

# **Wiltshire Council**

## **Homelessness strategy 2010**

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# Foreword

Welcome to Wiltshire Council's first homelessness strategy which sets out the council's plans for the prevention of homelessness and for securing that sufficient accommodation and support will be available for people who become homeless or who are at risk of becoming so.

Under the homelessness act 2002 all housing authorities were required to have in place a homelessness strategy based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The first strategy was required by July 2003 and reviewed at least every 5 years. A review of the previous four district councils was required in July 2008, however, due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Government Office of the South West (GOSW) allowed for an extension of this requirement and accepted an interim action plan which included the main action points from the four district councils.

On 1 April 2009 Wiltshire Council came into existence and the process for creating Wiltshire Council's first homelessness strategy by 1 April 2010 began.

For the homelessness strategy to be effective and to fully understand the needs and gaps in service provision, a full review of homelessness in Wiltshire through information gathering days and consultations with service users and stakeholders was undertaken. The review was carried out between April and August 2009 and considered the nature and extent of homelessness within the Wiltshire council area.

A total of five strategic priorities have been set which identify the main expected outputs of the homelessness strategy. It is a document that will ensure we sustain and improve upon the work already undertaken and meet new national indicators, local area agreement targets and other government initiatives. The action plan sets out key objectives under each priority and will drive continued improvements to the homelessness services that are delivered by the council and other partner agencies.

The five strategic priorities are:

1. Improve information about the accessing of accommodation for both customers and agencies
2. Improve access and support for all customers with a particular focus on renting privately
3. Continue to improve the prevention of homelessness through a comprehensive advice service and having an effective range of housing options for customers
4. Increase the supply of affordable housing and promote choice
5. Provide effective partnerships and improve communications and publicity

The action plan reflects the continued need for Wiltshire Council and the partner agencies to work together to achieve the objectives set. It is a working and evolving document which provides the opportunity to build upon and develop the partnerships that have been established throughout the review of homelessness within the area.

It is now nearly 12 months since the housing options team placed a household in bed and breakfast accommodation which is an outstanding achievement and is down to improved temporary accommodation provision and the dedicated work of the housing options team, together with the voluntary and statutory agencies, in the prevention of homelessness.

Despite the fact that Wiltshire Council is just one year old and the current housing market remains uncertain, the housing options team has worked exceptionally hard and achieved excellent results in the prevention of homelessness and reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation. At the end of Qtr 4 (March 2010), Wiltshire Council had 150 households placed in temporary accommodation. The target set for 2010 was 242 and this reflects the dedication of the team but also that of our partner agencies who have worked alongside us to assist people remain in their homes or find alternative accommodation.

We have responded to the current economic climate by setting up a court desk service in Salisbury and Trowbridge to assist households who are at risk of losing their home because of rent or mortgage arrears and launched the mortgage rescue scheme in the first few months of Wiltshire Council.

Despite the economic climate, the three main causes of homelessness remain the same both nationally, regionally and locally:

- Being asked to leave by parents/relatives
- Relationship breakdowns
- Termination of an assured shorthold tenancy

In addition to the objectives set in the action plan, we will continue to focus on providing a customer focused service and working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies in the prevention of homelessness against the three main causes of homelessness.

Finally, I would like to thank, on behalf of Wiltshire Council, all those who have worked alongside us to create the homelessness strategy. The action plan is challenging but I am confident that, with the commitment and enthusiasm already shown to produce this strategy, the objectives within the action plan will be achieved and the service provision to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless will be enhanced.

Cllr John Brady  
**Cabinet member – Housing**

## 2.0 Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 made local housing authorities responsible for preparing a strategy to address any needs and gaps in the provision of help for homeless people. To understand these needs and to develop the first homelessness strategy for Wiltshire, we carried out a full review of homelessness in Wiltshire through information gathering days and consultations with service users, stakeholders and local agencies. This strategy builds on the achievements of all four previous district council strategies and sets a framework for the continued improvement of homelessness services.

The review was carried out between April and August 2009 and considered the nature and extent of homelessness within the county. In particular it focused upon:

- Exploring current and previous trends in levels of homelessness
- Identifying the causes of homelessness within Wiltshire
- Gauging current service provision for homeless households
- Identifying gaps in the provision of current services

Much has been achieved since the first homelessness strategies were produced; the key has been the shift of emphasis to the prevention of homelessness and continued multi-agency working. The approach has led to a fall in levels of homelessness across the county over the last five years and many improvements in homelessness services.

This strategy is based on a review of homelessness, which is summarised in the strategy, along with consultation with stakeholders and consideration of the new context and identified challenges. A total of five strategic priorities have been set, which identify the main expected outputs of the homelessness strategy.

The strategic priorities of this homelessness strategy are:

1. Improve information about the accessing of accommodation for both customers and agencies.
2. Improve access and support for all clients with a particular focus on renting privately
3. Continue to improve the prevention of homelessness through a comprehensive advice service and having an effective range of housing options for customers.
4. Increase the supply of affordable housing and promote choice
5. Provide effective partnerships and improve communications and publicity

This strategy is important to ensure that we can sustain and improve upon the work already undertaken and meet new national indicators, Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets and other government initiatives. The action plan will drive continued improvements to the homeless services delivered both by the Council and by a range of partner agencies.

## 3.0 Section one

### 3.1 National homeless picture

The government is committed to reducing homelessness and has set a number of targets / measures to reduce homelessness and to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation. Wiltshire has either met or is on track to meet these targets. These include:-

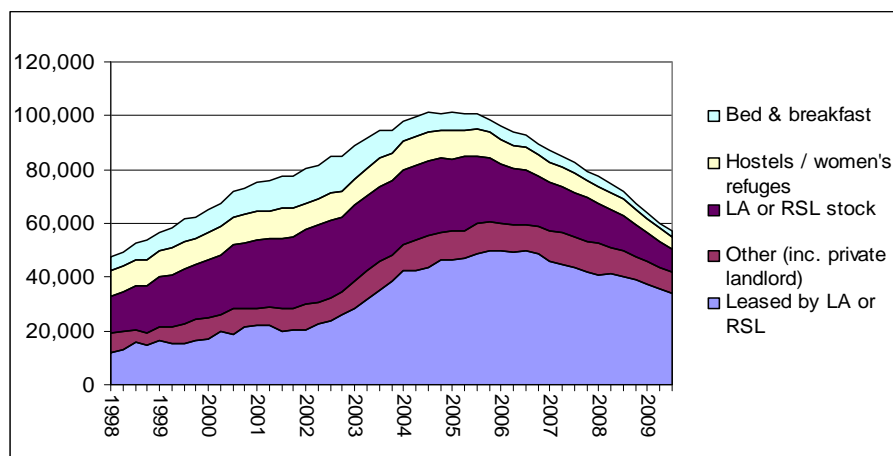
- Reduce, or sustain the reduction of, the levels of rough sleeping by two thirds from the level recorded in 1998
- Avoid the long term use of bed & breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children and for households with a pregnant woman
- By 2010 to have 16 and 17 year olds accommodated in bed & breakfast accommodation only in exceptional circumstances
- Halve (from the level recorded in December 2005) the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by December 2010.
- Each year reduce the level of homelessness acceptances against the three main causes of homelessness in the area, from the level of the previous year.

Nationally, homelessness has been steadily improving with a reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation, the elimination of bed and breakfast and a reduction in the total number of rough sleepers.

The number of households nationally accepted as homeless in 2008/09 was 53,430, compared to 135,430 in 2003/04.

In addition the number of households living in temporary accommodation in England in 2003/04 was 97,680, which was reduced to 64,000 households in 2008/09. The government has set a challenging target to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation to 50,500 by 2010. At the end of March 2009, 88% of households in temporary accommodation were in self-contained accommodation and 4% were in bed and breakfast hotels.

**Households in temporary accommodation, by type, at the end of each quarter, from 1998 to 30 September 2009**



The national rough sleeping estimate for 2008 shows a 78 per cent reduction in rough sleeping in England since 1998. Annual research has confirmed we have low levels of rough sleeping recorded each year in Wiltshire and initiatives in reducing this further are considered in section 5.4 below.

### 3.2 Regional homelessness picture

Wiltshire is situated within the South West Region and adjoins eight other local authority areas. Of these eight, Swindon, South Gloucestershire and Bath and North East Somerset are also unitary authorities. The chart below shows the neighbouring local authorities and the numbers of homeless acceptances for the year 2008/09.

Local Authority	Total no. of households in area	Acceptances	per 1000 households
Swindon	80,000	171	2.1
South Gloucestershire	105,000	229	2.2
BANES	74,000	127	1.7
South Somerset	68,000	179	2.6
Mendip	46,000	102	2.2
Cotswold	36,000	23	0.6
Wiltshire	186,000	409	2.2

Interestingly, the total number of acceptances for Wiltshire is far higher than for any of our neighbouring local authorities; this may be due to Wiltshire having the highest number of households, 44% higher than South Gloucestershire which is the second highest and 75% higher than North Dorset which is the lowest. It is therefore important to show homeless acceptances together with the numbers of households within each area, in order to gain a true picture of the comparative levels of homelessness.

#### **South West regional housing strategy 2005 - 2016**

It is intended that the actions of the Wiltshire homelessness strategy will help support the implementation of the regional work detailed in the South West regional housing strategy 2005-2016. The following strategic aims and themes are outlined in the regional housing strategy.

Strategic aim	Theme
Improving the balance of housing markets – <i>“to develop housing markets with a range of tenures, which improve the balance between supply and demand, and offer everyone the opportunity to access a home at a price they can afford”</i>	Increasing housing delivery
	Reducing homelessness and use of temporary accommodation
	Access and more efficient use of housing Stock
Achieving good quality homes – <i>“to ensure that existing and new homes improve over minimum standards of quality, management &amp; design by 2016”</i>	Promoting sustainable development and good design
	Meeting the Decent Homes target
Supporting sustainable and mixed communities – <i>“to ensure that housing makes a full contribution to the achievement of sustainable and inclusive communities”</i>	Sustainable and mixed communities
	Support for homeless households and vulnerable groups

### 3.3 Wiltshire context

This homelessness strategy creates a shared vision for homelessness in Wiltshire with an emphasis on partnership working to deliver the identified priorities.

Wiltshire Council held information gathering days in the North, South, East and West of the county in April 2009. The high level of interest in the event shown by our partners working within this sector was demonstrated by the attendance on the days of over 50 organisations. The lively debate and valuable contributions made by these organisations reflect the importance stakeholders attach to the issues being discussed.

