

**Bristol Preventing
Homelessness
Strategy
2008-2013**

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INTRODUCTION

1. As a city, Bristol has enjoyed significantly improved and focused performance since 2003 in meeting changing and challenging government and local targets concerning homelessness and homelessness prevention. Bristol won Regional Homelessness Champion status in 2007 and the current national situation, echoed by Bristol's performance, has been described by Ian Wright MP:

'We've seen huge progress over the last decade with new cases of homelessness at the lowest levels in 20 years, rough sleeping has fallen by two-thirds, use of temporary accommodation is falling and the number of 16 and 17 year olds in bed and breakfast has fallen by a third since we set the target a year ago. But we know there is much still to do. We want to help families living in temporary accommodation into a settled home, provide better opportunities for younger people facing homelessness and make further reductions in rough sleeping'.

Iain Wright MP, Housing Minister, Communities and Local Government,
5th December 2007

2. Bristol's response to the ongoing challenge of homelessness prevention, bearing very much in mind the lack of social housing stock, high land and house prices, rapid demographic changes and the elements of social exclusion that can often lead to homelessness, is captured within the city's current housing strategy:

'Our approach to homelessness prevention is to begin with early interventions in all cases of potential or threatened homelessness.'
Bristol City Council Housing Strategy 2005-2010

3. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy has not been written simply to address a legal requirement to publish an update of the 2003 Homelessness Strategy within 5 years. Rather, it is the document which will drive change in the homelessness and related systems over the next 5 years in Bristol, building on the city's successes and improved outcomes in homelessness prevention - taking full account of key national and local targets.
4. This is a five-year strategy with a rolling Action Plan.

BRISTOL'S HOMELESSNESS MISSION: THE MAIN OUTCOMES WE WILL ACHIEVE

1. The Preventing Homelessness Review process and the development of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy were guided in part by the following outcomes, informed by Bristol's performance in meeting local and national homelessness targets:
 - **Eliminate homelessness crisis**, replacing reactive and one-dimensional responses with joined-up homelessness prevention interventions
 - **Where households do experience homelessness, they are provided with relevant and timely advice and support, enabling them to become fully independent** and able to help themselves whenever possible, by receiving information and other tools to do so. It is important that people who can prevent their own homelessness are empowered to do so. It is equally important to avoid the creation of a culture where some people facing homelessness become dependent on assistance, receiving inappropriate services that could be better used by other more vulnerable people who face more complex issues.
 - **Ensure that people receive a positive experience of all homelessness and housing advice services**, replacing variable provision with a high baseline standard for all groups of people, regardless of their colour, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, sexuality or culture.
 - **Reduce to a minimum the number of households that become homeless on more than one occasion**, by creating multi-disciplinary approaches to homelessness prevention, social inclusion and tenancy sustainment services. The aim is to make repeat homelessness a thing of the past.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

1. During 2007 a thorough Preventing Homelessness Review took place in Bristol. The Review was designed to track, record and evidence progress made on homelessness prevention in the city since Bristol's Homelessness Strategy was first published in August 2003.
2. The Review presented the opportunity to explore and gain a profound understanding of how 'the homelessness system' works in Bristol, including:
 - the areas that work well
 - the areas that are improving
 - the areas subject to poor performance that must change
 - costs of preventing and tackling homelessness
 - areas where there are gaps in strategy, policy and service
 - links to and with other strategic and operational priorities
 - evidence and capacity for joint work and joint commissioning
 - emerging themes and trends, particularly in terms of demography and changing needs and challenges, to gain a clear understanding of likely future demands and to develop service flexibility that can be future proof
3. The Review created a solid foundation of knowledge and analysis on which to build this Strategy, utilising both quantitative and qualitative data, in the main forms of performance management information and archetypal case studies, respectively.
4. The Review was informed and influenced directly by:
 - A Project Board – an 'expert and diverse panel' of senior managers from the statutory and voluntary sectors
 - An Advisory Group – comprising a wider range of private, voluntary and private sector managers and key stakeholders
 - Service questionnaires – designed to capture key points of view from a wide range of homelessness services
 - Service user case studies and the creation of archetype documents
 - Service user participation and involvement groups, namely Users Feedback Organisation, Action Works! and Stepping Forward.
 - A wide range of national and local good practice and strategy documentation
 - Detailed analysis of homelessness prevention performance data, 2003-present day, relating to a range of voluntary, RSL and statutory services.

The Review's Main Findings

5. Data collected has been analysed to understand the city's homelessness system, making sense of what works well and what should change, so that our mission statement can be better fulfilled.
6. The Review has revealed little by way of surprises or new data, which is a positive testament to the city's information sharing and performance management information. However, this data strongly suggests that there should be a major re-focus in the way in which the homelessness system operates. Analysis of the Review's key findings provides the following areas for focus and change:
 - Homelessness prevention could be further improved by changing the more reactive and crisis management approaches within the homelessness system
 - Homelessness prevention requires early interventions, which can be delivered more effectively if trigger systems are in place
 - Planned homelessness pathways can better achieve a range of targets and planned outcomes, while improving people's experience of services and increasing their resilience and capacity to sustain independent living and social inclusion.
 - The provision of permanent housing (private rented or social) is often not the most important service for many people. Support services, drug treatment, mentoring, training and employment, for example, are often far more pressing and can take people to a point when independent housing is then a sustainable priority for them
 - Case management arrangements can better ensure that services – not simply homelessness services - are delivered according to needs and vulnerabilities and that people are far better matched to the services they need, without receiving inappropriate services.
 - Needs analysis methods and case management arrangements should be developed and shared widely or they will not work effectively
 - Improvements in homelessness prevention and value for money outcomes will be achieved by thorough review and the development of new commissioning plans, to create flexible and structured multi-disciplinary working and holistic approaches
 - Prevention is best achieved by meeting individuals' needs rather than by expecting individuals to fit neatly into existing service criteria
 - It is essential to review homelessness services across the piece, to ensure that value for money (VFM) is being achieved within the scope

of the objectives and priorities set out in this and associated strategies and policies. The aim is to ensure that all relevant services commissioned in Bristol e.g. by the council and the Primary Care Trust include homelessness prevention as a service outcome.

7. Please note: Bristol has not yet developed a clear VFM model but will do so, informed by new core cities benchmarking arrangements, the Homelessness Pathways and Housing Support Register Projects and the findings of service reviews.

SUMMARY OF THE PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

1. The Preventing Homelessness Review revealed few surprises or new data, a testament to the city's capacity to share targets and deliver homelessness prevention outcomes. The data strongly suggests that there should be a major re-focus of the homelessness system's ways of working. Analysis of the Review's key findings provides the following areas for focus and change:
 - Homelessness prevention could be further improved by ending most reactive and crisis management approaches within the homelessness system
 - Homelessness prevention requires early interventions, which can be delivered more effectively if shared trigger systems are in place
 - Planned homelessness pathways can better achieve a range of targets and planned outcomes
 - Support services, including drug treatment, mentoring, training and employment, can lead to permanent housing outcomes
 - Shared case management arrangements can ensure that people are far better matched to the services they need, without receiving inappropriate services
 - Improvements in homelessness prevention and value for money outcomes will be achieved via new commissioning plans which ensure flexible and structured multi-disciplinary working and holistic approaches
 - Prevention is best achieved by meeting individuals' needs rather than by expecting individuals to fit neatly into existing service criteria
 - Homelessness services across the piece should be reviewed, to ensure that value for money (VFM) is being achieved within the scope of the objectives and priorities set out in this strategy.

Five Priorities – Ringing the Changes

2. The Preventing Homelessness Review findings can be categorised under five priority headings that highlight and will steer Bristol's direction in homelessness prevention for the next 5 years:
 - Homelessness Prevention
 - Early Interventions

- Multi-Disciplinary Approaches
 - Individual Solutions
 - Value for Money
3. These priorities mark a significant departure from the Key Issues described in the Homelessness Strategy 2003:
- Key Issue One: Accessing services for people with multiple needs is difficult
 - Key Issue Two: There is a lack of housing provision for the changing client group
 - Key Issue Three: Current advice and assistance services fail to adequately prevent homelessness by offering real alternatives to those that present
 - Key Issue Four: Current monitoring and performance management systems need to anticipate homelessness
4. Although work to address the key issues continues and is still relevant, there have been significant improvements in performance management, positive engagement with people with complex needs and homelessness prevention. The issue of independent housing (private rented or social) remains one that will be addressed through the Homelessness Pathways and Housing Support Register projects but will not be able to produce adequate social housing to meet current and future demands.

Main Strategic Outputs

5. To meet the 5 priority headings, it is useful to identify main expected outputs. These are headline areas of activity, under which will sit a number of specific projects (please see Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan):
- Create a Future Commissioning Model
 - Implement New Case Management Systems
 - Create Sustainable Housing Routes
 - Increasing Access to Information and Support
 - Focus on Equalities
 - Focus on Other Emerging Priorities
6. These outputs create a framework for the Preventing Homelessness Action Plan. The specific projects detailed in the Action Plan will ensure service developments and changes that will deliver the Five Priorities.

