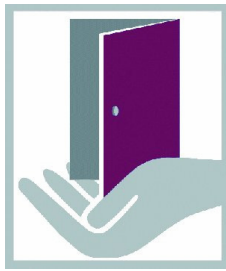


Darlington
Homelessness Strategy
2010-15



700 Club



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Appendix A

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

1. Why have a homelessness strategy

“Homelessness has no place in a sustainable community. Like poverty and disadvantage, our aim should be to eradicate it.”¹

1.1 Homelessness as a national priority

This strategy sets out what needs to be done to address homelessness in Darlington. It builds on key achievements delivered through the last homelessness strategy published in 2006 (see section 3 for more details). The strategy is shaped 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.

Over the last ten years national policy has placed an increasingly high priority on the prevention of homelessness and ensuring support is available to all households identified as being vulnerable to homelessness. At a national and local level this has led to a shift in service provision from reactive to preventative services and increased diversity in the types of services provided.

The Government has outlined a number of targets it expects each local area to achieve through close working relationships between local authorities and local partners.

These include:

- 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.

This strategy’s aims and objectives (section 6) are designed to reflect national policy objectives and tie them into more localised priorities identified through the homelessness review (see section 4).

2.2 Homelessness as a local priority

Homelessness is not just a housing problem, it is often the symptom of broader issues facing a family, and, becoming homeless can have an impact in many different ways on an individual or family, such as personal health, education attainment or, access to, or, sustainment of, employment. As a result there are a wide range of local strategies and plans in Darlington that directly and indirectly contribute to the prevention of homelessness and support those households who become homeless.

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) ‘One Darlington: Perfectly Placed’ promotes a common “joined up” partnership approach towards accessing housing and tackling the damaging effects of homelessness in a coordinated way. The SCS

¹ CLG Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives (2005)

illustrates how it will address inequality within the borough in terms of health, education and employment establishing long term actions for all partners. The SCS action plan, the 'Local Area Agreement' (LAA), identifies a number of local objectives that will be delivered over the next three to five years.

There are a number of objectives within the LAA that are relevant to this strategy including:

- Participation in regular volunteering (NI 006)
- Average earnings of employees in the area (NI 166)
- Emotional health of children (NI 050)
- Overall/general satisfaction with local area (NI 005)
- Repeat incidents of domestic violence (NI 032)
- Alcohol-harm related hospital admission rates (NI 039)
- Perceptions of anti-social behavior (NI 017)
- Under 18 conception rate (NI 112)
- Re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders (NI 030)
- Drug users in effective treatment (NI 040)
- Overall employment rate (NI 151)
- People supported to live independently through social services (all ages) (NI 136)
- Serious acquisitive crime rate (NI 016)
- Drug users in effective treatment (NI 040)

2. The Darlington Context

Darlington has a population of approximately 100,000 and has experienced a small but consistent growth in population over the last thirty years. Population growth is anticipated to continue at a similar rate over the next 15 years. Similar to many local authority demographic projections, Darlington expects that the most significant change in demographics is likely to be the significant increase in the local population who will be from the 60-74 and 75+ age bracket. For the Tees Valley sub-region it is anticipated that the 60-74 age range will increase by 39% and 75+ age range by 70%.

The data linked to the number of black and minority ethnic (BAME) households in Darlington remains limited and will be significantly improved by the 2011 Census. Current estimates indicate that of the 45,000 households in Darlington 822 or 1.8% can be identified as BAME households.

Darlington has consistently had the lowest levels of unemployment within the Tees Valley sub-region over the last 10 year. During this period the unemployment levels have also been lower than the average for the North East region but higher than the national average. In 2009 however, Darlington experienced its highest rate of unemployment for over 10 years and for the first time in that period of time, did not have the lowest unemployment rate in the Tees Valley sub-region.

Despite having the highest Gross Domestic Product per head in the Tees Valley, Darlington has the lowest average wages. Darlington also has higher than average education attainment levels yet have the lowest university entry rates in the sub-region. This highlights the fact that while Darlington is a relatively affluent area there are pockets of deprivation with eight of Darlington's 63 super output areas being amongst 10% of the most deprived wards nationally. A particular concern for the area is that the average life expectancy for a Darlington resident is 1.5 years less than the national average and there can be large variations in life expectancies between wards (13 years between the best and worst wards within the area).

A recent survey of the housing markets across the Tees Valley sub-region revealed that Darlington has a well-balanced housing stock in terms of the match between current household sizes and the property mix in the area. The survey also identified that the tenure mix between owner-occupier, private rented and socially rented housing was well balanced. The survey did identify however that Darlington has the highest level of need in the sub-region for affordable housing. When coupled with the increasing levels of unemployment, the lowest levels of social rented housing and high house prices there is a danger that the most vulnerable households will struggle to access appropriate and affordable accommodation.