Many of the stakeholders realised that if Wiltshire was to achieve its vision of preventing all homelessness then this would need to be done in partnership, as it cannot be tackled by one organisation alone. This homelessness strategy therefore is a strategy written, owned and delivered by Wiltshire Council in partnership with the housing community of Wiltshire.

The strategy is a working document, setting challenging targets to deliver innovative solutions to tackling homelessness, and building on existing successes to prevent homelessness in Wiltshire.

Since April 2009 when we became Wiltshire Council, a number of new partnerships have been formed and the existing ones strengthened. In July 2009 Wiltshire Council held its first multi-agency homelessness forums to assist in developing this strategy and to monitor the action plan.

As well as having good partnerships, there are identified below some of the other strategies and plans that impact on homelessness, and to which this strategy will have links:-

#### ***Local area agreement for Wiltshire (LAA)***

The local area agreement (LAA) is an agreement signed with central government, which agrees targets for the next three years. It has been introduced as part of the local agreement for Wiltshire, which improves the way the council and its partners work together. The current LAA (2008 – 11) contains a number of key housing related strategic objectives

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- Net additional homes provided
- Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)
- Reduction in the use of temporary accommodation

However, there are many other targets not directly relating to housing but which we play a part in meeting, including helping to build resilient communities, supporting people to live independently, and helping to make homes more energy efficient.

#### ***A sustainable community strategy for Wiltshire 2007 – 2016***

The sustainable community strategy has been developed to create a common vision for a more sustainable future for Wiltshire, by taking a more cross-disciplinary and integrated approach to social, economic and environmental issues. It also provides the

evidence for the local area agreement. Below are some of the housing outcomes intended to help achieve the housing issues identified within the strategy:-

- Increased access to affordable homes
- Choice and transparency in the allocation of social housing
- Reduction in households in temporary accommodation
- Increased uptake of energy efficiency

### ***Wiltshire Council's first year plan – 2009 - 2010***

Wiltshire Council's first year plan was developed to identify the vision, goals and ambitions for the first year as Wiltshire Council. The vision for the new council is to:



### **Create stronger and more resilient communities**

and the goals are to:

- 1 Deliver high quality, low cost, customer focused services,
- 2 Ensure local, open, honest decision making,
- 3 Work together to support Wiltshire's communities.

It sets out the actions that will be delivered in the first year of the council and for housing this includes:-

- Delivering a total of 554 new affordable homes
- Reducing the total number of households currently living in temporary accommodation to below 242
- Helping young people who find themselves in need of housing
- Starting to build 350 new affordable Private Finance Initiative homes in the West Wiltshire area
- Investing in supported housing for elderly and vulnerable adults

A revised corporate plan is currently being developed and one of the agreed priorities is meeting housing need. The finer detail, objectives and targets have not yet been developed.

### **Other strategies and plans include:-**

Alcohol strategy  
Domestic abuse strategy  
Mental health strategy  
Parenting strategy  
Teenage pregnancy strategy  
Wiltshire community safety plan

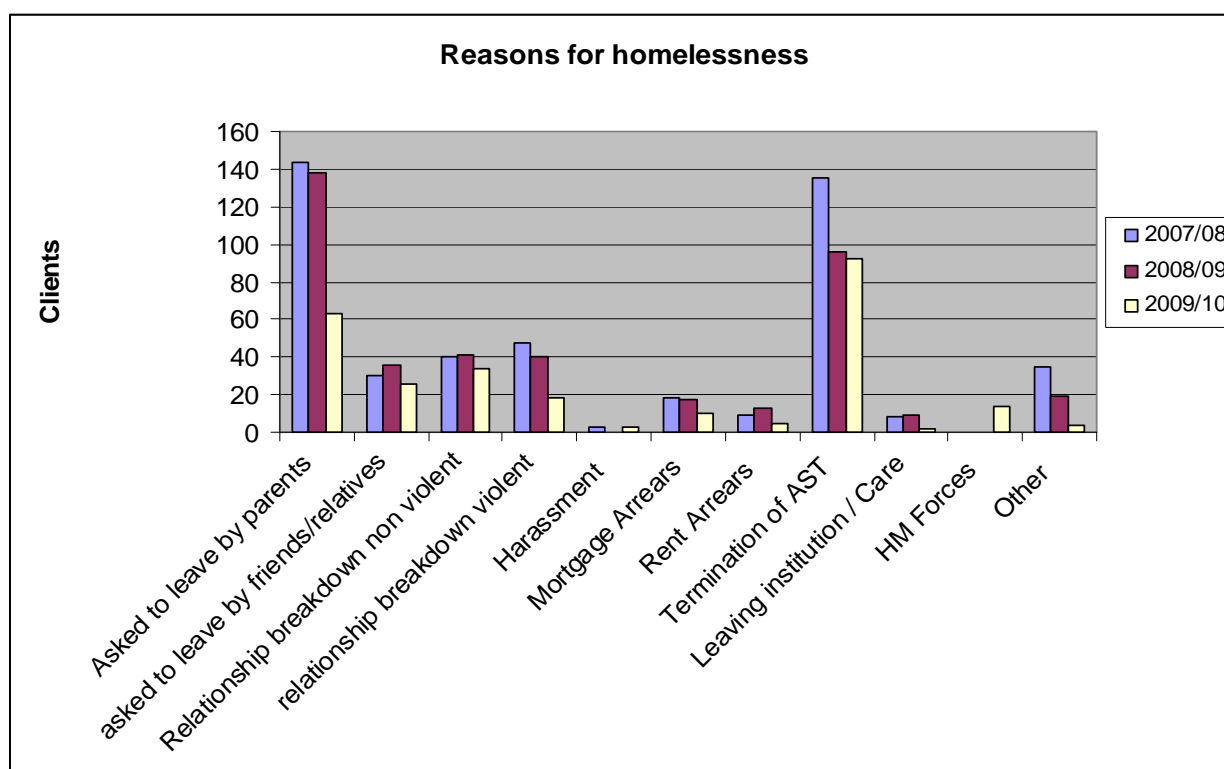
## 4.0 Section two

### 4.1 Understanding the local causes of homelessness

In Wiltshire from 2007/08 to 2009/10 the three main causes of homelessness were and still are today:-

- Being asked to leave by parents
- Termination of assured shorthold tenancies
- Relationship breakdown

Below shows a breakdown of the reasons for homelessness in 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.



The three main causes of homelessness are consistent with the national and South West homeless figures. See table below:-

	Nationally	South-West	Wiltshire Council
Parental evictions	23%	24%	23%
Termination of AST	14%	21%	34%
Friends/other relatives eviction	14%	10%	9%
Violent relationship breakdown	13%	10%	7%
Non violent relationship breakdown	7%	7%	12%
Other	29%	28%	15%

By far the main cause of homelessness is around the termination of a privately rented property. During 2009/10 34% of total acceptances were for this reason, which is an increase of 11% on acceptances from 2008/09. Further work needs to be done to better understand the reasons why landlords are serving notices but basic research has indicated that the reasons for termination include:-

- the landlord's circumstances have changed and they either require the property back for themselves or they want to sell the property.
- assertion of a legal right by the tenant i.e. repairs
- anti-social behaviour by the tenant

In April 2009 Wiltshire Council launched its Wilts Let scheme, which is a scheme to assist households who are threatened with homelessness to secure suitable, affordable private rented accommodation by funding the rent in advance and holding the deposit as an alternative to applying as homeless. To date this scheme has prevented a total of 378 households from becoming homeless and needing to go into temporary accommodation.

We have also recently recruited accommodation option officers in each of the area hubs to encourage greater use of the private rented sector, by advertising the benefits of the Wilts Let scheme as well as with the extra support that they are able to offer tenants and landlords.

We hope that through the work of these officers we will be able to encourage private landlords and agents to rent properties to households on housing benefit. Historically, private landlords in Wiltshire have been reluctant to rent to homeless households on housing benefit, so we hope that through this work we will be able to change this.

To try and prevent landlords from serving notice on tenants we intend:-

**'B1 - To develop and advertise a Wiltshire landlords accreditation scheme.'**

**'B2 - To develop initiatives to encourage private landlords to accept households who are threatened with homelessness and who are on benefits.'**

**'B1 - To set up a landlords forum that meets twice a year and links into the Wiltshire housing partnership (WHP).'**

**'B4 – To fast track housing benefit for households threatened with evictions.'**

The second main cause of homelessness in Wiltshire is parental evictions. In 2009/10, 63 households were accepted as homeless because they were asked to leave home by parents. This accounted for 23% of all homeless acceptances in 2009/10. To try and reduce the amount of parental evictions we intend:-

**'E1 - To explore ways in which we can raise greater awareness of the consequences of homelessness among school and college leavers.'**

**'E2 - To create a secondary school / college resource pack.'**

**‘E4 & E5 - To become trained in and pilot the use of the Common Assessment Framework to help with prevention and early intervention as well as safeguarding young people.’**

**‘E6 - To work with the extended services teams that work with vulnerable families in schools to identify early signs of families who are experiencing difficulties.’**

**‘C8 - To home visit all 16-24 year olds threatened with homelessness to discuss alternative housing options to prevent homelessness.’**

Finally, the third main cause of homelessness in Wiltshire is due to relationship breakdown (both violent and non violent). In 2009/10, 52 households were accepted as homeless due to a relationship breakdown, which is a reduction on previous years.

In 2007/08 Wiltshire police confirmed that 3,618 domestic abuse incidents were reported to them. Given the consensual view that only 1 in 5 incidents are actually reported to the police, it is therefore estimated that the level of domestic abuse in Wiltshire is in the region of 18,000 incidents per annum.

We can also confirm that in 2007/08 Wiltshire refuges and safe houses accommodated 147 women and 154 children, and that in the same year 50% of cases referred to Wiltshire Council children and families service were attributed to domestic abuse.

As identified in the domestic abuse strategy for Wiltshire, domestic abuse cannot be tackled in isolation and a co-ordinated partnership approach is essential. All partners should work together to prevent, intervene and reduce the impact of domestic abuse.

The safety of victims and their families has been identified as an important issue in our consultation, and as such we are looking at developing a county wide sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse to help them to stay safe in their own homes.