What's the Difference?

7. The Main Strategic Outputs will address both the Homelessness Mission's Required Outputs and the 5 Priorities identified by the Preventing Homelessness Review, within a framework of local and national targets. In so doing, they will deliver key differences to Bristol's homelessness system:
 - The use of B&B for 16/17 year olds will be ended by 2010.
 - Continued sustainment of rough sleeping in single figures, by delivering early interventions, holistic approaches and planned pathways.
 - Planned Pathways from emergency accommodation to sustainable housing and support options will be in place and will reduce statutory homelessness presentations and the use of temporary accommodation.
 - Joint working, especially between partner agencies and council departments (Adult Community Care, Children and Young Peoples Services, Neighbourhood and Housing Services, National Offender Management Service) will achieve a more holistic approach with planned packages of care and support services, improved case management and the role of a lead professional taking responsibility for each complex homelessness case.
 - Good quality information and advice about homelessness prevention and housing options will be easily accessible through a dedicated web site, including self-help options, leading to a better customer experience of housing and homelessness services.
 - The use of temporary accommodation will have been halved by March 2010 and continue to reduce through the use of planned, alternative and sustainable housing options.
 - The introduction of a case management information technology system will enable improved equalities monitoring and reporting about access to and take-up of service provision and gaps. This will lead to better analysis and consequent improvements in service delivery.
 - A further shift away from crisis responses to homelessness in favour of early intervention and planned housing routes. This will produce further reductions in statutory homelessness acceptances.

Summary of the Key Strategic Outcomes Required

Future Commissioning

8. A model of integrated homelessness, housing and support services will be developed to review services and to re-commission where necessary. An essential element of this work will be to develop a clear understanding and framework to achieve value for money, within outcomes based commissioning arrangements. The aspiration is to ensure that all relevant services commissioned by the council and the Primary Care Trust include homelessness prevention outputs.
9. The model will take into consideration different funding streams, opportunities for joint commissioning with other agencies, and will take a value for money approach looking to create flexible services that concentrate on planned homelessness prevention as opposed to housing crisis management. Inevitably, this process will involve commissioners taking an influential role over service delivery and the way it is altered and improved to meet the priorities of this and linked strategies.

Case Management

10. We will make changes to the way we case manage homelessness in the future. This will include exploring the development of Lead Professional systems, and implementing new IT software, earlier assessment of all support needs, regular reviews, and staff training.
11. These actions will enable us to create homelessness services that are focussed on eliminating housing crisis, that are more proactive in managing and preventing homelessness, and that are more able to assist people with sustaining their housing long-term.

Sustainable Housing Routes

12. Work involving BCC's Supporting People team will complete and implement the Homelessness Pathways commissioning process, which will provide clear access routes into supported housing and move-on accommodation relevant to that household's needs.
13. We will increase access to private rented sector accommodation by exploring the options for developing a private rented sector housing team, bringing together the resources that can provide better access to private rented accommodation; providing better access to support and advice to private tenants, landlords and those looking for private rented accommodation; and expand on the success of existing routes into private rented accommodation.

14. We will examine the future use of different types of emergency accommodation, including the use of Bed and Breakfast, in order to ensure that we have the best short-term housing solutions for specific households. This includes further work on the current Temporary Accommodation Reduction Action Plan. It is important to note that 'temporary accommodation' (TA) refers to the housing secured for roofless households who are going through a statutory homelessness assessment and those who, following an assessment, are accommodated prior to a permanent offer of social housing. In this sense, TA is more a measure of statutory homelessness cases than it is of actual accommodation.

Access to Information and Advice

15. The availability of homelessness information and support provision will be increased by: holding annual Bristol Homelessness conferences; creating a Bristol Homelessness-specific website with sections for people at risk of homelessness, tenants, landlords, professionals working with homelessness, and anyone else looking for up to date information; creating a regular newsletter for professionals working within homelessness in Bristol; and a young people's integrated prevention programme with other agencies, potentially based within the Healthy Schools programme.

Equalities and Service Accessibility

16. Services will be reviewed within the context of the council's Integrated Equalities Policy and will be subject to improved equalities monitoring systems (information technology) to enable better analysis and service responsiveness and to meet the relevant targets within Bristol Housing Race Equality Group's Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Delivery Plan 2007.
17. Services' accessibility will be reviewed and altered if necessary. Potential equalities impacts of future changes to services will be assessed.
18. The Preventing Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008-2013 will be accessible in a range of accessible formats.

Other Priorities

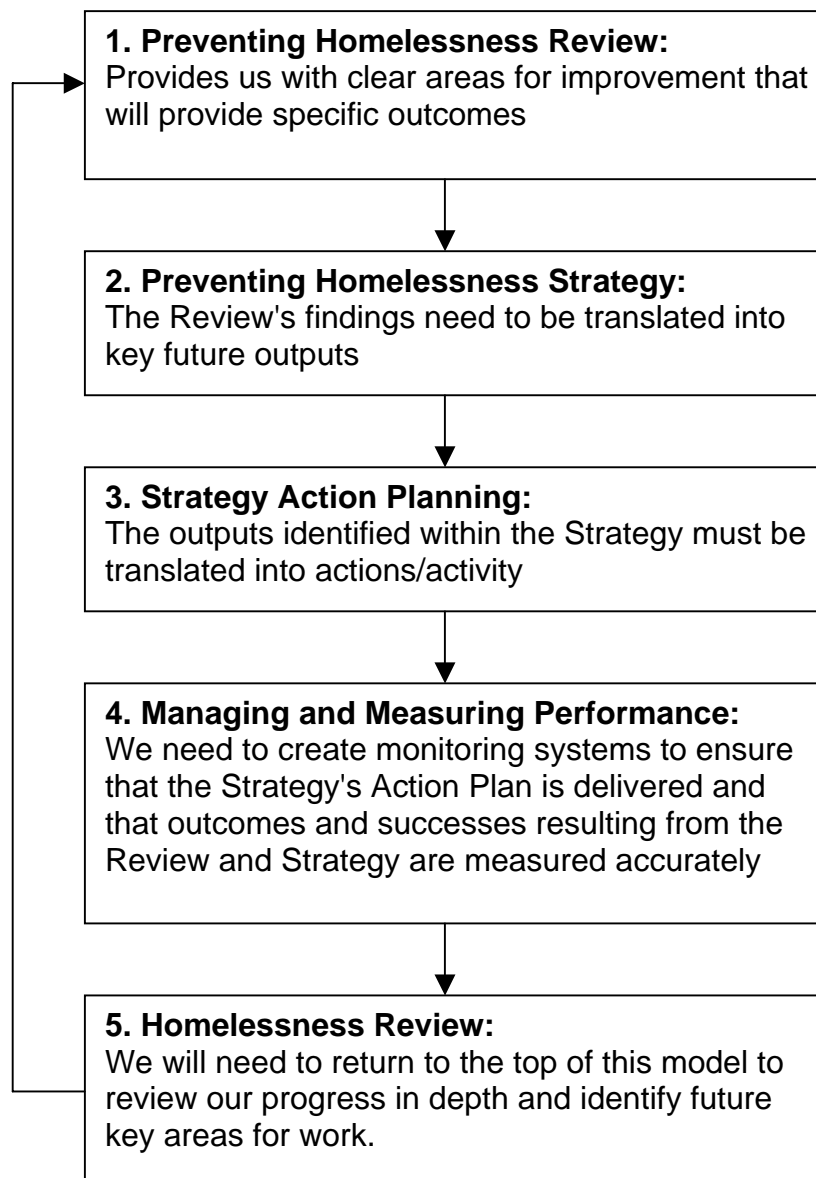
19. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008 will work to support the achievement of other key priorities as specified within Bristol City Council strategies, through the development of new working practices

and services, and by the support of existing services. There is also a responsibility to ensure that responsiveness and early interventions - through service flexibility and good analysis – are in place within homelessness and related systems, to tackle possible future needs e.g. those generated by demographic change, Asylum Seekers and Refugees, offenders and prisoners returning to Bristol, young people and people at risk of homelessness through mortgage repossessions.

