

Huntingdonshire District Council

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

June 2011



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Introduction

This is the Council's third Homelessness Strategy. It looks back at the successes that have been achieved following the 2006 Strategy and looks forward to the way in which the Council aims to further develop services for households threatened with homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all Councils to formulate a Homelessness Strategy at least every five years. Councils are required to carry out a homelessness review of their area and produce a strategy to:

- address the causes of homelessness in the area;
- introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
- provide sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
- ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

The Council has selected six of its objectives as community priorities for the next three to four years in its Council Plan for 2011 to 2015. Four of these priority objectives contribute directly or indirectly to the prevention of homelessness:

- to prevent and deal with homelessness;
- to help vulnerable and disadvantaged people to live independently;
- to work in partnership to support strong communities; and
- to encourage new jobs, homes and facilities to meet our needs.

In addition to its priorities, the Council continues to work towards a wider range of objectives linked to delivery of its many important and valued services.

The Council will attempt to achieve a low level of homelessness by:

- helping prevent people from becoming homeless; and
- housing homeless people where appropriate.

This strategy reviews the successes achieved in contributing to these outcomes and highlights areas where further action is still needed. It incorporates all of these factors into a revised Action Plan.

Homelessness in Context

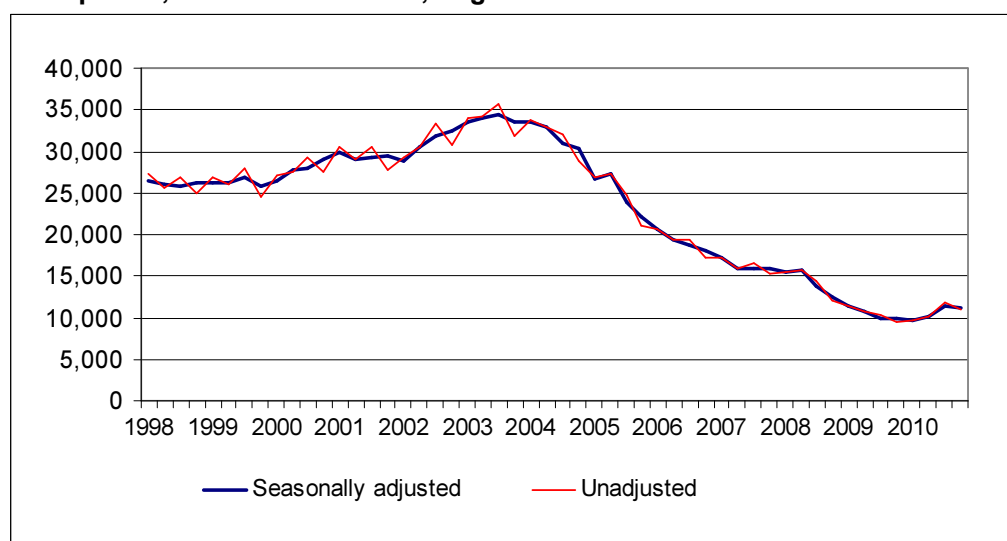
The National Picture

The number of households accepted as statutorily homeless by Councils in England peaked in 2003/04 at 135,430. Between 1997 and 2004 the number of households accommodated by Councils in temporary accommodation doubled, breaking the 100,000 mark in 2004. Homelessness moved further up the political agenda with the recognition that urgent action had to be taken to address the housing crisis, in particular the rate of homelessness within the country and the number of households in temporary accommodation.

The government's policy briefing released in June 2005 focused on ways of achieving this target, particularly the increased use of preventative measures and utilising the private rented sector as a source of settled accommodation. This drew together the examples of good practice where Councils had successfully introduced homelessness prevention measures and increased access to the private sector for many clients who may otherwise have been reliant on the limited stock of social rented housing.

We are now six years down the line since this change in emphasis. The trend of increasing numbers of households faced with homelessness was reversed and since 2003/04 the number of households accepted as homeless by Councils in England has dramatically decreased. The concern now is that nationally between October and December 2010 there has been a reversal in the downward trend achieved over the last seven years. This quarter saw a 15% increase in the number of households accepted as homeless compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The big question is whether the current economic downturn will lead to significant increases in homelessness and break the downward trend in homelessness that is illustrated in the chart below.