To try and reduce relationship breakdown levels in Wiltshire we will:-

**‘C6 - Identify through research the reasons for relationship breakdowns in Wiltshire and develop a relationship breakdown policy to assist with prevention work in this area of homelessness’**

**‘C3 - Develop a county wide sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse.’**

**‘C11 - Identify high risk victims through the engagement of the Wiltshire multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and recognise and support the role of the domestic abuse reduction support officer.’**

## **4.2 Temporary Accommodation**

In line with the national data on the reduction of homelessness, Wiltshire Council is reducing the total number of accepted homeless cases and the number of households who currently reside in temporary accommodation.

Below confirms the total number of households in temporary accommodation from the end of March from 2004/05 to 2009/10 including the latest temporary accommodation figure for Wiltshire:

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Number of households in temporary accommodation	383	330	272	204	150

The chart below confirms the total number of households in some form of temporary accommodation in our neighbouring authorities as well as our 2010 target for households in temporary accommodation. Those highlighted in blue have already met the 2010 government target.

	NOs in T/A Sept 2009	2010 Target
Wiltshire Council	149	219
BANES	26	37
Swindon	354	435
South Gloucestershire	88	132
South Somerset	171	122
Mendip	53	45
Cotswold	11	11

The standard of temporary accommodation in Wiltshire is good. 50% of the households who were consulted as part of our research confirmed that their experiences of temporary accommodation were either good or very good; however, 17% stated that their experiences were bad or very bad.

On looking into this further it was noted that 85% of the bad or very bad experiences came from households who had stayed at Hillside Hostel, which is due to be demolished during 2010 and the site used for the development of affordable housing.

Temporary accommodation in Wiltshire is provided in a variety of ways which is detailed below:-

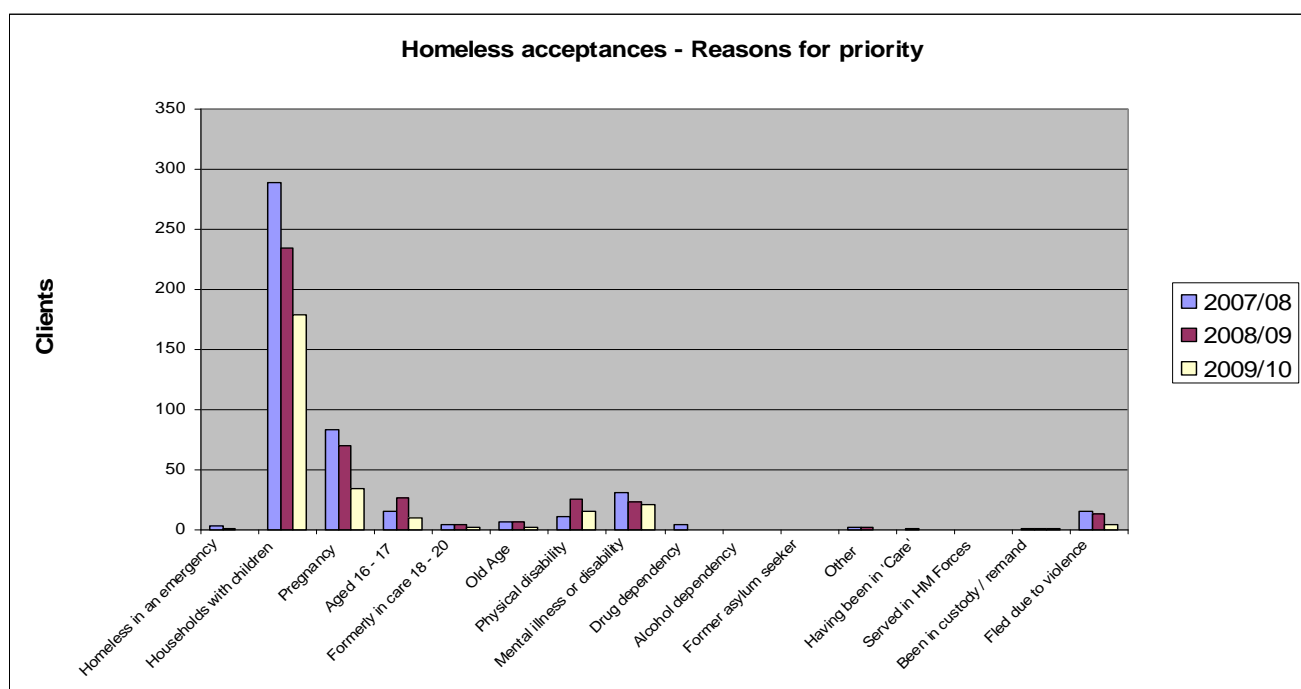
Type of accommodation	Households March 09	Households March 10
Hostel	60	38
Bed and breakfast	2	0
Private sector leasing scheme	85	86
Supported lodgings	0	0
RSL temporary accommodation	33	25
Other	24	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>150</b>

Even though we have already met the government target to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, it is still important to keep under review the availability and suitability of emergency and temporary accommodation, as well as the support needs of all households in temporary accommodation.

Again ahead of target we eliminated the use of bed and breakfast for all households, except in an emergency, and will now only use this form of accommodation as a last resort.

### 4.3 Reasons for Priority acceptances in Wiltshire

In Wiltshire, households with dependent children/pregnancy have accounted for the majority of statutory homelessness acceptances. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of 16 and 17 year olds presenting as homeless during the last few years and this is likely to be due to the change in legislation in 2002 that requires local authorities to find this group in priority. Below is a chart showing the reasons that households have been accepted as homeless over the past three years



Section three will look at a variety of individual client groups in more detail. As well as looking at the reasons for homelessness in Wiltshire it is important to understand the age profile and the household make up of those accepted as homeless. You will notice below that in 2009/10 36% of households accepted as homeless by the council were aged between 16 and 24 and 51% were aged between 25 - 44. This is consistent with the main causes of homelessness in Wiltshire which is parental evictions; therefore you would expect a high proportion of young households being accepted as homeless and termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies.

Age	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
16-24	205	192	194	97
25-44	227	241	179	139
45-59	44	32	29	27
60-64	8	3	5	2
65-74	4	2	2	3
75 + over	1	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>271</b>

It is also important to review the family make up of those accepted as homeless. It is interesting to note that the largest group of households who were accepted as homeless are female lone parents, therefore a further understanding of the reasons for parental evictions is required, as, although likely to be due to overcrowding, we have to consider that the economic climate may be having an effect in this area.

Family Make up	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Couple with children	104	120	108	92
Male lone parent	19	10	22	10
Female lone parent	217	242	174	114
Single male	85	47	50	35
Single female	52	40	41	15
All other households	12	11	14	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>271</b>

**‘C14 - To research into the reasons for parental evictions due to such incidences being well above the national average and to make recommendations on how these can be prevented.’**

**‘C15 – To research into the reasons for homelessness among 16 – 24 years and to make recommendations on preventative options.’**

When considering the main causes of homelessness it is also important to look at prevention work that stops families from needing to apply as homeless. Prevention work is one of the main tools used to help reduce homelessness in the County and below gives a breakdown of the preventions carried out in 2009 / 10.

Breakdown of homeless preventions 2009 / 2010:

Prevention	Number of cases
Prevented homelessness – Housing Advice	518
Prevented homelessness – Hostel or House in Multiple Occupation	20
Prevented homelessness – Use of prevention fund – Wilts Let	378
Prevented homelessness – Private rented with no funding	227
Prevented homelessness – Friends / family	78
Prevented homelessness - Supported accommodation	195
Prevented homelessness - Social Housing ‘Part 6 offer)	255
Prevented homelessness – Other	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>1685</b>

The main ways of preventing homeless in 2009/10 were achieved by:-

- Helping households to remain in their current accommodation by negotiating with private and registered social landlords, mortgage lenders etc., and finding practical solutions to housing difficulties through advice and assistance.

- Helping households to rent privately through various rent deposit schemes previously operated by the district councils.

Concerns were raised that these figures do not give a true picture of the actual number of households that the options team have prevented from becoming homeless. A new system has since been introduced during the first year of Wiltshire Council we recorded a total of 1685 preventions which is within top quartile performance for prevention work.

This can be shown in the end of year prevention figures as below, which also highlight future forecasted numbers:-

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of households prevented from becoming homeless	721	997	1685	1610	1750

To ensure that we are able to continue to prevent homelessness through providing advice and assistance, we have set up the following actions:

**‘C1 - To achieve charter mark accreditation for our housing advice service.’**

**‘C4 – All housing options advisors to have a generic role but to develop specialism in specific areas, e.g. domestic abuse, mental health.’**

**‘C7 – To continue to focus on front line prevention with the ambition of achieving top quartile on prevention work each year.’**

**‘C9 – To offer debt counselling, income maximisation and budgeting advice to prevent homelessness and as part of pre-tenancy work to sustain tenancies. To promote financial inclusion initiatives such as credit unions and affordable credit.’**

**‘C16 – To create an enhanced housing options service.’**

## 5.0 Section three

### 5.1 Homelessness as it affects specific client groups

#### 5.2 Black and minority ethnic households

Wiltshire has a relatively small proportion of people from black and minority ethnic groups (2.7% of the population) compared to the rest of the country (11.3% for England). Information for Wiltshire indicates that the black and minority households are not disadvantaged when it comes to being accepted as homeless as over the past two years the homeless service has accepted over 5% of applications from black and minority groups which is consistent with the proportion of black and minority groups in Wiltshire.

Although numbers are relatively small, this can in itself lead to problems for communities isolated from sources of cultural community support. It is therefore essential that the housing needs of this group are better understood in order to ensure equitable access to appropriate housing or advice service. Below gives a clear breakdown for the past three years.

Total Homeless Acceptances by ethnicity in Wiltshire	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Total white	481	449	384	250
Total black	1	6	4	3
Total Asian	0	2	5	3
Total mixed	1	2	7	12
Total other	1	4	0	1
Not stated	5	7	9	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>271</b>

We therefore intend:-

**‘A3 - To develop and implement equality impact assessments as a tool to understand the impact of services on individuals and communities and inform service development.’**

#### 5.3 Military

Military personnel constitute around 3% of Wiltshire's total population, with around 15,000 personnel stationed at sites across the county. At former district level, the proportion of military personnel ranges from 1% of the population in the west to 7% of the total population in the east area. We need to be aware of changes planned for both the army and RAF presence in Wiltshire over the next three to four years. One of these changes is to be the stepped build up in the numbers of army personnel and their families based in the Salisbury Plain area, as this is developed into one of the country's first Super Garrisons. The increases began in 2007 and should be completed by 2012.

