



HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

July 2003

Introduction by Portfolio Holder

Preface

Homelessness continues to be a major problem on the Isle of Wight. Despite many positive features and attractions, the Island has pockets of significant deprivation resulting from low wages, seasonal unemployment and high levels of long-term illness and disability.

This strategy sets out a new approach to tackling homelessness that overturns many years of using bed and breakfast and seeks instead to promote prevention to reduce the numbers of households needing to be dealt with as emergency cases.

The Council alone cannot achieve the effective delivery of homeless services. We will work in partnership with a wide range of agencies and individuals across sectors and tenures to deliver a range of options and solutions to resolve housing need.

We are clear that homelessness benefits no one and that an effective strategy will benefit not only the households who might be saved the trauma of losing their home, but the other statutory and corporate services for whose services demand might be relieved by reducing the stress of temporary accommodation, improving housing conditions and creating a more stable environment.

We are determined to be user focussed and consultative in reviewing services on a regular basis and to adopt an evidence based approach to cost effectiveness. Most importantly, we are prepared to be innovative, pragmatic and radical where it can be demonstrated that new approaches work better than those currently in use.

However, even within this general philosophy, we are convinced that additional investment in new permanent housing is vital for the Island. We will therefore use this Strategy as a vehicle to attract new funds and use existing resources in the most productive way.

Finally, this Strategy is also a tool for implementing a programme of action. We are aware that to achieve the challenging targets set by the Bed and Breakfast Unit and through our PSA agreements that we have to keep a tight reign on performance. This is undoubtedly an ambitious strategy, but one which is achievable.

PART 1 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR HOMELESSNESS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Introduction

This strategy sets out the approach of Isle of Wight Council to address the major problem of homelessness on the Island. It is intended to reflect the needs of households threatened with homelessness or having no home at all. However, we also seek to emphasise the role of prevention as an absolute preference over an approach based on the consistent need to react to emergencies.

We are clear that homelessness benefits no-one and that certain locational factors, e.g. rent levels, benefit dependency, seasonal changes in supply and demand, etc contribute directly to the levels of homelessness experienced. We also recognise that for many, the process of homelessness is highly debilitating but that the causes and effects are often very diverse. While we aim to promote consistency of service provision and decision making, we recognise that 'one size does not fit all' and that what might constitute an appropriate solution might vary.

Many of the issues raised in this Homelessness Strategy have strong relationships with those identified within the Housing Renewal and Supporting People Strategies. In particular, the high level of owner occupation, the incidence of unfitness in the private rented sector and the considerable levels of disability and support needs on the Island are all contributory factors to the level of homelessness presentations. These three strategies, together with the updated Housing Strategy due to be published later in 2003, should all therefore be seen as addressing, directly or indirectly, the causes and solutions to homelessness on the Island.

We are also convinced that in tackling homelessness, we will reduce the impact on other services. There is little doubt that households who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation place greater demands on local health services and social services. Children living in cramped and unsuitable housing are less likely to achieve at school and to present additional problems for teachers and support workers. Single homelessness and rough sleeping may well relate to a drug and alcohol culture that in turn creates additional policing difficulties. An investment in homelessness prevention and resolution can therefore be seen as a corporate benefit for the Council and the community as a whole.

Therefore, in establishing and evaluating good and effective approaches to homelessness we have striven for a balance between focussing resources on greatest need whilst understanding the requirement for flexibility and the need to accommodate diversity.

In line with Government targets, and having regard to the legislation and Government guidance relating to homelessness, this strategy sets out an action plan intended to initially remove families with children and subsequently all households from bed and breakfast. Of equal importance is a commitment to avoid the future use bed and breakfast except in the most short-term emergencies.

However, emergency accommodation is only one aspect of the range of services and issues that determine the effectiveness of homelessness policies and the experience of service users. Of equal significance is the ease of access to services, the provision of support and the measures in place to avoid homelessness occurring.

