the Council Plan aim to address social exclusion and socio-economic polarisation. Examples of such initiatives are as follows:

- **Beeston Hill and Holbeck** - Comprehensive housing led regeneration, attracting funding through both elements of the Single Regional Housing Pot, together with housing market renewal funding. A Private Finance Initiative bid is also being developed that will support the regeneration of the area.
- **EASEL**- Private and Public Sector Partnership Scheme which is designed to build upon the decency works being undertaken by Leeds East and South-East Homes, by replacing existing obsolete housing with high-quality housing for the traditional housing market and creating affordable housing home ownership models to promote tenure diversity.

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- **West Leeds Gateway** - Comprehensive regeneration scheme to improve the quality of housing in the west of the city, address imbalances within the housing markets, improve the economic infrastructure and develop effective links with the city centre.
- **Little London Private Finance Initiative** - Will be the second Private Finance Initiative relating to housing in Leeds. It is envisaged that approximately £78 million will be available through the initiative. The scheme will aim to promote tenure diversity in the Little London area through the replacement of obsolete stock with new housing for market sale and affordable home ownership.

The demolition of obsolete stock that is currently managed by the Leeds ALMOs is a central element of these initiatives. It is estimated that approximately 4,500 ALMO managed properties will be demolished through the implementation of these and other schemes. It is forecast that around 600-700 new properties will be allotted to the Leeds ALMOs as replacement units. The Homelessness Strategy strongly supports the drive to promote tenure diversity and affordable housing options as a means of delivering more mixed sustainable communities. Clearly the continued contraction in the stock of properties managed by the Leeds ALMOs will mean that the number of available homes will continue to fall. This will have implications for the capacity of the Council to fulfil its statutory duties to homeless households. Conversely, the Homelessness Strategy will strive to ensure that social housing does not become a residual housing option that is only available to the most vulnerable including homeless households. The Homelessness Strategy will therefore respond not only to the impact of these programmes by seeking to ensure that an equitable balance is achieved in terms of the proportion of lettings made to homeless households and other housing applicants, but also, by broadening the housing options available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Additionally the Regeneration Plan for Leeds promotes the development of Intensive Neighbourhood Management. This places an emphasis on effective management and support to all vulnerable households and the Homelessness Strategy work with the Supporting People strategy to ensure appropriate floating support is available to previously homeless people.

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## Objectives

### Objective One

**Through effective homeless prevention work to reduce the incidence of homelessness in the city.**

#### Targets

**Reduce the number of homeless acceptances made by the Council to a maximum of 1600 per annum by the end of 2009/2010**

**Increase the number of homeless preventions achieved to a minimum of 600 per annum by the end of 2009/2010**

One of the aims of the new Homelessness Strategy is to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness. The effectiveness of the strategy in meeting this aim will be assessed through the two targets listed above. The DCLG use the number of homeless acceptances made by each authority as a high level indicator of the effectiveness of homeless prevention services. However, in isolation such an indicator could be construed as being a negative yardstick with the Council being able to reduce the number of acceptances by adopting a more rigid homeless assessment policy. The homeless prevention indicator is also useful because it makes no distinction between households who are likely to be owed a housing duty - the key test being that homelessness has been prevented.

The first objective is an overarching objective, the success of which will be dependent upon whether more specific objectives/targets, relating to homeless prevention such as establishing a Sanctuary scheme and building on the success of the mediation service and the private sector lettings scheme, are achieved.

The Council's Homeless Service is currently in the process of being reorganised and relocated to new offices. The restructure will result in a higher proportion of officers carrying out a housing advice rather than homeless assessment role at a location (Great George Street) where customers are able to access other services relating to benefits and rights. Customers will be referred to the homeless assessment service if the housing advice offered has failed to prevent homelessness.

The target relating to homeless prevention will primarily be met through effective housing advice services provided by the Council. However, a challenge of the new Homelessness Strategy will be to encourage other housing advice services in the city, especially those services that the Council funds or part-funds, to start recording homeless prevention outcomes. Through the Supporting People programme the Council will also try to measure the effectiveness of housing support services that have been commissioned to prevent homelessness.

It is essential that a focus on homeless prevention is a key objective of the new Homelessness Strategy. The DCLG use the number of homeless acceptances made by the authority as a high-level measure of how successful homeless

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prevention initiatives are in that district. It is crucial that this focus does not lead to households who are clearly homeless, or threatened with homelessness, being advised that a homeless application will not be taken and that temporary accommodation will not be secured. Other non-council agencies have expressed a concern that this is already taking place and will continue with the development of the new strategy. If a decision is taken not to activate a homeless application then the Council must be able to justify this decision by demonstrating they are providing continuous and proactive housing advice in order to prevent homelessness. This information must be detailed comprehensively in case files and the customer must be given written information detailing the assistance and advice that is being provided. The Council must be legally accountable for its services and the Strategy envisages that non-statutory agencies will play a vital role in ensuring that this happens. There is also a clear link to Objective 13 in the new strategy which sets out to increase the proportion of households who on receiving a negative homeless decision or other decision relating to their housing application that is against their interest exercise their right to a review.

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## **Objective Two**

**Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by March 2010**

### **Target**

**Reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation to a maximum of 261 by the end of March 2010**

The DCLG have set a target for all housing authorities to reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by 50% by the end of March 2010. The baseline position has been set at the end of December 2004 – at that point 521 households were being placed in temporary accommodation on a nightly basis. Therefore, the target is to reduce the number of households placed to 261 by the end of March 2010.

This is also an overarching objective that will be dependent upon the success of other more specific objectives/targets relating to homeless prevention and maximising the supply of accommodation available to homeless households. The objectives relating to the establishment of the Sanctuary Scheme and the development of the existing Mediation Service and the Private Lettings Scheme will be crucial to meeting the target.

The review of homelessness has identified that the supply of social housing is continuing to contract and the waiting time for a homeless household to be rehoused is increasing on a yearly basis. Maximising the housing options open to homeless households is therefore of crucial importance in terms of ensuring that an adequate proportion of lettings made by both the Leeds ALMOs and RSLs are made to homeless households. It will be important to carry out a review of the policies relating to excluding an applicant from the Housing Register (suitability test) so that exclusion only happens when the unacceptable behaviour has been such that such a decision is unavoidable.

The Supporting People Strategy will need to incorporate the target to cut temporary accommodation placements by 50% by 2010. Clearly this target will have an impact upon the number of units of accommodation based support that the Supporting People programme in Leeds needs to commission. The review of homelessness identified that approximately 40% of accommodation placements are with private providers who are not commissioned through Supporting People. At the time of developing the new Homelessness Strategy the Council was in the process of re-tendering the contract to provide temporary accommodation through the private sector. The award of such a contract will need to include the flexibility to reduce the number of units procured on an incremental basis to meet the 2010 temporary accommodation target.

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## Objectives

### Objective Three

**Establish a Sanctuary Scheme to give customers threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence and other hate crime a wider range of options to resolve their housing difficulties.**

#### Target

**By 2010, 250 households, who are threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence or other hate crime, are to have their homelessness prevented through the installation of security measures via the Sanctuary Scheme.**

The main cause of homelessness in Leeds is relationship breakdown with partner involving violence. 20% of homeless acceptances in the city relate to some form of violence or hate crime. The Council is committed to reducing the incidence of homelessness against these reasons but not by adopting an overall more rigid approach to homeless assessment.

Since 2003 the Council has done significant work in terms of identifying examples of best practice relating to homeless prevention. The London Borough of Harrow was the first to establish a Sanctuary Scheme to respond to homelessness resulting from incidents of domestic violence and hate crime. They identified that approximately 40 to 50% of households who approached them for assistance were not living with the perpetrator of the violence. This suggests that within the context of customer choice and personal safety there was scope to prevent homelessness relating to violence and hate crime. This research was further corroborated by the DCLG who identified that national trends were very similar.

The Sanctuary Scheme involves the installation of a range of security measures to create a safe room in a customer's own home or reinforce external security. The scheme will involve a partnership arrangement between Neighbourhoods and Housing Department and West Yorkshire Police. It is envisaged that following a request for security measures to be installed the Domestic Violence Coordinators (West Yorkshire Police) will carry out a survey of the property to identify whether it is suitable for the security measures to be installed and the range of security measures required. The role of the Domestic Violence Coordinators will guard against inappropriate referrals and can also provide some degree of advice or referral to other agencies and support.

The Council has carried out a tender exercise and awarded a contract to supply and fit the security measures to one organisation. An emphasis in the contract award has been speed of installation and also an awareness of the needs and rights of customers who have encountered domestic violence and hate crime, such as the absolute need for confidentiality.

It is likely that the cost of a standard Sanctuary installation will be £600. No cost will be incurred by the customer as this may act as a deterrent to the most vulnerable. The scheme will be tenure neutral. Research carried out by LB Harrow identified

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

that one third of Sanctuary sign-ups were to owner occupiers. Where a customer is a tenant it will be important to obtain the consent of the landlord for the security measures to be installed.

It must be stressed that it will be entirely the customer's choice to take up the offer of the security measures. If, for whatever reason, the customer decides that they are still not safe even after the security measures have been installed, the Council will automatically activate a homeless application and if necessary secure temporary accommodation. This emphasises the purpose of the Sanctuary Scheme as being an option to prevent homelessness where this is the customers own choice.

