

## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT**

AICH	Advice, Information, Counselling in Huntingdonshire
ASB	Anti Social Behaviour
B & B	Bed and Breakfast
BME	Black and minority ethnic
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
DAT	Drug Action Team
HIAC	Huntingdon Independent Advice Centre
HHP	Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership
ODPM	Office of The Deputy Prime Minister
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SHIP	Cambridgeshire Supported Housing Information Project
SP	Supporting People
YOS	Youth Offending Service

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Legislative Context**

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced new statutory responsibilities for local housing authorities. These included the requirement to review all homelessness issues in their area, and to produce a 5-year strategy to meet the needs identified. Allied to this, the Government has also extended the priority need groups, which authorities have responsibility to rehouse, to include:

- most 16- and 17-year olds
- most care leavers and former care leavers up to the age of 21
- people who are vulnerable as a result of an institutionalised background, including prison and the armed forces, or as a result of violence or the threat of violence.

The Government has also set a target that by 2004 the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) as temporary accommodation for families with children will be phased out, except for a short period (up to 6 weeks) in emergency situations.

## **1.2 Huntingdonshire's Approach**

### **1.2.1 Consultation**

In September 2002 the Council held a stakeholder consultation event to identify the issues that our partners considered central to the production of an effective homelessness strategy. This proved to be a useful exercise and highlighted the need for a greater co-ordination of the services available for households threatened with homelessness. The feedback demonstrated that although there were areas of good practice with joint working, this needed to be formalised and extended so as to improve inter-agency working.

### **1.2.2 Existing Work**

In December 2002 the Council published the final report of its Housing Needs and Resources Best Value Review. This highlighted the potential for service improvements in the following relevant areas:

- determining whether the range and quality of advice provided is what users of the service want
- reducing the level of reliance on B&B accommodation
- reviewing the help provided to non-priority and intentionally homeless households.

## **1.3 Stakeholder Involvement**

At the same time as the homelessness review, the County Council commenced begun a Best Value Review of Social Inclusion. The County's review focused on homeless families in temporary accommodation and due to the similarity of the objectives and partner agencies involved, the Councils agreed to link these projects. This partnership approach has produced some valuable feedback about the concerns and priorities of these households, from the perspective of all of the

agencies involved. The findings have been incorporated, as appropriate, into this review. Although the Social Inclusion Best Value Review has not yet been fully completed, the main findings are included in what is termed the stage 1 report, attached at Annex 7.2.

The Social Inclusion review focused on families with dependent children. The Council's stakeholder event highlighted issues around single young people and clients with mental health issues. Sub-groups were established to consider the specific needs of each of these client groups.

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Homelessness Review**

This review has set out to:

- map the level of need amongst homeless and potentially homeless households
- survey the resources available from all relevant agencies to meet those needs
- identify the gaps in services and resources which the strategy must go on to address.

It is recognised that the strategy is a 5-year one, and that some of the issues cannot be resolved in the short term. It is also recognised that some potential service improvements, particularly those relating to support services for vulnerable people, will depend on the provision of additional funding from Supporting People grant, which at this stage cannot be presumed.

## 2 THE LOCAL HOUSING CONTEXT IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

### 2.1 Social and Economic Nature of the District

Huntingdonshire is the largest district in Cambridgeshire, with a population of 157,000. 76.2% of households are owner-occupiers (the England and Wales average is 68.9%). 24.4% of the total are single person households. 5.9% are aged 75 or over, and 13.5% have a limiting long term illness.

(Source: 2001 Census)

On average, incomes are relatively high:

Mean Household Income in Cambridgeshire, 2000

South Cambs.	£28,500
Huntingdonshire	£27,500
East Cambs.	£24,200
Cambridge City	£23,900
Fenland	£20,000

(Source: CACI Paycheck. N.B. the methodology used to calculate mean household income here is different from that used to calculate average earned income below.)

However, as in other parts of the county, house prices have risen sharply over the last year or so:

Average House Prices of Sales, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters 2001 & 2002, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

District	4 <sup>th</sup> Q 2001	4 <sup>th</sup> Q 2002	% Change
Cambridge City	£179,560	£211,100	17.6%
East Cambridgeshire	£131,280	£161,580	23.1%
Fenland	£77,630	£103,310	33.1%
Huntingdonshire	£120,250	£143,540	19.4%
Peterborough City	£84,400	£104,920	24.3%
South Cambridgeshire	£181,200	£206,080	13.7%
Cambs & Peterborough	£120,820	£144,190	19.3%

(Source: HM Land Registry; figures quoted in Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group report, 'House Prices in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2002')

Clearly the average house in Huntingdonshire is out of the reach of first time buyers on low to moderate incomes, but we need also to consider how accessible the cheaper properties may be to those in housing need:

Affordability Comparisons, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2002

District	Lower Quart-ile Price	10% Price	% Sold for Under £80,000
Cambridge City	£ 140,260	£113,560	3.2%
East Cambridgeshire	£109,220	£81,150	9.4%
Fenland	£71,670	£55,200	37.0%
Huntingdonshire	£91,440	£71,140	16.2%
Peterborough City	£67,100	£53,800	41.9%
South Cambridgeshire	£130,920	£105,850	1.9%
Cambs & Peterborough	£83,090	£62,220	22.7%

Assuming a mortgage level based on 3x gross annual income, people in housing need in Huntingdonshire need to be earning at least £24,000 to buy even the cheapest properties available. This does not of course take into account the likelihood of these being of the right type, size and condition, or indeed in the locations where people want to live.

The authority has estimated that by 2011 there will be some 74,000 households in the district, of whom well over 12,000 will need social rented housing.

(Source: Housing Investment Programme data 2002)

## 2.2 Housing Needs Survey

In 2002, the Council commissioned Fordham Associates to carry out a comprehensive housing needs survey. The key findings are summarised in Annex 7.3.

### 2.2.1 Definitions

“**Housing need** refers to households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are likely to be able to meet their need in the housing market without some assistance.”

DTLR (now ODPM) Local Housing Needs Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice  
Appendix 2 page 116

“**Affordable housing** is considered to be housing which is affordable to those householders who cannot either rent or purchase housing on the open market.”

Huntingdon Local Plan Alteration 2002. Policy AH1

### 2.2.2 Market Housing Requirements

The survey found a shortage of owner occupied homes, most notably 1 and 2 bedroom.

There was no apparent shortage of private rented homes.



### **2.2.3 What Types of Affordable Housing**

The survey provides data about how much housing should cost to be affordable to households in housing need. It concludes that, in Huntingdonshire, subsidised social rented is the only form of housing that contributes towards meeting that need although a small fraction of Shared Ownership may be appropriate.

### **2.2.4 Affordable Housing Provision**

The Housing Needs Survey (Annex 7.3) indicates that:

- **5,065** affordable houses are needed over the next five years (equals five times the net requirement of **1,013** per year).
- If **12,663** new dwelling were built in Huntingdonshire in this time, then **40%** would provide these **5,065** affordable units.