Aims of the Strategy

1. The principal aim of this strategy is to create a robust framework within which the Council can deliver effective homelessness services to people in need on the Island.
2. We will pursue this within a context of partnership and consultation with all key stakeholders and service users.
3. We will attempt, wherever possible to prevent homelessness occurring
4. Where prevention cannot be achieved, we will investigate applications in a user-friendly and sensitive manner whilst adopting rigour and thoroughness in our deliberations
5. We will aim to produce outcomes to homelessness applications which, as far as resources allow, reflect user expectations and result in appropriate and sustainable arrangements

Strategic Priorities

1. We will target our resources on the most vulnerable groups in the community, while recognising the need to accommodate diversity
2. We will aim to support and reflect other corporate priorities, e.g. support for care leavers in determining the focus of resources
3. We will work to establish relationships across tenures to procure resources to accommodate homeless households
4. We will use the resources and approaches identified within the Housing Renewal and Supporting People Strategies to deliver quality housing and environments with appropriate support to enable independent living.
5. We will not use temporary accommodation in situations where it can be avoided
6. We will maximise capital and revenue resources to meet the needs of homeless households

Review of Homelessness Services

The development of a new strategic approach for the Island is set against the results of a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) review of the homelessness service, which were published in August 2002. The service was rated one star, likely to improve. A number of positive aspects of service delivery were balanced by a series of concerns expressed about such issues as a weak approach to prevention, lack of user consultation, lack of focus on PPG3 to deliver housing and a failure to recognise the potential needs of BME communities on the Island.

Following the publication of the CPA report, the Council agreed a Homelessness Improvement Plan with the Audit Commission, the contents of which are reflected in this strategy.

Homelessness on the Isle of Wight

The Isle of Wight, in common with many local authorities in the South East, has a significant problem with homelessness. Many factors have contributed to this, but a principal cause is the lack of adequate affordable housing. This has resulted in a past dependence on the widespread use of bed and breakfast accommodation to provide emergency and short term housing for homeless families.

High levels of poverty and deprivation on the Isle of Wight have also been major contributors to the high levels of homelessness. This is illustrated by the Island's GDP which at 1998 was only 67% of the national average. In terms of the impact on social exclusion this is further illustrated by statistics from the Index of Deprivation, 2000:

- The Island has the lowest average male earnings in the UK, with a heavy reliance on seasonal and part time work in the tourism sector. 18% of households on the Island are in receipt of income support, the highest in the region outside Greater London.
- Unemployment is higher on the Island than in the UK and South East Region, at around 4.8% (compared to 2.1% in the South East Region, and 3.7% in the UK), and is concentrated in the 18-24 year old age group. 46% of unemployed males are below 35 years old.
- 15 out of the total 48 wards are in the worst 20% nationally on the Index.
- Pan (Newport) and St. Johns (Ryde) wards are ranked within the UK top 10% most deprived.
- There are 31,720 (25%) Island residents in receipt of means tested benefits.
- There are 8,696 employment-deprived people resident on the Island. These are people who want to work but are unable to do so through unemployment, sickness or disability.
- 5 Island wards are in the worst 20% nationally in terms of access to services; all of these wards are rural.

These levels of deprivation are brought into sharp focus when placed in the context of access into the market housing. House prices on the Isle of Wight rose by 41% between December 2000 and December 2002. In contrast, the average income on the Island increased by only 7% over the same period.

The average level of mortgage awarded on the Island was £52656 for which a single person would have required an income of £15,044. However, using the average 10% deposit required by most building societies, an average 3/4 person household would require an income of nearly £30,000 to get onto the property ladder. In practice, the average income on the Island was only £15,000+ with over 80% of heads of households earning below £20,000.

The affordability gap is even greater for many households who are much worse off than the average would suggest. An analysis of applicants on the Common Housing Register indicates an average head of household income of £6230.38. This would allow only a £21,800 mortgage or on the basis of the NHF definition of affordability, suggest a housing cost of £30 per week.