The Council makes a commitment in the Homelessness Strategy that no household should feel compelled to take up the option of the Sanctuary Scheme. It is entirely the customer's choice. If any customer feels that they have been forced or cajoled into taking up the offer of a Sanctuary installation then this will be treated seriously and the Council will respond through the formal complaints procedure. There is a role for non-statutory homelessness practitioners to hold the Council to account to ensure that this scheme is provided on a choice basis.

The Homelessness Strategy recognises that a significant number of customers who take up the offer of a Sanctuary will also require housing support. The Supporting People Strategy will need to consider the impact of the development of the scheme and to ensure that an adequate supply of floating housing support is commissioned to meet service demand.

In 2004/05 947 households were accepted as homeless due to experiencing some form of violence or hate crime. On that basis, and the research carried out by LB Harrow and the DCLG, the Homelessness Strategy forecasts that 250 households will take up the offer of having security measures installed as a means of safely remaining in their current accommodation.

Leeds has secured funding of approximately £200,000 through a Local Area Agreement. This funding will be used to pay for the scheme in the first year of its operation. It is envisaged that savings made against the temporary accommodation budget can be used in future years to offset the cost of the scheme.

However, it is important that the Leeds ALMOs and the RSLs consider what housing management options can be used to prevent a household from becoming homeless, even if they do not wish to have a package of security measures installed. For example, awarding a household additional priority so that they can be rehoused, making an allocation of alternative housing or where applicable pursuing the eviction of the perpetrator of the violence.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010

## Objectives

### Objective Four

**Increase the range of housing options open to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by developing the existing Private Lettings scheme**

#### Target

**Increase the number of lettings made through the Private Lettings scheme to 400 per annum by March 2010**

An objective of the first Homelessness Strategy was to establish a rent deposit scheme in Leeds. In the last three years the Council has been unable to release the requisite funds to establish a rent deposit or rent deposit guarantee scheme.

The Council has been successful in establishing a Private Lettings Scheme which at the point when the review of homelessness was carried out (end of February 2006) has let 383 Assured Shorthold Tenancies in the previous eighteen months. This needs to be compared with authorities such as Colchester Borough Council (who were awarded Beacon status for their homeless services in 2003) whose Private Lettings Scheme has assisted approximately 100 customers to take up Assured Shorthold Tenancies in the last three years.

The scheme has been successful partly through the development of effective working relations with the Council's Benefits Service. Leeds is a pathfinder authority for the Local Housing Allowance (LHA). The LHA essentially entails the payment of a flat rate of housing benefit based upon the number of bedrooms/living rooms that the household requires. If the rental charge is lower than the housing benefit cap then the tenant can keep the difference; if the rental charge is higher than the cap then the tenant will be obliged to make up the difference. Landlords have found this to be attractive option as claims can be processed more quickly without the need for a rent calculation to be carried out. Landlords are offered direct payment of rent for the first twelve months of the tenancy and claims are treated as priority for processing by the Benefits Service.

The continuing contraction of the housing stock managed by the Leeds ALMOs means that developing the Private Lettings Service will be a crucial objective within the new Homelessness Strategy not only in terms of providing a homeless prevention option but also as a means of discharging the housing duty owed to homeless households. The Private Lettings scheme and the accompanying housing benefit concessions make no distinction between households on the basis of whether a housing duty is owed. The scheme therefore represents a pure prevention opportunity for all households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Between August 2005 and February 2006 the scheme set up 160 Assured Shorthold Tenancies – if this rate were to continue then approximately 275 lettings would be made per annum.

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

However, because the scheme centres on the partnership arrangement with the Leeds Benefits Service it is primarily aimed at customers who are in eligible for means tested benefits. It is therefore crucial that the scheme is opened up to customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness but are working in low paid employment. Customers who are working are more likely to be those to whom no housing duty is owed under the homeless legislation but nevertheless will have a housing need that needs to be addressed. By the end of February 2006 the scheme had let properties through 45 landlords but it is recognised that a significant number of landlords will not let their properties through the scheme unless a bond is paid or at least guaranteed.

Work will be carried out to identify the feasibility of securing funding to establish a rent deposit scheme. Clearly if such funding is secured then it will be important to ensure that this will only be used for tenancies that otherwise would not be let through the existing scheme.

Under the terms of the 2004 Housing Act all landlords who require a deposit for an Assured Shorthold Tenancy will in future have to safeguard it in an approved tenancy deposit scheme. It will therefore be a prerequisite that all landlords who receive a rent deposit place it in a tenancy deposit scheme used by the Council.

It is intended that private landlords will be able to advertise properties that they have to let through the weekly Leeds Homes choice based lettings flyer. This is clearly a positive step in promoting the private rented sector as a viable housing option. It is envisaged that whilst a landlord will have the ultimate choice as to whether to accept an applicant as a tenant properties will be let to households with a comparatively high level of priority including homeless households. The Homeless Service will work in close conjunction with colleagues from Leeds City Council's Strategic Landlord to ensure that legal procedures such as organising a housing duty discharge through a 'qualifying offer' and landlords' entitlement to direct payment of housing benefit as applicable.

The Homelessness Strategy will also link up with the Council's Empty Property Strategy to identify the scope to secure properties that can be used to house households as a homeless prevention measure to discharge housing duty. Consideration will need to be given to how the costs of property improvement can be met and what organisations will carry out the housing management role.

The Supporting People Programme aims to increase the availability of floating housing support services that are linked to the customer rather than residence in particular accommodation. Floating housing support should therefore be tenure neutral – customers should be able to access support irrespective of the type of accommodation they are occupying. The Homelessness Strategy will seek to increase the availability of housing support for customers who have taken up the offer of a private rented tenancy. Existing floating housing support services are already offering support to customers who have taken up the offer of a private tenancy but there is an opportunity to extend the use of such support over the time span of the strategy.

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

The Council is committed to ensuring that households who take up an offer of a private tenancy do so through their own choice. Customers should not feel compelled to take up the offer of temporary accommodation nor should they be told that it is their only option when the Council has clear legal obligations towards that household. In common with other homeless prevention options the Council must be accountable for the advice and assistance it has given and therefore the Strategy emphasises the important role of non-statutory agencies and practitioners in terms of monitoring the services provided.

It is recognised that the increased use of the private rented sector may well lead to other issues of concern, especially if tenancies are concentrated in limited areas of the city. This will act against the wider strategic housing objective of creating mixed sustainable communities. The Homelessness Strategy is mindful of the point that vulnerable households with a range of support needs could be concentrated in limited areas of the city which become characterised by high tenancy turnover and high levels of anti-social behaviour. Therefore the strategy recognises the importance of trying to broaden the range of geographical areas in which tenancies can be secured, the need to engage with partners from Safer Leeds and the importance of housing support in assisting households to maintain their tenancies. Part of the engagement with other agencies involved in neighbourhood management will be stressing the need to increasingly use the private rented sector as a housing option due to the shortage of social housing units.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Five

### Reduce the level of repeat homelessness in the city

#### Target

**Reduce to 5% by the end of 2009/2010 the percentage of homeless acceptances made by the Council that had previously been accepted as homeless within a two year period**

An objective of the first Homelessness Strategy was to identify the incidence of repeat homelessness within the city. In 2003 there was no agreed definition of what constituted repeat homelessness. Some authorities were recording repeat homelessness in relation to multiple temporary accommodation admissions whilst others were defining the measure in terms of how many times a household had been accepted as homeless under the homeless legislation. At this point it was difficult for the Council to give an accurate figure of the level of repeat homelessness in the city.

In 2005 the DCLG and the Audit Commission established a definition of repeat homelessness relating to whether a household accepted as statutorily homeless had previously been accepted as homeless within a two year period – the first housing duty having been discharged through the acceptance or refusal of a tenancy through a social landlord or the acceptance of a qualifying Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

This definition is not flawless: it does record repeat homelessness for households who are not statutorily homeless and authorities in high demand areas where it was less likely for an offer of social housing to be made within a two year period would therefore be more likely to have a lower incidence of repeat homelessness.

In 2004/05 the Council identified that 284 of the 2782 homeless acceptances made had previously been accepted as homeless within a two year period – repeat homelessness therefore stood at 10.2% in the city using this measure. The forecast figure for 2005/06 is 130 repeat acceptances out of a total of 1850 – which means that the level of repeat homelessness in the city is 7%.

The Audit Commission publish thresholds relating to the best and poorest performing authorities in the country. The upper threshold (75<sup>th</sup> percentile of performing authorities) is 0 and the lower threshold (25<sup>th</sup> percentile of performing authorities) is 8%. This suggests that although Leeds is now comfortably outside of the worst performing 25% of authorities there is considerable scope for improvement.

It is likely that the increased focus on homeless prevention in terms of the provision of housing advice services has led to a reduction in the incidence of repeat homelessness. However, we do not know definite reasons for the reduction nor how performance can continue to be improved so that the level of repeat homeless is reduced to a maximum of 5% of homeless acceptances made.