Graph 1: Households accepted by local authorities as owed a main homelessness duty each quarter, 1998 to March 2010, England



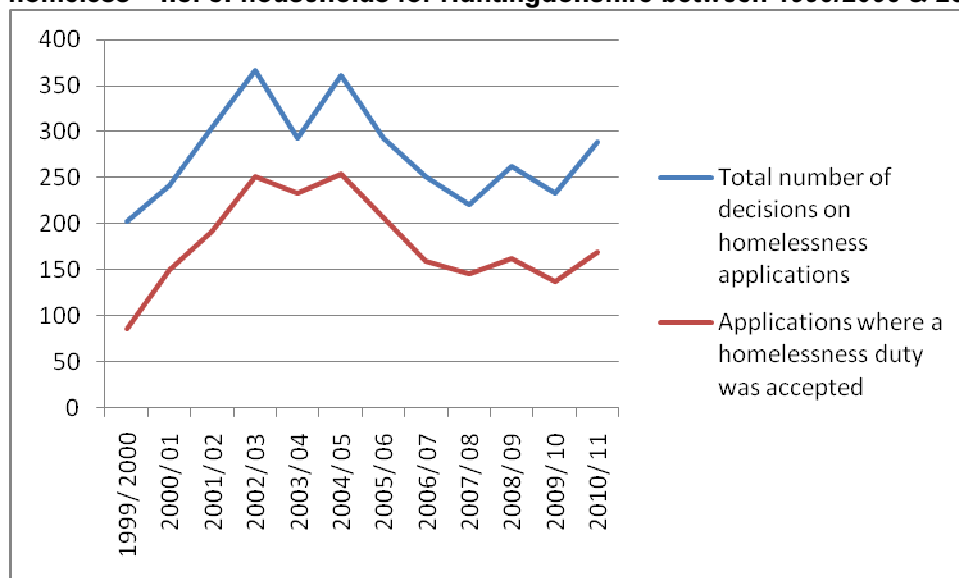
Source: CLG Housing Statistical Release March 2011

The Local Picture

Huntingdonshire has seen a similar trend to the national picture in terms of homelessness, although actually experiencing a peak in the actual number of homeless households a year earlier in 2002/03. Like the national picture, Huntingdonshire was successful in reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness in the subsequent years. The number of households accepted as homeless reduced by 45% from 251 in 2002/03 to 137 in 2009/10.

However, 2010/11 saw an increase in households applying to the Council and being accepted as homeless. Acceptances increased by 23% on the previous year up to 169 households. The graph below illustrates the reducing number of households experiencing actual homelessness in Huntingdonshire since 2005 and the increase from 2009/10 to 2010/11.

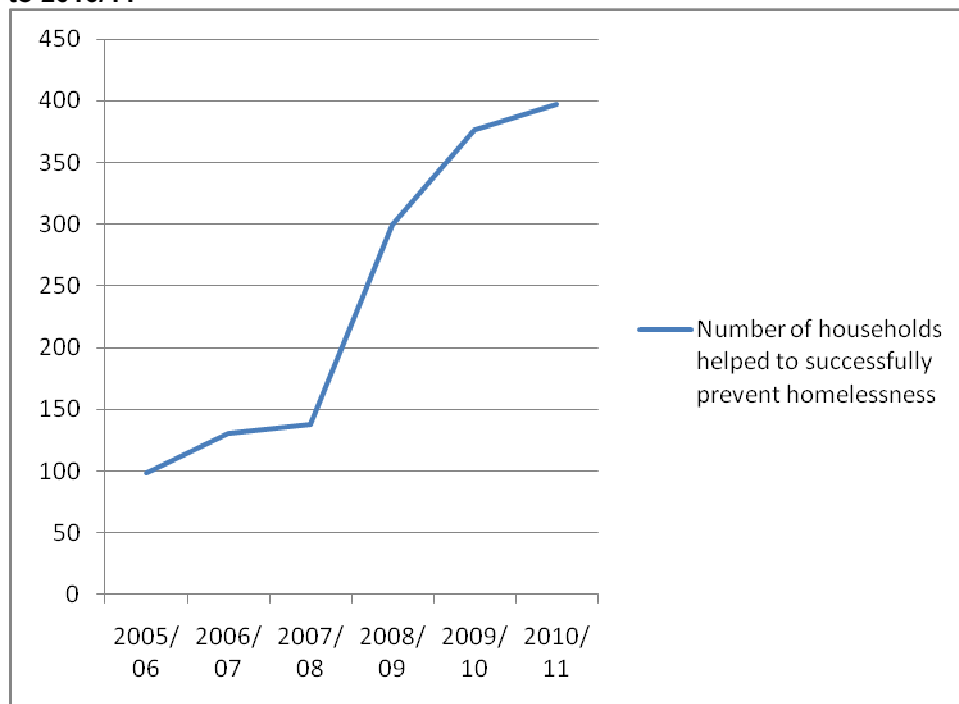
Graph 2: Total homelessness decisions, those that were accepted as statutorily homeless – no. of households for Huntingdonshire between 1999/2000 & 2010/11