The nature of the housing market on the Island is highly constraining for low-income households. Approximately 80% of the housing is in owner occupation and therefore subject to market forces. The private rented sector is highly marginalised at only 7% with a heavy dependence on assured shorthold tenancies and subject to seasonal fluctuations. The remaining 12% are social housing at affordable rents which is in heavy demand.

In terms of underlying need, the Housing Need Survey 2001 indicated, *"The total affordable housing need annually is for 1,061 units. Re-lets of the existing social stock average 686 units and is the major means of addressing the scale of need identified. In the years to 2006, an average of 133 new rental units and shared ownership are predicted to be delivered through the new programme and it is assumed that this will be able to be sustained for the next 5 years"*.

The effects of this level of activity is clear, *"Even after allowing for this level of supply, there will still be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 375 units which projected over the five year period to 2006 is a total of 1,875 units"*. There are currently almost 4,000 cases registered on the Common Housing Register, which has almost doubled within the last five years.

The Council received 451 homeless applications in 2002/03, 302 of whom were accepted as statutory homeless, and for whom the Council had an accommodation duty. Government statistics for the nine months leading up to April 2003 locate the Island as tenth out of sixty-six authorities in the South East in terms of homeless acceptances. This is behind mainly large urban authorities such as Southampton, Portsmouth, Reading, etc. These figures continue to remain at a consistently high level. The terminating of private sector assured shorthold tenancies remained the single case of homeless, accounting for 37% of all homelessness.

Ryde accounts for 19% of all homelessness on the Island, with Sandown/Shanklin at 17% and Newport 18%. 10% of all homelessness occurs in the rural areas.

At the end of 2002/03, 55 households were in B & B, of which 28 were families with children. The average length of stay in B&B decreased from 16 to 14 weeks.

In addition to the 55 in B&B, there were also an additional 314 families in assorted leased or temporary accommodation, in the Women's Refuge, or who had made their own arrangements, a total of 369 families. In 2002/03, there were 358 nominations to Housing Associations, of which 207 were homeless households. The number of lets available through natural vacancies, new build, purchase, leasing etc., just about keeps up with the number of homeless, but no significant inroads into the backlog have been made for several years.

- The Women's Refuge accommodates about 45 women and their children each year, all of whom have been made homeless by domestic violence. The refuge consistently turns away more families than it can accommodate.
- The Council's formal rough sleepers counts show there to be less than 10 rough sleepers on the Island, although it is likely there are about 70 roofless single people who may sleep rough from time to time, and about 250 single people of no fixed abode who "sofa-surf" whilst under a serious threat of homelessness.

The Isle of Wight Independent Housing Advice Centre deals with about 1,800 clients per year, all of whom have a housing or housing related financial problem, are facing the possibility of homelessness, or live in inappropriate or poor housing conditions.

The Homelessness Context

Homelessness has for many years been one of the principal priorities for the vast majority of local authorities. In determining our response to the issues, the Isle of Wight has been mindful of the legal framework laid down within the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002.

In addition, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 also have a significant influence on the delivery of homelessness services within a framework of equity and equality.

Other key national policies having a direct bearing on the homelessness strategy are the Supporting People programme, the Government's Housing Statement 'Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All'.

In a local context, the Homelessness Strategy links to a range of other strategies which together deliver the corporate vision contained in the Council's Community Strategy "Island Futures". The most closely related of these are illustrated in figure 1 below.

Isle of Wight Strategic Matrix



Reviewing Existing Services

The development of this strategy has been based on a consultative and transparent process geared towards evaluating the merits and effectiveness of existing services and proposing sustainable and achievable targets for future activity. This has been pursued within five key component parts:

1. **A review of existing services** - which has been conducted in three stages.
 - a. an audit of current services provided together with the range of service providers
 - b. consultation with a wide range of users and stakeholders involved in delivering, receiving or advocating the homelessness service.
 - c. An analysis of outcomes and performance indicators benchmarked against targets and other comparable providers.