FROM THE PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS REVIEW TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

A Well-Structured Approach

1. In planning the Preventing Homelessness Strategy, it was necessary take key findings from the Preventing Homelessness Review and translate them into planned future outcomes, which will be delivered through the activities described by the Strategy's Action Plan.
2. To complete this process effectively and to ensure that the Review's findings influence all future work, there will be a planned and ongoing cyclical approach to managing and implementing the Strategy's priorities as prescribed by the Review's key findings:

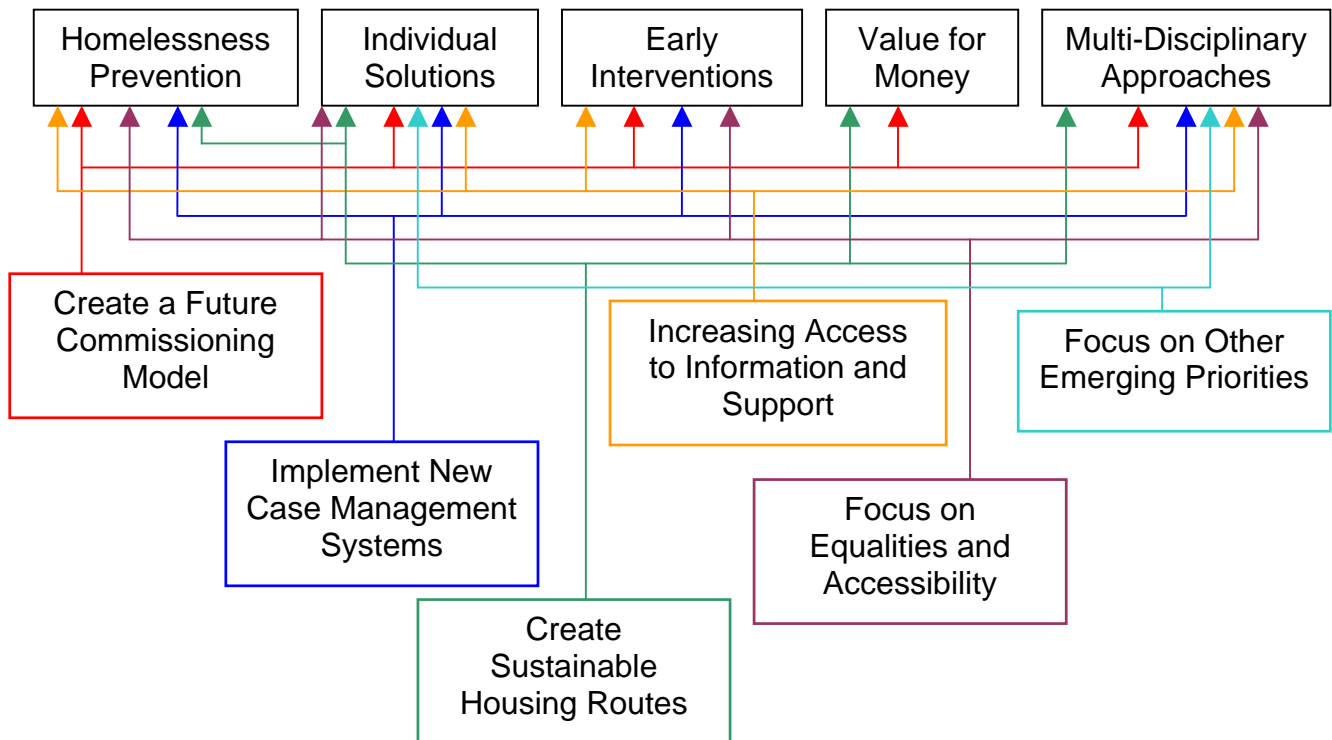


From Review to Strategy

3. The method taken in planning strategic outputs was to plan the implementation of future projects that would prescribe activities to deliver the Review's 5 key priorities:
 - Homelessness Prevention
 - Early Interventions
 - Multi-Disciplinary Approaches
 - Individual Solutions
 - Value for Money.

4. There are clearly developed strategic outputs to direct the future activities that will deliver the Review's key priorities:
 - Create a Future Commissioning Model
 - Implement New Case Management Systems
 - Create Sustainable Housing Routes
 - Increasing Access to Information and Support
 - Focus on Equalities
 - Focus on Other Emerging Priorities.

5. As described by the diagram below, the strategy's outputs will each deliver multiple strands of the Review's priorities, provided via planned activities within the Strategy Action Plan:



Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

6. From this point, Bristol can confidently create and sign up to a Strategy Action Plan which records the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) activities that will address the 5 priorities through the outputs described above and the projects and activities driven by these outputs (more detail is provided in following chapters and the Strategy Action Plan).
7. To provide additional context and to inform both the framework and the planned outcomes for the Action Plan, it will make specific reference to Bristol's homelessness targets, prescribed by Communities and Local Government (CLG). Currently, the foremost are:
 - To halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010*
 - Ongoing increases in homelessness prevention
 - Ongoing management and reduction of rough sleeping, to maintain numbers at 9 or below.
 - To end the use of bed and breakfast as an emergency housing solution for 16 and 17 year olds by 2010.
 - Complete and update the council's Homelessness Strategy Self Assessment document and tackle any gaps identified from this exercise

* 'Temporary Accommodation' is defined as accommodation secured by a local authority for a household before a statutory homelessness decision is completed and after a positive decision is made, prior to a suitable offer of permanent social housing.

8. The Action Plan is a 'high level' document and will capture main actions, relevant projects and their general descriptions, timescales and targets. Specific detail such as project management documentation, contract documents etc. will be generated by each individual project. The first version of the Strategy Action Plan is presented as Appendix A.

Monitoring, Measurement and Management

9. To ensure that the Strategy Action Plan is relevant, up-to-date and SMART, it will be produced on a year-by-year basis and will be subject to performance monitoring and measurement by the council's Strategic Housing Business Development Unit.
10. The overall management of the Strategy, and particularly its Action Plan, will be conducted by a multi-agency senior level group based on the Preventing Homelessness Review and Strategy Project Board. More detail is provided in Chapter 9.

FUTURE COMMISSIONING

Summary

1. A model of integrated homelessness, housing and support services will be developed and used to review services and to recommission and restructure them where necessary. The model will take into consideration different funding streams, opportunities for joint commissioning with other agencies, departments and local authorities.
2. A value for money (VFM) approach will be adopted to create flexible services that concentrate on planned homelessness prevention as opposed to homelessness crisis management. In so doing, and in response to the current lack of comparative financial and performance data with other local authorities, the council has joined a Core Cities finance and performance project, focusing on benchmarking homelessness services.
3. Changes will be made to the way in which individual households needs are managed – case management and lead worker arrangements will be put in place. This will include exploring the development of Lead Professional systems, and implementing new IT software, earlier assessment of all support needs, regular reviews, and staff training.
4. These actions will enable the further development of homelessness services that are:
 - Focussed on eliminating housing crisis
 - More proactive in managing and preventing homelessness
 - Active in contributing to shared outcomes with other commissioning agencies
 - More able to assist people to sustain their housing in the long term
5. The emphasis on preventing crisis should produce real savings and economies in the costs of both homelessness and related services, and dovetail with increases in efficiency and effectiveness.

Planned Changes to Services

6. At many points during the Preventing Homelessness Review, it was made clear that all homelessness services in Bristol require further review, followed by a clear vision about how services are commissioned and provided in the future, with a view to making some specific changes to how they are currently working.
7. Generally, the Review suggests that there is much positive work currently focused on preventing homelessness for individual

households. However there are some key future changes that will have a significant positive effect on the quality of future provision to people threatened with homelessness. These key changes include:

- Maximising service flexibility
 - Increasing joint and multi-agency work and 'whole person solutions'
 - Joint commissioning to support joint work
 - Ensuring services are underpinned with an emphasis on economy, efficiency and effectiveness
 - Ensuring that there is widespread access to up-to-date information about all homelessness services and support, particularly for service providers.
8. Bristol has a number of high quality services achieving positive outcomes for their service users. This work has been underpinned by a local Homelessness Prevention approach, largely driven by Bristol City Council's interpretation of central government advice and good practice information. However, in developing new approaches to working within homelessness, we have often added to existing services, increasing costs, without taking a 'whole system' approach, looking at the bigger picture to determine how existing services can change to better deliver homelessness prevention more efficiently.
9. Homelessness services require review, to develop a sustainable, effective and value for money (VFM) homelessness prevention model that delivers all the areas of change suggested in the Preventing Homelessness Review. Bristol appears to be one of the most expensive cities in the UK in terms of spend on homelessness. While this remains a moot point, it is crucial that service costs against outcomes are scrutinised and that there is clarity about which services deliver VFM services and which are costing more than they should.
10. The council is currently working with the Core Cities Finance Group led by Birmingham City Council, which has begun a benchmarking project focusing on homelessness financial and performance information. For the first time Bristol's homelessness prevention performance will be meaningfully compared to costs and with other core cities. This will lead to the further development of good practice in Bristol and beyond, in creating more efficient services and reduced costs.

Review of all BCC and Externally Commissioned Homelessness Services

11. Services funded with CLG homelessness grant will be reviewed to seek out VFM, service performance, sustainability, flexibility and access. Once completed, reviews will enable a straightforward exercise to identify which services in particular are working well together and with other sectors in order to tackle homelessness and

prevent homelessness occurring. Then there will be consideration of whether services should be recommissioned, decommissioned, altered, expanded and whether we have the right level of service access.

12. Reviews will dovetail with the Homelessness Pathways Project (see chapter 4). This project's key aims are to make best use of existing services, while capturing adequate data about services and service users to contribute to the development of robust homelessness (joint) commissioning plans. This work will inform the Commissioning Project taking place in the council's Strategic Housing Division, in advance of the creation of a Business Development Unit.

