

## **Appendix A**

### **York Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013**

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## Foreword

This strategy outlines our vision for homelessness services in York.

It sets out the evidence on which our strategic aims and future priorities have been based. It demonstrates our plans for reducing the number of people who experience homelessness and how we will provide best possible services for those people whose homelessness we are unable to prevent.

The strategy seeks to build upon the key achievements delivered since publication of the first homelessness strategy in 2003. Since then improvements have been made in terms of our knowledge of how people can become homeless and how we can prevent it.

The effects of homelessness are felt not only by individuals and their families but also impact on the wider community. It is important therefore that our efforts to tackle homelessness are seen as part of a bigger picture, which includes tackling the causes of social exclusion while improving access to health and social care services.

The strategy sets out how we will build on multi-agency working to prevent homelessness and continue to make the best possible use of all partners' expertise and resources in this area. We look forward to regularly reviewing progress in the years to come to ensure that the strategic aims set out in this strategy are achieved.

I am grateful to all those who have helped to put this document together. Working as a team, I believe the City can eradicate the heartache that the threat of homelessness presents to many of our citizens.

Cllr Susan Galloway  
Executive Member for Housing and Adult Social Services

July 2008

## Executive summary

- Homelessness is the most extreme form of housing need. It can affect anyone, including families, childless couples and single people. Homelessness has many causes, some relating to the wider economy and the housing market and some more personal to the individual or household.
- This strategy sets out what needs to be done to address homelessness in York over the next five years. It builds on key achievements delivered through the last homelessness strategy published in 2003. The strategy aims to reflect national policy objectives and tie them into priorities identified at the local level.
- Whilst York is a relatively prosperous city, pockets of deprivation do exist. Demand for housing far exceeds supply, pushing up prices and creating barriers to the market. Ongoing population and household growth looks set to increase competition further, making it more difficult for younger people, vulnerable households and those deemed to be homeless to access housing.
- In recent years homelessness services in York have increasingly focussed on tackling the causes of homelessness. As a result there has been a steady decline in the number of people presenting as homeless, and an increase in the number of successful homelessness preventions. However, there are still too many younger people coming through the homeless route, and too many vulnerable households whose housing needs could have been planned for much earlier.
- There are a wide range of services seeking to meet the needs of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. These include housing advice and information services, the provision of temporary or permanent accommodation and services that support people to live independently and sustain their accommodation.
- In 2007 service providers from across the statutory and voluntary sectors came together to undertake a review of homelessness and homelessness services York. The review began with an assessment of homelessness in York and went on to consider the views of customers and those involved in

delivering homelessness services. Findings from the review were used to inform the strategic aims and objectives of this homelessness strategy.

### Strategic aims:

- 1. Ensure people who are at risk of homelessness are aware of, and have access to, the services they need to help prevent it.
- 2. Ensure the provision of, and fair access to, accommodation sufficient to meet identified housing needs.
- 3. Ensure people with housing related support needs have these needs fully assessed and have access to the support services required to sustain independent living and prevent homelessness.
- 4. Ensure the effective co-ordination of all service providers, across all sectors, whose activities contribute to preventing or addressing homelessness.

## 1. Why have a homelessness strategy?

*Homelessness can destroy lives and damage communities. It can breed despair, anger and desperation and lead to mental and physical illness. It can stand in the way of tackling health inequalities, raising education standards and getting more people into work. It can undermine independence, freedom, choice and self reliance. It is an affront to social justice and to us all<sup>1</sup>.*

This strategy sets out what needs to be done to address homelessness in York. It builds on key achievements delivered through the last homelessness strategy published in 2003. The strategy is framed by a wide range of Government legislation, policy and good practice including the Housing Act 1996, the Homeless Persons Act 1997, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance 2006.

### The main homelessness duties:

- It is the responsibility of the Local Authorities to provide free housing advice and information to people that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Particular emphasis is placed on prevention and assisting people to find suitable alternative accommodation, including supported housing, private rented accommodation or accessing social rented housing through a planned route . Additional responsibilities are placed on Local Authorities to assess homeless cases and to secure permanent accommodation for people who have a priority need, are not intentionally homeless and have a connection with the local area. Priority need groups include households with children and people who are vulnerable as a result of age, disability, violence or leaving institutionalised care. Customers may spend time in temporary accommodation until more permanent accommodation can be found.

National policy places a high priority on the prevention of homelessness. Key to this is understanding the main causes of homelessness so that agencies can work together to address these at an early stage. Addressing the needs of all homeless people, those at risk of homelessness and the needs of different groups, including Gypsies and Travellers, is also emphasised.