### **2.3 Future Homelessness Trends**

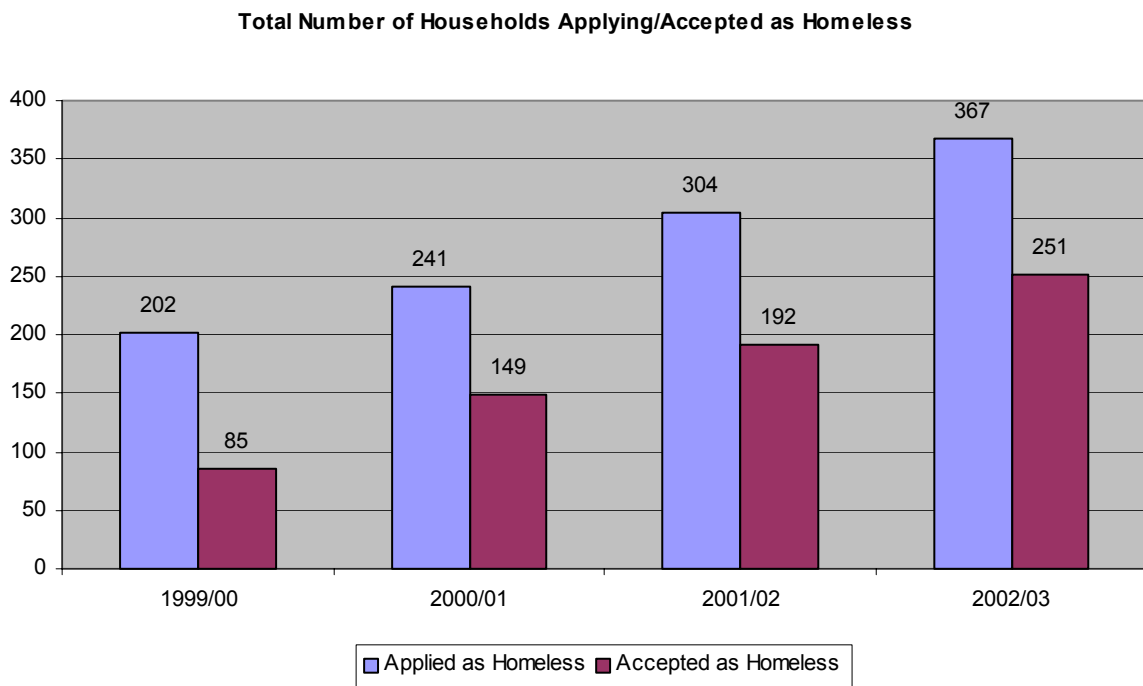
Clearly the results of the survey, even with such a specific quantification of the projected shortfall of affordable housing, cannot be used to calculate an equally specific projected rise in homelessness. Nevertheless, it is self-evident that if the availability of affordable housing continues to fall behind the rise in households unable to access market housing, then an increase in levels of homelessness will almost certainly follow.

### 3 HOMELESSNESS – THE CURRENT PICTURE

In conducting this review, we started by collecting all the relevant information held by different parts of the Council. We have also looked to include information held by other agencies whose work brings them into contact with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

#### 3.1 Homeless applications to the Council

The table below summarises the homelessness situation over the last four years. It shows the numbers of households who applied to the Council because they were homeless or threatened with homelessness, as well as the numbers accepted after investigation. This four year period has seen an 82% increase in the number of households applying to the Council for possible help, and a 195% increase in the number of accepted homelessness applications.



(Source: HDC P1E Homelessness Returns)

Both national and local trends show increases in homelessness. In 1999/2000, 246,649 households claimed homelessness within England and Wales, with 101,510 of these being accepted under the terms of the legislation. In 2001/02 the number of applications increased to 263,636 households (a 7% increase) with 116,021 of these being accepted (a 14% increase).

Cambridgeshire as a whole has seen an increase over this same period. In 1999/2000 local authorities in Cambridgeshire accepted 682 households as homeless. This had increased to 857 households (an increase of 26%) in 2001/02. Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire districts showed the largest increases over this period.

### 3.2 Ethnic Origin of Homeless Applicants (HDC)

The following table shows the ethnic origin of the households applying as homeless. Levels of homelessness appear to be broadly proportionate to the prevalence of each group within the overall population:

	1999/00 (%)	2000/01 (%)	2001/02 (%)	2002/03 (%)
White	193 (95.5)	235 (97.5)	288 (94.7)	355 (96.7)
African, Caribbean	3 (1.5)	3 (1.2)	2 (0.7)	4 (1.1)
Indian, Pakistani, Bagladeshi	5 (2.5)	2 (0.8)	12 (3.9)	5 (1.4)
Other Ethnic Origin	1 (0.5)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.7)	2 (0.5)
Unknown	0 (-)	0 (-)	0 (-)	1 (0.3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>367</b>

(Source: HDC P1 Homelessness Returns)

### 3.3 Causes of Homelessness

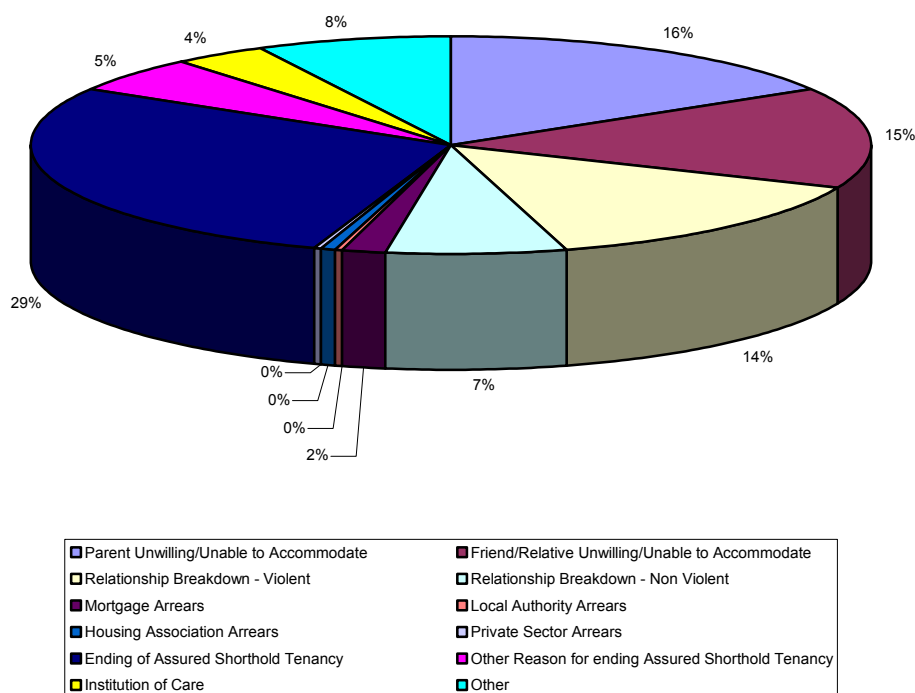
The following table and pie chart show the main reason for homelessness of those households that the Council accepted. The single largest cause of homelessness in 2002/03 was private landlords evicting their tenants because they did not wish to renew their tenancies. This cause of homelessness has seen a large increase over the last four years. Other main causes were eviction by parents (16% of all cases in 2002/03) or by other family or friends (15% of all cases in 2002/03).