3. Homelessness Strategy 2006 achievements

The Homelessness Strategy 2006 outlined a number of key actions to be delivered by 2009. Table 1 provides an overview of progress against identified actions;

Action	Target completion date	Progress
Capture customer data to map household requirements to develop the service to maintain its relevance to local need.	April 2006	Completed
Develop robust and formal referral procedures including e-enabled referrals between partner agencies and the Housing Options service.	July 2008	Completed
Review the roles and responsibilities of the Homelessness Strategy steering group and its membership.	Bi-monthly meetings	Completed
Develop task groups in response to locally identified priorities.		Completed
Review all customer information / advice materials and ensure they are available in a range of formats and accessible through a variety of methods to meet customer requirements.	Sept 06	Completed
Review and agree nomination rights with Registered Providers for all affordable tenures.	April 2006	Completed
Assess the extent and nature of rural homelessness.	Dec 2006	Complete
Identify common priorities across the sub-region and jointly procure and commission services as appropriate.	March 2006	Completed
Host annual Homelessness Forum events with all partner agencies to review and reflect on achievements.	July 2006	Completed
Regularly review the training and personal development requirements of the Housing Options team to ensure they have the appropriate skills to deliver the Action Plan commitments.	April 2006	Completed
Introduce a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings policy to improve the accessibility to, and, choice for, customers seeking accommodation	June 2008	Completed
Develop Landlord Accreditation Scheme	Feb 2006	Completed

Table 1

4. Overview of Housing Options and Homelessness services

A mapping exercise was undertaken locally to identify the variety of services that are available to homeless households or those threatened with homelessness. Services were categorized under the following specialist areas for all sectors of the community;

- a) Homelessness Prevention - predominantly through the provision of housing advice and information
- b) Accommodation provision – support and non-support based accommodation, and
- c) Housing Support – floating support provided to help maintain current and future tenancies.

Within each of these broad work streams there is a diverse range of services. Some services are generic services that are designed to be accessible to all members of the local community. Other services are specialist serviced tailored to meet the needs of a particular group who have been identified as more vulnerable to homelessness, or, the consequences of homelessness than the general population.

The delivery of services within these work streams is shared between the public, private and voluntary sector and through a combination of close partnership working and co-ordination. The local authority's primary role is to co-ordinate the delivery of homelessness services at a strategic level and ensures that all local agencies are committed to the mutually agreed priorities for homelessness in the area.

A number of key services receive mainstream funding from the Council such as the statutory duty to provide housing advice and homeless investigations through the Housing Options Team. Many services however, particularly in the voluntary sector, are funded through a combination of housing benefit payments, Supporting People grant funding and other sources of grant funding. Between 2010-13 Supporting People grant funding for homeless services are anticipated to be £1million, which is a fall in grant funding of £200k from the previous three-year period. Supporting People have undertaken a major review of Homelessness Services supported by Supporting People funding with the re-tendered services becoming operational in April 2010. The Supporting People review is aligned with the broader review of all Homelessness services in Darlington.

4.1 Homeless Prevention – advice and information

Early engagement and intervention providing advice and support to identified vulnerable groups is the most effective way to prevent homelessness. Investing in homelessness prevention services is critical to assisting customers vulnerable to homelessness in maintaining their independence, health and well being and ensuring sustainable neighbourhoods. Focusing investment and resources into preventative strategies delivers positive outcomes and reduces both the damaging consequences of homelessness and, the costs of providing accommodation and support at the point homelessness occurs.

The Council's Housing Options Team acts as a one-stop shop providing general housing advice directly, but, also engages with a range of external partners to signpost to other specialist services as appropriate such as;

- Citizens Advice Bureau for debt advice
- Housing Benefits for benefit eligibility and claiming qualifying benefits including Discretionary Housing Payments
- Private Housing Team to address disrepair issues in private housing
- Children and Adults Social Care Teams where there are specific support requirements
- Primary Care Trust for particular health concerns, and
- Age Concern for non age specific fuel poverty / fuel arrears advice through the multi-agency HEAT project.
- First Stop for advice, assistance, training and support for homeless households.

4.2 Provision of accommodation

There are a wide range of housing options for those seeking accommodation in Darlington. These include home ownership, shared ownership, private and social rented housing, supported housing and emergency temporary accommodation.

The types of accommodation people can access will depend largely on their personal circumstances, housing need and the type of assistance they can access.. A significant proportion of households presenting to the Housing Options Team 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 mediation can help secure existing accommodation arrangements but alternative arrangements and provision will be found where this is not possible either in the short or longer term.

Darlington has an excellent track record of securing permanent accommodation for households who are homeless despite high demand for affordable housing locally. Darlington boasts the largest privately rented sector in the Tees Valley sub-region and has to regularly seek opportunities and vacancies within this sector to satisfy the requirements of homeless households. However, placements are made on the basis that privately rented accommodation meets the minimum requirements of the Private Landlords Accreditation scheme. Darlington also accesses Registered Provider vacancies through the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings policy and by stipulating minimum nomination requirements tailored around customer requirements, for any new build affordable housing projects. Darlington also has existing leasing arrangements with private landlords to provide longer term accommodation.

Darlington also has a range of supported accommodation schemes specifically for teenage parents, young single people, people with learning disabilities, victims of domestic violence, single people with mental health issues and extra care and sheltered housing schemes for the elderly.

Whilst emergency temporary accommodation is always viewed as an option of last resort it is important that such provision is available to cope with the unpredictable

nature of homelessness and when it occurs. A new Key Point of Access (KPA) policy was introduced in April 2009 which allows consistent assessment of homeless households and their appropriateness and eligibility for specific emergency accommodation schemes. This policy allows homeless households to be placed in appropriate accommodation with, if required, an appropriate level of support whilst transient homeless households who may be better located and supported close to friends and family in other local authority areas, will be assisted to secure accommodation and support elsewhere through agreed partnership arrangements between local authorities and other support providers. The Places of Change (PoC) has been developed by Communities and Local Government (CLG) to provide capital funding for hostels and day centres in order to transform their facilities and services. Services supported by the PoC programme are expected to excel in allowing service users to gain skills and confidence to move on with their lives and the Strategic Housing works with local service providers to develop applications to this programme.