A new commissioning model will be developed

13. To create a working and sustainable system of homelessness services, able to provide a multi-disciplinary and flexible approach to providing individual solutions to homelessness. The Homelessness Pathways Project and the development of the Housing Support Register will add much vital information to the Commissioning Project.
14. A final future commissioning model must involve and be signed-up to across disciplines and sectors, to ensure full support for commissioned homelessness prevention services. Thorough reviews of current service successes and areas for improvement will inform the commissioning model.

Review of current services, in terms of value for money and where they fit with a new commissioning model

15. Service reviews will take place within the context of the development of a new commissioning model. VFM and current service outcomes will be examined to check that the right services, with the right outcomes are being commissioned and, in future, will be able to fit a new commissioning model sustainably and within the framework of current and future levels of need and demand.
16. Once current services have been reviewed and a commissioning model developed, decisions can be taken about how (joint) commissioning arrangements will be made about to recommissioning, decommissioning and the creation of new and different services. This process will also adopt the principle, where practical of adopting a 'Lead Funder' or Lead Commissioner' approach which is being piloted corporately by Bristol City Council.

Non-housing and financial support

17. The Review has identified that we need to examine the non-housing specific support we provide to homeless and ex-homeless people. 58%

of service user consultants said that they felt increased support would be the best way to prevent future homelessness.

18. Case study 'Archetypes' illustrate a need for ongoing support to enable people to make lifestyle changes confidently, in the context of homelessness prevention and social inclusion. Therefore current Tenancy Sustainment and Floating Support arrangements will be scoped into the Homelessness Pathways Project, to ensure that people at different levels of need and at different stages in their housing journey are able to access appropriate support when needed.
19. The process will enable joint commissioning and/or the provision of homelessness-specific tenancy or floating support services in the future. Attached to this is a need to examine types of support that can be provided, to cover: arrears (mortgage, private rent, local authority rent) and financial advice (debt advice and support, equity release). If better targeted at homeless households, these services can enable floating support services to focus on preventing future homelessness.
20. By reviewing advice services and by ensuring that a VFM approach is taken to all homelessness and related service commissioning, it is possible to increase the flexibility of services, ensuring that they are able to continue working with an individual as long as is necessary in terms of homelessness prevention.

Expected Outcomes from Future Commissioning

21. Homelessness services that are able to work with people in different levels of need, whether they are currently homeless or may have other needs or housing issues that may make them at higher risk of homelessness in the future: this will enable us to have greater opportunity to prevent future homelessness from occurring or to make timely interventions with current housing need.
22. Services that provide individually tailored solutions, taking into consideration individual support needs that may affect housing or homelessness, and may impede that household's ability to engage with a housing process. This will enable us to link in with better support for that household, supporting the likely success of future housing.
23. The move towards joint commissioning should improve the efficiency of services whilst reducing costs.

Examples of Current Services Providing Good Performance, Sustainability, Flexibility and Accessibility

24. Bristol has examples of homelessness and linked schemes and services that are working already in this direction, providing flexible, creative solutions to homelessness. Some of these are detailed in the following table:

Services Demonstrating Good Performance, Sustainability, Flexibility and Accessibility

Service Name	Details	Outcomes
Housing and Support Register	<p>The Housing Support Register (HSR) is targeted to be operational in September 2008. After a long period of debate, discussion and development, it will be a sole point of access to virtually all Supporting People funded services in Bristol. It will take the form of an internet-accessible database system with application, needs logging, risk assessment and initial prioritisation functions. Apart from creating and managing a massive and robust cross-sector single application and needs recording process for thousands of service users each year, in order to inform how Supporting People and related commissioning meets emerging and changing priorities, the system will enable also the development of Homelessness Pathways.</p>	<p>This system will provide a reporting capability that will enable us to build a clear image of supported housing and floating support need in Bristol, including equalities and support needs breakdown. The system is expected to reduce the amount of administration time needed for case work, as housing support workers must currently complete separate housing applications for separate schemes: this system will function as a single point of entry for all supported housing and floating support within Bristol, so duplication of work will be reduced to a minimum, potentially achieving savings.</p>
The Compass Centre	<p>The Compass Centre is Bristol's new Homelessness Assessment Centre, operational from Spring 2008. The Compass Centre is an exciting new multi-agency scheme for homeless adults in Bristol, which will include the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Churches Night Centre for rough sleepers • English Churches Outreach • Second Step Mental Health Outreach • Homelessness Health Service • Training and Education services on-site including a training café. 	<p>The centre will provide streamlined and flexible services for homeless adults with a view to assessing and accessing appropriate accommodation and support shortly after contact with the centre: this will be partially achieved with partnership arrangements with 2 of Bristol's largest homelessness hostels, Places for People Redwood House and Salvation Army Logos House.</p>

<p>Choice Based Lettings – HomeChoice Bristol</p>	<p>HomeChoice Bristol is a new way of allocating social housing in Bristol, aiming to give more choice to people applying for social housing or a housing transfer, from January 2008, All empty properties owned by Bristol City Council and Registered Social Landlords in the city are advertised on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Properties are advertised;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the website (www.homechoicebristol.co.uk) • In the local newspaper • In a newsletter. <p>There are different ways to place a bid for a property:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the website and log in using a unique reference number • Use the automated phone line • Text bids to the HomeChoice Bristol Team • Visit a Bristol City Council Customer Service Point. 	<p>Applicants will be able to choose vacant properties for which they are eligible and register a bid for properties they wish to be considered for, ensuring that individuals have input and control over their future housing choices.</p>
<p>West of England Lettings</p>	<p>West of England Lettings is a joint initiative between the four Local Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. It is funded as a pilot scheme by the Department of Communities and Local Government, and builds on work already being done to help households who are or would otherwise be homeless access accommodation in the private rented sector.</p>	<p>West of England Lettings increases options available for landlords, providing incentives and support in letting their properties. It also recognises the crucial role that the private sector has to play in increasing choice and promoting balanced and thriving communities across the region.</p>
<p>Bristol Accommodation Gateway</p>	<p>The Bristol Accommodation Gateway (BAG) is a one-stop service for ex offenders to access housing, advice, accommodation and support within Bristol. Having run as a pilot project during 2007/8, funded by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), it will continue for a further year funded jointly by NOMS and homelessness grant. The intention is to prevent homelessness and contribute to the reduction of reoffending. The feasibility of commissioning a wider West of England Gateway will be conducted in 2008/9.</p>	<p>The BAG received over 400 referrals during its first year of operation and achieved accommodation outcomes for 50+5 of cases. Links with local prisons and Avon and Somerset Probation Area have been developed and strengthened. An independent evaluation study is underway and will conclude in Summer 2008. It will inform a future sustainability strategy.</p>

IMPLEMENT NEW CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

1. Changes need to be made to the way in which agencies work with homeless people or those at risk of future homelessness. The Preventing Homelessness Review demonstrates that we have to focus on working with people as whole individuals, taking into consideration all of their needs and issues, instead of simply concentrating on getting roofs over their heads. The longer a household is either homeless or at risk of homelessness, the more likely it is that its situation will worsen, leading to more stress, possible illness, or, for example, increased drug use.
2. It is also important that services aim to engage with households at risk as early as possible and that their work is regularly checked to ensure that it is producing positive and planned outcomes. It is likely that an earlier intervention will create efficiency savings in terms of both outcomes and cost and improve the value for money of services.

Development of Case Management and Lead Worker Arrangements

3. The Preventing Homelessness Review identified a need for us take a lead in creating a Lead Worker Protocol. A future system is required where, when a household has a number of different services trying to achieve positive outcomes for them, one lead worker (case manager or care coordinator) can be identified to lead the work involved. Lead workers would not be expected to take on all necessary work or to try to take over other agencies' work. Instead, the intention is to identify the best person to take overall responsibility for communication and overview on that household's case. The lead worker would ensure that all relevant services are working together, not duplicating or unknowingly sabotaging each other's work, and that the homeless person at the centre of the case had a clear point of contact throughout.
4. Bristol's Criminal Justice Interventions Team (CJIT) workers already function as care coordinators for their cases. Bristol's Drug Strategy Team is also working to create lead worker systems, and Bristol's Adult Community Care social workers already function within similar systems. We will work with these teams, plus other sectors who will need involvement in the Lead Worker protocol, to research and develop the possibility of creating this system in the future: we recognise that developing a multi-agency Lead Worker Protocol may be a problematic and potentially difficult task to complete, but feel the Review has emphasised the need for this system so we have committed to fully exploring the creation of the role in the future.

Early assessment of all support needs

5. The Review identified that many of our service users have significant needs that affect their homelessness, including addiction and disability. To work effectively with homeless households we need to be aware of what additional factors will influence the work we're to accomplish with that household. Therefore we will need to change our current assessment format to include information on other possible support needs including drugs and addiction, physical and mental health, criminal justice involvement, and possible community care needs. This will enable us to gain a better picture of what work will need to be completed with each household, and for us to seek involvement from appropriate services, in order to provide our service users with relevant support where needed.
6. In addition to existing services, consideration should be given to introducing widely the Practical Housing Units (developed by Amber Foundation) in order for service users to gain certification in aspects of tenancy management. These have already been introduced as part of the Bristol Accommodation Gateway's services, with some success.
7. The Bristol Housing Support Register (BHSR) will provide us with an assessment template that all homelessness services will use in the future to assess past, current and future need. This will enable us to standardise our monitoring and more easily define what services are needed in the future as we will be better able to gauge presenting needs, and will also cut down on the amount of repetition of the same support need assessment questions that individuals currently face when applying for housing and support.