The review of services has been as wide ranging, inclusive and transparent as possible in the time available. The process of consultation has built further on an already well-developed structure of voluntary, private sector organizations and existing special interest fora already established on the Island (see Appendix 1). A critical element of the process has also been the involvement of service users in providing feedback. This has come either via direct contact or as synthesised feedback through advocates and pressure groups.

In implementing the consultation process, the need to involve users has been a high priority. More importantly, there is a recognition that more effective mechanisms need to be developed which enable such feedback to become a more integrated part of the homelessness service. This is particularly true of a number of hard to reach groups that have traditionally fallen outside of the mainstream service arena, i.e. young, single individuals. Developing such mechanisms remains a key action point in the Implementation Plan.

2. Evaluating need

The second key element relates to the evaluation of need. We recognise that an effective strategy must be based on an accurate picture of the needs and expectations to be addressed. The data necessary to picture has been obtained through a number of sources:

- a. A commissioned Housing Needs Survey in 2001
- b. Extensive work conducted in the development of a Supporting People strategy
- c. Data from the Common Housing register
- d. Analysis of homelessness activity
- e. House Condition Survey 2002
- f. Knowledge gained through existing partners, networks and fora that exist on the Island.

We recognise that some of these data sources are more robust than others. It is clear that further work also needs to be done to generate and collate this information in a useful form. We also need to establish robust mechanisms to ensure that effective reviews are in place to plot changes in demand trends over time. Further work also needs to be put in train the identification of hidden needs, for which we currently have no or inadequate data.

We recognise that such data is vital in helping shape and develop services for people who are homeless, including those who are not "statutorily" homeless, and those in need of housing advice. In so doing we will be able to raise the profile of homelessness and increase the understanding of the problems faced by homeless people.

3. An analysis of existing services set against needs

Having looked at the range of existing services and performance, we have also examined whether the current portfolio of available options meets the range of needs to be addressed. As indicated earlier, we recognise that certain factors contributing to homelessness will be dealt with by measures adopted in other complementary strategies. An example of this is the adoption of programmes to address unfitness in the private rented sector that has, in the past been the basis of high levels of housing need and also insecurity.

The evaluation of homelessness services has been developed via a gap analysis, which has focused on the production of a matrix that relates current needs to current provision. The full matrix is contained in Appendix 2, however the summary in figure 2 indicates the provision across a range of areas. Not all of the units quoted will be let to homeless households, but this is an indication of the range of provision on the Island should it be needed.

16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Families with Children
58	85	67	78	34	5	42	26	318	264

Figure 2. Provision for Homeless Households

Although the matrix indicates coverage across a wide range of housing needs, there are also some notable gaps. For instance, older people receive no specific support should they become homeless. This is largely due to the relatively small numbers who suffer this event together with an ability to respond to their needs within existing provision. The same is true of provision for physical disability. Servicemen discharged from the forces are also expected to take their turn alongside other households. We make no specific provision for their needs. Young single individuals also often fall outside of the net. Although provision is made for care leavers and under 18-year olds, those falling outside of these categories have little opportunity to access secure housing. This impacts most critically on those who are most vulnerable as a result of substance misuse and/or prison discharge. The needs of this group are considered further below.

The review has also taken account of the accessibility and robustness of services i.e.

- whether or not they are likely to endure over the life of the strategy,
- value for money i.e. where existing resources are being used in the most cost effective and productive manner;
- Partnerships i.e. whether the right organisation are involved in assessing and delivering services;
- and whether current services fully respond to the national, regional and local agenda for addressing homelessness and supporting people into independent living.

It is intended that the mechanisms developed as part of this review, will offer a more sustainable vehicle for future consultation than has existed in the past. This has included the establishment of a Strategic Steering Group comprising a wide range of stakeholder interests. This will retain a future role as a strategic review body and a homelessness forum.