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. The Council also provides emergency accommodation to all households who present as homeless on nights when the temperature is expected to fall below zero. This is available to both priority and non-priority homeless households. Homeless households receiving support through the 'Below Zero' policy are allocated a Housing Options Advisor to help identify a long terms solution to their housing need.

4.3 Housing Support Services

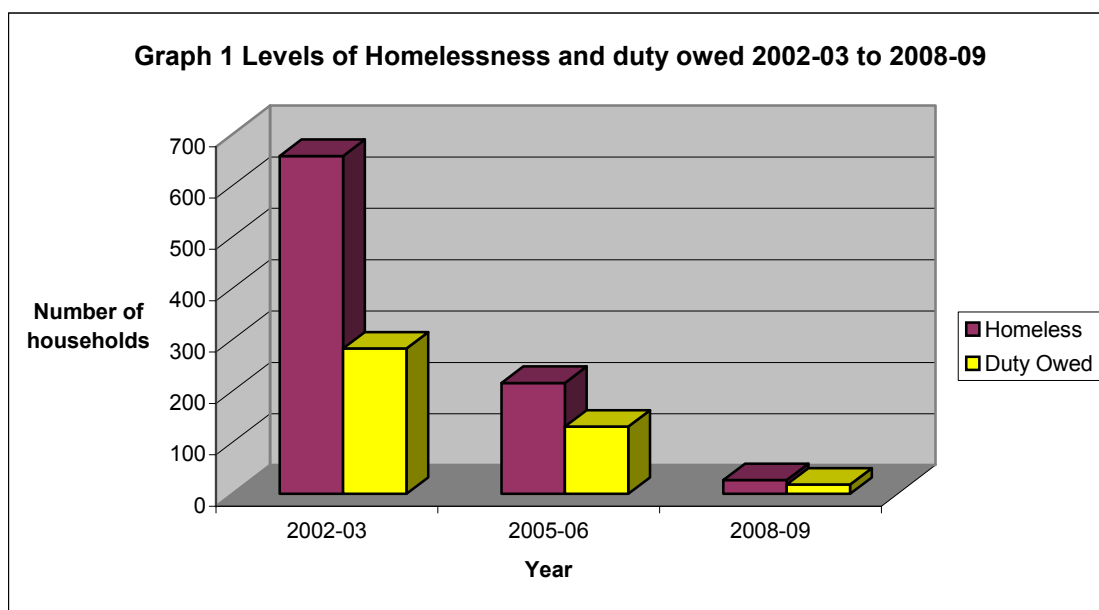
Floating Support or non-accommodation specific support, is a valuable means of supporting vulnerable households and delivering tailor made services in a more efficient way benefitting more households. The Supporting People programme currently provides floating support services to 79 households in the Borough. There is clear evidence of the complimentary nature of floating support services towards other key local initiatives such as Darlington's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), and, the Preventing Prisoner Accommodation Loss (POAL) programmes.

5. Findings from the homelessness review

In December 2008 the Council established a multi-agency Homelessness Steering Group to review homelessness and homelessness services in Darlington. The primary focus of the Steering Group was to review and evaluate the collective response towards tackling and eradicating homelessness, identifying successes but equally where there may be service gaps, and, to inform the launch of the new Homelessness Strategy in 2010. The members of the Steering Group were from the public, private and voluntary sectors and spanned a range of disciplines including Housing, Health and Social care.

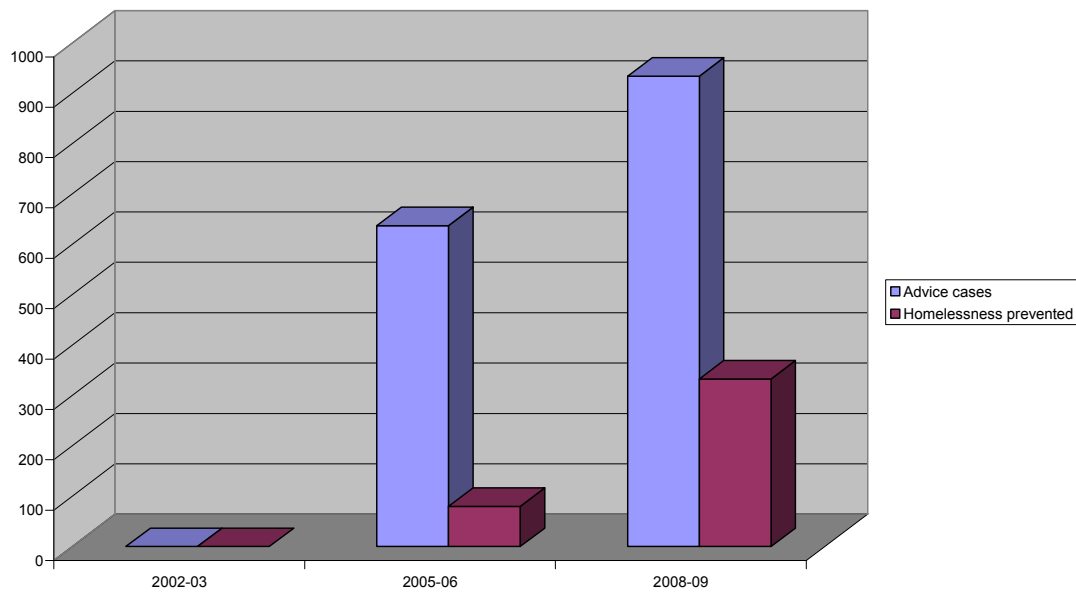
The first role of the steering group was to complete a thorough review of homelessness in Darlington, as required by Community and Local Government's (CLG's), Homelessness Code of Guidance. This review included a thorough analysis of the current and future levels of a) need b) supply c) resources for homelessness services. The key findings from the homeless review have informed the strategic aims and objectives identified by this strategy in section 6.

