



Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008



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INTRODUCTION

The government published '[More than a Roof – a report into tackling Homelessness](#)' in March 2002, which outlines their key objectives:

- To strengthen the help to people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
- To develop more strategic approaches to tackling homelessness.
- To encourage new responses to tackling homelessness.
- To reduce the use of B&B hotels for homeless families with children.
- To sustain two-thirds reduction in rough sleeping.
- To ensure the opportunity of a decent home for all.

The Homelessness Act of 2002 imposed an obligation on all Local Authorities to conduct a review of homelessness and formulate a five year Homelessness Strategy for their area by 31st July 2003. Local authorities are required to consider the following as part of their Homelessness Review:

- The levels and likely levels of homelessness in the borough
- The services provided that help to prevent homelessness, help to find accommodation, or provide support for them, including support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- The resources available to the authority and to social services, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other agencies for providing these services.

The key themes of the Strategy are to consider the supply of accommodation and other related services for homeless people, the prevention of homelessness, joint working with other agencies and assessing the support that is available to enable people to sustain tenancies. This initial review will identify gaps in current provision, leading to an action plan for improvement. The five-year strategy must be published by 31st July 2003, and must set out clearly defined SMART targets for improvements that can be easily monitored as to their effectiveness. (Source: DTLR, Feb 2002, [Homelessness Strategies: A good practice handbook](#))

In September 2001, a Homeless Strategy Working Group was formed for Torbay as a specific Task Group of Torbay Partnership Committee, a well established health and social care based partnership. The following organisations and individuals have been invited to send a representative on an ongoing basis:

Benefits Agency	Probation
Check Point	Project 58
Citizens Advice Bureau	Rethink
Connexions	Riviera Housing trust
Devon Partnership Trust	Shelter
Disability information Service	South Devon Healthcare Trust
Drugs and Alcohol Services	South Devon Residential Landlords Association
Executive Member for Social Services, Housing and Inclusion	South Devon Women's Aid
Executive Support member for Housing	Torbay Churches Homeless trust
Housing Benefits, Environmental Health, Supporting People	Torbay Council - Housing, Social Services, Community Education
Jobcentre Plus	Westcountry Housing Association
Police	Youth Offending Team
Primary Care Trust	

User input and involvement is being facilitated through Shelter conducting a survey in June 2003 and the Shelter facilitated stakeholder SWOT analysis carried out late 2002.

From the original Working Group, four sub-groups were formed to carry out detailed reviews of specific areas. These fed into the review published alongside this document.

Advisory Information Services Working Group

Primary Care and Medical Services for Homeless Initiative

Mapping Supply Working Group

Statistics Working Group

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS - Extract from Housing Act 1996:

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- (1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation, in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, which he -
 - (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court,
 - (b) has an express or implied licence to occupy, or
 - (c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.

- (2) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but -
 - (a) he cannot secure entry to it, or
 - (b) it consists of a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted both to place it and to reside in it.

- (3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation, which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.

- (4) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Bringing together a diverse range of organisations to agree common goals and improved contact between agencies
- Adopting a holistic approach towards homelessness within Torbay Council
- Initiating a strategic review of homelessness
- Shelter facilitated SWOT analysis involving agencies and customers
- Introduction of a Primary Care Outreach Service for homeless people
- Setting up a Private Sector Leasing Scheme to provide more suitable temporary accommodation for homeless families
- Partnership event with South Devon Residential Landlords Association (18/03/03)
- Shelter user survey initiated for users of Housing Advice and Homelessness Service
- Court representation and prevention lead

TORBAY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2003-2008 REGARDING HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Torbay Council's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 has Housing and Homelessness as priority areas as detailed below:

Aim 5	To facilitate, in conjunction with our partners, improved access to decent affordable homes for the people of Torbay	
Objective 1	Increase availability of affordable decent homes for people in housing need	By
Key Activities	Develop a 'fit for purpose' Housing Strategy 2003-2006 with SMART targets, based on up to date housing needs statistics by October 2003	October 2003
	Strengthen the Council's housing functions by merging private and public housing functions and the provision of additional resources	April 2004
	Create a "Housing Partnership" to assist in the development of community plans and policies relating to Housing and Social Inclusion	August 2003
Objective 2	Increase the prevention of, and support to, those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness	By
Key Activities	To deliver the Homelessness and Housing Advice Improvement Plan by March 2004	March 2004
	Review homelessness and rough sleeping in Torbay and deliver a strategy to address with SMART targets by July 2003	July 2003
Objective 3	The Council with our partners, will increase the number of vulnerable people helped to live independently	By
Key Activities	To revise 5 year Supporting People Strategy by November 2003	November 2003
	To provide 50 additional supported housing units for vulnerable adults by March 2004	March 2004
Objective 4	Ensure a sustained reduction of B&B provision for families with children to meet national targets	By
Key Activity	To deliver 50 units of accommodation through a Private Sector Leasing scheme by March 2004 to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast as temporary accommodation for homeless families	March 2004

OBJECTIVES

The Homeless Strategy Group will bring together all relevant agencies to develop a strategy to improve the housing and other needs of homeless people of all ages in Torbay.