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

It is currently not known what the impact of housing management services carried out by the ALMOs and RSLs and housing support services commissioned by the Supporting People programme are having in terms of preventing repeat homelessness.

It is known that 53% of repeat homeless cases identified in 2005/06 had their first housing duty discharged through the offer of a tenancy managed by the Leeds ALMOs. Of these 69% left their tenancy due to encountering some form of violence or hate crime. This emphasises the importance of establishing a Sanctuary scheme in the city to prevent homelessness (including repeat homelessness) caused by domestic violence or hate crime.

It also emphasises the importance of using the tools available to social landlords to prevent tenancy breakdown such as an award of additional priority to be rehoused on the Leeds Homes Register, an allocation of an alternative property or using Ground 2A of Schedule 2 Housing Act 1985 (domestic violence causing a partner or other family member to leave the property) to have a perpetrator of domestic violence evicted from a secure tenancy managed by one of the Leeds ALMOs. With regard to the last point it may be necessary to provide accommodation based respite housing whilst the eviction takes place and the customer can either move back to their old home (with housing support and security measures installed if required) or be given enough time for the landlord to make an offer of alternative housing.

It is currently not known what proportion of the customers who had their first housing duty discharged through the offer of a tenancy managed by one of the Leeds ALMOs were also receiving housing support from a service commissioned through the Supporting People programme. Developing a process to record this information on the Orchard system is therefore of crucial importance. Identifying the percentage of customers who have sustained a tenancy for a specific time period with housing support in place (or until the support planning process was completed) will be a critical measure in terms of the future reviewing and commissioning of floating housing support services through the Supporting People programme.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Six

**Continue to reduce the incidence of youth homelessness in the city**

### Target

**By the end of 2009/2010 reduce the number of homeless acceptances where the homeless reason is parental eviction to a maximum of 150 per annum**

Homelessness caused by parental eviction is the second most common reason for homelessness in Leeds. In 2004 506 households were accepted as being statutorily homeless where their reason for homelessness was parental eviction. Historically little action was taken by the Council to help young people reconcile relations with their parents and ultimately to establish whether the young person could return home and homelessness be prevented.

In order to respond to the issue of youth homelessness the Council established a mediation service in partnership with a local youth agency, Archway, in October 2004. The purpose of the mediation service was to identify opportunities to prevent homelessness by helping young people to reconcile relations with their parents so that they could return home for an indefinite period or until they could leave home in a planned way.

In 2005 the number of homeless acceptances relating to parental evictions was reduced to 198. The award of the contract to provide the mediation service to Archway also meant that the young people referred to the scheme were able to access other housing advice and support services provided by that organisation.

The new Homelessness Strategy sets a target to reduce the number of households accepted as homeless because of a parental eviction to 150 per annum by the end of March 2010.

The mediation service will continue to be a key part of the strategy to reduce the incidence of youth homelessness in the city. The Council now funds Archway to employ two mediators to respond to the demand for the service. This arrangement will continue pending ongoing monitoring of service demand.

The Homelessness Strategy has noted recent case law (Robinson v Hammersmith and Fulham LBC) which stipulates that it would be unlawful for an authority to defer taking a homeless application whilst mediation work is being carried out. The Council is clear that this does not mean that mediation can not be used as a homeless prevention option but rather that a homeless application should be taken at the same time. If the mediation is successful and the young person is able to return home on an indefinite basis then a 'Not Homeless' decision can be taken.

It is believed that some level of youth homelessness does relate to the failure of the authority in addressing other forms of housing need such as overcrowding. Young people are living in accommodation that is so sub-standard that they have little option but to make a homeless application. If the young person had been offered a

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

suitable level of priority on the housing register to be rehoused then they may have been able to remain in their parental home until they are rehoused. The Leeds City Council lettings policy offers a more generous level of priority on the basis of overcrowding than the statutory framework. Work will be carried out to identify the scope to use priority awards on the basis of overcrowding and poor housing conditions to better address housing need in the city. However, it must be stressed that such awards will not be used as an alternative to taking a homeless application where it is clear that the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness. Once again, non-statutory agencies will play a vital role in holding the Council to account for the decisions it makes.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Seven

### Continue to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping

#### Target

- **To sustain reductions in rough sleeping to 10 or fewer and as near to zero as possible**

An objective of the first Homelessness Strategy was to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping within the city. Leeds, as with other major cities, had seen increasing numbers of people sleeping rough in the city. An initial Rough Sleepers Strategy was developed in 2000 that set out action plans to reduce the numbers sleeping rough; including the establishment of an outreach and support service. Despite work to progress the Rough Sleeper Strategy numbers of people sleeping rough remained high with 43 counted on one night in October 2002.

In December of 2002 a Rough Sleeping Summit was held bringing together representatives from the Council, DCLG, West Yorkshire Police and a range of housing, support and health care providers. This summit identified a range of issues related to the provision and co-ordination of accommodation, health and drug treatment services and related community safety issues. It reconfirmed the need for a robust multi-agency approach to tackle the range of issues identified. Following this a "Street User Strategy" was developed and agreed.

The strategy is two-fold, aiming to ensure that those engaged in rough sleeping or other street based activities have opportunities to access appropriate services to improve their quality of life and move away from a life on the street. Alongside this it also aims to disrupt and challenge illegal and anti-social street behaviour.

The strategy aims to achieve the following objectives.

- To reduce street activity in Leeds
- To assist street users to access accommodation and treatment services
- To improve the health and life chances of those living a street lifestyle
- To reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour associated with street users
- To contribute to a reduction in fear of crime

The partnership activities undertaken over the last few years have resulted in significant reductions in rough sleeping. These have included;

- The re-commissioning of the rough sleeper outreach services to a broader street user outreach service
- The development of weekly multi-agency case conferences to ensure appropriate information sharing and to assist the co-ordination of services for people rough sleeping.
- Improving the access routes and processes to access Local Authority dispersed and emergency accommodation
- The development of an Intensive Support Programme for rough sleepers within ring fenced accommodation

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

- The provision of specific accommodation, support and assessment services for drug using street users

The challenge for the next four years is to build on the work done so far to further reduce the numbers of rough sleepers. Key issues to be addressed will include;

- Improving access to accommodation services for street users
- Improving and maintaining access to drug treatment services for street users
- Improving access to primary health care and mental health services for street users
- Developing responses to identified gaps in service provision for street users
- Preventing rough sleeping where possible by ensuring all agencies are aware of the trigger factors that may lead to rough sleeping. Developing provision for those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping due to alcohol misuse

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010

## Objectives

### Objective Eight

**Ensure that that wherever possible homeless households or those threatened with homelessness have a live housing application on the Leeds Homes Register**

#### Target

**Reduce the number of households who are deemed to be unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council by 50% by March 2010**

**Ensure that all households who are deemed to be unsuitable have access to some form of housing support**

**Ensure that all households who are deemed to be unsuitable have a housing option made available to them**

Under the terms of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) local housing authorities are able to exclude applicants from the allocation of housing if it is deemed that they have committed unacceptable behaviour. This behaviour should be such that if the applicant were a current tenant the authority would be entitled to an outright possession order. In addition, for them to be deemed unsuitable to be a tenant the applicant should not have demonstrated any modification in their behaviour. At the end of households of August 2006 825 households were excluded from the Leeds Homes Register on the basis that they were considered to be unsuitable to be tenants. This figure exceeds the number of households who Leeds City Council had placed in temporary accommodation as homeless households. Applicants have a statutory right to request a review of the decision to exclude them from the housing register. In 2005 only 60 households made such a challenge. This suggests that customers and their advocates such as supported housing providers are often unaware of their statutory rights.

Feedback from supported housing providers and the Leeds Supporting People Team is that moving unsuitable customers on from accommodation based support can be problematic if they are unable to access social housing. Furthermore, some providers have been reluctant or unwilling to offer services to households who are deemed to be unsuitable on the basis that there would be no immediate means for moving the customer onto longer term provision. Discussion with supported housing providers indicates that there is not only a low level of understanding of the legal framework relating to exclusion but also the application of the law.

Therefore a key priority will be for the Council to carry out a series of briefing sessions for supported housing providers on the whole suitability issue. One of the key tests that must be applied to suitability exclusions is whether at the point of assessment the customer has demonstrated a modification in their behaviour. The briefing sessions will encourage supported housing providers to build into their support planning process steps and actions to address the behaviour that has resulted in the exclusion. This could be making arrangements for a customer to pay

## Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

off their rent arrears or to address dependency issues that have led to the customer committing anti-social behaviour.

In 2005 31 of the 60 reviews that were heard at Review Panel were overturned. This suggests that if customers and supported housing providers were more aware of the legal framework relating to suitability exclusions then more review requests would be received, with an accompanying rise in decisions being overturned.

The most common reason for the Council to seek possession of a tenancy is rent arrears. However, it will be important to address other issues such as anti-social behaviour which result in possession action being taken and/or a customer being found to be unsuitable to be a tenant. Closer working will be developed with colleagues in the Community Safety Division of the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department who manage the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit. Additionally more effective links need to be established with specific projects targeted at improving behaviour such as the Signpost Project in the south of the city. The project works with households who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour to help them address their behaviour through a combination of enforcement and support. Many of these households will be living in supported accommodation and some of them may have difficulty in moving-on as they are excluded from the housing register. Closer working arrangements will be established to ensure the support offered by the Signpost project is complemented by that of supported housing officers with the dual aims of addressing the anti-social behaviour and helping households to secure suitable long-term housing.