This strategy aims to reflect national policy objectives and tie them into more localised priorities identified through the homelessness service review (see Chapter 4).

- The Government expects strategic housing authorities such as York to work closely with local partners to achieve the following targets:
- Keep rough sleeping as close to zero as possible
  - Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 to half the figure it was in 2004
  - End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children, except in short term emergencies
  - End the use of bed and breakfast for 16-17 year olds, except in an emergency, by 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> Homelessness Link 2007

A list of relevant legislation, policy and good practice used to inform the development of this strategy is available at [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/) or by contacting the Homeless Services Manager at the address shown in Chapter 6.

The local policy context and strategic links:

Homelessness is not just a housing problem, it can disrupt other parts of a person's life, including their health, education, training, work and relationship with the wider community. If not addressed swiftly it can turn what should be temporary crisis into a life damaging event.

Homelessness can be caused by;

- lack of affordable housing,
- loss of income, unemployment
- getting into debt, especially mortgage or rent arrears
- relationship breakdown, death of a spouse or partner
- domestic abuse,
- problems with landlord,
- family disputes or friends or relatives no longer being able to provide accommodation,
- Leaving institutions
- mental health issues
- substance misuse
- lack of skills to maintain independent living
- insufficient suitable Gypsy and Traveller sites

In York there are a wide range of local strategies and plans that contribute directly or indirectly to preventing homelessness and addressing the needs of those who are homeless. This strategy aims to build on this work and link to it.

The overall supply of, and access to, decent affordable housing is a key structural factor influencing levels of homelessness in York and a number of existing plans are already in place seeking to address this as a priority. These include the Regional Housing Strategy, York Sustainable Community Strategy, York Housing Strategy and the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Strategies and plans aiming to address the personal and individual causes and affects of homelessness include those tackling poverty, those aiming to improve the life chances of young people and families, those aiming to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable adults and those aiming to reduce health inequalities. The York Local Area Agreement (LAA) provides an important focus for the delivery of many of these objectives.

York Local Area Agreement Indicators relevant to this strategy:

- Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- Number of households living in temporary accommodation
- Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living
- Under 18 conception rate
- Young people not in education, employment or training
- Substance misuse by young people
- Alcohol-harm related hospital admission rates
- Inequality gap in the achievement of a level 3 qualification by the age of 19
- Reducing health inequalities within the local area
- Number of people re-offending

A full list of local strategies that link to the homelessness strategy and the achievement of its aims can be found at [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/) or by contacting the Homeless Services Manager using the contact details in Chapter 6.

## 2. The York context

York has a population of almost 187,000 and rising. The estimated growth rate to 2021 is almost twice that of the region. This, alongside a reduction in average household size and an increasing number of older people, will bring a significant increase in the overall number of households.

The black and minority ethnic population has grown in recent years from 4.9 per cent in 2001 to an estimated 6.1 per cent in 2003<sup>2</sup>. There are around 350 Gypsy and Traveller households in the city.<sup>3</sup>

York is more economically prosperous than surrounding areas and classed as a sub-regional centre. There are high levels of economic activity and skills with strong representation in higher end occupations. However, one in four people aged 16-74 have no formal qualification, which, though better than the national average, remains high. Agencies in the city are focussed on improving the skills of this group to increase access to the changing jobs market.

Whilst York is seen as a relatively affluent city, pockets of deprivation do exist. Of the 22 council wards, 8 contain areas that are amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in England<sup>4</sup>. Whilst the average household income is £30,000, 43 per cent of households earn less than £20,000 per annum<sup>5</sup>.

A recent study of housing in York found a requirement for 425 affordable homes each year up to 2012<sup>6</sup>. This is against an average net supply of around 130 affordable homes a year<sup>7</sup>. House prices in York are almost 30 per cent above the regional average and there is a significant gulf between average house prices and average earnings<sup>8</sup>. The study concluded that housing need in York was higher than almost any other level of need found in the North of England<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Annual Population Survey 2003

<sup>3</sup> Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – North Yorkshire 2007/08

<sup>4</sup> Indices of Deprivation 2007

<sup>5</sup> York Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007

<sup>6</sup> Ditto

<sup>7</sup> Between 2004/05 - 2007/08

<sup>8</sup> Ditto

<sup>9</sup> Ditto

Projected population growth and economic prosperity mean residents are likely to experience greater levels of competition for housing. Those not able to access owner occupation must look to other sectors to meet their housing needs, but even then competition can be tough.