Due to this gradual increase in military personnel in Wiltshire, along with the recent changes in housing legislation making it more accessible for military personnel to apply for social housing in the areas where they are/were stationed, it is important that we understand the potential future impact of this on the homelessness service.

Since 2006, Wiltshire has not accepted any client as homeless for the primary reason of 'having served in HM forces', however this does not mean that we have not assisted families who have gone through relationship breakdowns and in turn left army accommodation as the primary reason for priority could have been 'household with dependent children'. It is for this reason that further research is required into the needs of those who have served in HM forces.

We therefore intend:-

**'B3 - To research the needs of ex-serviceman across Wiltshire and produce housing guides for all forces leavers to help find alternative accommodation and prevent homelessness.'**

## 5.4 Rough sleepers

In November 2008 the government launched a strategy on rough sleepers and set an ambitious target of ending rough sleeping 'once and for all' by 2012. Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness. People who sleep rough are vulnerable to physical or sexual abuse, crime, drug and alcohol misuse and health problems.

Fortunately, there are few instances of people sleeping rough in Wiltshire. There are however occasional reports of people being seen sleeping in cars, parks, derelict buildings and in some rural locations of the County. Therefore, although we are not required to do so, it was agreed that we would conduct an informal rough sleeper street count which was completed on 16 December 2009 across the County. Only one rough sleeper was found in the Salisbury area; however there was evidence of rough sleeping in Trowbridge.



Below confirms the results of Wiltshire's rough sleeper counts from 2006 to 2010 based on the government's definition of people sleeping rough, which is:-

*“People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or “bashes”)”*

Results of rough sleeper counts from 2005 - 2009

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
WWDC	0	2	5	0	0
NWDC	7	8	12	0	0
Salisbury	5	5	4	3	1
Kennet	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	15	21	3	1

As with all street counts, the actual estimates provided cannot be assumed to be comprehensive, because of the hidden nature of much rough sleeping, but as they have been conducted on a reasonably consistent basis, it seems nationally and locally there is a downward trend in rough sleeping. There has been much criticism of aspects of the methodology used in the street counts (e.g. the definition of a rough sleeper and the ‘rounding down’ of estimates of less than ten to zero). However this has proven to be a national concern and not just local to Wiltshire.

There are no night shelters in Wiltshire, with the nearest being Bath and Swindon. As a result, it is likely that people who sleep rough migrate to these locations where there are facilities. We do however recognise that there may be a number of households ‘sofa surfing’ or residing with friends and family on a very temporary basis and the full extent of this is unknown.

Wiltshire Council will operate severe weather provisions for rough sleepers. The trigger for this is when the weather forecast predicts three consecutive nights with a minimum temperature of zero degrees Celsius or lower. In these cases the council will work very closely with voluntary agencies and housing providers so that rough sleepers can be brought in from the streets and be provided with emergency accommodation for the duration of the cold weather.

**‘E7 - To create a multi agency rough sleepers panel that meet regularly to discuss rough sleeper issues including cold weather provision.’**

## **5.5 Single people in housing difficulty**

We have limited information about people who are single homeless and who do not fall under the priority need category of the homelessness legislation. At our multi-agency homelessness forum, concerns have been expressed that very little assistance is available in Wiltshire for single homeless people, and there is also acknowledgement that this is often a vulnerable group due to the particular difficulties they experience.

Currently, some supported housing schemes in Salisbury are being used for single homeless people, however, following a review of the residents within all supported housing schemes in Wiltshire, it was found that many of these individuals would not have been eligible for placement had a referral been made by the Council. This is currently being addressed as we have made limited funds available to assist this client

group to secure private rented accommodation, but concerns exist that this could still lead to an increase in rough sleeping.

The council with its partners will carry out a full assessment of housing options for single people in order to determine the gaps and demand in service provision for this client group.

## **5.6 16 / 17 year olds**

The vulnerability of 16 and 17 year olds in housing need is the reason for the special status given to them under both the homelessness and children legislation. The relationship between the obligations placed on the housing department and those on children's services was the subject of a further House of Lords judgement in May 2009.

We recognise that there is considerable scope for better working between housing and children's services on this matter, so that more is done to ensure that each young person in housing difficulty is provided with support and accommodation appropriate to their circumstances. We do have some suitable supported schemes for 16 and 17 years olds in the county but as the need increases we are likely to need more. In 2008/09 we accepted a total of twenty seven 16 and 17 year olds and this decreased in 2009/10 to ten.

**'C10 – Reduce the use of temporary accommodation by housing and children services through better homeless prevention and early identification of children and families at risk.'**

**'C12 – Create service level agreements with all social housing providers to help reduce the number of B&B placements made by DCE and to ensure that all young people who are owed a duty are accommodated in suitable accommodation.'**

**'E3 – To have a shared commitment from children's services and housing regarding planning for the accommodation and support needs of care leavers and 16/17 year olds.'**

## **5.7 Teenage parents**

Teenage pregnancy rates in Wiltshire are lower than for the South West and England, but have been rising in recent years. The rate of teenage pregnancies in this area has increased from 28.7 (aged <17) per 1000 young women in 2002, to 30.3 per 1000 in 2008. In actual terms there are now approximately 300 teenage pregnancies per year in Wiltshire, leading to 140 births a year.

In order for Wiltshire to meet its national teenage pregnancy strategy targets there needs to be a reduction in teenage pregnancies from the current 1 in 30 young women becoming pregnant down to 1 in 62, which will be a very difficult target to meet, as eleven of Wiltshire's wards are teenage pregnancy hotspots and represent 23% of pregnancies in Wiltshire.

There are also national targets to get 60% of young mothers into education, employment and/or training (EET); and at present in Wiltshire 67% of young mothers are *not* in any kind of education, employment or training (NEET). This indicates that

there is a need for further targeted floating support to enable these young mothers to attain the skills not only to be able to successfully manage their lives and parenting but also to be able to access training to get work.

Significant gaps in the provisions for homeless teenage parents were identified in the 2003 financial assessment of the council's grant allocation: most notably, that there were no accommodation based supporting people services for teenage parents. Since then, 18 units of supported 'mother and baby' housing have been made available, and the teenage partnership board has incorporated other partners and partnership boards in order to bring about a joint approach to addressing the needs of this group.

However, due to recent changes in the provision requirements for homeless teenage parents, and most particularly the shift from a 'mother-and-baby' prioritisation to a family-based focus more inclusive of the child's father, the Council is currently undergoing a full review of its provisions for homeless teenage parents.

## **5.8 People with drug and alcohol problems**

The statutory figures for homeless acceptances due to the vulnerability of the applicant or family member to alcohol or drug dependency are, in Wiltshire as across other English rural authorities, very low: 1.02% of total acceptances in 2006/7; 0% in 2007/8; and 0.49% in 2008/9. These figures, however, are likely to reflect the definition and categorisation of statutory homeless dependency need groups, within which homeless households without dependent children are much less likely to be owed a full statutory duty than those with children, and also in which those households with dependent children are accepted as a priority as such, without requiring the further recording of drug or alcohol issues among applicants.

The Strategic Assessment of Alcohol Harm in Wiltshire describes the impact of alcohol misuse across the County, detailing current services as well as identifying gaps in provision. The Strategic Assessment informed the identification of priorities for action by partner agencies in Wiltshire and led to the Wiltshire Alcohol Strategy and Implementation Plan 2009-11. This plan sets out provisions for the prevention of alcohol harm and for early intervention in order to prevent homelessness among those who have problems with alcohol and drug misuse. These are separated into 'prevention' and 'intervention' initiatives, including in the former case educational awareness programmes and, in the latter, staff training and the provision of early support for those identified as at risk from substance harm.

The directory of drug and alcohol services (6<sup>th</sup> edition) provides details of advisory, counselling, housing and drop-in services available across the county, catering for both individuals and families affected by drug and alcohol issues and at risk of homelessness.

Following the recommendations of the Bannan Report, the facilities for drug and alcohol supported accommodation in Wiltshire have improved, with the provision of seven rooms at Damascus House designated as 28-day direct access accommodation.

Ruth House accepts housing referrals for people on a script, but the absence of any wet treatment accommodation in the County remains a subject of criticism. This would be a supported hostel for short term homeless individuals in the process and committed to

combating their addiction to alcohol. Both the Wiltshire supporting people partnership and the drug and alcohol action team (DAAT) have described a lack of support available for homeless individuals who are not yet engaged in dry treatment programmes. Past attempts to introduce a wet house in the County have encountered resistance, and there remains no provision for this kind of support in Wiltshire.

As identified by the former Wiltshire supporting people partnership, and still relevant today, there are several areas of improvement required in the provision of support to people with drug and alcohol problems who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. These are:

1. The needs of people who misuse alcohol should be considered separately to those of drug misuse as their needs are often very different.
2. The provision of wet treatment accommodation should be re-examined.
3. Specialist services should be available to those with multiple needs ('dual/multiple diagnoses').
4. There is a need for improved links between housing and treatment providers in order to help people moving on from residential rehabilitation to maintain a treatment programme and access support.

Rates for alcohol-related admissions to hospital were estimated to be 1,121 per 100,000 of the population in 2007/08. These admission rates are increasing in all areas of the county and are predicted to continue to do so. They are strongly correlated with deprivation levels. Compared to the national average, women in Wiltshire have higher levels of overall mortality attributed to alcohol. Estimates suggest that there is a lower proportion of drug users in Wiltshire compared with the South West and England populations. The greatest proportion of drug misuse-related admissions is for intentional self-poisoning by a range of drugs (including over the counter medications).

## **5.9 Ex-offenders**

The statutory figures for homelessness amongst ex-offenders often appear very low. Mental health issues, substance misuse and relationship breakdown are more likely to be recorded as the priority reason for acceptance as homeless, rather than having left custody.

To get a realistic view of homelessness amongst offenders, figures for housing status on entering custody have been used, as these enable a more accurate picture of housing need.

By recording the housing status on reception into custody, the prison service is able to assist offenders with housing issues, such as housing benefit claims, the termination of tenancies, unattended animals etc..

The existing national accommodation target for placing ex-offenders into settled accommodation at the end of sentence, order or licence is 79%.