The group's work will be reported to Torbay Partnership Committee and its strategic proposal will be submitted to the Council for consideration and adoption as the Council's homeless strategy, in line with its statutory obligation.

The group will incorporate the views and experiences of homeless people.

The objectives of the strategy are:

- **To shift the focus of agencies' services to the proactive prevention of homelessness**
- **To secure that sufficient and appropriate accommodation is and will be available to meet the needs of people in Torbay who are or may become homeless**
- **To secure the satisfactory provision of support services for people who may become homeless or who may have been homeless and need support to stop them becoming homeless again**
- **To review, develop and adequately resource multi agency referral and assessment protocols and monitor and review their effectiveness**
- **To improve communications, consultation and awareness of homelessness issues throughout all relevant organisations and the wider community**
- **To make sure that appropriate structures and processes are in place to monitor and review implementation of this strategy**

LINKS WITH OTHER STRATEGIES

The Homeless Strategy has obvious links with the overall Housing Strategy for the Bay. The Housing Strategy 2000-2003 was developed by a working party with representation from all directorates within the Authority, with additional input from housing staff involved in corporate and partnership initiatives.

The objectives of the strategy have a range of targets associated with them, of which nine are directly associated with homelessness:

Theme	Objective
Homelessness	To update our homelessness service practice to focus on prevention through a proactive multi-agency approach
	To complete the homeless service review of policy and procedures.
	To further improve the information package supplied to clients.
	To establish a multi agency forum for reviewing provision and practice in relation to both the prevention of and support to those who are homeless.
	To reduce the use of B & B accommodation and maximise the use of more appropriate accommodation.
	To work with Torbay Churches Homeless Trust on the provision of a direct access emergency accommodation for homeless women and the continuing development of their other services.
	To develop a Rough Sleepers and Single persons Homelessness Strategy.
	To explore the potential for a register of landlords and agents offering long term commitments (i.e. minimum 2-year tenancies).
	To explore further expansion of the Deposit Guarantee Scheme to clients who wish to be housed in the private sector.
	Review, revise and develop service objectives and Service Improvement Plan (new objective 2002)

The target date for the production of a new housing strategy is October 2003 and the homelessness strategy will form a major part. Details of specific housing developments and the necessary resources will be laid out in the Housing Strategy.

Draft housing advice and homelessness service procedures have been developed and are due to be discussed with staff in July before adoption in August.

Housing Advice leaflets have been developed and the second batch, following amendments and updates, will be available in July.

The initiation of a Devon-wide Housing Advice forum is a key action in the action plan below.

A private sector-leasing scheme has been launched and is on target to provide 50 self-contained temporary homes by March 2004.

Torbay Churches Homeless Trust have extended their lease. The project to rework the hostel is underway and support schemes are being developed under the transitional stage of the Supporting People programme.

A rough sleepers count is being conducted as part of a Housing Needs Survey that will inform the revised Homelessness Strategy. This outlines the action for rough sleepers and single homeless people as part of the Housing Strategy to be published in October 2003.

There has been greater uptake of the rent deposit guarantee scheme. The use of rent in advance is being piloted.

A Housing Services Business Plan for 2003/04 has been developed that incorporates the recommendations of the recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment Gap Inspection of Homelessness and Housing Advice.

A revised Homelessness Strategy will be published as part of the umbrella Housing Strategy, worked up in parallel with the priorities for the Supporting People Strategy with details of resources needed and allocated, options considered and priorities identified.