York has a relatively low proportion of social rented housing at just 15 per cent of all housing stock, yet around 2,500 households are on the Housing Register. The proportion of private rented accommodation is in line with the national average at 10 per cent but entry level weekly rents are more than twice as high as rents in the social sector.

The private rented sector is expected to grow over future years as immigration, students and households excluded from home ownership fuel the market. In turn, other households such as younger people, vulnerable groups or those deemed to be homeless may find access to the sector more difficult.

The proportion of owner occupied homes is higher than the regional and national average at 73 per cent of total stock. One in three households in this sector are under occupying their home, many of which are older households.<sup>10</sup>

Recent evidence suggests a growing number of households facing housing related debt problems. One advice agency in York has reported a significant increase in the number of enquiries concerning housing possession proceedings.<sup>11</sup>

The well-being of children and young people is a key priority. York performs well by comparison to other areas but there is a continuing need to tackle variations between different groups of young people and between different parts of the city. The teenage conception rate for under 18 year olds has dropped over recent years to 39.2 per 1000, broadly in line with the national average<sup>12</sup>. Less than 1 in 5 teenage parents are in education, employment or training.

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<sup>10</sup> Assessed against the Bedroom Standard

<sup>11</sup> Housing Advice Resource Project (HARP)

<sup>12</sup> 2006

Overall the health of the city's population is very good, with life expectancy significantly higher than the national average. However, there is a disparity in health outcomes between the more affluent and more deprived area and closing this gap is a priority for the city.



### 3. Homelessness services

Homelessness services in York fall within three broad service areas;

- those aiming to prevent homelessness happening in the first place, including housing **advice and information**
- those addressing the **accommodation** needs of homeless people
- those addressing the **support needs** of homeless people and those at risk of being homeless.

Within these there are also more specialised services tailored around the needs of particular groups with emphasis at present on resettlement and floating support, domestic abuse services, rough sleepers, offenders, people with mental health, drug and alcohol problems and young people.

Delivering these services is often done through agencies working together. The local authority plays a key strategic role in ensuring local agencies fully engage in tackling homelessness and coordinates a number of forums and steering groups to facilitate this.

The estimated cost of homelessness advice and supported housing services in York was around £4.4 million in 2007/08, with 50 per cent of this funded through the Supporting People programme. Total Supporting People funding for York is due to reduce by around £1 million over the next 5 years, yet the proportion spent on homelessness services is, at present, set to increase. The main area of Supporting People expenditure is directed towards the rough sleeper client group closely followed by support for homeless families.

Measuring the wider costs of homelessness, for example on health, education, probation and prison services remains a challenge for the future and one that we will begin to address within the lifetime of this strategy.

#### Homelessness prevention, advice and information services

A wide range of services contribute directly and indirectly to the prevention of homelessness, from those improving people's education and skills and identifying and supporting those at risk at an early stage, through to those ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing.

Early advice, information and support is a key prevention tool to ensure the moves people make in their lives are planned. City of York Council's Customer Advice Centre is a one stop shop providing general housing advice, specialist interviews, home visits and support to remain in the existing home. It also offers limited debt advice, some private landlord services, advice about court and re-possession and signposting to more specialist services.

#### Good practice:

- The 2003/08 Homelessness Strategy identified the need for a central advice centre for young people. In 2007 'Castelgate' was opened – bringing together a range of advice and information for young people including homeless prevention services and young persons mental health and counselling services.
- In 2005 HARP set up a duty court advice scheme at York County Court for those facing possession proceedings. This was supplemented by accessible debt advice provided by Citizens Advice Bureau through a 'triage' Housing and Debt Project.
- In 2006 City of York Council introduced a new Allocations and Lettings policy with an element of choice based letting, prioritising people who access early advice and supported housing services.

#### Accommodation

A range of options are available for those seeking accommodation in York. These include home ownership, shared ownership, private and social rented housing, supported housing and emergency temporary accommodation as well as pitches for gypsies and travellers. The types of accommodation people can access will depend largely on their personal circumstances and the type of assistance they are entitled to and need.

A significant proportion of those coming through the homeless route are at risk of losing their accommodation because parents or relatives are no longer able or willing to accommodate or there has been some form of

relationship breakdown. In such situations it may be possible to provide advice and support to help them remain in their existing home.

Where this is not possible other options must be considered. Rent deposit and bond schemes are available to assist people to access the private rented sector. City of York Council seeks to provide permanent accommodation to households owed a statutory duty. A range of temporary accommodation and supported housing is often used until such time as suitable permanent housing can be found or where this best meets the needs of the household concerned. Permanent accommodation is generally local authority or Registered Social Landlord stock.