It is also recognised that in order to sustain user feedback there needs to be perceivable pay back, i.e. a clear indication that their views have been listened to and have influenced the future shape of homeless services on the Island. We will achieve this through more timely and widespread dissemination of consultation findings. To this end, we will produce a half yearly homelessness newsletter that will reflect responses to consultation feedback and other substantive issues relating to the homelessness service. This will be distributed to service users and stakeholders.

The initial consultation exercise with homeless service users indicated a high level of satisfaction with the approach and delivery of the reception and investigation process. One third of the questionnaire forms used were returned, which is statistically significant. Overall, the indications were of a high level of satisfaction amongst service users with the full results contained in Appendix 3. The issues which appeared to cause most concern are the design of the application form, help in completing the form and on-going information to keep applicants updated on progress in their case. These issues will be the subject of review in the coming year. This will form part of a wider review of information provision relating to homeless services, which also reflects a recommendation from the CPA review. We will also look to consolidate and expand our consultation mechanisms to get the maximum level of input from service users relating to all aspects of provision.

User feedback is also a major source of information to ensure that the quality and management of temporary housing is of an acceptable standard. This has not always proved possible in the past because of the dependency on bed and breakfast. However, the reduced usage of such accommodation should enable a much greater level of control over issues.

Using Temporary Accommodation

At the beginning of June 2003 there were 50 households in bed and breakfast, 30 had children. The target set by the ODPM is for this number to be reduced so that no families with children are resident after April 2004. We recognise that we will have to provide alternative types of temporary accommodation and maximise the provision of permanent accommodation to make up this shortfall.

Currently we have 168 units of temporary accommodation in management. This represents:

84 dwellings leased directly from private landlords (usually 3 or 5 year leases)

16 dwellings leased through RSLs

28 units owned by the Council and managed by RSLs

40 units owned and managed by RSLs

All dwellings leased directly from private landlords are subject to a set of minimum standards for stock condition and management that are set out in an advice document. Compliance with these standards will be monitored via an initial inspection that will be repeated on an annual basis, supplemented by quarterly questionnaires to residents.

The units that are specifically geared towards temporary usage, i.e. non single family units, tend to present the greatest difficulties in terms of conditions and management. In particular, the Council owned units at Wrafton House, Jellicoe House and Moira House need considerable investment to bring them up to an acceptable standard. A sum of £30,000 has been set aside to commence this work, but alongside this, a wider options appraisal is being conducted with Medina Housing Association to examine the most appropriate longer term course of action. A full review of such accommodation, in both Council and RSL ownership will be conducted over the coming year.

Key Service Themes

The review of existing services has also recognised the need to reflect key issues that have become increasingly important strategic corporate objectives within the recent past. These include:

Supporting People

The new Supporting People regime came into effect from 1st April 2003. Its remit is to offer vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing services that enable them to have greater independence and control in making choices within their lives.

The importance of Supporting People to homelessness on the Island is twofold. Firstly that housing related support services will be commissioned which enable people who might otherwise find the maintenance of a tenancy too difficult and thus be in danger of becoming homeless. The range of services which are delivered are based on projections contained within the Supporting People Strategy. This is produced through a working partnership between the Council, the National Health Service and the National Probation Service, support service users and support service providers. At April 2003, the Supporting People Team had issued contracts with 53 service providers to deliver support to 1256 service users.

The second main area of relevance is the provision of floating support services to households both to assist in the prevention of homelessness and to support households in temporary accommodation.

Research has identified that a significant factor of homelessness on the island is due to tenancy breakdown. This is due to a number of reasons including rent arrears, housing benefit problems and neighbour disputes. Supporting People can provide housing related support services which have been proven to prevent homelessness locally.

At the end of 2001/02 there were 356 families in temporary accommodation on the island. The duration of their stay in temporary accommodation can often be many months. Supporting People provides support to these

families whilst they are in temporary accommodation and acts as a communication conduit between them, the Council and other agencies/organisations.