Other strategies that have a relevance to the Homeless Strategy are:

- Supporting People Strategy
- Community Safety Strategy
- Torbay Health Improvement Programme
- And the objectives of DAT (Drugs Action Team)
- Substantial sections of the Supporting People shadow strategy have been incorporated into the review

ACTION PLAN

Objective 1 To shift the focus of agencies' services to the proactive prevention of homelessness

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
To expand education programme to raise awareness of the causes of homelessness and the realities of becoming homeless with young people	Set up working group 30/07/03 Submit proposals to Autumn 2003 meeting of group	SD / DW / Dick Dyke / Connexions / SDRLA / Link Harbourside	£30k unallocated	
To explore the provision of advice and educational support to children affected by homelessness	Set up working group 30/07/03	SD / DW / Dick Dyke / Connexions / SDRLA / Link Harbourside		
Mediation service to be offered as and when appropriate to those asked to leave by friends/family or private landlords as and when appropriate	Reduce number of families in this category (friends and family evictions =34% of all accepted cases, loss of AST 50%)	DW/SS/WCHA/ DCHA/RHT/ YOT/SCATT		A project group has met twice and will finalise a proposal and bid in September 2003
Home visits to be carried out for all homeless applicants	To pilot home visits to clients who are homeless due to family or friends no longer willing to accommodate August - October with a view to building in to assessments by November 2003	JB/DW/RSLs		Stage one is in the development stage with plans for 16-17 yr. olds being visited by the Council's newly appointed Youth Project Worker to commence in August

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Payment to family and friends to keep clients "homeless at home", rather than placing in bed and breakfast where appropriate	To pilot) 31/07/03 – 31/12/03 Review) January 2004	JB	£3K ODPM Grant	
Carry out feasibility study into establishment of a Housing Advice Centre.	Commence January 2004	Homelessness Strategy Group		To feed into Torbay Council's Strategic Review on Customer Focus
Develop better links to welfare, debt and benefit advice	Review current linkages by October 2003	Homelessness Strategy Group		
To expand provision of outreach Housing Advice	Consider possibility of Housing Advice Officers holding a surgery at CAB premises and other locations	DW /JB / CAB TW		Housing Advice will commence fortnightly surgeries at Project 58 from July onwards
To set up a housing advice forum	To lead a forum for Devon to develop consistent standards of Housing Advice across Devon by March 2004	SS / DW		
Agree a Social Housing Agreement as part of the Housing Partnership to include standards and procedures with regard to homelessness	Reduce number of tenants evicted for rent arrears/anti-social behaviour and abandonment	DW/JH/NB		Factsheets re Housing Advice Service given to all RSL's to forward to tenants. All have been asked to give Council earlier warning of all tenants threatened with eviction so prevention work can take place.
"QUICK FIX FUND" to prevent homelessness through one off payments	To pilot August – November Review December 2003	JB/DW	£4K ODPM Grant	

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Raise standards of advice and assistance to those threatened with homelessness, including non-priority and intentionally homeless cases through sharing of good practice, development of user led standards, regular monitoring and review.	To agree Housing Advice Standards for Housing Services by 30/10/03	SS/DW/JB		Regular monthly meetings are held between Torbay, South Hams and Teignbridge Councils to share protocols and ideas of Good Practice. Benchmarking takes place between 3 Authorities. Torbay attends HONG meetings on a quarterly basis to share common experiences and ideas, and receive training. Advice Officers have received training on the new Homeless Act, harassment and illegal eviction. Training will be arranged on domestic violence etc. Written homeless procedures have been drafted for Advice Officers. Business Plan for Housing Advice and Homelessness Service in process of being written. Percentage of homeless cases reviewed by Operational Manager to ensure consistency.
Recruit additional Housing Advice Officer to allow one officer to concentrate on prevention work, e.g. attendance at court, outreach surgeries	Achieved	SS / JB	£25K – ODPM Grant 2003/4 then spend to save	Housing Advice Officer started 14th April 2003 Court attendance / representation service and wider prevention service started 6 th May – now receiving referrals from the court and private landlords
Runaways Project	Project started 2000, to be reviewed by March 2004	Check Point		Recently evaluated expanded from 1 to 1.5 fte with funding to June 2004

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Mortgage Liaison	Warden with mortgagees re possession	SS		

Objective 2

To secure that sufficient accommodation is and will be available to meet the needs of people in the district who are or may become homeless

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
To develop a move on strategy	To set up a working group 31/07/03 To agree strategy by March 2004	Homeless Strategy group		
Increase supply of alternative temporary accommodation.	Take on 50 private sector leasing properties by April 04	SS / WCHA /SDLA		Presentation given to landlords 18 th March 2003-scheme to be commenced from April. Scheme launched 28/04/03 – on schedule to meet target
Investigate possibility of a Nightstop scheme for young people aged 16-25	Set up working group 31/08/03 Submit proposals to Homelessness Strategy Group 30/11/03	SD/GH/YOT/ Connexions / DW	£30-35K unallocated	
To assess feasibility of using Check Point offices as a flexible refuge for young people	31/08/03 – feedback to chair	SD		
To recruit supportive lodgings in private sector for homeless young people	30/11/03 Target of 14 young people assisted	SD / DW		Scheme is up and running and Check Point actively recruiting supportive landlords / landladies

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
To work with private landlords to provide accommodation for vulnerable young people (16-17 yr. olds)	Target of 6 units by 30/11/03	VS / FN		
Assess feasibility of re designating low demand sheltered schemes for other clients	March 2004	RHT / WCHA		
Set up a Private Landlord Liaison Service	<p>To foster closer working between the Council and private landlords.</p> <p>To help prevent homelessness through termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies.</p> <p>To improve access to private sector accommodation</p>	TW/SS/SDLA	£30k unallocated	<p>Questionnaire and Housing Advice Factsheets have been sent to all landlords who are members of South Devon Residents Landlords Association, to make them aware of Housing Advice Service.</p> <p>They have been asked to notify us of any tenant threatened with eviction so prevention work can take place-some landlords have already contacted Housing Advice Officer and successful mediation work has taken place.</p>

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
<p>To review Torbay Council's Allocations Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure homeless families are awarded sufficient points to achieve permanent re-housing, i.e. Assured Tenancies. • Investigate feasibility of choice based lettings scheme. • Monitor nominations from RSLs. • Review points awarded for underoccupation to free up family housing. 	<p>Set up review group 31/07/03</p> <p>Develop options by 31/11/03</p> <p>Implement new approach 01/04/04</p>	SS	Additional Resources will be required to run a choice based system, however any revised system will be funded in partnership with Housing Associations	
To put together a Housing options pack for those who may become homeless	To assess mobility options 20 th November 2003	DW		Harrow presentation Harrow have been contacted to arrange a half-day seminar for staff/stakeholders
Increase supply of permanent accommodation through adoption of Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing and monitor its effectiveness	To be adopted by July 2003	DP / SS	Expected additional resource for provision of affordable housing	As at 09/07/03 Supplementary Planning Guidance and model s106 is in formal consultation stage

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Consider financial incentives and support to tenants moving to smaller accommodation to free up family housing.	To be worked up as part of Housing Strategy October 2003	SS/DW/JH/NB	£---? RSLs / Council	
To work up accommodation and support needs for all client groups to be included in revised Homeless Strategy as part of Housing Strategy to be published October 2003	October 2003	SS		
Following the publication of Torbay's Housing Needs Survey set a three year development programme that addresses the needs of the revised Homelessness Strategy	To ensure that this is worked up advance of the bidding programme for public capital resources – 31/08/03	SS / DP		
Improve standards of Houses in multiple occupation (HIMO's) by regular inspections with Environmental Health and expansion of the accreditation scheme	Ongoing to be reviewed as part of Housing Strategy development	FW		

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Develop agreed standards for temporary accommodation providers and sign contracts	31/01/04	DW / JB / FW		Programme of Environmental health and Housing Services inspections commenced March 03
Physical and Sensory Disability	To improve access to accommodation for people with disabilities – link to allocations review	SS to feed into Physical and Sensory Disability Task Group		
Review Direct Access provision following Factory row expansion	To commence November 2003	Housing Services / SP / GH		
To expand the Council's Deposit Guarantee Scheme and develop rent in advance	To review Housing Services budget and allocate additional resources by 31/08/03	SS / DW / JB	TBA	

Objective 3

To secure the satisfactory provision of support services for people who may become homeless or who may have been homeless and need support to stop them becoming homeless again

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Investigate possibility of holding furniture in storage to enable clients to move into accommodation without unnecessary delay.	Set up working group 31/07/03 Submit proposals to steering group by 30/10/03	DW/GH/Project 58 / RHT		
Review floating support, resettlement and tenancy sustainment for homeless people	2003/04	SP/FN		
Set up Employment placements/business action for homeless people	Set up working group by 31/07/03	Jobcentre Plus/Progress to work		
Review primary health surgery	By February 2003	CB		
To ensure that co-ordinated support is provided to people in temporary accommodation from a range of services to ensure their health, education and social needs are met		Homelessness Strategy Group		
To resource an expanded Housing team with a resettlement worker	April 2004	SS	£25k unallocated	To be considered as part of merging of housing functions

Objective 4

To review, develop and adequately resource multi agency referral and assessment protocols and monitor and review their effectiveness