The trend of reduction in homelessness illustrated above has been achieved by introducing a series of successful prevention measures. The more successful the Council has been at helping households prevent their homelessness the fewer households that have been faced with a crisis situation and had to make a homelessness application. The likelihood is that if the prevention measures were not so successful the number of homeless households would be much higher than shown in the graph above.

Graph 3 overleaf illustrates the increasing number of successful homelessness preventions helped year on year. The large increase in households helped, particularly from 2007/08 to 2008/09, was mainly due to the buoyancy of the local private rented sector and being able to help people find a new home in that sector before they became homeless. The Council's Rent Deposit scheme helps people with some of the upfront costs taking on a private sector tenancy and has played a large part in being able to achieve the higher prevention numbers.

Graph 3: Number of households helped to successfully prevent homelessness 2005/06 to 2010/11



It could be argued that the current economic climate has started to have a significant impact on homelessness within the district, with increasing numbers of households seeking advice about their housing difficulties being an indicator. The Council's housing advice and options service has seen a 31% increase in customers (from 1362 households seeking help with their housing in 2009/10 compared to 1781 during 2010/11). The local Citizens Advice Bureaux have also seen an increase in the number of housing enquiries they received in 2010 (an increase from 416 households in the first half of 2009/10 to 491 in the same period 2010/11).

Temporary Accommodation

The Council has a duty to provide certain homeless households with temporary housing whilst it attempts to help them resolve their housing difficulties. As with many high demand areas, the limited number of social rented properties available for letting and the increasing demands on these properties leads to homeless households having to spend longer than would be desirable in temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation, and in particular bed and breakfast, is recognised as being unsatisfactory for households. In many cases it provides accommodation with shared facilities away from families' usual support networks at a cost to both the Council and household. As a result, reducing the use of temporary accommodation and minimising the length of time households have to stay in this accommodation will remain a key priority for the Council within this Strategy.

The successful preventative measures led to a reduction in the number of households having to be placed in temporary accommodation from a peak of over 120 households in 2004 to 61 at the beginning of April 2009. The recent increase in homelessness has led to 76 households housed in temporary

accommodation at the end of March 2011. This figure is expected to increase if homelessness continues at current rates, or increases, and the number of available social rented properties reduces.

As well as concerns about the increasing numbers of households placed in temporary accommodation a further issue is that Council's ability to ensure that these households have the opportunities to move on into permanent housing, avoiding bed blocking of the temporary accommodation. Under normal circumstances this is through households accepted as homeless bidding for housing through the Home-Link scheme for available social rented properties. A number of households have issues that they firstly need to resolve before they are able to go through this route. They may have problems such as former tenant arrears with a housing association or a support issue where a support package needs to be put in place for them to live independently. The Council works with households in these circumstances to make sure that their issues are resolved so that housing associations are willing to consider them for an offer of permanent housing. There is an increasing proportion of households with these types of issues potentially adding to bed blocking of temporary accommodation and requiring ongoing casework by the Council. At the end of April 2011 there were 45 households out of a total of 76 in temporary accommodation that had issues that meant they were not able to be considered for permanent housing.

Case study 1: Mr and Mrs P and their two children had been privately renting a house in St Neots for two years when their landlord gave them notice to leave. It was the landlord's only property and he no longer thought it worthwhile renting out the property and he wanted to release the equity that he had in the property. Despite working with the family to try and find an alternative privately rented property we were unable to do this before the landlord required possession and so we had a duty to provide the family with temporary accommodation. They were placed in bed and breakfast in Huntingdon whilst we tried to find them more suitable temporary housing and continued to try and help them find a new home in the privately rented sector. The placement in B&B meant the family were moved away from Mr P's job and the family support network they had in St Neots. As well as the social cost, although the family were eligible for some help with Housing Benefit the financial cost was not insignificant. This was also a costly option to the Council as it was not able to recover through the subsidy arrangements with central government all the Housing Benefit it paid to Mr and Mrs P.