	1999/00 (%)	2000/01 (%)	2001/02 (%)	2002/03 (%)
Parent unwilling/unable to accommodate	13 (15.3)	23 (15.4)	41 (21.4)	41 (16.3)
Friend/Relative unwilling/unable to accommodate	15 (17.6)	31 (20.8)	21 (10.9)	38 (15.1)
Breakdown of Relationship - Violent	6 (7.1)	13 (8.7)	16 (8.3)	35 (13.9)
Breakdown of Relationship – Non-Violent	9 (10.6)	10 (6.7)	12 (6.3)	18 (7.2)
Mortgage Arrears	9 (10.6)	4 (2.7)	3 (1.6)	4 (1.6)
Local Authority Arrears	0 (-)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.5)	1 (0.4)

Housing Association Arrears	1 (1.2)	2 (1.3)	0 (-)	1 (0.4)
Private Sector Arrears	2 (2.4)	5 (3.4)	4 (2.1)	1 (0.4)
Ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	14 (16.5)	39 (26.2)	58 (30.2)	71 (28.3)
Other reason for ending Assured Shorthold Tenancy	1 (1.2)	0 (-)	9 (4.7)	13 (5.2)
Institution of Care	3 (3.5)	3 (2.0)	8 (4.2)	9 (3.6)
Other	12 (14.1)	18 (12.1)	19 (9.9)	19 (7.6)
Total	85	149	192	251

(Source: HDC P1E Homelessness Returns)

**Main Reason Given for Homelessness 2002/03**

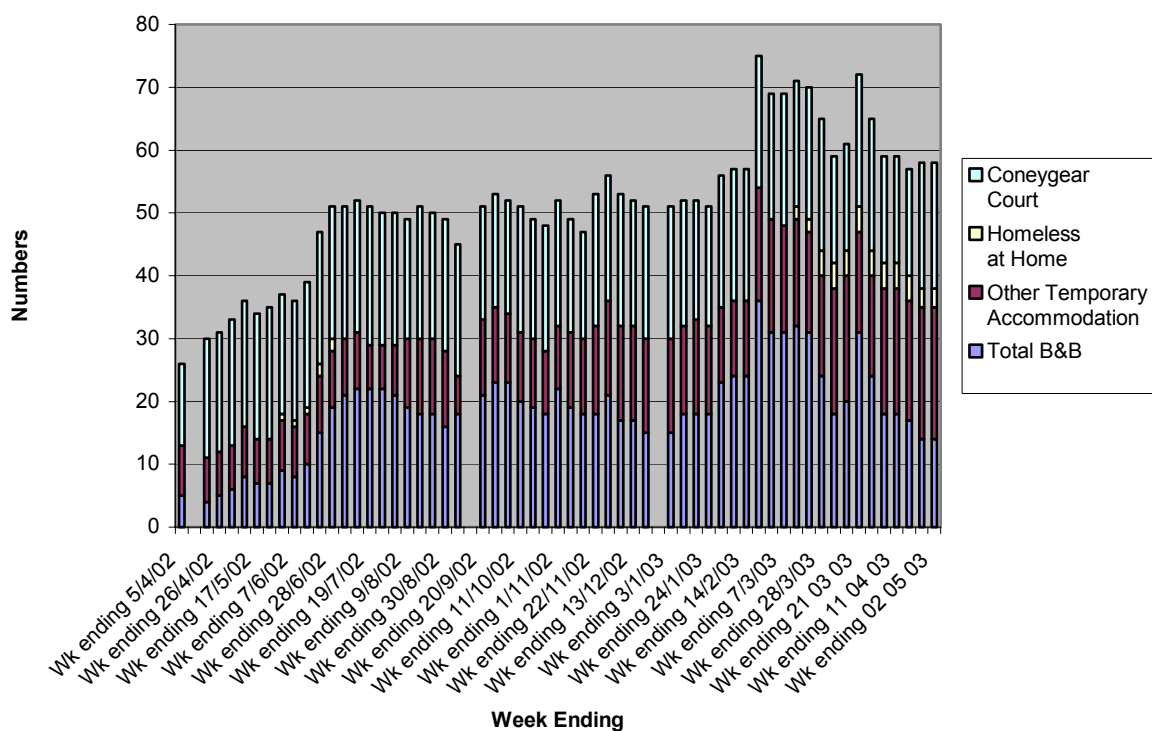


### 3.4 Number of Homeless Households Placed in Temporary Accommodation

The following graph shows the numbers of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation throughout 2002/03. It also shows how these were split between the different types of temporary accommodation. As would be anticipated with a higher number of homelessness applications during the year, there has been a

steady increase in the number of households requiring temporary accommodation. The average length of stay for households in bed and breakfast in 2002/03 was just below 13 weeks, whilst the average length of stay in the Coneygear Court hostel over the same period was just over 13 weeks. This is directly influenced by the availability of self-contained temporary accommodation, such as that provided by HHP (see 5.4 below), and the availability of more permanent housing provided by our RSL partners.

Temporary Accommodation April 2002 - March 2003



### 3.5 Applicants on the District's Housing Register

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Households on the housing register at 1 April	2498	3416	2724	2910

The number of households registering a housing need via the register has increased by 16% in the last 3 years. The Council recognises that many people in need do not add their names to the register, either because they prefer to look for other types of accommodation, or because they feel there is little if any chance of their needs being met through this route.

### 3.6 People Seeking Housing Aid and Advice

At present there is no qualitative data on the type of housing advice enquiries that are made at the Council. This is an area that will need to be reviewed in the future. However, quantitative information is collected and in 2002/3 a total of 1878 housing advice interviews were carried out, covering the housing register and homelessness as well as other areas such as landlord and tenant issues. In addition, 1142

households were visited in their own homes to confirm housing register details and offer advice on other housing options.

### **3.7 Rough Sleeping**

Despite carrying out a rough sleeping count in the past, the Council has never had evidence that it occurs apart from on a very casual basis. It is aware, however, of evidence from other surveys nationally that suggest that gaining an accurate picture from a count on any single night is extremely difficult. It will, therefore, be necessary to use consultation with homeless people themselves to try to establish whether this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

### **3.8 Independent Advice Agencies**

#### **3.8.1 Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)**

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) has offices in Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey and offers a wide range of advice to residents of the district. In 2002/03 these offices dealt with a total of 1800 housing related enquiries, demonstrating that they are seen very much as an alternative source of information and advice to the Council's own housing advice service.

#### **3.8.2 Huntingdon Independent Advice Centre (HIAC)**

HIAC is a further independent advice agency with offices in Huntingdon. Although detailed information is not currently available on the type and number of enquiries HIAC deals with, it is anticipated that a qualitative analysis will be carried out to identify client needs and possible trends.

#### **3.8.3 Advice, Information, Counselling in Huntingdonshire (AICH)**

As with HIAC, the Council does not currently have detailed information on the types and volume of housing advice offered by AICH. It is hoped that all independent advice agencies will agree to the implementation of a common monitoring system of clients that seek housing advice from these agencies in order to inform the Council's strategy in this area.

### **3.9 Agencies Working with Young People**

#### **3.9.1 Connexions**

Connexions has not, up to now, formally recorded information on housing need of their clients, but are beginning to do so. They know anecdotally that there is a high level of housing need among young people from 16 upwards, a factor which impacts upon the other work they do. They feel it is very important that young people have access to accommodation near their home base so that they can maintain supportive links with friends and relatives, and where they have transport links to their place of employment, training or further education.

#### **3.9.2 Cambridgeshire Social Services**

The 16 Plus Team within Social Services deals with care leavers and other vulnerable young people. Where their clients have a housing need, referrals may be

made to the Council to consider what assistance may be offered with housing. A young persons protocol has been agreed between Social Services and the Council although its effectiveness now requires reviewing. A further partnership approach needs to be developed between the two agencies to assess the level of potential future needs of care leavers within the Social Services 'looked after' system.

### **3.10 Cambridgeshire Drug Action Team (DAT)**

As far as housing issues are concerned, the DAT are working within the context of 'Tackling Drug Use in Rented Housing' (Home Office Report, 2002). This concludes: "Efforts to promote successful treatment and combat anti-social behaviour rely on access to appropriate support, treatment and after care services. Access to, and use of, such services can be hampered by lack of access to appropriate accommodation". The DAT will be working with the Cambridgeshire Supported Housing Information Project (SHIP) during 2003/4 to review, amongst other things, the housing needs of substance misusers.