5.1 Homeless Decisions



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Graph 2 - Numbers of advice cases and numbers where homeless is prevented 2002-03 to 2008-09

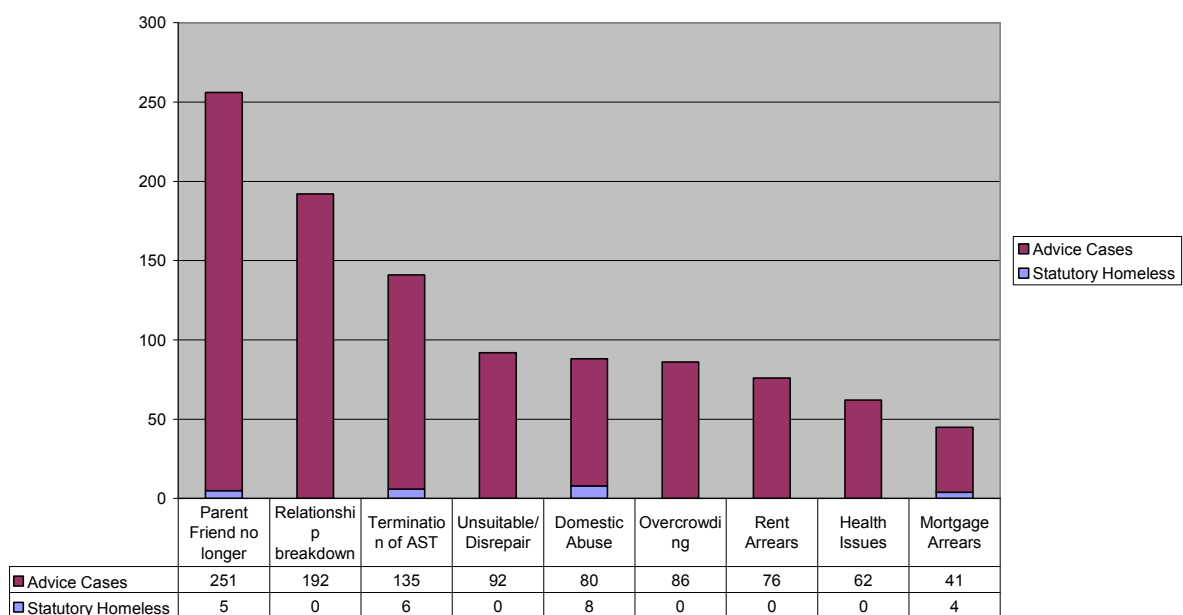


Levels of homelessness

- Graphs 1 and 2 (above) illustrate a significant decline in the numbers of homeless households owed a duty between 2002 and 2009 and the significant increase in households supported through housing options and advice. This mirrors the legislative change implemented through the Homelessness Act 2002 stressing the importance of prevention as opposed to dealing with the causes of homelessness. Early positive intervention confirms a significant improvement in lowering homelessness presentations.

Causes of homelessness

Graph 3 - Most common causes of advice presentation and homelessness per year between 2007 and 2009



- Graph 3 (above) identifies the annual number of advice and homelessness prevention cases from 2002-03 to 2008-09. As illustrated by the graph the number of households who are identified and supported through the statutorily homeless route is very small compared to the number of households presenting for a similar reason but who are supported to remain in the current accommodation or to make a planned move into new accommodation. This indicates that the housing options and advice service is effective in engaging at an early stage to prevent homelessness.
- Domestic Abuse is one of the most common causes of homelessness across all local authority areas and Darlington is consistent with this national trend. The number of domestic abuse cases in Darlington supported through the statutorily homeless route is an indication that victims are aware of and have confidence in accessing the domestic abuse services provided. This is a significant achievement as a common issue among sufferers of domestic abuse is that they fail to seek support. Darlington has a wide range of services to support those suffering from domestic abuse such as the Domestic Abuse Service, the Sanctuary Scheme and the Women's Refuge.
- The second most common cause of homelessness is the termination of assured short hold tenancies in private rented sector. Both the Housing Option team and Private Sector Housing team provide support to tenants and landlords in order to resolve disputes and difficulties so tenants can remain in their current accommodation or make planned moves into more appropriate accommodation. A local private sector tenancy support service, Bridge2Home has recently been launched. This services aims to increase access to private rented accommodation through the provision of a bond and reduce the number of terminations of assured short hold tenancies by providing short term housing related support to households identified as having low level housing support needs.
- Homelessness as a result of parents or friends no longer willing to accommodate them is the third most common cause of homelessness. This form of homelessness predominantly affects young people and is caused by relationship breakdown, overcrowding or financial hardship. To reduce the number of households suffering from relationship breakdown the authority has established a Family Intervention Project which aims to provide support to families with children with complex needs and compromised parenting.
- The fourth most common cause of homelessness in Darlington over the last two years is mortgage arrears. The Housing Options team are making full use of the services launched by government in 2008 to help households with mortgage arrears remain in their home. In September 2009 the Housing Options team in Darlington had supported more households through the mortgage rescue scheme process than any other authority in the North East.

Client profile

- 40% of households accepted as homeless and in priority need in 2007 and 2009 were aged between 16-24 and over 45% were female lone parent households. No households were identified within the BAME community although this is largely in line with their representation in the wider community.