<b>2008 - 09</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>YTD % (total)</b>	<b>NFA</b>	<b>NFA %</b>	<b>TEMP</b>	<b>TEMP %</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>15</b>	7.39%	<b>1</b>	6.67%	<b>0</b>	0.00%
<b>North</b>	<b>22</b>	10.84%	<b>3</b>	13.64%	<b>3</b>	13.64%
<b>South</b>	<b>53</b>	26.11%	<b>4</b>	7.55%	<b>2</b>	3.77%
<b>West</b>	<b>113</b>	55.67%	<b>17</b>	15.04%	<b>6</b>	5.31%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12.32%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5.42%</b>

The above table shows figures for offenders (adults 18yrs+) who declared themselves to be of no fixed abode (NFA), or living in temporary accommodation (TEMP), on entering custody within Wiltshire (2008 – 2009).

The implications of offenders entering custody for short sentences (6 months or less) is that realistically there is little or no time to deal in-custody with any housing needs, other than attempting to secure the continuation of an existing tenancy, or terminating tenancies.

<b>2009 - 10</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>YTD %</b>	<b>NFA</b>	<b>NFA %</b>	<b>TEMP</b>	<b>TEMP %</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>6</b>	5.13%	<b>1</b>	16.67%	<b>0</b>	0.00%
<b>North</b>	<b>50</b>	42.74%	<b>11</b>	22.00%	<b>2</b>	4.00%
<b>South</b>	<b>12</b>	10.26%	<b>2</b>	16.67%	<b>1</b>	8.33%
<b>West</b>	<b>49</b>	41.88%	<b>10</b>	20.41%	<b>3</b>	6.12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20.51%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5.13%</b>

The table above shows the figures (year to date October 2009) for the current reporting period. If the monthly average remains the same for the rest of the year, the numbers coming into custody would be similar to last year, but the NFAs would increase by over 40%. The north area is already showing a marked increase in the numbers declaring themselves without a permanent address.

The South West Accommodation Gateway (SWAG) was a pilot project, the delivery of which was a Government commitment through the action and delivery plans to reduce re-offending. The South West was selected to run this national pilot due to the particular challenges it faces in relation to affordable housing and the opportunities that the well developed partnerships in the South West presented. The Dorset and Plymouth Gateways began operation in September 2006 and Bristol in February 2007.

There is a possibility of the project being extended to the whole of the South West, but with the current financial constraints, there have been no announcements regarding this to date.

There has been a great deal of research into the links between accommodation and the reduction of re-offending. The social exclusion unit report on which the original Gateway project was based suggested that being in employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half and having stable accommodation reduces the risk by a

fifth. Similarly, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 1996 found in research covering four prisons that two thirds of ex-prisoners who had no satisfactory accommodation on release went on to re-offend within 12 months, whereas only a quarter of those in suitable accommodation did so.

It should also be noted that the literature suggests that accommodation is part of a complex mix of offender needs in this area; and this itself points to a requirement for gateway and multi-agency projects to ensure that appropriate support is available, either through the gateway or from other services.

**‘C5 - To develop and implement an intervention procedure for leavers from Erlestoke Prison and to review the procedures for Guys Marsh’**

## **5.10 Physical disabilities and learning difficulties**

From the Census 2001, the percentage of people with learning difficulties is 2.34% of the total population; therefore the number of people in Wiltshire aged 18 and over with learning disabilities is now approx 8,270. By 2012, it is predicted that this will increase to 10,418.

It has proved difficult to obtain information about the levels of demand for adapted housing. The Homes4Wiltshire register identifies households who have requested a need for an adapted property. We currently have 645 households on the register who have identified a need for some sort of adapted property, but not all of these will require wheelchair housing (housing which is intended for occupation by somebody who uses a wheelchair inside the house for most of the time).

As a working hypothesis it has been assumed that those households containing a family member with a disability that have stated the need for a fully adapted property, which is 99 households, are likely to be households that have a member of the family who needs to use a wheelchair.

To ensure we are able to meet the needs of households with disabilities we have agreed the following objectives:-

**‘A2 – For Housing to become part of the transition steering group for young disabled people to better understand current and future needs.’**

## **5.11 Households with mental health problems**

In 2009/10 a total of 21 people with mental health problems were accepted as homeless, this was a reduction from 23 in 2008/09 and from 31 in 2006/07. During the strategy consultation, stakeholders identified difficulties in accessing statutory services for dual-diagnosis clients. We therefore need to look at and improve our working procedures with key agencies that cover mental health clients presenting as homeless.

Where people live has an impact on their mental health needs. The social exclusion unit report “Mental Health and Social Exclusion” states:

*“Stable, appropriate housing is critical for people to work and take part in community life. A lack of stability or unsatisfactory housing can lead to worsening mental health. People with mental health problems are particularly likely to have vulnerable housing:”*

People with mental health problems are:

- One and a half times more likely to live in rented housing.
- Twice as likely to be dissatisfied with their accommodation.
- Four times more likely to say that their health has been affected by their housing.

A lack of suitable housing not only impacts people's mental health but may also result in them being delayed in hospital, if that is where they have been treated, leading to a greater reliance on services and staff, and less independence. Through Homes4Wiltshire, clients, with a priority need because of mental health problems and who have been in supported accommodation and are ready to move, will be allocated the highest priority banding to ensure that they are able to access permanent independent housing quickly.

### **5.12 Specialist mental health housing team**

The specialist mental health housing team has been created in order to improve communication between health, adult care and housing. The aim of the service is to ensure that people in receipt of mental health services receive the appropriate support in order to either access supported or permanent accommodation, or to maintain their existing accommodation. The main responsibilities of the team are to provide support to individuals with accommodation issues, improve and develop systems for referral and signposting, identify shortfalls and improve access to supported accommodation by increasing capacity and by aiding the move-on process. The team currently focuses on the north and east of the county, but plans are being developed to roll the service out to the rest of the county.

### **5.13 Mental health recovery house**

In line with best practice guidance and our local mental health and supporting people strategy, Wiltshire Council department of community services are planning on extending our current provision by commissioning a new 24 hour short term accommodation based care and support service for approximately 10 adults with mental health issues.

This new service will hopefully become operational from April 2011 and it will provide recovery orientated specialist mental health care and support in a supported living setting for adults with functional mental health problems and it will facilitate the transition to community living for people who would otherwise enter or remain in long term residential care placements or have repeated admissions to hospital.

**‘E9 - In order to promote effective discharge from hospital for people with mental health problems we will develop and agree a hospital discharge protocol to ensure that their accommodation needs are addressed at an early stage.’**

## 5.14 Gypsies and Travellers

Wiltshire Council operates 1 transit and 6 permanent sites. The current level of provision accommodates 169 semi-permanent residents and a further 48 residents – assuming full occupancy – at the transit site; a total of 217 gypsies and travellers overall. The last caravan count in Wiltshire was completed in August 2009 and counted a total of 314 of which 35 were on unauthorised encampments without planning permission on land.

It is estimated that there are fewer than 16,000 gypsy and traveller households living in caravans in England, of these around 4,000 are still on unauthorised sites. The government is keen to address the serious shortfall of gypsy and traveller accommodation through the housing and planning system.

The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to carry out assessments of gypsy and traveller accommodation needs and to address these in housing strategies. Due to the lack of specific needs information about gypsies and travellers the Council is currently developing a gypsy and traveller strategy encompassing all its services to gypsies and travellers, which will be published in May 2010.

## 6.0 Section four

### 6.1 Current picture

### 6.2 Housing register

March 2009 saw the launch of Wiltshire Council's new choice based lettings system called Homes4Wiltshire. Demand for affordable housing in the County is high. In April 2010 there were 10,654 households on the housing register, of which 227 were in the highest priority band for re-housing.



Housing register split by band

Band	Households
Platinum	227
Gold plus	203
Gold	2,209
Silver	3,048
Bronze	4,987
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,654</b>

The ethnic origin of the households on the waiting list in April 2010 can be broken down as follows:-

Ethnic Origin			
Asian – Other	42	Not given	1166
Asian/Asian British Bangladeshi	16	Other	34
Asian/Asian British Indian	17	White	188
Asian/Asian British Pakistani	3	White British	8710
Black\Black British African	53	White Irish	37
Black\Black British Caribbean	30	White Other	256
Black\Black British Other	16		
Chinese	11		
Mixed Other	10		
Mixed White and Asian	13	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,654</b>
Mixed White and Black African	12		
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	40		

The table below breaks down the 10,654 households on the housing register by the size of the property needed. It clearly identifies that the highest need in Wiltshire is for one bedroom accommodation:

Bedroom need	Households	%
One	5859	55%
Two	3200	30%
Three	1375	13%
Four	220	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,654</b>	<b>100%</b>

Wiltshire has not yet seen the increases, either in the number of applications for affordable housing or in the number of homeless households, anticipated as a result of the economic downturn.

In 2008/09 2,048 homes were let to households on the housing register, this was a reduction on the previous year of 113. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to the 31 March 2010, 2052 lets have been achieved: this is an increase from last year of just 4 lets.

There is a huge gap between the total number of lets compared to the total number of households on the register. From the information gleaned, it is evident that there is a long wait for households to be housed from the register, as demand far outstrips supply. To assist, homeless households who are accepted as homeless will be given the highest priority band for re-housing.

Homeless households waiting to be housed from the housing register were allocated 23% of void properties in 2008/09 and only 15% in 2009/10.

#### **Total lets compared to homeless lets:**

	2008/09	2009/10
Total lets	2048	2052
Council to homeless households	131	64
Housing association lets to homeless households	336	245
<b>Total lets to homeless households</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>309</b>

### **6.3 Affordable housing**

There is a shortage of suitable, affordable accommodation for those in housing need. Owner occupation and renting in the private sector is beyond the means of a great number of households. Homelessness can only be prevented if suitable affordable accommodation is made available.

Social housing in Wiltshire is provided by 30 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), three of which are local stock transfer RSLs: Sarsen, Selwood and Westlea.

Wiltshire Council still holds social housing stock in the south of the county, which is managed by the housing management team. They manage around 5,400 tenanted properties and 400 leasehold properties. In November 2006 tenants voted for management of their homes to be retained by the Council in a stock transfer ballot.