There are clearly areas of overlap between the Homelessness Strategy and the Supporting People Strategy. These will be kept under continual review to ensure that the synergies that exist between these areas are nurtured.

Equalities and Diversity

Because the tenure mix of the Island is so heavily dominated by owner-occupation, the opportunities for access to rented housing is limited. There is a significant body of research that has indicated that certain groups within society tend to fare less well when seeking to access public services. This has been highlighted with reference to the black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in investigations by the CRE since the mid-1980s, the findings of the Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence, and more recently in the Race and Housing Inquiry.

However, ethnicity is not the only criteria to generate barriers to accessing suitable and affordable housing. Traditionally the needs and aspirations of young single people and childless couples have been overlooked because of their perceived low priority. Women too, although comprising the majority of social tenancies, often have had their specific needs ignored in the pursuit of standardised practices and bureaucratic systems.

In developing this Strategy, we recognise that the creation of choice and the sophistication of needs analysis are key to establishing equitable and sustainable outcomes. We also are aware that we have further to go in having the knowledge and processes in place to meet these needs than in some other areas. This is reflected in the Implementation Matrix (figure 2) below. We have already commenced the process of making links with groups and individuals within the community who have knowledge and expertise in this area. It is our intention that this will result in a more robust set of strategic and operational guidance for responding to the needs of the BME community on the Island.

Women and Housing Issues

Because of their role as carers and their longevity, women tend to be the largest users of public services. This is particularly true of social housing, where they are represented within the majority of households allocated homes through the CHR or as homeless. As such, there are a number of key issues which affect women either specifically or disproportionately and which are therefore key to this Strategy. They relate particularly to:

- Support
- Health
- Security

Research has consistently indicted that single women are more likely to experience `hidden' homelessness than men. This means that they use all of their resources to make temporary arrangements with friends and acquaintances rather than become roofless. It is also highly likely that the true level of domestic violence is under reported, as many women feel unable to leave the family home. The health needs of women in who are homeless are also often not fully addressed either because of their unsettled lifestyle or because they are living in bed and breakfast or other unsuitable housing. We have made some progress in these areas. An example is a response to the needs of young single parents who need not only accommodation but also support and assistance in developing life skills. Two mother and baby homes have been funded through housing associations on the Island.

However, we recognise that these needs require further understanding and scoping so as to be able to develop appropriate and sustainable services that reflect their needs. One of the vehicles used to develop this Strategy has been the establishment of a Women and Health Group which has acted as to co-ordinate expertise in this area. We will work through this group to **further research the needs of women on the Island in 2003/4.**

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness across the UK. Research undertaken by the ODPM indicated over 7,000 cases accepted as homeless through domestic violence in March 1999. Domestic violence also remains a problem on the Island although measures are in place to respond to it. Island Womens' Refuge (IWR) operates the Island's Refuge. Their properties are owned by South Wight Housing Association and funded by the Housing Corporation. Together they comprise 30 bedspaces.

IWR operates an open door, direct access policy. Users and other services access the Refuge through its 24 hour helpline. IWR also operates Childcare, Outreach, Resettlement and Pet Rescue services. Many of its activities, principally the helpline, rely on the dedication of volunteers. IWR is funded through IOWC with a Social Services and a Housing Department grant. It accesses Supporting People monies and has grants with the Drug Action Team (DAT) and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Local individuals and organisations also make regular donations of money and goods.