The Causes of Homelessness.

The main causes of homelessness within the district are consistent with the national picture: eviction by parents, other relatives and friends; end of private sector tenancies; and relationship breakdown (violent and non-violent) being the main causes. Eviction by parents, other relatives or friends asking people to leave their home continues to be the single largest cause of homelessness in the district. This accounts for almost a third of all homelessness, both nationally and at a local level.

Almost a quarter of homelessness is as a result of relationship breakdown with a proportion of this being as a result of domestic violence. Households

losing their private sector tenancies are the third largest cause of homelessness in the district although this figure has been reducing over the last three years. The break down of causes of homelessness within the district is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Causes of homelessness In Huntingdonshire – No. of households accepted by actual cause of homelessness.

Year	Eviction by parent, other relative or friend	Relationship breakdown (of which involve violence)	Mortgage arrears	Loss of private rented housing	Other causes	Total
2008/09	59	28 (17)	15	37	23	162
2009/10	48	32 (20)	6	27	24	137
2010/11	57	26 (11)	11	56	19	169

In terms of the type of households faced with homelessness, both nationally and locally approximately 70% are families either with children or where they are expecting their first child. This may lead to family upheaval with children being placed into temporary accommodation a distance from schools and families being moved away from their support networks.

Single people with mental health issues make up on average 8 to 10% of the households accepted as homelessness, with young people (16 and 17 year olds) making up 6 to 7%. There are no discernable trends with homelessness amongst differing household types and this picture is mirrored nationally. However, anecdotal evidence locally suggests that there are an increasing number of young people facing the threat of homelessness but successful prevention work with them, for example helping them into a placement in an appropriate supported housing scheme means that they may not appear in the homelessness statistics mentioned above.

Huntingdonshire has in recent years attracted significant numbers of migrant workers to the area. A concern was that given the economic downturn and increasing unemployment the migrant worker population may suffer the knock on effect of homelessness if they did become unemployed. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the migrant worker population's first tenure of choice appears to be privately renting. There have been relatively few migrant worker households that have ended up becoming homeless as they have managed to resolve their own needs in the private rented sector, some with the help of the Rent Deposit Scheme. 2010/11 has seen a slight increase in homelessness amongst these households. The table below gives the figures and this will continue to be monitored to see if migrant workers appear to be having a disproportionate problem with homelessness in the district.

Table 2: No. of households accepted as homeless in Huntingdonshire by nationality – 2008/09 onwards.

Year	UK nationals	Other nationals	EEA*	Non nationals	EEA	Total
2008/09	155	5		2		162
2009/10	126	10		1		137
2010/11	150	13		6		169

*EEA: European Economic Area is member states of the European Union plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Delivering a successful housing advice and options service

The lifetime of the previous strategy witnessed times of economic growth followed by recession leading to higher unemployment, lower property prices but restrictions in lending by the banks. A housing advice and options service is in demand in prosperous economic times as well as times of economic downturn. When times are good a prosperous property market leads to higher prices meaning that many people on lower incomes are priced out of the market, unable to get their feet on the first rung of the property ladder. Their housing options may be limited because of this and if faced with housing difficulties they may see social rented housing as the only affordable option open to them.

In times of recession, particularly when the availability of credit and mortgage products are limited, combined with higher levels of unemployment, affordability is also an issue for many households. The difference is that those faced with housing difficulties may be struggling to afford to keep their existing home for example if they become unemployed or struggling to find a new home if previously readily available credit for mortgages becomes limited. In these circumstances many may see social rented housing as their only affordable option and so approach the Council for help.

The Council has a legal duty to ensure that there is a free advice and information service about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness in the district. It also has a duty to take reasonable steps to make sure that accommodation continues to be available for someone who is threatened with homelessness and is likely to have a priority need under the terms of the homelessness legislation. The Code Of Guidance that accompanies the homelessness legislation goes further in that it states that Councils should offer a broad range of advice and assistance and not wait until homelessness is a likelihood or imminent before taking action.