Use of temporary accommodation

- Over the period 2007-09 the Council had a duty to accommodate 28 households. Four of these households were accommodated in B&B accommodation for an average of 18 nights and two were placed in suitable temporary accommodation for an average of 25 nights. All remaining households did not require the use of temporary accommodation and were either supported to remain in their existing accommodation or to find new and appropriate long-term accommodation.
- The Council has now met all Government targets related to the use of temporary accommodation including; halving 2004 temporary accommodation usage levels by 2010, ending the use of B&B accommodation for families with children except in emergencies and ending the use of B&Bs for 16-17 year olds except in emergencies.

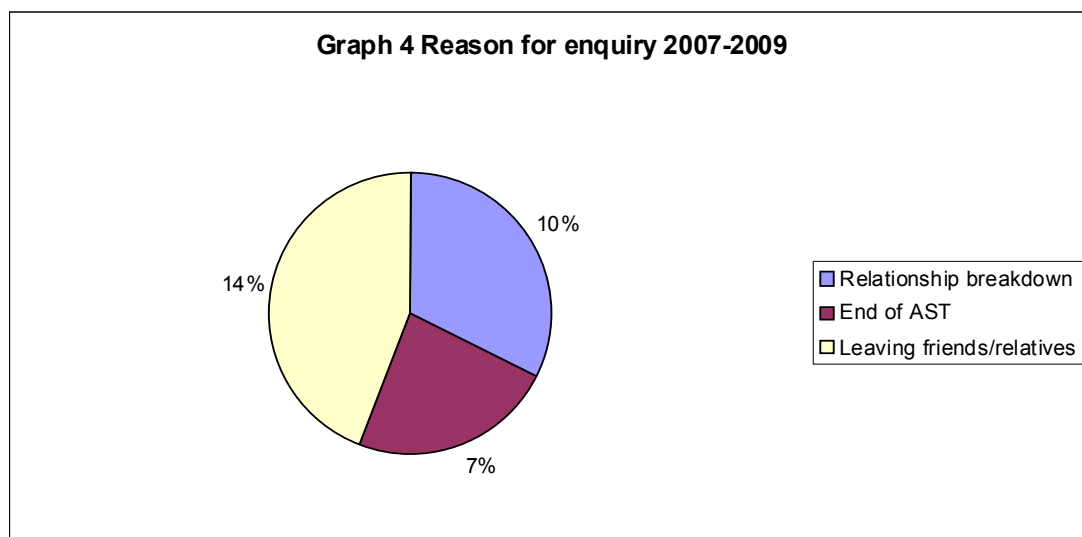
5.2 Information and Advice

Levels of advice

- As noted earlier in this section, the shift in priority and resources towards homeless prevention has led to a significant drop in homelessness presentations and an increase in housing advice enquiries. Between 2007 and 2009 an average of 800 separate housing enquiries were made to the Housing Options service.

Reason for advice enquiry

- As demonstrated by graph 4 below the most common causes for housing enquiries between 2007 and 2009 were relationship breakdown, end of assured shorthold tenancy and asked to leave by friends or family.



Client profile

- Similar to the age range of homelessness households, nearly 40% of all enquiries were from households where the main applicant was aged between 16-24. 'Other Asian' and 'White Irish' were the only households identified as having BAME

ethnicity and each of these accounted for 1% of all housing advice enquiries. This is broadly in line with the overall ethnicity breakdown for the Darlington area.

Performance of housing advice service

- The Council's housing options service is achieving top quartile performance nationally with the service achieving homeless preventions per 1000 population of 6.98. The significant reduction in the levels of homelessness in Darlington over the last three years can be attributed to the effective information, advice and support provided by the Housing Options Service and the joint working protocols that the service has developed with other key stakeholders in the public, private, and, voluntary sectors.

5.3 Accommodation

Access to general accommodation in Darlington

- Choice Based Lettings was launched in Darlington in Autumn 2009 and provides a new way of allocating social housing by assessing applications and placing them in one of five bands depending on the level of housing need. The waiting list for social housing on the CBL system in Darlington contained approximately 1400 households in November 2009. This highlights a clear need for affordable housing within the Darlington area but is proportionately similar to waiting lists found in other areas across the Tees Valley sub-region. The Council needs to continue working with private developers, Registered Providers, and explore opportunities to creatively fund new forms of affordable housing.
- Alongside work to deliver new affordable housing there is a need to increase partnership working with private landlords to increase access to this housing market. The importance of this sector is critical to Darlington as the area has proportionately the smallest social rented market and largest private rented market of all areas within the Tees Valley sub-region.
- Historically Darlington has had low numbers of long term empty properties and, while remaining the lowest in the region, experienced a notable rise in 2008-09. This can be largely attributed to the problems experienced within the housing market nationally during 2008 and 2009. Due to the difficulties associated with the development of new housing, most significantly the cost and lack of suitable land, bringing long term empty properties back into use is a critical activity in meeting the demand for affordable housing and so reducing levels of homelessness.

Hostels in Darlington

- The Council's Supporting People team currently provides grant funding to support four hostels within the Darlington area. While few of the statutory homeless households over the last two years have been accommodated within these hostels they do act as an effective form of homeless prevention with an average of 380 individuals accessing the hostels each year.
- The majority of hostel customers' previous form of accommodation is with family or friends and 31% of hostel service users fall within the 16 to 19 age range. This highlights the role hostels play in providing both accommodation and housing related support to young people, particularly during periods of relationship

breakdown. A recent survey completed by the Supporting People Team indicated that on average 30% of hostel space are occupied by individuals whose previous residence was outside the Darlington area.