The refuge is a safe house providing confidential, crisis accommodation for women and their children escaping domestic violence. Since 1991 more than 1100 people have been accommodated in the Refuge. However, over the same period a further 1400 women presented but were not accommodated, largely because the Refuge has been full. In every case, other accommodation has been found. However, this level of demand indicates a need to review whether current provision for domestic violence is adequate to sustain this vital service. Such a **review will be conducted with the full involvement of IWR and other stakeholder groups during 2003/4.**

In parallel to this courses are also run by the probation service, with multi-agency funding, for perpetrators of domestic violence. The perpetrator's group, managed by the Stonham Housing Association, runs a programme consisting of 30 sessions and the offenders are expected to complete the whole course and to attend 6 monthly relapse prevention sessions. Over the last two years 39 men have been referred to the programme that between them have 87 children. The re-offending rate for these men was only 7% during the last year. This project, funded from a variety of sources, requires £24,000 to continue for the coming year to make up for SRB funding which is now coming to an end. Consideration will be given to how this funding might best be provided.

Health and Homelessness

The relationship between health and housing also has been well proven through research over many years. In particular, people who are roofless have lower life expectancy and households in bed and breakfast are more prone to illness. The Council's corporate commitment is to promote health and well-being throughout the Island and this must therefore be a key issue for this Strategy.

By ending the use of bed and breakfast for families with children by April 2004 we will be reducing the potential for illness and poor health for households so placed. In procuring alternative housing from the private sector we have set out a set of minimum standards that will ensure that households live in appropriate surroundings. We have also established floating support for households in temporary accommodation through the Supporting People programme.

Through the adoption of a Housing Renewal Strategy we are addressing poor conditions where they exist in the private rented sector and promoting measures to overcome fuel poverty. The effects of these mechanisms will be to secure better quality, secure accommodation for people on the Island, but also to improve health and reduce the drain on already depleted incomes through excessive fuel costs.

We also need to develop robust systems to alert health professionals e.g. health visitors, school nurses, GPs to the fact people are in temporary accommodation. This should also link to parallel proposals to develop assessment, referral and tracking systems for children in need.

Clearly health issues in general need to closely relate to the Supporting People strategy to ensure that we are making the best use of support resources on the Island. To achieve this, we need to explore scope for shared training to improve cross-professional/agency understanding of respective roles, responsibilities and services. To this end, we have identified a range of issues that need to be examined in terms of their relationship to homelessness (Appendix 4). These will be the subjects of future Homelessness Strategy reviews.

We also need to build on the expertise developed in neighbouring authorities. An example is the programme in Portsmouth that provides an intensive programme to support young women with coping skills to maintain a home, initially on licence and later to sustain a tenancy assuming they comply with the programme.

We also recognise that drug and alcohol misuse can be a major factor in the cause of homelessness and that itinerancy can create significant problems for individuals seeking to access support services. In particular we will seek to further investigate is the identification of issues in the prescription of methadone and detox services for homeless people.

BME Households

Although the Island is largely monocultural and not ethnically diverse, we are conscious of the need to be aware and to take account of the specific requirements of the resident BME community. The 2001 Census indicates 98.7% of the population of the Island to be white, of whom 96% were born in the UK. This places the Island amongst the least diverse communities in the south-east. However, it has often been demonstrated that small, relatively isolated BME communities have experienced difficulties due to the lack of supportive networks and the absence of religious and culturally specific facilities. The lack of local knowledge and understanding of other cultures can also lead to prejudice and harassment.

It is however clear that the needs and aspirations of the local BME community are under researched. This is of particular concern because traditionally BME households tend to be disproportionately represented within social housing and as homeless. We are also aware of a growing number of reported racial attacks on the Island, which would suggest a need for additional service development in this area.

We will prioritise the need for further research into the service needs of BME households to complement the adoption of a Race Equality Scheme

Single Homelessness

In the past, single people have received little assistance in accessing social housing. Homelessness legislation has, in general terms, located them outside of the key groups to be awarded priority. However, the Homelessness Act 2002 extended the priority criteria to include certain single people. In addition, changes in social behaviour over recent years requires a more flexible approach to assessing housing needs amongst this group.

In particular, the evolution of a drug culture amongst a significant number of young people on the Island has created new forms of vulnerability and the need for different services to address this. Accommodation is often cited by drug misusers seeking treatment as one of the critical components affecting the success of their programme.