The housing advice and options approach adopted by the Council is similar to that used successfully by many Councils over the last few years. The first step is to consider whether the Council is able to work with the household to resolve whatever the issue may be and try and help them stay in their current home. This could be by:

- Negotiating with family and friends, including use of mediation

- Negotiating with private landlords and agents
- Negotiating with mortgage lenders
- Referral to the mortgage support and rescue schemes
- Assisting with maximising their income, for example help with applying for benefits
- Property improvements, for example through the Sanctuary scheme, or adaptations

Where a person's homelessness cannot be prevented we consider what their other housing options are. This will include a full range of advice on the different tenures available including privately renting, low cost home ownership options and socially renting, and what assistance may be available to help them with the most appropriate of these options.

Within this structure of 'prevention followed by alternative housing options' the Council decided to introduce a range of initiatives that it believed would be most appropriate to help customers. The following are the most successful initiatives used with case studies of how these have helped particular households:

1. **The Court Advocacy Service** – the Council provides an advocacy service at the County Court to help households defend possession claims, for example on grounds of mortgage arrears and rent arrears. The purpose of the service is to ensure that all steps are taken to try and resolve the issues so that the household can remain in their home and that eviction and repossession are the very last resort. The Council has taken on a greater role with this work since the independent law centre in the district that previously attended the Court went out of business. The Council was able to recruit one of the law centre's specialist advisors to continue with this work with the help of the Homelessness Prevention Grant from central government. This grant was increased in 2011/12 to £85,000 and the same amount will be received in 2012/13. Although the grant is labelled as Homelessness Prevention Grant it is not ring fenced and is paid into the Area based Grant pot.

Negotiations with landlords and mortgage lenders through the Court Advocacy Service, or earlier where possible, may require relatively small payments to be made in the form of a grant or a loan. The Council considers making these types of payments through its Homelessness Prevention Budget where homelessness can be prevented and this provides the best outcome for the family and provides a longer term, affordable solution for the household.

Case study 2: Mr A from St Ives is a construction worker who suffered a downturn in earnings due to a reduction in work at the same time as his partner required a serious operation and became too ill to work. As their income dropped they fell into mortgage arrears totalling £15,000. We negotiated with their lender, prepared a financial statement and manageable budget, we then represented them at the court hearing and achieved a suspension of a warrant of eviction. A homelessness situation was avoided that would have been through no fault of their own.

The family were able to remain in their home and as Mr A is confident of getting more work over the coming months their income and financial position should improve further.

- 2. The Rent Deposit / Rent In Advance Scheme** – where it is not possible to help a household remain in their current home this is the most successful initiative that helps them find a new home. The scheme provides either an interest free loan or bond to cover the up front costs associated with taking on a private sector tenancy. These costs can often be restrictive for many and as privately rented accommodation tends to be the most readily available tenure in the district, giving a helping hand to secure this type of property means that many households are able to find a new home, avoiding actual homelessness altogether.

Where a household is not able to afford other associated costs with taking on a tenancy, such as the administration or credit check fees, the Council is able to make further payments from its Homelessness Prevention Budget if this is the only barrier to helping a household into a tenancy and avoids the need for a homeless situation.

Case study 3: Mr and Mrs B fell into mortgage arrears when Mr B's business failed and he was declared bankrupt. Their mortgage lender threatened Court action and their property was in the process of being repossessed when they sought advice and help from the Council. Unfortunately there was nothing that could be done to save their home but we were able to help them find a privately rented property with a private landlord. The landlord's property had been brought back into use with the assistance of a Repairs Assistance Loan from the Council. The Council helped Mr and Mrs B through the Rent Deposit scheme by offering the landlord a bond and the family moved into the property avoiding an actual homelessness situation.

- 3. Young Persons Mediation Service** – the Council helps fund the Cambridge and District Mediation Service to provide a service for young people threatened with homelessness as a result of a breakdown in their relationship with their parents. The aim is to reconcile the young person with their parent so that they can return/remain at home and address the issues that led to the break down in the first place. Mediation can be very difficult as the breakdown in relationship has often reached such a severe stage that full reconciliation is not possible. Where this is not possible the service may help with a more managed move away from home for the young person so that an emergency homelessness situation is avoided by the parent agreeing to keep the young person for longer.