In emergency situations bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation is used, but no families of young people remain in B&B for longer than six weeks.

The York Resettlement Service is a multi-agency partnership providing a range of accommodation enabling rough sleepers to move through a planned housing route into independent accommodation. Floating support is offered in permanent accommodation through Salvation Army, Peasholme Charity, York Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (YACRO) and Foundation Housing.

There are a number of specialist projects for young people, although direct access accommodation is limited to short term supported housing.<sup>13</sup> Longer term (up to two years) supported accommodation is provided by Scarcroft Project and Foundation Housing offering a total of 14 units and up to 12 supported lodging placements through Safe and Sound Homes (SASH). Foundation Housing and Scarcroft Project also provide a small number of move-on flats. These services are utilised by care leavers in preparation for independent living.

City of York Council owns and manages three traveller sites, providing 55 permanent pitches across the city.

#### Case study:

- Mr K was referred by Compass Drug Intervention Programme to a private rented housing scheme run by Foundation Housing. Homelessness was part of his cycle of re offending. Pre tenancy work encouraged him to look at why his previous tenancies failed and encouraged him to gain qualifications and employment. Accommodation was secured through the scheme and he has since had his prolific offender status removed.

#### Good practice:

- In February 2006 a newly built women's refuge opened as a result of joint work between York Women's Aid and Yorkshire Housing Association.
- In 2007 City of York Council's temporary accommodation hostel at Howe Hill was expanded and re-furbished, providing improved disabled access and an increased number of units from 13 to 27.
- Provision of state of the art 'Places for Change' accommodation for rough sleepers in a joint initiative between Arc Light, York Housing Association and City of York Council.
- York Action for Youth Homelessness (YAYH) developed a bond guarantee scheme to ensure young people 16 and 17 are able to access rented accommodation despite not having a suitable family member or friend to act as guarantor.
- YAYH and Castlegate produce an annual Survival Guide for young people at risk of facing homelessness

#### Support services

Support services are available to a number of customer groups, offering a wide range of support at different levels. These services are delivered by a wide range of agencies, primarily funded through the Supporting People programme.

Housing support services include an independent living scheme (Foundation Housing), a Youth Offending Team accommodation worker, an early intervention and prevention team (Salvation Army) and a homelessness prevention support worker (York Housing Association). There are also intensive Connexions Personal Advisors, Connexions universal support and specialist drug / alcohol and mental health support services.

*Drugs and alcohol:* Specialist support is provided in York for people with alcohol issues through York Alcohol Advisory Service offering a range of services including advice, information and support, structured counselling, day programmes and access to patient detoxification.

Case study:

- Mr. M was referred to the Intensive Support Scheme run by York Housing Association as his mental health appeared to be deteriorating due to alcohol abuse. Neighbours complained on a daily basis and the property deteriorated. Mr. M was supported to access appropriate help following which his drinking stopped and the property improved.

The Primary Medical Service provides support to drug and alcohol users who are homeless and are not registered with a General Practitioner.

The Crime Reduction Initiative (CRI ) is contracted by the Drug and Alcohol Action Teams to provide structured day programme to drug users in York. They are also contracted to provide Drug Rehabilitation Requirements (DRRs) by Probation. Both services provide group work and key working support.

In addition a joint Foundation Housing / CRI project called First Base provides drug support for young people and Foundation Housing provides a drugs floating support and bond scheme for adults.

Compass One provide a needle exchange for drug users and provide support to substance users and their families. They provide an advice and counselling service. There is an appointment service, drop-in and telephone service. They also provide support to drug users involved in the criminal justice system via the Drug Interventions Programme.

Compass also provide specialist prescribing via the Drug Dependency Clinic and General Practitioner prescribing in primary care for drug users requiring prescribing support. The service is provided via an initial assessment and there is a waiting list for treatment.

*Mental health:* A number of support services, some of which are self help organisations are available in York, including York **MIND**, Our Celebration, City of York Council Mental Health Day Centres and Mainstay providing

counseling, advocacy, therapeutic groups and support plus a range of accommodation based services providing specialist supported housing or floating support. Access to specialist supported housing is via referral from mental health services including Community Psychiatric Nurses or psychiatrists. There are 42 bed spaces within 8 schemes with 8 more schemes in development. All accommodation is fully furnished with most of these being permanent. Through the Supporting People partnership there are floating support places for 35 customers provided by voluntary sector agencies and 24 customers provided by the Council.