During 2008/09 Wiltshire delivered 583 new affordable homes (against a target of 479) and in 2009/10 we successfully delivered 564 against an annual target for 2009 /10 of 554.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Forecast 2010/11	Forecast 2011/12
Number of affordable homes delivered	636	583	564	590	610
Net additional homes provided	2670	1881	Unknown at this stage	2565	No future forecast
% of affordable housing	24%	31%			
Total number of affordable housing lets	2161	2048	2052	2100	2200

It would be impossible for us to meet all the need for housing through building new affordable homes, therefore in response to this high demand we are required to look at alternatives, and because of the high percentage of private rented accommodation in Wiltshire this was considered a priority.

#### 6.4 Private rented stock in Wiltshire

The percentage of homes in the private rented sector (including MOD properties) varies across Wiltshire but overall is higher than the UK average.

Area	Number of private rented	Percentage	Total
North	5,236	9.8%	53,500
South	6,649	14.08%	47,408
West	4,550	9.3%	49,407
East	3,778	12.7%	29,565
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,213</b>	<b>11.24%</b>	<b>179,880</b>

Wiltshire has set up initiatives to make better use of the private sector. The aim is to make it more accessible to tenants by:-

- Launching the Wilts Let policy to assist households into the private rented sector.
- Improving liaison with private landlords.
- Working more closely with housing benefit to ensure benefit is paid promptly.

#### 6.5 Temporary accommodation

Wiltshire Council has a total of 177 units of accommodation which are provided in a variety of ways. We currently have a total of 93 private sector lease properties, 85 of which are in the south; 53 units provided by our registered social landlords; and 31 which are owned and managed by Wiltshire Council.

Below shows the breakdown of the types of temporary accommodation that are available for the housing options team to use for households who have been accepted as homeless.

Provider	Accommodation Type									Disabled Bungalows			Totals
	1 Bed H	2Bed H	3Bed H	4Bed H	1Bed F	2 Bed F	3Bed F	Hostel Rm	C-Pad	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	
<b>South</b>													
PSL	1	32	17	3	8	10	1	11			1	1	85
<b>East</b>													
Wiltshire						1							1
RSL								23					23
<b>West</b>													
PSL	1	3	3		1								8
Wiltshire								28	1			1	30
RSL					4	6							10
<b>North</b>													
RSL						20							20
<b>TOTALS</b>	2	35	20	3	13	37	1	62	1	0	1	2	177

Although we have 177 units of accommodation, some households take up more than one unit as it depends on the size of the family and which units are available at the time the household is made homeless.

The standard of temporary accommodation is generally good, however following our satisfaction survey of clients who have stayed in temporary accommodation we had some negative remarks made about Hillside Hostel in Warminster. This hostel had fallen into disrepair and only repairs that were needed due to health and safety were being carried out. This hostel was decommissioned in March 2010.

Due to the low demand for temporary accommodation in the Devizes area we have agreed with Ridgeway Housing that they will dispose of the 6 units of temporary accommodation at 28A St Margarets Mead, Marlborough and that this will be replaced with 6 units of resettlement support to be provided by Ridgeway using the support funds from St Margarets Mead. This is anticipated to take place in June 2010.

The availability and suitability of emergency and temporary accommodation will be kept under review to ensure standards are maintained and appropriate support is being provided. An action plan detailing the number of temporary accommodation units required in future years will be developed.

## 6.6 Supported accommodation

Supported accommodation is available for a range of client groups and should be used to develop or maintain households' independence; it is intended to allow more people to live independently in the community and to minimise tenancy breakdown and homelessness once re-housed on a permanent basis.

All supported schemes should be for a temporary period and ideally for no more than two years.

Below is a breakdown of the temporary supported accommodation placements available in the County.

Client Group	Total Capacity	RSL	Voluntary Sector
Homelessness	321	189	132
Domestic Violence	34	23	11
Drugs and Alcohol	10	0	10
Offenders	19	19	0
Teenage mothers	21	15	6
Total	405	246	159

### Homelessness

There are a large number of supported housing units available in Wiltshire, covering a range of client groups including individuals with mental health issues, learning difficulties, and complex needs; and 16/17 and 18/24 year olds who have support needs. It is important that a more in depth review is completed to understand what is required in this area in order to meet current and future needs. We are aware that the schemes currently in place are not being used to their full potential as some high level support schemes have clients with low level needs and some have clients who have been resident for many years without moving on.

There is also the additional concern that we do not have a fair distribution of supported housing schemes across the county, as the majority are located in Salisbury, and often clients with support needs from other areas in the county do not want to move from their local support networks.

### Domestic Abuse

There are four women's refuges in Wiltshire that between them provide a total of 34 bed spaces. The demand for this type of supported accommodation is high, and the refuges have limited vacancies throughout the year. The refuge service provides safe, emergency, temporary accommodation to women and their children experiencing domestic abuse. They provide emotional support for women and their children, assistance and advice on benefits, legal and housing issues as well as assistance with re-settlement from refuge accommodation.

## **Drugs and Alcohol**

We have 10 placements for homeless households who have experienced problems with substance misuse and who are abstinent from drugs or alcohol and who will benefit from support to remain abstinent. There are two schemes in Wiltshire, one called KASH in Salisbury that has 4 bed spaces and a further 6 are provided by Acorn House in Trowbridge. These schemes provide advice and support as well as advising clients on how to manage and maintain their accommodation by offering information and advice on benefits, budgeting and debt management.

## **Ex-Offenders**

We have one scheme in Wiltshire that is used for medium/high risk offenders and this is based in Trowbridge. This is not a scheme that we refer into but we are involved with assisting with move on accommodation when residents of the scheme are ready to be moved to permanent accommodation. Due to the high level support offered there are often difficulties with finding suitable accommodation for ex-offenders who have lower support needs.

## **Teenage mothers**

As previously mentioned we have 18 placements for young mothers, located in Salisbury, Trowbridge and Calne. All schemes offer personal and practical support to young mothers to help cope with the first time experiences of motherhood. They also encourage preparation for independent living to help clients manage their move into permanent accommodation, ensuring they are able to sustain their tenancy and prevent homelessness. One of the gaps identified in this area is the need for young parent accommodation to help keep young families together when made homeless rather than splitting them up and only supporting the mother and child.

## 7.0 Section five

### 7.1 Gaps in provision

During the consultation process and the development of the homelessness strategy the following gaps in provision were identified:-

- Direct access accommodation in Wiltshire
- Provision for a wet house – during recovery
- Housing accommodation and support for 16 – 17 year olds
- Provision for homeless teenage parents
- A central database that hosts all agencies that assist homeless, or threatened with homelessness, households
- Improved links with the prisons to ensure a co-ordinated approach and planned moves into suitable accommodation
- Support in private rented accommodation
- Common referral system into supported housing
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of resources for non priority households
- More move on accommodation and support
- Improved multi-agency working
- Link officers for all client groups
- School/education programme
- Host families
- Enhanced housing options

## 8.0 Section six

### 8.1 Future trends

#### 8.2 Temporary accommodation

We currently have 177 units of temporary accommodation but with the removal of the 6 units in Marlborough we will have a total of 171 units from June 2010. Based on the current number of households in temporary accommodation we have more units than we are able to fill. We have already reduced the number of private sector leased properties (PSLs) by 30 in the last 12 months and will continue to gradually reduce over the coming year. A full review of temporary accommodation will be undertaken to ensure we have the right temporary accommodation in the right place and at a suitable standard.

Below is a table confirming the current picture as well as a forecast for future provision. With the increase in prevention, we anticipate a reduction in homeless acceptances and in turn a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation. However it is unlikely that we will totally eliminate homelessness and we anticipate a continued need for around 100 units of temporary accommodation.

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Number of households in some form of temporary accommodation	265	179	150	136	120	100	100

April 2009 saw the total elimination of the use of bed and breakfast for homeless families in Wiltshire which was a huge success. Due to our increase in prevention work we have managed to prevent any household from being placed in bed and breakfast and anticipate that in the future we will not require the use of this type of temporary accommodation.

#### 8.3 Prevention of Homelessness

During the last couple of years the housing options staff have embraced the homelessness prevention agenda which led to a substantial change in the traditional culture of homelessness work and a structure change that was implemented from April 2009.

All households are interviewed by a housing options advisor and practical steps are discussed to help prevent homelessness. Following recent consultation and focus groups, further preventive actions have been identified and, once implemented, we hope to see a continued increase in prevention.

Below shows our anticipated trend for the numbers of households we hope to prevent from becoming homeless in the coming years.

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Number of households prevented from becoming as homeless	721	997	1685	1610	1750	1820	1935

#### 8.4 Acceptance of homelessness

With the increase in prevention work, we hope to see a continued decline in households being accepted as homeless, due to early intervention and alternative options being found. This should not be seen as gate keeping by the authority as we would always want to ensure that homelessness is the last option for any household and will strive to assist households to remain in their own homes or to find alternative, suitable accommodation.

There is a concern that we have not yet felt the impact of the economic downturn and we also need to be aware that homelessness could potentially increase when there is an economic upturn. The main form of prevention work involves using the private rented sector, and the housing options team has 'benefited' from the economic downturn, due to the fact that landlords who have been unable to sell their properties have approached the council to find assistance in letting those properties. When there is an upturn in the economy, private landlords may choose to sell their properties or to increase the rents above the local housing allowance rate. This will have a severe impact on homeless households who will not be able to afford to rent in the private sector, and on the service as the demand for temporary accommodation will increase.

Without considering any potential downturn or upturn in the private sector we have predicted a steady decline in applications being received and accepted, which also mirrors the reduction in temporary accommodation.

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Number of households accepted as homeless	470	409	271	272	240	200	200

# Appendix one

## Stakeholders who took part in the review

Age concern  
Alabare  
Amber  
Bournemouth Churches Housing Association  
Breakthrough  
Bromford Housing  
Citizen Advice Bureau  
Community 4  
Community team for people with learning disabilities  
Community mental health team  
Connexions  
Defence Estate Housing  
Drug and Homelessness Initiative  
Department of adult services  
Department of children services  
Government Office of the South West  
Housing staff  
Jephson Housing  
Job centre plus  
Knightstone Housing  
National Health Service  
Probation  
Ridgeway Community Housing  
Salisbury Trust for the Homeless  
Sanctuary Housing  
Sarsen Housing  
Selwood Housing  
Service users  
Shape Housing  
Shelter  
Sovereign Housing  
Stonham Housing  
Specialist drug & alcohol service  
Splitz  
Supporting people  
Vine for Pat  
Westlea Housing Association  
Wiltshire accommodation support services for young people  
Wiltshire advice partnership  
Wiltshire police  
Wilts Racial Equality Council  
Wiltshire Rural Housing Association

# Appendix two

## Consultation process

In drawing up this strategy, we have sought to be as inclusive as possible, and to learn from the experiences and feedback of stakeholders and service users.