Case study 4: Miss T was a 17 year old whose relationship with her parents deteriorated to the extent that they asked her to leave home. The family were willing to try and rebuild their relationships and accepted the offer of mediation. As a result of talking through their differences and accepting compromises Miss T was able to go back home and maintain a more constructive relationship with her parents. This avoided an unnecessary homelessness situation.

Unfortunately where the Council is unable to prevent a household's homelessness situation, or help them find alternative housing through the other options outlined above, then the safety net of the homelessness legislation means that the Council may have a duty to help them through the social rented housing route. As mentioned earlier, in 2009/10 a total of 137 households were owed the full housing duty through this route which increased to 169 households in 2010/11 with many commentators believing homelessness numbers will increase further before they reduce further.

Case study 5: Mrs P lived in Huntingdon with her three children. She had been left with a number of debts since her husband's death some years previously and had been struggling to manage the mortgage for some time, falling into mortgage arrears. She was reliant upon Widow's Allowance and could not work due to a disability. The Council worked with her to try and prevent an outright possession order on her home but it was not an affordable option and so repossession was inevitable. The Council therefore considered what help it could offer her under the terms of the homelessness legislation. She was owed a full housing duty under the legislation as she had become homeless through no fault of her own and she has been assisted into social rented housing through the Home-Link scheme.

The aims and objectives of the Strategy

There were many successful achievements within the lifetime of the previous strategy as outlined in appendix A of this document. These contributed to the four high level objectives of:

- 1. Preventing homelessness by maintaining households in their current home wherever possible.**
- 2. Providing a range of accessible and affordable housing options across all tenures.**
- 3. Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.**
- 4. Improving performance management, organisational efficiency and cross boundary collaboration.**

These objectives remain very relevant in the current climate. The provision of proactive services to help households avoid homelessness altogether, or minimise the detrimental affects should homelessness be unavoidable, remain at the heart of what the Council aims to achieve for the residents of the district. The challenge moving forward will be to continue the successful homeless prevention measures in a potentially a harsher economic climate. There may be a need to adapt existing homelessness prevention measures or create new responses to any changes in the housing market.

The Council recognises the significant social hardship that homelessness has on the households affected. It also recognises that there is a significant monetary cost to households as well as to the Council via its statutory duties towards the homeless. Many of the services and initiatives provided by the Council can offer better value in terms of preventing homelessness compared to dealing with the aftermath of actual homelessness. The Council therefore recognises the importance of achieving positive outcomes for households

threatened with homelessness. To keep the focus squarely on the prevention of homelessness or minimising its impact if this is unavoidable, the four outcomes from the previous strategy have been carried forward to this strategy.

Considering some of the key aspects of each of these objectives in turn:

1. **Preventing homelessness by maintaining households in their current home wherever possible.**

We currently have in place:

- **A Court advocacy service** for housing association tenants facing eviction due to rent arrears and home owners facing repossession due to mortgage arrears. This service is provided by a specialist advisor through short term grant funding.
- **A Homelessness Prevention Budget** to be able to make relatively small payments that prevent homelessness. This is funded through a grant provided by central government.
- **A young persons' mediation service** for those threatened with homelessness because of a relationship breakdown with parents.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments** through the Housing Benefit department to help with the shortfall in entitlement in certain circumstances so that a claimant has time to find more affordable alternative housing.

We aim to:

- Continue with this valuable service that offers both last minute and early interventions for households facing court action.
- Continue to provide a Homelessness Prevention Budget as it is recognised as one of the main tools available to help households avoid homelessness.
- Review the provision of this service, considering commissioning the service with neighbouring Councils as well as Children's Services at the County Council.
- Review with the Housing Benefit department how any increase in DHP grant that the Council may receive can be best used to minimise the threat of homelessness on households affected by changes in the Housing Benefit system

Our other priorities in this area are to:

- Review the success of the new operational arrangements of the Young Persons' Protocol with Children's Services following changes made to it in early 2010 in light of new case law.
- Implement a vulnerable persons' protocol with housing providers to ensure a joined up approach to the prevention of homelessness amongst, for example, vulnerable housing association tenants.

2. Providing a range of accessible and affordable housing options across all tenures.

We currently have in place:

- **A Rent Deposit / Rent In Advance scheme** that provides an interest free loan or bond to help with the upfront costs associated with taking on a private tenancy.
- **Payments for credit & reference checks** for households threatened with homelessness who have found a private sector tenancy. This is funded through the homelessness grant from central government.