Trigger Systems for more challenging cases

8. The Review identified several cases where it became apparent to a range of homelessness services that additional issues meant that a clear route from homelessness into settled housing would be difficult to achieve. In these cases, there were usually indicators early on that the specific case needed senior input and assertive working from as early in the case as possible.

Regularly planned reviews

9. Also identified in the Review were several cases where an initial approach to housing an individual or household had not been effective, but the same approach had been taken on each return to homelessness, or at each missed appointment, thus repeating failed interventions. We will create a system where all homelessness cases are reviewed on a regular basis for progress, so each caseworker is able to access input into whether or not a new approach is needed towards working with that household.

New electronic case management systems

10. From 2008, new IT software will enable electronic case management of the above systems for the Compass Centre, the Hub and BCC's Family Homelessness teams. The new software is expected to create standardised case working and we hope that we will be able to expand it across the sector once the new model of homelessness services has been implemented.
11. The development and implementation of electronic case management IT software, planned to be complete during 2008/9, will reduce the time spent by service users and frontline staff respectively on completing individuals' equalities monitoring data and support needs. The benefits of this are twofold, increasing the efficiency of the work done with an individual across agencies whilst improving the services to clients. In our service user focus group work, a key area flagged up was the need to repeatedly report the same information to different agencies.
12. It will also increase dramatically the information available to a wide range of homelessness services about individual households' action plans and the outcomes achieved. In terms of data collection for the purposes of meaningful and focused analysis, our aim is to record data regardless of:
 - The type and composition of households
 - Whether households are engaged with homelessness prevention and homelessness pathways
 - Whether households have presented as homeless under the legislation
 - Which was the first or lead agency that the household presented to
13. By the end of 2008, the Housing Support Register will have begun to produce a detailed and ongoing log of people who require and have accessed Supporting People funded services. The HSR software will provide a mechanism to record, analyse and meet/plan to meet the needs of households experiencing or facing homelessness.

Getting the Questions Right

14. A multi-agency approach will be taken towards developing a full, clear, accessible and uniform equalities monitoring and case management system to be used by homelessness workers, regardless of their employing organisation. This will first apply to case management and Housing Support Register software but eventually to all households approaching the council or its partner agencies for advice, assistance, housing and support.
15. A new statutory homelessness application form will be launched in 2008, including obligatory corporate equalities monitoring fields, which will conform to those contained within the HSR and case management software.

16. To support this work, the level of data yielded by HOAS' Complex Needs Survey of 2004 will be referenced, because it demonstrates clearly that many homeless people fall into more than one equalities group and often have attendant vulnerabilities linked to the risks of violence, financial and sexual exploitation. This data was valuable in the development of The Compass Centre.

Training

17. We will create and implement a rolling training programme for these new systems for both staff working within homelessness services and for staff in other agencies who will be working alongside our own teams.

Expected Outcomes from Changes to Case Management Systems

- More clarity for individuals working with many different agencies for different types of support, with less risk of work duplication between agencies, clearer communication, and one key worker as the main contact for the service user involved.
- Shared assessment tools that will cut down on the amount of repetition individuals may have to go through when trying to access support from different agencies.
- Capacity to plan services and service changes according to evidenced trends including demographic changes affecting existing equalities and ethnic communities and the needs of Refugees and migrant workers.
- A reduction in the repetition of working practices that have proved ineffective for the individual so that we're able to identify what works for that individual and tailor support for their specific needs.
- An overall reduction in the combined and singular costs borne by agencies working with an individual, translating into a tangible improvement in value for money when allied with the increased efficiency and effectiveness outlined above.

SUSTAINABLE HOUSING ROUTES

Summary

1. We will work with BCC's Supporting People team to complete and implement the Homelessness Pathways commissioning process, which will provide clear access routes into supported housing and move-on accommodation relevant to that household's needs.
2. We will increase access to private rented sector accommodation by developing a private rented sector housing team; providing better access to support and advice to private tenants, landlords and those looking for rented accommodation; and expand on the success of existing routes into private rented accommodation.
3. We will examine the future use of emergency and short term - including statutory 'temporary accommodation' and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation - to identify where use of this type of housing is and is not appropriate, and to make sure that we will have this resource available to us in the future where it may be the best short-term housing solution for specific individuals.
4. The Review identified clearly that, in order to achieve lasting positive outcomes for homeless households in the future, the homelessness sector has to seek an increasing level of input into homelessness work from related sectors. The majority of our Archetypes had non-housing specific support needs that affected our ability to find suitable and sustainable accommodation or support for our service users, and we need to create methods to ensure better multi-sector working on behalf of homeless people in the future.

Homelessness Pathways

5. The development of Homelessness Pathways is now a formal BCC project, informed by the Housing and Support Register development and the Southampton City Council Value Improvement Plan (VIP) Model, funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
6. The overriding ideas incorporated in the Homelessness Pathways Plan are to:
 - Bring together services commissioned with Supporting People, Drug Strategy Team and homelessness grant sources, to establish and agree joint outcomes between homelessness and related services, to

create a clear cross-sector, multi-agency approach to meeting the needs of homeless people.

- Establish clear routes from homelessness, through a range of homelessness and related services, to social inclusion and independent housing, monitored, influenced and overseen by the council's Accommodation Services Team and informed by multi-agency agreements about which households should be prioritised for which services.
- Create logical, individual, sustainable and helpful action plans, agreed with individual households (via a client contract) and implemented via good quality joint working.
- Directly inform new commissioning plans and arrangements

Expected Outcomes

- A much clearer understanding for service users that they are central to service planning and delivery, so must take personal responsibility for their pathway
- Housing routes that are designed to address households' support and other needs, to ensure that their independent housing options, once delivered, are sustainable for the future.

Private Rented Housing

7. It has been very clear for a number of years that, as Bristol's social housing units decline proportionately, access to private rented housing should be maximised, to create sustainable and affordable tenancies for all household types, as a realistic housing solution. BCC's Housing Strategy Action Plan is clear that we should:

- Provide financial assistance to enable 10 dwellings (units of housing) for homeless households through nomination rights per year
- Bring 232 empty private sector homes back into use and maximise the percentage used to house homeless households

8. Currently, separate to the work of the council's Private Housing Support Team and its own Empty Homes Officer, HOAS provides the following services to access private rented housing for (potentially) homeless households:

- Deposit Bond Scheme
- West of England Lettings
- Bristol Accommodation Gateway
- Singles Homelessness Prevention Fund

- Families Homelessness Prevention Fund
 - Family Bond Scheme.
9. We will explore, as part of our homelessness services review (please see Chapter 3 for more information), how we can move towards the creation of one private rented sector access team. Although strides forward have been made in opening up the private rented market for homelessness prevention, using these schemes, there are key areas of activity which will further support this work:

Bristol ‘Housing Shop’

10. We will create a virtual “Bristol Housing Shop” in order to encourage easy access to the private rented sector in Bristol, and also to increase access to information and support. We would look to encourage landlords to advertise vacancies for free, and also look to provide people with information about schemes such as West of England Lettings, deposit bond schemes or floating support in the area. We would look to the Housing Shop to provide an opportunity to increase the amount of housing and arrears (including mortgage arrears) advice available in Bristol, so that a person accessing to the Housing Shop could be signposted to a relevant scheme able to offer them with further support. We would also like to include other relevant information including access to benefits advice.

More Joint Work with the Private Housing Support Team

11. HOAS will work in partnership with the council’s private housing support team, to:
- Maximise efficiency in meeting joint targets concerning access to private rented housing
 - Maximise the number of people for whom private renting becomes a housing solution
 - Share good and best practice
 - Reduce the duplication of work
 - Establish knowledge about archetypal landlords i.e. groups of landlords who are likely to rent to particular client groups.

Increased Support Available to Private Sector Landlords and Registered Social Landlords

12. As part of our drive to increase access to information and advice concerning housing and homelessness (please see Chapter 5 for more detail), we will promote access to advice and support to landlords through our commissioned services and improved communication networks, with a view to supporting landlords to making timely decisions that may prevent evictions and future homelessness for some of their tenants. We believe that by supporting landlords in their work, including providing information on both landlords’ and tenants’

rights, we will enable landlords to take routes other than seeking possession in the future. Access to this information and advice may take several forms, including Landlords Resources on a Bristol Homelessness website (please see Chapter 5 for more detail) or Landlord liaison meetings (please see Chapter 7).