Wiltshire Council's first homelessness strategy has been produced following extensive consultation with service users, service providers, housing staff and other stakeholders.

We achieved a balance of partner and service user input by:

- Using a postal survey and focus groups to consult with residents of temporary accommodation
- Holding a focus group with young people who are being accommodated by supported housing providers
- Using a postal survey to consult with households who have been permanently re-housed through the new Homes4Wiltshire system; with households who were prevented from becoming homeless through our advice and prevention service; and with households who used the new Wilts Let scheme
- Hosting four stakeholders' conferences across Wiltshire attended by supported housing providers, voluntary sector workers, housing staff, registered social landlords, and other staff at Wiltshire Council with links to housing, in order to identify unmet needs and to consider options for service improvement.
- Providing regular updates and opportunities to engage at each stage of the strategy at all homelessness forums held quarterly across the County
- Holding team meetings with housing staff, to capture their views on the service currently provided and their ideas on new ways of working

After reflecting on the findings of the consultation, a multi agency Homelessness Strategy group was set up. This group agreed five key strategic priorities and the set of actions that will support their achievement.

Stakeholders were then invited to comment on the strategic priorities and draft action plan to ensure the homelessness strategy continues to have widespread support.

# Appendix three

## **Delivering our Priorities and Monitoring**

Our priorities have been used as a structure for the action plan which is included in this strategy. The implementation of this strategy will be the responsibility of the Wiltshire Housing Liaison Group. This is a multi agency group that meets quarterly across the County and is linked into the Wiltshire family of partnerships. They will ensure the delivery of the priorities set out in the action plan and this will include monitoring the progress of new and existing working groups that will be working on new projects.

The homelessness strategy group will continue to meet bi-annually to review and monitor the action plan which will be updated annually.

# Appendix four

## Equality Impact Assessment Template Homelessness Strategy

### ***Stage 1: Screening for Relevance***

**Name of the Strategy / Policy / Procedure / Practice**

Homelessness Strategy

**Author;**

Housing Strategy & Support Team

**Name:**

**Job title and directorate:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**

**Does the strategy / policy / procedure / practice require an equality impact assessment (EIA)?**

**1. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice and how do these fit in with the wider aims of the organisation?**

Purpose: to understand and provide for the needs of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness in Wiltshire. The strategic priorities of this homelessness strategy are to:

- Improve information about the accessing of accommodation for both customers and agencies.
- Improve access and support for all clients with a particular focus on renting privately.
- Continue to improve the prevention of homelessness through a comprehensive advice service and an effective range of housing options for customers.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing and promote choice.
- Provide effective partnerships and improve communications and publicity.

These fit into the following organisational goals:

- High quality, low cost, customer-focused services;
- Local, open, transparent decision-making;
- Working together to support Wiltshire's communities, building social capital;
- Being inclusive and supporting others.

**2. How will these aims affect our statutory duty to:**

1. Promote equality of opportunity – enabling homeless people to improve life chances.
2. Eliminate discrimination esp. indirect discrimination against people with complex needs / teenage parents / Gypsies and Travellers / the LGBT community / people with mental health issues and/or drug and/or alcohol dependencies / socially excluded groups.

3. Community relations are of course key to social housing – encouraging communication between communities and positive attitudes.
4. Encourage participation of disabled people – WSUN has been involved in identifying needs, there will be the setting up of provision for participation in housing issues, and the homeless strategy aims to specifically address the needs of disabled homeless people.
5. Protect and promote human rights – HRA duty to provide (accommodation) support to asylum seekers; to provide equitable treatment for minority groups inc. Gypsies and Travellers.

**3. Are there any aspects of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice, including how it is delivered, or accessed, that could contribute to inequality? This should relate to all areas of our statutory duties.**

N/a – this strategy is intended to enable equality in homelessness provision and should not contribute to inequality.

**4. Will the strategy / policy / procedure / practice have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including members of particular communities and groups? What evidence do you have for this?**

The strategy aims to have a positive impact upon the lives of homeless people in Wiltshire, including members of BME communities and disabled people. As such, various issues have been identified as requiring attention:

Evidence:

1. Identified need for better homelessness provision for people with complex needs – current lack of temporary accommodation able to cater for complex needs ('dual/multiple diagnosis' clients)
2. Teenage parent accommodation (mother and baby units) currently under-privileging baby's father.
3. Strategy provides for continued monitoring of BME provision to ensure equitable treatment.
4. Links to Gypsy and Traveller Strategy (forthcoming) in order to address homelessness provision for these communities.

**5. Are particular communities or groups likely to have different needs, experiences and attitudes in relation to the strategy / policy / procedure / practice?**

1. Disabled people and people with mental health needs likely to have different needs in terms of temporary and supported accommodation.
2. Gypsy and Traveller communities (different housing requirements)
3. LGBT communities (increased risks of homelessness)
4. Young people, esp 16-17 year olds (different supported/temporary housing requirements; different opportunities for preventing homelessness).
5. People with drug and/or alcohol dependencies (different supported/temporary housing requirements; increased risk of homelessness).
6. Pregnant women and young mothers/fathers (different housing requirements)
7. People who have suffered domestic violence (different housing and support requirements)

**Is an EIA required?**


The strategy / policy / procedure / practice is assessed as			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HIGH Relevance, therefore a full EIA will be done by 30th March 2010</li> </ul>			
<b>Author of Screening for Relevance</b>			
Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature:
Sarah Hartley	Housing Strategy & Support	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	
<b>Director Level Sign-off (if EIA will not be done)</b>			
Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature:

## Stage 2: Full Assessment

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### Step 1– scoping the equality impact assessment (EIA)

<b>1.1. Name of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice</b>
Homelessness Strategy
<b>1.2. What are the main aims, purpose and outcomes of strategy / policy / procedure / practice and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation?</b>
<p>Purpose: to understand and provide for the needs of homeless people and people at risk of homelessness in Wiltshire. The strategic priorities of this homelessness strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve information about the accessing of accommodation for both customers and agencies.</li> <li>- Improve access and support for all clients with a particular focus on renting privately.</li> <li>- Continue to improve the prevention of homelessness through a comprehensive advice service and having an effective range of housing options for customers.</li> <li>- Increase the supply of affordable housing and promote choice.</li> <li>- Provide effective partnerships and improve communications and publicity.</li> </ul> <p>These fit into the following organisational goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality, low cost, customer-focused services;</li> <li>• Local, open, transparent decision-making;</li> <li>• Working together to support Wiltshire's communities, building social capital;</li> <li>• Being inclusive and supporting others</li> </ul>
<b>1.3. List the main activities relating to the strategy / policy / procedure / practice and identify who is likely to benefit from it</b>
The main activities under the strategy are:

- Exploring current and previous trends in levels of homelessness;
- Identifying the causes of homelessness within Wiltshire;
- Gauging current service provision for homeless households;
- Identifying gaps in the provision of current services.

Those who benefit from it will be:

- Homeless people and people at risk of homelessness in Wiltshire;
- Wiltshire Council in developing the strategy to combat homelessness;
- Other partner agencies because they will work within a common framework to prevent homelessness and improve provisions in temporary accommodation;
- Staff working with homeless people/those at risk of homelessness because they will have clear guidance as a result of the strategy.

**What do you already know about the relevance of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice?  
What are the main issues you need to consider?**

**1.4. What data, research and other evidence or information is available which will be relevant to this EIA?**

- Preventing and responding to homelessness is an issue that needs to be addressed nationally and locally.

The government is committed to reducing homelessness and has set a number of targets / measures to reduce homelessness and to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation. Wiltshire has either met or is on track to meet these targets. These include:-

- Reduce, or sustain the reduction of, the levels of rough sleeping by two thirds from the level recorded in 1998;
- Avoid the long term use of bed & breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children and for households with a pregnant woman;
- By 2010 to have 16 and 17 year olds accommodated in bed & breakfast accommodation only in exceptional circumstances;
- Halve (from the level recorded in December 2005) the number of households placed in temporary accommodation by December 2010;
- Each year reduce the level of homelessness acceptances against the three main causes of homelessness in the area, from the level of the previous year.

All of the above data, research and other evidence gathered have informed the developments of the strategy. Evidence of this can be provided through

- statistical data analysis
- qualitative data / research analysis

**1.5. What further data or information do you need to carry out the assessment?**

As the strategy is implemented, further data and information needs will be identified so that future impact assessments can be strengthened.

## Step 2 – Involvement, Consultation and Partnerships

<b>2.1.</b>	
<b>Equality target group</b>	<b>Briefly describe what you did, with whom, when and where. Please provide a brief summary of the responses gained and links to relevant documents, as well as any actions.</b>
<b>Age</b>	Wiltshire accommodation support services for young people; Age Concern; Connexions;
<b>Disability</b>	WSUN; Community team for people with learning disabilities; Community mental health team
<b>Gender</b>	
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	
<b>Race</b>	Wilts Racial Equality Council
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Wilts Racial Equality Council
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	
<b>Human rights</b>	
<b>Other</b>	
<b>2.2. If consultation and involvement of specific groups did not take place, please state why</b>	
Involvement / Consultation with specific equality groups other than 'Age', 'Disability' and 'Race/Religion' has not been directly undertaken as yet because the strategy sets a <u>broad framework</u> which reflects a whole range of relevant legislation, educational guidance and policies.	

<b>2.3. What do previous consultations show about the potential take-up of any resulting activities or services?</b>
<p>In the development of the strategy, consultation with partner agencies took place during a full review of homelessness in Wiltshire which included information gathering days and consultations with service users, stakeholders and local agencies.</p> <p>We achieved a balance of partner and service user input by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using a postal survey and focus groups to consult with residents of temporary accommodation including in the latter case provision of physical access to meetings for disabled people and communication support for deaf or hard of hearing people.</li> <li>Holding a focus group with young people who are being accommodated by supported housing providers, which included the provision of physical access to meetings for disabled people and communication support for deaf or hard of hearing people, and access to information for people who speak English as a second language.</li> <li>Using a postal survey to consult with households who have been permanently re-housed through the new Homes4Wiltshire system; with households who were prevented from becoming homeless through our advice and prevention service; and with households who used the new Wilts Let scheme.</li> <li>Hosting four stakeholders' conferences across Wiltshire attended by supported housing providers, voluntary sector workers, housing staff, registered social landlords, and other staff at Wiltshire Council with links to housing, in order to identify unmet needs and to consider options for service improvement.</li> </ul>

- Providing regular updates and opportunities to engage at each stage of the strategy at all homelessness forums held quarterly across the County.
- Holding team meetings with housing staff, to capture their views on the service currently provided and their ideas on new ways of working.