We aim to:

- Ensure the scheme continues to be available to households threatened with homelessness as this scheme has been the most successful means of preventing homelessness.
- Continue with this initiative as it is essential for some households to help them access the private rented sector and so prevent their homelessness.

Our other priorities in this area are to:

- Develop the Home-Link scheme to provide a wider range of options and services. This forms part of the Enhanced Housing Options programme mentioned earlier in the strategy that aims to use the Home-Link scheme and website to deliver:
 - A private rented website that allows landlords to advertise their available properties
 - Links to information on low cost home ownership options as well as rented options
 - Links to employment advice
 - A personalised front page to the website that considers a person's circumstances and provides them with relevant and targeted advice to meet their needs

3. Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation. This will be achieved by reducing the number of households requiring temporary accommodation through successful prevention and options work outlined above. This is not always possible and temporary accommodation is frequently required and so

this objective will be redefined to include work on ensuring that appropriate accommodation is provided wherever possible.

We currently have in place:

- **Crash bed units** that provide emergency accommodation for homeless young people at Paines Mill Foyer in St Neots. This is far more appropriate emergency accommodation than the use of B&B.
- Coneygear Court that provides 26 units of temporary accommodation. The scheme has shared facilities and is an outdated model of provision

We aim to:

- Replicate this model of provision at Kings Ripton Court in Huntingdon by working in partnership with the Salvation Army, the provider at that scheme. This will mean ensuring that the resources are available to deliver and maintain this type of provision.
- Investigate the options for updating the scheme so that each of the units has use of its own facilities.

Our other priorities in this area are to:

- Introduce a supported lodgings scheme in partnership with the City and District Councils in Cambridgeshire as well as the County Council. The aim will be to recruit a range of host landlords willing to provide emergency temporary accommodation to a variety of different homeless people.

4. Performance management, organisational efficiency and cross boundary collaboration.

The current economic climate places even greater pressures on the housing advice and options service, not only because of greater numbers of customer relying on it for advice and help but also due to imminent funding cuts as a result of government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Improved performance, better organisational efficiency and collaborating with other Councils to deliver services and achieve better value for money are vitally important in light of these funding restrictions.

Our priorities in this area are to:

- Continue to participate in the development of the Home-Link scheme and investigate what efficiencies can be delivered through sub regional working.
- Review the performance data produced to ensure that it is most relevant to use as a tool to analyse efficiency and value for money against the outcomes achieved for customers.

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Action Plan

Appendix A

Objective 1 - Prevent homelessness by maintaining households in their current home wherever possible			
Action		Target	Resources
Maintain a Court advocacy service to assist households faced with possession action.		Ensure that the service continues beyond end of March 2012.	This is a staffing cost. Subject to ongoing need (which is likely) the funding needed for this post is £35k per annum (including overheads). Funding for 2012/13 will be via a mixture of efficiency savings, government homelessness grant and by HDC MTP bid.
Maintain a homelessness prevention budget for advice and options officers to make use of in their proactive work.		Ensure that the budget continues beyond March 2012.	Government has confirmed a £85k homelessness grant to HDC for 2012 and 2013. This is a 'named purpose' grant but not ring fenced. The current MTP provision is £61k (which matches the previous government grant level) so if more is needed an HDC MTP bid will be made to secure the additional funding.
Review the provision of a young persons' mediation service.		Run & evaluate the reviewed mediation service in 2011, and if successful consider commissioning a continuing service with the other Cambridgeshire Councils.	To be funded from the current Homelessness Prevention Grant but if required to bid for the additional (secured) government homelessness grant via the Council's MTP process.
Review the Discretionary Housing Payment policy with the Housing Benefit Department to ensure it is targeted at households most likely to be under threat of homelessness.		To complete the review by September 2011.	Existing staffing resource for the review. Any payments made will be by the Housing Benefits Service from their Government allocation of £41,422. This budget is also used by the Housing Benefit Service for other than homelessness.
Review the operational arrangements of the Young Persons' Protocol with Cambridgeshire County Council's Children's Services.		To complete the review by December 2011.	Within existing staffing resources.
Implement a vulnerable persons' protocol with housing providers to ensure a joined up approach		By December 2011.	Within existing staffing resources.

