

**SUBMISSION TO COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

**Agenda Item: 4**

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**SUBMISSION BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

**HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY**

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise Members that a Review of Homelessness in Lichfield District has been completed which is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 Members are asked to consider and comment on the Review and the proposed priorities and aims for the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a legal obligation on all local housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their areas and in consultation with partners and stakeholders, develop and publish a strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness by 31st July 2003. The Act placed a further obligation on local housing authorities to publish a new Homelessness Strategy every 5 years following a further review of homelessness in their area.
- 2.2 Lichfield District Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003 which was revised in 2008 following a full review. This latest review will inform an updated Homelessness Strategy for 2013-2018 and its action plan will build upon the achievements made to date and reflect the current priorities for our district. It will also recognise the significant changes that have taken place in both national and local policy context, economic conditions and demand for the service since the last strategy was published in 2008.
- 2.3 In formulating the review, consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders and members of the Strategic Housing Partnership.
- 2.4 Following on from the review, a strategy and action plan will be finalised and, following a further consultation period of 12 weeks from October 2013 it will be brought back to this Committee in January 2014.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Members are asked to note and comment on the Homelessness Review.
- 3.2 Members are asked to recommend to the Cabinet Member the proposed priorities and aims for the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 that are set out in section 6 of the review.

**4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Review of Homelessness has been carried out using existing budgets and the financial implications of any actions in the action plan will be highlighted at a future date.

**5. Local Policy Context**

5.1 Within the strategic theme of 'We'll support people' there is the following long term outcome relevant to the Homelessness Strategy:

- We'll help and support vulnerable adults, families and children to live independent and fulfilled lives in their own homes and communities, and prevent homelessness wherever we can

**6. Risk Management Issues**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood/ Impact</b>	<b>Risk Category</b>	<b>Countermeasure</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Failure to have homelessness strategy in place	Low/Medium	Reputational damage / Legal	Establish a clear timetable to approve and publish the strategy	Housing Services Manager

**Attachments:**

Lichfield District Council Homelessness Strategy Review 2013 (Appendix A)

Report checked and approved:

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Strategic/Corporate Director

**Lichfield District Council  
Homelessness Strategy Review 2013**

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## 1. Introduction and review process

### 1.1 Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a legal obligation on all local housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their areas and in consultation with partners and stakeholders, develop and publish a strategy for tackling and preventing homelessness by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2003.

The Act placed a further obligation on local housing authorities to publish a new Homelessness Strategy every 5 years following a further review of homelessness in their area.

Lichfield District Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003 which was revised in 2008 following a full review. The 2008-13 Strategy identified the following priority areas:

- To prevent homelessness
- To provide more settled homes and increase the supply of affordable housing
- To improve access to services, particularly for vulnerable people
- To reduce the use of and length of stay in temporary accommodation
- To improve partnership work and enable effective joint working

These priorities and the more detailed strategy action plan have directed our work in relation to the development and provision of services to homeless and potentially homeless households in Lichfield District over the last 5 years. Progress against the strategy action plan has been monitored and good progress has been made.

This review will inform an updated Homelessness Strategy for 2013-2018 and the action plan will build upon the achievements made to date and reflect the current priorities for our district. It will also recognise the significant changes that have taken place in both national and local policy context, economic conditions and demand for the service since the last strategy was published in 2008.

### 1.2 Progress since the last strategy

Figure 1 below shows that the number of people contacting us for housing advice has significantly increased by nearly 50% from 1101 in 2008/9 to 1642 in 2012/13. However, despite this there has been a significant reduction in the number of homeless applications and acceptances. One explanation for this reduction could be the increased success of homeless preventions which have increased by 432% between 2008-09 and 2012-13.

Measure	2003-04	2008-09	2012-13
Housing Advice Enquiries	n/k	1101	1642
Homelessness Applications	302	193	101
Homelessness Acceptances	149	110	89
Successful Homeless Preventions	n/k	40	215

Figure 1: Source Lichfield DC P1E Returns and Housing Enquiries database

The progress and delivery of the Homelessness Strategy action plan has been regularly monitored through the corporate performance monitoring framework and also nationally using the P1E homelessness return to government.

A full update of all the progress that has been made against the previous action plan can be found in **Appendix A**. Particular examples of good practice and service development include:

- The development of a housing options service, including a housing advice website
- Development of the Homelessness Prevention Schemes e.g. Rent Guarantee Scheme and Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- Increased working relationship with private landlords
- The introduction of a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)
- Commissioning of services via the Shropshire/Staffordshire Homelessness Prevention Partnership
- The introduction of pilot outreach services at Jigsaw and the Family Justice Centre
- A reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation – particularly for families
- A reduction in the number of families placed into temporary accommodation
- An improved out of hours service
- The appointment of a money advisor, in partnership with Bromford Living and the development of a money advice website
- Working with National Offender Management Service(NOMS) to assist ex-offenders in accessing services
- The delivery of 205 affordable homes since 2008

### **1.3 The review process**

The Homelessness Review document provides up to date information about the current and likely future levels of homelessness, the range of services that are currently provided across the district and the resources available to both the council and its partners to try and deliver these services. This information has informed our Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan covering the period up to December 2018.

The review process has included:

- Summarising changes in policy context at national, regional and local level and identifying how these changes will impact upon our housing options service
- Carrying out an updated needs analysis
- Identifying any gaps in the current service provision and making recommendations for the new strategy and action plan
- Consultation with all key partners including the Strategic Housing Partnership about issues and priorities for the future

## **2. Context**

### **2.1 National context**

The government is committed to tackling and preventing homelessness by working in partnership with local authorities, voluntary sector partners and housing associations to deliver a number of key policy aims.

#### **Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness**

In 2010 the coalition government established a cross-government working group on homelessness which brought together ministers from across 8 government departments to cover the following issues:

- Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – housing and homelessness
- Ministry of Defence – welfare of veterans
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – adult skills
- Department of Health – health and care services
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – housing benefit
- Ministry of Justice – criminal justice
- Home Office – crime prevention
- Department for Education (DfE) – children and youth services

The aim of the group is to prevent and reduce homelessness and to improve the lives of those people who do become homeless. It is committed to working together to share information and to agree how policies across departments can contribute to helping communities to resolve the many and complex issues that can cause people to lose their homes. The group has concentrated its efforts on looking at people who are living on the street or who are in temporary or insecure accommodation (such as hostels, shelters and squats) and who are at significant risk of rough sleeping.

#### **Rough Sleeping**

The ministerial working group published its first report in July 2011- “Vision to end Rough Sleeping, No Second Night out Nationwide”, in which it set out 6 government commitments to end rough sleeping:

1. Helping people off the streets
2. Helping people to access healthcare
3. Helping people into work
4. Reducing bureaucratic burdens
5. Increasing local control over investment in services
6. Devolving responsibility for tackling homelessness

The main focus of the report is on single homeless people who are not in ‘priority need<sup>1</sup>’, including those who are living on the streets and those who are at the greatest risk of rough sleeping because they have lived on the streets or are living in insecure accommodation. The report recognises the need to tackle the broader issues that led to homelessness in the first place.

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<sup>1</sup> Priority need categories as set out in the homelessness legislation

Central to the report is the governments pledge to roll out the principles of 'No Second Night Out' which has operated in London since April 2011. This programme aims to ensure that those people who do find themselves sleeping rough to be quickly helped off the streets so they do not spend a second night without a roof. The report also recommends that local authorities will need to build on their existing services to adopt a 'gold standard' approach to rough sleeping which meets the "No Second Night Out" principles of:

- New rough sleepers should be identified and helped off the streets immediately so that they do not fall into a dangerous rough sleeping lifestyle
- Members of the public should be able to play an active role by reporting and referring people sleeping rough
- Rough sleepers should be helped to access a place of safety where their needs can be quickly assessed and they can receive advice on their options
- Rough sleepers should be able to access emergency accommodation and other services such as healthcare, if needed
- If people have come from another area of the country and find themselves sleeping rough, the aim should be to reconnect them back to their local community unless there is a good reason why they cannot return.

West Midlands Homelessness Forum has produced a regional response to the central Government initiative and is asking all local authorities in the West Midlands to sign up. The Council is currently considering the implications of committing to the West Midlands No Second Night Out standard, which contains seven agreed outcomes:

- Providing one point of contact for reporting rough sleepers
- Extend outreach service across the sub-region
- Rolling out an agreed rough sleepers database in each sub-region
- Co-ordinating rough sleeper estimates and counts across the sub- regions
- Co-ordinating cold weather provision
- Offer personalised solutions and individual budgets
- Facilitate reconnection

### **Making Every Contact Count**

In August 2012 the ministerial working group published its second report 'Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness'. The focus of this report is on how services could be managed in a way that prevents all households, regardless of household type, from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness.

The report had a simple aim – to make sure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts. It brought together government commitments to:

- **tackle troubled childhoods and adolescence** - through interventions to turn around the lives of the most troubled families and youth homelessness
- **improve health** - including improving outcomes for homeless people with dual drugs / alcohol and mental health needs

- **reduce involvement in crime** - through support to the new Police and Crime Commissioners; improving offender access to private rented sector accommodation; and measures to help those on short sentences retain their tenancy
- **improve skills; employment; and financial advice** - through new housing demonstration projects which help claimants budget and manage rent payments; a commitment to explore a payment by results approach for those some distance from the labour market
- **pioneer social funding for homelessness** - through a world first Social Impact Bond for rough sleepers and support to other local commissioners to turn social investment propositions into reality

The report states that these are not problems that government can fix alone and states that local authorities and their partners need to bring these commitments to life. To assist in this the government has set the following ten local challenges that should lead to all local homelessness teams to delivering ‘a gold standard service’ and aspiring to the achievements of the best:

1. Adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has ‘buy in’ across all local authority services
2. Actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
3. Offer a Housing Options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
4. Adopt a *No Second Night Out* model or an effective local alternative
5. Have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
6. Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
7. Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
8. Have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
9. Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
10. Not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than 6 weeks

### **Homelessness Prevention**

The government has continued to provide £80m funding for preventing homelessness through the Business Rate Retention Scheme. The purpose of this funding is to enable local authorities to provide prevention initiatives, examples of which include rent deposits to help people obtain tenancies in the private rented sector, mediation services, and debt services. More detailed information regarding the homelessness prevention schemes can be found later in this document in section 3.2.

### **Localism Act**

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a range of provisions to move ‘power’ from central government back into the hands of communities, individuals and local councils. The most relevant provisions of the Act for this strategy are to:



- Allow local authorities to discharge their duties to homeless households by using private rented accommodation
- Give local authorities the power to limit who can apply for social housing within their area
- Provide for a new form of flexible tenure for social housing tenants

Under previous legislation, people who become homeless were able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, and wait until a social-rented home became available. The provisions of the Act mean that this is no longer the case and a local authority can discharge its duty by making a reasonable offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. We have developed a policy to define a reasonable offer and to describe how we intend to use this power.

More generally, changes to the way social housing is allocated and the length of social housing tenancies have the potential to have a knock-on impact on the homelessness service. The potential impact of these was considered in the revision of the allocation policy in 2013, a copy of which can be found at:

[http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=95](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=95).

### **Welfare Reform**

The reforms to the welfare system introduced through the Welfare Reform Act represent the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years and are intended to make the benefits and tax credits system fairer and simpler by creating the right incentives to get more people into work whilst protecting the most vulnerable in society. The main provisions are:

- The introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit
- A stronger approach to reducing fraud and error with tougher penalties for the most serious offences
- Reforms to Disability Living Allowance, through the introduction of Personal Independence Payment
- Changes to the Housing Benefits system
- Transferring responsibility for managing the Social Fund to local authorities

These measures are in addition to the wider reforms being undertaken to housing benefit and the changes to council tax benefit which came into effect in April 2013.

Recent measures to reduce Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have intended to exert a downward pressure on rents in the private rented sector, however, in popular areas such as this where there is a small but buoyant private rented sector, there is concern that these changes will make it harder for people to find suitable affordable housing in the private rented sector and may threaten the ability of some households to continue to afford their current home. This can only add to the pressure on the housing register and is likely to impact on the homelessness/housing options service.

The changes recently implemented through the welfare reforms have had the following implications for households:

- Tenants who rent 5-bed homes have had a reduction in benefit through the limitation of maximum benefit to the cost of a 4-bed home.

- Significant reductions from claimants eligible rent where other adults live with them (typically the claimants own adult children or other relatives) who are either working or claiming in their own right.
- The increase in the age threshold for the shared room rate from 25 to 35 leading to single people under the age of 35 facing increased difficulty in accessing suitable accommodation.

To help households manage the transition, the government has increased the Discretionary Housing Payments Fund which provides additional funding to local authorities to provide support to those households that have been affected by the changes to the housing benefit rules. A copy of our Discretionary Housing Payment Policy which sets out the criteria for applications within the district can be found at: [http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/download/1665/discretionary\\_housing\\_payment\\_policy](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/download/1665/discretionary_housing_payment_policy)

### **Troubled Families Programme**

The government launched the troubled families<sup>2</sup> programme in February 2013 with the aim to ensure the children in these families have the chance of a better life. As part of the programme, the government agreed to work alongside local authorities to:

- get children back into school
- reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour
- put adults on a path back to work
- reduce the high costs these families place on the public sector each year

The Government is encouraging local authorities to work with families in ways the evidence shows is more effective, such as:

- joining up local services
- dealing with each family's problems as a whole rather than responding to each problem, or person, separately
- appointing a single key worker to work intensively with families to change their lives for the better for the long term

In Lichfield District a multi-agency working party has been established to look at identified families chaired by Staffordshire County Council's District Commissioning Lead which is called 'Supporting Families in Lichfield District'.

### **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM)**

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of four national charities – Clinks, Drug Scope, Homeless Link and Mind that has been formed to influence policy and services for adults facing multiple needs and exclusions. Together the charities represent over 1600 frontline organisations working in the criminal justice, substance misuse, homelessness and mental health sectors.

The MEAM approach aims to help local areas design and deliver co-ordinated services for people with multiple and/or complex needs.

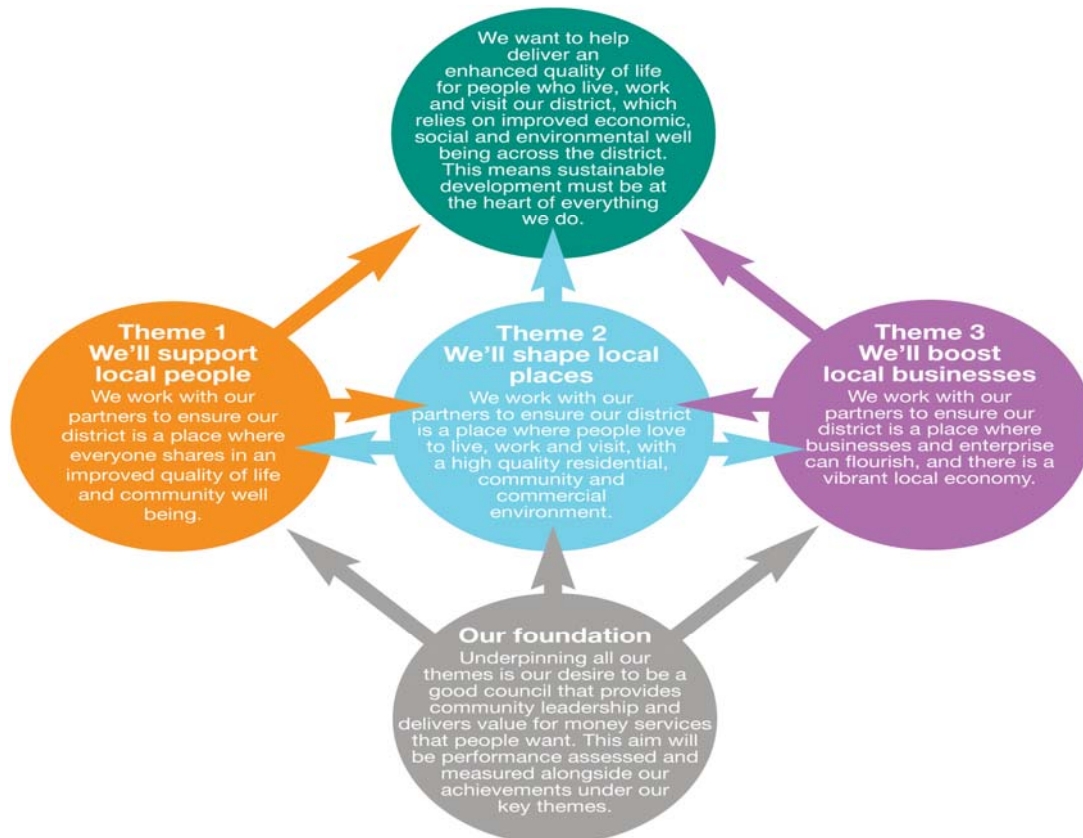
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<sup>2</sup> The Government defined troubled families as those that have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector. The government committed to working with local authorities and their partners to help 120,000 troubled families in England turn their lives around by 2015.

## 2.2 Local context

### 2.2.1 Local policy and strategies

In the period since the last review and strategy in 2008 there have been a number of important developments with regard to assisting vulnerable people more effectively in the district. The District Council and Lichfield District Strategic Partnership (LSP)<sup>3</sup> have both endorsed and adopted The Plan for Lichfield District 2012-16<sup>4</sup> which sets out a shared vision and direction for tackling issues that are important to local residents and businesses. The overall purpose of the plan and the three themes is shown in the next diagram:



Within the strategic theme of 'we'll support people' there are the following long term outcomes relevant to housing and homelessness:

- We'll help people to be and to feel secure in their homes, neighbourhoods and town and city centres by tackling crime and anti-social behaviour
- We'll help and support vulnerable adults, families and children to live independent and fulfilled lives in their own homes and communities, and prevent homelessness wherever we can
- We'll improve the health and wellbeing of the whole population making sure we make the biggest improvement for people with the lowest life expectancy

<sup>3</sup> The District Board is the decision making body of the Local Strategic Partnership which brings together the Council, Staffordshire County Council with the police, fire service, health services and many other local agencies and businesses.

<sup>4</sup> This is available at [http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/file/4086/a\\_plan\\_for\\_lichfield\\_district\\_2012\\_2016](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/file/4086/a_plan_for_lichfield_district_2012_2016)

Within the strategic theme of 'we'll shape place' there is the following long term outcome that is of most relevance to this strategy:

- We'll work with others to provide access and choice to a range of market specialist and affordable homes that meet the needs of our existing and future residents

The District Board is made up of representatives of the Local Strategic Partnership and works through the following groups-

- Tamworth and Lichfield Business Economic partnership,
- Sustainable Environment Partnership,
- Lichfield One Place Board
- Strategic Housing Partnership which is chaired by the Head of Neighbourhoods at Bromford Living, the largest housing association in the district
- Health and Well-Being Group – chaired by Public Health

### **The Housing Strategy 2013-2017**

The Housing Strategy 2013-2017 was approved in April 2013 and sets out the council's plans for housing over this period. The vision of the strategy is:

'To ensure that the housing stock meets existing and future housing needs and includes a wide choice of affordable homes in healthy, safe and sustainable communities'

In developing the strategy the council and its partners identified the following four priorities for housing all of which are of equal importance, for the period until 2017:

- Improve housing choice and access to a wide range of affordable homes
- Prevent and reduce homelessness
- Ensure warm, healthy, well maintained homes, reduce fuel poverty and cut carbon emissions
- Support older and vulnerable people to live as independently and healthily as possible

These priorities are underpinned by a range of key aims and the Delivery Plan contains a range of actions and initiatives designed to help us address the four priorities in conjunction with our partners. As well as a main strategy document there are four detailed appendices that contain evidence to support the four strategies. The strategy and appendices is available to view at:

[http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/info/200173/housing\\_strategy/353/download\\_our\\_housing\\_strategies/2](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/info/200173/housing_strategy/353/download_our_housing_strategies/2).

### **Other strategies**

**The Staffordshire Flexi Care Housing Strategy 2010-2015** identifies the number of flexi-care or extra care units that are required in the district to meet current and future needs. For Lichfield District this is an additional 700 flexi care units by 2015 rising to 1,199 by 2030; with a tenure split of 68% owned and 32% rented. The majority of people in a flexi care housing scheme will be over the age of 55 but may include some younger people with disabilities.

**The 2012 – 2016 Staffordshire Strategy for Tackling Domestic Abuse** aims to break the cycle of domestic abuse within families through four objectives. The first focuses on prevention through, for example, raising awareness and working with young people;

the second is to focus on provision by ensuring adequate access to quality services; the third is through partnership; and finally the fourth is to work with perpetrators.

**The 2012-2015 Staffordshire Housing Support and Independence Strategy** puts in place a 3 year plan to achieve the vision to enable every citizen in Staffordshire to live as independently as possible. It is based on a 'whole life' approach which joins services up and helps people to take control of their lives.

**The Lichfield District Local Plan** comprises a strategy<sup>5</sup> and a land allocations document, with a number of supporting documents which will provide the framework for managing development, addressing key planning issues and guiding investment across the district up to 2028. Within the strategy document is a 'Homes for the Future' chapter which sets out the core housing policies including the affordable housing policy, based on evidence contained in the Affordable Housing Viability Study and update, which proposes a target of up to 40% affordable housing on large sites; but it is a flexible policy that allows the council to change the % provision of affordable housing, according to market conditions.

### **2.2.2 Lichfield District's housing market**

Lichfield District has a high level of housing need and there are a number of supply and demand pressures contributing to a growing difficulty in meeting the need for housing within the district. There is a higher proportion than the regional average of the older working age population (40-65) and people aged between 65 and 79, but a much smaller proportion of younger working age population (20 to 34)<sup>6</sup>. Due to the ageing population, the number of older people is forecast to increase even further, particularly in the over 80 age group which is forecast to increase by 127% by 2030<sup>7</sup>.

This demographic shift will present an increasing challenge for the district, particularly in terms of the impact on the economy of health and social care services and is likely to result in a greater need for smaller and more supported accommodation plus associated support services, to enable elderly residents to live safely and independently within the community, despite growing levels of frailty, disability and dementia.

Lichfield is an attractive destination for people to live and has seen significant immigration from the West Midlands conurbation and other nearby towns, which has led to increased pressure for housing growth beyond that generated from the local population. The affordability ratio, which is the ratio of house prices to incomes is high, meaning that home ownership is out of reach to many, particularly would be first time buyers. There is also a high incidence of larger detached dwellings and an undersupply of smaller dwellings which limits choice and housing options for residents. Despite a recent slight reduction, the average house price in the district is still out of the reach of many households, with them remaining the highest in Staffordshire for the past 5 years.

Another factor limiting housing choice is that the district has a smaller than average private rented sector, rent levels are generally higher than surrounding areas and

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<sup>5</sup> This can be viewed online at

[http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/download/1440/lichfield\\_district\\_local\\_plan\\_strategy\\_july\\_2012](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/downloads/download/1440/lichfield_district_local_plan_strategy_july_2012)

<sup>6</sup> Southern Staffordshire Districts Housing Needs study and SHMA update 2012

<sup>7</sup> Projecting Older People Population Information system (POPPI) data 2012

market demand is strong. In addition the district has only a small number of shared houses which is estimated at less than 100.

With regards to social housing, the pressure on the housing register (the waiting list for social housing) remains high, with 2910 households live on the UChoose housing waiting list at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, of which 1020 are considered to be in a reasonable preference category<sup>8</sup> with a connection to Lichfield, and 343 of whom were classed as homeless or potentially homeless. There is also the potential for further rise in numbers on the housing register, both from households who cannot afford to buy and from households who may have been able to do so but who are currently unable to due to tighter lending criteria and the need for substantial deposits.

In terms of housing supply within the district, like other areas the recession has led to a slow down in house building and particularly a reduction in the new supply of affordable housing. Whilst there is a clear need for additional affordable housing within the district to meet identified needs, it is also important to focus on activity which will allow people to remain in their existing home for as long as possible, and therefore limit additional demand. This means that our homelessness prevention activities have a vital contribution to make by removing the need for people to move when, with help, they could remain in their existing home. Further details on the housing market in the district can be found in the Housing Strategy 2013-2017.

### **2.2.3 Local resources**

#### **The Homelessness / Housing Options service**

The homelessness and housing advice service is currently delivered by an in house team which consists of 2 housing options officers, a senior housing options officer, a housing options manager and supported by a housing administration officer.

The housing options team provide advice and information about a wide range of housing and related issues. In addition, a number of partners in the statutory and voluntary sector provide advice and assistance which in many circumstances may prevent a household from having to make an application on the grounds of homelessness. This advice and assistance includes the following housing related issues:

- Landlord and tenant problems/issues
- Rent/benefits/debt issues
- Relationship breakdown
- Problems with neighbours/anti social behaviour
- Finding accommodation

The services offered by the housing options team were significantly enhanced in 2012 when the post of a money advice worker was employed, using some funding from Bromford Living, to provide money advice to households predominantly in the private sector. The money advisor can check benefit entitlement, help with budgets, negotiate with creditors, assist with court representation and make applications for charitable assistance. This service assists households to maximise their income,

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<sup>8</sup> Reasonable preference is defined as being in priority bands 1-3 and therefore considered to be in some degree of housing need.

manage debts effectively and therefore sustain their tenancy or mortgage.

As well as offering advice and assistance and seeking to prevent homelessness where ever possible, the team also assess homeless applications to determine whether a statutory duty exists.

The term 'homelessness' has a specific legal definition and before a statutory duty arises (homeless 'acceptance') there are 5 tests which we must consider and further details of these are in **Appendix B**. The Local Authority has different duties and powers depending upon the outcome of the 5 tests and these are:

- Pending enquiries - If someone is homeless and in priority need they will be eligible for temporary accommodation pending enquiries into the rest of their circumstances.
- Unintentionally homeless and in priority need - a duty to secure accommodation
- Unintentionally threatened with homelessness and in priority need - there is a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that accommodation does not cease to be available
- Intentionally homeless – there is a duty to provide advice and assistance and secure accommodation for such period as will give applicant a reasonable period to secure accommodation for him/herself
- Intentionally threatened with homelessness – there is a duty to provide advice and assistance

#### **Homelessness Prevention schemes**

The Council introduced a number of homelessness prevention schemes to enable households to remain in their current accommodation or to obtain alternative accommodation. Further details of the Homelessness Prevention schemes are given in **Appendix C**.

#### **Housing Advice and Guidance Website**

In October 2011 the Council launched a housing advice and guidance website which allows households threatened with homelessness or people needing housing advice to access a range of information and advice tailored to their individual circumstances. The website can be found at:

[http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/info/100007/housing/1456/housing\\_advice\\_and\\_guidance\\_website](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/info/100007/housing/1456/housing_advice_and_guidance_website)

#### **Other Local resources**

##### **Money Advice Website**

The Council, in partnership with Bromford Living and South East Staffordshire Citizen's Advice Bureau, have produced a website to assist those who are struggling with debt or trying to avoid falling into debt. The site contains advice on debt management solutions, advice on benefit entitlement and links to websites, telephone helplines and information resources. There are on average 41 visitors to the website each month. The website can be found at [www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney)

## Lichfield Foyer

Lichfield Foyer is a 26 bed scheme for young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or in housing need which is run by Midland Heart, a Registered Provider. Applicants to the Foyer must be willing to engage in employment, education and training opportunities whilst living at the scheme. The accommodation comprises 17 single bedrooms with shared facilities and 9 one-bed self contained flats at an adjoining property - Aiden Court. There is a training room and IT suite on site.

Applicants are required to complete a risk and needs assessment and an affordability assessment before an offer of accommodation can be made. The maximum length of stay is 2 years. The service is staffed 24 hours per day and staff provide housing related support to enable customers to gain the skills required to move-on into independent living. Self referrals are accepted and the scheme is accredited by the Foyer Federation.

## Housing Related Support Services

There are a number of support services that provide housing related support to various client groups. This support is either provided to the client in their own home, to enable them to be able manage their own affairs e.g. to pay their rent or bills or not cause anti social behaviour so that they can keep their home, or as part of the accommodation offered to them . Figure 2 below details the services available in Lichfield District.

Client Group	Service Type	Service Provider	Number of units
People with Learning Disabilities	Floating Support Service	Lifestyles	30
People with Learning Disabilities and Mental Health	Floating Support Service	Bromford	15
Generic, socially excluded groups.	Floating Support Service	Lichfield Floating Support Socially Excluded	60
People with HIV / AIDS	Floating Support Service	Positive Housing Support	1
People with Mental Health Problems	Supported Housing (Shared or Self-Contained)	Supported Housing Staffordshire St Matthews Road	16 14

Figure 2

## Temporary Accommodation

Where a household has become homeless through no fault of their own, is in 'priority need' and 'eligible for assistance' the council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation. The council have an agreement with Bromford Support to provide and maintain accommodation to enable the council to meet this duty. The accommodation is currently provided in two schemes, Edgeworth House in Lichfield and New Gardens in Burntwood together with 4 individual houses.

## Homes Direct

Homes Direct is an online housing register which is a new choice based lettings system for Lichfield District that was launched in July 2013. Bromford Living manages Homes



Direct on behalf of the council and work to help local people to find affordably priced homes to rent. Homes Direct can be found at [www.homesdirect.org.uk](http://www.homesdirect.org.uk).

### **South East Staffordshire Citizens Advice Bureau (SESCAB)**

SESCAB provide free, confidential, impartial and independent advice and information on any subject, including debt, money management and housing. They also offer practical help, including filling in forms and drafting letters and negotiate with third parties, including creditors.

### **Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse**

The Pathway Project and the Family Justice Centre work closely with the council in providing advice and assistance to victims of domestic violence. The refuge run by Pathway provides 14 units of accommodation for women fleeing domestic violence as well as 25 units of floating support in the district. The floating support service is particularly important because it enables relevant support to be provided at the right time to prevent a housing crisis and where victims have been re-housed or have had sanctuary measures fitted it assists them in re-building their lives.

Where victims want to be re-housed our housing options team will work with them, other local authorities and the relevant support providers to find them suitable permanent accommodation, providing housing advice and assistance and making sure they have access to appropriate support.

## **3. Homelessness in Lichfield District – local evidence**

### **3.1 Housing enquiries**

We have a duty to provide advice and assistance relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness free of charge to anyone threatened with homelessness or in housing need. The provision of timely advice and support is key in preventing homelessness within the district.

We can see in Figure 3 below that number of enquiries received and the number of cases that have progressed to each subsequent stage has changed quite significantly since 2008/9. There has been an increase of 49% in the number of enquiries received and the number of cases where homelessness was prevented has also increased significantly, whilst the number of homeless applications being made has declined.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Housing Options Enquiries Received</b>	<b>Cases where homelessness Prevented / Relieved</b>	<b>Homeless applications</b>	<b>Homeless acceptances</b>
<b>2008-09</b>	1101	40	193	110
<b>2009-10</b>	1350	116	124	81
<b>2010-11</b>	1587	128	142	114
<b>2011-12</b>	1447	145	142	114
<b>2012-13</b>	1642	215	101	89

Figure 3 - Total number of enquiries, preventions, applications and acceptances by year.

Source: LDC Housing Enquiries Database and P1E Return

An analysis of the main reasons why householders contacted us during 2012-13 is detailed in figure 4 below where we can see that the main reason for enquiries is relationship breakdown<sup>9</sup> at 43.2% of enquiries, with loss of tenancy being the second highest reason at 26%.

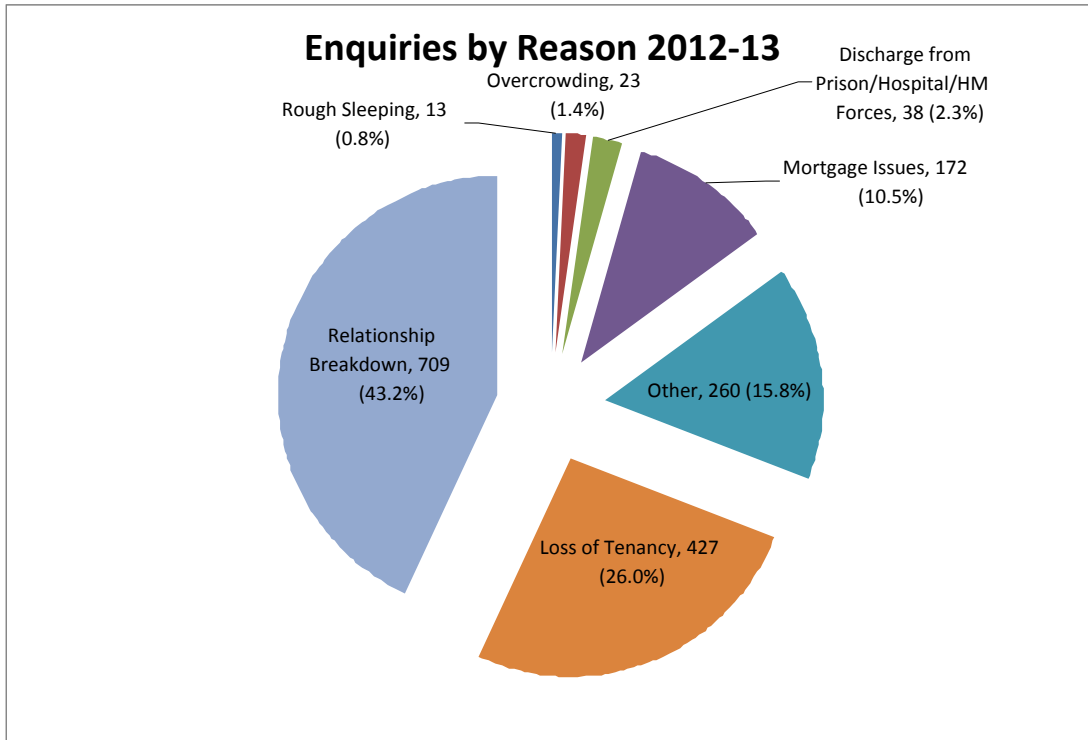


Figure 4: Source: LDC Housing Enquiries Database

It is anticipated that enquiries and the number of households requiring our assistance will remain high and significantly above pre-recession levels due to a range of issues to be discussed later. The main impacts of this are an increase in waiting times for appointments to see our housing options officers and an increase in the number of households placed in temporary accommodation.

### 3.2 Current levels of homelessness and trends

Despite the increased demand for our housing advice services, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of homeless applications since 2008(see figure 5), which is partly due to the increased emphasis on housing options advice that is available from the team.

<sup>9</sup> This will include domestic abuse.

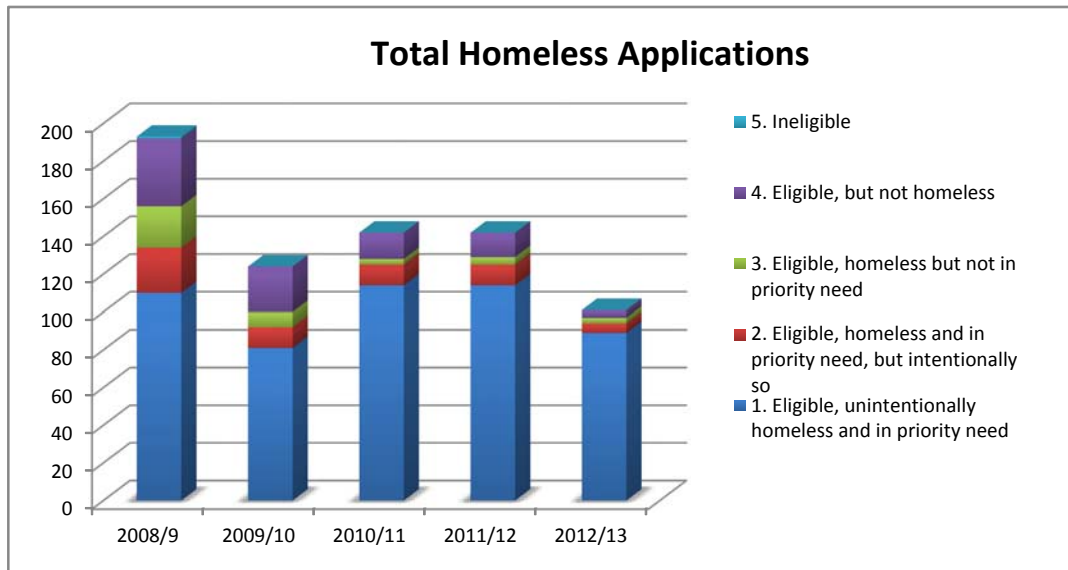


Figure 5: Source P1E Return

This reduction however does not fully reflect the national trend as nationally in 2010/11 there was the first increase in homeless acceptances since 2003-04, with an increase of 10% from 2009/10, compared to a 40% increase in Lichfield District for the same period. In 2011-12 there was a further increase of 10% nationally, whilst in Lichfield District there was no change and in 2012-13 the national figures have continued with the upward trend, with acceptances increasing by a further 6% from the previous year, whilst in Lichfield District the number has declined by 21%.

A comparison with Staffordshire, the West Midlands and England, of the total and the average number of homeless acceptances per 1,000 households can be found in **Appendix D**. In Staffordshire, Lichfield District has had the highest number of homeless acceptances per 1,000 households for the last 4 years. In 2012-13 there were 2.12 homeless acceptances per 1,000 households compared with 2.37 nationally, although we remain higher than many other Staffordshire Districts.

In 2008/9, 58% of homeless applications were accepted as statutorily homeless but by 2012/13 this had increased to 88%. Figure 6 shows the number and percentage of homeless applications where the full homeless duty has not been accepted because the household does not meet the criteria<sup>10</sup> and we can be seen that these numbers have significantly decreased over the last 5 years from a total of 82 in 2008-09 to 12 in 2012-13.

<sup>10</sup> In assessing what duty is owed to a household that makes a homeless application the Council must consider whether they are: Homeless or threatened with homelessness (within 28 days), In priority need or unintentionally homeless. If a household cannot meet these criteria then they will not be accepted as statutorily homeless and they could be found either, not homeless, intentionally homeless or not in priority need, meaning that the Council's duty towards them is different.

Year	Number of 'Not Homeless' Cases	Number of 'Non-Priority' Cases	Number of 'Intentional' cases
2008-09	36 (18.7%)	22 (11.4%)	24 (12.4%)
2009-08	24 (19.4%)	8 (6.5%)	11 (8.9%)
2010-11	14 (9.9%)	3 (2.1%)	11 (7.7%)
2011-12	13 (9.2%)	4 (2.8)	11 (7.7%)
2012-13	4 (4%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)

Figure 6: Source: P1E Return

In terms of homeless decisions, figure 7 below shows a comparison of the main reasons for homelessness of those accepted as statutorily homeless in Lichfield District between 2008-09 and 2012-13.

We can see that the main reasons for homelessness have consistently been 'Parents no longer able or willing to accommodate' and 'violence', with 'loss of rented accommodation' become a more significant cause in 2012-13, reflecting the economic conditions and changes to the welfare system. In the last 2 years we have also seen an increase in the number of households citing rent arrears as the primary cause of their homelessness, again reflecting the economic conditions. Relationship Breakdown remains one of the highest causes of homelessness in Lichfield District; this is covered by 4 categories in figure 7 below (violence, non-violent breakdown, parents and others no longer willing to accommodate). In 2011-12 relationship breakdown accounted for almost 70% of all homeless acceptances, in 2012-13 this had reduced to 48% but it remains the highest reason.

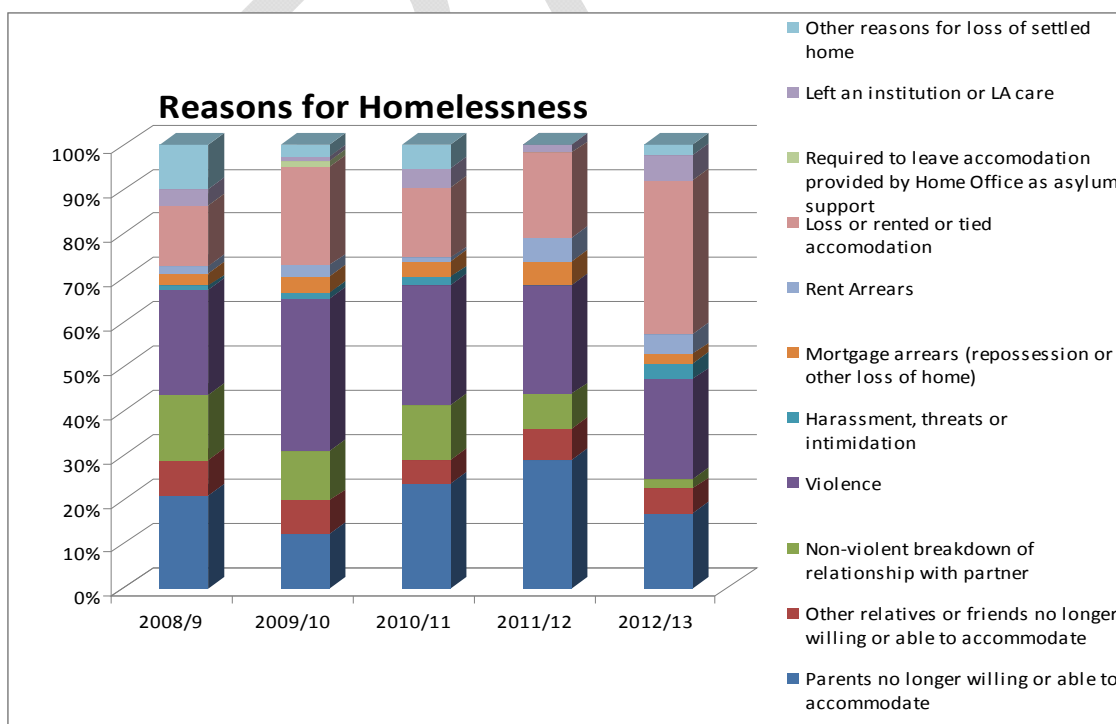


Figure 7: Source: P1E returns

The quarterly data returns on those households accepted as statutorily homeless (P1E return) includes information on ethnicity, household type and age of the lead applicant.

Figure 8 below shows the household composition by age of the lead applicant for the last 5 years for Lichfield District. Generally between 2008/9 and 2011/12 the percentage of young people between 16 and 24 of all homeless acceptances remained broadly the same (35% to 41%). However in 2012/13 this has fallen to 24%.

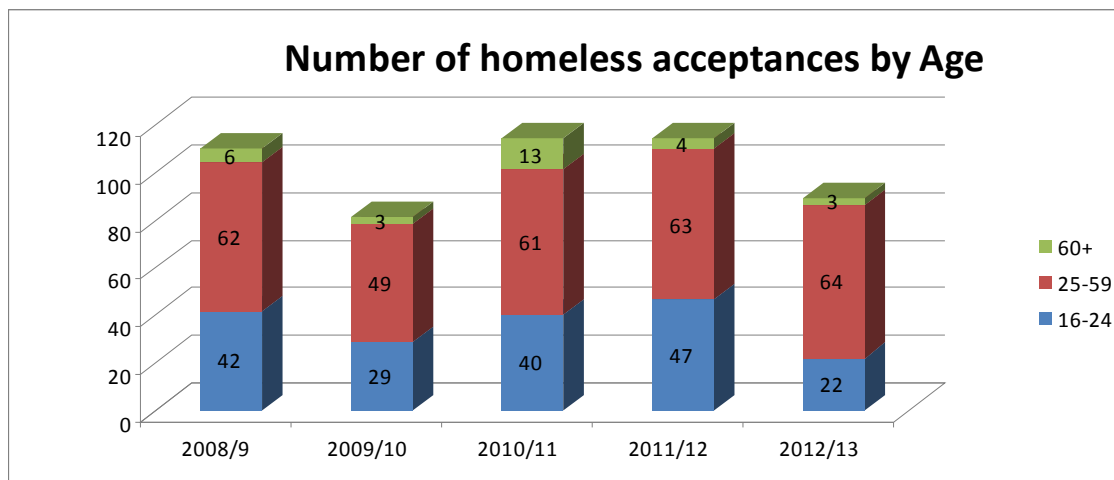


Figure 8 - Source P1E Returns

Figure 9 below shows that the majority of known household types include those with children, and in 2011-12 77% of all households accepted statutorily homeless were in this category. In 2012/13 74% of households accepted as homeless include children, of these 83% are lone parents (57% of all acceptances). It also shows that over 50% of homeless acceptances since 2008/9 have been lone parents and homeless acceptances of couples with children have fallen by 44% since 2009/10.

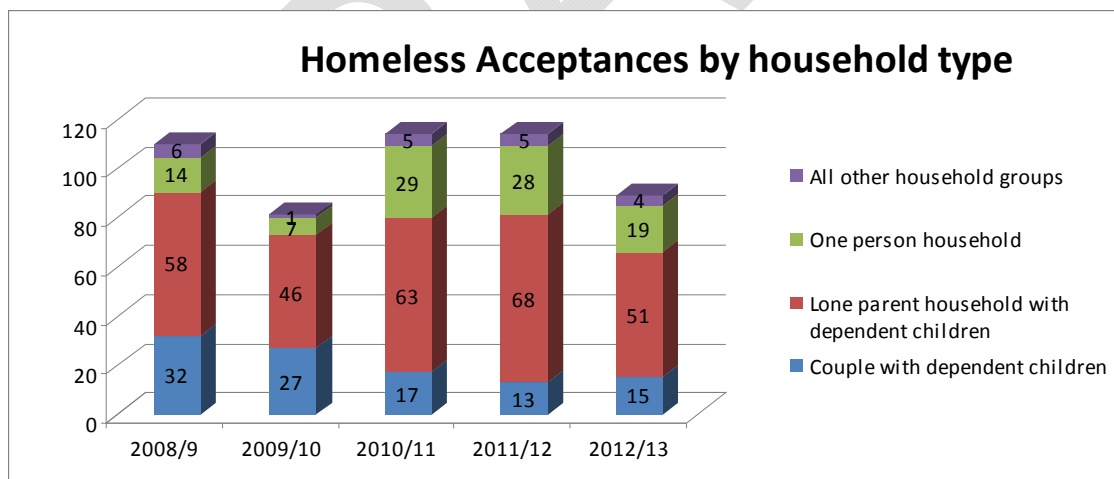


Figure 9: Source P1E returns

### Rough Sleepers

In response to the revised government guidance, we have carried out annual rough sleeper estimates in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The estimates were based on consultation with and verification by local partners likely to encounter rough sleepers during the course of their activities, such as Staffordshire Police, Substance Misuse Teams and Voluntary and Faith Groups. The returns to government over the last three years were 1 in 2010, 0 in 2011 and 1 in 2012.

Due to the small number of identified rough sleepers in the district, to date there has been no provision of a dedicated outreach service for them. There is also no direct access hostel or specific supported accommodation available for rough sleepers in the district.

### Gypsies and travellers

As part of the Local Plan evidence base<sup>11</sup> it was identified that the district has a shortage of authorised gypsy and traveller pitches sites. Throughout the period of the review, only one gypsy and traveller household sought our advice and assistance which resulted in their placement in temporary accommodation and subsequent assistance to obtain private rented accommodation.

### 3.3 Use of temporary accommodation

Figure 10 shows that the use of temporary accommodation has recently started to rise again, following a fall in use for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11. The use of bed and breakfast has fallen in the last 5 years and in 2012/13 fortunately no families were placed in this type of temporary accommodation.

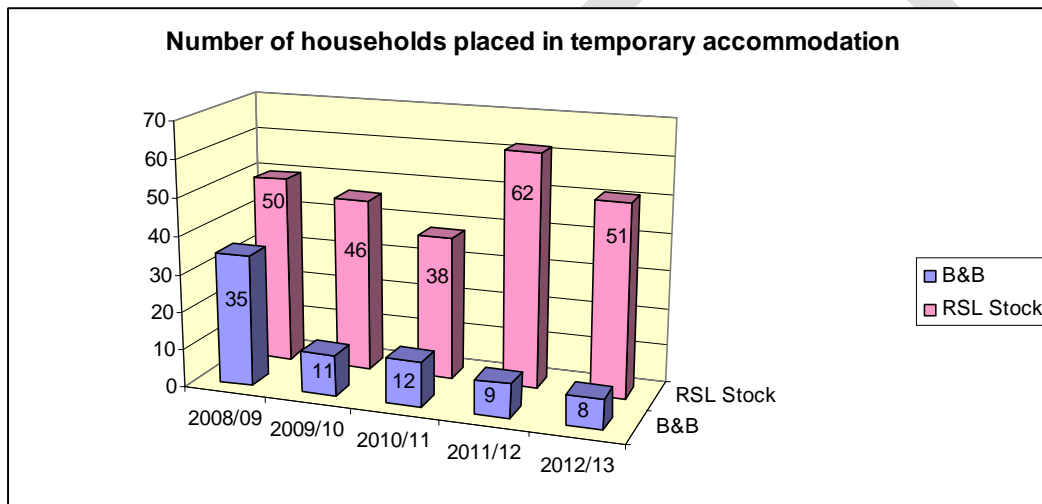


Figure 10: Source Lichfield District Council Performance Management System

<sup>11</sup> Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment Lichfield and Tamworth October 2012

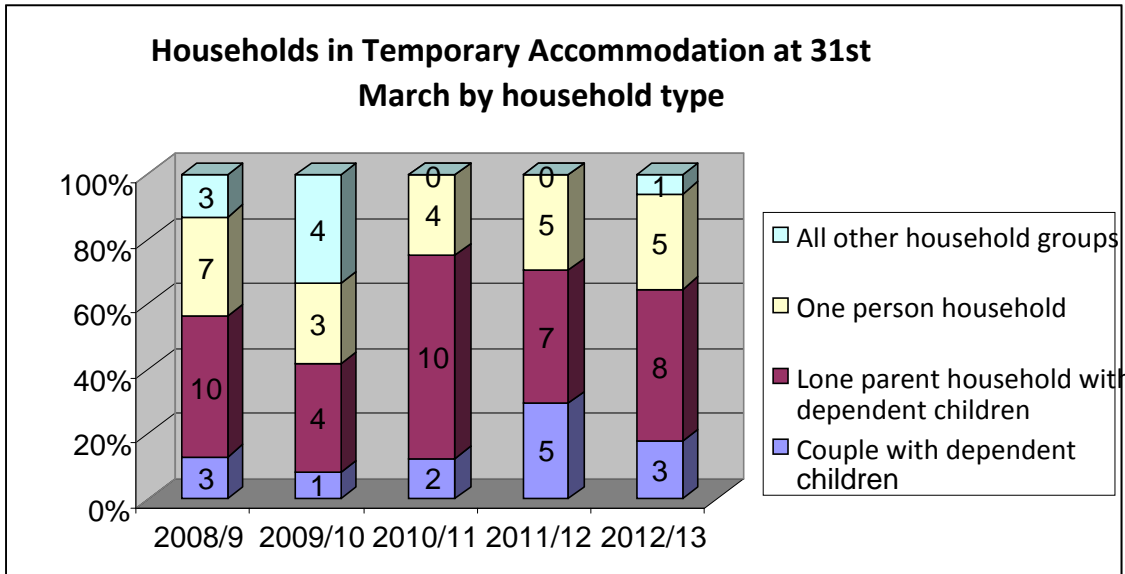


Figure 11

The length of time households have to remain in temporary accommodation has risen again by 1.5 weeks (11.6% increase) in the last year, reflecting the difficulties faced by homeless households in accessing suitable affordable accommodation within the district. However, this is a reduction of 2.8 weeks (16%) since 2008/9 and is a significantly shorter period than it was at the time of the last strategy.

There has however, been a steady increase in the length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation over the last 3 years which can be seen in figure 12 below.

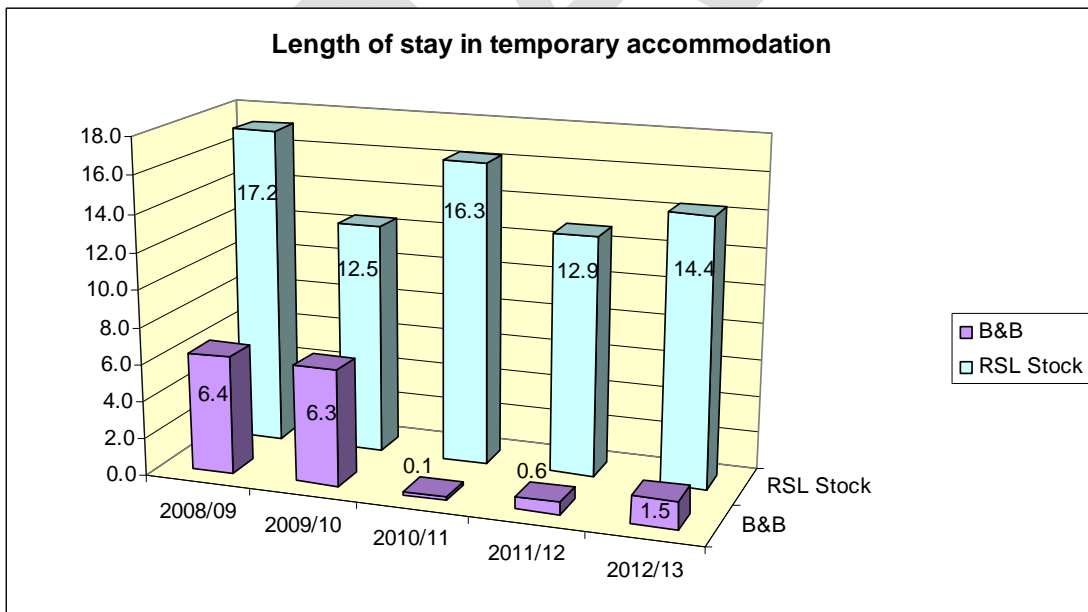


Figure 12: Source Lichfield District Council Performance Management System

The reduction in the use of the temporary accommodation managed by Bromford Support has led to an increase in void periods; these have resulted in an increase in the void loss incurred by Bromford and the subsequent payments by the council when void loss has exceeded the agreed amount. Figure 13 on the next page shows that the overall number of void days has increased by 50% from 1832 to 2751. In terms of the

total percentage of the total temporary accommodation days available in the financial year for all 23 units, voids have increased from 22% in 2011/12 to 33% in 2012/13.

Temporary Accommodation	Void Days 2011/12	Void Days 2012/13	Overall Total
Edgeworth House	1175	1611	2,786
New Gardens	493	751	1,244
4 Houses	164	389	553
<b>Total</b>	<b>1832</b>	<b>2751</b>	<b>4,583</b>

Figure13

### Comparison with Staffordshire

Staffordshire – Use of Temporary Accommodation			
Authority	At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2011	At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012	At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2013
Cannock Chase	5	1	2
East Staffordshire	4	2	7
Lichfield	16	17	17
Newcastle-under-Lyme	2	0	1
South Staffordshire	9	4	3
Stafford	5	2	4
Staffordshire Moorlands	16	15	21
Tamworth	5	10	7

Figure 14

We can see in figure 14 above that, Lichfield District Council has consistently been one of the highest users of temporary accommodation in Staffordshire. The reasons for this will be considered as part of a full review of temporary accommodation during 2013-14.

One reason however may be that there is no direct access hostel accommodation in the district and we have to try to refer clients to provision in neighbouring authorities, such as Birmingham. However, due to increased demand for hostel places, Birmingham has now tightened their local connection criteria for hostel places and fewer establishments are accepting Lichfield referrals.

The lack of affordable housing options and particularly the lack of supported housing in the district are also contributing factors to this. The relatively small private rented sector and lack of shared houses also mean that there are reduced housing options in this district for households in need of emergency accommodation.



### 3.4 Homeless Prevention

Preventing homelessness means assisting people to address their housing and any other associated needs in order to avoid becoming homeless. Prevention activities include those which help a household remain in their current home where possible, or enable a planned and timely move and prevent a crisis situation.

Homelessness relief is where the prevention of homelessness is not possible but the Council helps someone secure accommodation, even though there is no statutory obligation to do so.

The reasons why people become homeless can be many and varied and often include one or more of the following; family breakdown, domestic violence, debt, drug or alcohol abuse, mental health problems, leaving care and many more. In many situations, if people get the right support and help at the right time then they can be helped before their situation reaches a crisis. We know that people often approach others before the council and therefore we recognise the role of partners in helping to prevent homelessness. A greater understanding of where people go for assistance at an early stage is needed in order to build a stronger partnership across the district.

Figure 15 below shows the number of homeless preventions delivered over the last 5 years. It can be clearly seen that the number of homeless preventions achieved by the housing options team has increased by over 430% in the last 5 years.

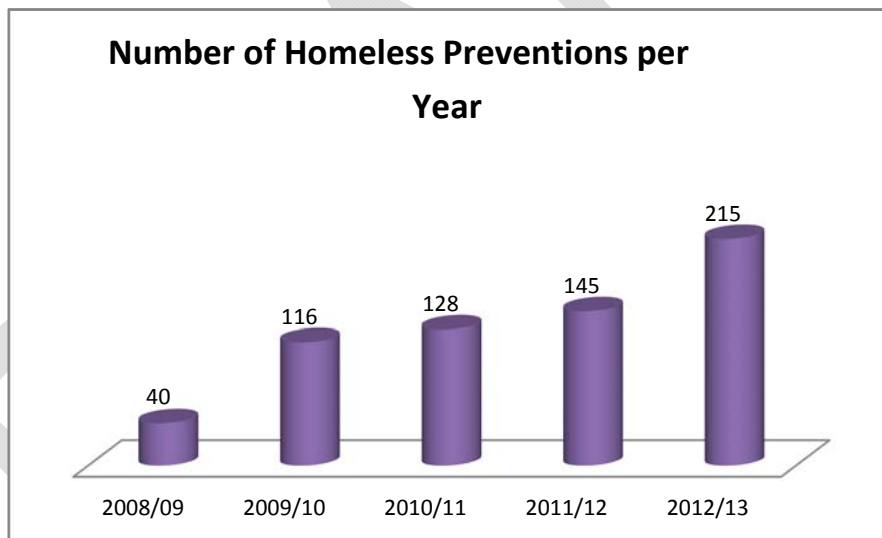


Figure 15: Source P1E return

In 2012-13, 215 households were assisted to successfully prevent or relieve their homelessness, a 48% increase on the previous year.

There are two main ways in which households are prevented from becoming homeless. Firstly, households are helped to remain in their own home through activities such as debt advice, repayment of arrears or resolving issues with rent and/or landlords. In 2012/13, 22% of homelessness preventions in Lichfield District enabled a household to remain in their own homes compared to 47% nationally.

Alternatively, households are helped to obtain suitable alternative accommodation through activities such as nominations to housing associations or finding them accommodation in the private rented sector or supported accommodation. In 2012/13

78% of homelessness preventions enabled a household to obtain alternative accommodation compared to 53% nationally

Figure 16 below shows a breakdown of the homeless preventions in 2012/13 that enabled a household to remain in their own home. 23 (48%) households required some form of money advice to resolve their financial difficulties which highlights the value of the service that is available from our money advice worker.

Between April and July 2013 the money advisor opened 138 cases and rearranged £525,000 of debts which included priority debts (utilities, mortgage or rent arrears or secured loans). Anecdotal evidence from partners, such as Citizens Advice Bureau, suggests that, despite the introduction of this new money advice service, demand for their services remains high and there is still unmet need for money advice in the district.

<b>Homelessness Prevented 2012/13 – household able to remain in existing home</b>	
Home visits	5
Homelessness Prevention Fund	1
Debt Advice	18
Resolving benefit problems	5
Resolving rent or service charge arrears	7
Sanctuary scheme	5
Crisis intervention – emergency support	0
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>

Figure 16

We can also see in figure 16 above that 14% were assisted with resolving rent or service charge arrears, 12% were assisted with mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue and 10% were assisted through the Sanctuary Scheme to install additional security measures.

The Council introduced a number of prevention schemes to enable households to remain in their current accommodation and 16 (34%) received assistance from these schemes.

The Repossessions Prevention Fund assisted 10 households through loans to pay off rent or mortgage arrears. Of these, 7 were to assist with rent arrears with the remaining 3 for mortgage arrears.

The Sanctuary Scheme enabled 5 households to remain in their existing homes, by the installation of additional security measures.

The Homelessness Prevention Fund assisted one household to remain in their own homes by paying for the removal of a piece of furniture that was stored in a communal area in contravention of the tenancy agreement. The cost was £14.90 and enabled the tenant who was disabled and on a low income to remain in their flat.

In 2012/13 the total cost of this financial assistance to prevent homelessness by assisting a household to remain in their existing home was £20,161 to assist 16 households at an average cost of £1,260.

A further 3 households were also assisted through the national Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

<b>Homelessness Prevented or Relieved 2012/13 – household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation</b>			
	<b>Prevented</b>	<b>Relieved</b>	<b>Total</b>
Hostel or House in Multiple Occupation	9	7	16
Private rented accommodation with incentive scheme	40	1	41
Private rented accommodation without incentive scheme	22	8	30
Accommodation arranged with friends or relatives	2	2	4
Supported Accommodation	11	6	17
Social Housing Nomination	32	2	34
Social Housing negotiation - No Nomination	12	4	16
Low cost home ownership scheme	1	0	1
Other	9		9
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>168</b>

Figure 17

Of those households whose homelessness was prevented by obtaining alternative accommodation, 42% were able to obtain accommodation in the private rented sector. 36 of the 71 households (51%) were assisted through the Homelessness Prevention Fund with loans for rent in advance, rent deposit or both. Of the 36 households who were assisted by the Homeless Prevention Fund, the majority had dependent children, and most were single parent families.

A further 5 households at a total liability of £3,080, were assisted through the Rent Guarantee Scheme where the rent deposit is guaranteed to the landlord with no actual payment being made unless the landlord claims because of damage or rent loss. In 2012/13 a total of £1,290 was paid out where 2 existing guarantees were claimed by the landlord.

Overall in 2012/13 41 (24%) received assistance from these schemes to obtain alternative accommodation. The total cost of this financial assistance to prevent homelessness by assisting a household to obtain alternative accommodation was £38,231 to assist 41 households at an average cost of £932.

In 2006 the Council commissioned Lichfield Foyer to carry out a Homelessness Education Programme by delivering 'homelessness prevention' sessions to Year 11 pupils, with the message that the best way to leave home is in a planned way. Since the programme began over a hundred sessions have been delivered to almost 2,500 pupils.

### 3.5 Summary of evidence from our initial review findings

- Housing Strategy evidence
  - higher proportion than the regional average of the older working age population (40-65) and people aged between 65 and 79
  - a greater need for smaller and more supported accommodation plus associated support services to enable elderly residents to live safely and independently
  - affordability ratio, which is the ratio of house prices to incomes is high, meaning that home ownership is out of reach to many
  - high incidence of larger detached dwellings and an undersupply of smaller dwellings which limits choice and housing options for residents
  - average house prices remaining the highest in Staffordshire for the past 5 years.
  - smaller than average private rented sector and rent levels are generally higher than surrounding areas and market demand is strong.
  - small number of shared houses which it is estimated at less than 100.
  - pressure on the housing register (the waiting list for social housing) remains high, with 2910 households live on the UChoose housing waiting list at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, of which 1020 are considered to be in a reasonable preference category<sup>12</sup> with a connection to Lichfield District, and 343 of whom were classed as homeless or potentially homeless
  - housing supply within the district, like other areas the recession has led to a slow down in house building and particularly a reduction in the new supply of affordable housing
- Housing enquiries have increased by 43% since 2008
- 43% of housing enquiries are due to relationship breakdown
- 26% of housing enquires are due to the loss of a tenancy
- 473% increase in homelessness preventions since 2008
- 47% reduction in homelessness applications
- 19% reduction homelessness acceptances
- 2.12 homeless acceptances per 1000 households is the highest in Staffordshire, compared with 2.37 nationally
- Relationship breakdown is the main reason for homeless acceptances since 2008
- Loss of rented accommodation is the second highest reason for homelessness acceptances , 34% in 2012/13, an increase of 106% compared to 2008 and 41% compared to 2011/12
- Reduction in percentage of young people aged 16 to 24 accepted as homeless, 53% lower in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12

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<sup>12</sup> Reasonable preference is defined as being in priority bands 1-3 and therefore considered to be in some degree of housing need.

- In 2012/13 74% of households accepted as homeless include children, of these 83% are lone parents (57% of all acceptances)
- Over 50% of homeless acceptances since 2008/9 have been lone parents
- Homeless acceptances of couples with children have fallen by 44% since 2009/10
- In 2008/9 58% of homeless applications were accepted as statutorily homeless but by 2012/13 this had increased to 88%
- Use of temporary accommodation has recently started to rise again, following a fall in use for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11
- Use of bed and breakfast has fallen in the last 5 years and in 2012/13 no families were placed in bed and breakfast
- In 2012/13 the length of time households have to remain in temporary accommodation has risen in the last year by 1.5 weeks (11.6% increase). This however is a reduction of 2.8 weeks or 16% since 2008/9
- Apart from 2012/13 Lichfield District were the highest users of temporary accommodation in Staffordshire since 2008/9, with only Staffordshire Moorlands having a higher use
- £400,000 of debts were rearranged by the money advisor between April 2012 and November 2012
- There are on average 41 visitors to the money advice website each month
- In 2012/13 22% of homelessness preventions enabled a household to remain in their own homes compared to 47% nationally
  - 48% of households able to remain in their own home required some form of money advice to resolve their financial difficulties
  - 14% were assisted with resolving rent or service charge arrears
  - 12% were assisted with mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue
  - 10% were assisted through the sanctuary scheme to install additional security measures
  - 34% of households enabled to remain in their own homes were assisted by the homelessness prevention schemes.
- In 2012/13 78% of homelessness preventions enabled a household to obtain alternative accommodation compared to 53% nationally
  - 42% of households were assisted to obtain accommodation in the private sector, of these 51% received assistance through the homelessness prevention fund and 42% were assisted without any incentive scheme
  - 33% were assisted into social housing
  - 10% were assisted into supported accommodation
  - 10% were assisted to find accommodation in a hostel or house in multiple occupation

- The number of rough sleepers in Lichfield District is very low with only 1 rough sleeper identified in the official estimate in 2012
- There is no local direct access hostel in the district or other supported accommodation for the single homeless

#### **4. Consultation**

To test our initial review findings we carried out two consultation exercises. In June 2013, we held an informal consultation workshop with the Strategic Housing Partnership, where we shared our emerging evidence and sought any additional evidence partners could share with us to assist in our review.

We then consulted 4 key partners- SESCAB, Bromford Support, Midland Heart Foyer, and Pathway to share what we felt our key issues were and asked if these were the experiences of their organisations or if any other issues were also important.

A formal consultation event was then held on Tuesday July 16<sup>th</sup> 2013 at the Council offices to test our initial review findings. The event was attended by 21 people representing 14 organisations working with homeless households across the district. A further 6 organisations sent feedback and representations electronically. A full list of attendees at the event can be found in Appendix E.

The attendees at the event were asked to consider our emerging evidence and in workshops discuss the key issues that we had identified through our initial review and the informal consultation that had been completed to date. Attendees were also asked to highlight any other areas which from their experience they felt needed attention.

Attendees were largely in agreement that the 7 key issues that we had identified were a priority within Lichfield District. Feedback and issues raised during the consultation workshops on each of these areas can be found in Appendix E.

#### **5. Key Issues identified for the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18**

Through our review of homelessness and following consultation with our partners we have identified a number of key issues that we need to address in our Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018. These are as follows:

##### **5.1 Housing Options for Single Non Priority Homeless Households**

The options for single homeless households within the district are very limited and there is anecdotal evidence that there is a large element of sofa surfing and sleeping in cars amongst this group.

Changes to housing benefit rules mean that single people under the age of 35 are only able to claim benefit for a private rented room in a shared house rather than a self-contained unit, which will severely curtail the options available to these households.

The lack of shared properties in Lichfield District and the fairly small size of the private rented sector also limit the choices available to single homeless people.

There is a lack of direct access and emergency provision for single homeless people in Lichfield District or the surrounding areas, together with tighter local connection

criteria in other local authority area provision. This again the limits options available to single homeless people in an emergency.

## **5.2 Relationship Breakdown**

Relationship breakdown has remained consistently the highest cause of homelessness within Lichfield District for the past 5 years. In addition it is the most common reason that people make a housing enquiry (43%).

In terms of homelessness prevention, there have not been many successes mainly due to the fact that by the time that an enquiry is made to the Council the relationship breakdown has reached a crisis point and mediation services are not suitable.

To continue to reduce the number of households that the Council have a duty to house, consideration needs to be given to how homelessness can be prevented where a relationship has broken down.

## **5.3 Temporary Accommodation**

Apart from 2012/13, Lichfield District has been the highest user of temporary accommodation in Staffordshire since 2008/9. At the same time, however, there has been an increase in the number of void periods in the temporary accommodation managed by Bromford Support which has resulted in loss of their rental income.

Whilst the use of bed and breakfast accommodation has fallen over time any future reduction in overall provision of temporary accommodation could impact on this.

There is also a lack of provision of direct access or emergency accommodation for single homeless households.

## **5.4 Access to the Private Rented Sector**

There is a smaller than average private rented sector, rent levels are generally higher than surrounding areas and market demand is strong. In addition there are only a small number of shared houses which is estimated at less than 100.

Pressure on the housing register (the waiting list for social housing) remains high, which means that access to the social rented housing in the district, is limited.

Evidence from partners is that people have to move out of the district to meet their housing needs; however rent levels in adjoining areas such as Cannock and Tamworth are also rising which could lead to people needing to move even further afield.

The lack of support for private rented tenants also limits the availability of private rented accommodation to homeless applicants, due to the potential increased management issues, particularly in relation to shared accommodation.

Affordability is also a key issue with the availability of homes to rent at or under Local Housing Allowance rates very limited.

## **5.5 Debt and Welfare reform**

The reforms to the welfare system introduced through the Welfare Reform Act will have implications for many householders, as there will be increased pressures on individual's budgets to meet their housing costs without allowing arrears to arise.

48% of households that were assisted to remain in their own homes by the team required some form of money advice to resolve their financial difficulties.

The money advisor rearranged £400,000 of debts between April 2012 and November 2012 and there are on average 41 visitors to the money advice website each month.

There is limited access to debt and money advice in the district and there is also a perceived lack of awareness of available services. Accepting the need for debt advice, however, is difficult as people often do not recognise that they have a debt problem until they reach a crisis point and even then some will not ask for, or accept, help.

### **5.6 Support for vulnerable adults, especially those with complex needs**

There is a lack of a clear integrated multi-agency approach to assist people with complex needs and often no single agency will take the lead unless there is a law being broken or a medical danger present.

The generic and specialist support services that do operate in the district are limited in the time they can give to individual clients per week and are restricted to ongoing support for a two year period only. This can mean that vulnerable people, particularly those with complex needs do not receive the support they need. Some people need long term support and may never be able to sustain independent living without support.

People often live chaotic lifestyles which mean that even if they will engage they often miss appointments and 'fall out' of the support system, meaning that they then have to be referred again and support is missing.

There are service users with low to medium needs who refuse to accept that they have a 'problem' and therefore engage with support services. If they refuse to accept help it is almost impossible to get them the help they need.

GPs are often reluctant to refer to mental health services or others until addiction issues are resolved, yet these issues are often intrinsically linked and so in the meantime they may continue to present problems which can result in homelessness.

The Probation Service has advised us that they find it difficult to resettle ex-offenders within Lichfield due to the lack of available accommodation.

### **5.7 Access to supported accommodation**

There is a lack of supported accommodation for particular groups, such as those over 25, young single parents and people with drug and alcohol problems, with access to facilities in neighbouring authorities limited.

There is also a lack of direct access and emergency provision for single homeless people in Lichfield District and there is limited availability in neighbouring areas, such as Birmingham. This together with tighter local connection criteria in other local authority area limits the options available to single homeless people in this district in an emergency.

There is limited opportunity to develop new supported accommodation due to the lack of both capital and revenue funding available both locally and nationally.



## **6. Recommended priorities and aims for the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18**

Following consideration of the evidence contained in this review and the key issues we have identified and consulted upon with our partners, we have identified two strategic priorities and five aims for the Homelessness Strategy 2013-18.

The priorities are:

- Prevention of homelessness
- Support for those who are homeless

The five aims are:

- Assist households to obtain affordable accommodation
- Assist households to remain in their own home
- Increase access to private rented accommodation
- Support those who are vulnerable, especially those with complex needs
- Reduce the use of temporary accommodation

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Priority 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS		
OBJECTIVE 1.1 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of LDC		
Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
1.1.1 Establish & monitor prevention targets for the Homelessness Service and individual Housing Options Officers	Establish targets by comparison with high performing authorities to find benchmark level	Targets no longer required, as prevention is now embedded within the Housing Options Team. Targets to be considered for the number of homelessness applications.  Homelessness prevention is monitored via performance indicators, not only in terms of overall numbers but via individual schemes.  A review of the homelessness prevention schemes is to be undertaken as part of the review of the Homelessness Strategy
	Set individual targets for Housing Options Officers	
	Monitor targets through Performance Indicators (PI's)	
1.1.2 Enhance the 'housing options' approach operated by the Council	Review existing literature and promotional materials to ensure up to date	Lichfield Housing Options website developed. Leaflets reviewed and new ones produced.
	Investigate the use of Customer Relationship Manager to deal with & record initial enquiries	In house enquiries database developed. New CRM system to be considered for initial enquiries.
	Implement system to ensure checks are made 6 months after prevention occurred to ensure indicator is calculated correctly	Checks being carried out as part of the review of the prevention schemes.
	Employ a permanent Homelessness Prevention Officer	All officers rebranded as Housing Options Officers, whose primary function is to prevent homelessness.
	Produce procedure for initial enquiries	Completed
	Review Housing Enquiries Database	Database reviewed on an ongoing basis, to respond to legislative and other changes.
1.1.3 Work with mortgage lenders/ local solicitors/ debt services/ local court to establish an early warning & monitoring	Establish local firms/ partners in Lichfield area	In October 2009, amendments were made to the Civil Procedure Rules Part 55 (Rule 55.10), which required mortgage lenders to notify local authorities where possession
	Inform relevant partners of Housing Options Service	

system	Establish referral mechanism	proceedings in their area had been commenced. With the appointment of a Money Advisor, the householders have been contacted and offered money advice.  We are also working with lenders via the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
	Establish a Debt Advisers Forum to facilitate joint working within the District	The Strategic Housing Partnership established a Debt Strategy Sub-Group in 2010 and, as a consequence, a money advice website was created ( <a href="http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney">www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney</a> )

**Priority 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

**OBJECTIVE 1.1 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of LDC contd.**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
1.1.4 Monitor effectiveness of LDC prevention initiatives/projects and evaluate future options for delivery	<i>Homelessness Prevention Fund</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate success of the fund</li> <li>▪ Review Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF) procedure and database</li> </ul>	Review to be carried out as part of Homelessness Strategy review.
	<i>Home visits/ Mediation services</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate success of home visits</li> <li>▪ Complete Mediation Training for all HOO</li> </ul>	Not carried out. To be part of review of Homelessness Strategy as relationship breakdown still highest cause of homelessness.
	<i>Sanctuary Scheme</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluate delivery and outcomes of Sanctuary Scheme</li> <li>▪ Revised Scheme operational by April 09</li> </ul>	Review Sanctuary Scheme as part of county wide review of Sanctuary Schemes.
1.1.5 Develop system to monitor the use of Discretionary Housing Payment as a Homelessness Prevention Tool	Access & review best practice	DHP Policy reviewed in light of welfare changes and additional income received
	Draft the monitoring system	New DHP Policy produced jointly by Housing Services and Revenues and Benefits

OBJECTIVE 1.2 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of partners		
<p>1.2.1 Monitor effectiveness of prevention initiatives funded or part funded by LDC but provided by partners and evaluate future options for delivery</p>	<p><i>Education Programme</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor the number of sessions provided in schools and number of pupils attending.</li> </ul>	<p>Number of sessions, number of pupils attending and satisfaction levels of attendees monitored through PI's (Covalent)</p>

**Priority 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

**OBJECTIVE 1.2 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of partners**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
<p>1.2.1 Monitor effectiveness of prevention initiatives funded or part funded by LDC but provided by partners and evaluate future options for delivery contd.</p>	<p><i>Nightstop</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meet with Foyer and SP to agree future of the scheme</li> <li>▪ Decide on level of future funding</li> <li>▪ Contact other organisations to ascertain funding opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Scheme no longer operational</p>
	<p><i>Debt Advice Service</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain &amp; Monitor figures on homelessness prevention through debt advice</li> </ul>	<p>Money Advice Service operational and monitored.</p>
<p>1.2.2 Establish a homelessness forum to find ways to improve and coordinate housing advice services to homeless people</p>	<p>Set up list of meeting dates</p>	<p>Homelessness Forum not established.</p>
	<p>Establish list of attendees from previous forum attendees of Homelessness Strategy Steering Group</p>	<p>Better co-ordination of advice services may be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in partnership with Lichfield RAFT (Right Advice First Time) through funding from the Advice Services Transition Fund.</li> </ul>
	<p>Establish and agree terms of reference</p>	
	<p>Consider each RSL Homelessness Plan</p>	

	<p>Explore the new initiatives identified at the Consultation event Sept 2008</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in partnership with the Shropshire and Staffordshire Homelessness Prevention Partnership to achieve outcome 7: <i>Improve quality of advice and information given to households approaching for housing advice; ensure that all LA partners are offering a minimum standard of advice including written advice in plain English.</i></li> <li>• Consideration to be given to the creation of a Homelessness Forum, as part of the review of the Housing Options Service.</li> </ul>
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**Priority 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

**OBJECTIVE 1.2 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of partners contd.**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
<p>1.2.3 Work more closely with Homezone Living (now Bromford Living) &amp; other RSL's regarding Homelessness Prevention through the Housing Solutions group.</p>	<p>Present Prevention Training proposals to Housing Solutions</p>	<p>Attendance at Housing Solutions meetings was sporadic and consequently the meetings were discontinued.</p>
	<p>Provide Training to RSL Staff</p>	<p>RSL's were invited to attend the Strategic Housing Partnership meetings but attendance continues to be sporadic.</p>
	<p>Produce Guidance Notes for RSL call centres</p>	<p>No joint working arrangements have therefore been made.</p>
	<p>Produce New Public Information Leaflets</p>	
	<p>Discuss Eviction Protocol with Housing Solutions Group</p>	<p>See above.</p>
	<p>Review/ re-establish protocol with Homezone Living &amp; Other RSL's regarding evictions including data protection issues, warrant applications etc.</p>	<p>Agreed to produce Eviction Protocol with Bromford Living (formerly HomeZone Living) and extend to other RSL's when established.</p>

	Raise with Homezone & other RSL's the promotion of the tenants incentive scheme	Underoccupation has become an issue in light of the Spare Room Subsidy regulations.
	Create leaflet for tenants who are in breach of tenancy because of ASB	Not achieved.
	Develop SLA to ensure visits are carried out to Foyer residents where threats of eviction have been made	Meeting with Lichfield Foyer carried out and statistics obtained. Number of evictions has fallen significantly since Homelessness Strategy produced.
	Raise the co-ordination of prevention activities with member of Housing Solutions Group	See above
1.2.4 Ensure the introduction of UChoose does not disadvantage vulnerable groups.	Review Your Choice reports to ensure UChoose reports identify relevant issues	Vulnerable Applicants Policy produced as part of UChoose system.  UChoose moving to Homes Direct July 2013. A Vulnerable Applicants Policy will also be produced for the new system.  Allocations Policy reviewed.

**Priority 1: PREVENT HOMELESSNESS**

**OBJECTIVE 1.2 Improve and enhance homelessness prevention activities of partners contd.**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
1.2.5 Training in maintaining and managing a tenancy for 16-25 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify all organisations with tenants or potential tenants of this age</li> <li>▪ Training already underway for HomeZone tenants. Consider widening the training to include other Registered Social Landlords and private sector landlords</li> </ul>	The Shropshire and Staffordshire Homelessness Prevention Partnership has commissioned a project to increase the amount of shared accommodation available in the private rented sector to those under 35. This will include an element of tenancy training.

Priority 2 : PROVIDE MORE SETTLED HOMES AND INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING		
OBJECTIVE 2.1 Maximise the supply of new affordable housing		
Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
2.1.1 Ensure the revised LDF takes account of identified need for affordable housing and work with planning policy team to develop revised policy	Participate in all consultation on the emerging LDF and development of Core Strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete Housing Background paper</li> <li>▪ Revise affordable housing policy</li> </ul>	Policies were complete & are being Examined in Public in July 2013
2.1.2 Complete evidence base on housing needs for revised LDF: SHMA and Rural Housing Needs Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agree final report of SHMA with C1 and Outside UK</li> <li>▪ Agree final version of Rural study</li> <li>▪ Liaise with Planning Policy Team to agree sign off</li> </ul>	Evidence Base was completed and has subsequently been updated
2.1.3 Complete evidence base for revised LDF: Affordable Housing Viability Assessment (AHVA)	Agree tender brief and appoint Consultant to complete AHVA	Completed
	Draft AVHA Report received	Completed
	Final AVHA Report Agreed	Completed & revised
Priority 2 : PROVIDE MORE SETTLED HOMES AND INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING		
OBJECTIVE 2.2 Maximise the use of existing stock		
Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
2.1.4 Continue close working relationship with Development Partnership (DP) to identify new opportunities for affordable housing and monitor progress of the development programme.	4 meetings of Development Partnership per annum to be held	Completed
	Target of 50 affordable units p.a. (to be reviewed in line with LDF)	Target was adjusted but was met and monitored annually

2.1.5 Undertake rigorous s106 negotiations to achieve current local plan policy of 25% affordable housing on large sites (N.B. %age to be revised)	Target 50 affordable units built p.a. Monitor via DP meetings	See above
2.1.6 Work with partners to promote HomeBuy and innovative housing options such as Try before you buy	Raise and monitor through Housing Solutions Group and Development Partnership meetings	Equity Share Schemes have been promoted in partnership with Orbit Homebuy
2.2.1 Work with RSL's to maximise use of their stock and adapt where necessary.	Ongoing - attend meetings DP, SHP, Hsg Solns	Meetings attended although Housing Solutions was suspended in 2011 and combined with SHP
2.2.2 Finalise the revised Private Sector Housing Strategy and Assistance Policy to identify the type and level of support that the Council has available to deal with non-decent homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate joining Kickstart</li> <li>▪ Finalise Strategy</li> </ul>	Policy was developed and revised – Kickstart and subsequent schemes were joined and monitored
2.2.3 Review the Empty Property Strategy to incorporate new legislation	Complete review once Private Sector Strategy completed	This was not pursued although case work was undertaken
	Facilitate quarterly meetings of the Empty Property Steering Group	Completed
2.2.4 Develop & Maintain database of empty properties and record action taken	Quarterly Working Group meetings	Completed
<b>Priority 2 : PROVIDE MORE SETTLED HOMES AND INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>		
<b>OBJECTIVE 2.3 Work with private landlords to increase the supply of accommodation available to homeless households</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Progress as at May 2013</b>
2.3.1 To continue work to liaise with Private Sector Landlords	Engage with private landlords and update database	Database continually updated and group of landlords willing to engage identified
	Promote Landlords Accreditation Scheme	12 landlords accredited. To promote accreditation at remaining Fora in 2013
2.3.1 To continue work to liaise with Private Sector Landlords contd.	Investigate the development of a Rent Deposit Scheme	Rent Guarantee Scheme established but use is limited.



	Facilitate the meetings of the Private Landlords Forum	Lichfield District Private Landlords' Forum continues to meet quarterly
	Work with Homezone Living to consider the introduction of a Private Sector Leasing Scheme	Pilot scheme introduced to manage two LDC properties

**Priority 3: IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES PARTICULARLY FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1 Review support services available to vulnerable people**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
3.1.1 Work with SP, RSL's and agencies delivering floating support to monitor the effectiveness of existing schemes and access additional support for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ high &amp; low risk offenders</li> <li>▪ People with mental health problems &amp; learning disabilities</li> <li>▪ Substance Misusers</li> <li>▪ Young People</li> </ul>	Convene Floating Support Forum	LDC Officers attend steering groups of SEGS Support Service and Changing Lives Support (Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Service)
	Carry out mapping exercise of all support schemes in Lichfield district	Support schemes identified and added to Lichfield District Housing Options website
	Meet with providers to discuss their support services	Information obtained from all support service providers.
3.1.2 Work with providers and Supporting People to prioritise the need and identify options to increase supported accommodation and floating support in the district in line with SP Strategy.	Engage in consultation on revised SP strategy	Completed
3.1.3 Monitor referral arrangements in place for supporting homeless families in temporary accommodation: Cornerstone, TCHA and New-Start	Review the service quarterly	Service level agreement produced with Bromford Support
3.1.4 Continue local representation on SP development groups, Officers Board and Commissioning body	Attend the Quarterly meetings of Board and Comm. body.	Ongoing through Housing Services Manager
3.1.5 Continue to actively engage with Staffs CC to understand the issues and consequences of the 'Changing Lives' agenda and the impact on services to vulnerable people in the district.	Attend local LAA Healthier Communities; Older People's theme groups and changing lives delivery group.	No longer relevant
3.1.6 Review the operation and funding of the New Start	Complete review	New Start Service discontinued. Floating support for temporary

Service	Develop bid for SP funds and prepare report for SP Board	accommodation provided by Bromford Support
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**Priority 3: IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES PARTICULARLY FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

**OBJECTIVE 3.2 Improve services that allow vulnerable people to remain in their own homes**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
3.2.1 Continue multi agency work on aids and adaptations	Monitor Performance of Spirita Care & Repair Quarterly	Completed
3.2.2 Continue to fund DFG's and continue financial assistance given to Spirita HIA	Monitor Performance Indicators, Budget Spend & Customer Satisfaction of Spirita Care & Repair Quarterly	Completed
3.2.3 Monitor the new handy person scheme run by Spirita HIA to assist the most vulnerable households across Southern Staffordshire	New handy person scheme to be launched January 2009	Launched but ended in October 2012 when County funding withdrawn.

**Priority 4: REDUCE THE USE OF AND LENGTH OF STAY IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION**

**OBJECTIVE 4.1 Reduce the use of Temporary accommodation**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
4.1.1 Review LDC procedures for placement into temporary accommodation	Develop a pro-forma for all Temporary Accommodation – to be signed by Senior Officer before a placement is made	Proforma produced and in use
	Develop a draft protocol with HomeZone for Temporary Accommodation Placements.	Service level agreement produced and awaiting ratification
	Ensure all staff in Housing Dept aware of protocol, procedures & proforma through Team Meeting briefing	Completed

<b>Priority 4: REDUCE THE USE OF AND LENGTH OF STAY IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION</b>		
<b>OBJECTIVE 4.1 Reduce the use of Temporary accommodation contd...</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Progress as at May 2013</b>
4.1.2 Identify opportunities to fund the purchase ESD's in the district for use as affordable housing for permanent accommodation.	Identify possible ESD 's & funding streams & monitor progress	Not appropriate in the market
4.1.3 Work with Tamworth BC and partners to develop supported accommodation for young people in the two districts	Obtain SP Funding, in principle	Scheme discontinued due to funding and siting difficulties
	Agree Location for Lichfield scheme	
	Finalise SP and HC funding for proposal	
	Develop scheme	
<b>Objective 4.2 Reduce the length of stay in Temporary Accommodation</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Progress as at May 2013</b>
4.2.1 Ensure all occupants receive decision as soon as possible and within 25 day timescale in at least 80% of cases	80% of decisions made within 25 days of application being taken	Performance monitored via Covalent. 86% in 2012-13
4.2.2 Review bid monitoring procedure	Produce a draft bid monitoring procedure	Bid monitoring procedure developed and in use
	Consult with Homezone Living & NewStart regarding bid monitoring process & Obtain agreement for new procedure	
	Monitor effectiveness of new procedure	Review procedure once move to Homes Direct completed.
<b>Priority 4: REDUCE THE USE OF AND LENGTH OF STAY IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION</b>		
<b>Objective 4.2 Reduce the length of stay in Temporary Accommodation contd.</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Progress as at May 2013</b>

4.2.3 Liaise with HomeZone about reallocation of properties to Band 1 on a weekly basis up to April 09	Obtain written agreement with HomeZone not to advertise void properties in Band 1 wherever possible if reason for void is 'abandoned' or 'evicted'	No longer applicable
4.2.4 Liaison with NewStart to facilitate move on accommodation for those applicants in temporary accommodation not owed a full housing duty	NewStart PI - Target of 50% for 2008-9	For Bromford Support, PI revised to: To assist those in temporary accommodation, no longer eligible to remain, to access alternative accommodation. Target 100%
4.2.5 Monitor the impact of UChoose on length of stay in Temporary Accommodation	Review the operation of new system	Repeat action for Homes Direct.

**Priority 5: IMPROVE PARTNERSHIP WORK AND ENABLE EFFECTIVE JOINT WORKING TO IMPROVE SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1: Ensure effective protocols are in place with key agencies involved with homeless and potentially homeless people**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
5.1.1 Review existing protocols and service level agreements that are in place with partners and key agencies providing services to homeless and potentially homeless people	Finalise Probation Protocol	Protocol agreed
	Review & Revise Social Care & Health Protocol	Young Persons' Housing Protocol still not finalised
	Review & revise DV Protocol	No protocol developed but joint working through FJC

**Priority 5: IMPROVE PARTNERSHIP WORK AND ENABLE EFFECTIVE JOINT WORKING TO IMPROVE SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1: Ensure effective protocols are in place with key agencies involved with homeless and potentially homeless people contd...**

Action	Milestones	Progress as at May 2013
5.1.2 Identify new protocols needed through existing Forums	Homelessness Forum	Draft Hospital Discharge Protocol developed.
	Mental Health & Housing Forum	Other protocols identified and included in other areas of this

	Young People’s Housing & Homelessness Forum	action plan
	Housing Solutions Group	
5.1.3 Review the information available on the housing advice services that are included in the Homelessness Directory	Review homelessness directory	Lichfield District Housing Options website produced.
	Develop an on-line Homelessness Directory	
<b>OBJECTIVE 5.2: Improve collection of information on homelessness prevention activities</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Progress as at May 2013</b>
5.2.1 Work with Homelessness Forum to devise methods of data capture on prevention activities	Develop Action Plan through Homelessness Forum	No Homelessness Forum developed. LDC prevention data monitored via Covalent. No current method of data capture for Lichfield District.
5.2.2 Investigate Housing Advice Performance Indicators performance monitoring framework developed by the Association of Housing Advice Services	Obtain copy of Housing Advice Performance Indicators performance monitoring framework	PI’s not utilised, as prevention activity not sufficiently developed. HAPI’s to be reconsidered now that prevention is sufficiently embedded in Housing Options Team activity.
	Review HAPI performance monitoring framework and how it might be implemented in Lichfield District	
5.2.3 Ensure homelessness prevention is reflected in the strategic priorities of our partners	Carry out review of Strategic Priorities of all partners	Not completed
<b>OBJECTIVE 5.3: Develop new initiatives with partners</b>		
5.3.1 Develop initiatives to help prevent worklessness by improving relationships with DWP & Job Centre & other relevant partners	Assess current activity	Housing Options Manager housing representative on the Lichfield District In To Work Group
	Develop draft initiatives	
5.3.2 Develop initiatives to promote financial inclusion and	Develop draft initiatives	Strategic Housing Partnership developed a Debt Strategy Sub-

improve debt advice services within Lichfield District	Facilitate Debt Advisers Forum	Group, which has developed a list of objectives, most of which have been met by the development of a money advice website – Manage Your Money – <a href="http://www.lichfelddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney">www.lichfelddc.gov.uk/manageyourmoney</a>
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**KEY TO DELIVERY PLAN:**

**Staff**

HSM (CG) Housing Services Manager, Clive Gibbins  
 HOM (DW) Housing Options Manager, David Whittaker  
 SM (LR) Housing Strategy Manager, Lucy Robinson  
 SO (RF) Housing Strategy Officer, Rachel Frondigoun  
 SHOO (TW) Senior Housing Options Officer, Tiffany Whyte  
 HOO (AT) Housing Options Officer, Allan Tranter  
 HOO (BDB) Housing Options Officer, Beverley Dickinson-Broomfield  
 SPO (MB) Senior Planning Officer, Matthew Bowers

**Partners/ Agencies**

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership  
 SHP – Strategic Housing Partnership  
 HSG – Housing Solutions Group  
 DP – Development Partnership  
 HC – Housing Corporation  
 WMRA – West Midlands Regional Assembly  
 SP – Staffordshire Supporting People Team  
 CAB – Citizens Advice Bureau  
 PLF – Private Landlords Forum  
 RSL's – Registered Social Landlords  
 LDC – Lichfield District Council  
 TBC – Tamworth Borough Council  
 DV Forum – Domestic Violence Forum  
 C1 HMA – Central 1 Strategic Housing Market Area (incl. TBC, LDC, Solihull MBC & Birmingham CC)  
 HIA – Home Improvement Agency(Spirita)  
 DAT – Drug Action Team  
 CCCHC – Cannock Chase Churches Housing Coalition

## APPENDIX B - Homelessness Legislative Framework

### The 5 tests in detail:

The 5 tests are applied in order; for example if the applicant is not eligible then the local authority will not assess whether they are in priority need.

#### Test 1:

The local authority must first decide if the person is **eligible for assistance**. The only persons who are ineligible are some people from abroad or returning from abroad.

#### Test 2: Is the person homeless / threatened with homelessness?

A person is homeless if they have no accommodation anywhere in the world (other than temporary crisis accommodation e.g. women's refuge) available for their occupation.

A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but-

- they cannot secure entry to it, or
- it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it, or
- it would not be reasonable for the person to continue to occupy it,

Accommodation does not have to be settled or permanent. Other relevant matters to be considered in relation to whether it is reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation include:

- Location;
- Physical conditions;
- Overcrowding;
- Legal conditions (e.g. status of tenancy agreement);
- Financial conditions (affordability); and
- Employment.

In addition, it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to domestic violence or other violence against him/her or against-

- a person who normally resides with him as a member of his family, or
- any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him

When is a person threatened with homelessness?

A local authority has to undertake the same enquiries for someone who is threatened with homelessness as someone who is actually homeless. Someone is threatened with homelessness when they will be homeless within 28 days, eg. When an order for possession of their property has been made and it expires within 28 days. If the local authority does not think the person will actually be homeless eg. Because they believe they can do something to prevent the homelessness (for instance mediate to prevent eviction by relatives), they may not take an application.

### **Test 3: Is the person in priority need?**

The law only requires local authorities to provide accommodation for certain groups of homeless people, who are defined as having a “priority need for accommodation”.

These groups are:

- A pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonable be expected to reside
- A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
- A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonable be expected to reside
- A person who is threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster

Additional Priority Need Categories (extended through the 2002 Act) are:

- 16 & 17 year olds other than those that social services are responsible for accommodating
- Care leavers under the age of 21 who were looked after by social services when they were 16 or 17 (some exceptions apply)
- People who are vulnerable as a result of violence or threats of violence
- People who are vulnerable as a result of a prison, armed forces or care background

Where applicants have a ‘priority need’ for accommodation the Council is under a duty to provide suitable temporary accommodation. For homeless people not in priority need (i.e. ‘non-priority’), there is no duty to provide accommodation but the Council must still provide advice and assistance.

### **Test 4: When is someone intentionally homeless?**

A person becomes homeless intentionally if:

“he deliberately does or fails to do anything in consequence of which he ceases to occupy accommodation which is available for his occupation and which it would have been reasonable to continue to occupy.”

There is no requirement that a person deliberately becomes homeless, merely that he deliberately did or failed to do something as a result of which he became homeless.

If the authority is satisfied that the applicant is intentionally homeless there is no long term housing duty.

### **Test 5: When does someone have a local connection?**

Most authorities consider whether the applicant has a local connection with their area. If the applicant does not have such a connection, the LA can refer the client to be housed by another LA where they do have a local connection. If the applicant does not have a local connection elsewhere, the LA to whom they made the application will consider their application.

A person may have a local connection with the district of a local housing authority based on one of the four grounds:



- because he is, or in the past was, normally resident there, and that residence is or was of his own choice;
- because he is employed there;
- because of family associations, or
- because of special circumstances

Family associations do not usually extend beyond parents, adult children and brothers and sisters.

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## **APPENDIX C - Homelessness Prevention Activities**

### **1. Homelessness Prevention Fund**

The Homelessness Prevention Fund is a sum of money available to front line officers to use where homelessness and/or the use of temporary accommodation can be prevented or brought to an end. This financial assistance is given in the form of a loan.

To be eligible an applicant must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Be in a priority need category.
- Have a local connection to the Lichfield District
- Be unable to obtain the necessary funding from any other source.
- Agree to the terms and conditions of the Homelessness Prevention Fund.
- To have undertaken financial advice, where this is available

### **2. Repossessions Prevention Fund**

The Repossessions Prevention Fund is designed to enable households at risk of homelessness through repossession or eviction to remain in their homes with the assistance of a loan.

To be eligible an applicant must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Be in a homeless priority need category
- Have a local connection to Lichfield District
- Be unable to obtain the necessary funding from any other source
- Agree to the terms and conditions of the Repossessions Prevention Fund
- Be threatened with eviction or repossession because of rent or mortgage arrears
- To have undertaken financial advice
- Be genuinely unable to pay their rent or mortgage as distinct from choosing not to pay

### **3. Rent Guarantee Scheme**

This scheme is to assist homeless household's access private rented sector accommodation. Using this scheme the Council will provide a guarantee against the value of the rent deposit or rent in advance, rather than it being actually paid to the landlord. The amount guaranteed will be up to the value of a maximum of six weeks rent for a deposit and a maximum of four weeks for any rent in advance.

The guarantee will finish at the end of the tenancy or after 2 years, whichever comes sooner. At the end of the guarantee, in the event of any agreed damage to or loss of a fixture or fitting by the tenant during the tenancy or rent arrears, the landlord will be entitled to claim an amount equal to the value of the damage or loss up to the

maximum amount guaranteed. If this happens, the Council will seek to recover from the tenant any monies that have been paid to the landlord.

To be eligible an applicant must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Be homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Be in a priority need category.
- Have a local connection to the Lichfield District
- Be unable to obtain the necessary funding from any other source.
- Agree to the terms and conditions of the Rent Guarantee Scheme

#### **4. Sanctuary Scheme**

The Sanctuary Scheme began in Lichfield in 2007 and has, in the past, received financial contributions through the Safer Community Partnership and Bromford Living.

The overall aim of the scheme is the prevention of homelessness by ensuring that with the addition of appropriate security measures, victims of domestic abuse and other violent crimes are able to remain in their homes and feel both safe and secure in doing so.

Scheme criteria:

- The Sanctuary Scheme is available to any person living in Lichfield District who is threatened with homelessness due to domestic abuse, hate crime, racial harassment or other violence.
- The additional security measures to the victims' home must prevent a homelessness application.
- The perpetrator must not be resident in the property that needs the additional security measures

#### **5. Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

The aim of this protocol is to ensure that rough sleepers are not at risk of getting hypothermia or dying during periods of severe weather in Lichfield District.

The protocol provides temporary accommodation for any rough sleepers in Lichfield District if the temperature is predicted to fall below zero degrees Celsius for three consecutive nights.

To be eligible, a person must only be at risk by sleeping rough in severe weather when the Protocol is in force, and accept the assistance offered regardless of their eligibility under the homelessness legislation.

## APPENDIX D - Comparative Homeless Acceptances Data

	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	Total	No. per 1,000 household	Total	No. per 1,000 household	Total	No. per 1,000 household	Total	No. per 1,000 household	Total	No. per 1,000 household
<b>ENGLAND</b>	53,430	2.5	40,020	1.9	44,160	2.03	50,290	2.31	53,540	2.37
<b>WEST MIDLANDS</b>	8,670	3.9	7,100	3.2	8,440	3.76	8,560	3.82	n/a	n/a <sup>1</sup>
<b>Cannock Chase</b>	75	1.9	28	0.7	51	1.31	41	1.05	27	0.68
<b>East Staffs</b>	62	1.4	27	0.6	49	1.09	24	0.53	34	0.72
<b>Lichfield</b>	110	2.8	81	2.0	114	2.85	114	2.85	89	2.12
<b>Newcastle-under-Lyme</b>	26	0.5	17	0.3	7	0.13	6	0.11	13	0.24
<b>South Staffs</b>	67	1.5	21	0.5	62	1.44	50	1.16	33	0.75
<b>Stafford</b>	160	3.0	68	1.3	50	0.94	63	1.19	48	0.87
<b>Staffs Moorlands</b>	86	2.1	75	1.9	100	2.50	90	2.25	74	1.80
<b>Tamworth</b>	89	2.9	52	1.7	72	2.32	107	3.45	68	2.13

Figure \* : Source: CLG Live Table 784, from P1E Returns

<sup>1</sup> Data for West Midlands region for 2012-13 was not published in the Live Table

**Homelessness Strategy Consultation Event**  
**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013 - Lichfield District Council Offices**

**Issues raised**

**Debt / Welfare Reform**

- People often do not recognise that they have a debt problem until they reach a crisis point and even then some will not ask for or accept help
- A need to more 'early warning signs' training for home visitors
- Stronger links to the RAFT and LWT projects
- A need for a Money Advice Working Group within the District was identified
- Awareness of available services need to be improved – a lack of support was identified but the money advice works based at LDC is currently under-utilised
- Welfare Reforms are making the situation worse – a need to work with the DWP & Job Centre regarding the wider implications of sanctions they impose is needed – particularly once Universal credit is in place- if they sanction someone by stopping benefits for a period of time, this could be their rent money that is also stopped, which could result in them becoming homeless.
- Is money management included in the Homelessness Education Programme – could this be expanded into colleges as well as schools?
- Creating stronger links between homelessness and worklessness – to look at how housing options interviews could be broadened to include job and work issues and stronger links to work clubs etc...
- The need for more food banks were identified as an issue; one within the District in Burntwood although there are several in Cannock & Tamworth.
- An issue for street homeless households was identified who have trouble accessing benefits, as no address which means if hostel accommodation is found their rent is paid but they receive no money to live on as benefit claims are taking too long to process (ESA in particular)
- A stronger link between homelessness and worklessness
- Good Communication & closer links between departments and organisations seen as key to helping people – a joined up approach needed

**Access to private rented accommodation**

- There is a lack of HMO/Shared accommodation within Lichfield District
- Landlords are reluctant to have shared accommodation due to the management issues it can present – they may be more prepared to if there was increased support for tenants, some form of rent guarantee and also support for landlords in managing the properties.
- It was suggested that awareness raising amongst landlords regarding the causes of homelessness may help break down traditional stigmatisation

- Within Lichfield District the private rented sector is fairly buoyant; with high demand for properties and high rents meaning that landlords do not need help to let their properties and therefore do not 'need' tenants on benefit or who are homeless to fill their properties.
- Evidence from partners was that people have to move out of the district to meet their housing needs; however rent levels in adjoining areas such as Cannock & Tamworth are also rising which could lead to people needing to move further afield.
- The idea of renting out spare rooms by both owner-occupiers and tenants affected by the bedroom tax was discussed – a possible need to seek assistance from a support service to enable this?
- Further promotion of the Rent guarantee scheme amongst Landlords – although this is currently only available to households in priority need – could the scheme be expanded?
- Could more work be done with Fusion Credit (particularly with Universal Credit) to help households maintain their tenancies and helping people access the private rented sector.
- One suggestion was to offer a service similar to university matching/management service for shared accommodation and/or supported housing

### **Supported Accommodation**

- There is no provision of supported accommodation for those over 25
- There is an identified need for supported accommodation units for mother and baby – access to units in neighbouring areas is limited
- There is no direct access hostel accommodation in the district and the County
- Earlier referrals and interventions are needed; often people are only identified at crisis point
- Support services are limited both in the time they can give per week and the length of time they can offer the service – this can result in vulnerable people not receiving the support they need.
- There is a cohort of vulnerable people with low to medium level needs who need long-term support – the current contract limits support to 2 years; whereas some people will need support long-term to cope, they cannot be 'made better'
- Ex-Offenders – there is no resources within the District - no supported accommodation – a hidden need. Heantun do have a County contract for support but Probation state that they do not try to resettle within Lichfield due to the lack of available supported accommodation. More information is needed on this.
- Bromford have a supported scheme in Perton which is 2x 2-bed flats of shared accommodation which is supported and works well – could this be mirrored within the district?

### **Single Homelessness**

- Options for single homeless households within the district are very limited
- Limited access to suitable accommodation
- A large element of sofa surfing and sleeping in cars amongst this group

- Mental Health state they are seeing more single people over 35 who are suffering illness and homelessness due to relationship breakdown.

### **Temporary Accommodation**

- This is currently under-occupied, although we are one of the highest users of temporary accommodation in Staffordshire
- It was suggested that the possibility of placing non-priority households in temporary accommodation be investigated, on an emergency basis
- South Staffs DC make direct offers to homeless applicants – to investigate whether this could work within our allocation policy and choice-based lettings system
- To investigate the potential to use it for ex-offenders as not all ex-offenders are high risk
- Pathway Project identified an issue for their service users (DV victims) in accessing emergency refuge accommodation out of office hours and therefore anticipate they may be referring more people to local authority accommodation in the future
- To conduct a thorough review of the use of /need for the temporary accommodation units

### **Relationship Breakdown**

- Is the highest cause of homelessness within the district
- The timing of mediation is essential – by the time people reach the housing options team it is usually too late for mediation
- CVS confirmed there is a mediation service based at Mansell House which is over-subscribed
- Where is the front-line? – Potentially GP's; schools; Social Care & Health services
- A need to identify the reasons for relationship breakdowns – financial, mental health, violence?

### **Complex Needs**

- There is a lack of specialist support services within the District
- There is a lack of suitable accommodation within the district
- There is a lack of an integrated multi-agency approach to people with complex needs
- The Foyer reported an increase in young people with serious alcohol issues
- Addiction often masks symptoms
- GPs are often reluctant to refer to mental health services or others until addiction issues are resolved, yet they are often intrinsically linked
- There are service users with low to medium needs who refuse to accept that they have a 'problem' and therefore engage with support services. If they refuse to accept help it is almost impossible to get them the help they need.
- People often live chaotic lifestyles which mean that even if they will engage they often miss appointments and 'fall out' of the support system, meaning they then have to be referred again and support is missing.
- In the meantime they may continue to present problems which can result in homelessness.

- No single agency will take the lead unless there is a law being broken or a medical danger being present.

### Other Issues identified

- Bedroom tax and its impact on non-resident parents who have access to children
- Changing & localised rules for Council Tax Support – example of Solihull MBC which only gives assistance to households who have a connection with Solihull- this could limit people’s choices when looking to move out of area if they are unable to access Council tax Support in their chosen area

All of the feedback obtained at the event has been considered in conjunction with the evidence gathered in our Review of Homelessness. We have used this to help develop our priorities and aims of the Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 and also formulate our action plan for delivery.

### List of Attendees

Name	Role Title	Organisation
1. Pat Griffiths	Commercial and Housing Services Manager	South Staffs DC
2. Ben Tomkinson	Support Worker	Brighter Futures
3. Peter Phillips	Community Chaplain	Lives Released
4. Jenni Coleman	Community Safety Manager	Lichfield District Safer Community Partnership
5. Kerry Shea	Finance Director	Vast
6. Stephanie Bristow	Intermediate Support Practitioner	Heantun Housing Association Limited
7. Lindsey Griffiths	Housing Advice Unit - Staffordshire LDU	Staffordshire & West Midlands Probation Trust
8. Ellie Thorne	Prison Transition Manager	Trident Reach The People Charity
9. Marie Williams	Service Manager	Bromford Group
10. Shelley Coglan	Senior Support Worker	Bromford Group
11. Jo Smith	Youth Services Manager - Staffordshire	Midland Heart
12. Sandra Payne	Deputy Director	Lichfield & District CVS
13. Rachel Frondigoun	Housing Strategy Officer	Lichfield District Council
14. Clive Gibbins	Housing Services Manager	Lichfield District Council
15. David Whittaker	Housing Options Manager	Lichfield District Council
16. Addeba Tabasum	Housing Options Officer	Lichfield District Council
17. Kate Becque	Housing Options Officer	Lichfield District Council
18. Allan Tranter	Senior Housing Options Officer	Lichfield District Council
19. Lucy Robinson	Housing Strategy Manager	Lichfield District Council
20. Nadine Taylor		Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent NHS Foundation Trust
20. Rebecca Fagan		Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent NHS Foundation Trust
21. Mandy Bygrave		National Landlords Association