The Council is committed to ensuring that some form of contact and assistance is available for all households who have been excluded from the housing register. Discussions will be held with the Leeds Supporting People Team to explore the capacity to commission floating housing support services which work with customers who are excluded from the housing register as a means of addressing such behaviour. However, it is recognised that many customers will already be working with existing services and so the initial focus will be on better informing both customers and supporting housing providers of their rights and responsibilities.

If a customer is deemed to be unsuitable they will not be able to access accommodation that is managed by the Leeds ALMOs. However, in some instances the Council has accepted a housing duty to these customers as a homeless household: a duty which can only be discharged under specific grounds. The most common ground is the offer of permanent accommodation through a social landlord. However, the Council is also able to discharge this duty through the qualifying offer of an assured shorthold tenancy. Where it has not been possible to overturn the suitability decision either through review or modified behaviour, then the Council will strive to offer of a private rented tenancy is made to all households especially those to whom a housing duty is owed and/or have dependent children.

It is believed that approximately 50% of households currently deemed unsuitable have dependent children. There is a clear need to align this situation with the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. Namely, that whilst the Council may deem a household to be unsuitable there will still be a need to put in place appropriate housing and support

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

packages for these households. A key principle of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda is to ensure that children and their families are given clear information on their rights and responsibilities. The actions set out above clearly reflect this principle and also the need for customers to be advised why they have been found unsuitable and what steps they can take to challenge such decisions.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010

## Objectives

### Objective Nine

**Ensure that a balance of social housing lettings is achieved so that the Council is able to fulfil its statutory duty to homeless households whilst giving other households the opportunity to access social housing**

#### Target

**To ensure that on an ongoing basis between 30-40% of lettings made by the Leeds ALMOs are to homeless households including between 20-30% of lettings made to statutory homeless households**

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) places a duty on local housing authorities to secure temporary accommodation for an indefinite period for unintentionally homeless and in priority need households. This duty can only be discharged on certain grounds – the most common of which is through an offer of permanent accommodation managed by a social landlord such as the Leeds ALMOs. The same Act also places a duty on all local housing authorities to frame their allocation schemes so that reasonable preference is given to applicants who fit into certain groups. Consequently, the Leeds City Council Lettings Policy places statutory homeless households in the Priority Extra band and non-statutory homeless households in the Priority band on the Leeds Homes Register.

Between November 2005 and February 2006 the Leeds ALMOs let 38% of available homes (either through choice based or direct lets) to homeless households – 26% of these lettings were to statutory homeless households and 12% to non-statutory homeless households. There is no doubt that the contraction in the stock of properties managed by the Leeds ALMOs in the last three years has placed significant pressure on the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to homeless households. This has also resulted in the average waiting time for a statutory homeless household to be rehoused increasing by 84 days between 2001 and 2005.

However, it is considered that the correct balance has been achieved in the breakdown of lettings made to homeless households, waiting list applicants and existing tenants who wish to transfer. An increase in the proportion of lettings made to statutory homeless households would not necessarily result in a reduction in the incidents of homelessness in Leeds. The Council is committed to wherever possible award additional preference on the appropriate ground. If applicants believed that they would not get rehoused on the basis of overcrowding or poor housing conditions, then there would be an accompanying rise in the number of homeless applications made. It is important that the lettings policy acts to give all applicants the opportunity to be rehoused irrespective of their circumstances. A good example of where this is happening is the London Borough of Camden: an inner London borough where the pressures on the social housing supply are so acute that it takes on average three years for a homeless household to be rehoused. However Camden Council are committed to achieving parity in lettings between homeless households, transfer and waiting list applicants as they believe it is the most effective way of controlling the supply and demand issues evident in the borough.

## Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

It is forecasted that there will be further reductions in the number of available homes to let due to the impact of a number of regeneration programmes in the city such as EASEL and the Little London PFI project. Existing forecasts suggest that these schemes will involve the demolition of around 4500 properties that are currently managed by the Leeds ALMOs with the ALMOs receiving only approximately 650 properties that they will directly manage as replacements. The new Homelessness Strategy accepts that this arrangement is required to make the business models robust and also to support the affordable homes, mixed communities agenda. However, as it is likely that the number of lettings made by the Leeds ALMOs will fall to around 3600 per annum by 2009/2010 this raises questions regarding the capacity of the Council to meet not only its statutory requirements to homeless households but also to achieve an equitable balance in the number of lettings made to different groups. It is likely that the demolition of around 4500 properties will mean that an equivalent number of tenants will need to be decanted to other available ALMO managed properties. This could mean that the proportion of lettings made to statutory homeless households decreases as less properties would be advertised under Choice Based Lettings. Moreover, if it is widely perceived that applying as a homeless household is the only way of accessing social housing in the future then the Council will have to deal with an increase in homeless applications and an accompanying rise in temporary accommodation placements.

Therefore, over the next five years there needs to be a commitment to maintain the balance in the proportion of lettings made to homeless households, waiting list and transfer applicants. Whilst it is recognised that the existing and future contraction in housing stock has, and will place significant pressures on the Council these are not as acute as those faced in authorities such as the London Borough of Camden. Therefore further work needs to be carried out to examine the practices of authorities such as Camden.

It is currently not known what proportion of lettings made by RSLs are to homeless households. Feedback received from other housing authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region indicate that this is a significant issue for them. It would be difficult to argue this is the case in Leeds without relevant data. A key priority therefore will be to work with local RSLs to obtain lettings data which breaks down the proportion of lettings made to homeless households and other groups. It is also not known whether such homeless lettings are for households that the RSL has defined as being homeless or those to whom the Council has made some form of assessment and priority award. Of course one of the issues is the existence of common systems that enable us to be aware when a homeless household is rehoused by an RSL. The Council also needs to be more proactive in nominating homeless applicants for RSL properties. In February 2006 only 17 lettings were made by RSLs to homeless households through the Orchard IT system (12 of these followed a nomination by the Council) and out of these 17 lettings 9 were made to applicants that the Council considered to be homeless. Work is currently being undertaken to establish more effective nomination arrangements with local RSLs. Part of this work will include establishing the current level of lettings made by specific RSLs to homeless households. The Council and local RSLs will be able to use this information to establish more robust nomination arrangements and accompanying lettings targets.

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

This is part of wider work to promote the value of Choice Based Lettings and the Leeds Housing Register. It is envisaged that this work will lead to an increase in RSL lettings in future years but at this point the Strategy is unable to set targets for improvement.

There is a residual belief within the Leeds housing sector that a social housing let is the only viable option for a homeless household to address their housing needs in the long term. The above suggests that this is not a realistic belief and therefore more work needs to be done to ensure that all housing practitioners are aware of the supply and demand pressures currently facing the Council and the ALMOs, and the likelihood that these pressures will be exacerbated in the near future. It is important that the Council and its partners embrace the use of the private rented sector and access to affordable home ownership as a positive step for homeless households. It is known that the average house price in Leeds has increased significantly since the start of the decade. However it is not known how many households who approach the Council as either homeless or threatened with homelessness are in active employment. It is certainly likely that this figure has increased as the level of employment in the city has increased in the last 10 years. Without being aware of this information it is difficult to establish plans and policies to help homeless households access affordable home ownership. This again must be a priority of the new Homelessness Strategy.

# **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

## **Objective Ten**

**Improve the standard of services offered to children whose families are homeless or threatened with homelessness**

### **Target**

**Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation to a maximum of 141 by the end of March 2010**

**Cease the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for families except in exceptional circumstances and then for no more than one week by March 2009**

**Ensure that every child placed in temporary accommodation has a school place by March 2008**

The DCLG have set a target that all housing authorities must reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by 50% by the end of March 2010. The new Homelessness Strategy will build on this by setting a target to reduce the number of families placed by 50% by the end of the same period. Meeting this target will be dependent on meeting other more specific objectives and targets such as establishing the Sanctuary Scheme, developing the private sector lettings scheme, maximising the number of lettings made by social landlords to homeless households and minimising the number of families who are excluded from the housing register.

It is now a statutory requirement not to place families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in exceptional circumstances and then for no longer than 6 weeks. This was one of the ten objectives set out in the last Homelessness Strategy and Leeds City Council met the objective in October 2003. However, families still need to use Bed and Breakfast on certain restricted occasions where referrals are made out of hours and no alternative temporary accommodation can be found. The new Strategy sets a target that even in these exceptional circumstances no family will be placed for longer than one week. Other specific objectives and targets relating to the prevention of homelessness and the broadening of housing options available to homeless families will have an impact upon the capacity of the Council to meet this target. However the re-tendering of the contract to provide emergency access accommodation from private sector providers will also be crucial. Part of the tender evaluation will be the capacity to provide self-contained emergency accommodation on an out-of-hours basis.