Expected Outcomes

- Increased access to services for people at different stages of homelessness, with more flexible services able to provide an individually tailored package of support or advice
- Increased housing choice available to homeless persons through access to the private rented sector
- Increased access to support in order to prevent cases of repeat homelessness.

Examine the Use of Emergency Accommodation

13. It is recognised that for some households Bed and Breakfast accommodation may be the best option in terms of immediate and short-term solutions to homelessness, as other emergency accommodation e.g. supported housing and hostels can also be the most appropriate housing option for a homeless household, depending on that household's support needs and situation. We will look at how we currently use B&B and other forms of emergency accommodation, and ensure that these remain viable options in the future as short-term housing where appropriate and where this is the best option for that household. Although we are committed to ending inappropriate uses of emergency accommodation in the future, we also need to allow for the fact that emergency accommodation, including B&B use, can be a workable, flexible, cost effective and timely solution for some.

Expected Outcomes

- Clarity about emergency and short-term housing options, including temporary accommodation and B&B, so that housing workers will be able to further tailor housing solutions to the individual, taking into consideration that individual's needs and wants.
- Reduction in the inappropriate use of B&B and consequent decrease in expenditure on B&B as an emergency housing option.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Summary

1. We will increase the availability of homelessness information and support provision in Bristol, to create better signposting and advice, by:
 - Holding annual Bristol Homelessness conferences
 - Creating a Bristol Homelessness-specific website with sections for people at risk of homelessness, tenants, landlords, professionals working with homelessness, and anyone else looking for up to date information
 - Creating a regular newsletter/bulletin for professionals working within homelessness in Bristol
 - Developing a young people's integrated prevention programme with other agencies, potentially based within Bristol's Healthy Schools programme.
 - Contributing to the development of housing and related advice within local prisons, via the Bristol Accommodation Gateway.

Improving Access to Information and Advice

2. Bristol has a number of homelessness services working well to tackle homelessness and housing crisis, but the Review identified that support workers do not always have up-to-date or accurate information about what services are accessible by their clients. We need to consider a range of different techniques to ensure that information about homelessness in Bristol and service provision is widely available. For example, case study Archetypes analysis revealed that the use of mentoring and training schemes for homeless people often enables those individuals to settle into their new homes. However many services were unaware of the level of mentoring and training services currently available. By increasing the amount of accurate information available to both homeless households and their support workers, we should be able to encourage uptake on projects that will help prevent future homelessness.
3. We have consulted with a range of professionals across Bristol working in different agencies and likely to work with homeless persons or those at risk of homelessness as to what would be useful to them or their service users in terms of increasing access to advice or information.

Annual Bristol Homelessness conference

4. To help to increase information about homelessness in Bristol, we will examine the viability of annual conferences within Bristol, to discuss issues relevant to homelessness, both locally and nationally. This would give both homelessness and related sectors, plus other relevant local authorities and sectors, an opportunity to liaise and make contacts, learn about best practice and discuss important local issues affecting homelessness. Additionally, we will encourage all local homelessness services to take part in an 'information fair', where services will provide information and data about themselves to all-comers. This concept was particularly welcomed by frontline workers who do not always have an opportunity to engage with higher level consultations on policy development and implementation, so an annual conference would provide an opportunity to access an as-yet untapped resource of professional frontline experience when discussing and developing future focus for homelessness services.

Bristol Homelessness Pages website

5. Council officers will ensure that there is an expansion of web-based information about and homelessness and related issues in Bristol, providing fully up-to-date, accurate and publicly available information, to include:
 - Bristol TREE (Training, Recreation, Education, Employment) Directory
 - Bristol Housing and Support Register
 - Self-help opportunities such as Bristol virtual Housing Shop
 - Signposting to arrears, financial support, debt advice, deposit bond schemes, and other forms of homelessness prevention
 - Downloads available of homelessness sector meeting minutes, to ensure that BCC and its partner agencies can be held accountable
 - Copies of key documents such as the Preventing Homelessness Review and Strategy
 - Information and contact details for housing and support schemes.
6. A website would give us the opportunity to provide better access to a range of different groups involved in homelessness:
 - Homeless households and their friends or families
 - People potentially at risk of homelessness
 - Interested members of the public who may wish to inform themselves about homelessness
 - Professionals working to support homeless people or those at risk of homelessness
 - Landlords (private sector or registered social landlords).

7. Council officers will coordinate monthly mailing lists, by which members of the public, homeless people or their advocates would be able to access regular emailed updates of current homelessness developments locally.
8. Increasing access to information and advice in this manner will enable more opportunities for homelessness prevention in the future through improved access to information for professionals, and increased access to support and advice for those in need.

Regular Housing Options and Advice newsletter

9. As part of our current Homelessness Consortium arrangements, HOAS circulates information to professionals working within the homelessness field via email. This ensures that a large number of people and their agencies are updated on a regular basis about developments within current services, new areas of practice or possible opportunities for development. However, many of Homelessness Consortium meetings also have a large amount of time allocated to information sharing, something that could be completed in a more efficient manner via a weekly newsletter. Relevant information within these weekly newsletters can be collated into a monthly information mail out for the Bristol Homelessness Pages website.

Young People

10. 44% of statutory homelessness acceptances are of under 25 year olds in Bristol, while only 34% of Bristol's general population are in that age group. The Review suggests that we begin to address this issue by increasing the amount of information and engagement about homelessness to young people, making sure that they are aware of their options and of the reality of homelessness.
11. Priority Youth Housing is commissioned with homelessness grant funding to provide an outreach and homelessness prevention intervention for young people in different areas of Bristol, working in community centres to provide advice and support to young people at risk of homelessness. However we need to expand on the success of this scheme by looking to improve access to homelessness information and prevention for young people, in addition to the development of early intervention trigger systems (please see Chapter 3 for more information about trigger systems).
12. *Healthy Schools Programme*: over 100 Bristol schools have already achieved National Healthy Schools Status and all schools in the City are now engaged with the National Healthy Schools Programme, which supports the links between health, behaviour and achievement. The impact of the programme is based on a approach to physical and emotional well-being focused on four core themes: Personal, Social

and Health Education; Healthy Eating; Physical Activity; Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

13. Homelessness prevention, with a view to helping young people make positive choices about their future, could be an integral part of the Personal, Social and Health Education theme within the Bristol Healthy Schools Programme, especially as part of an integrated prevention programme including information about drug use or future employment, for example. Personal, Social and Health Education Prompts including sex and relationship education, and drug education.
14. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan will include a specific project to end of the use of B&B accommodation as an emergency housing option for young people, in favour of better and supported solutions.

Expected Outcomes with Improved Access to Information and Advice

- More self-help opportunities where individuals are able to take control of their own housing options
- Better access information for individuals and professionals looking for support or advice regarding homelessness
- Better understanding of homelessness systems for young people who may be able to ask for homelessness prevention at an earlier stage in their lives if necessary, and make alternative choices where they are able to
- Improved access to support services for individuals in need of advice or support.

EQUALITIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

Please note that this chapter is not the Equalities Assessment conducted as part of the Preventing Homelessness Review nor is it the Equalities Impact Assessment that will accompany the Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

Summary

1. Homelessness services will be reviewed within the context of the council's Integrated Equalities Policy, to ensure that they are accessible.
2. The accessibility of services will be assessed to ensure that there are no negative, and generally positive, impacts emerging from new services and service changes.
3. The Bristol Housing Race Equality Group's Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Delivery Plan 2007 relevant homelessness and housing advice targets will be addressed.
4. The known and still unaddressed equalities needs, described in Bristol's 2003 Homelessness Strategy action plan will be met.
5. The Preventing Homelessness Review and Strategy 2008-2011 will be made as accessible as possible.

What We Know Now

6. Bristol's Homelessness Strategy 2003 set out four key issues, one of which is:
'Current monitoring and performance management systems need to be reviewed and better utilised in order for us to anticipate homelessness earlier and act on our findings'.
7. The Preventing Homelessness Review reveals comprehensive, well-presented performance management data, which has assisted the council and the homelessness sector in better meeting national and local targets and in planning and refocusing future provision.
8. Although equalities monitoring has improved since 2003, particularly since 2005, there is room to do better and respond more effectively. The data collected, referred to and presented in the Preventing Homelessness Review demonstrates the following:

9. **Ethnicity:** There has been a steady growth in the numbers and percentages of African and Caribbean households presenting as homeless or potentially homeless. A significant number of service users have not self-declared their ethnicity.
10. **Age Groupings:** Of all presentations, the overwhelming majority are made by the 25-44 year old age group, closely followed by 16-24 year olds.
11. **Gender:** Council officers collect fairly sophisticated information linking gender to household types.
12. **Reasons for Homelessness:** Since 2005/6 the council has improved and expanded our collection of information about the reasons for households' homelessness. Overwhelmingly, friends, relatives and family members no longer being able to accommodate is the main reason, followed by loss of an assured shorthold tenancy, then relationship breakdowns, including domestic and other abuse and violence. This is not to say that in most cases there is simply one cause. We recognise that many people face homelessness due to a combination of individual and societal factors e.g. drug use, low self-esteem, mental ill health, leaving care or other institutions e.g. hospital and prison.
13. **Support Needs and Disability:** Since 2004/5 the council has collected support needs and disability data, which includes recording of care leavers, young people (16/17 year olds particularly), care and other institution leavers, physical disability, mental ill health, problematic alcohol and drug use.

Service Reviews

14. During 2008, the council's HOAS (Housing Options & Advice Service) and Supporting People Teams will complete their Homelessness Pathways Project, part of the Housing Support Register development due to be operational in September 2008. In tandem with this, there will be a significant review of how HOAS itself delivers services (see Chapter 3).

Homelessness grant service reviews

15. Part of this process will include reviews, largely affecting Supporting People and Homelessness Grant funded service. The council commissions such services with contractual obligations as set out below:

'In the delivery of the Service to the public or the exercise of any public function on the Council's behalf the Contractor shall give appropriate consideration to each Service User's age, any disability, economic or

social background, gender (including transgender issues), sexual orientation, marital and civil partnership status, race, (including nationality, cultural or ethnic background) religion or belief, shall observe all legislation relating to equalities and shall follow the Council's Equalities Policy and any other equal opportunities legislation and policy as may apply from time to time during the Contract period and shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any of those grounds.'

Expected Outcomes

- The review process will include an analysis of how successful agencies have been in meeting these requirements and will make recommendations about how further improvements can be made.
- The review process will create shared Supporting People and HOAS expectations of all homelessness services in terms of service delivery to equalities groups.

Responsiveness and Outreach

16. Bristol City Council works with its partners to deliver practical improvements in housing for BME communities. This is being achieved with the help of the BME Housing Needs Survey conducted in 2005 by Salford University. A key outcome of this survey was the adoption of the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Delivery Plan in 2007. The Plan feeds into an Action Plan which is overseen by the Bristol Housing Race Equality Group (REG) which meets at least three times a year.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Service Delivery Plan

17. The BME Housing Delivery Plan includes two targets that require further attention and will be recorded as actions in this Strategy's Action Plan:

Target B1 – Training for BME Community Groups: Extend HOAS homelessness/housing training for BME community groups including youth orientated groups and links to Supporting People services.

Target B2 – Outreach to BME Groups to Deliver Advice and Assistance to Them and to Gain Better Information About (How to Meet) Their Needs: Expand outreach services, via Homelessness Consortium sub-groups, to provide advice and information services through partnerships between mainstream advice agencies and BME groups.

18. More generally, the intention is to boost significantly the levels of early interventions, outreach, drop-in and case management/lead worker work across the piece, including a special focus on BME groups who

are at times overrepresented by 300% in the homeless population in Bristol.

Expected Outcomes

- Improvement in the number of BME groups and individuals who receive good quality advice and homelessness prevention interventions
- Greater understanding of the housing and support needs and aspirations of Bristol's BME communities
- Reduction, over time, in the numbers of BME households requiring homelessness sector interventions to solve housing needs and homelessness.

Meeting Known Needs

19. The most recent Homelessness Strategy Action Plan re-fresh (December 2006) includes a small number of actions affecting equalities groups that remain incomplete:

Ensure Access to Furniture for Homeless Families to Assist Their Resettlement: HOAS will support SPACE Trust to support its provision and will review effectiveness in 2008, along with the effectiveness of starter packs and furnished tenancies supplied and created through HOAS.

Safe Accommodation With Support for Domestic Abuse Survivors: There are plans, via the council's Strategic Services Section, to enable the further development of provision, including accommodation for women escaping domestic abuse who are unable to live in shared/refuge accommodation because of their drug use, alcohol use, sex work and other issues.

Develop More Culturally Sensitive Housing and Support for Older BME People: This area of work has been incorporated successfully, with progress, within the BME Housing Delivery Plan.

Develop Prevention and Resettlement Services for Older People Leaving Hospital: HOAS has an in-house Health and Housing Team which will try to ensure that Older People leaving hospital are returning to, or able to access, appropriate accommodation to meet their needs.

20. HOAS is about to create a Hospitals Discharge Coordinator post, to create a pivotal role in delivering the Hospital Discharge Homelessness Prevention Protocol that HOAS officers will finalise and publish in 2008/9, in association with specific health services for homeless people and Bristol's NHS acute trusts.

Customer Satisfaction Data

21. There is no clear evidence in the form of complaints that may suggest our services are discriminatory. However, we do not accept that this means that they are not. Rather, we intend the Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan to set out improved mechanisms by which to ensure improved complaints monitoring and customer satisfaction data, particularly where discrimination might be an issue. This is particularly important because, at present, it cannot be stated confidently that the city's homelessness sector wholly understands or share enough existing information about different cultural attitudes towards homelessness, within Bristol's diverse BME groups.
22. The Preventing Homelessness Review revealed that there are many different methods of collating customer satisfaction data, from regular surveys to collating exit interview data for all of our service users. Different options for collating this information will be reviewed and recommended changes will be implemented as part of the future commissioning model (see Chapter 3).

Accessibility of Strategy Documents

23. The Preventing Homelessness Review, Strategy and Strategy Action Plan and all attachments will be publicly available in both printed and electronic format through Bristol City Council's website and on the proposed Bristol Homelessness website (see Chapter 5 for more detail). We will produce translated or large print versions when requested. We are unlikely to be able to budget to produce taped 'storybook' versions in Bristol's BME languages.

Service Accessibility

24. Currently services are accessible by several different routes so the ability to apply for specific services should be open to everyone in need. The impacts on different equalities groups will be thoroughly considered if any changes to services are proposed as a result of service reviews and the development of Homelessness Pathways, joint commissioning arrangements and forthcoming Supporting People Commissioning Plans.

OTHER PRIORITIES

Summary

1. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008 will work to support the achievement of other key priorities as specified within Bristol City Council strategies, through the development of new working practices and services, and by the support of existing services.

Bristol City Council Housing Strategy 2005–2010

2. BCC's Housing Strategy 2005 –2010 listed 4 main objectives, and the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008 assists with the delivery of two of these:
 - **Objective 3:** Safe and lasting neighbourhoods that encourage social inclusion, welcome diversity, have a socially sustainable mix of housing and are supported by good local services
 - **Objective 4:** Ensure there is timely, integrated information, advice, support and education around housing choices.

Objective 3: Through schemes such as West of England Lettings, Home Choice Bristol, and Bristol Housing and Support Register, we will be able to ensure that individuals have a choice and an influence over where they find settled accommodations. Through early interventions, flexible working and increased access to on-going support, via the Homelessness sector review and the Homelessness Pathways process, we will be able to ensure that people are able to access support enabling them to remain within their community wherever possible.

Objective 4: This will be primarily achieved through many of the schemes as mentioned above, including West of England Lettings, Home Choice Bristol, and BHSR, which will provide information about the location of properties. The review of the Homelessness Sector will enable us to commission integrated housing advice and support services in the future, supported by the creation of Bristol Housing Shop, Bristol Homelessness Pages, and the Annual Bristol Homelessness Conference.

Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Crime and Drugs Strategy 2005-08

3. Bristol Crime and Drugs Strategy's 5 key priorities will be supported from the actions arising from the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008:

Reducing Fear of Crime, and Reducing Acquisitive Crime: The success of existing services such as Bristol Accommodation Gateway, ECHG Prison Homelessness Prevention, and Criminal Justice Interventions Team Housing Assessment Worker, of working with ex-offenders to provide suitable housing and support, will be a crucial area to consider within the Homelessness sector review, considering the impact these services have had locally on crime prevention through support of ex-offenders.

Reducing the harm caused by drugs misuse: An increase in the effectiveness of multi-sector working, new case management systems including lead worker system and changes to case management, a flexible, early interventions approach, and on-going support provided to homeless people will enable us to further achieve success with supporting homeless drug users in addressing their housing and support needs in the long term.

Building stronger, safer communities: Through schemes such as Home Choice Bristol, West of England Lettings, and Bristol Housing and Support Register, we will support homeless people to take ownership of their own housing process and making their own choices over settled accommodation, leading to greater investment in the communities they have chosen for themselves.

Young People: By working in partnership with Children and Young People's Services and SaferBristol, we will work to ensure that harm reduction and prevention information, including homelessness prevention, is offered to children at risk within Bristol.

Bristol City Council Supporting People 5-Year Strategy 2005-2008

4. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008 will support the following key priorities as described in the Supporting People 5-year Strategy, 2005:
 - Develop flexible support services to sustain and develop people's abilities to live in their own homes across all forms of tenure.
 - Provide housing related support and advice services that promote independence and choice for all vulnerable adults.
 - Integrate the Supporting People programme into the existing strategy and planning framework to reduce levels of social exclusion, poverty, institutionalisation, rent arrears, evictions and homelessness.