### **3.11 Criminal Justice Agencies**

#### **3.11.1 Housing Needs of Ex-Offenders**

In 2002 SHIP and the Supporting People Partnership commissioned a report entitled 'Housing Offenders in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough'. This estimated that during 2001/2, based on information supplied by Probation Service workers, 100 ex-offenders in Huntingdonshire beginning supervision had an identified housing need. The report highlighted a number of gaps in provision across the county, including:

- a general lack of single person housing, particularly in rural areas
- a need for rent deposit schemes etc. to help ex-offenders access private rented accommodation
- the importance of different levels of support services for people with a range of needs, including tenancy sustainment, and basic skills training, including literacy and confidence-building, particularly for younger ex-offenders.

It is anticipated that this analysis will be updated so that a more accurate picture of the level of needs can be gained. Although not all ex-offenders will be considered to be vulnerable under the homelessness legislation it is recognised that a partnership approach to addressing the housing needs of some ex-offenders may contribute to a reduction in rates of re-offending, linking into the District's Community Safety Strategy.

#### **3.11.2 Youth Offending Service (YOS)**

In February 2003 the YOS carried out an analysis of the housing situation of their client group in Huntingdonshire, and found the following:

- |                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| • At home with both parents          | 9  |
| • At home with one parent            | 14 |
| • Living independently               | 1  |
| • At home, family members n/k        | 2  |
| • At home with parent and partner    | 6  |
| • In residential care                | 2  |
| • With relative(s), immediate family | 1  |

• In young offenders institution	6
• Homeless	1
• No info. recorded	3
Total	45

The YOS feel that the use of B&B and hostels is usually highly unsuitable for their clients, and often leads to re-offending. They believe that some form of supported lodgings would be a more appropriate solution.

### **3.12 The Health Sector**

#### **3.12.1 Huntingdonshire and South Peterborough Primary Care Trusts**

Although strategic links have been made with the Primary Care Trusts, formal links on daily procedural housing issues are limited. The review has highlighted that a greater degree of the co-ordination of services is required in this area.

#### **3.12.2 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Trust**

Joint working with mental health professionals exists. The review has identified areas where improvements can be made. The process has highlighted the following housing problems affecting people with mental health issues:

- many have previously lost settled accommodation through rent arrears and/or behaviour problems and it is important that housing providers are prepared to discount this where there is evidence that the person is now better able to cope
- many of this client group have multiple needs and it is important that all relevant agencies are involved to ensure that their problems are addressed in parallel
- some people will fail to hold down independent accommodation regardless of the level of support offered, and at present there is no fallback provision for these; they will tend to drift towards caravans or other unsatisfactory accommodation where they are likely to be isolated and receive little support.

A Supported Accommodation Panel provides the forum for housing and mental health professionals to liaise on a monthly basis and discuss the resources available and how these may meet the needs of clients. Also, a discharge protocol has been negotiated with the Mental Health Trust in an attempt to ensure that the housing needs of people with mental health issues are considered in advance of their discharge from hospital, in order to help avoid emergency homeless situations.

### **3.13 RSLs and Independent Providers**

Since the Council transferred its housing stock to Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership in 2000, the provision of affordable housing in the district has been in the hands of RSLs. Whilst they are, therefore, the main housing resource for homeless people and others in housing need, there are occasions when they feel obliged to evict tenants because of long term rent arrears or other persistent and serious breaches of their tenancy agreement. Annex 7.1 shows that in most cases the numbers concerned are very small, but most RSLs are understandably reluctant to rehouse people with a previous poor tenancy history. The Council recognises the need to work closely with RSLs both to ensure that advice can be given at an early stage to their tenants who are facing eviction (given that most may be intentionally



homeless) and to ensure that appropriate support packages are in place for homeless people who have previously had difficulty in holding down an independent tenancy.

### **3.14 Supporting People (SP)**

At present the Cambridgeshire SP Strategy sets out priorities for funding through SP grant across the county in the short term, based upon information supplied by the districts and the agencies involved with individual client groups. In the future it is envisaged that needs mapping will form the basis of future funding decisions, and be carried out on a cross-boundary basis. It is likely, therefore, that a considerable amount of data will be obtained which will be relevant to authorities' homelessness strategies.

### **3.15 Feedback from Consultation**

#### **3.15.1 Best Value Review**

In the context of the Best Value Review of Social Inclusion referred to in 1.3 above, families living in temporary accommodation were asked for their views on their experiences. It became clear that some of the issues considered important by professionals, access to GP services and education/training, for instance, were of less importance than basic day-to-day issues such as:

- lack of privacy
- lack of basic facilities
- financial worries
- lack of social interaction
- rules and restrictions regarding use of the accommodation.

These issues are being followed up as part of the second stage of the review, and the conclusions and recommendations will be fed into the homelessness strategy as they become available.

#### **3.15.2 Residents of Coneygear Court**

The consultation (paragraph 3.15.1) included a small sample of residents of Coneygear Court. Further consultation of residents will take place on a more regular basis so that this may help direct how service improvements may be made. Granta Housing Society, the owners of Coneygear Court, plan to carry out a consultation exercise of resident and the Council will work with Granta in assessing the most effective means of receiving meaningful resident feedback.

#### **3.15.3 Residents of B&B Accommodation**

The Council completed a consultation exercise with a sample of homeless households that had been placed in B & B on an emergency basis. The comments received confirmed the Council's understanding of the problems experienced by families placed in B & B. These included:

- problems with the location of the B & B when it was not where the household originated from, causing difficulties with access to schools and employment

- problems with the size of the accommodation, particularly where parents had to share rooms with their children
- the cost of the accommodation where the household was not in receipt of full Housing Benefit
- the quality of the facilities offered, although different households in the same B & Bs did have differing opinions on the quality of the facilities.

#### **3.15.4 Customer Satisfaction Survey**

The Council sends a postal satisfaction survey to everyone that uses the housing needs service, including a specific survey for the housing advice service. There was only a 14% response rate to the advice survey in 2002/03, with 73% of these being positive responses. The survey has recently been amended and future returns will be analysed, and if necessary amended again to attempt to maximise the response rates and the meaningfulness of the feedback.

## **4 PREVENTION AND TENANCY SUSTAINMENT SERVICES**

All agencies working with homeless people recognise that, whilst in practice homelessness is sometimes unavoidable, there are occasions when early and effective intervention can prevent it. There are already a number of ways in which the Council and its partners are trying to put this into practice.

### **4.1 The Council's Aid and Advice Service**

The service plays a role in preventing homelessness by giving advice on landlord and tenant law, resolving tenancy relations disputes, and advising people in housing need on the whole range of options available to them. The Council may also 'sign-post' to other agencies that have the expertise to offer more specialised assistance.

The Council's housing advice service is complemented by the services offered by voluntary agencies such as the Citizen Advice Bureau and Huntingdonshire Independent Advice Centre. The positive partnership working between these agencies and the Council enable preventative homelessness working, whichever agency is initially approached for housing advice.

### **4.2 Cambridgeshire and District Mediation Service**

A pilot is currently under way with this agency to evaluate the extent to which mediation can play a role in preventing homelessness, where relations between parents and their sons or daughters have broken down. This is a joint initiative with East Cambridgeshire District Council, and is supported by the ODPM's priority needs order funding. This initiative will continue to be run as a pilot in 2003/04, after which a full evaluation of its effectiveness will be carried out.

### **4.3 Tenancy Support Services**

#### **4.3.1 Link Scheme**

The scheme, operated by Granta Housing Society, provides floating support for vulnerable people with mental health issues who need help to maintain an independent tenancy. The level of support can be reduced or increased in line with the individual's needs at any particular time. The scheme has 16 units of accommodation available to it at any one time, with the support provided being funded through Supporting People grant. These properties are accessed through a referral to the Supported Accommodation Panel. This Panel is made up of representatives from the Council, Mental Health Trust and Granta Housing Society.