- 152 hostel customers were identified as having substance misuse support needs during 2008 but only 22 were receiving support from the Drug Intervention Programme. This indicates that hostels need to engage service users more effectively in support services.
- The outcome of consultation with service providers and customers completed as part of the review reveals a number of areas in which hostel services could improve. This included an increase in the number of suitable hostel units available to women, a pro-active response when customers make unplanned moves, and, that the balance of tenants in hostels could be more effectively managed to prevent vulnerable customers being located with a number of customers with chaotic lifestyles.

5.4 Support for vulnerable groups

- The number of families who become homeless and the length of time homeless households spend in emergency accommodation in Darlington are comparatively small. This indicates that Darlington is performing effectively in both its preventative and supportive duty to potentially homeless households. Despite this effective performance however, 39 families experienced homelessness in the last two years. While this figure is comparatively low these families have still experience homelessness and as outlined by a report by the Salvation Army in 2009² this experience can sow the ‘seeds of exclusion’. An objective of this Strategy will be to further reduce this figure by increasing advice, accommodation and support services provided to families.
- In line with national trends, domestic abuse is a common cause of homelessness in Darlington, accounting for 37% of all homeless cases in the last two years. Support for households suffering from domestic abuse is provided through the Domestic Abuse Service, the Sanctuary Scheme and the Women’s Refuge. The Children and Young People’s Service and Adult Social Care are currently reviewing the structure of service provision.
- The review found that roughly 40% of hostel customers have substance misuse support needs. This highlights the importance of providing and enabling hostel customers to access appropriate support services. Consultation with local advice and floating support services also highlighted that customers with substance misuse support needs often suffer from issues linked with emotional well-being and learning difficulties. This Strategy will prioritise the monitoring of support needs and the level of hostel customers who are engaged in appropriate services.
- Although there is a large army barracks in Catterick, there are very low levels of former members of the armed forces presenting to the Housing Options Service.

² Salvation Army ‘The Seeds of Exclusion 2009’ - <http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/seeds>

Consultation with service providers who specialise in supporting those who leave the armed forces indicate they have good relationships with the Housing Options Service, and have not had difficulty in finding accommodation for service users in Darlington. Many are accommodated through well established leasing arrangements with Annington Homes.

- The number of rough sleepers in Darlington is difficult to estimate with official rough sleeper counts only presenting a “snapshot” of any identified housing need over a small period of time. However, services for rough sleepers are provided by the council, voluntary accommodation advice services, the Below Zero Policy, Emergency Duty Team, hostel accommodation and floating support services providing support for those who find themselves sleeping rough. The most recent official count completed in accordance with CLG guidance by the area was in 2006 and did not identify any rough sleepers in Darlington.
- There are very low levels of prison leavers presenting to the Housing Options Service, yet feedback from customers and service providers indicate that more prison leavers are homeless upon their release from prison and in a very vulnerable position so further work is required in this area.
- There are a relatively high number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 presenting for housing advice (15% of all advice cases where a support need is identified) and using supporting people funded hostel accommodation (118 relating to 31% of all customers). Such high levels of hostel usage amongst young people indicate that more resources need to be provided to prevent this age group experiencing homelessness. Alongside preventative work, it is appropriate for a significant proportion of hostel accommodation and support to be designated for young people.

6. Strategic aims and objective of the new homelessness strategy

Strategic aim 1 – Ensure vulnerable homeless households have access to effective services that will prevent homelessness

Objectives

- Raise the awareness of and accessibility to all advice services that can help prevent homelessness.
- Reduce the number of young people and families who are threatened with homelessness and break the cycle of generational homelessness.
- Support households struggling to meet mortgage payments and provide advice on alternative housing options as appropriate.
- Provide timely housing related support to individuals undergoing treatment for substance addictions.

Strategic aim 2 – Ensure that there are appropriate forms of accommodation for all households living in Darlington both now and in the future

Objectives

- Ensure appropriate accommodation and support is secured and available for the statutorily homeless.
- Ensure appropriate support is provided to people who are or are in danger of becoming homeless, but are not owed a statutory duty.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing and maximise the use of existing resources.

Strategic aim 3 – Provide appropriate and accessible support to households with identified support needs to promote and sustain independent living

Objectives

- Provide support to assist homeless customers with drug and alcohol dependencies to maintain current and future tenancies.
- Provide support to assist homeless customers with mental health needs to maintain current and future tenancies.
- Provide support to encourage homeless customers who are currently workless to develop the confidence, lifestyle and attitude to access and secure education, training or work opportunities.

7. Monitoring the impact of the new homelessness strategy

The responsibility to deliver on the strategic aims and objectives contained within this Strategy are shared amongst a wide range of local stakeholders. It will be however, the role of the Homelessness Steering Group to monitor the progress made towards these strategic objectives. The Steering Group have committed to meeting on a quarterly basis in order to:

- monitor progress towards the completion of the Action Plan
- update the Strategy to reflect progress towards Action Plan targets
- evaluate the impact of new policies or practices
- provide an effective multi-agency forum, and
- respond to changes in Government legislation.

The Homelessness Steering Group will also use Darlington's Annual Homelessness Forum as a feedback mechanism to communicate progress on the Homelessness Strategy to a broader stakeholder audience.

A full review of the Homelessness Strategy will take place in 2013.