*Offenders:* Support is available for offenders through Foundation Housing, York Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (YACRO) floating support and programme interventions through North Yorkshire Probation Area (including 'Think First' a enhanced thinking skills programme and Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme. Offender Managers are responsible for looking at housing issues with each offender assessing their need and risk using the Offender Assessment System.

Good practice;

- Changes to the Supporting People contract enabled support workers to provide housing support for travellers on the roadside and in bricks and mortar accommodation, rather than just of the three council sites. This recognised the changing needs of travellers within York.
- Provision of independent living skills training provided by the Peasholme Resettlement Centre. These accredited courses have expanded into other services including the council's temporary accommodation hostels, Safe and Sound Homes and Foundation

Partnerships and the strategic housing role

City of York Council, as the local strategic housing authority, co-ordinates a range of homelessness forums and user groups. The forums promote a shared understanding of homelessness issues and enable an exchange of information, joint training and the development of new services.

The council also takes a lead role in commissioning housing needs surveys and other related research to provide the city with a robust evidence base.

Good practice:

- The York Homelessness Strategy Steering group was established in 2007 and comprises a range of statutory and voluntary agencies responsible for delivering the strategic aims and priorities set out in this strategy document
- Successful development and implementation of a multi agency Rough Sleepers Strategy. The strategy is underpinned by joint training events, joint protocols and procedures.
- The development of the York Offender Housing Protocol in order to reduce the re-offending rates through the planned provision of stable accommodation.
- Youth homeless officers jointly managed between Foundation Housing and the council's Pathway Team ensure that 16 and 17 year olds in danger of homelessness are assessed and linked into specialist support.

An A-Z guide detailing the remit and contact details of all service providers involved in preventing and addressing homelessness in York is available at [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/) or by contacting the Homeless Services Manager using the contact details in Chapter 6.

## 4. Homelessness review

In 2007 the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group was set up to review homelessness and homelessness services in York and to develop a new strategy based on the findings of this review. The Steering Group includes a range of service providers from the statutory and voluntary sectors.<sup>14</sup>

The review began with an assessment of homelessness in York, its key causes and the needs of particular groups. It went on to consider the views of customers and service providers about how services might need to change or adapt both now and in the future to effectively address homelessness. The review included external inspection,<sup>15</sup> peer review, staff self-assessment and extensive service user consultation<sup>15</sup>.

Key findings from the review were used to inform the strategic aims and objectives identified in this strategy.

### Homelessness in York – key facts

Homeless prevention and the main causes of homelessness:

- The shift in focus and investment over recent years towards preventing homelessness and away from crisis management seems to be working. In 2007/08 there were 278 successful homelessness preventions, almost three times more than in 2003/04.
- As preventions rise the number of homeless decisions taken by the local authority as a result of a household presenting as homeless has fallen steadily over the past three years from 656 in 2004/05 to 406 in 2007/08.  
**BAR CHART?**
- The three main causes of homelessness in York over the past three years have been:
  - Parents, relatives or friends no longer able or willing to provide accommodation (52 per cent in 2007/08)
  - Relationship breakdown (19 per cent in 2007/08)

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 6 for a list of Steering Group members.

<sup>15</sup> A full list of service review activities can be found at [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/)

- End of assured short hold tenancy (14 per cent in 2007/08)

### **PIE CHART?**

- Homelessness arising as a result of parental or family licence terminations in York predominantly involves young people. Levels of exclusion by parents in York is significantly above the all England rate.
- The incidence of homelessness due to mortgage arrears has risen sharply to 11 per cent of all homeless acceptances in 2007/08, up from 2 per cent in 2006/07. When asked the main reasons why people do not seek early advice, 70 per cent of respondents said people did not know who to go to.<sup>16</sup>

Homeless decisions:

- In 2007/08, 258 households were accepted as being homeless and in priority need. Over half of these households were between 16 and 24 years of age. Almost 19 per cent were young person households, over twice the rate for England as a whole.<sup>17</sup>
- Almost half of all households accepted as homeless and in priority need were lone parent female households and 20 per cent couples with dependent children, largely consistent with the all England rates.
- Of those accepted as homeless and in priority need 97 per cent described their ethnic origin as either white or unknown.

Accommodation:

- Recently there has been a reduction in the number of local authority properties available for let each year, resulting in increased pressure on accommodation for households to which the authority owes a statutory duty (see table below). Despite this the proportion let to homeless households has remained fairly constant at 23 per cent..