- Develop a sustainable consultation and participation system with service users, providers and other commissioners in order to develop strategic services and monitor performance.
5. Using the findings of the homelessness service reviews and the Homelessness Pathways Project, future services will be commissioned to work flexibly, provide on-going support to individuals where needed, provide clear information and promote independence and personal choice through increased access to support and advice. The focus will be on homelessness prevention including reducing evictions arising from arrears problems or social exclusion.
 6. By reviewing multi-agency liaison and meetings, including the Homelessness Consortium and sub-groups, there will be joint work with the Supporting People Team to create a workable consultation and participation system with all key stakeholders.

Local Area Agreement and National Indicators

7. Bristol's 35 Local Area Agreement indicators, in addition to 16 further indicators concerning young people and 14 existing 'Reward' indicators, will be agreed and signed off by June 2008.
8. The priorities of this Strategy and its Action Plan will be measured through several of the LAA indicators to ensure that our services are locally relevant and that homelessness services contribute to performance targets. For example, the new model of homelessness services will be able to support the following:
 - Offenders under probation supervision living in settled accommodation at the end of their order or licence, by providing appropriate housing and on-going support to those persons reporting as at risk of homelessness and on probation on release from prison. Current services working in Bristol with offenders on probation at risk of homelessness include ECHG Prison Link Homelessness Prevention and Bristol Accommodation Gateway
 - Drug users in effective treatment, by providing drug users at risk of homelessness with advice and support including sign posting and referral into drug services. ECHG Streetwise Drugs Workers are currently funded by Homelessness Grant to provide homeless drug users who are either beggars or likely to beg with drug treatment and on-going support
9. A new homelessness services model created in context with the LAA would also be able to support indicators such as:
 - The number of vulnerable people achieving independent living, by providing through the Homelessness Pathways process (see Chapter

5) sustainable and appropriate housing solutions and on-going support to individuals

- The number of working age people on out of work benefits, by increasing training and education opportunities to homeless persons in receipt of benefits. BCC has recently commissioned a TREE (Training, Recreation, Education and Employment) Coordinator, employed through Alabaré, to produce a citywide programme of training and education opportunities for homeless people in Bristol.

10. The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 will also support the achievement of other key priorities as specified within Bristol City Council strategies, through the development of new working practices and services, and by the support of existing services.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Summary

1. This chapter sets out how the implementation of this strategy will be managed, monitored and measured. It references new (joint) commissioning arrangements and makes it clear that current outcomes monitoring may need to be expanded and/or altered to encompass and incorporate a broader commissioning base.
2. Part of commissioning arrangements will include strong expectations for services to have capacity to respond effectively to predictable and unpredictable future trends, for example the likely trends described below.

Future Proofing The Strategy – Likely Future Trends

3. Since local authorities' first published their homelessness strategies in summer 2003, there have been significant changes, nationally and locally, to how homelessness is addressed i.e. homelessness prevention rather than more reactive and crisis driven responses. Mirroring experiences in other parts of the country, there have also been notable changes in the profiles and types of households who seek advice and assistance from homelessness services; for example there have been increases in the number of BME households looking for help and comparatively high numbers of people with complex needs who tend to absorb disproportionate amounts of frontline service time and resource.
4. Because this is a five year strategy, with a rolling action plan, it is essential that within it is embedded a clear message about the need to ensure capacity across the piece to deliver high quality services that meet changing needs responsively and creatively.
5. It is not an exact science to predict future needs, but the current socio-economic and demographic context suggests that the following elements of homeless households' profiles and needs should be within the scope of all homelessness and related services:

Worklessness: Central government has identified clearly that worklessness is often an integral element of social exclusion.

It is also a key element that both contributes to and is caused by homelessness. Inspired by CLG's Places of Change agenda, Bristol's response will be to continue, expand and further embed the focus on

TREE for homeless households (training, recreation, education and employment).

Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Recently 80 Asylum Seeker families in Bristol were granted permanent leave to remain by the Borders and Immigration Agency, many of whom were owed 'the full housing duty' by Bristol City Council. Thus it is crucial to remain aware of world events and legislative change, in order to respond effectively to the needs of Refugees. It is anticipated that a further number (yet unknown) of single Asylum Seekers will be awarded status during 2008.

Migrant Workers: Bristol has seen a small but steady growth in Eastern Europeans (A2 and A8 nationals) who are currently without employment and have presented to homelessness services. Unless A2 and A8 nationals have 'worker status', they have no recourse to public funds therefore very limited ability to sustain placements in homelessness and related services. However, it seems reasonable to offer standard offers to workless migrant workers of:

- Signposting to employment providers
- 'Reconnections' to their home country

(Ex) Offenders: Bristol is committed to developing shared outcomes (e.g. reducing reoffending) with criminal justice agencies such as the successful Bristol Accommodation Gateway (BAG), funded by the National Offender Management Service. The BAG pilot scheme will continue in 2008/9, jointly funded by NOMS and CLG Homelessness Grant. It is an example of an approach based on shared objectives and outcomes. During 2009 the feasibility of an expanded West of England Gateway will be explored and sources of future funding researched to sustain this work, to include joint commissioning arrangements.

Ongoing liaison and the development of further protocols with the criminal justice system may help the city to further prevent the homelessness of prisoners on release and homeless Probation Area clients.

Mortgage Repossessions: The collapse of the sub-prime lending market in the USA, coupled with the slowing of the housing market in Britain and the likely 'cooling off' of house prices, could lead to more households becoming at risk of homelessness through mortgage repossessions. CLG has gathered local authority information about how advice services are offered at the court desk concerning mortgage repossession; and Bristol City Council estimates that the Citizens Advice Bureau directly prevents 100 cases of homelessness each year through its court desk work. It is likely that homelessness, debt and advice services may need to develop early interventions with households before they are at risk of their homes being repossessed.

Problematic Alcohol Use: A number of frontline and related services, including the Streetwise Initiative, report that a culture of street and problematic drinking has replaced Class A drug use to a significant extent. This appears to reflect the fact that Bristol's high quality drug treatment commissioning and provision is not yet able to include alcohol treatment. The new national Drug and Alcohol Strategy may address this anomaly and in future specific provision for drinkers may be developed in tandem with treatment options for them.

Young People: The risks to young people who face homelessness can create enduring damage to them and their life chances. Although Bristol has strong strategic planning and service delivery for young people and this Strategy is clear that there should be a strong focus on homelessness prevention via early interventions, current trends suggest that youth homelessness will require concerted, joined-up and sustained work to reduce significantly the high percentage of homelessness amongst under-25 year olds.

Contingency Planning and the Need for Flexibility

6. The following areas of work, captured within the Strategy Action Plan, will help to create a new commissioning model for homelessness and related services:
 - Retendering Supporting People Drug and Alcohol housing and support
 - Review of the council's Housing Options and Advice Service
 - Review of external homelessness services
 - Homelessness Pathways Project and Housing Support Register
 - Review of Bristol Accommodation Gateway and the development of its sustainability strategy
 - Discussions and negotiations with key stakeholders and commissioners throughout the city, concerning joint commissioning and shared outcomes
7. New commissioning arrangements will ensure that services provide adequate contingency and flexibility in their service delivery (including multi-disciplinary working), case management, specific outputs and outcomes and links with other agencies and services. Contingencies and flexibilities will be driven by the predictable (see 'Likely Future Trends') and not-so-predictable changes and new challenges that typify homelessness, economic, social and legislative change.

Ongoing Strategy Management

8. The Project Board for the Preventing Homelessness Review and Strategy agreed at its last meeting to be 'recalled' with the remit to manage the implementation of the Strategy Action Plan at a senior and multi-sectoral level, including representatives of:
 - Bristol Supported Housing Forum / Homelessness Consortium
 - Bristol Primary Care Trust
 - Bristol City Council - Children and Young Peoples Services; SaferBristol and Neighbourhood and Housing Services.
9. It is likely that other representation will be needed to ensure full oversight and continued commitment to the strategy by a complete range of partners. Thus Adult Community Care, the National Offender Management Service and private sector landlords/developers are likely to be invited to join.

Monitoring

10. Initially, monitoring the implementation of the strategy, particularly its Action Plan, will be conducted by the council's Homelessness Policy and Strategy Team, the current collation point for all the city's homelessness prevention and associated monitoring.
11. Current monitoring arrangements include P1E (statutory homelessness), Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) and locally adopted Housing Advice Performance Indicators (HAPIs). HAPI outcomes are used to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of both the councils and external homelessness services, with a particular focus on prevention. It is possible that, during 2008/9, the strategic, commissioning, monitoring and performance management role of the team will be absorbed by the forthcoming Strategic Housing Business Development Unit (SHBDU).

Outcomes Measurement

12. Current outcomes are measured by P1E, National Indicators and HAPI (Housing Advice & Prevention Indicators), as described above. However, the development of a new commissioning model, including Supporting People funding, stronger links to drug treatment funding and multi-disciplinary approaches, including care and health provision, suggest very strongly that a new outcomes measurement framework should be developed as an integral part of the new commissioning model.
13. It is probable that the new commissioning model and a new joint

outcomes framework will be developed as part of the SHBDU's key functions. Outcomes measurement, accompanied by key observations and recommendations, will be forwarded to the Project Board, to enable and inform its Strategy Management functions.