Contact details:

Copies of this document are available to download from the Darlington Council's website www.darlington.gov.uk/housing

Hard copies and further information about this strategy are available from the Housing Strategy Manager, Room 303 Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 5QT
Telephone 01325 388304

Signatories to the Strategy

The following organisations are represented on the Homelessness 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:

- Darlington Borough Council
- Supporting People Partnership
- Darlington Primary Care Trust
- Darlington Private Sector Landlords Association
- First Stop Darlington
- 700 Club
- DISC

Appendix 1 – Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Strategic aim 1 – Ensure vulnerable homeless households have access to effective services that will prevent homelessness

Aim	Delivery Mechanism	Responsibility	Timescales	Resources	Performance Indicators	Outcome
1. Increase the awareness of all advice services that can help prevent homelessness.	1.1 Produce a tenure blind booklet / directory of services / advertising campaign of support available through the Housing Options Service, First Stop, CAB, Connexions and Job Centre Plus.	<u>Lead</u> - First Stop <u>Support</u> - Citizens Advice Bureau	April 2010	Funded through Annual Homelessness Grant provided by Communities for Local Government.	10% increase on the April 2010 baseline figure for the number of households seeking housing related advice by April 2011. New marketing and promotional strategy by April 2010.	More households supported to stay in their own accommodation or to make planned by accessing appropriate support before crisis points.
2. Reduce the number of young people and families who are in danger of becoming homeless and break the cycle of generational homelessness.	2.1 Training for Health Visitors and School Nurses on how to identify housing support needs and appropriate referral procedures.	<u>Lead</u> - DBC: Housing service <u>Support</u> - PCT: Health Visiting Service - DBC: Children's Services and Young People Service	Annual training event	Housing Options Employee time. Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.	20% increase on the April 2010 baseline figure for the number of households referred to housing advice services from Health Visitors and School Nurses by April 2012.	Earlier identification of families who require housing related support. Reduction in the number of children who experience homelessness.
	2.2 Provision of accommodation and support services for vulnerable parents under the age of 25.	<u>Lead</u> - DBC: Supporting People <u>Support</u> - Support provider	Newly commissioned services April 2010.	A minimum of 9 units of self-contained accommodation and 18 units of floating support. Funded through Supporting People Homelessness grant and is secured until March 2013.	To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.	Vulnerable parents under the age of 25 given the support to live independently

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<p>3. Support households struggling to meet mortgage payments.</p>	<p>3.1 Repossessions prevention fund for Mortgage Rescue, preventing repossession and preventing rough sleeping.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> - DBC: Housing Options</p> <p><u>Support</u> - CAB</p>	<p>September 2009 onwards until funding exhausted.</p>	<p>£38k provided by CLG Repossessions Fund 2009/10 (used as interest free loans).</p> <p>Contributing resources from mortgagors in write-downs, etc. Private landlord write-offs of part arrears and RSL arrears reductions.</p>	<p>Support 25 households through mortgage rescue process between April 2010 and 2011.</p> <p>Support 10 households through repossessions fund process between April 2010 and 2011.</p>	<p>Household enable to remain in current accommodation and prevented from experiencing spiralling levels of debt.</p>
<p>4. Provide timely housing related support to individuals undergoing treatment for substance addictions.</p>	<p>4.1 Provision of training for treatment nurses who make home visits to help them identify when a patient has housing related support needs.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> DBC: Housing Options</p> <p><u>Support</u> - PCT: Community Alcohol & Drug Intervention Team</p>	<p>Annual joint training events with Housing Options.</p>	<p>Housing Options Employee time.</p> <p>Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.</p>	<p>20% increase on the April 2010 baseline figure for the number of households referred to housing advice services from treatment nurses by April 2012.</p>	<p>Households with substance addictions receive timely accommodation related support.</p>

Strategic aim 2 – Ensure that there are appropriate forms of accommodation for all households living in Darlington both now and in the future

Aim	Delivery Mechanism	Lead	Timescales	Resources	Performance Indicator	Outcome
<p>5. Ensure appropriate accommodation and support is secured and available for the statutorily homeless.</p>	<p>5.1 Provision of high quality emergency accommodation (both homes and flats) with appropriate levels of support while suitable long-term accommodation is sought.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> - DBC: Housing Services</p> <p><u>Support</u> - DBC: Supporting People - First Stop - 700 Club</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p><u>Accommodation</u> Houses and flats leased from Private Landlords and Council fund by Housing Options and Supporting People.</p> <p>Funded through Supporting People Homelessness grant and is secured until March 2013.</p> <p><u>Support</u> Housing Options Advisors carry out welfare visits.</p> <p>Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.</p> <p><u>Out of hours support</u> Housing Options Advisors on call to cover all out-of-hours periods.</p> <p>Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.</p>	<p>To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.</p>	<p>High quality emergency accommodation and pro-active approach to finding settled accommodation minimises negative impact of homeless to the households.</p>
	<p>5.2 Continued provision of hostel accommodation with particular emphasis on supporting young people aged between 16 – 24.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> - DBC: Supporting People</p> <p><u>Support</u> - Accommodation and support providers</p>	<p>Current hostels in place until March 2010</p> <p>Newly commissioned services April 2010</p>	<p>To be addressed through Supporting People commissioning in April 2010.</p>	<p>To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.</p>	<p>A reduction in the number of people aged 16-24 becoming homeless.</p>