#### **4.3.2 Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership's (HHP) Tenancy Support Service**

HHP employs 3 tenancy support officers who in total work with around 45 clients, particularly tenants who have previously been homeless or whose current tenancy is for some reason under threat. HHP are carrying out research to map the outcomes of the service and hope to have data available later in the summer.

#### **4.3.2 Other Support Services**

There are other support services provided for people with mental Health issues, which are funded through the Supporting People grant with the aim of helping

individuals to maintain a home and live independently. The Mental Health Trust and Turning Point provides such support to a further 31 people.

#### **4.4 Court Advocacy Service**

The Council, together with CAB and HIAC, has established this service to support households going through the Court process who are facing eviction from their RSL tenancy. Where appropriate it can be combined with the provision of a debt counselling service. The service has been in operation for 18 months and has assisted tenants in negotiating agreements with their landlords in order to prevent homelessness. Although this service has not had any clients that have been evicted at the initial stage of advocacy, the success of preventing homelessness in the medium to long term will require further analysis and assessment.

#### **4.5 Rent Deposit Scheme**

The Rent Deposit/Rent in Advance Scheme helps households to secure private sector tenancies. It provides a bond or interest free loan to households that do not have a lump sum available in order to be able to take on a private tenancy. It is not restricted to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, as it is intended to make a wider contribution to meeting housing need. Twenty-two households were assisted through this scheme in 2002/03.

## 5 RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP TACKLE HOMELESSNESS

The resources of a variety of different agencies, in the form of staff and funding as well as bricks and mortar, contribute to meeting the needs of homeless people in the district.

### 5.1 Lettings of Affordable Housing

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/2
Council dwellings let to new secure tenants	490	478	*	*
Council dwellings let to homeless households in priority need	85	62	*	*
(of which, 2+ beds)	(69)	(53)	*	*

\* post stock transfer

	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
Total RSL lettings (incl. nominations, excl. transfers)	446	479	751	615
Council nominations to RSL dwellings	212	290	681	551
Homeless households in priority need taking up Council nominations	22	17	92	130
(of which, 2+ beds)	(20)	(13)	#	(114)

# data unavailable

## 5.2 Projected New Provision

Details of the current capital programme for the district are shown at Annex 7.2.

## 5.3 Supported Housing and Support Services

The following relevant schemes are receiving funding through SP grant during 2003/4:

Client Group	Provider's Name	Service Name	Property
Homeless Families with Support Needs	Granta Housing Society	Coneygear Court & The Lodge	Coneygear Court
Offenders or People at risk of Offending	Stonham Housing Association	Huntingdon - Ex Offenders	Huntingdon Ex Offenders
Offenders or People at risk of Offending	Stonham Housing Association	Huntingdon - Move On	Huntingdon-Move On
People with Mental Health Issues	Cambs & P'boro Mental Health P'ship NHS Trust	Mental Health Floating Support (Huntingdon)	
People with Mental Health Issues	Granta Housing Society	Cambridge Road & Pinfold Lane	13 Pinfold Lane
People with Mental Health Issues	Granta Housing Society	Cambridge Road & Pinfold Lane	50 Cambridge Street
People with Mental Health Issues	Granta Housing Society	Huntingdon Link (Granta)	16 units
People with Mental Health Issues	Turning Point	Floating Support (Hunts)	5 Properties
No single client group	Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership	Floating Support Service Hunts	Up to 45 tenancies
No single client group	Muir Group Housing Association Ltd	Floating Support (Muir - Hunts)	
Single Homeless with Support Needs	The Salvation Army	Kings Ripton Court	Kings Ripton - Main Block
Teenage Parents	Granta Housing Society	22 Prospero Way	22 Prospero Way
Teenage Parents	Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership	St Neots scheme	2 units
Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	Spurgeons Child Care		
Young People at Risk	Axiom Housing Association	Paines Mill Foyer	Paines Mill Foyer
Young People Leaving Care	Stonham Housing Association	Huntingdon - Young People at Risk	8 Properties

Huntingdonshire is the only rural district in the county with specific housing provision for ex-offenders, 8 units being provided by Stonham. These consist of a 6-bed core house in Huntingdon, with floating support provided for two further clients.

## **5.4 Temporary Accommodation**

### **5.4.1 Hostels**

Granta provide 21 units of accommodation at Coneygear Court, Huntingdon, for homeless households referred by the Council. The hostel is permanently staffed and providing the Council with one of the main resources of temporary accommodation for homeless households. This hostel was the main focus of the joint Best Value Review referred to in 1.2.3 above; see Annex 7.2 for further information on the Review.

### **5.4.2 B&B**

As was shown in 3.4 above, the use of B&B has increased considerably over the last 3 years. In practice this generally has to be sought outside the district, since most establishments in Huntingdonshire do not wish to take referrals from the Council. Also most do not meet the requirements of the House In Multiple Occupation Scheme run by the Council. The Council is working towards minimising the use of this type of accommodation by increasing other forms of provision.

### **5.4.3 Other Temporary Housing Provided by RSLs**

The Council has a temporary accommodation agreement with HHP. Under this agreement the Council originally had access to six miscellaneous properties that were designated as temporary accommodation for homeless households. This agreement was reviewed in December 2002 and extended to 20 properties. HHP and the Council agree that this agreement should remain flexible in terms of the number of properties included so that it can change with fluctuations in the demand from homeless households. The scheme has contributed significantly to reducing the length of stay of households in B & B.

## **5.5 Provision for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities, including Travellers**

According to the 2001 Census, 152,487 residents of the district (over 97%) describe themselves as white. The largest recorded minority are people of Indian origin, of whom there were 592. In the absence of representative bodies to provide a voice for people from BME communities it is difficult to know whether there are housing issues specific to them. However, we are aware that there are significant issues affecting one group not recorded separately in the Census, namely travellers. At present the district has one site making provision for travellers' caravans, but it is possible for travelers with a habitable caravan to become homeless simply because there is no pitch available which they can legally occupy, although in practice homeless applications to the Council from people in this position seem to be rare.

## **5.6 Empty Properties**

Work in support of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy suggests that typically less than 0.1% of the housing stock in the district consists of problematic non-transactional voids, thus limiting the potential for this resource to make a serious impact on housing need. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the availability of renovation grant funding (in return for Council nomination rights) may persuade a few owners to bring their properties back into use. This scheme has already enabled two properties

to be brought back into use, with the Council nominating households to these properties. The Council also liaises with RSLs over the potential for purchase, lease or management arrangements of empty homes.

## 5.7 Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector accounts for 10% of the local housing stock (Housing Needs Survey 2002). Demand for accommodation of most types and in most locations remains high relative to supply. Previous research carried out by the Council and published in the document 'Reading the Housing Market' provides evidence that local landlords and letting agents believe there is no business reason to let to households that are unable to pay the market rent from their own resources. Although there is some evidence that prospective private tenants needing to claim Housing Benefit to supplement their own resources are still on the market, those that are dependent on benefit to meet all or a large proportion of a market rent are all but closed out of this tenure.

## 5.8 Revenue Funding of the Council's Homelessness Services

The following extract from a summary of the Council's housing revenue expenditure gives an idea of the financial provision:

Service	Expenditure/Income	2001/2 Actual £	2002/3 Budget £	2002/3 Actual £	2003/4 Budget £
Homelessness	B&B Payments	162,118	231,140	357,534	235,760
	Hostel Revenue Support	142,953	164,840	32,976	63,893
	Bad Debt Provision	38,510	22,880	50,890	46,027
	Recoveries From Clients (B&B)	-162,118	-231,140	357,534	235,760
Housing Service Staff	Employee Costs	579,249	720,190	680,714	762,403

The Council has approved a provisional growth item for 2004/5 for an additional Housing Advice Officer.