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to homelessness prevention			
Objective 2 – Providing a range of accessible and affordable housing options across all tenures			
Action		Target	Resources
Maintain the Rent Deposit / Rent In Advance scheme for households accessing private rented tenancies. Review the budget requirements to maintain the scheme.		Ensure that the budget continues in 2012/13 and beyond.	This is net zero budget but HDC has an allowance for bad debts of £81k 2011/12. This allowance is reassessed on a regular basis and is part of the base revenue budget for the service.
Develop the Home-Link scheme to provide a wider range of options as part of an Enhanced Housing Options service. To include: A private rented property website Low cost home ownership options Employment Advice A personalised website offering targeted advice		To be delivered in line with the Home-Link Enhanced Housing Options sub regional work plan.	The capital budget provision is from an earlier year HDC MTP bid and a specific government grant for the initial development of the scheme. Revenue funding for the software license and maintenance (£3k) is included in the base revenue budget for the service.
Objective 3 – Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation			
Action		Target	Resources
Work with the Salvation Army to introduce emergency crash bed units at Kings Ripton Court		To have in place by December 2011	Budget from existing Homelessness Prevention Grant.
Investigate the options for the remodelling or reprovision of Coneygear Court to provide self contained temporary accommodation.		To investigate options and feasibility by May 2012	Resources to be identified. Potential bid to the Homes and Communities Agency via the landlord
Introduce a supported lodgings scheme in partnership with the other Cambridgeshire Councils, including the County Council		To have in place by December 2011	Revenue resources to be identified once models of provision agreed and any ineligible Housing Benefit costs established.
Utilise the direct let options within the Council's Lettings Policy to ensure sufficient households move through temporary accommodation.		To have in place by July 2011	Within existing staffing resources.

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Objective 4 – Performance management, organisational efficiency and cross boundary collaboration			
Action/Aim		Target	Resources
Investigate what efficiencies can be achieved through working sub regionally on the development of the Home-Link housing options scheme.		To be delivered in line with the Home-Link sub regional work plan.	Existing sub-regional staffing resource to identify potential efficiencies.
To carry out a cost benefit analysis of homelessness prevention measures versus dealing with actual homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation; and separately, the cost effectiveness between different types of temporary accommodation.		By December 2011	Analysis will be within existing staff resource.
Review the performance data produced to ensure efficiency and value for money against outcomes achieved for customers.		Complete review of performance data and potential for benchmarking by December 2011	Existing sub-regional staffing resource.

Achievements since the last Strategy

The previous Strategy action plan had four main objectives:

1. Preventing homelessness by maintaining households in their current home wherever possible.
2. Providing a range of accessible and affordable housing options across all tenures.
3. Reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.
4. Improving performance management, organisational efficiency and cross boundary collaboration.

Achievements against this action plan include:

- Introducing a homelessness prevention budget that allows advisors to make relatively small payments in their proactive work to prevent homelessness.
- Improving links with the County Court and expanding the court advocacy service to cover mortgage repossessions as well as social rented possession hearings.
- Jointly funding a specialist debt advisor at the local Citizens Advice Bureau and establishing a referral process to this service.
- Increasing the number of households assisted into private rented tenancies through the Rent Deposit/Rent In Advance scheme.
- Introducing help with payments for credit and reference checks for homeless households trying to secure private rented accommodation who do not have the funds available.
- Maintaining a Sanctuary scheme in partnership with other Councils in the county to assist victims of domestic violence.
- Converting a proportion of temporary properties to permanent homes, allowing settled families to remain in properties where they may have lived for sometime.
- Establishing an emergency crash bed provision for young people at Paines Mill and funding move on units for residents of the scheme.
- Jointly funding a Family Intervention Project for families that require intensive support to break the cycle of anti social behaviour, offending and potential homelessness.
- Introducing a sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme (the Home-Link scheme) to provide a more transparent means of accessing social rented

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housing and ensuring this assists homeless households and those threatened with homelessness.

- Enabling the delivery of 660 new social rented properties between April 2008 and the end of September 2010.
- Enabling move on opportunities for residents of the various supported housing schemes within the district, such as the young persons and ex-offenders schemes.
- Successfully jointly bidding for Enhanced Housing Options programme funding through government, to develop the Home-Link scheme to provide a wider range of options and services.
- Participating in the development of a sub regional homelessness action plan and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on homelessness to improve multi agency and cross boundary working to tackle homelessness and its effects.