Research by Carr Gomm in 2003 indicated that around 60% of children placed in temporary accommodation do not attend school regularly. This clearly is a serious trend that must be addressed through the Homelessness Strategy. It is also included in the Children and Young People's Plan for Leeds. Work carried out since 2003 has improved this situation to a certain degree. However feedback from supported housing providers is that there are specific issues relating to children of secondary school age being able to secure an alternative school place if they move into temporary accommodation. Education Leeds only pay for school transport if the

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

school place is further than 3 miles away from the child's place of residence. Wherever possible a child should be maintained in their existing school place. The process of being placed in temporary accommodation is naturally a traumatic one and the disruption to the lives of children should be minimised. Enabling children to remain in their current schools where they can maintain relationships with friends and teachers but also continue to have access to out of school activities is clearly of utmost importance. It is also crucial that placements in temporary accommodation are minimised both through work to prevent homelessness and by securing longer term housing for families in as short a time period as possible.

It is important to have both temporary accommodation options and permanent accommodation options available across the city, including outlying areas. Such an approach needs to be placed in the context of the disparity in the supply and demand of social housing in the city and therefore it will be important to give customers realistic advice on the availability of social housing and to promote the use of the private rented sector. There is a clear link here to the use of the proposed bond guarantee to assist families to secure private rented accommodation in areas where there is a shortage of social housing.

It will be important to ensure that addressing the issues relating to school placements of children will be an integral part of the support planning process carried out by supported housing providers. The target to ensure that all children have a school place should therefore be a target within the support plan and some mechanism for monitoring should be identified through the contract management processes of the Supporting People programme.

The review of tendering and commissioning of supported housing services for families through the Supporting People programme should include as a standard an assessment of the effectiveness of service delivery to children, not only in terms of the provision of housing support but also accessing and signposting to other relevant services. This approach was taken with the tendering for the Supporting People contract at Richmond Court Family Hostel and will be rolled out to future commissioning projects. On a less tangible level it will be important to deliver accommodation based services where families want to stay until their housing and support needs are addressed. Ensuring that families have an input into the running of services and the capacity to express their views on service quality will be important as will providing a range of additional services such as IT training, play areas for children, holding events and trips for children, and close working with services such as Early Years Centres.

The establishment of CHIVA (Children Housed In Vulnerable Accommodation) has resulted in many of these issues being addressed through an increased focus on the needs of children and young people who have been placed in temporary accommodation. However the experience of the tender exercise at Richmond Court has highlighted the need to ensure that children and young people's access to services do not cease at the point they leave temporary accommodation. Once again, the Supporting People programme will be crucial in overcoming such issues by monitoring through the support planning process the stability of services provided

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

to families and also through the commissioning of floating and inter-connected support services.

The Social Services department of Leeds City Council has been reconfigured in response to the requirement for all authorities to create a specific Director of Children's Services. The Homelessness Strategy will therefore be a means of raising issues relating to children in temporary accommodation with the Children's Service. The Strategy will also be aligned with the Children and Young People's Plan to ensure there is a shared approach to tackling the needs of children.

A key action will be the development and implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This is a national standard for identifying the needs of children and young people and putting in place plans to address these needs. It is intended that the implementation of this system will reduce the level of bureaucracy that families need to contend with (reduce the number of forms that they need to complete), promote inter-agency working and ensure that parents, children and young people are able to access the support they require more swiftly than was previously possible. The Neighbourhoods and Housing Department are currently responding to this agenda in conjunction with key partners such as Supporting People contracted services for families and the Leeds ALMOs. It is envisaged that officers will complete an assessment form at the point of first approach. Key issues to consider would be the capacity to prevent homelessness, the suitability of temporary accommodation and whether the customer might be excluded from the housing register on suitability grounds.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Eleven

**Develop long-term solutions to the causes of homelessness amongst BME households**

### Targets/Outcomes

**By 2008 ensure that the % of homeless acceptances and homeless rejections made for BME households reflects the % of the general population from BME communities (11%)**

**Increased satisfaction with emergency accommodation amongst BME households**

The objective and accompanying target set out above have been taken directly from the Leeds BME Housing Strategy Action Plan. The BME Housing Strategy has taken account of national research conducted by the DCLG which identified that 21% of households accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need in 2004/05 were BME households. The reasons for the disproportionate incidence of homelessness for BME communities were identified as follows:

- 'BME households are more likely than white households to be affected by a cycle of deprivation, which includes unemployment, low educational attainment, overcrowding, ill-health and social isolation'.
- 'Many first generation migrants have skills that are ill-adapted to the British labour market, are not fluent in English, lack familiarity with British institutions, have limited social networks, and experience prejudice and discrimination'.
- 'Family conflicts resulting from the contrasting values and expectations of different generations'.

In Leeds 19.9% of homeless acceptances were for BME households in 2005. This appears to mirror national trends and this suggests that the reasons identified by the DCLG for the national trend are also relevant to Leeds. The issues raised by the DCLG research are not strictly related to housing and therefore the Homelessness Strategy needs to link up with other strategic developments to ensure that these issues are addressed. It is important to note that the proportion of homeless acceptances for BME households in 2003 was 22.9%. This is a positive trend but does need to be qualified in that in 2005 the Council did not have a record of the ethnicity of around 18.5% of acceptances.

In 2005 30% of homeless rejections related to BME households. It is inevitable that there will be a disproportionate incidence of homeless rejections for BME applicants as in all likelihood ineligible decisions will be restricted to such applicants and having refugee status is not an automatic reason for priority need. It has been identified that there is no negative variance between acceptance and rejection levels for BME applicants from ethnic groups that are more likely to have been born or long-term settled in the UK, such as Pakistani. However, this trend is still an issue of

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

concern and therefore identifying why there is a disproportionate incidence of negative homeless decisions for BME households is clearly a priority for the Homelessness Strategy.

The Leeds BME Housing Strategy also made reference to research carried out into BME housing needs and aspirations in 2003 (by BMG). This research identified that around 40% of BME households who had stated that they had been homeless had not approached the Council but had relied on family or friends. Further work needs to be carried out to identify whether this was a preferred option or due to a lack of awareness/satisfaction with the options that could be provided by the Council. However, it needs to be recognised that significant changes have taken place since 2003 not only in relation to the focus on homeless prevention but also on the types of temporary accommodation that are used. There is now a greater concentration of dispersed self-contained (rather than hostel accommodation) which is often located in areas of the city with a high proportion of BME households.

At the end of March 2006 there were 773 households on the Leeds Homes Register who were recorded as being statutorily homeless – 360 of these were not living in managed accommodation but had made their own arrangements perhaps with family or friends on a temporary basis. This equates to 47% of all statutory homeless households deciding to make their own arrangements which is higher than the figure identified by the BMG research. This suggests that the BMG research in relation to homelessness needs to be treated with some caution. However, an outcome of improving BME customer satisfaction with the range of temporary accommodation services that are provided has been included in the Homelessness Strategy. This outcome can be measured by continuing to report the number of statutory and non-statutory homeless households who are living in managed accommodation and further breaking this down to report the trends relating to BME households.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Twelve

**Ensure that households are able to move on from supported housing to appropriate longer term accommodation of their choice within reasonable timescales**

### Targets

**Move customers on from emergency access hostels within six weeks**

**Move customers on from emergency dispersed provision within four months**

**Move customers on from refuge provision within six months**

**Move customers on from resettlement tier 1 within six months**

**Move customers on from resettlement tier 2 within two years**

The Supporting People programme is responsible for commissioning housing related support services, including accommodation based support services. A key priority for the city is to identify the number of units of accommodation based support that are required. Having an adequate supply of units is essential if the Council is able to carry out its duties to homeless households and also so that other vulnerable customers can access the services they require.

The Supporting People programme is and will continue to be subject to significant efficiency savings over the span of the new Homelessness Strategy. Therefore, it will be crucial to deliver effective throughput in the services commissioned so that the supply of units meets demand.

The Leeds Supporting People Team has set the targets given above which it will expect service providers to meet in terms of project move on. There is no doubt that these targets are extremely challenging.

Performance over the first three quarters of 2005/06 was as follows:

| <b>Tier/model</b>          | <b>Maximum length of stay</b> | <b>Target throughput in order to meet length of stay target</b> | <b>Average throughput Qs 1-3 2005-06</b> | <b>% Variance</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|
| <b>Emergency hostel</b>    | 1.5 months                    | 285   | 314                                      | <b>10.2</b>       |
| <b>Dispersed emergency</b> | 4 months                      | 167   | 110                                      | <b>51.9</b>       |
| <b>Refuge</b>              | 6 months                      | 143   | 170                                      | <b>18.9</b>       |
| <b>Resettlement 1</b>      | 6 months                      | 150   | 130                                      | <b>13.3</b>       |
| <b>Resettlement 2</b>      | 2 years                       | 113   | 127                                      | <b>12.4</b>       |
| <b>Sustainment</b>         | Indefinite                    | 100   | 99                                       | <b>1</b>          |

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

The Leeds Supporting People Team has calculated the number of move-on outcomes that needed to be achieved over the first three quarters of 2005/06 to achieve satisfactory throughput. The actual number of move on outcomes has been identified and the difference taken as a percentage of the target to work out the variance.