**2.4. How are external partners involved, or how do you intend to involve external partners, in delivering the aims of this strategy / policy / procedure / practice? (if applicable)**

The following external partners were involved in the review of homelessness:

Age concern  
 Alabare  
 Amber  
 Bournemouth Churches Housing Association  
 Breakthrough  
 Bromford Housing  
 Citizen Advice Bureau  
 Community 4  
 Community team for people with learning disabilities  
 Community mental health team  
 Connexions  
 Defence Estate Housing  
 Drug and Homelessness Initiative  
 Department of adult services  
 Department of children services  
 Government Office of the South West  
 Housing staff  
 Jephson Housing  
 Job centre plus  
 Knightstone Housing  
 National Health Service  
 Probation  
 Ridgeway Community Housing  
 Salisbury Trust for the Homeless  
 Sanctuary Housing  
 Sarsen Housing  
 Selwood Housing  
 Service users  
 Shape Housing  
 Shelter  
 Sovereign Housing  
 Stonham Housing  
 Specialist drug & alcohol service  
 Splitz  
 Supporting people  
 Vine for Pat  
 Westlea Housing Association  
 Wiltshire accommodation support services for young people  
 Wiltshire advice partnership  
 Wiltshire police  
 Wilts Racial Equality Council  
 Wiltshire Rural Housing Association

The involvement of partners will continue, as this will be imperative to our commitment in delivering the aims. The EIA action plan also identifies new relationships required to meet the gaps identified in 2.1 which may be able to provide support with addressing issues raised in 3.1.

### ***Step 3 – data collection and evidence***

#### **3.1. What evidence or information do you already have about how this policy might affect equality, and what does this tell you?**

Statistical research and surveying indicates:

- that black and minority ethnic households are not currently quantitatively disadvantaged in Wiltshire when it comes to being accepted as homeless, as over the past two years the homeless service has accepted over 5% of applications from black and minority groups which is consistent with the proportion of black and minority groups in Wiltshire (source: P1E data).
- that LGBT young people (16-17 year olds), c.50% more likely than young heterosexual people to be made homeless through parental or family eviction (source: Joseph Rowntree study 'Youth Homelessness', 2008; Crisis Homeless Survey, 'Sexuality & Homelessness', 2005).
- That people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties are considerably more likely to have difficulties sustaining a tenancy (source: Social Exclusion Unit, 'Mental Health and Social Exclusion', 2004).
- National data indicates men more likely than women to become homeless (source: Crisis Homeless Survey, 2003); however P1E data consistently indicates in Wiltshire more women than men accepted as in priority need (may be due to categorisation of priority). Gender difference exists in some cases of accommodation needs e.g. requirements for mother-and-baby units, domestic violence refuges.

#### **3.2. What does available data tell you about the potential take-up of any resulting activities or services?**

Assessing national and local research and data (both qualitative and quantitative) has enabled us to determine our key priority areas of activities under the strategy. These are:

- Exploring current and previous trends in levels of homelessness;
- Identifying the causes of homelessness within Wiltshire;
- Gauging current service provision for homeless households;
- Identifying gaps in the provision of current services.

#### **3.3. What additional research or data is required to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice? Have you considered commissioning new data or research?**

As the strategy is implemented, more consultation and involvement will focus on special interest groups.

Advice will sought from the Corporate Equality & Diversity Team and from the Housing E&D officer (appt. forthcoming)

## ***Step 4 – Assessing impact and strengthening the strategy / policy / procedure / practice***

### **4.1. How does / will the strategy / policy / procedure / practice and resulting activities affect different communities and groups?**

In relation to impact on specific groups, the strategy aims to ensure that homelessness is minimised so that the social, mental and accommodation needs of all people are promoted. The strategy will not therefore impact adversely on different communities, but will actively work towards eliminating homelessness in all groups.

The strategy will currently be published in English, but we recognise that it will need to be accessible in various formats, including;

- Translations to spoken and signed languages
- Easy Read
- Audio
- Braille
- 'Plain English'.

Effort will be made to ensure staff familiarity, such that members of staff are able to understand, adopt and use the principles of this Strategy.

### **4.2. What measures does, or could, the strategy / policy / procedure / practice include to help promote equality of opportunity?**

It has been identified in the review of homelessness that gaps in provision currently exist in relation to several key groups. To respond to this, the Homelessness Strategy focuses on:

1. Examining the provisions for young families, with a view to including fathers in accommodation provision (currently fathers largely excluded from mother-and-baby units).
2. Linking with the developing Gypsy and Traveller Strategy in order to identify and respond to the specific needs of these communities.
3. Re-examining the provisions for a 'wet house' in Wiltshire, as currently there is no provision for this kind of treatment.

### **4.3. What measures does, or could, the strategy / policy / procedure / practice include to address existing patterns of discrimination, harassment or disproportionality?**

As the Strategy is implemented, more consultation and involvement will focus on special interest groups. Advice will be sought from the Equality & Diversity Team, whose function (amongst other activities) is to assist partners in identifying patterns of discrimination or disproportionately in the delivery of the Strategy, and from the housing E&D officer (appt. forthcoming). Progress will be monitored by the Housing Liaison Group.

### **4.4. What impact will the strategy / policy / procedure / practice have on promoting good relations and wider community cohesion?**

The Strategy provides for community participation through consultation and engagement.

**4.5. If the strategy / policy / procedure / practice is likely to have a negative effect ('adverse impact'), what are the reasons for this?**

The implementation of the strategy will NOT have any direct adverse impact.

Any indirect discrimination in the implementation of the strategy will be monitored through;

- Quantitative data analysis
- Qualitative data analysis
- Assessment of outcomes under relevant performance measures (national indicators) and comparative data

**4.6. What practical changes will help reduce any adverse impact on particular groups?**

N/A at present until further data analysis proves otherwise

Note also that the Strategy acknowledges the social model of disability as provided for in the DDA, and aims to provide accessible communications in line with DDA guidelines.

**4.7. What evidence is there that actions to address any negative effects on one area of equality may affect other areas of equality or human rights?**

N/A at present until further data analysis proves otherwise

**4.8. What will be done to improve access to, and take-up of, services or understanding of the policy / strategy / function or procedure?**

- Communicating the strategy to various interest groups / external partners
- Capacity building among staff
- Raising staff awareness

***Step 5 – Procurement and Commissioning***

**5.1. Consideration of external contractor obligations and partnership working**

The delivery of the Strategy will have partnership involvement. If within the partnership arena, considerations are made to procure contracted services, these will be subject to our equalities and procurement guidelines and relevant strategy

***Step 6 – making a decision***

**6.1. Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the strategy / policy / procedure / practice will meet the Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and human rights**

The Strategy will further strengthen our commitment to ensure the well being of homeless people. In doing so, the implementation of this Strategy will:

- empower young people who may be vulnerable to homelessness;
- empower parents / carers of young people to help prevent homelessness in young people;
- strengthen our response, with our partners, to combat rough sleeping;
- equip teaching and education staff to contribute toward education on homelessness (PSHE key stage 3);
- continuing to improve our performance in preventing homelessness;
- develop more citizen focussed services which reflect the needs of homeless people.

We believe that the Strategy meets the council's responsibility in relation to equality and human rights.

**6.2. What practical actions do you recommend to reduce, justify or remove any adverse / negative impact?**

N/A at this stage – we have no evidence of any adverse / negative impact in the implementation of the Strategy. A continuous monitoring will be carried out by the Housing Liaison Groups.

***Step 7 – monitoring, evaluating and reviewing***

**7.1. How will the recommendations of this assessment be built into wider planning and review processes?**

The implementation of any recommendations as result of this assessment will be monitored by the Housing Liaison Group. This will include recommendations for undertaking strategy reviews and amendments as monitoring information is assessed.

**7.2. How will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the strategy / policy / procedure / practice?**

Any direct / indirect impact resulting from the implementation of the strategy will be assessed through;

- Quantitative data analysis
- Qualitative data analysis
- Assessment of outcomes under relevant national performance measures and comparative data

The implementation of this strategy will be the responsibility of the Wiltshire Housing Liaison Group. This is a multi agency group that meets quarterly across the County and is linked into the Wiltshire family of partnerships. They will ensure the delivery of the priorities set out in the action plan and this will include monitoring the progress of new and existing working groups that will be working on new projects.

The Homelessness Strategy Group will continue to meet bi-annually to review and monitor the action plan which will be updated annually.

**7.3. Give details of how the results of the impact assessment will be published**

- Outcomes of monitoring are provided to service heads and to the Corporate Equality & Diversity Team who have been consulted during to development of the strategy and in completing this impact assessment.
- Impact assessment will be published, once signed-off and approved, on our website and made available to the public via freedom of information.
- Outcomes of this impact assessment and any future subsequent assessments will be made available in to the public.

## Step 8 – action plan

	Actions	Target date	Responsible post holder and Directorate	Monitoring post holder and Directorate
Involvement, Consultation and Partnerships	Listed in 2.4 above  Identify local LGBT and women's groups who may be able to help address the issues raised in 3.1	ongoing	Housing Strategy Team	
Data collection and evidence	Change to the homeless assessment forms to collect data on sexuality in line with national issues identified in 3.1	Dec 2010	Housing Strategy Team	
Assessment and analysis	n/a	n/a		
Procurement and Commissioning	n/a	n/a		
Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing	Communicate strategy to partners and staff  Monitor against NIs	ongoing	Homelessness Strategy Group and Housing Liaison Groups	

## ***Sign-off***

**The final stage of the EIA is to formally sign off the document as being a complete, rigorous and robust assessment**

### **Author of strategy / policy / procedure / practice and EIA**

Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature:
Sarah Hartley	Housing Strategy & Support	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	

### **Quality check: screening document has been checked by:**

Name:	Date:	Signature:
Sharon Brookes	Corporate Equality & Diversity	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2010
Angie Rawlins	Head of Service: Housing Options	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2010

### **Director level (sign-off)**

Name:	Job title and directorate:	Date:	Signature: