

York Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

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Foreword (sample text)

This strategy outlines a vision for homelessness services in York and sets out the evidence on which our strategic aims and future priorities have been based. It demonstrates our serious commitment to reducing the number of people who experience homelessness and to providing the best possible services to 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 great improvements have been made both in terms of our knowledge of homelessness and our ability to 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 that efforts to tackle homelessness are seen as part of this bigger picture, which includes tackling social exclusion and improving access to health and social care services.

Successfully addressing homelessness can only be achieved by people working together. 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 the strategic aims set out in this strategy are achieved.

Cllr...

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 preventing homelessness before it happens. 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. The review was completed in April 2008 and findings from it used to inform the strategic aims and priorities of this homelessness strategy.

Summary of the strategic aims and priorities

- **Strategic Aim 1** - Ensure the effective co-ordination of all service providers, across all sectors, whose activities contribute to preventing or addressing homelessness.

Key priorities:
 - Improved strategic leadership
 - More joint working, particularly for young people and those with complex needs
 - Ongoing customer consultation to improve services
 - Better value for money
- **Strategic Aim 2** - Ensure people who are at risk of homelessness are aware of, and have access to, the services they need to help them prevent homelessness.

Key priorities:
 - Increased homeless preventions
 - Increased number of planned moves for those most at risk
 - Reduced numbers of young people coming through the homeless route
 - Increased housing options for all customers
- **Strategic Aim 3** - Ensure the provision of, and fair access to, accommodation sufficient to meet identified housing needs.

Key priorities:
 - Increased access to affordable housing for homeless and potentially homeless households across all sectors
 - Reduced use of temporary accommodation
 - Ensure appropriate accommodation for black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, including Gypsies and Travellers
- **Strategic Aim 4** - 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.

Key priorities:
 - Increased tenancy sustainment through provision of appropriate support

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- Increased number of joint assessments for those most at risk and in particular for those with more complex needs
- Reduction in the number of people with mental illness coming through the homeless route through the provision of more specialist accommodation with support

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 all¹.

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.

Local authorities are required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to publish a strategy based on the results of this review at least every five years². 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:

The main duty placed on local authorities is to provide free housing advice and information, with particular emphasis placed on preventing homelessness or assisting people to find suitable alternative accommodation. 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 needs 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.

People in non priority need categories are entitled to receive advice and assistance on how to find suitable accommodation. Other groups of people also homeless or at risk of homelessness but not automatically given statutory protection include rough sleepers and people living in temporary accommodation or other insecure accommodation.

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 causes 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 has set a number of specific objectives and targets it expects local authorities to meet. These include:

- keeping rough sleeping as close to zero as possible
- reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 to half the figure it was in 2004
- ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children, except in short term emergencies
- ending the use of bed and breakfast for 16-17 year olds, except in an emergency, by 2010.

A list of relevant legislation, policy and good practice used to inform the development of this strategy is available at www.york.gov.uk.... or by contacting Homeless Service Manager at the address shown in Chapter 7.

¹ Homelessness Link 2007

² Unless rated as an 'Excellent' authority

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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.

In York there are already 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.

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
- lack of suitable Gypsy and Traveller site provision

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.

Other existing 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

The action plan at the back of this document cross references the plans and actions that contribute to preventing and addressing homelessness. 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..... or by contacting Homeless Service Manager using the contact details in Chapter 7.

Joint working:

The development of jointly managed youth homeless posts between Foundation Housing and CYC Pathway Team ensures that 16 and 17 year olds in danger of finding themselves homeless within the City of York are assessed and proactively linked into support to prevent their homelessness and directed towards some specialist support.

Joint working:

Peasholme Resettlement Centre established a training post approximately 12 months ago originally to provide residents with independent living skills as part of the resettlement process. Following customer consultation, the training has now been tailored and accredited to provide a comprehensive programme of 'higher certificates', including effective communication, money management, relaxation, addiction awareness, and assertiveness. The courses have become a foundation of preparing people for independent living that they have been expanded into other services including CYC temporary accommodation hostels, SASH and Foundation Housing

Strategic links – reducing re-offending rates through provision of stable accommodation. A York Offender Protocol has been developed across York with the aim of ensuring that offenders consider housing options at start of sentence and appropriate support and advice is provided to ensure that they can retain their accommodation or relinquish it proactively, without debts or eviction in order for a planned housing move out of prison to be facilitated

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 the number of persons per household, will bring a significant increase in the overall number of households.

The black and minority ethnic (BME) population is relatively small, though it has grown significantly in recent years from 4.9 per cent in 2001 to an estimated 6.1 per cent in 2003³. There are around 350 Gypsy and Traveller households in the city.⁴ Information about the size of the gay, lesbian and transgender population in York is limited.

York is more economically prosperous than the surrounding areas, and is 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 job market.

Whilst York is seen as a relatively affluent city, pockets of deprivation do exist. Of the 22 council wards, eight contain areas that are amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in England⁵. Whilst the average household income is £30,000, 43 per cent of households earn less than £20,000 per annum⁶.

A recent study of housing in York found a requirement for 425 affordable homes each year up to 2012⁷. This is against a net supply of around 130 affordable homes each year over the past three years. House prices in York are almost 30 per cent above the regional average⁸ and there is a significant gulf between average house prices and average earnings. The study concluded that housing need in York was higher than almost any other level of need found in the North of England⁹.

³ Annual Population Survey 2003

⁴ Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – North Yorkshire 2007/08

⁵ Indices of Deprivation 2007

⁶ York Strategic Housing market Assessment 2007

⁷ Ditto

⁸ Ditto

⁹ 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 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 rented sector.

The private rented sector is expected to grow over future years as immigration, student and households excluded from home ownership continue to 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 home¹⁰.

There is evidence locally of growing numbers 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.¹¹

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 is 42.2 per 1000, slightly higher than the national average.¹² Less than 1 in 5 teenage parents are in education, employment or training.

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.

¹⁰ Assessed against the Bedroom Standard

¹¹ Housing Advice Resource Project (HARP)

¹² York Parenting Strategy 2008/11- Appendix 2

4. How do we currently tackle homelessness in York?

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 rough sleepers, resettlement, floating support and domestic abuse services.

The estimated total cost of homelessness services in York is around £4.4 million, with over half of this funded through the Supporting People programme.

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, the 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 a robust evidence base on which homelessness policies and services can be based

Example box:

Partnership working:

- Peasholme Resettlement Centre established a training post approximately 12 months ago originally to provide residents with independent living skills as part of the resettlement process. Following customer consultation, the training has now been tailored and accredited to provide a comprehensive programme of 'higher certificates', including effective communication, money management, relaxation, addiction awareness, assertiveness. The courses have become a foundation of preparing people for independent living that they have been expanded into other services including CYC temporary accommodation hostels, SASH and Foundation Housing
- The successful development and implementation of the Rough Sleepers Strategy 2002-5 and 2005-8 through a series of multi-agency strategy meetings involving Arc Light, Salvation Army, CYC Homeless Services, Future Prospects, and Peasholme Charity and recently extended to include Foundation Housing and YACRO. Meetings are supplemented by twice yearly multi-agency training and extensive joint working, joint protocols and procedures and shared vision and beliefs.
- Peasholme Resettlement Centre in partnership with the Riccall Regen Centre offers access to the ASDAN Employability Award equipping participants with basic employability skills and level 2 numeracy and literacy certificates. The programme also includes elements of volunteering work; which is allowing the centre to build working relationships with local projects. The award is joint funded through Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, and is part of a national strategy to increase the employability skills of the workforce, and reduce the number of benefit recipients. .

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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.

There are also advice services meeting particular needs, such as the Castlegate Young persons advice centre and the Citizen's Advice bureau Housing and Debt Project.

Example box:

Advice and Prevention

- In 2005 HARP were successful in a bid to develop a duty court advice scheme a York County Court , but an estate manager recognised the need for easily accessible debt advice to supplement this legal advice and through contract re-configuration the CLG grant was used to support the Citizens Advice Bureau in providing a Housing and Debt Project, providing 4 surgeries across the city and provide a fast and effective 'triage' debt service.
- The 2003-08 Homelessness strategy identified the need for a central advice centre for young people. In 2007 'Castelgate' was opened – bringing together youth services, advice services, young persons mental health and counselling services, Connexions, and other relevant agencies. Through housing training and improved staff interaction the prevention agenda has been highlighted, with successful planned moves being the norm!
- City wide estate managers are focusing on preventative work - a recent case of rent arrears , where CYC were going to ask for immediate possession was reduced to request for Postponed Possession Order because the tenant engaged with Citizens Advice Bureau to resolve an outstanding Housing Benefit issue and completed an income and expenditure form and agreed a realistic payment plan.

Accommodation

City of York Council seeks to provide permanent accommodation to those households to which it owes a statutory duty. However, addressing the accommodation needs of homeless people is made more difficult by the lack of decent affordable housing in York. The Council cannot always find immediate permanent accommodation so a range of temporary accommodation is used until such time as suitable permanent housing can be found.

The provision of temporary accommodation is primarily from City of York Council housing stock - including 71 shared hostel units, self contained supported units within a 'hostel complex' and around 100 self contained dispersed units. Local Registered Social Landlords provide an additional 35 self contained homes through the private sector lease scheme.

Property sizes vary and it is often necessary to move people between temporary units before a permanent suitable offer is available. In emergency situations Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation is used, but no families or young people remain in B&B for longer than six weeks.

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

Example box

- Refurbished and expanded Howe Hill Hostel
- In February 2006 a newly built women's refuge opened as a result of partnership working between York Women's Aid, xxx and Yorkshire Housing Association, providing modern accommodation with en suite rooms, crèche facilities, improved communal areas.
- In 2006 CYC introduced a new Allocations and Lettings policy including an element of choice based lettings, prioritising people who access early advice and support housing services. This banding system has been instrumental in the prevention of homelessness as a result of giving priority to those at risk of homelessness.

The York Resettlement Service is a multi-agency partnership that provides a range of accommodation enabling rough sleepers to move through a planned housing route into independent accommodation. The success of this partnership is recognised by the Homeless Link Move-On-Planned Protocol.¹³ Arc Light provides a direct access hostel providing 38 beds, with second tier accommodation being available through the Peasholme Resettlement Centre, YACRO¹⁴ and Peasholme Shared Housing. Floating support is offered in permanent accommodation through Salvation Army, the Peasholme Charity, YACRO and Foundation Housing.

Example box

Accommodation:

Foundation Housing: The private rented scheme has developed from pilot funding initially made available from the DAAT to open up the private rented sector for drug users, through provision of bond pot. Following the initial pilot, Supported People has now taken over the support element of the scheme.

P was referred to the scheme through DIP at Compass. He felt his homelessness was part of his cycle of re offending and he was classified as a prolific offender.

Pre tenancy work looked at reasons for his previous failed tenancy and encouraged him in his work with probation to get qualifications and find paid work, which he successfully achieved. His current housing with his mother was creating a strain on this supportive relationship.

Through the scheme we were able to secure accommodation with a landlord the scheme had previously worked with and provide a months rent in advance which P was able to begin paying back as he was still working. He was able to access the housing tenancy support which enabled him to settle into the accommodation and ensure he could manage this tenancy more successfully than previous ones.

He has continued to engage well with this support and has had his prolific offender status removed.

¹³ MOPP.....

¹⁴ York Care and Resettlement of Offenders

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Accommodation options for young people are limited to short term supported housing (York Nightstop and a young persons 'crash pad'), three self contained units with high level support, nine shared units with medium level support and ten supported lodging placements . Move on accommodation is offered by Foundation Housing and the Scarcroft Project. These services are also utilised by care leavers in preparation for independent living.

Example box

Accommodation

- A creative scheme was developed though York Action Youth Homelessness (YAYH) to ensure that young people 16 and 17, were not excluded from permanent accommodation because social landlords required a financial guarantor. YAYH holds a pot of money and allocated a financial guarantor to a maximum of £1000 for those young people unable to find a suitable family member or friend to act as guarantor. Since being established in 2003 no claim has been made on the scheme, and in last 2 years 23 young people have been assisted into permanent accommodation.

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 family support worker (York Housing Association). There are also intensive Connexions Personal Advisors, Connexions universal support and specialist drug / mental health support services.

Example box

Support

- Intensive Support Scheme – York Housing Association. Mr M- referred to scheme as mental health appeared to be deteriorating as he was drinking again. Neighbours were complaining on daily basis and property was deteriorating. Mr M supported to access appropriate services. Drinking stopped with support and property improved.
- Change to Supporting People contract has enabled the travellers support workers (part of CYC temporary accommodation team) to provide housing support for travellers on roadside and in bricks and mortar accommodation , rather than just of the 3 CYC sites. This change in contract recognises the changing needs of travellers within York. Since this change xxx households have been supported off sites.

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Services for drugs and alcohol

Specialist support is provided in York for people with alcohol issues through York Alcohol Advisory Service (YAAS), which is funded through xxxx offering a range of services including Advice, information and support, structured counselling, day programmes and access to patient detoxification.

Drug services in York are provided by Crime Reduction Initiative (Cri) – offering drug testing, group work intervention, key work (one to one situation) and alternative therapies. The aim is to provide treatments to help clients develop their confidence and commitment to remain drug free. Cri are contracted through North Yorkshire Probation Service for those customers subject to court order aged 18+ and a voluntary programme through REACH funded through DAAT (drug alcohol action team). In addition a joint Foundation Housing / Cri project First base provides drug support for young people 0-19 support

Compass One referred to above in the Housing Advice and Prevention Section also provide a needle exchange for drug misusers and provide support to substance abusers and their families. They provide an advice and counselling service. There is an appointment service, drop in and telephone service. They also have a court based working operating from York Magistrates Court.

Compass Drug Dependency Clinic York provides drug dependency clinical services for substance misusers. They provide structured courses of treatment for heroin users. Clients have to be referred by their GP or DTTO. 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 MIND, Our celebration, City of York Council Mental Health Day Centre 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 (CPN's) or psychiatrists. There are 30 bed spaces within 8 schemes. All accommodation is fully furnished and some is permanent accommodation. Through Supporting

People there are floating support places for 27 customers provided by Housing Associations and 28 customers provided by the Council.

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..... or by contacting Homeless Services Manager using the contact details in Chapter 7.

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.¹⁵

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, peer review, staff self-assessment and extensive service user consultation¹⁶.

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

Homelessness in York

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

¹⁵ See Chapter 7 for a list of Steering Group members.

¹⁶ A full list of service review activities can be found at www.york.gov.uk/.....

PIE CHART?

- Homelessness arising as a result of parental or family licence terminations in York predominantly involves young people. Levels of exclusion by parents is significantly above the all England rate and has been for the past three years.
- 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 what are the main reasons people do not seek advice, around 68 per cent of respondents thought people did not know who to go to for advice. Around 75 per cent of respondents thought debt advice and payment negotiations would be useful if they were threatened with re-possession or eviction from their home¹⁷.

Homeless acceptances

The profile of those accepted as homeless and in priority need:

- 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 households¹⁸, over twice the rate for England as a whole.
- Almost half of all households accepted as homeless and in priority need were lone parent female households and 20% 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:

- In recent years there has been a significant reduction in the number of 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).

¹⁷ City of York Council 'Talkabout' survey March 2008

¹⁸ Includes 16-17 years olds and 18-20 year olds formerly in care

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Year	Total lets	Let to Homeless	%
2004/05	605	178	29
2005/06	597	163	27
2006/07	623	113	18
2007/08	523	90	17

- 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 led to a recent increase, but there is scope for further growth.

Year	Total Lets	To homeless	% to homeless families
2006-7	196	23	11.7%
2007/8			

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 211 households in temporary accommodation.

BAR CHART – TARGET AND ACTUAL 2004/05 - 2007/08

The percentage of households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation has declined steadily since 2005 to under 5 per cent. 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.

Accommodation type	31.3.01	31.3.02	31.3.03	31.3.04	31.3.05	31.3.06	31.3.07	31.3.08
Bed and Breakfast	68	44	62	34	33	14	11	10
B&B use as % of all temp accommodation	32%	17%	20%	12%	13%	6%	5.3%	4.7%

- Of the 16-17 year olds placed in temporary accommodation, 65 per cent of them have failed their tenancies, resulting in eviction or abandonment of the property. In the three years since the adoption of Introductory Tenancies¹⁹ 70 households either abandoned their accommodation or were evicted and a significant proportion of these were under the age of 20.

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 outturn figure for 2007/08 standing at 2.
- The introduction of the Move On Planned Protocol (MOPP) has seen the numbers of successful, planned re-settlement moves. 69 people have move into secure tenancies.
- Consultation with customers show that a high proportion of people seeking resettlement have multiple needs, including mental illness. Such groups have difficulties maintaining tenancies, sustaining occupations and social networks. It is estimated there are currently 50 people in the city who would meet this criteria. Failed tenancies have been very low with only 3 of the 69 failing in their tenancy, which is very positive in light of the complex needs of the customers being re-housed.

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.

¹⁹ introductory tenancies '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.

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- 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, compared with neighbouring areas. However, a recent survey found that York requires an additional 56 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 release²⁰.

What did the wider review of homelessness and homelessness services tell us? / What we need to do:

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 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.
- There needs to be better much better understanding about the low representation of BME households accessing homelessness services in York
- There is insufficient information regarding the costs of homelessness services across all sectors.

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 increasing shift away from crisis management towards 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. Increase 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 reduced.
- There is a need to improve 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

²⁰ Information Related to Resettlement Issues report – Heidi Scott, Senior Psychologist 2004

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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 advice about mortgage repossession may require additional focus on debt advice services in the coming years.
-
- Around three-fifths (59%) of the panel would seek advice at the first signs of a problem, if they had rent or mortgage arrears, whilst only 4% would never seek advice.
- Respondents were asked what would encourage them to seek advice at an earlier stage, to which three-fifths (60%) said a confidential helpline would encourage them. Furthermore, half (50%) of the sample said home appointments would be encouraging.
- The sample were further asked what advice or support would be useful to prevent homelessness, if they were having family or relationship problems. Around half said relationship or marriage counselling (49%) would be useful and family counselling (48%).
- One-fifth (20%) would prefer to find out about homelessness and prevention services through a leaflet enclosed with a letter and 16% would prefer to use the internet.

Accommodation:

- Increase the supply of, and access to, housing across all sectors and promoting better use of the existing stock. There should be a particular focus on tackling barriers to accessing 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. Targets to end the use of bed and breakfast for families or pregnant households have been met, temporary accommodation provision has increased and improved, a new women's refuge has been built and access to RSL properties has improved. 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 to 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
- Increase provision of supported accommodation for teenage parents or for a specialist mother and baby unit.
- Consideration should be given to enable families with children who have become homeless intentionally (or are ineligible for housing assistance) to secure accommodation.
- Increase the number 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. Whilst it is recognised there is a rich network of multi agency working in York to meet people's needs and support clients tenancies, there is no model for providing suitable and sustainable accommodation for this group.
- The management and future provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites should be reviewed based on recommendations arising from the Sub Regional Gypsy and Traveler Accommodation Assessment (July 2008).

4. Support services

- Key successes include extending support to people in transition from temporary to permanent housing, introducing a range of training sessions in hostels, offering structured support to rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping.
- Reduce the number of failed tenancies, particularly for those with drugs and alcohol problems, complex needs, mental health problems, personality disorders and learning disabilities. Loss of accommodation can be a cause of mental health problems. There is a need to understand better the links between drug use and mental disorder.
- Reduce the number of families or family members losing their accommodation due to anti social behaviour through a Family Intervention Scheme and parenting support.

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- Successful outcomes have been delivered through the Move On Planned Protocol, enabling customers to move successfully from rough sleeping into independent accommodation. This approach should be mainstreamed and extended to other client groups.
- Increase the number of joint assessments and joint care planning. Support for vulnerable customers should be further developed and embedded.
- There is a particular need to identify and access additional services to meet the needs of entrenched customers and develop improved pathways through services for them.
- Expand young people floating support contracts to include all tenures and improve floating support services to customers with complex needs.

5. 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.
- Mental health - need to develop hospital discharge protocol, provide specialist support in some hostels and develop more specialist accommodation for people with mental health problem
- Offenders need to embed the prison discharge protocol, improve planned housing options for people being released from prison

6. What are our aims and priorities for the future?

The following strategic aims 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,:

Strategic Aim 1 (Partnership and the strategic housing role). 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.

Priorities:

- Stronger 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
- Increased and ongoing user consultation to inform the development of future services and increased understanding of the needs of the growing BME community
- Ensuring the services provided are value for money through a better understanding of what services cost.

Strategic Aim 2 (Homelessness prevention, advice and information). 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.

Priorities:

- A further shift of resources towards prevention so that there is no longer a need to invest so heavily in crisis management
- Increased focus on the earlier identification of those most at risk of homelessness and earlier interventions
- Increased number of planned housing moves
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- Increased focus on tackling the main causes of homelessness to prevent people from being homeless in the first place
- A particular focus on young people as the proportion approaching the authority for help is too high

- Pro-active services addressing the needs of all customers, including non priority homeless, through provision of wider 'housing options'
-

Strategic Aim 3 (Accommodation). Ensure the provision of, and fair access to, accommodation sufficient to meet identified housing needs.

Priorities:

- Increased housing supply
- Increased access to affordable housing across all sectors for homeless and potentially homeless households
- Reduced use of temporary accommodation
- Increased provision of specialist accommodation for young people and improved pathways through services for them
- Ensure appropriate accommodation for black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, including Gypsies and Travellers
- Increased access to affordable housing for homeless and potentially homeless households across all sectors

Strategic Aim 4 (Support services). 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.

Priorities:

- Increased number of joint assessments, in particular for those with more complex needs
- Increased tenancy sustainment through provision of appropriate support
- Reduction in the number of people with mental illness coming through the homeless route through the provision of more specialist accommodation with support

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

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

7. 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:

- York and North Yorkshire Primary Care Trust
- City of York Council
 - Housing Services
 - Children's Services
 - Supporting People Team
- Registered Social Landlords Provider Group
- Resettlement Services
- Housing Advice Resource Project ?
- Probation Service

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..... Notes from Steering Group meetings will also be available at this location.

Equality and diversity:

The contents of this strategy have been tested²¹ 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....

Hard copies are available on request from

For further information about this strategy document please contact...

Signatories to the Strategy

The following organisations were represented on the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group 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 York and North Yorkshire primary Care Trust

For and on behalf of the Registered Social Landlords Provider Group

For and on behalf of the Probation Service

For and on behalf of Housing Advice Resource Project

For and On behalf of Peasholme centre

For and on behalf of Arclight Centre

²¹ City of York Council Equality Impact Assessment July 2008