



# Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003



# **Index**

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>SECTION 1 - OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 - POLICY BACKGROUND</b>	<b>6</b>
- HOMELESSNESS - THE LEGAL CONTEXT	<b>7</b>
- THE REQUIREMENT TO CARRY OUT A HOMELESSNESS REVIEW AND STRATEGY	<b>8</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2- KEY FACTS AND FIGURES</b>	<b>9</b>
- HOW WE MEASURE THE HOUSING NEEDS	<b>11</b>
- THE HOUSING NEED SURVEY	<b>11</b>
- THE HOUSING REGISTER	<b>12</b>
- SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 - HOMELESSNESS WITHIN BABERGH</b>	<b>16</b>
- THE SIZE OF THE HOMELESSNESS PROBLEM	<b>17</b>
- CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS	<b>18</b>
- WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME HOMELESS?	<b>19</b>
- REASONS FOR HOUSING PRIORITY	<b>25</b>
- HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION	<b>26</b>
- HOW LONG DO PEOPLE REMAIN IN TEMPORARY HOUSING?	<b>27</b>
- HOUSEHOLDS NOT ACCEPTED FOR HOUSING	<b>28</b>
- COMPARING HOMELESSNESS WITH OTHER COUNCILS	<b>29</b>
- RECURRING HOMELESSNESS	<b>30</b>
- INTENTIONAL HOMELESSNESS	<b>32</b>
- SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	<b>33</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 - THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF HOMELESS GROUPS</b>	<b>36</b>
- FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN	<b>37</b>
- LONE PARENTS	<b>39</b>
- YOUNG PEOPLE	<b>40</b>
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	<b>42</b>
- OLDER PEOPLE	<b>44</b>
- EX-OFFENDERS	<b>45</b>
- SINGLE HOMELESSNESS	<b>46</b>
- CLIENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS	<b>47</b>
- CLIENTS WITH MULTIPLE NEEDS	<b>49</b>
- PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	<b>49</b>
- CLIENTS FROM BME COMMUNITIES	<b>50</b>
- REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS	<b>50</b>

	<b>PAGE</b>
- PEOPLE LEAVING THE ARMED FORCES	<b>51</b>
- SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	<b>52</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 - RESOURCES</b>	<b>55</b>
- SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	<b>59</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 - HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT</b>	<b>60</b>
- THE PLANNING APPROACH	<b>61</b>
- THE SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROGRAMME	<b>61</b>
- SUPPORTED HOUSING	<b>62</b>
- ACCOMMODATION BASED SUPPORT	<b>63</b>
- FLOATING SUPPORT	<b>64</b>
- SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS	<b>65</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7 - LINKS WITH OTHER STRATEGIES</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>SECTION 2 - OUR HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY</b>	<b>69</b>
- INTRODUCTION	<b>70</b>
- OUR VISION, CORPORATE OBJECTIVES AND AIMS	<b>71</b>
- AIM 1: PREVENTING PEOPLE FROM BECOMING HOMELESS	<b>73</b>
- AIM 2: INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION	<b>75</b>
- AIM 3: RAISING THE STANDARDS OF TEMPORARY HOUSING	<b>77</b>
- AIM 4: PROVIDING HELP AND SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE	<b>79</b>
- HOW TO COMMENT ON OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW	<b>81</b>
- OUR ACTION PLAN - SEE APPENDIX 1	<b>82</b>

# SECTION 1

## **OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW**

**CHAPTER 1**

**Policy Background**

**Homelessness – The Legal context**

**Homelessness Review and Strategy**

## **Introduction: Policy Background**

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities to carry out a review of homelessness and homelessness services in their area, and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on this review.

The Review will help inform the Strategy by considering what we already know about homelessness within Babergh; how many cases we deal with each year, which groups are effected most and why homelessness is more prevalent in certain parts of the district but not others. It then summarises the various causes of homelessness, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and the housing market and others which are personal to the individual or family. It moves on to consider whether we could ever actually know the true extent of the problem with some analysis of the factors that could influence homeless trends in the future. It concludes by looking at the work undertaken by our partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors and how their services contribute to the prevention of homelessness, the provision of accommodation and support for homeless clients.

The Local Authority is required to keep the strategy under review and to consult with other local or public authorities and voluntary organisations before adopting or modifying the strategy. The strategy must be published within 12 months of the Act coming into force (which was July 2002). The Bill also requires Local Authorities to renew their homelessness strategy every 5 years. The strategy cannot be amended without prior consultation with the relevant stakeholders first.

The strategy must include plans for:

- The prevention of homelessness
- Ensuring there is sufficient temporary accommodation available to people who are, or may become homeless
- Ensuring that sufficient support is available to people to prevent them becoming homeless again.

The strategy must include all homeless people irrespective of whether they are considered to be in priority need for accommodation; all people at risk of becoming homeless whether within 28 days or a longer period; people who may have become homeless intentionally; and homeless people in the area who may not have a local connection.

In March 2002 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published a report entitled "More than a Roof". The report examines the causes and extent of homelessness in the country as well as future trends. The report predicts that as a result of the Homelessness Act and the introduction of the Priority Need Order, levels of homelessness are likely to rise in the short term as the assistance available to homeless people is extended. There are 6 key objectives contained in the report, which Babergh District Council will support through its Homelessness Strategy.

These objectives are:

1. Developing a more strategic approach to tackling homelessness.
2. Strengthening the assistance available to homeless people (or those at risk of becoming homeless).
3. Encouraging new responses to tackling homelessness.
4. Reducing the use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation for homeless families with children.
5. Sustaining the reduction in the number of people sleeping rough.
6. Ensuring the use of a decent home for all.

## **Homelessness - The legal context**

A Local Authority's legal duty to homeless people is contained within Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act and has been updated and amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (which includes an extension of the priority need categories). The Act requires that a Local Authority must consider whether a homeless person is eligible for assistance; homeless; in priority need; not intentionally homeless. A Local Authority may also identify whether or not a homeless person has a local connection with the authority they are presenting to. A Local Authority must provide temporary accommodation whilst it carries out its investigation and must make a decision within 30 days, about what duty it owes a homeless person. The service offered to a homeless person therefore depends on what duty is owed by the Local Authority following a homelessness investigation and subsequent decision. The potential outcomes can be seen in Appendix 1.

The Homelessness Act 2002 (Priority Needs Order) seeks to enhance the rights of homeless people by extending the categories of priority need to certain groups not covered by the 1996 legislation. These include:

- 16 and 17 year olds (except relevant children i.e. those who Social Services have responsibility under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000).
- Care leavers aged 18 to 21 who are former relevant children.
- People who are considered vulnerable as a result of fleeing violence (or threats of violence).
- People who are vulnerable as a result of spending time in the armed forces, serving time in prison or a care background.

## **The requirement to carry out a Homelessness Review and Strategy**

This Homelessness Review explains how much homelessness exists within the Babergh District and what more we know about who are more likely to lose their home, the reasons why homelessness takes place and what things can influence a greater or lesser homelessness problem in the future.

We also consider the roles of other organisations and individuals who work with the homeless and how effective partnership working can make a real difference to their lives.

We also look at the costs involved in managing the problem and why some homeless people are likely to become homeless again if we do not provide meaningful support.

Finally, we consider what we call “strategic links”. Homelessness is a much more complex problem for Babergh to cure alone and these links to other strategies are important if we are to find new ways to tackle the problem.

Our Homelessness Strategy is produced in Section 2 of this document. We used all the information gathered from our Review to establish four key aims that will allow us to respond positively to the requirements of the legislation and the needs of local people.

We remain grateful for all the help and support that has been provided by a range of partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors and their continuing commitments to work with us now and in the future as we attempt to achieve our goal of tackling the homelessness problem within Babergh.

The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan that is attached as an appendix to our Homelessness Review and Strategy will help to ensure that we deliver on all our key aims and that our progress can be monitored throughout the life of the strategy.

**CHAPTER 2**

**Key facts and figures about Babergh District Council**

**How we measure housing needs**

**The Housing Needs Survey**

**The Housing Register**

## **Key facts and figures about Babergh District Council**

The Babergh District has an area of 59,000 hectares and constitutes the most southern of the seven administering authorities within Suffolk. It has two main urban areas consisting of five wards. These are Sudbury and Great Cornard, (Population: - 19,770) which is situated in the west of the District, and Hadleigh (Population: - 7,000) which is located in the centre. The remainder of the District is largely rural and made up of 28 wards or 85 parishes

A recent MORI survey identified the district as the 7<sup>th</sup> most desirable place in England in which to live. Crime levels and levels of social deprivation are generally low although two wards, Sudbury North and Great Cornard South are among the top 20 most deprived wards in Suffolk. The Sudbury and Great Cornard Priority Action Zone was identified as one of the first three geographically specific zones within the Suffolk Pathfinder Strategy that was established in 1999 as part of the Local Government Association "New Commitment to Regeneration". Homelessness and deprivation are very closely connected. This report will show that there are much higher levels of social and community problems, which include homelessness occurring within Sudbury and Great Cornard. Furthermore, that issues that both contribute to homelessness; high unemployment levels, welfare benefit dependence and higher rates of family and relationship breakdown and problems that are most prevalent among homeless people; drug and alcohol dependence, poor housing and poor health need to be recognised and meaningful solutions found if we are to tackle both the cause and effect of the homelessness problem. It would be misleading to under estimate the very real problems of homelessness affecting this small geographical area however, other concerns are just as important for homeless families outside this "hot spot". Other parts of the district have regularly generated their fair number of homeless cases each year and the associated issues of how to access the centralised homelessness service and other essential services brings its own special problems.

Babergh District Council serves 80,400 people (in mid 2001). The population density, at around 1.4 people per hectare, is low compared to the national average of 3.4. Less than 1% of the population are from black and ethnic communities.

Of the 35,983 dwellings (April 2001) within the District 30,983 or 88.2% are owner occupied, 3,979 or 8% are rented from either the Council or Private Landlords. 1,021 or 3.8% are owned and managed by Housing association partners.

The level of empty homes in the stock is estimated to be around 2.3% which, is based on total stock levels. This translates to about 664 homes. The level of second home ownership within the district is again based on estimates provided by Council Tax records (1.02%). This equates to around 371 homes.

## **How we measure the housing needs of the district**

Homelessness is only a part of the overall housing needs of the district. A total of 375 clients applied to Babergh District Council as homeless in 2002/2003 however, approximately 80% more applicants can be identified on the Housing Register. More detailed analysis is regularly undertaken by Local Authorities concerned that this means of identifying need does not accurately record the true picture of need and that, it only provides a picture at a given point and not one that stands up to scrutiny in the future.

This review considers what we know about housing need focusing on our Housing Needs Survey and the Housing Register:

### **The Housing Needs Survey**

Babergh is an area of relatively high housing need. During 2000, Babergh along with four of the other housing authorities within Suffolk commissioned a Housing Needs Study. The aims of the study were to evaluate the current needs and demand analysis and collection methods and to consider future needs and preferences to assist in the development of housing, planning and care strategies.

The key findings of the study were:

- Whilst 90% of households were considered adequately housed, house size and poor condition adversely impact older households, those with disabilities and those on low incomes.
- Affordability of homes is seen as a problem among those assessed as being "concealed" households.
- The scale of subsidised affordable need varies significantly across Suffolk and this has a general impact on the movement of households between Districts and a significant impact on areas adjoining Ipswich.
- Shortage of smaller, particularly one and two bedroom homes for single and childless couples and for older people living predominantly in sheltered accommodation who have support needs and where their existing accommodation, does not allow for family and other forms of support to be delivered effectively from their homes due to the lack of bedrooms.
- A clear need that has been identified through local housing need surveys conducted in partnership with Parish Councils to build low-cost, affordable homes for local people in 15 wards within the District.
- Existing provision will not cope with the housing needs of older people in the period to 2011.
- More specialist housing is required with appropriate support, particularly for those with drug and alcohol problems, common mental health problems and "chaotic" lifestyle difficulties.

## The Housing Register

The number of households registered for housing within the District over the last three years is contrasted with the number of household housed in the table below:

### The demand for affordable social housing

#### Number of applicants on Housing Register and Allocations made

<i>Date</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>
<i>Applications on Housing register</i>	1074	1072	1047	1005
<i>Allocations</i>	443	517	450	466
<i>Notional Shortfall</i>	631	555	597	539

**Note:** The total number of allocations made takes into account the transfer of existing tenants to other accommodation and nominations governed under local agreements to Registered Social Landlords.

This indicator is a useful means of measuring the overall demand for social housing within the District rather than a strict measure of the needs of the homelessness. However, it does tend to illustrate that innovation is no substitute to increasing the amount of social housing units required each year.

The number of allocations made to homeless applicants is a further indicator of the way in which Local Authorities manage the homelessness problem within their area. Government has made clear their desires for a reasonable balance of allocations between the three main housing categories; general needs, transfer applicants and those who are homeless. The Best Value Review of services to tenants which was subject to a full inspection by the Audit Commission in March 2003 concluded Babergh offers a good mix of nominations. Our service has been assessed as being a Two Star housing service with excellent prospects for improvement.

Babergh seeks to balance the competing needs of households from its Housing Register, those awaiting a transfer to more suitable accommodation and those who are homeless. The decline, in both the overall number of lettings opportunities and the slow down in the Social Housing programme in 2001/2002 for general needs accommodation, has had the overall effect of increasing the waiting time for permanent housing rather than the overall percentage of allocations to homeless families.

The number of properties purchased by existing qualifying tenants under the Right to Buy sales policy since 1980 and up to December 2002 is 2,669. This factor, along with both the rapid rise in house price inflation coupled with high rental values in the private rented housing market, continue to effect the supply of affordable housing within the district. The result of selling council homes has had a profound impact within the district as a whole however, analysis at a local level brings the matter into very sharp focus. The 2,669 properties lost under this policy are only part of the overall picture.

- There are 6 out of the 75 wards within the district where all the council houses have been sold.
- A further 11 wards have seen their total housing stock decrease by 50%.
- Three bedroom properties in some rural locations that are now on the open market for purchase are valued as high as £165,000.

An indication of the problem of replacing the overall level of housing stock sold is brought into stark contrast by the total number of new units developed under partnership arrangements with Registered Social Landlords or Housing Associations. In the last three years we have enabled 67 new homes to be developed whilst 22 homes have been sold.

The impact of selling homes in a rural community such as Babergh is felt in many ways. It reduces the housing choice for clients who would prefer to live in a particular community for employment, family or social reasons. It erodes the number of available rented housing options and in doing so increases the rental value of properties often beyond the payment capability of those who are homeless. It is known to have a tangible effect on the outward migration of particular homeless groups, such as those who are single or who have special housing needs. Babergh's desire to increase the number of affordable homes within the district will form a major element of our Homelessness Strategy.

## **CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **Key Facts and Figures about Babergh District Council**

- Babergh District Council serves 80,400 people.
- It comprises 35,983 dwellings with a high level (88.2%) of owner occupation.
- Two wards within the District are among the top 20 most deprived wards in Suffolk, Sudbury North and Great Cornard South.
- The level of clients from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds is less than 1% of total population.

### **The Housing Needs Survey**

- 90% of households sampled considered themselves to be adequately housed.
- The cost of purchasing a home is seen as a serious obstacle by many “concealed” households.
- There is a shortage of smaller homes for single, childless couples and older people throughout the District.
- There is a shortage of more specialised “supported” housing schemes for vulnerable groups.

### **The Housing Register**

- The number of households applying for housing has remained fairly constant over the last four years.
- The number of households allocated social rented housing each year account for approximately 45% of the total households on the Housing Register.
- The Allocation formula remains dependent on the success of our Social Housing Programme.
- We are successful in balancing the competing housing demands from households on the general needs housing register, transfer applicants and those who are homeless.
- A total of 2,669 homes within the District have been sold since 1980 under the “Right to Buy” sales policy.
- The number of homes sold each year cannot be replaced under the Social Housing Programme.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Homelessness within Babergh**

- 1. The size of the homelessness problem**
- 2. Causes of homelessness within Babergh**
- 3. Why do people become homeless?**
- 4. Reasons for housing priority**
- 5. Homeless households in temporary accommodation**
- 6. How long do people remain in temporary housing?**
- 7. Households not accepted for housing**
- 8. Comparing homelessness with neighbouring Councils**
- 9. Recurring homelessness**
- 10. Intentional homelessness**

## Homelessness within Babergh

This chapter considers what we know about the homelessness problem within the district. We will examine the extent of the problem from the information we collect and any trends we have witnessed over the years. We will also look at the reasons why people lose their homes and the main group of households who are most effected. We will also try to compare the homelessness problem within Babergh with our neighbours and demonstrate that external factors, that are often quite unique to an area such as economic activity and employment, house prices and so on, make the need for specific solutions an overriding importance.

### 1) The size of the homelessness problem

The table below sets out the number of homeless presentations made to Babergh District Council over the last three years. A presentation is defined as a situation of homelessness that has been formally assessed and a decision made in accordance with the statutory housing duties imposed on all Local Authority housing departments. The number of presentations grew by 17.4% in 2000/2001 however; figures for the previous two years have remained relatively constant.

Homelessness acceptance levels are again fairly constant representing between 33% and 36% of total presentations over the last three years. The figures for 2002/2003 should allow us to measure the impact of the new priority need provisions introduced by the Homelessness Act 2002. This provided a new duty to accommodate young single clients, care leavers and those leaving "institutional" backgrounds. As the report will go on to show, there are special arrangements in place with other partner agencies and dedicated accommodation available to some of these groups which were in place prior to the introduction of this legislation. These arrangements may themselves have an impact on overall acceptances.

#### Homeless presentations and acceptances: 2000-2003

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of presentations</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>Number of acceptances</i>	<i>Change</i>
1999/2000	212	<b>- 17.4%</b>	102	<b>- 0.39%</b>
2000/2001	272	<b>+ 28.3%</b>	120	<b>+ 17.6%</b>
2001/2002	275	<b>+ 0.11%</b>	120	<i>No change</i>
2002/2003	282	<b>+ 4.2%</b>	101	<b>- 15%</b>

Source: Babergh DC Housing Support Best Value Report

## 2) Causes of Homelessness within Babergh

The following table summarises the main causes of homelessness within the District over the last three years as defined within official P1E government returns:

<i>Causes of Homelessness</i>	<i>Year Ending March 2001</i>	<i>Year Ending March 2002</i>	<i>Year Ending March 2003</i>
Parental Eviction	15 (13%)	17 (14%)	22 (22%)
Other relative/Friend eviction	11 ( 9%)	12 (10%)	11 (11%)
Relationship breakdown (violent)	14 (12%)	11 ( 9%)	3 ( 3%)
Relationship breakdown (non violent)	21 (17%)	13 (11%)	9 ( 9%)
Mortgage Arrears	9 ( 7%)	6 ( 5%)	2 ( 2%)
Rent Arrears (LA)	0 ( 0%)	0 ( 0%)	0 ( 0%)
Rent Arrears (HA)	0 ( 0%)	0 ( 0%)	2 ( 2%)
Rent Arrears (Private Dwellings)	3 ( 3%)	1 ( 1%)	1 ( 1%)
Loss of Private Rented Tenancy/Tied Accommodation	35 (29%)	47 ( 39%)	43 (42%)
Institution (Care)	0 ( 0%)	0 ( 0%)	1 ( 1%)
Other (incl. Homeless in emergency, returned from abroad, sleeping rough or in hostel, etc.	12 (10%)	13 (11%)	7 ( 7%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120 (100%)</b>	<b>120 (100%)</b>	<b>101 (100%)</b>

The above table only provides part of the overall picture because it only focuses on households for whom we have a statutory obligation to rehouse. These accounted for just 35% of all homeless cases in 2002/2003.

It is useful therefore to consider the wider picture of all the outcomes reached following the formal assessment of needs under homelessness law. This is examined in the table below:

*Numbers of homelessness presentations and decisions*

	<i>2000/2001</i>	<i>2001/2002</i>	<i>2002/2003</i>
Not homeless	76	72	89
Not in priority need	68	70	79
Intentionally homeless	8	13	13
Accepted for permanent housing	120	120	101
<i>Applications total</i>	<i>272</i>	<i>275</i>	<i>282</i>

Applicants deemed not to be in priority need and those who are intentionally, or deliberately homeless, will be considered later within this review. The number of clients each year who are assessed as being not homeless also require consideration.

The homelessness legislation requires all Local Authorities to decide whether an applicant is either actually homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Whilst the Local Authority must determine whether, or not, they owe a housing duty to the applicant they must also seek to prevent homelessness from occurring wherever possible. The number of clients therefore who are assessed as being not homeless reflect the steps taken to prevent or delay homelessness. Whilst we are not required to assess the outcomes in individual cases we are clear that homelessness prevention makes a significant impact.

### **3) Why do people become homeless?**

There are many reasons why people become homeless. This part of the review considers each reason in detail:

#### **a) The loss of tenancies with a private landlord**

The highest level of homelessness presentations results from households whose private sector tenancies are brought to an end by their landlord. This accounted for 41 households or 42% of the total within the year ending March 2002. Changes to tenancy law brought about by the Housing Act 1988 and the increased the certainty of private landlords to enter into commercial agreements with tenants, in the knowledge that they could gain vacant possession of their homes easily, are known to have a major impact on homelessness at a national level. The level of private renting within

Babergh is relatively low at 5% of all housing tenure and much of this accommodation is known to be owned by individual landlords.

Other factors that effect the fragility of this sector include:

- A buoyant housing market. The immediate financial returns of landlords seeking to sell their homes are viewed by some individual private landlords as more advantageous than the revenue income derived from letting.
- A Housing Benefit system that is subject to regulation and that has not kept pace with landlord expectation on financial returns.
- Adverse publicity about “difficult” tenants and the processes required to recover possession.
- The cost of carrying out essential repairs.

#### **b) Eviction by other family members or friends**

The next highest cause of homelessness is eviction by either other family members or friends. These made up 29 or 24% of all cases in 2001/2002. Again the position within Babergh follows the national trend. There are many reasons why so many homeless clients fall into this category:

- Clients may not enjoy stable relationships with their family particularly with step-parents.
- There are often issues of overcrowding where family and friends cannot accommodate in the longer term.
- Some clients have unmet support needs that place increased pressure on their family and friends.
- High housing demand sometimes increases the expectation that homelessness overrides priority on the housing register.
- There are peer group pressures to become independent.

#### **c) The breakdown of relationships**

The breakdown of relationships provides the next largest group at 13 or 11% of the total number of presentations. The figure for 2001/2002 shows a decline of 7% over 1999/2000 and a 1% increase from 2000/2001 and appears to suggest that more clients are inclined to exercise their property rights in relation to the “matrimonial” or family home as opposed to a formal approach as homeless.

The breakdown of a relationship due to violence makes up 9% of the total or 11 cases. The extension of the provisions contained in the Homelessness Act 2002 to include victims of violence from outside the property may have an impact in future years however, it is not yet apparent in the information available.

**d) Housing related debt**

Housing related debt account for the next largest total of overall presentations at 5%. In 1990 this percentage was 21% and not until 1998 did debt related homelessness within Babergh fall below 10%. The consistent decline in these cases since 1995 is reflected at a national level as interest rates have fallen to record low levels and unemployment in this part of the region has fallen below the national average.

Housing related debt is still a concern. The total amount of rent arrears owed by our tenants is £147,373 or 1.33% of total income due. With 59% of our 3,762 tenants qualifying for help with all or part of their rent this small minority of debt cases cannot be underestimated. The recovery of these monies remains a priority to the Council. A total of 23 tenants with serious rent arrears were taken to Court in 2002 and agreements reached to repay the sums due, subject to a Suspended Possession Order. Outright possession was granted by the courts in 6 cases although only one tenant made a formal approach to us for assistance with housing. The likelihood remains however, that debt will continue to be a factor that may threaten the housing security of council tenants.

The situation within the private rented housing market has been more difficult to estimate although five of the seven property management agents spoken to stated that at least 10% of their tenants owed between one and three months outstanding rent. This could account for as many as 60 tenants and a total debt of £21,000.

Evictions for arrears, which involve court action within this sector, are also rare. Many landlords and their agents spoken to have indicated that they would not bring a specific action against a tenant for rent arrears unless they were seeking to recover monies due because the possession procedures are costly and cumbersome. They say that they prefer to rely upon the so-called "non-reasonableness" grounds for possession that allow for notice to be served two months before the tenancy ends. It is possible therefore that many tenancies are terminated because the landlord is concerned about rent arrears although this does not constitute the real reason why they are either not renewed or brought to an end at the earliest opportunity.

The average rental value of privately rented homes has also risen significantly over the last five years. The Rent Officer Services who set the subsidy each Local Authority can claim and which itself determines the maximum amount of housing benefit we can pay to tenants who qualify for this benefit, have confirmed that the average increase to be about 22% bringing the average rental value of a three-bedroom house in Sudbury to £475 per calendar month and a two-bedroom house in Hadleigh to £425.

Housing Benefit in the form of a rent allowance is paid to 666 tenants who live in private rented accommodation within the district. A sample survey of 20 cases revealed that approximately 50% of these claims were for the maximum amount of rent that is due. In other words, the benefit paid the whole rent however, in the remaining cases there was a rent shortfall of between £25 and £125 per month. This means the tenant must meet this difference from their benefit. The shortage of available and affordable accommodation within the district remains a real problem and whilst Babergh provides assistance in the form of both a Rental Deposit Guarantee and Rent in Advance Scheme for those most needy, more work needs to be undertaken within the Homelessness Strategy to encourage private landlords to offer their housing to homeless people.

House prices give an indication of the affordability of an area and are therefore relevant in helping to understand the often fragile nature of this sector for many households. House price inflation impacts in many different ways. They have an effect on the immigration of labour both in and out of the District. Residents who are first time buyers are often excluded from this part of the housing market which places further pressure on Local Authority housing resources and low income households in the owner occupied sector remain most susceptible to homelessness caused by variations in interest rates.

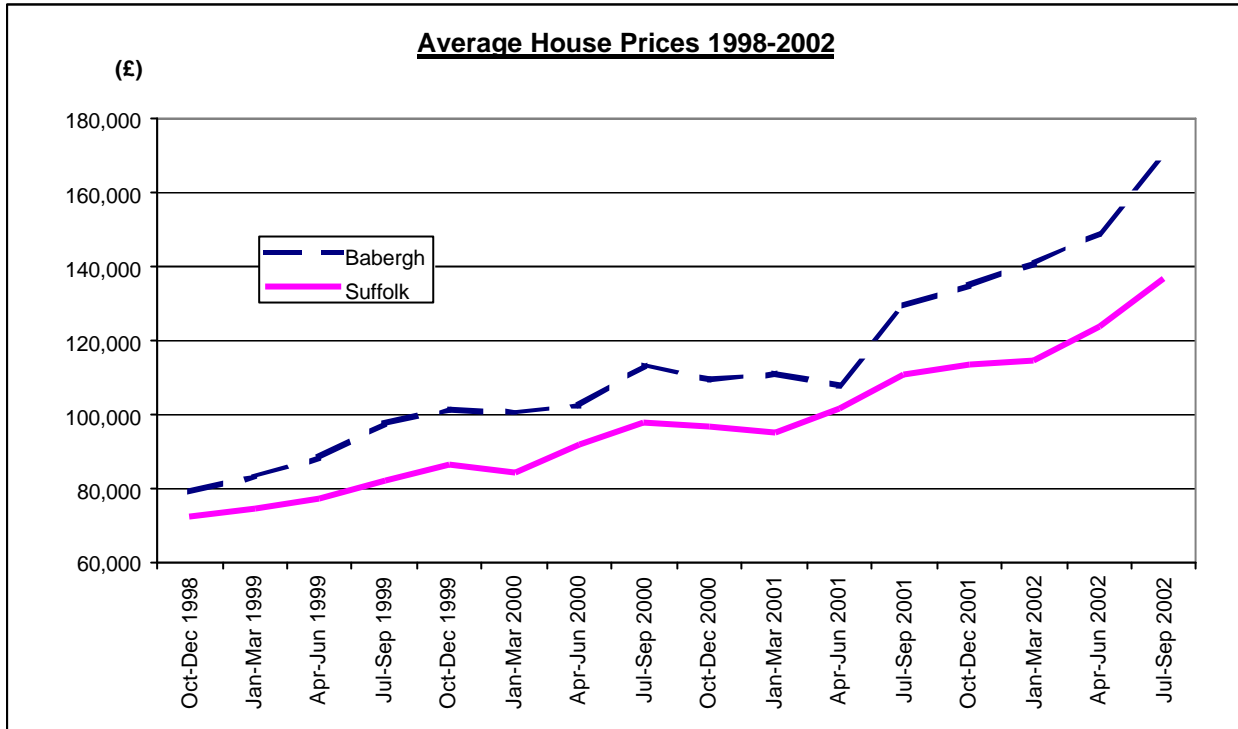
The table below shows average house prices by type and the overall percentage change:

House Prices by Type, July – Sept. 2002

	<i>Detached</i>	<i>Semi-Detached</i>	<i>Terraced</i>	<i>Flat/ Maisonette</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>% increase since July - Sept 2001</i>
<i>Babergh District</i>	244,474	127,410	108,662	63,467	170,047	31.5
<i>Suffolk</i>	200,871	112,744	91,704	83,781	136,606	23.6
<i>East of England</i>	230,628	117,902	117,902	98,570	156,339	19.5

Source: HM Land Registry

In the year to September 2002 house prices in Babergh have increased by almost a third. This represents a much larger increase than as occurred within the county and the region where house prices have increased by almost a fifth and a quarter respectively.



The above chart shows that house prices in Babergh have been rising steadily over the last 4 years, however large increases have occurred from Spring 2001 onwards. From this point the rate of increase has been greater than that experienced by the county. Up to this point variations in house prices in the district had mirrored the trend exhibited by the county.

Homelessness effecting homeowners within the district has decreased year on year from its record high in 1991/92 although there is evidence from a number of sources including the lenders themselves to indicate that mortgage arrears are still seen as a problem. Whilst lenders are now far less inclined to recover their debts through possession procedure because the amount of equity in most homes purchased after 2000 are sufficient to protect their interests, any change in the housing market would undoubtedly change the situation very rapidly.

Advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau see debt and “over borrowing” on mortgages in particular as a real problem. The Sudbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau dealt with some 58 cases involving housing related debt in 2002 with a further 241 people seeking advice with multiple debt problems. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau has recently published some findings that claim the amount owed by more than 900 clients over a one-month period averaged nearly 14 times their monthly income. Almost half these clients had found their creditors unhelpful, and a quarter was receiving treatment from their GP for stress, depression and anxiety.

Certain clients such as those whose relationships break down or who require larger and hence more expensive accommodation are also more likely to fall into arrears. The Benefits Agency who pay mortgage interest to clients on Income Support state that some 3,000 households within Suffolk rely on these payments to meet their mortgage commitments. These were the same clients in the early to mid 1990's who homes were regularly repossessed due to mortgage arrears.

First time buyers, as the average house price figures in the chart on Page 19 shows may again be affected by any downward change in the economy. Low interest rates have allowed some lenders to loan 100% of the purchase price of a property and to abandon the income bar that restricts the amount a person can borrow based on their income. These "marginal" owner-occupiers are less likely to have savings and take on mortgage protection insurance.

#### 4) Homelessness - reasons for housing priority

Legislation requires all housing authorities to collect information on the breakdown of vulnerable groups who qualify for accommodation under homelessness legislation. The table below examines the position over the last three years:

Homelessness acceptances - reasons for priority

<i>Households with/or:</i>	<i>2000/2001</i>	<i>2001/2002</i>	<i>2002/2003</i>
• Dependent Children	82	68	49
• Pregnant	6	8	5
<i>Households who are vulnerable due to:</i>			
• Old age	12	16	12
• Physical Disability	3	4	2
• Mental illness/ disability	5	3	9
• Young people	4	7	9
• Domestic Violence	4	3	0
• Other	4	11	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>101</i>

## 5) Homeless Households in temporary accommodation

The number of households in temporary accommodation and the time taken to effect a permanent housing solution remains a useful indicator of the homelessness problem within the District. The table below sets out the numbers of homeless households accommodated in the various forms of temporary accommodation at the end of each year:

*Homeless households in temporary accommodation during the year*

	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Hostel Accommodation	64	71	78
Bed and Breakfast	0	0	14
Women's Refuge	4	2	3
Homeless at home	0	11	14
Other	11	0	3
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>112</i>

The number of households who had occupied temporary accommodation at some point during 2003 and which included Homelessness Centres, Non-Secure Accommodation, Women's Aid Centres, Bed and Breakfast and those classed as "Homeless at Home" was 112. This can be contrasted with the figures for 2001 and 2002. The 36% and 25% increase in the numbers accommodated in temporary housing throughout 2003 at the same time that the overall number of homeless acceptances remains static is a cause for concern.

## 6) How long do homeless people remain in temporary housing?

The average time household spent in temporary accommodation during 2003 is broken down into the various types; Homeless Centres, Bed and Breakfast, Woman's Aid Centres, "Homeless at Home", Council Non-secure tenancies and arrangements with private landlords. The findings are shown below:

### The average time in temporary accommodation

Type of Temp Accommodation	Data	Household type		
		Family	Single	Grand Total
Bed & Breakfast	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	87.29	33.86	60.57
	No's in temp accom.	7	7	14
Homeless Centre	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	147.07	124.75	140.21
	No's in temp accom.	54	24	78
Women's Aid Centre	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	172	0	172
	No's in temp accom.	3	0	3
Homeless at Home	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	167.25	187.5	170.14
	No's in temp accom.	12	2	14
Other	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	322.00	0	322.00
	No's in temp accom.	1	0	1
Private Sector Landlord	Average of Time in Temp Accom.	230.00	0	230.00
	No's in temp accom.	2	0	2
<i>Total Average of Time in Temp Accom.</i>		<i>150.10</i>	<i>109.27</i>	<i>138.07</i>
<i>Total Numbers in Temp Accom.</i>		<i>79</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>112</i>

The average length of time taken to permanently house clients in temporary accommodation in 2003 was some 27 days longer than in 2001 and 2002 and is a reflection both on the diminishing vacancy rate, the overall shortage of particularly two bedroom houses in areas of highest demand and, in some instances, the need to provide supported housing for those with special needs.

Of the 78 clients in Homeless Centres during the year, 15 clients waited between 288 and 379 days before they were eventually housed. This is a 33% increase in the highest recorded waiting period for the last two years.

## 7) Homeless Households not accepted for housing

The homelessness legislation requires all Local Authorities to decide whether an applicant is either actually homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days. Being homeless therefore is the first important step in deciding the outcome of a homeless case. The legal definition of homelessness applies to the following situations:

- Where there is no accommodation that the applicant can occupy with their family or other persons who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.
- Where the applicant has no legal right to occupy the accommodation or the legal rights to remain.
- Where the applicant cannot secure entry to the accommodation.
- Where the accommodation is a moveable structure and it cannot be lawfully put it.

Whilst the Local Authority must determine whether, or not, they owe a housing duty to the applicant they must also seek to prevent homelessness from occurring wherever possible. The number of clients therefore who are assessed as being not homeless reflect the steps taken to prevent or delay homelessness. Whilst we are not required to assess the outcomes in individual cases we are clear that homelessness prevention makes a significant impact.

The majority of households applying for assistance cannot be accommodated in accordance with these rules. In 2002 the figure was 168 cases or some 59% of the total number of presentations. We have considered the number of not homeless cases over the last 6 months and have broken down the various outcomes as follows. From the 40 cases considered:

- 18 cases involved situations where family or friends asked the applicant to leave the accommodation. We were able to place these clients into other accommodation in 13 cases and in the other 5 negotiated the continuation of the placement and arranged for the applicant to be placed on the Housing register and nominated to a specialist housing provider.
- In 13 cases we were able to intervene because the private sector landlord had served the incorrect notice. We instructed the landlord how to bring about the lawful termination of the tenancy in 7 cases, which delayed the applicants' homelessness for up to 2 months. In a further 4 cases involving outstanding rent, we were able to negotiate the payment of the arrears thus preventing homelessness. In the remaining 2 cases, we were able to argue that the landlord was unable to bring about the lawful ending of the tenancy.
- In 6 cases involving the breakdown of a relationship, we were able to work with the applicant's solicitor so that they could help exercise the applicant's property rights.

- In the remaining three cases, we were unable to make a homeless decision because the client was not homeless within 28 days.

It is difficult in these situations to predict whether applicants will simply become homeless at a later date. We know that in some cases we are simply delaying the inevitable whilst in others homelessness may not occur again. Our Homelessness Strategy will attempt to measure the impact of homelessness prevention.

## **8) Comparing homelessness with neighbouring Councils**

The levels of homelessness within a district provide only a part of a much wider picture of the housing difficulties faced. Homelessness itself is measured in a number of different ways and much analysis is undertaken to see whether the problems are greater or lesser elsewhere. The problem is of course relative to a number of different factors in the locality; the supply of housing, the type of housing available, economic and geographical issues, access to other services such as education, health and social care and so on.

The levels of homelessness within Babergh have remained fairly constant over the last four years. This trend is confirmed by many of our neighbours within Suffolk and Norfolk. London authorities have for years sought to measure the relative picture of homelessness within their areas by contrasting the number of presentations per 1000 of their population. The outcomes from this simple analysis has highlighted so-called homelessness “hot- spots” within the Greater London Boroughs such as Westminster and Lambeth with a ratio of 19 with smaller and less central Boroughs such as Harrow revealing a ration of 7.

The table below examines the levels of homelessness affecting our neighbouring authorities using this analysis. It shows that the two regional capitals, Ipswich and Norwich, have both the largest overall populations but also the highest ratio of homeless presentations at 10.26 and 10.74 respectively. These two centres have the highest amount of Council and also Private Rented Housing and much greater access to local services.

In relation to authorities displaying very similar characteristics to Babergh in terms of their population, economic activity and employment rates, housing tenure breakdown and access to local services, the figures reveal only slight local variations.

There is a need to carry out further work with our neighbours to ascertain the problems they face but also their approach in delivering solutions. Meaningful discussions and partnership on areas of good practice and innovation will be developed further in the Strategy.

**Number of homeless presentations shown as a figure per 1000 of the population**

Council	2002/2003	
	Number	(Per 1,000)
Babergh District Council	282	(3.50)
Broadland District Council	343	(2.89)
Norwich City Council	1306	(10.74)
South Norfolk District Council	301	(2.8)
Ipswich Borough Council	1254	(10.26)
Waveney District Council	327	(2.91)
Forest Heath District Council	125	(1.76)

## 9) Recurring Homelessness

Recurring or repeated homelessness explains a situation where people become homeless again despite being either accommodated or offered advice and assistance on where to find accommodation themselves. This may happen once or a number of times within a set time span, perhaps a few months or even up to a number of years.

At the present time there is no formal requirement on Local Authorities to collect information on this issue. There is however, a growing awareness that people who become homeless repeatedly must fail for a reason and Local Authorities should both investigate the reasons for failure and do something very positive about it.

Evidence has been collected within this review of 6 cases of recurring homelessness within the last three years. We are aware that there may be more cases that have not been identified or cases where other providers have intervened without our knowledge. An examination of each of these cases reveals the following:

- **Case A:** Woman and two children fleeing a violent partner. Property is rented from a Housing Association and the tenancy is in joint names. Long history of violence and threats by partner. A serious assault occurred three months ago that required hospitalisation. Client sought legal advice before making a homeless presentation.

Temporary accommodation was offered to the client and arrangements made with solicitor to seek the transfer of the tenancy into sole name and to resolve financial and childcare matters.

The client moved out of temporary accommodation after just 6 weeks saying that she wanted to reconcile with her partner. A fresh homeless application was made within three months after the first. The attempts to resolve differences within the relationship were not successful and the partner made two further assaults on the client.

- **Case B: Young** person aged 17 presented as homeless following the breakdown of his relationship with his step- father. He was asked to leave home immediately. The client had spent his early years in a Social Services Care Home and had been convicted of minor offences when he was 15. Social Services had not seen the client for the last year although they were concerned that the family relationships may break down at some point in the future. The client was placed into temporary accommodation whilst a joint planning meeting was convened with Social Services to consider ongoing support needs. The placement failed when the client failed to pay his rent and caused persistent nuisance to others whilst in this accommodation. Warnings were issued but not adhered to. The client was evicted but represented as homeless 4 months later claiming he had no settled accommodation in the intervening period.
- **Case C: Older** client with undiagnosed mental health problems presented as homeless. Claimed that he had no settled housing for the last 8 years and was used to sleeping rough. Family connections established within area although family had disowned client and wanted no contact.

Client moved into temporary accommodation but immediately displayed signs of a personality disorder and challenging behaviour to others. Mental Health Team consulted and agreed to assess condition but client failed to attend meeting.

Client then left temporary accommodation without prior notice. He presented as homeless 6 months later following his discharge from a psychiatric ward of a local hospital. Temporary accommodation was again made available to the client however, he moved out again 6 weeks later.

- **Case D: Young** single mother asked to leave parental home after a disagreement with stepfather. Moved into temporary accommodation. Formed relationship and moved into permanent home after 6 months with partner as joint tenants. Property subsequently purchased however, relationship breaks down and home repossessed. A second homelessness approach was made after 18 months.

These cases illustrate a range of situations that cause people be become homeless again. Whilst they are by no means exhaustive, they appear to support the view that both the lack of appropriate accommodation and specialist forms of housing related support undermine the housing security of certain vulnerable groups and make them more pre-disposed to become homeless again.

The government has indicated that housing authorities must do more to help sustain the tenancies of these groups. This review will consider how support is currently delivered and its overall effectiveness. A clear aim within our Homelessness Strategy will be to investigate further the extent of the problem and to ensure that every effort is made to prevent preventable tenancy breakdown.

## 10) Intentional homelessness

Intentional or preventable homelessness describes the situation in which a homeless person is deemed to have deliberately and recklessly brought about the loss of their accommodation. For a person to be found intentionally homeless the following conditions must apply:

- He or she has ceased to occupy accommodation (or there is a likelihood of him or her being forced to leave accommodation) as a consequence of a deliberate action or inaction by him or her
- The accommodation is available for his or her occupation, and
- It would have been reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy the accommodation.

However, for this purpose, an act or omission in good faith by someone who was unaware of any relevant fact must not be treated as deliberate.

We found 13 households intentionally homeless in 2003 of which 3 were households with children and 10 were single people. This contrasts with the situation in 2001 and 2002 where 8 and 13 families respectively were found to be intentionally homeless. We are unable to explain this increased trend, as there has been no material change in the legal interpretation of intentional homeless or a proportionate increase in overall presentations during these periods.

We will continue to monitor the incidence of intentional homelessness and to ensure that all clients affected are advised on both our internal review arrangements and the other forms of legal remedies available through the courts.

Furthermore, where families with dependent children are found to be intentionally homeless, that we will work with other housing providers and particularly Social Care Services, within their responsibility under the Children Act to ensure that the welfare of children are not seriously prejudiced.

## **CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **The size of the Homelessness Problem**

- Homelessness presentations within the District have increased by 33% in the last 3 years.
- The number of households accepted for housing has remained fairly constant over the same period.

### **Causes of Homelessness**

- 34% of all homelessness is due to eviction within the private rented housing sector.
- Eviction by family and friends make up a further 24% of all homelessness.
- Homelessness due to relationship breakdown has slowed down over the last 3 years, however, the number of women fleeing violence and seeking housing from Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid has increased.
- Eviction due to debt has again declined markedly over the last decade, however, housing and other related debt is still much in evidence for many of our clients.

### **The reasons for Housing Priority**

- Households with dependent children and family members who are pregnant account for 50% of all homelessness acceptances.
- Older people make up 9% of all acceptances.
- Vulnerability due to mental or physical reasons have increased by 20% over the last 3 years.
- 9 young people under 18 were accepted as homeless in the last year.

### **Homeless households in temporary accommodation**

- Almost 80% of homeless households accepted for housing were placed into Hostel accommodation in 2002/2003.
- Homelessness at home has increased as a temporary housing option over the last 2 years.
- The number of households accommodated in Bed and Breakfast hotels reached an all time high in 2002/2003.
- Our reliance on temporary accommodation shows no signs of decreasing.

### **The Length of Stay in Temporary Accommodation**

- The highest average amount of time households spend in temporary accommodation is within Council managed “non-secure” tenancies at 322 days.
- The shortest average time of 60.57 days was spent in Bed and Breakfast hotels.
- The average time taken to re-house homeless households have increased by 33% over the last 2 years.

### **Households not accepted for housing**

- Single people account for the highest number of people whose applications are rejected each year at 78.
- A total of 168 households or 59% of total presentations were rejected within the terms of the homelessness legislation.

### **Recurring Homelessness**

- Formal recording of repeat or recurring homelessness is not undertaken although anecdotal evidence suggests this is an increasing problem year on year.
- The lack of suitable accommodation and the varied support needs of vulnerable households increase the likelihood of this problem occurring.

### **Intentional Homelessness**

- 13 households were found to be intentionally homeless in 2002/2003.
- Formal arrangements with Social Care Services for families with dependent children are in place.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **The Housing and Support Needs of Homeless Groups**

- 1. families with children**
- 2. lone parents**
- 3. young people**
- 4. domestic violence**
- 5. older people**
- 6. ex-offenders**
- 7. single homelessness**
- 8. clients with mental health problems**
- 9. clients with multiple needs**
- 10. people with disabilities**
- 11. clients from Black, Minority and Ethnic communities**
- 12. refugees and asylum seekers**
- 13. people leaving the armed forces**

## The Housing and Support Needs of Homeless Groups

This part of the review considers in more detail what we know about the specific groups of homeless households. We have approached our partners for assistance and they have provided additional information about the services they offer and by helping us to understand the often complex housing and support needs of each specific client group. Confirmation of these services will therefore be included in this chapter.

A separate chapter will summarise how the governments *Supporting People Programme* has enabled specific housing related support to be delivered to vulnerable tenants within the district.

Analysis of each client group is included as follows:-

### 1. Families with Children

Much of the new government thinking on homelessness has concentrated on families with children. It has been accepted that this group has not received as much prominence as many others because the provision of suitable housing rather than any other specialist services was felt to be their primary need.

The Homelessness Act 2002 strengthened the level of duties owed to homeless families with children by:

- Ensuring that all Local Authorities ended all together the use of bed and breakfast for families except in emergencies by 2004.
- Ensuring families in temporary accommodation were not excluded from receiving access to education, health and social service provision.
- Ensuring that temporary accommodation meets a minimum standard, which will be policed and enforced by Local Authorities.
- Removing the two-year time restriction owed to homeless families under the Housing Act 1996 that allowed a Local Authority to discharge its housing duties by placing the family in the private rented sector.

The number of families with dependent children who were unintentionally homeless and accepted by Babergh District Council in 2002/2003 was 59 or 51% of all homeless acceptances. This figure does not take into account lone parents whose needs will be examined separately. This represents the highest of all the specific client group types who were accepted as homeless.

At the end of March 2003, 28 families with children were living in temporary accommodation. A total of 41 homeless households with children were re-housed in permanent accommodation during 2002 and the average length of time taken to re-house these clients was 147.07 days.

This report has already considered the main reasons why this client group becomes homeless. Evidence collected from our partner's reveals that a number of other concerns are prevalent among this group.

- The children from low-income families are far more likely to have low basic skills and do less well at school. Access to education, training and employment is a critical ingredient in breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty. This was an area highlighted in the Best Value Review of Housing Support and Homelessness undertaken in October 2002 and has resulted in a series of actions which include the adaptation of our main Homelessness Centre, Stour House in Sudbury to create self-contained living accommodation for all homeless families.
- In 2002/2003, 11 clients with children on the Social Care Service "at risk" register were accepted as homeless and accommodated in temporary housing. This means that there are serious concerns about the welfare and safety of these children.
- The avoidable breakdown of tenancies and the re-presentation by homeless families with children is a further problem highlighted by partner agencies. Detailed research into this problem will need to be undertaken however, there is evidence to suggest that this is a growing problem area with an estimated 10% of all homeless presentations from families falling into this category.

## Services and Resources for Families with Children

**Home-Start Sudbury and District:** This service offers friendship support and practical help to families with one or more children under five who are experiencing difficulties. Home-Start compliments existing social and health service assistance by offering self help and encouragement to families so that they become valuable and stable parts of the local community. Home-Start assisted 89 families within the district, 60% of whom live in Social Housing. We provide £5,000 each year to help fund the service within the district.

**Social Care Services:** This statutory agency provides family support and child centred social work on a range of issues. The west of the district is served from their Sudbury office whilst areas in the east receive help from the Ipswich office.

**The Chestnuts Family Centre:** This service is part of the Family Support Team, which is managed by Social Care Services. It affords the carers of families the opportunity to meet other carers and share experiences in a confidential setting. The service also provides information and advice on a range of issues such as benefits, respite care and accessing other essential services. The Centre takes referrals directly from the Immediate Needs Team within Social Care and often work very closely with residents within our Homelessness Centres. At any time as many as 40 clients receive assistance from the service.

**Money Advice:** Sudbury and District Citizens Advice Bureau provide money advice and debt counselling and also help on welfare benefits, housing and consumer debt.

**Babergh District Council School Holiday Programme:** Our Leisure Department provides free places at our leisure centres for families on a low income. Residents in our Homelessness Centres regularly attend these sessions during school holidays.

## 2. Lone Parents

Lone parents made up 7% of all presentations in 2002/2003. A total of 5 homeless households falling into this category were accommodated in temporary housing during 2002 and the average length of time taken to re-house was 159.33 days. An examination of the age breakdown of lone parents reveals that approximately 60% of those are under 19 whilst the remaining 40% are over 19.

Evidence backed up by The Social Exclusion Unit suggests that family breakdown and teenage pregnancy are more likely to occur in areas of highest deprivation.

The table below shows teenage conception rates amongst 15-17 year old girls in Babergh and within Suffolk as a whole. The rate is calculated as the number of conceptions per 1,000 girls in this age group. In each period, listed rates have been lower in Babergh in comparison with the county average.

	Babergh		Suffolk	
	Conceptions	Conception Rate	Conceptions	Conception Rate
1992-94	104	23.0	1065	31.5
1995-97	116	25.1	1173	33.0
1998-99	90	30.0	859	34.5

*Source: Suffolk Health Authority*

However within Babergh there are 6 wards which exhibit conception rates greater than the county average. These wards are Sudbury East (60.3), Sudbury South (55.2), Great Cornard North (50.9), Sudbury North (43.6), Copdock (39.8) and Great Cornard South (34.7).

## Services and Resources for Lone Parents

**Connexions - Suffolk County Council:** Connexions have appointed a teenage pregnancy co-ordinator to work with all the Local Authorities within Suffolk. The reduction in teenage pregnancies is a department of health target as well as a Suffolk Strategic Partnership target. This co-ordinator delivers information and advice for young people and teenage parents on health, welfare and housing issues as well as linking to other broad-based health initiatives.

**Colchester Quaker Housing Association:** As well as managing our vulnerable parents scheme, Lindsay Court in Great Cornard, which provides 8 two- bedroom houses for this client group, Colchester Quaker Housing Association also deliver floating support in the community for young parents and “soon-to-be” parents.

**See also services for families.**

### 3. Young People

Applications from young people under the age of 19 have increased significantly over the last three years. In 2002/2003 some 18 young people were accepted as homeless due to their age alone. Eviction by other family members or friends makes up the single highest reasons for homelessness at 75% of this total. The obstacles to this group living independently in their own accommodation make it far less likely that homelessness will be due to any other reason.

A total of 6 young people left or were asked to leave Homelessness Centres in 2002/2003 for failing to meet the terms of their licence. This is a key issue that will need to be addressed in our Strategy.

Whilst the Homelessness Act 2002 made it a legal requirement for all Local Authorities to consider all 16 and 17 year olds as being vulnerable and therefore entitled to assistance under the Act, the Children Act 1989 had already defined categories of young people who were owed a duty to be accommodated. The majority of young people presenting as homeless remain those evicted from family and friends, However, there are a number of young people included within the overall figures who are homeless from an institutional care background either because this placement has failed or the placement was coming to a natural end. Social Care Services estimate that the number of clients leaving care and requiring accommodation within the Babergh area will remain static over the next three years. They say that the number should not exceed 10 cases each year however, that they may not be able to ensure sufficient notice of the ending of the placements to plan a strategy of housing these young people through normal housing register means. It remains probable therefore that imminent homelessness will continue to be the usual route into housing for these clients.

Young people and in particular care leavers are often deeply effected by their background. Evidence collected at a national level has suggested that:

- Between 25% and 30% of young people leaving care are teenage parents.
- Up to 50% of young people will be long-term unemployed.
- Up to 20% of young people leaving care and accommodated by statutory and voluntary agencies experience homeless within 2 years.
- Young people are 3 times more likely to experience mental health problems, than those from more settled backgrounds.

## Services and Resources for Young People

**Social Care Services:** The Immediate Needs Team provide the initial assessment of the support and housing needs for young people particularly those who are facing homelessness. The Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on Social Care Services to safeguard the welfare of children up to the age of 18 and those leaving care up to the age of 21. The joint agreement between Suffolk County Council Social Care Services and District and Borough housing departments within Suffolk clarifies the housing responsibilities between these two departments. The policy is now under review however, the understanding about which department provides responsibility for housing and ongoing support has been very successful in meeting the needs of this client group.

**Connexions:** The Connexions Service has been established to provide integrated information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for all 13-19 year old in England. It aims to help young people engage in learning, achieve their full potential and make a smooth transition to adult life.

The support individual young people receive varies according to their needs. All young people will have a personal advisor who works in partnership with others strategic bodies such as local education departments, Learning Skills Council, Youth Offending Teams and Health Bodies. The service also includes a multi-agency team who are based in local schools. As many as 60 young people are currently being advised in the district.

**Young People Support Team (YSPT):** The service is contracted to Social Care to help them fulfil their responsibilities under the Children (leaving care) Act 2000. When a young person is rising 16, this team works with individual social workers in the preparation of a Pathways Plan. This plan helps to understand a young person's aspirations and which groups and bodies need to be involved to enable these to be realised.

YSPT works closely with the Connexions Service in reviewing and monitoring the pathways plan and in ensuring Social Care are able to retain its overall statutory responsibilities for the young person. A Suffolk Agreement is also in place whereby care leavers can be directly nominated or given priority for the allocation of suitable housing.

**NCH Action for Children:** Two specialist supported housing schemes for young people and those leaving care have been developed in the district in partnership with NCH Action for Children and Social Care Services. The schemes are designed to offer appropriate support to young people either leaving care or facing homelessness to prepare them for independent living.

Common with all supported housing schemes within the district, nominations to the both schemes are governed under the Suffolk County Allocation Policy. This policy ensures consistency in the approach to all nominations by bringing together a panel of representatives with either a direct financial interest in the project or the client group itself. Referrals to these projects come from a variety of different sources however, the Local Authority representative chairs the meetings at which vacancies are determined and clients placed.

**St Matthew Housing:** another Housing Association partner, St Matthew Housing provide two schemes within the district that cater for single, lonely and vulnerable people many of whom are homeless. The two schemes are group homes with a house manager who help to encourage the residents to develop the skills that eventually enable the majority to move on into fully independent accommodation. The *Supporting People* Programme (considered in chapter z of this review) is also helping to fund a resettlement service whereby residents of St Matthew Housing who move on into their own homes can be supported to help them maintain their tenancies for as long as they need it.

**SOLO Housing (East Anglia) Ltd:** SOLO are a housing charity who work with three Local Authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk, Broadland District Council, South Norfolk District Council and ourselves. They are part funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister under the section 180 grant policy to accommodate single homeless people and to offer them advice and assistance on housing related issues such as benefits, debt counselling and their housing rights. All three Local Authorities have a referral arrangement in place that enable outcomes to be measured and a core management group meets regularly to keep this policy under review.

SOLO Housing is also funded under the *Supporting People* Programme to deliver support to 24 tenants in homes within the district that are subject to a management agreement with the landlord.

**Suffolk County Council- Community Education:** This offers young people aged 13-19 and also adults the opportunity for learning to enable the development of further skills and competencies. The service to young people has been developed with Suffolk Connexions. It works predominantly with disaffected young people who are at risk of involvement in crime, who may go on to misuse drugs or become teenage parents or become homeless. The service also recognises the need for early intervention and the promotion of a positive culture of learning from an early stage and also offers support to families and parents.

#### **4. Domestic Violence**

The Homelessness Act seeks to differentiate clients who are homeless due to domestic violence from those experiencing the conventional breakdown of their relationships. The Act also extended the types of situation which makes it “unreasonable to remain” in accommodation to include all forms of violence or threats of violence from both inside and outside the home as opposed to the more narrow definition of domestic violence between co-habiting couples.

Homelessness due to domestic violence accounted for 3% of all applications in 2002/2003. Evidence suggests that we know very little about the true extent of the problem. Some clients are known to refuse the homelessness route preferring to return to the safety of their family and friends. Others present and accept an offer of temporary accommodation but return home soon after. Others present claiming the breakdown of their relationship but fail to raise the issues of violence.

Of the 5 clients placed into temporary accommodation in 2002/2003, 1 client was accommodated in our Homelessness Centre, 3 in a Women's Aid Centres and 1 client was accepted under the special "homeless at home" arrangements. The average length of time taken to offer clients permanent housing was 172 days.

Babergh provides discretionary funding to two local Women's Aid Centres in Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. In 2002/2003 we referred 7 clients to these centres and 5 were offered placements. A total of 3 other clients were offered placements within England as local schemes were full and unable to assist. Just one placement was accepted. Two clients were offered and accepted permanent housing from these centres in 2002/2003. One client remains eligible for assistance and is waiting the offer of a permanent home.

## **Services and Resources**

**Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid:** these services offer 24 hour, safety at crisis point, accommodation, friendship and support to woman and their children who are victims of domestic violence. They help women to help gain an understanding and come to terms with what has happened in their lives and by offering practical help of rebuilding their lives at a time when their confidence is at its lowest ebb. We provide a small level of funding to both these services each year which help to support the 200 families each year that use these services.

**Babergh District Council's Domestic Violence Forum:** this is a multi-agency group of professionals from a range of local services, the police, probation, social care, victim support, local solicitors and housing who work in partnership to develop and promote good practice and make domestic violence legally, socially, morally and culturally unacceptable. Housing remains one of the forum's key priorities and they are a key partner in the development of our strategy.

**Suffolk Police:** the police are responsible through the Domestic Violence Forum for ensuring all incidents are reported and the full range of legal options is discussed with the victims.

**Social Care Services: see families with children**

**Suffolk Probation Service:** this organisation works with offenders to enable them to live in the community without committing further crime. This work is also designed to protect the victim from further harm. Probation also work with the Family Court Welfare Service to help families undergoing separation and divorce to resolve residence and contact issues concerning children.

## **Citizens Advice Bureau: see families with children**

**Solicitors:** a number of local solicitors within the district specialise in family and criminal matters and can advise victims of domestic violence on their housing options and the various legal remedies available to ensure their safety.

### **5) Older People**

Babergh accepted a total of 12 clients as being vulnerable and therefore entitled to assistance under the Act by virtue of their age in 2002/2003. Older people who are homeless are housed on average twice as quickly as other priority groups due to their specific property needs. The average length of time taken to effect a housing solution was 91 days

Babergh's general housing policy affords older people under a threat of homelessness the flexibility of awarding "Vulnerability Points". These points advance a person's position on the register and provide a strong likelihood of a permanent housing offer before homelessness occurs. Older people applying as homeless are also more likely to be housed either in Regulated Tenancies where the grounds for possession need to be proven and where possession procedures are likely to take much longer than the post 1989 Assured and Assured Shorthold Tenancy regimes. This allows more time for the point advancement to produce meaningful results. They are also more likely to be living in service occupancy type tenancies where the "notice" provided by their employers coincides with retirement. In such cases Babergh uses the so-called "Social Need" housing scheme to advance points before homelessness occurs. In 2002/2003 a total of 13 older people were housed using these arrangements. It appears that older people are more likely to experience problems of inadequate housing therefore than outright homelessness

There are a number of other issues associated with old age that can have impact on housing. These include:

- An increasing number of older people struggling to maintain their accommodation. These people tend to live in older accommodation with all the attendant problems of maintenance. In 2002/2003 Babergh's Care and Repair Scheme had 295 enquiries from clients who owned their homes. Remedial and improvement works to these homes and including re-wiring, central heating provision, window replacement and the provision of new amenities were commissioned in 105 cases. The value of the work completed was £210,980.
- Older people are one of the main groups of people lacking basic facilities within their homes such as central heating, sharing a bathroom or using an outside toilet. The private Sector Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2001 identified 10.8% of total tenure or 3,486 homes within the district as being "unfit" and "not unfit but seriously defective". Of the 162 "live" cases on the housing register from older people some 75 cases have known problems of disrepair.

The Suffolk *Supporting People* Team found that 68% of all supported accommodation in Suffolk was for older people with a support need, and that a further 4.2% was for frail elderly people.

Our own experience reveals that many older people have a greater level of expectation for housing in the Social Sector even though their present accommodation is often inadequate. The need, in particular for two bedrooms in sheltered accommodation can sometimes lead to an offer being refused. The development of our Older Persons Strategy will consider the suitability of our housing stock and seek to address many of these concerns.

## **Services and Resources for Older People**

**Age Concern:** provides free, confidential support and independent advice on benefits, finances, local services and a range of matters relating to people over 60. They also offer a surgery for people in need of their service once a month in our main towns, Sudbury and Hadleigh.

**The Sudbury Advice Centre:** this “one stop shop” is a partnership between Suffolk County Council, Babergh District Council and Sudbury Town Council and provides a seamless service on all matters effecting the delivery of local government services.

As well as offering office space for the Age Concern Advice Surgery, the Sudbury Advice Centre acts to signpost users to many other agencies.

## **6) Ex-Offenders**

The Priority Needs Order contained in the Homelessness Act 2002 extended the award of priority need to homeless people who have offending histories or who have been discharged from prison. The impact of this new order has not been significant within Babergh with only one case recorded in the last year.

The Suffolk Probation Service confirmed that they dealt with some 500 cases last year from clients with housing and welfare issues. They are unable to break this figure down to a district level but can confirm homelessness to be a key issue for those clients leaving prison institutions. There are no prisons within the district, but there are a number of other prisons in Norfolk and Suffolk that take people from the area as well as other parts of the Country. A report commissioned by Suffolk’s Probation Service and the Suffolk *Supporting People* Team entitled “Not just Bricks and Mortar” detailed the current location of offenders within Suffolk. Some 70 are known to reside within the Babergh district. As no specialist housing provision is available within the district for this client group or indeed any other type of emergency accommodation, it is probable that the housing needs of ex-offenders from those with a direct connection to Babergh are met by other providers within Suffolk.

The study identified people entering or re entering prison as being at a greater risk of becoming homeless following their discharge. It also stated that the majority of ex prisoners need some form of support to find and maintain accommodation on their

release and the lack of suitable and appropriate housing increases the risks of them re offending at some later date.

Whilst Babergh does not have an agreed protocol for re housing ex-offenders, it will consider each case on its merits. It is fully signed up with all other Suffolk housing authorities to the management of the risks involved in any placement through the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPP). Funding for this service through the special allocation of funds by the ODPM in 2003/04 has also been made.

## **Services and Resources for Ex-Offenders**

There are no specialist services within the district that specialise in housing and supporting offenders and ex-offenders who display challenging behaviour. Emergency accommodation providers outside the district who we often contact for assistance such as the YMCA in Ipswich and Tayfen House in Bury St Edmunds have reported that up to 85% of young people housed in these schemes have a known history of past or present offending.

### **7) Single Homelessness**

Whilst this review has already considered the issue of young single homeless people, there are a far greater number of single people between the ages of 19 and 60 who seek assistance each year. In 2002/2003 the number was 79 making it the largest of all client group presentations.

The Homelessness Act provides that this group will not be entitled to accommodation unless they are deemed to be vulnerable and therefore in priority need. As this review considers the main reasons for vulnerability under each client group heading, this chapter concentrates on single people who do not qualify for housing assistance.

There is little doubt that the true extent of homelessness affecting single people is underestimated in official returns. The main reason for this discrepancy is that many single homeless people believe that they will not be helped by the Local Authority and they would be wasting their time in making an official approach. Single people are also more likely to stay with family and friends indeed some are known to have multiple or "care of" addresses. These "hidden" homeless form a high number, 15%, of those on the housing register with points for sharing facilities. There is also evidence that this group of clients approach other agencies rather than the Council.

SOLO Housing, who are one of our partner agencies specialising in housing and advising single people, and who are well established in the area accepted 89 referrals in 2002/2003 from single people who were homeless and in need of assistance. Of this figure some 52 clients were not known to Babergh at the point of presentation. Our protocol arrangements have ensured that all of these clients are now registered for housing. Even other agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and the Sudbury Advice Centre, who provide SOLO staff with office space, seek to refer single homeless clients to other housing agencies rather than to ourselves.

The Act prescribes a general duty to provide advice and assistance to clients with no priority need for housing. In seeking to discharge these general duties we referred 55 single homeless clients to other hostel accommodation in 2002/2003. Apart from those placements, which are subject to formal nomination agreements with the housing providers, concerned, very little feedback is provided by the other providers and so we are not always clear on housing outcomes. As all other emergency forms of accommodation is located outside our administrative boundaries we are unable to evidence the success and the duration of the placements.

The Rental Deposit Guarantee Scheme has proved to be successful in helping to secure accommodation for 28 single clients in the private rented housing sector. A major group however, single people under 25, remain excluded from the scheme as housing benefit legislation restricts the amount of benefit that is capable of being met. The Homelessness Strategy will include a series of recommendations for increasing the supply of accommodation in the private sector.

Rough sleeping is an issue for many housing authorities and a special unit has been set up by the ODPM to seek a two-thirds reduction in the numbers sleeping rough by April 2004. Babergh conducted an official count in 2001 with our partners and was unable to provide any evidence of a problem within the district. We will continue to undertake counts in future years and keep this particular issue under review.

## **Services and Resources for the Single Homeless**

Refer to services and resources for young people.

### **8) Clients with mental health problems**

There is overwhelming evidence from a variety of different sources that links mental health to homelessness. Becoming homeless is both a contributor to the problem with depression the most regular form of the illness often present and certain groups are also most likely to present with varying degrees of mental health problem. In 2002/2003 the number of homeless cases where vulnerability was assessed due to a diagnosed mental health need was 8.

The formal assessment of the mental health needs of clients is the duty of the Community Mental Health Team and two services exist within Babergh, one in Sudbury and the other in Hadleigh. The number of clients presenting to each of these services in 2002/2003 was 57 although no information is collected that confirms the primary problem was homelessness related.

These services also support homeless clients in our Homeless Centres. Again in 2002, specialist support was delivered both within the client's own accommodation and otherwise through the service to 9 clients.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the real extent of mental health illness is much more of a problem than these figures suggest. An increasing number of clients within our Homelessness Centres display challenging forms of behaviour and develop physical health problems which sometimes lead us to conclude there might be an undiagnosed mental health issue. There is often an unwillingness to engage with services that again makes the formal diagnosis of the problem very difficult.

A challenge exercise carried out within the Best Value review of Homelessness in 2002, with residents of our main Homelessness Centre, Stour House in Sudbury concluded that there are factors that also contribute to the stress of being homeless. Firstly, there are a number of different groups who live at Stour House, whose accommodation and support needs are very different. These include families with children, lone parents and single vulnerable people. Secondly, the facilities at Stour House are shared. None of the accommodation is self-contained. Finally, the length of time taken to rehouse clients on a permanent basis.

Residents on the group believed that these factors made it difficult for people to cope and this leads to depression, family and relationship breakdown and challenging behaviour. Colleagues from health and social care services supported this view.

## **Services and Resources for Clients with Mental Health Difficulties**

**Community Mental Health Teams (CHMT):** these services are based in both Sudbury and Hadleigh. These teams are responsible for initial assessment of clients before then referring the client to the specialist health of psychiatrists who make the formal assessment of a mental health illness. The service is available to clients diagnosed with severe and enduring mental health needs. Those clients whose needs cannot be assessed or who are found to be suffering with so called common mental health problems cannot access the service. The joint planning process has identified the need for more supported housing for this client group within the district.

**East Suffolk MIND:** East Suffolk Mind provide both supported housing and also ongoing support to clients with mental health problems throughout east Suffolk. Their service compliments the role performed by statutory providers like the CMHT and they are funded under the *Supporting People* Programme.

**Richmond Fellowship:** this Housing Association has responsibility for two specific client groups. Firstly, those diagnosed with severe and enduring mental health problems and secondly, those clients who have a mental health need brought about by substance misuse. The Richmond Fellowship provides 14 flats in Sudbury and offers support to the tenants to increase their level of independence. A further 8 clients are supported in the community through a programme of resettlement. Again the *Supporting People* Programme is the main funding body for this work.

## **9) Clients with multiple needs**

It has become increasingly apparent over the last few years that a growing number of homeless clients have what we might describe as multiple needs.

The problems manifest themselves in a variety of different ways and Homeless Link, a body concerned with this issue, claim that a person will fall into this category if they have two or more of the following problems:

- Undiagnosed mental health needs.
- Multiple substance misuse
- Personality disorders
- Offending behaviour
- Learning difficulties
- Physical health problems
- Challenging behaviour
- Vulnerability because of their age.

Whilst homelessness law allows us to categorise a person's vulnerability for other reasons, we accept that it has been difficult to define the number of cases each year that would appear to meet these tests. Our Homelessness Team and staff within our Homelessness Centres believe that the number of clients who have these multiple needs and who are accommodated under the law was as many as 15 in 2002.

The Suffolk Housing Programme Group who plan and commission services for those clients with special needs recognise this to be a key area and have established a task group to consider how best to develop new services in the future. This will be an important area within our Strategy.

## **10) People with disabilities**

The number of applicants with a physical as opposed to a mental health need where this was the reason for their housing priority need remains fairly small. In 2002 just 4 clients fell into this definition.

Anecdotal evidence again suggests that the housing register and not the homelessness law provides the main route into housing and that Community Care measures allow cases to be identified early and either homeless preventative measures to be used or special needs housing and appropriate support to be offered.

A Suffolk protocol is in place to control and oversee the discharge of clients from hospital. The aim of this policy is manage the discharge of potentially homeless clients or those who are unable to return home because their needs cannot be met. Whilst this policy has been effective in the small number of cases we witness each year, we have not been forced to rely on this policy in relation to any homeless cases.

## **11) People from Black Minority and Ethnic Communities**

People from Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) groups make up less than 1% of Babergh's overall population. It is not surprising therefore to find a corresponding small level of people who are dealt with as homeless who fall within these definitions.

Only 6 or 0.72% of the 829 homeless applications processed over the last three years were from clients from BME Communities.

Babergh has both a diversity and BME Strategy and is fully signed up to comply with the code of practice that governs social rented housing. All staff are trained to recognise harassment, abuse and discrimination and must report their concerns. Babergh recognises that the number of clients from these communities is unlikely to increase however, it remains fully committed to ensuring equality and choice for BME households with an explicit recognition of both their cultural and social needs.

## **12) Refugees and asylum seekers**

No homeless applications have ever been received by this client group. This contrasts starkly with the picture in Ipswich where the Council has been defined as a Cluster Area and has accepted a housing responsibility with its partners to accept nearly 250 families and single people from this client group. Whilst we do acknowledge that a legal responsibility to process applications and offer either housing or advice on where to seek further help does exist for asylum seekers and those granted leave to remain in the UK, all Suffolk housing authorities have adopted a regional position that aims to maintain a strategic overview of dispersal arrangements within the eastern region

Babergh is fully signed up to accepting 10 families under delegated powers granted by Committee in June 2000 under this policy subject to the dispersal arrangements set out under the Immigrations and Asylum Act 1999. We will continue to monitor the situation and co-operate fully with the legal responsibilities imposed on us.

### **13) People leaving the armed forces**

Babergh has no armed forces establishments within its district however, a substantial amount of armed forces accommodation has recently been provided in Hadleigh for serving staff and their families who are employed at RAF Wattisham. Evidence collected at a national level has indicated a strong link between single homelessness and in particular rough sleeping and people with a service background. In major cities, up to 40% of homeless single people fall into this category.

In the last three years just two single people have made a homeless presentation due to this reason. In one case the applicant had been discharged from armed service 7 years before he was made homeless and had had a strong period of settled employment as well as housing throughout this time. In the second case, the applicant had only recently been discharged for medical reasons and was found to be vulnerable within the terms of the homeless legislation as a result.

We will closely monitor any cases of homelessness arising from the armed force accommodation in Hadleigh.

## **CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF HOMELESS GROUPS**

#### **Families with Children**

- This group accounts for 51% of all homeless presentations.
- At the end of March 2003, 28 households with children were living in temporary accommodation.
- Nearly 50% of these households have known support needs.
- A number of support agencies deliver services to homeless families within the District.

#### **Lone Parents**

- This group made up 7% of all presentations in 2002/2003.
- 60% of all lone parents are under 19 years of age.
- Teenage conception rates amongst 15-17 year old girls within the District as a whole are slightly below the Suffolk average. However, 6 wards within the District have rates higher than the county average.
- Two specialist services provide advice and support to this client group within the District.

#### **Young People**

- 18 young people under 18 presented as homeless in 2002/2003.
- Those leaving care institutions accounted for 40% of all presentations.
- Young people fail and are evicted more than any other group within our Homelessness Centres.
- A total of 10 clients will be leaving Local Authority care in 2003/04 and will require accommodation.

### **Domestic Violence**

- Victims of domestic violence account for 3% of all applications.
- The formal reporting of domestic violence to other agencies indicates the extent of the problem is increasing.
- Babergh provides funding to two Women's' Aid Centres.

### **Older People**

- People over 65 made up 9% of homelessness acceptances in 2002/2003.
- Our Housing Allocations Policy ensures "reasonable preference" is given provided to older people before they become homeless.
- Disrepair and the cost of maintaining accommodation is a growing cause for concern for many older people.
- The development of our Older Persons Housing Strategy will take into account the housing and support needs of older homeless people.

### **Ex-Offenders**

- Ex-offenders are at more risk of re-entering prison without adequate accommodation.
- No specialist housing provision exists within the district for this client group.
- The extension of the priority need order for people with offending histories has yet to be fully evaluated.
- We jointly fund a special MAPP Co-ordinator to help us identify any risks involved in placing people with serious offending histories.

### **Single Homeless**

- Single people who are not a priority need make up the largest single client group who present as homeless. In 2002/3 this figure was 28% of all applications.
- Single homeless people are often “hidden” from official returns. Direct referrals to other advice agencies indicate the problem within Babergh is much greater than our figures suggest.
- Single people under 25 are more difficult to place into privately rented housing due to housing benefit restrictions.
- There is no direct access accommodation within the district. Single people are therefore placed in areas where they have no networks of family and friends.

### **People from Black, Minority and Ethnic Communities**

- Homeless applications from people from BME Communities represent less than 1% of all homeless presentations.
- There are no specialist services within the District for BME groups.
- The ethnic monitoring of all homelessness applications requires strengthening.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Resources**

## Resources

One of the aims of this review is to set out the resources available to the Local Authority, social services and other public agencies, voluntary organisations and others for homeless related activities. These will be considered within this chapter.

The overall cost including overhead and support costs of delivering the homeless service at Babergh in 2002/2003 was £60,320.

By way of a comparison, our Best Value of Homelessness contrasted the overall level of funding on homelessness administration (excluding management and overhead and support cost) with neighbouring authorities. The findings are described below:

	Babergh	St Edmundsbury	Forest Heath	Suffolk Coastal
Total Costs	£24,071	£74,838	£37,546	£140,867
Total Number of Staff (FTE)	1.0	2.0	1.5	5.5
Number of Applicants	275	616	125	418
Staff FTE per 100 applications	.36	0.32	0.83	0.60
Average Cost Per Case	£87.53	£121.49	£300.36	£154.29

The Priority Needs Order funding allocation paid by the ODPM to ensure all local housing authorities meet the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002 are fully implemented has generated additional income for Babergh in the two financial years 2002/2003 and 2003/04. Our allocation in both of these years was £22,000. This money has allowed us to appoint a second homelessness officer on a temporary contract that expires in March 2004 and as a result, to dedicate the work involved in this review and strategy to the Housing Support Manager. We fully anticipate the outcome of this important work to result in a challenging action plan and we must ensure sufficient resources to ensure that we deliver meaningful results.

The cost of providing temporary accommodation rose significantly in 2002. Throughout 2002 Babergh placed 14 households in Bed and Breakfast hotels. Expenditure on Bed and Breakfast alone in 2002 was £35,000. In 2001 the figure was just £1,500. The cost of managing our two homeless Centres is £180,000 per annum although we have subsidised approximately £60,000 of these total costs year on year. The "Supporting People" Programme which, will be considered later in the review, has enabled us to apply for grants to help meet the housing related support elements of the service charge at these centres.

The table below details the level of funding made by us to organisations and groups who either work directly with the homeless or whose core activities extend to homeless people.

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Current Funding Sources</i>	<i>Future Funding Sources</i>
<i>SOLO Housing (East Anglia) Ltd</i>	Housing and support services for single homeless clients	£3,850 per annum. £42,000 in Section 108 funding also awarded within three areas; Babergh, Broadland and South Norfolk	Current level of commitment to continue in future years.
<i>Sudbury Citizens Advice Bureau</i>	All advice services	£38,000- subject to Service Level Agreement	Commitment provided for future years.
<i>Ipswich Woman's Aid</i>	Housing, advice, counselling and support to victims of DV	£1,200	As above
<i>Bury St Edmunds Woman's Aid</i>	As above	£1,200	As above
<i>Homestart Babergh</i>	Advice and support to vulnerable families with dependent children under 5	£5,000	Member approval to be sought for future funding

Additional resources that become available during the lifetime of the strategy will be directed towards identified gaps in the service.

The *Supporting People* Programme has also helped us to understand how grant funding to other bodies has been allocated within Suffolk. The mapping exercise of service provision carried out by the Suffolk Supporting People team has calculated the proportion of housing provision for different types of vulnerable people as follows:-

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **RESOURCES**

- The administration of homelessness cost £60,320 in 2002/2003.
- Our average cost per application was £87.53.
- The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister allocated £22,000 in 2002/2003 to assist in implementing the Homelessness Act 2002.
- Expenditure on Bed and Breakfast rose from £1,500 in 2001/2002 to £35,000 in 2002/2003.
- The Supporting People Programme provides £60,000 in revenue funding for our two Homelessness Centres.
- We provided £44,255 in grant funding to other organisations connected with homelessness in 2002/2003.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**Housing Related Support**

**The Planning Approach**

**The Supporting People Programme**

**Supported Housing**

## **Housing related support**

This chapter considers one of the key objectives of the Homelessness Act 2002; how the avoidable breakdown of tenancies and the cycle of repeated homelessness can be lessened by the provision of housing related support. Much has already been stated within this review about the support needs of particular groups of homeless people. We now move on to consider how Babergh has developed a range of specialist support services with our partner agencies that are designed to sustain the tenancies of the most vulnerable and how we plan and commission new services.

## **The planning approach**

Babergh along with all the other local housing authorities in Suffolk and the Commissioning Managers of both Social Services and Health have worked very successfully over the last decade in understanding where the needs are and how they can be met.

Under the direct co-ordination of the Suffolk Housing Programme Group, the aim has been to focus resources and also expertise within a number of client specific housing task groups. Each group collects housing needs information and agrees housing and support priorities for the client group it represents. These priorities are then fed directly into a three-year rolling programme of proposed development.

The task groups are led by officers from the seven housing authorities within Suffolk and focus on all housing and support issues of the following client groups:

- Mental Health
- Young People
- Marginalised (or excluded) People
- Physical Disabilities
- Substance misuse
- Older People
- Learning Disabilities

## **The *Supporting People* Programme**

*Supporting People* is the new Government programme covering various types of housing related support that became effective on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2003. It offers vulnerable people the opportunity to live more independent lives in the Community. *Supporting People* introduces a new system of planning, monitoring and funding of housing related support, that is flexible, cost effective, reliable and complimenting existing care services.

Babergh along with all the other Local Authorities in Suffolk have worked together to ensure the programme has been fully implemented. The appointment of a central *Supporting People* team has been crucial to its success. Further information on the *Supporting People* programme can be accessed via their website <http://www.supportingpeoplesuffolk.org.uk/>.

The *Supporting People* Commissioning Body, which has representatives from all the Local Authorities in Suffolk along with the County Council, Probation and Health Service, oversee and guide *Supporting People* in Suffolk. As the principal funding body of current and new services they have recognised that the development of long-term and strategic approaches to tackling and preventing homelessness will not be possible by Local Authorities alone. The continuation therefore of joint planning systems and partnership working must and will continue in order for these services to make a difference.

As far as delivering quality and choice to homeless people is concerned the *Supporting People* Programme will do this in a number of ways. Existing services will be improved by:

- Ensuring that service users are consulted on any changes to their accommodation and services.
- Improving access for all homeless people to supported housing schemes.
- Working with partner agencies to improve or remodel existing services to meet current and projected trends in demand.
- Meeting gaps in service provision where need has been clearly researched and identified.
- Ensuring that the *Supporting People* programme is linked to other strategies being implemented and/or developed.

## **Supported Housing**

Supported housing remains a vital part of our approach to homelessness. The development of specialist housing for clients who are unable to live full and independent lives in the Community ensures that needs can be met and support offered. This gives vulnerable people a much better chance of success and lessens the risk of tenancy breakdown. Our housing policy also recognises that for some groups, their ongoing support needs will reduce over time and we aim to provide “move on” accommodation once we are satisfied that they will be able to cope in general needs housing.

The term ‘supported housing’ is commonly used to define accommodation based on ‘bricks and mortar’. The *Supporting People* Programme allows new support services to be linked to people as opposed to properties. This ‘Floating Support’ will be an important means to targeting much needed support to people particularly those in temporary accommodation and this support will follow them in to settled accommodation as and when needed.

These two distinct types of supported housing are described as follows:

### **Accommodation Based Support**

The table below shows a summary of the current provision and access arrangements of supported housing within the district:

<i>Scheme Name</i>	<i>Client Group</i>	<i>Name of Partner</i>	<i>Access Arrangements</i>	<i>Number of Units</i>
<i>Crofton House, Sudbury</i>	Single and/or homeless	St Matthew Housing	County Nomination Agreement	14
<i>97 Ballingdon Street, Sudbury</i>	Single and/or homeless	St Matthew Housing	County Nomination Agreement	10
<i>The Manor, Sudbury</i>	Care Leavers Young People	Orbit HA/ NCH Action for Children	County Nomination Agreement	4
<i>The Gatehouse, Hadleigh</i>	Care Leavers Young People	Suffolk Hsg Society/ NCH Action for Children	County Nomination Agreement	4
<i>Lindsey Court, Great Cornard</i>	Vulnerable Parents	Orbit HA/ Colchester Quaker HA	County Nomination Agreement	8
<i>Lucas Road, Sudbury</i>	Mental Health Difficulties	Richmond Fellowship	County Nomination Agreement	8
<i>Queens Road, Sudbury</i>	Mental Health Difficulties	Richmond Fellowship	County Nomination Agreement	6
<i>York Close, Sudbury</i>	Learning Disabilities	Granta HA	County Nomination Agreement	6
<i>Ferndell, Hadleigh</i>	Learning Disabilities	Granta HA	County Nomination Agreement	6
<i>Cornard Road, Sudbury</i>	Single and/or homeless	SOLO Housing	Local Referral Arrangement	12
<i>44 Oak Road, Gt Cornard</i>	Single and/or homeless	SOLO Housing	Local Referral Arrangement	8
<i>Raleigh Road, Sudbury</i>	Single and/or homeless	SOLO Housing	Local Referral Arrangement	4

## Floating Support

A number of floating support schemes have been developed under the *Supporting People* Programme with a range of partners. These are described below:

<i>Client Group</i>	<i>Name of Partner</i>	<i>Number of Clients/Places</i>
Homeless in temporary accommodation	Colchester Quaker Housing Association	9
Vulnerable People in Secure Council Properties	Colchester Quaker Housing Association	24
Clients with Mental Health Needs	Richmond Fellowship	9
Resettlement Services for Single People	St Matthew Housing	4
Clients with Learning Disabilities	Social Care Services	5
Clients with Sensory Disabilities	Social Care Services	3

## **CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

### **HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT**

- We jointly plan, commission and review services for people with special needs.
- We have adopted joint protocols that govern allocation arrangements and the housing and support needs of vulnerable groups.
- We chair the Housing Task Group for clients with Mental Health difficulties.
- We have fully implemented the Supporting People Programme and have set up a floating support scheme for vulnerable people so that they do not fail in their tenancies.
- We have a range of supported housing schemes within the District for clients with different support needs.

**CHAPTER 7**

**Links with other Strategies**

## **Links with other strategies**

Homelessness as we have seen should not be seen as a 'peripheral' statutory duty but should be linked to other policy areas in an effort to combat social exclusion and to ensure that current services to homeless people are maintained and enhanced. A number of strategic links are necessary to produce a quality service to homeless people. These include:

- **Housing strategies**

Our homelessness strategy will be developed as an integral part of our housing strategy for the next four years. It will ensure the clear link to other national, regional and local issues that are essential in meeting local housing needs and national priorities within a clear financial and service planning framework.

- **NHS Joint Investment Plans (JIP's)**

Joint investment plans provide mechanisms for effective partnerships between the Health Service and Local Authorities to plan and deliver new support services. Homeless people with support needs benefit from these arrangements and close links to the Homelessness Strategy are therefore essential.

- **Crime and disorder strategies**

Local Authorities and the police must publish a crime and disorder strategy every three years. These are relevant to issues of homelessness especially for people who are caught in a cycle of offending, prison, inappropriate hostel accommodation or rough sleeping. Our work with the Probation Service in managing offenders and ex-offenders in the community plays a key preventative role that can reduce crime levels and the need for more expensive custodial sentences

- **Anti-social behaviour strategies**

We are fully committed to tackling anti-social behaviour within our communities. Our strategy has been developed with a range of partners and aims to influence behaviour by offering support and practical advice. Where this is not possible we are prepared to take legal action which may result in an anti social behaviour order or a possession order. A Neighbour Nuisance Group co-ordinates the work and will act as the link to our homelessness strategy.

- **Best Value**

Best Value was introduced to ensure that local government sets out its priorities and plans for the continuous improvement in the delivery of services. This involves carrying out service reviews by challenging the ways in which services operate, assessing the quality assurance systems and the outcomes of monitoring both service and funding arrangements. The Best Value Review of homelessness undertaken in 2002 has done much to inform this review and many of its outcomes will be included in the strategy.

- **Teenage Pregnancy Strategy**

The government aims to reduce the risk of social exclusion for all teenage parents under 18 by ensuring there is an adequate supply of semi-independent housing with support for all those who cannot live with their family or partner. Much work has already been carried out to ensure we meet these aims and future service provision and partnership will continue within the strategy.

- **Suffolk Connexions**

The Suffolk Connexions Service provides a co-ordinated approach to guiding and supporting 13-19 year olds as they move towards adulthood. The service works through a network of personal advisors who help these young people to access service as and when they need them. We have already established a close working relationship with these advisors and aim to take part in a programme of education for young people on housing and homelessness issues

- **Community strategies and County Local Strategic Partnership**

These partnerships with both statutory and voluntary agencies decide how best to deliver action that improves the economic, social and environmental well-being of local communities. An opportunity exists within homelessness strategies to deliver a range of outcomes for marginalised groups that will help to integrate them fully into these communities.

# SECTION 2

## **OUR HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Babergh, along with all housing authorities, must publish our five-year Homelessness Strategy by the end of July 2003 based on our knowledge of the homelessness problems specific to our area.

As already set out in the policy background in Chapter 1 of this document, the strategy must address the needs of both statutorily homeless people to whom we owe a legal housing duty as well as non-statutory homeless people who we must advise and assist to help find suitable accommodation.

The Strategy must also place a strong emphasis on helping to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place. Such advice covers a wide number of issues from the termination of shorthold tenancies through to the breakdown of relationships and will involve other agencies and groups who advise, counsel and support people ensuring that homelessness is prevented at all cost.

Increasing the supply of accommodation within the District remains one of our principle aims and we must continue to ensure that policies established to assist people to gain access to this accommodation work effectively at all times.

Delivering effective support and the provision of specialist forms of accommodation to vulnerable clients will, we hope, help establish settled and stable futures for these clients so that they have fair and equal access to services that the rest of society benefit from.

We also acknowledge that the responsibility for making and success cannot be achieved in isolation. We have engaged with a wide range of partners to help us gain a better understanding of the problems of homelessness within Babergh and we must now build on this mutual understanding and commitment to help achieve our ambitions.

Our strategy can remain unchanged for five years, however, we will carry out regular reviews. We need to know whether our actions are working and if not, change them to make sure they do.

We have identified four key aims to achieve over the life of the strategy. These are explained in the next section along with the evidence gathered from the review that allowed us to reach these conclusions.

## **Our Vision**

Our vision is to work towards eradicating homeless by ensuring a co-ordinated multi-agency approach is achieved in respect to the provision and delivery of services to homeless people within the District and by targeting resources and attracting new funding opportunities that enable all homeless people to have access to appropriate housing and support to meet their needs.

## **Our Corporate Housing Objectives**

The Homelessness Strategy also links to our wider housing objectives which are set out in our Housing Service Plan. This plan details the standard and level of the service to be provided within a series of overall aims and objectives. These are explained below:-

- The overall strategic housing objective is to provide an accountable effective and efficient, value for money, customer focused service.
- Our housing service is based on the belief that we are here to serve the public, to be answerable to the Council's tenants and other stakeholders, to provide best value and protect the most vulnerable members of the community.
- We will work closely with tenants to provide a quality housing management service and ensure that the Council's tenants are kept at the heart of the decision-making process as determined by the Tenant Participation Compacts.
- We will be a responsible landlord by carrying out customer orientated repair, renewal and improvement programmes in line with tenants' Right to Repair and will achieve the Decent Homes standard for all our Council housing.
- We will ensure that other strategies, such as those relating to combating social exclusion and dealing with the vitality of rural areas, are interlinked with the housing service. We will achieve this by working with others e.g. the Single Regeneration Budget project called "Community Energy".

## **The Aims of the Strategy**

In line with Government stated objectives contained within the Homelessness Act 2002, the aim of our Homelessness Strategy is to:-

- Prevent homelessness from occurring by providing timely intervention, assistance and advice.
- Secure the increased supply of decent and affordable accommodation for people who may be homeless.
- Secure the satisfactory provision of housing related support for people to help maintain their accommodation and to stop them becoming homeless again.

## **Aim 1**

**Our first aim is to stop people becoming homeless in the first place.**

**We must do more to intervene to prevent homelessness from occurring by offering our clients timely advice and advocacy, information and guidance. We must ensure that all our policies and practices complement each other and are effective in addressing the needs of clients who face losing their homes. We must also help people by referring them to agencies and organisations that can offer specialist help and by keeping people fully informed on the outcomes they can expect.**

Our Review informed us that homelessness presentations have increased year on year and that considerable resources are directed to fulfilling our legal obligations to assess the housing needs of the homeless.

It is our belief that homelessness is almost always preventable and evidence collected from other housing authority partners proves that timely intervention and prevention is the most cost-effective way of dealing with the homelessness problem.

We know that effective advice is also about education on helping people gain a better understanding of housing issues before they actually require our services and to recognise that we need to maintain and extend the range of advice services so that they are accessible to all members of the community.

We recognise that we also need to get our own house in order. As a responsible landlord we need to develop more robust procedures to avoid eviction due to rent arrears and to utilise our discretionary powers to pay housing benefit on time and to young people so that they can access private rented housing more easily.

We need to understand more about what works well and what doesn't and to learn from the experiences of others particularly those Beacon Authorities who have tried and tested policies and procedures that really make a difference.

Finally, we need to collect more qualitative data on homelessness outcomes to demonstrate that we are making progress and encourage all partner organisations to do the same.

**We will achieve this aim by:-**

- **Providing effective housing advice to those people who face becoming homeless.**
- **Publicising our homelessness service and making it freely available to people who need it.**
- **Simplifying and making more transparent the homelessness assessment process.**
- **Continuing to offer our “Homelessness Surgery” in Sudbury on a weekly basis by appointment.**
- **Helping people leaving institutions like hospital or care to find a home.**
- **Offering debt counselling for tenants and homeowners so that they can get early help to deal with their money problems and receive benefit advice.**
- **Offering a “fast track” housing benefit service for private tenants moving into their homes for the first time with home visiting arrangements for the most vulnerable.**
- **Using Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments to alleviate problems caused by single room rent restrictions to people under 25.**
- **Agreeing formal referral arrangements to specialist advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.**
- **Introducing a “fast track” appointment service with local solicitors for victims of Domestic Violence and providing these victims Floating Support where they have been displaced from the family home.**
- **Giving priority under our Floating Support Scheme to families at risk of becoming homeless.**
- **Introducing a housing education programme in local schools.**
- **Reviewing joint working agreements with our partner organisations and to placing greater emphasis within these documents on homeless prevention.**
- **Introducing a fully integrated training programme for all front line staff.**
- **Monitoring the effectiveness of the outcomes of all homelessness prevention work.**

## **Aim 2**

**Our second aim is to ensure the increased supply of decent, affordable and appropriate accommodation for all homeless people who need it.**

**We acknowledge that we do not have enough homes for everyone who needs them and we are not always able to offer much choice on where people should live. We also rely very heavily on the use of temporary accommodation and the government has set targets on eliminating the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families by 204. For many homeless clients, particularly single people and childless couples, we cannot provide any lasting and long term housing solutions. We must work with others to increase the amount of affordable accommodation available and ensure that people are able to access this accommodation through a range of measures that offers more choice.**

Our Review informed us the current supply of housing within the district is inadequate. Furthermore, that we are selling more council homes each year than are being developed.

We also know that there is much competition for these homes from not only the homeless but those on our general needs and transfer registers and maintaining a decent mix of allocations from these lists remains a key aim within our Housing Strategy.

The cost of buying a house within the district is, for the majority of our clients, impossibility and therefore we need to do more to facilitate the development of affordable homes both with our Registered Social Landlord partners but also within the private rented sector.

We know that many of our clients rely on state benefits and face many obstacles in securing their own accommodation. We need to increase the choice for our clients in where they chose to live so that they are not cut-off from their communities nor create dependencies on other services that can be hard to break. Homeless people need fair and equal access to services such as health, education, training and employment opportunities.

**We will achieve this aim by:-**

- **Developing an “Empty Homes” Strategy that aims to bring back into use 10 homes each year.**
- **Encouraging the owners of private properties, through a range of incentives to make these properties available for rent to people in greatest need, either directly or through a partnership with the Council, Housing Association or Letting Agency.**
- **Working in partnership with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners to maximise the availability of new housing through existing capital funding sources and PPG3 or “Planning Gain” policies.**
- **Making future applications for Government and other grants to enable our partner organisations to do more to increase the supply of accommodation for homeless families.**
- **Carrying out a feasibility exercise into the need for a specialist supported housing scheme for clients with “chaotic” lifestyle problems.**
- **Ensuring greater publicity of our Rental Deposit Guarantee and Rent in Advance Schemes for clients seeking private rented housing.**

### **AIM 3**

**Our third aim is to raise the standard of temporary accommodation and to remove the stigma of being placed there.**

**We recognise that our own temporary accommodation needs to be improved if it is to be suitable for the needs of homeless families. Many households find the experience of living in temporary accommodation stressful and the impact on them and their families are sometimes felt for some time even when they have been re-housed. There is also a stigma attached to being homeless and this can be increased by the knowledge that a family is living in temporary accommodation. We need to lessen the negative impact on families living in temporary housing and to improve the range of support available to them.**

Our Review has told us that the use of temporary accommodation for the homeless has a very negative effect on the mental well being of our clients. Many have real difficulties adjusting to life in temporary housing and the experience has a damaging effect on people in future years.

We know that the average waiting time in temporary housing has increased to almost ten months in the last year.

We also know that the lack of permanent housing blocks the availability of temporary accommodation in an emergency and increases our reliance on Bed and Breakfast.

We understand the stigma attached to living in temporary housing and how this can impact on the everyday activities that most people take for granted.

We have also learned the lessons from trying to accommodate people together in temporary housing. Clients with differing needs and aspiration, particularly those who are vulnerable due to age and illness, need to have access to specialist forms of housing where they can receive the support they require.

**We will achieve this aim by:-**

- **Increasing the number of temporary accommodation places available for homeless families within the District.**
- **Improving the standard of these places and by making them self-contained.**
- **Appointing a dedicated key worker to each family living in temporary accommodation who will co-ordinate the delivery of a comprehensive support package designed to meet the needs of the family and to assist and attain a smooth transition from temporary to permanent accommodation and sustain their tenancies.**
- **Working in partnership with Health, Suffolk Supporting People Team, Social Care Services and other housing providers to encourage the further development of temporary supported housing.**
- **Ensuring that existing agreements that govern multi-agency working and co-operation are effective in assessing the support needs of homeless people and that partner agencies are active in delivering this support.**
- **Setting up a cost-effective furniture storage scheme.**

#### **AIM 4**

**Our fourth aim is to make sure people who do find themselves homeless get the support they need to move out of homelessness quickly and in a way that is sustainable.**

**Homelessness has a very damaging effect on people and society. It can harm a person's mental and physical well being, interrupt a child's educational achievement and place great pressure on public sector agencies such as Health and Social Care Services. Housing people does not always offer a solution, particularly for those people who have not lived on their own before or who have support needs and may be unable to meet the terms of their tenancy. It is these groups of people who are more likely to become homeless again.**

Our Review has taught us that certain groups of people are at greater risk of becoming homeless and their welfare suffers without adequate support once they become homeless.

We have anecdotal evidence that repeat or recurring homelessness is more of a problem than we first thought and the main reason for this problem is preventable tenancy breakdown.

Whilst our record of partnership working has been successful, we are becoming more aware that some clients have multiple needs and this requires a holistic approach with good community support and inter-agency co-operation.

We know that services for clients with diagnosed mental health needs is sufficient within the district, however, there is a shortage of service provision for those with undiagnosed or "common" mental health problems.

We also acknowledge that more work must be carried out with clients in temporary accommodation to assess their support needs and to involve other agencies where necessary.

Finally, we need to encourage more effective working arrangements with our partners and to disseminate information about our clients wherever possible.

**We will achieve this aim by:-**

- **Providing “Floating Support” to the most vulnerable such as older people, care leavers and other young people, victims of domestic violence, people with mental health problems and others who need it.**
- **Segregating the many different vulnerable groups of people who currently live together within our Homelessness Centres.**
- **Monitoring carefully the number of clients who make repeated claims of homelessness.**
- **Attending the Suffolk Housing Programme Group. This group identifies the need for new supported housing schemes, ensures their development and monitors the effectiveness of their service delivery.**
- **Establishing a House Managers Group with other supported housing schemes within the District.**
- **Establishing a Homelessness Forum with all other statutory and voluntary agencies in the District where ideas can be exchanged and good practice developed.**
- **Developing an Older Persons Housing Strategy.**
- **Improving our working relationships with agencies involved with vulnerable groups within the community.**

**To comment on our Homelessness Review and Strategy please contact:-**

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## APPENDIX 1

# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003 ACTION PLAN

Aim No.	Details	Responsible Officer	Proposed Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Comments
1	Providing effective housing advice to those people who face becoming homelessness.	Housing Support Manager, Homelessness Officer	December 2003		
1	Publicising our homelessness service and making it freely available to people who need it.	Housing Support Manager	August 2003		
1	Simplifying and making more transparent the homelessness assessment process.	Housing Support Manager	December 2003		
1	Continuing to offer our "Homelessness Surgery" in Sudbury on a weekly basis by appointment.	Homelessness Officer	Immediately		
1	Helping people leaving institutions like hospital or care to find a home.	Housing Support Manager, Community Care Officer	Ongoing		
1	Offering debt counselling for tenants and homeowners so that they can get early help to deal with their money problems and receive benefit advice.	Committee and Head of Housing	April 2004		
1	Offering a "fast track" housing benefit service for private tenants moving into their homes for the first time with home visiting arrangements for the most vulnerable.	Head of Revenues	April 2004		
1	Using Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments to alleviate problems caused by single room rent restrictions to people under 25.	Head of Revenues	April 2004		

Babergh District Council  
Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003

<b>Aim No.</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Proposed Completion Date</b>	<b>Actual Completion Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	Agreeing formal referral arrangements to specialist advice agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.	Housing Support Manager	December 2003		
1	Introducing a "fast track" appointment service with local solicitors for victims of Domestic Violence and providing these victims Floating Support where they have been displaced from the family home.	Housing Services Manager, Domestic Violence Forum	April 2003		
1	Giving priority under our Floating Support Scheme to families at risk of becoming homeless.	Housing Services Manager	Immediately		
1	Introducing a housing education programme in local schools.	Housing Services Manager, Connexions	April 2004		
1	Reviewing joint working agreements with our partner organisations and to placing greater emphasis within these documents on homeless prevention.	Housing Services Manager, Community Care Officer	Ongoing		
1	Introducing a fully integrated training programme for all front line staff.	Housing Services Manager, External Trainers	Ongoing		
1	Monitoring the effectiveness of the outcomes of all homelessness prevention work.	Housing Services Manager	Immediately		
2	Developing an "Empty Homes" Strategy that aims to bring back into use 10 homes each year.	Head of Environmental Services	April 2004		
2	Encouraging the owners of private properties, through a range of incentives to make these properties available for rent to people in greatest need, either directly or through a partnership with the Council, Housing Association or Letting Agency.	Head of Environmental Services	April 2004		

Babergh District Council  
Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003

Aim No.	Details	Responsible Officer	Proposed Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Comments
2	Working in partnership with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners to maximise the availability of new housing through existing capital funding sources and PPG3 or "Planning Gain" policies.	Housing Services Manager	Ongoing		
2	Making future applications for Government and other grants to enable our partner organisations to do more to increase the supply of accommodation for homeless families.	Housing Support Manager	Ongoing		
2	Carrying out a feasibility exercise into the need for a specialist supported housing scheme for clients with "chaotic" lifestyle problems.	Head of Housing, Community Care Officer	April 2004		
2	Ensuring greater publicity of our Rental Deposit Guarantee and Rent in Advance schemes for clients seeking private rented housing.	Principal Lettings Officer	Ongoing		
3	Increasing the number of temporary accommodation places available for homeless families within the district.	Head of Housing, Housing Services Manager	December 2003		
3	Improving the standard of these places and by making them self-contained.	Head of Environmental Services	Ongoing		
3	Appointing a dedicated key worker to each family living in temporary accommodation who will co-ordinate the delivery of a comprehensive support package designed to meet the needs of the family and to assist and attain a smooth transition from temporary to permanent accommodation and sustain their tenancies.	Head of Housing and Committee	April 2004		

Babergh District Council  
Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003

Aim No.	Details	Responsible Officer	Proposed Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Comments
3	Working in partnership with Health, Suffolk <i>Supporting People</i> Team, Social Care Services and other housing providers to encourage the further development of temporary supported housing.	Community Care Officer	Ongoing		
3	Ensuring that existing agreements that govern multi-agency working and co-operation are effective in assessing the support needs of homeless people and that partner agencies are active in delivering this support.	Community Care Officer	Ongoing		
3	Setting up a cost effective furniture storage scheme.	Housing Support Manager	April 2004		
4	Providing "Floating Support" to the most vulnerable such as older people, care leavers and other young people, victims of domestic violence, people with mental health problems and others who need it	Housing Support Manager	Immediately		
4	Segregating the many different vulnerable groups of people who currently live together within our Homelessness Centres.	Head of Housing, Housing Services Manager	December 2003		
4	Monitoring carefully the number of clients who make repeated claims of homelessness.	Housing Support Manager	Immediately		
4	Attending the Suffolk Housing Programme Group. This group identifies the need for new supported housing schemes, ensures their development and monitors the effectiveness of their service delivery.	Community Care Officer	Immediately		
4	Establishing a House Managers Group with other supported housing schemes within the district.	Housing Support Manager	December 2003		

Babergh District Council  
Homelessness Review and Strategy 2003

Aim No.	Details	Responsible Officer	Proposed Completion Date	Actual Completion Date	Comments
4	Establishing a Homelessness Forum with all other statutory and voluntary agencies in the district where ideas can be exchanged and good practice developed.	Housing Support Manager	April 2004		
4	Developing an Older Persons Housing Strategy.	Housing Services Manager	December 2003		
4	Improving our working relationships with agencies involved with vulnerable groups within the community.	Housing Support Manager, Homelessness Officer, Community Care Officer	Ongoing		

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