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	5.3	Current Preventing Offender Accommodation Loss (POAL) operating across Tees Valley funded by Communities for Local Government grant. (Operates for women's prison at Low Newton as pilot).	<u>Lead</u> - Communities for Local Government <u>Support</u> - Local Authorities - Prison Service	Initial funding ends Feb 2010	£100k committed until February 2010 from Communities for Local Government (CLG). The Sub-regional homelessness group will co-ordinate a further funding application to CLG for funding through to 2013.	100% of female prison leavers moving to Darlington on release with settled accommodation.	Female prison leavers provided with appropriate settled accommodation upon release.	
6.	6.1	Ensure appropriate support is provided to people who are or are in danger of becoming homeless,	Development of Key Point of Access to ensure effective allocation and management of Supporting People funded hostel accommodation.	<u>Lead</u> - DBC: Supporting People <u>Support</u> - DBC: Housing Options - First Stop	Pilot launch in August 2009	Supporting People have provided funding for pilot. If pilot is successful further funding will be allocated. Supporting People will take the lead role in securing further funding.	Data from Supporting People pilot will be used to set PI's from April 2010.	Hostel customers will be placed in the most appropriate accommodation to facilitate the

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but non-priority.	6.2	Provision of high quality emergency accommodation (both homes and flats) with appropriate levels of support while suitable long-term accommodation is sought.	<u>Lead</u> - DBC: Housing Services - First Stop <u>Support</u> - DBC: Supporting People	Ongoing	<u>Accommodation</u> Houses and flats leased from Private Landlords and Council fund by Housing Options and Supporting People. Funded through Supporting People Homelessness grant and is secured until March 2013. <u>Support</u> Housing Options Advisors carry out welfare visits Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund. <u>Out of hours support</u> Housing Options Advisors on call to cover all out-of-hours periods. Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.	To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.	High quality emergency accommodation and pro-active approach to finding settled accommodation minimises negative impact of homeless to the households.
	6.3	Continued provision of accommodation for all homeless households on nights when the temperature falls below zero.	<u>Lead</u> - DBC: Housing Options	Ongoing	Initial cost incurred through Housing Options budget and recovered through Housing Benefit.	100% of all qualifying presentations provided with accommodation.	Homeless households protected from severe weather conditions.

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	<p>6.4 Provision of 24 hour emergency response service.</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> - Tees Valley: Housing Options Services</p>	<p>Daily during out of office period</p>	<p>Housing Options Advisors on call to cover all out-of-hours periods at a cost of less than £5k per year.</p> <p>Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund.</p> <p>Potential for Key Point of Access to delivery an expanded face to face service in the future.</p>	<p>100% response rate to all calls made to the emergency response service.</p>	<p>Vulnerable households with an accommodation crisis provided with immediate support.</p>
	<p>6.5 Increase number of accommodation units suitable for females in hostels either through increasing access to hostels and other temporary accommodation or by increasing support to private rented accommodation</p>	<p><u>Lead</u> - DBC: Supporting People</p> <p><u>Support</u> - Accommodation providers</p>	<p>Newly commissioned services April 2010</p>	<p>To be addressed through Supporting People commissioning in April 2010.</p>	<p>To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.</p>	<p>Increased number of females developing skill to achieve and maintain independent living.</p>

Strategic aim 3 – Provide appropriate and accessible support to households with identified support needs to promote and sustain independent living

Aim	Delivery Mechanism	Lead	Timescales	Resources	Performance Indicator	Outcome
7. Support to allow those with drug and alcohol dependencies to maintain current and future tenancies.	7.1 Arrange multidisciplinary meetings between accommodation, drug and alcohol and mental health specialists to identify how increased levels of mental health related support can be provided to potential homeless households who exhibit both mental health and substance misuse support needs.	<u>Lead</u> - Homelessness Steering Group <u>Support</u> - DBC: Housing Options - DBC: Supporting People - DBC: Adult Services - PCT: GPs - PCT: Clinical Practitioner Nurses	Initial meeting September 2010	Meetings will be met though each agencies current salary budgets New actions identified from meeting will identify resources required	10% increase on the April 2011 baseline figure for the number of households receiving support for both substance misuse and mental health needs by April 2012.	Reduction in the number of households with mental health and substance misuse support needs need identified as homeless per annum.
8. Support to allow homeless applicants with mental health needs to maintain current and future tenancies.	8.1 Increase the number of households with mental health support needs identified as requiring support through the provision of training for housing advice assessors and floating support officers.	<u>Lead</u> - Homelessness Steering Group <u>Support</u> - First Stop - DBC: Housing Options - DBC: Supporting People - Accommodation and floating support providers	Training offered throughout 2011 to targeted front line key workers.	To be addressed through Homelessness Steering Group in September 2010	10% increase on the April 2011 baseline figure by April 2012 for the number of households receiving support for mental health needs as a result of referrals from housing advice and support services.	Households receiving all necessary support to enable them to move toward independent living.
	8.2 Provision of specialist housing related support for those with significant mental health needs.	DBC: Supporting People	Newly commissioned services April 2010	To be addressed through Supporting People commissioning in April 2010	To be confirmed after completion of Supporting People tender process in April 2010.	Households receiving tailored housing related support to align with other support needs.
9. Support to encourage homeless applicants who are currently workless to develop the confidence,	9.1 Engage with specialist training and education agencies / employers who are able to provide tailor made training packages to suit individual needs and requirements.	<u>Lead</u> - All housing related support providers	Ongoing	Funding secured between 2010-13 through the Housing General Fund. The steering group will seek to access additional Government grants in 2010.	20% increase on the April 2011 baseline figure by April 2012 for the number of households who have been identified as homeless, are supported in hostel accommodation or are receiving housing related support who are	Households with a housing need are supported by housing support services to develop access education, training and employment.

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lifestyle and attitude to access and secure education, training or work opportunities.					engaged in a form of education, training or employment.	
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