The pilot mediation scheme referred to in 4.2 above will continue to receive funding for 2003/04 through the ODPM Homelessness Grant.

## 5.9 Resources within other Statutory Agencies

### 5.9.1 Probation Service

A full time accommodation officer attempts to meet the housing needs of Probation clients in the Huntingdonshire and Fenland districts.

### 5.9.2 Social Services

All care leavers are entitled to a leaving care grant (based on need), and the 16+ Team report that this can be and sometimes is used to provide funding for the deposit and first month's rent on a property.



### **5.9.3 Job Centre Plus**

They have access to a discretionary fund (up to £300) to help people into work, and in appropriate cases this can be used for accommodation.

Agencies also report that clients are, on occasions, able to access budgeting loans from the Department of Work and Pensions.

### **5.10 Resources of Voluntary Agencies**

The Council is providing grant aid to the following voluntary agencies in 2003/4:

CAB	£128,800
AICH	£2,560
Disability Information Service Huntingdonshire	£4,750

## **6 CONCLUSIONS**

### **6.1 Key Themes**

From the information gleaned in the course of this review, the following key themes have emerged which must be addressed in the homelessness strategy.

#### **6.1.1 Meeting the Needs of Young People**

Young people are disproportionately represented amongst some of the groups whose needs we have considered. In addition, existing housing provision for this client group is limited. Failure to meet their housing needs may result in the need for other intervention by e.g. criminal justice or health agencies.

#### **6.1.2 Services Aimed at Preventing Homelessness**

We have already seen the number of ways in which agencies can contribute towards reducing the incidence of homelessness in the first place. It is vital that the strategy seeks to maximise the contribution of prevention services, given that the supply of affordable housing is never likely to be sufficient to meet all housing need.

#### **6.1.3 Reducing the Use of Inappropriate Temporary Accommodation, Especially B&B**

As indicated in the introduction, this reflects one of the Government's major priorities as well as offering an opportunity to reduce an unsatisfactory and expensive use of scarce resources for the authority. Those households that are offered this form of emergency temporary accommodation are disadvantaged because of the inappropriateness of the accommodation and disadvantaged again as it is often outside the District away from support networks, employment and education.

### **6.2 "Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness"**

In beginning to work towards its strategy, the Council is mindful of the recommendations of the recently published Homelessness Directorate guidance note of this name. This suggests that proposed outcomes of strategies should include the key areas of:

- reducing repeat levels of homelessness
- reducing levels of homelessness against main causes (currently eviction by parent/relative/friend, relationship breakdown and ending of assured shorthold tenancy)
- reducing inappropriate use of temporary accommodation.

The Council believes that these are consistent with the findings of its own review, and will take these proposed outcomes into account in formulating its strategic action plan.

## 7 ANNEXES

### 7.1 Summary of RSL policy and practice on re-possession and the acceptance of previously evicted tenants\*

RSL	Policy and practice	Tenants evicted since April 2000 for:	
		Rent arrears	Other breach
Warden	Will accept people with arrears onto housing list depending on reasons and commitment to repay any debts. Former Warden tenants with arrears not normally accepted.	1	0
Nene	No blanket ban on applicants previously evicted. Circumstances considered, alongside any arrangement to repay arrears. Evictions more than two years ago generally discounted.	6	1
Granta	Former Granta tenants who have previously been evicted are not normally considered unless all arrears are cleared.	0	0
Axiom	Do not house people with former arrears unless there is commitment to pay them off, or people previously evicted for anti-social behaviour (ASB) unless satisfied that it won't happen again.	N/K	0
Hanover	Reserve the right to exclude applicants with a history of ASB, or of debt or rent arrears where it raises serious doubt about ability / willingness to pay in future.	0	0
Hunts Housing Partnership	Each case considered on its merits. Will house statutorily homeless people with rent arrears as long as there is a commitment to repay. Reluctant to take people evicted for ASB unless extenuating circumstances.	123	2
Guinness Trust	Reserve right to exclude people with a history of rent arrears, ASB, or recent serious prison record, but each case considered on its merit.	3	0
Housing 21	No formal policy on exclusions, but all applications vetted.	N/A (but thought to be 0)	
Hundred Houses	Will not generally consider former tenants of other social landlords who have been evicted for breach of tenancy conditions but each case considered on merit.	2	0
Cambridge HS	Will not normally consider applicants who have incurred rent arrears or have seriously breached terms of their tenancy or have committed violence against staff or residents, within the last 2 years.	2	0

Based on information provided by those RSLs who made returns

**BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SOCIAL INCLUSION OF HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS  
IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To outline the approach and findings from Stage 1 of the cross cutting and multi agency Best Value Review of Social Inclusion

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Following feedback from the Best Value Inspectorate, County Council officers in Social Services and Education were asked to identify a theme for a Best Value Review of Social Inclusion that would meet the following criteria:

Cross cutting

Capable of delivering a useful and realistic improvement plan

In an area where we identify we need to improve our services and policies.

Would draw in non County Council partners, e.g. Health, District Councils and Independent Sector.

Reasonably well bounded while illustrating a wide range of cross cutting issues.

Could be undertaken in a geographically focused area

Could be handled within the likely available resources.

- 2.2 The theme agreed on was families living in temporary accommodation. These families are known to be a highly vulnerable group who suffer multiple disadvantage because of the nature of their housing and the difficulties that have often led to them being in temporary housing. They are a group that also experience the marginalization that occurs for people who do not have a permanent address. It is a service area about which there is limited detailed information and analysis and is a concern to District and Health partners and the voluntary sector.

- 2.3 Huntingdonshire was selected as the most appropriate locality for the review and the proposed outcomes for the review were to provide  
A practical and achievable action plan for improvements in services for people in temporary accommodation in the Huntingdonshire area  
An indication of how services for families in temporary accommodation in other parts of Cambridgeshire could be improved  
An overview of the experiences and issues faced by families in temporary accommodation in accessing and using services  
An insight into social inclusion issues for other client groups and universal and specialist services in Cambridgeshire

- 2.4 A multi agency review team was formed comprising representatives from a range of organisations including: County and District Council Members and officers (including Social Services and Education), Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust, Granta Housing Association, The St. Neots Women's Refuge, The Citizens Advice Bureau, and Job Centre Plus.

**3.0 THE INFORMATION GATHERING PROCESS**

The stage 1 information gathering process has concentrated on the following

methods:

A series of semi structured interviews with professionals working in areas associated with the client group

Interviews with families in temporary accommodation

Input from organisation at 3 half day workshops for the Review Team

A Literature search

- 3.1 Interviews with professionals: A total of 15 professionals have been interviewed to date including staff working at Coneygear Court in Huntingdon (Granta Housing Association purpose built hostel for homeless families) the Women's Refuge in St Neots, Health Visitors, District Council housing officers, Social Workers and Education Welfare Officers.
- 3.2 Interviews with families: A total of nine families were interviewed incorporating a wide range of background circumstances including families in Coneygear Court, the Women's Refuge, bed and breakfast and one family who had previously been in temporary accommodation but has now been re-housed. This included one couple and a total of 17 children ranging in age from 4 weeks to 14 years.
- 3.3 Information from Review Team members: A total of three half-day workshops have been held to date. These have been used to share information between organizations and have provided an opportunity for members of the review team to share views and challenge the practices and procedures of the respective organisation. Periods between meetings have been used to gather additional information on issues such as delivery of services, practices and procedures, and best practice.
- 3.4 Literature Search: A selection of reports from a range of sources was considered.