<sup>16</sup> City of York Council 'Talkabout' survey March 2008

<sup>17</sup> Includes 16-17 years olds and 18-20 year olds formerly in care

Year	Total lets	Let to homeless	Percentage
2004/05	602	178	30%
2005/06	597	163	27%
2006/07	645	141	22%
2007/08	554	128	23%

- There are around 3,900 Registered Social Landlord (RSL) properties across York and until recently relatively few were allocated to homeless households. Increased partnership working and a growing commitment by RSL's to tackle homelessness has sustained lettings to homeless households at 12% of all RSL lets but there is scope for further improvement.

Year	Total RSL lets	RSL lets to homeless households	Percentage
2006/07	196	23	12 %
2007/08	293	34	12 %

#### Temporary accommodation:

- The target is to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation to 121 or lower by 2010 and an action plan is in place to meet this. However, recent statistics show that the Council still relies heavily on this type of accommodation. At the end of 2007/08 there were 209 households in temporary accommodation.
- BAR CHART – TARGET AND ACTUAL 2004/05 - 2007/08**
- Of the 16-17 year olds placed in temporary accommodation, 65 per cent failed their tenancies, resulting in eviction or abandonment of the property. This compares with 25% failing when placed in supported accommodation. In the three years since the adoption of Introductory Tenancies<sup>18</sup> 70 households either abandoned their accommodation or were evicted and a significant proportion of these were under the age of 20.

<sup>18</sup> Introductory tenancies are 'probationary tenancies' which gives new tenants less rights than a secure tenancy, but if the tenancy is conducted in a satisfactory way during this trial period will automatically become a secure tenancy after 12 months.

- The percentage of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation has declined steadily over recent years to just under 5 per cent.

Year	Bed and Breakfast	B&B as percentage of all temporary accommodation
2004/05	33	13 %
2005/06	14	6 %
2006/07	11	5.3 %
2007/08	10	4.7 %

- The local authority has a duty to ensure no family with children or a pregnant woman to whom the authority has a duty is placed in bed and breakfast accommodation other than in emergencies, and then only for a maximum of 6 weeks. In 2007/08 the average time spent in B&B was 3.3 weeks.
- The local authority also has a target to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for 16-17 year olds, except in an emergency by 2010. The target is in track to be met.

#### Rough sleepers and resettlement:

- The local authority has a target to keep rough sleeping as close to zero as possible and at least two thirds below the 1998 average (12) . A strategy for rough sleeping was developed in 2002 and this has led to a significant improvement in outcomes, with the number of people found to be rough sleeping at April 2008 being 2.
- A high proportion of people seeking resettlement have multiple or complex needs. People in these groups can have difficulty maintaining a tenancy without appropriate support. It is estimated there are currently around 50 people in the city with complex needs. In 2007/08 14 customers coming through the homeless route had mental illness and/or complex needs. The introduction of the Move On Planned Protocol has seen an increase in successful planned re-settlement moves in recent years with 69 people moved into secure tenancies and a failure rate of just 2 per cent.

#### Young people:

- Between April and November 2007 Children's Services dealt with 130 young people aged 16-17 with a housing issue. There is a close connection between homelessness and educational achievement. Over 60 per cent of these young people had no qualifications and less than 10 per cent had gained 5 GCSEs at grades A-C. Eleven were noted as having at least 1 permanent exclusion.
- In the last two years only one care leaver has had to access homelessness services due to the success of the planned move on support provided by the Pathway Accommodation Officer.
- Evidence shows that a significant proportion of young people presenting as homeless are from areas of known relative deprivation.

#### Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups:

- The limited data available suggests BME households in York access homelessness services broadly in line with their representation in the population as a whole. However, it is recognised that more detailed information is required before a full analysis can be undertaken.
- There is a relatively large Gypsy and Traveller community in York and a relatively high level of local authority site provision. However, a recent survey found that York requires an additional 36 pitches to meet current and projected need up to 2015. Over 90 per cent of those on unofficial encampments regarded themselves as homeless as they did not have a permanent or winter base.

#### Ex offenders:

- Data from the Probation service shows that of the 28 offenders returning to York on release 30 per cent had no qualifications, around 40 per cent felt they had a problem with drugs and around 50 per cent expected a problem finding accommodation on release<sup>19</sup>. Around 20 per cent of men from

Yorkshire and Humberside admitted to local prisons were in temporary accommodation or no fixed abode on admission.

#### **What did the wider review of homelessness and homelessness services tell us?**

##### Homelessness prevention, advice and information:

- The focus on prevention over recent years has succeeded in significantly reducing the number of people being made homeless. There needs to be an ongoing shift towards more planned moves for people going through transition, with particular emphasis on the three main causes of homelessness.
- Tackling youth homelessness should be a high priority. More holistic assessments and interventions are needed to help identify young people most at risk, including more use of mediation and early prevention work with families. There should be increased educational attainment and access to employment and training for this group, as well as improved family support and a reduction in teenage pregnancies. The disparity of youth homelessness between different areas of the city should be addressed.
- There needs to be improved awareness of housing advice and information services. Advice and information services should be redesigned so that a better, broader offer is available to those that seek assistance, with clear linkages to other forms of support. There is particular scope for improvement in our knowledge of, and services offered to, non priority customers.
- Household debt and a rise in the number of households seeking facing mortgage repossession may require additional focus on debt advice services in the coming years.

##### Accommodation:

- Increasing the supply of, and access to, housing across all sectors and promoting better use of the existing stock are, and should continue to be, key priorities. There should be a particular focus on

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<sup>19</sup> Information Related to Resettlement Issues report – Heidi Scott, Senior Psychologist 2004

tackling barriers to the private rented sector for homeless and potentially homeless households.

- There have been many improvements in the provision of accommodation for homeless households in recent years. A new women's refuge has been built, additional units at Howe Hill Hostel, use of Holgate Road Hostel have all contributed to achieving the targets to end the use of bed and breakfast for families or pregnant households and those aged 16-17. However, there needs to be ongoing focus on reducing the use of temporary accommodation, particularly for the young and the more vulnerable, and the standard of some accommodation still gives cause for concern.
- All 16-17 year olds should be accommodated through specialist planned housing provision. Consideration should be given to the provision of a dedicated young persons direct access hostel or foyer project with a review or restructure of second tier young persons accommodation and support programmes
- Consideration should be given to enable families with children who have become homeless intentionally (or are ineligible for housing assistance) to secure accommodation.
- Whilst there is a rich network of multi agency working in York to meet people's needs and support tenancies, there is no model for providing suitable and sustainable accommodation for this group. There should be increased numbers of planned moves out of hospital for people with mental illness, personality disorders, complex needs and multiple excluded customers through the provision of specialist accommodation.
- The management and future provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites should be reviewed based on recommendations arising from the Sub Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (July 2008).

#### Support services:

- Key successes include extending support to people in transition from temporary to permanent housing, introducing a range of training sessions in hostels and offering structured support to rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping.

- There should be ongoing focus on reducing the incidence of failed tenancies, particularly amongst younger people, and a mainstreaming of the successful Move On Planned Protocol to include a wider client group. There should be further support to help people access and sustain work.
- Further measures should be taken to reduce the number of families or family members losing their accommodation due to anti social behaviour through a Family Intervention Scheme and parenting support.
- Support for vulnerable customers should be further developed and embedded with an increased number of joint assessments and joint care plans.
- There is a particular need to identify and access additional services for entrenched customers and those with complex needs and improved pathways through services for them.

#### Particular groups:

- The black and minority ethnic population in York is growing rapidly but our knowledge of these groups in relation to homelessness is limited. Additional monitoring should be considered to increase understanding of the needs of these groups.
- Develop a Gypsy and Traveller service plan that sets out a more coordinated approach to meeting the needs of this customer group, including improved liaison with City of York Council Street Environment Service and the Gypsy and Traveller education project. There is a need to improve consultation and liaison with this customer group.
- There is a need to develop a mental health protocol, provide specialist support in some hostels and assess whether there is a need to develop more specialist accommodation for homeless people with mental health problems.



- There is a need to embed the prison discharge protocol and improve planned housing options for people being released from prison.
- There needs to be increased support for teenage parents
- Clause 270 of the Housing and Regeneration Bill is looking at amending Section 199 of the Housing Act 1996, to give person in the armed forces a local connection with a district through residence of choice or employment there, in the same way as a civilian. The possible implications of this for homelessness services should be assessed.
- There needs to be a much better understanding about the low representation of BME households accessing homelessness services in York
- Whilst there is a clear understanding about the cost of individual services contributing to the homelessness agenda, such as those funded through the Supporting People programme, there needs to be a much better understanding of how investment and disinvestment in one service can impact on outcomes and service demands in another.

#### Partnership and the strategic housing role:

- Whilst there are many examples of good partnership working there is scope for improving the way agencies work together to tackle homelessness. The local authority strategic housing role should be further strengthened to better co-ordinate the activities of agencies across all sectors. There should be joint service specifications in place that are signed off by the provider, City of York Council Housing Services and Supporting People.
- There needs to be improved promotion and understanding of homelessness prevention, particularly to Registered Social Landlords and other partners, including health and probation services. This should include improved and expanded multi-agency training.
- There is scope for developing more joint assessments and protocols between partners to ensure early identification of those at risk, particularly for those customers with more complex needs
- There is particular scope for effective joint working between Children's Services and Housing teams to address the high levels of young people coming through the homeless route
- There needs to be better understanding and sharing of information regarding the size and needs of the homeless client group, including the needs of non priority homeless.

## 5. What are our strategic aims and objectives for the future?

The following strategic aims and objectives have been agreed based on the review of homelessness services and an assessment of the needs of homeless people and those at risk of homelessness:

### 1. Ensure that people who are at risk of homelessness are aware of, and have access to, the services they may need to help them prevent homelessness.

Objectives:

- Reduce the number of people accepted as statutory homeless by providing comprehensive advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness at an early stage. Focus particularly on addressing the main causes of homelessness
- Improve services addressing the needs of all customers, including the non priority homeless through provision of a wider 'housing options' approach
- Reduce the number of young people (including teenage parents) presenting / accepted as homeless
- Improve levels of customer satisfaction with homelessness advice and information services

### 2. Ensure the provision of, and fair access to, accommodation sufficient to meet identified housing needs.

Objectives:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing and maximise use of existing stock
- Increase access to and quality of the private rented and RSL sectors for homeless or potentially homeless households
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation and improve the standard of temporary provision where it exists
- End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all homeless applicants, except in short term emergencies
- Increased provision of specialist accommodation for young people and improved pathways through services for them
- Reduce the number of people with mental illness and complex needs coming through the homeless route through the provision of more specialist accommodation

- Ensure accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are addressed, based on findings of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (July 2008)
- Consider provision of specialist supported accommodation for young parents and babies
- Reduce rough sleeping

### 3. Ensure people with housing related support needs have these needs fully assessed and have access to the support services required to sustain independent living and prevent homelessness.

Objectives:

- Improve joint assessment and joint care planning for vulnerable customers
- Increase tenancy sustainment through provision of appropriate support
- Increase the number of people with mental illness and complex needs achieving independent living through the provision of more specialist support
- Ensure support services meet the needs of all groups including those from the black and minority ethnic communities

### 4. Ensure the effective co-ordination of all service providers, across all sectors, whose activities contribute to preventing homelessness and/or meeting the accommodation and support needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Objectives:

- Strong local authority leadership on the homelessness agenda
- A greater role for a wider set of agencies in tackling homelessness, and a greater use of shared protocols and agreed principles for joint working
- Increased sharing of information between agencies and more joint training to promote wider understanding of homelessness and its prevention
- Increased and ongoing user consultation to inform the development of future services and increased understanding of the needs of the growing BME community
- Ensure the services provided are value for money

### Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

An action plan action plan showing how progress towards the strategic aims and priorities will be measured is attached at Appendix A.

## 6. Keeping the strategy relevant

This strategy will be monitored against actions and targets set out in the action plan and updated on an annual basis by the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group . A full review will take place in 2010/11.

Members of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group include:

- City of York Council - Housing Services
- City of York Council – Learning, Culture and Children's Services
- Supporting People Team
- York and North Yorkshire Primary Care Trust
- Registered Social Landlords Provider Group
- Resettlement Services
- Housing Advice Resource Project (HARP)
- North Yorkshire Probation Area

A bi-annual newsletter outlining progress to date delivering the strategy action plan will be circulated to all contributors to this strategy and published on the council's website at [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/). Notes from the Steering Group meetings will also be available at this location.

### Equality and diversity:

The contents of this strategy have been tested<sup>20</sup> to ensure they do not discriminate either directly or indirectly on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation.

### Contact details:

Copies of this document are available to download from City of York Council website [www.york.gov.uk/housing/](http://www.york.gov.uk/housing/).

Hard copies and further information about this strategy are available from the Housing Services Manager, 10-12 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6ZE, Telephone 01904 554040

## Signatories to the Strategy

The following organisations are represented on the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group and have pledged their commitment to delivering the actions and targets set out in the action plan and through them the aims and priorities of this strategy:

For and on behalf of City of York Council

For and on behalf of Supporting People Partnership

For and on behalf of York and North Yorkshire Primary Care Trust

For and on behalf of Registered Social Landlords Provider Group

For and on behalf of Resettlement Services

For and on behalf of Housing Advice Resource Project

For and on behalf of North Yorkshire Probation Area

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<sup>20</sup> City of York Council Equality Impact Assessment July 2008