The availability of social housing in the city will clearly have an impact on the capacity of service providers to move customers on within requisite timescales. The continued contraction within the social housing stock and the impact of regeneration programmes such as EASEL will mean that potentially less social housing units can be made available to customers in supported housing. However one of the aims of the Homelessness Strategy is to broaden the options available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It is important that all supported housing services accept that it is simply not feasible for all households to have their housing needs addressed through the letting of a social housing tenancy. It is important that the use of the private sector is accepted as being essential and also that services work in conjunction with the Council to improve the quality of private accommodation secured.

It is intended that the prevention tier contributes towards the Council's wider agenda to maximise the opportunities to prevent homelessness. Work will be carried out with the Leeds Supporting People Team and providers of services which sit within this tier to establish systems to effectively monitor prevention outcomes achieved. The wider homeless prevention agenda will at the same time contribute towards the capacity of service providers to meet move on targets. The Council is of course obliged to meet the target to cut temporary accommodation placements by the end of March 2010 and this is primarily being done through a greater focus on homeless prevention opportunities.

The Homelessness Strategy has identified that more households are excluded from the allocation of housing than are accommodated under a homeless housing duty. It is currently not known how many of these households are living in supported housing and for what length of time. However feedback from housing support providers has suggested that customers are being forced to remain in temporary accommodation for longer than necessary as they are excluded from the housing register and therefore cannot be successfully moved on. It has also come to light that some supported housing providers are unwilling or reluctant to accept customers who are excluded from the housing register on the basis that they do not envisage being able to move them on within the requisite timescales. Clearly these are issues that the Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy need to challenge. It is recognised that there may well be limited knowledge relating to the legal framework regarding suitability decisions amongst supported housing providers. Therefore it is proposed to carry out a series of briefing sessions for supported housing providers so that they are better informed on both the legal framework and the steps that they can take to overturn such exclusions. This is both in terms of requesting reviews and also by using the support planning process to assist customers to modify the behaviour that has led to their exclusion.

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

It is important that supported housing providers use the Leeds City Council lettings policy as effectively as possible. The majority of lettings made by the Leeds ALMOs are through choice. Choice Based Lettings is an inherently competitive system and many customers who are accommodated in supported housing are by definition vulnerable to some degree. Therefore it is essential that supported housing providers are fully conversant with the Choice Based Lettings system and are assisting customers to use their full allocation of bids. Part of this work must be to encourage customers to make realistic bids for accommodation. Whilst there is no doubt there is a shortage of social housing in the city, in February 2006, 62% of lettings made through choice to non-homeless households, the majority of which were placed in the General Needs band on the Leeds Homes Register. This suggests that irrespective of the level of priority given to the household permanent accommodation can be secured if realistic bidding is applied. Once again this emphasises the importance of supported housing providers being aware of the supply and demand issues currently facing the city in terms of social housing. The lettings policy now includes provisions to award additional priority on the grounds that a household has been living in supported housing, where the support plan has been completed and the customer is now ready to move to independent living. It is important that supported housing providers are aware of this provision within the policy and are assisting their customers to get the appropriate level of priority they need to be rehoused.

Customers placed in temporary accommodation can be accommodated on either a licence or an assured shorthold tenancy. The latter is often a condition of the supported housing provider being granted capital funding for their scheme. However it is important to recognise that this issue will have an impact upon the capacity of supported housing providers to move customers on. A customer accommodated on a periodic licence arrangement must be given a minimum of 4 weeks written notice if the supported housing provider wishes to evict them from the accommodation which they are occupying. At the end of this notice period the supported housing provider must secure a court order in order to evict the customer. If a customer is accommodated on an assured shorthold tenancy arrangement then they have security of tenure for the fixed period of the tenancy. Notice can only be given two months before the expiry of the fixed period unless there has been a breach in the tenancy agreement on one of the grounds set out in the 1998 Housing Act. Refusing an offer of suitable permanent accommodation may well be grounds to discharge the housing duty owed by the Council to a homeless household but is certainly not a ground to secure possession of accommodation let as an assured shorthold tenancy. Generally customers are entitled to two months notice to vacate an assured shorthold tenancy. If they fail to vacate, at the expiry of the notice period then the landlord will need to secure possession via a court order. The Council is ensuring that private landlords are made aware of their responsibilities to tenants through the possession process. Such responsibilities also apply to supported housing providers and this may well have implications for the capacity of services to move customers on. It is proposed that work is carried out to identify whether there is any scope to make any changes to the tenancy/licence arrangements used by supported housing providers in order to precipitate service move on.

# Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives

## Objective Thirteen

**Ensure that homeless households have the opportunity to express their views on the services they receive or decisions made relating to their housing application**

### Target

**Respond in writing to all complaints made relating to Council housing advice and homeless services within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint**

**Respond to all statutory reviews within eight weeks of receipt of the review request**

To some degree Objective 13 is the most important in the strategy. The Strategy has made clear that whilst there is a clear priority to maximise homeless prevention opportunities this should not be at the expense of applicants missing out on services that they are entitled to, or the Council failing to meet its legal duties. In principle there is significant scope to prevent homelessness against all the main causes of homelessness in the city but it is essential that the practice of doing so is legally robust and customer focused. One of the most effective methods of quality control is the statutory review process.

Applicants for housing have a right to request a statutory review of a range of decisions made by the Council and the Leeds ALMOs regarding their housing application. The responsibility of carrying out such reviews is a function that can not be outsourced to another organisation such as the Leeds ALMOs - it must be retained by the Council. The Council is legally obliged to respond in full within eight weeks. Such a response must be made in writing and cover all issues raised by the applicant and their advocate as to why the original decision made was wrong.

In 2005 the Council received 501 requests for a review - 293 of these were decisions relating to a negative homeless decision: applicant was deemed to be ineligible, not homeless, intentionally homeless or not in priority need. However, there were 2294 negative homeless decisions in 2005 which means that less than 13% of applicants who received a negative homeless decision exercised their right to challenge the decision made. It is standard practice to include details of how to request a review within the homeless decision letter but there are concerns as to whether applicants have an understanding of or the confidence to exercise their rights. It is intended to carry out a series of briefing sessions with supported housing providers regarding the statutory review process and this can include discussions around possible barriers to requesting a review. Some form of customer consultation (perhaps in conjunction with the Leeds Supporting People Team) can be organised to obtain the direct views of customers.

It has been identified that only a small proportion (60 in 2005 out of 507) of customers are exercising their right to request a review of a decision to find them unsuitable. It has already been identified that the trends relating to suitability

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

exclusions have significant implications for the capacity of supported housing providers to move customers within requisite timescales and also the willingness of some supported housing providers to accept customers who are excluded from the housing register because they believe there will be no immediate options for moving them on. Ensuring that customers and supported housing providers are briefed on all issues relating to suitability exclusions is a key priority within the new Homelessness Strategy.

The above is likely to lead to an increase in the number of review requests received by the Council. Currently, the Council employs one officer who is responsible for all aspects of the review process – the administration of acknowledgement letters, requesting case papers from the Housing Advice Centre and Neighbourhood Housing Offices, recording of requests and decisions on systems such as Orchard, the consideration of case details and the compilation of the decision letters. In 2005 53.7% of review cases received resulted in a decision being made within the 8 week deadline (267 decisions out of 501) but since January 2006 this figure has improved to 93.3% (102 out of 109 decisions) as the Council has become more focused on meeting the statutory deadline. Including a target on responding to all review cases within eight weeks is important not only because it is a statutory duty but customers should be entitled to have their housing needs addressed as swiftly as possible. The capacity of the Council to respond to review cases as swiftly as possible will also have an impact upon temporary accommodation numbers. The lack of resources attached to the review panel means that that the Council will have difficulty in meeting this target, especially if there is an increase in the number of requests made. However, it is essential that customers feel able to exercise their statutory rights and that they are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

The Leeds City Council Compliments and Complaints Policy stipulates that complaints should be responded to within fifteen working days of receipt. The Council has recognised that homeless households have historically been reluctant to make formal complaints regarding the standard of service they have received. From 2003 onwards the Council has made it a priority to encourage homeless customers to express their views, through the complaints procedure, on the services they have received. The Council should be accountable for the services it provides and complaints are an opportunity to obtain customer feedback that can be used to improve service delivery. In 2005 311 complaints were received by the Council which related to the standard of service that a household who was homeless or in housing need from a Council service. 291 of these were responded to within fifteen working days - over 93% of the total. Homeless Services provided by the Council are already monitored by Corporate Services on performance relating to complaint responses. However, the Homelessness Strategy represents an opportunity to make partners aware of our responsibilities relating to complaints received and to encourage customers to hold us to account for the quality of service provided by making a complaint.

Feedback from partners suggests that there are issues relating to the Council's interpretation of the legal duties relating to the protection of an applicant's possessions. There is no statutory right to review of a decision taken not to provide additional storage of an applicant's possessions but the Homelessness Strategy will

## **Homelessness Strategy 2006 – 2010 Objectives**

look at this issue as a priority for action – in terms of ensuring compliance with the legal provisions.

## Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 Action Plan

| Ref. No | Objective   | Target   | How measured   | Baseline position  | Key Actions  | Risk Impact | Risk Likelihood | Key Stakeholders   |
|---------|---|--|--|--|--|-------------|-----------------|--|
| 1       | <b>Through effective homeless prevention work to reduce the incidence of homelessness in the city</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce the number of homeless acceptances made by the Council to a maximum of 1600 per annum by the end of 2009/2010</li> <li>■ Increase the number of homeless preventions achieved to a minimum of 600 per annum by the end of 2009/2010</li> </ul> | <p><b>LKIHAS4</b> - Number of homeless acceptances made</p> <p><b>BV213</b> - Households, who considered themselves to be homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom case work intervention resolved their housing difficulty</p> | <p>2005 – 1899 homeless acceptances</p> <p>2005/06 – 452 homeless preventions achieved</p> | <p>Overarching objective/target which will be met through other more specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establishing a Sanctuary scheme</li> <li>■ Developing the mediation service</li> <li>■ Expanding the private sector lettings scheme</li> <li>■ Reorganising Council led housing advice services through the relocation of Housing Advice Centre to Great George Street One Stop Centre</li> <li>■ Commissioning homeless prevention housing support services through the Supporting People programme</li> </ul> |             |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> <li>■ Archway</li> <li>■ CASAC</li> <li>■ Leeds Landlord Accreditation Service</li> </ul> |
| 2       | <b>Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50%</b>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce the number of households placed in</li> </ul>  | <b>BV203</b> - The percentage change in the average number of  | End of December 2004 521 households placed in temporary                                    | Overarching objective/target which will be met through other more specific objectives:   |             |                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> </ul>  |

## Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 Action Plan

|   |   |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|
|   | by March 2010   | temporary accommodation to a maximum of 261 by the end of March 2010   | families, which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year.<br><br>Quarterly P1E return | accommodation  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establishing a Sanctuary scheme</li> <li>■ Developing the mediation service</li> <li>■ Expanding the private sector lettings scheme</li> <li>■ Retendering of Private Sector Temporary Accommodation Service so that a reduction of contracted units of accommodation can be achieved on an incremental basis</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Procurement Service</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> <li>■ Archway</li> <li>■ CASAC</li> <li>■ Leeds Landlord Accreditation Service</li> </ul> |
| 3 | <b>Establish a Sanctuary Scheme to give customers threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence and other hate crime a wider range of options to resolve their housing difficulties</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ By 2010, 250 households, who are threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence or other hate crime, to have their homelessness prevented through the installation of security measures through the Sanctuary</li> </ul> | <b>BV213</b> - Households, who considered themselves to be homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom case work intervention resolved their housing difficulty          | 711 households were accepted as homeless due to domestic violence or some other form of hate crime in 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Award contract to provide security measures to one organisation</li> <li>■ Establish joint working procedures with West Yorkshire Police who will carry out the initial property survey to identify if suitable for the installation of security measures and the range of measures required</li> <li>■ Formalise contract arrangement with service provider to ensure they meet requisite service</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> <li>■ CASAC</li> <li>■ Leeds Landlord Accreditation Service</li> </ul>  |

## Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 Action Plan

|          |  |  |  |   |   |  |  |   |
|----------|--|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
|          |  | Scheme   |  |   | <p>standards in relation to speed of installations and conduct of staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establish monitoring systems to ensure performance meets contractual obligations and to ensure swift payment for work carried out</li> <li>■ Ensure scheme is well promoted to customers, housing support services, housing advice agencies, social landlords, community safety support services</li> <li>■ Ensure that all customers have access to appropriate housing support services if required</li> <li>■ Secure longer-term funding for the scheme by identifying savings to the Council's temporary accommodation budget</li> </ul> |  |  |   |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Increase the range of housing options open to households who are homeless or threatened</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase the number of lettings made through the</li> </ul> | <b>BV213</b> - Households, who considered themselves to be | 187 tenancy sign ups in 2005/06 – 182 between August 2005 and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establish a rent deposit guarantee scheme to help customers to access</li> </ul>   |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> </ul> |

## Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010 Action Plan

|   |  |  |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|   | with homelessness by developing the existing Private Lettings scheme | Private Lettings scheme to 400 per annum by March 2010   | homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom case work intervention resolved their housing difficulty | March 2006.   | <p>private rented accommodation who are working but on a low income and/or wish to live in an outlying area of the city and the landlord is insistent on a bond being paid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identify a partner organisation who can hold rent deposits paid as required under the 2004 Housing Act</li> <li>■ Identify opportunities to use empty properties as a housing option for homeless households.</li> <li>■ Ensure that all customers who take up the offer of a private rented tenancy can access a housing support service commissioned through the Supporting People Programme if required.</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Accreditation Scheme</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> </ul>                   |
| 5 | Reduce the level of repeat homelessness in the city                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce to 5% by the end of 2009/2010 the percentage of</li> </ul> | <b>BV214</b> - Proportion of households accepted as statutorily  | 2005/06 – 7.17% of homeless acceptances were repeat homeless cases. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establish a sanctuary scheme as domestic violence and hate crime is a major cause of repeat</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Leeds City</li> </ul> |

Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010  
Action Plan

|          |  |   |  |                        |   |  |  |  |
|----------|--|---|--|------------------------|---|--|--|--|
|          |  | homeless acceptances made by the Council that had previously been accepted as homeless within a two year period | homeless who were accepted as statutorily homeless by the same authority within the last two years |                        | <p>homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Establish monitoring systems in conjunction with the Leeds Supporting People team to better identify the quality of housing support services commissioned to prevent repeat homeless presentations</li> <li>■ Work with the Leeds ALMOs and other social landlords to identify opportunities to prevent tenancy breakdown through more effective housing management</li> <li>■ Identify opportunities to assist a customer who needs to leave their tenancy without making a new homeless application through the award of additional preference, direct letting, or perhaps the use of Ground 2a to evict the perpetrator of hate crime.</li> </ul> |  |  | <p>Council Procurement Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ CASAC</li> <li>■ West Yorkshire Police</li> <li>■ West Yorkshire Fire Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Care Ring Service</li> </ul> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Continue to reduce the incidence of youth</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ By the end of 2009/2010</li> </ul>                                     | <b>LKIHAS5</b> - The number of   | 2005/06 – 208 homeless | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that all young people who are</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> </ul>   |

Leeds Homelessness Strategy 2006-2010  
Action Plan

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|  | <p>homelessness in the city</p> | <p>reduce the number of homeless acceptances where the homeless reason is parental eviction to a maximum of 150 per annum</p> | <p>homeless acceptances made where the homeless reason is parental eviction</p> <p><b>BV213</b> - Households, who considered themselves to be homeless, who approached the local authority's housing advice service(s) and for whom case work intervention resolved their housing difficulty</p> | <p>acceptances where reason for homelessness was parental eviction</p> | <p>threatened with homelessness due to parental dispute but who have not experienced violence or abuse are referred to the mediation service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Monitor whether the existing resource of two mediators is sufficient to meet service demand</li> <li>■ Work with the Leeds ALMOs to establish guidelines for when additional preference to be rehoused should be granted as an alternative to a homeless application being taken.</li> <li>■ Identify the opportunity to hold briefing sessions with Year 10 pupils to give housing advice on their legal rights and responsibilities, available services, and the availability of social housing and other housing options in the city. Preferably this should be carried out jointly between the Council and</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Archway</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Education Leeds</li> </ul> |
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|          |   |  |  |  | voluntary sector agencies.  |  |  |  |
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| <b>7</b> | <b>Continue to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping</b>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To sustain reductions in rough sleeping to 10 or fewer and as near to zero as possible</li> </ul> | <b>BV202</b> - Number of rough sleepers identified | March 2006 – 1 rough sleeper identified in formal headcount.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving access to accommodation services for street users</li> <li>• Improving and maintaining access to drug treatment services for street users</li> <li>• Improving access to primary health care and mental health services for street users</li> <li>• Developing responses to identified gaps in service provision for street users</li> <li>• Preventing rough sleeping where possible by ensuring all agencies are aware of the trigger factors that may lead to rough sleeping. Developing provision for those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping due to alcohol misuse</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Safer Leeds</li> <li>■ Community Safety Division</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ West Yorkshire Police</li> <li>■ Street Outreach Service</li> <li>■ Leeds DAT</li> <li>■ Primary Care Trusts</li> </ul> |
| <b>8</b> | <b>Ensure that wherever possible homeless households or those threatened with</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce the number of households who are</li> </ul>  | Performance Indicators to be established           | August 2006 – 825 households have been excluded from the Leeds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry out a review of the procedures relating to suitability exclusions with input</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> </ul>   |