#### 4.0 KEY FINDINGS

The following four key questions were devised to ensure all organisations involved in the review were working to a common framework that would ensure a consistent approach. The findings from Stage 1 of the review are outlined below under the headings of the four questions.

- 4.1 What do we know in terms of statistics/information about families in temporary accommodation?
- 4.1.1 The District Council has a responsibility to collect and record statistical information on families who present as homeless. With the exception of the district there is no evidence to show that any other organisations have recording systems to identify if a family is living in temporary accommodation. This lack of information did give rise to a range of issues identified by professionals, families and members of the review group. Specifically these were:  
Professionals reported that it would be beneficial to have more information available that could be readily transferable between agencies;  
A 'trigger' was needed to ensure families were picked up by relevant agencies;  
Review group members discussed the issue of children on the 'At Risk Register'. Should agencies involved be made aware if these children are living in temporary accommodation?  
What happens if children are waiting for or receiving specialist services – should the fact that they are in temporary accommodation be noted?

Could easier identification through information systems result in children/families becoming 'labelled' and/or stigmatised?

4.2 How do our policies and procedures impact on families in temporary accommodation who are users/ potential users of universal and specialist services for families?

4.2.2 Families were particularly critical of what was considered to be "bureaucratic and inflexible" systems that were particularly challenging in their circumstances. Examples given by families:

The claim form for Income Support does not lend itself to emergency situations and crisis loans can only be applied for in Peterborough, which can be a long, costly and arduous journey with small children.

Procedures at Coneygear Court require administrative forms to be completed immediately on arrival when families are often tired, emotional and scared.

Rent costs (£187 per week at Coneygear Court) can result in parents having to give up work and become reliant on state benefits, as they are in fact financially better off doing so.

Families at Coneygear Court feel restricted by regulations that do not allow them to come and go from their temporary accommodation in the way that they would if living in their own, permanent accommodation. Examples given were: regulations restrict visitor arrangements, and children are required to be in bed by a certain time and the parent is confined to the room with the child(ren).

Two parents who were interviewed advised that their children who have statements of special educational needs were absent from school for up to three months as educational provision could not be found for them.

The concentration of temporary accommodation in Huntingdon means that many families are placed away from families and support networks and in addition, may lose their employment.

4.2.3 Professionals supported many of the comments made by families and were also concerned that the shortage of local B&B and Hostel provision within Huntingdon and St Neots placed additional strain on homeless families. Placing families away from the area of their home has the following effects:

Removes them from social support networks;

Takes them away from local agency support;

Increases family isolation;

Removes from children the stability of attending the same school;

- Gives rise to issues surrounding transporting children to their original school and the lack of budget available from Education to do this.

4.2.4 Placing families away from the area of their home may however be necessary and appropriated in some cases. Families fleeing domestic violence being an example.

4.3 What do we know about the experience of families in temporary accommodation who use or attempt to use our service?

4.3.1 The focus of the families was more on day to day living issues which affect the quality of their life and that of their children. Issues of importance to families were: lack of privacy, lack of basic facilities, financial worries, lack of social interaction and having to abide by rules and restrictions which would not be in place if the accommodation was permanent. The issues identified by professionals such as registering with a GP, local pre-school facilities and access

to adult education and training were not seen as immediate priorities. Several women interviewed talked about simply 'getting through the day'.

4.3.2 Social isolation was a major problem noted by all those spoken to and the direct effects this can have on mental health and emotional well-being were commented upon.

4.3.3 Many families are in contact with some agencies e.g. social services, long before they reach the crisis point of becoming homeless. Professionals considered the most common problems facing families living in temporary accommodation are:  
financial problems;  
relationship breakdown;  
domestic violence;  
mental health problems.

4.3.4 Professionals also identified the following health related problems:  
Length of time moving GP records between practices leading to GPs having to treat and diagnose patients with limited case history;  
Loss of child health records;  
Families missing out on general screening e.g. child developmental checks or cervical smears;  
Hospital appointments are often missed;  
Health visitors work load meant prioritisation on most serious cases;  
Access to other specialist health services such as Children's Mental Health Services;  
The difficulty families have of getting a first referral to Mental Health services or of maintaining contact with the services if they are already 'in the system'.

4.4 What do we know about their experience of other services and the interaction between services locally?

4.4.1 The interviews with families highlighted that there is a lack of interaction between services and even within services themselves. Families provided examples from their own experiences including a case where social services child care and mental health teams did not liaise with regards to a mother and her child. The result was that an assessment was not shared between the teams until the mother herself had referred to it.

4.4.2 The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) highlighted the case of a family which presented as homeless on a Friday afternoon to the CAB office. The family was fleeing as a result of domestic violence and was from outside of the area. The CAB, as advocates, tried to secure temporary accommodation and were passed from one person to another within Social Services and the District Council. Calls were not returned as promised. A fundamental problem was trying to get the telephone number for the Refuge. The CAB (and other support and advice organisations) has an important advocacy function but needs to be enabled to fulfil this role. This case demonstrated the range of issues and problems that arose in trying to resolve this one situation.

4.4.3 Greater interaction and sharing of information between services was seen as a way of reducing the difficulties that many families find when attempting to access information. For example information on education, training and childcare

facilities could be provided through an “Opportunity Links” pod cited at Coneygear Court. (Opportunity Links is a voluntary organisation which provides information, via the internet and touchscreen kiosks, to those who have a need to find out about jobs, training and childcare facilities).

- 4.4.4 Successful interaction and the development of relationships between agencies results in positive experiences as demonstrated at Caroline Norton House where special arrangements have been made for:  
G.P. registration  
Twice weekly visits by a health visitor  
Visits by a housing officer as required  
Regular visits by a solicitor.
- 4.4.5 The above approach provides evidence that the recognition of the vulnerability of this client group requires a supported, multi-agency approach.
- 4.4.6 The views from professionals and users relating to the current Coneygear Court provision in Huntingdon were mixed. A separate report has been provided to Huntingdonshire District Council and Granta Housing Association on this issue.
- 4.4.7 Concern was also expressed by professionals about the lack of knowledge and understanding between agencies about each other’s procedures and eligibility criteria. For example housing professionals and social service workers did not fully understand how each service worked and there were misconceptions regarding expectations and eligibility criteria. Other areas of confusion were Education Welfare and staff at Coneygear Court.
- 4.4.8 Evidence from the literature search concluded that the ‘preventative’ agenda was of key importance and that presently there was an existing gap in services that helped with the initial trauma of homelessness. Helping people to break the ‘cycle of homelessness’ was a key factor and outreach services adopting a multi-agency approach were the ones most likely to gain positive results.

## 5.0 PRIORITY AREAS FOR STAGE 2 INVESTIGATION

- 5.1 Throughout stage 1 of the review, members of the review group have engaged in discussions on the findings. Based on the evidence presented a list of priority areas for stage 2 investigations has been agreed. In addition to the consultation and challenge that has been an intrinsic part of the review meetings, the prioritisation process has also been informed through a variety of additional processes. This has included:  
Engaging with a range of officer meetings within the council - for example, ELH Departmental Strategy Team, Education and Social Services Officer Group and the Best Value Officer Group meeting;  
The Huntingdonshire “In Your Patch” meeting;  
Presenting progress reports to wider partnership meetings including the Children’s Fund and Social Exclusion Partnership Meeting and the Cambridgeshire Strategic Housing Group;  
Review group representatives from the District Council and PCT have also engaged with colleagues within their own organisations and where appropriate have discussed the work of the review at wider partnership meetings they attend. For example the Cambridgeshire Housing Advisors Group.