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Improve joint working between agencies by formulation of protocols and working arrangements.	<p>Update Youth Protocol by Sept 2003</p> <p>Formulate Common Hospital Discharge Protocol by Sept 2003</p> <p>Devise written protocols between Torbay Council and Mental Health Services, Police, Probation, Factory Row, YOT, Employment service and Project 58 by Oct 2003</p>	<p>Homelessness Strategy Group</p> <p>Youth Hospital Discharge DV</p> <p>Mental Health LD</p> <p>Drug and Alcohol Probation – Prison discharge protocol – South Hams/Teignbridge/Torbay</p> <p>Older People Employment</p>		<p>Youth Protocol in process of being updated-launch day for new Protocol provisionally arranged for August 2003.</p> <p>Common Hospital Discharge Protocol for Torbay, South Hams and Teignbridge in process of being formalised.</p> <p>Discussions taking place between Council and Mental Health Services, Police, Probation, Factory Row, YOT, Employment service and Project 58 to devise written protocols.</p>
Set a multi agency Information sharing protocol	31/03/04	DW / GH		Circulated to all parties May 2003

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
<p>Improve working arrangements between Housing Services and Housing Benefits so the former receives early warning of potential homelessness.</p>	<p>Develop protocol for information sharing by 30/06/03</p> <p>Develop joint training and delivery timetable 31/08/03</p> <p>Agree Service Level Agreement by 01/10/03</p> <p>Examine use of credit agencies 31/07/03</p> <p>Explore use of Connections for Housing Advice surgeries by 30/09/03</p>	<p>TW/SS</p>		<p>Project on track - information sharing protocol developed</p>
<p>Investigate discretionary housing payments to cover the shortfall in Housing Benefit payments.</p>		<p>DW/TW</p>		<p>Series of meetings between the two sections to commence April 03.</p>
<p>Employ a Youth Project Worker within Housing Services</p>	<p>To review floating support for homeless households</p> <p>To provide specialist advice and support to 16-17 yr. olds through links with other agencies / departments</p> <p>To lead development and expansion of the youth protocol</p>	<p>SS / DW</p>		<p>Recruited 23/06/03</p>

Objective 5

To improve communications, consultation and awareness of homelessness issues throughout all relevant organisations and the wider community

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Raise the profile and increase awareness of Housing Advice and Prevention Service	Ongoing	DW/SS		
Improve collection of statistical information to gain a true picture of housing need by devising and implementing a standard approach across agencies	Analyse Rough Sleepers Count and incorporate into revised Housing Strategy. Develop a system multi-agency monitoring to ensure accurate assessment and forecasting of needs	Homelessness Strategy Group		
Streamline referral procedures between various agencies and improve information available both to staff and various client groups by formulation of information directories.		Homelessness Strategy Group		

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource Implications	Progress
Hold consultation / awareness raising events for all stakeholders to ensure informed strategic decision making	Advertising-local press, leaflets, factsheets to be made available to all local agencies. Re-launch Housing Website 30/06/03. Marketing of services through presentations and word of mouth. Member training on housing and homelessness issues 18 & 19 June 2003	Homelessness Strategy Group	£5000 pump priming from TC	
Set up a service users forum to inform strategy and service development, to include an annual independent survey	Carry out user consultation to highlight areas in need of improvement Shelter commissioned to conduct independent survey of Council's service users to be completed end July 2003	Homelessness Strategy Group		
Set up multi agency training plan for 2004/05	Access Connexions multi agency training network and link to Devon Housing training Network	Homelessness Strategy Group		

Objective 6 | To make sure that appropriate structures and processes are in place to monitor and review implementation of this strategy

Description of Action	Target	Responsibility	Resource implications	Progress
Set up working parties to deliver specific targets	30/07/03	Homelessness Strategy Lead		
Quarterly reporting by working parties to steering group		Homelessness Strategy Lead		
Six monthly reporting to Council's executive		Homelessness Strategy Lead		
Annual Report to Torbay Partnership Committee		Homelessness Strategy Lead		
Annual Stakeholder Review		Homelessness Strategy Group		

ABBREVIATIONS

CB	Christine Branson, Torbay Primary Care Trust
DP	David Pickhaver, Strategic Planner, Torbay Council
DW	Dawn Wilson, Homelessness and Housing Advice, Senior Officer Policy and Service Development, Torbay Council
FN	Faye North, Youth Project Worker, Homelessness and Housing Advice, Torbay Council
FW	Fred Weston, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Private Sector Housing, Torbay Council
GH	Glenn Heritage, Director, Torbay Churches Homeless Trust, Deputy chair Homeless Strategy Group
JB	Jane Bruce, Homelessness and Housing Advice, Senior Officer Operational management, Torbay Council
RHT	Riviera Housing Trust
RSLs	Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations)
SD	Sarah Dimmelo, Project Leader, Check Point
SDRLA	South Devon Residential Landlords Association
SP	Supporting People Team
SS	Simon Sherbersky, Housing Services Manager, Torbay Council, chair of Homelessness Strategy Group
TW	Trish Webster, Head of Exchequer and Benefits, Torbay Council
WCHA	Westcountry Housing Association