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|  | <p><b>homelessness have a live housing application on the Leeds Homes Register</b></p> | <p>deemed to be unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council by 50% by March 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that all households who are deemed to be unsuitable have access to some form of housing support</li> <li>■ Ensure that all households who are deemed to be unsuitable have a housing option made available to them</li> </ul> |  | <p>Homes Register on suitability grounds</p> | <p>from homeless practitioners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry out briefing sessions for all supported housing providers in the city so that they are more aware of the legal framework relating to suitability exclusions and also how they can assist a customer to pursue their right to review</li> <li>■ Work with the Supporting People team and supported housing providers to ensure that where a customer has correctly been found to be unsuitable work is carried out as part of the support planning process to assist the customer to modify their behaviour so that such a decision can be overturned.</li> <li>■ Work with the Supporting People team to ensure that no customer is excluded from a supported housing service because they are unsuitable and</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Community Safety Division</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Strategic Landlord</li> </ul> |
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|   |  |   |  |  | <p>also identify where customers have been unable to move on from temporary accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Monitor on an on-going basis the number of households deemed to be unsuitable</li> <li>■ Monitor on an on-going basis the number of customers who have requested a statutory review of the decision and also what the review outcome was.</li> <li>■ Ensure that all customers who have been found unsuitable are made aware of the private sector lettings scheme</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| 9 | <p><b>Ensure that a balance of social housing lettings is achieved so that the Council is able to fulfil its statutory duty to homeless households whilst giving other households the opportunity to access social housing</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To ensure that between 30-40% of lettings made by the Leeds ALMOs are to homeless households including between 20-30% of lettings made to statutory</li> </ul> | <p>Reported monthly by Leeds Homes Register Team</p> | <p>February 2006 – 26% of lettings made to statutory homeless households (99 out of 380)<br/>11% of lettings made to non-statutory homeless households (42 out of 380)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Continue to monitor on an on-going basis the percentage of lettings made to homeless households, waiting list applicants and existing tenants requiring to move.</li> <li>■ Promote the need to achieve parity in lettings between these three groups</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Strategic Landlord</li> </ul> |

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|    |   | homeless households  |   |   | <p>not only in terms of building mixed sustainable communities but also to avoid creating artificial incentives to apply as homeless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with the Leeds ALMOs to ensure that housing advisers and officers are aware of when to give additional preference on other grounds such as overcrowding or poor housing conditions</li> <li>■ Identify the proportion of RSL lettings that are made to homeless households and if applicable work with RSLs to identify opportunities to increase this figure</li> </ul> |  |  |   |
| 10 | <b>Improve the standard of services offered to children who families are homeless or threatened with homelessness</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation to a maximum of 141 by the end of March 2010.</li> </ul> | <b>BV203</b> - The percentage change in the average number of families, which include dependent children or a pregnant woman, placed in temporary accommodation | <p>December 2004 – 282 families in temporary accommodation</p> <p>2005/06 – no families placed in bed and breakfast for longer than three weeks</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This objective will be dependent on the success of other objectives such as the establishment of a sanctuary scheme that enables families to remain in their current homes therefore allowing children to be able to</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> <li>■ Education Leeds</li> <li>■ CHIVA</li> <li>■ Primary Care Trusts</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOS</li> </ul> |

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|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cease the use of Bed and breakfast accommodation for families except in exceptional circumstances and then for no more than one week.</li> <li>■ Ensure that every child placed in temporary accommodation has a school place</li> </ul> | <p>under the homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year</p> <p>P1E Quarterly Returns</p> <p><b>LKIHAS6</b> - The number of households with dependent children who are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than three weeks</p> <p><b>BVPI183a</b> - Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation and of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (number of weeks)</p> <p>Establish system for monitoring access to school</p> |  | <p>maintain links to school and other social networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The development of the private lettings scheme will also represent a further housing option for homeless households with children</li> <li>■ The retendering of the private sector temporary accommodation contract should ensure that a sufficient supply of self-contained emergency accommodation is available so that families do not need to be placed in temporary accommodation.</li> <li>■ Joint work needs to be carried out with Education Leeds to identify where improvements can be made in terms of access to schools especially with children attending secondary schools.</li> <li>■ Through the Supporting People</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> <li>■ Landlord Accreditation Service</li> <li>■ CASAC</li> </ul> |
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|    |   |  | places for homeless children with Education Leeds |   | <p>programme work needs to be carried out to ensure that support and other services that families have access to in temporary accommodation does not end merely because the family is no longer accommodated at a particular project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Work with the Supporting People team to ensure that the tendering and commissioning of supported housing services for families has a clear focus on the quality of services provided for children</li> <li>■ Joint work needs to be established with partners in Children's Services to ensure a clear focus on the Every Child Matters and Children and Young Peoples Plan</li> </ul> |  |  |   |
| 11 | <b>Develop long-term solutions to the causes of homelessness amongst BME households</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ By 2008 ensure that the % of homeless acceptances and homeless</li> </ul> | Monitoring as part of equality standard returns   | 2005 - 19.6% of homeless acceptances related to a BME household | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry out an audit of homeless acceptances and homeless rejections to identify the reasons why BME</li> </ul>  |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting People Team</li> </ul> |

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|  |  | <p>rejections made for BME households reflects the % of the general population from BME communities (11%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased satisfaction with emergency accommodation amongst BME households</li> </ul> |  | <p>2005 – 30% of homeless rejections related to a BME household</p> | <p>households are more likely to make a homeless application but perhaps more importantly are more likely to receive a negative decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Report and therefore obtain a better understanding of the number of homeless preventions achieved for BME households.</li> <li>■ Ensure that all households, including BME households, are aware of their legal rights and the process by which they can request a review of a homeless decision.</li> <li>■ Gain a better understanding of the preferences in terms of temporary accommodation amongst BME households.</li> <li>■ Identify whether the incidence of securing own housing options is more acute amongst BME customers than in the wider customer base.</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Strategic Landlord</li> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> </ul> |
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| 12 | <p><b>Ensure that households are able to move on from supported housing to appropriate longer term accommodation of their choice with reasonable timescales</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Move customers on from emergency access hostels within six weeks</li> <li>■ Move customers on from emergency dispersed provision within four months</li> <li>■ Move customers on from refuge provision within six months</li> <li>■ Move customers on from resettlement tier 1 within six months</li> <li>■ Move customers on from resettlement tier 2 within two years</li> </ul> | <p>Quarterly returns submitted to the Leeds Supporting People Team by supported housing providers</p> | <p>Quarter 1 to 3 2005/06</p> <p>Emergency Tier (Hostel) – 10.2% positive variance</p> <p>Emergency Tier (Dispersed) 51.9% adverse variance</p> <p>Emergency Tier (Refuge) 18.9% positive variance</p> <p>Resettlement 1 13.3% adverse variance</p> <p>Resettlement 2 12.4% positive variance</p> <p>Leeds Supporting People Team has calculated the number of move-on outcomes to be achieved over the first three quarters of 2005/06 to achieve satisfactory throughput. The actual number of move on outcomes has been identified and the difference</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overarching objective that will be reliant upon meeting other more specific objectives.</li> <li>■ Offering training to supported housing providers on the legal framework relating to suitability exclusions but also relating to suitability of homeless duty discharge offers will be given.</li> <li>■ Ensure that all supported housing providers are aware of the bidding systems under Choice Based Lettings and also have regard to the importance of realistic bidding</li> <li>■ Promote the importance of and the need to use the private rented sector as a viable housing option</li> <li>■ Carry out joint work with the Leeds Supporting People team to ensure that the tenancy/licence arrangements in place in particular</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds City Council Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds Supporting Team</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Strategic Landlord</li> <li>■ Local RSLs</li> <li>■ Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme</li> <li>■ Housing Corporation</li> </ul> |
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|    |   |   |  | taking as a percentage of the target to work out the variance.  | schemes support the objective of moving customers on within requisite timescales.   |  |  |   |
| 13 | <b>Ensure that homeless households have the opportunity to express their views on the services they receive or decisions made relating to their housing application</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Respond in writing to all complaints made relating to Council housing advice and homeless services within fifteen working days of receipt of the complaint</li> <li>■ Respond to all statutory reviews within eight weeks of receipt of the review request</li> <li>■ Carry out a review of the procedures relating to protection of property</li> </ul> | <p><b>New local performance indicators to be established:</b></p> <p><b>% of complaints responded to within fifteen working days</b></p> <p><b>% of statutory review requests responded to within eight weeks</b></p> <p><b>Number of legal challenges/complaints relating to protection of property</b></p> | <p>March 2006 – 13 complaints received – 10 responded to within 15 days</p> <p>March 2006 – 52 out of 58 reviews heard were responded to within 8 weeks</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that all customers and supported housing providers are aware of the legal framework relating to statutory reviews and also the procedure for requesting a review.</li> <li>■ Report performance on an ongoing basis relating to the number of reviews requested, the length of time taken to carry out a review and also a breakdown of decisions made, proportion overturned/upheld</li> <li>■ Identify the number of BME households who are requesting a statutory review and the outcome of that review</li> <li>■ Report on an ongoing basis review decisions and identify opportunities to improve services from the issues which emerge from</li> </ul> |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leeds Homeless Service</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Housing Business Team</li> <li>■ Leeds ALMOs</li> <li>■ Leeds City Council Strategic Landlord</li> <li>■ Local legal and advocacy services</li> </ul> |

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|  |  |  |  |  | <p>cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure that all customers are aware of their right to pursue a complaint under the Leeds Compliments and Complaints procedure</li> <li>■ Report on an ongoing basis the number of complaints received, number completed within 15 days and the outcome of these complaints.</li> <li>■ Use complaints received as an opportunity to improve services from the issues that have emerged from the case.</li> <li>■ Carry out a review of the existing procedures relating to protection of possessions. Brief Council officers and other stakeholders on findings.</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
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