5.2 The following seven priority areas have been identified:

PRIORITY AREA	Detail of Issues to be included	Rationale (Reference point on notes of meeting held on 23 <sup>rd</sup> Sept and 9 <sup>th</sup> July [italics])
1. Delivering Customer Focussed Services to People in a joined up way	Delivering services where and when people need them; Information – consistency, reliability and availability; Taking account of rural issues Access to, and information on benefits; Providing outreach/inreach services; Childcare and early years provision; Helping people access existing community initiatives; Multi-agency, multi-team approach; Ensuring basics are in place – e.g. when GP notes have not been sent on/received	Limitations of SSD resources (2.3) Lack of knowledge of policies/procedures of other organisations (2.4) Accessing benefits/travelling to Peterborough (2.6) Communication between agencies (2.8) Call centre approach (2.8) Evidence from literature search (3) Findings from interviews with professionals (4) Findings from interviews with families (5) Lack of pre-school provision/temporary childcare (2.3) HV attached to refuge/hostel 2.4) Information sharing between agencies (2.4) Accessing/understanding benefits system (2.7)
2. Preventing people from 'Falling through the gap'	Ensuring continuity of essential services for example: - Education (plus transport) – GP Ensuring access to other specialist services such as Education Psychology, Mental Health Services; Special Educational Needs Services Ensuring employment is maintained (if best option), or accessed (if best option); Ensuring support is offered when people move out of temporary accommodation.	Preventative role of SSD (2.4) Evidence from literature search (3) Findings from interviews with professionals (4 and 4.1) Interviews with families (5) Education/transport budget/SEN (2.1) Access to support services (2.2) Breakdown in patient/professional relationship (2.4)
3. Cost and location of Temporary Housing	Concentration of temporary housing provision is in Huntingdon; Can mean that people have to move a considerable way from existing support systems; Rent at Coneygear Court £187 p/w	Findings from interviews with professionals (4 and 4.1) Interviews with families (5) Cost of storing belongings (2.7)

4. Acknowledging rights, showing respect, treating like adults	Ensuring that staff from all agencies are sensitive to the real needs of the customers; Awareness raising training sessions for staff from all agencies to gain a better understanding of how the customer feels and what is of prime importance; Involving staff in multi-agency training programmes to encourage 'thinking outside the box'	Relationship between SSD and HDC (2.1) Training for all occasions (2.8) Findings from interviews with professionals (4 and 4.1) Interviews with families (5)
5. Information Systems	Consider the investigation of a joint referral system which will be – transferable across agencies – 'owned' and kept by the customer – a tool for identifying people at risk – useful for triggering a response – act as a 'tracking/tagging' tool	Findings from interviews with professionals (4 and 4.1) Interviews with families (5) Information sharing between agencies (2.4)
6. Prevention	The cycle of homelessness General issues	Evidence from literature search (3) Findings from interviews with professionals (4 and 4.1) Interviews with families (5) Social Services role in the preventative agenda (2.5) Life skills/cycle of homelessness
7. Advocacy	Citizens Advice Bureau Huntingdon Independent Advice Centre Women's Refuge	Role of CAB and Hunts Independent Advice Centre (2.7 and 2.8)

## 6.0 STAGE 2

- 6.1 Stage 2 of the review will explore the identified priority areas in more detail, with a view to developing proposals for change. The half day workshop approach for the review team will continue with the next meeting conducted as a focus group event. The intention is to broaden the attendance at this meeting to include people who work at the delivery end of the services – for example social workers, health visitors, education welfare officers, GP practice managers. It is also proposed that we invite some of the families who have experienced homelessness first hand.
- 6.2 Based on the outcomes of the stage 2 work a realistic improvement plan will be produced that will be owned by all agencies and organisations involved in the review and deliver the intended outcomes for this review as set out in 2.3.
- 6.3 It is proposed to take a multi agency approach to the Scrutiny process that includes County Council and appropriate District Council and PCT members. It is proposed

that we link this work into the development of local processes for health scrutiny.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 SMT is asked to:  
Comment on and endorse the findings from the Stage 1 process  
Support the proposed approach for Stage 2

## 7.2 Huntingdonshire Housing Capital Programme

### Future Affordable Completions

Completions 2003~2004	Units	Type
Barford Road	10	Rent
Broadway Yaxley Two	27	Rent
Spinney Way	9	Rent
27 Uggmere	1	S Needs
P&R	7	Rent
Howits Gardens	4	Rent
Broadway 2	28	Rent
Totals	86	*
Completions 2004~2005	Units	Type
	34	V. Sheltered
	10	Rent
	29	Rent
	20	Rent
	7	Rent
	6	Rent
	3	LCHO
	7	Rent
	16	Rent
	4	Rent
Totals	136	*
Completions 2005~2006	Units	Type
	31	Rent
	20	Rent
	37	Rent
	13	Rent
	20	Rent
	12	Rent
	35	Rent
Totals	168	*
* Numbers of completions will be dependent upon the availability of grant funding for these schemes		

## 7.3 Key Findings from the Housing Needs Survey

### Local Housing Market

- Fordham were asked to consider two broad housing market areas within the district:
- North and west Huntingdonshire reported lower house prices.
- East (Cambridge sub-region area) reported higher prices.

Example:

minimum for 2 bed in N&W Hunts is: £72,000	Purchase £330	Rent pm
minimum for 2 bed in E Hunts is:	£74,500	£430

### Financial Information

- Average earned income is £26,673 per annum (excluding benefits).
- There are considerable differences between tenure groups.
- Housing Association tenants average £7,943 per annum.

### Affordability

- A household is not considered able to afford a **mortgage** that requires more than three times its gross income.
- A household is unable to afford **rent** that is more than 30% of its net income.

### Existing Need

- 2,779 of all households are currently living in unsuitable housing (4.3% of all households).
- 1,478 of these must move home to solve the problem and look to remain in the district.
- 758 of these cannot afford suitable market housing.
- 539 of these do not have social rented housing.
- 369 potential households are unable to afford market housing.
- 64 homeless households are accommodated by the authority.
- 972 is therefore the estimated overall existing need for affordable homes.

### Newly Arising Need

- 928 new households in housing need will form per year.
- 360 existing households will fall into need per year.
- 240 households in housing need will move into the district per year.
- 1,528 total households with newly arising need per year.

### Supply of Affordable Units

- 832 re-lets per year from Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), excluding transfers, allowing for losses such as Right to Buy and voids.
- 123 new units completed per year. These are discounted here as they form part of the re-let figures for succeeding years after their completion.

- **709** units of affordable housing will become available per year.

### **Basic Needs Assessment**

- 194 existing need per year (equals one fifth per year of the current total existing need (972) assuming that the existing need will be addressed over a five year period).
- 1,528 newly arising need per year.
- 1,722 is therefore the gross affordable housing requirement per year.
- 709 affordable units supplied per year.
- **1,013** is therefore the net affordable housing requirement per year.
  
- The estimated housing yield from allocated sites and windfall sites is **6,047** for the period 2001~2006.
  
- An affordable housing target of **40%** on suitable sites would provide **2,409** affordable units and would therefore be justified. Even this figure if adopted, would result in a large shortfall in affordable housing.


### **Thresholds**

- The report suggests that affordable housing should be sought on sites of **15 or more** units for allocated and windfall sites and **2 or more** in areas with settlements of 3,000 population or less.

## **CONTACT PERSON FOR THIS HOMELESSNESS REVIEW**

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