A report commissioned by the Wessex Youth Offending Team (Brafield, 2003) into the availability of accommodation for young offenders on the Island suggests a need for an additional 40 bedspaces for single people with a variety of support needs, together with the resources for floating support an additional 40 young people. Whilst it is unlikely that such a range of resources can be provided within existing resources in the short term, consideration needs to be given to the capital and revenue implications of such developments and how they relate to existing resources.

Alongside the evaluation of future development options, additional work needs to be carried out to improve the links between the Council, particularly Housing Services, the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the voluntary sector. The need for this is highlighted in the Implementation Matrix below which indicates a relative lack of progress in developing formal working arrangements in this area. This needs to be a priority in the coming year.

We are also very aware of our corporate responsibility towards children who have been in the care of the Council. We will treat as a priority any child reaching their 18th birthday who is reaching the point of independence. We anticipate that this will require approximately ten units of housing each year.

There have been some notable developments in accommodation for single people. An example is Medina Housing Association's Foyer in Ryde. The Foyer targets young people who are homeless or leaving home, and provides support and training to obtain sufficient qualifications to find sustainable employment. It provides accommodation long enough to give the residents time to develop a sound base in key skills so as to find employment and move into independent accommodation.

However, there is clearly a need for further single person housing other than that currently provided for the elderly. This will be reflected, where possible, in future development sites.

Rough Sleeping

There appears relatively little rough sleeping on the Island, although anecdotal evidence from agencies working with the single homeless indicates that it is an increasing phenomenon. There appears a strong correlation

between rooflessness and substance misuse amongst young single people and this has also highlighted the absence of any direct access facility on the Island. This increasingly appears to be a significant gap in the range of housing provision available to meet emergency needs. Initial discussions have been held with the Salvation Army about the feasibility of developing an appropriate facility. It is envisaged that any such development would comprise a mixture of direct access units, many of which would be linked to medium term support packages. Revenue funding would most likely be sought through the Supporting People programme. We would hope to progress evaluating the feasibility of such a scheme during the course of 2003/4.

Crime and Disorder

We are clear that homelessness is a factor that contributes to the general picture of homelessness. Many of the young single people mentioned above who are ex-offenders and/or substance misusers may find it hard to access accommodation and therefore resort to crime to may generate disorder by sleeping rough. The absence of appropriate accommodation is a significant factor leading to recidivism, which is an expensive and unacceptable outcome for the individuals concerned and the agencies involved with them. Further analysis need to be given to the cost effectiveness of providing some housing resources for individuals particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon.

4. Prevention

A critical function of any homelessness policy needs to be the movement away from the past emphasis on reaction to emergency presentations, to a much greater emphasis on prevention. The Council has now appointed a homelessness prevention officer whose remit is to work with agencies on the Island to develop effective approaches to homelessness prevention. This is a substantial task that needs to operate at an individual case level whilst also contributing to immediate and long-term processes and mechanisms to create alternatives to homelessness and make people aware that these exist.

We recognise that effective prevention needs a clear and coherent infrastructure of assessment, referral and support services. While a number of the component parts of such an infrastructure exist at present they do not

operate in a co-ordinated or strategic manner. It is intended through the continued existence of the Homeless Strategy Steering Group, that further coherence will be developed in these areas.

We need a clearer map of where other types of support services are located e.g. CAB outreach surgeries, IHAC outreach, debt advice, community legal services to inform the development of a more consistent approach in all parts of the Island. This needs to be complemented by the development of a wide range of easily understood communication mechanisms that will enable people to understand the options open to them and the potential implications of certain actions. We are in the process of producing good quality printed material, which has been funded in part through a grant from the ODPM. This will be further supplemented by the development of a more informative and interactive web site that will provide links to a wide range of information sources. Finally, we will develop a series of information pack with facilities for translation, which will be targeted towards key vulnerable groups.

We are also aware that the use of temporary accommodation brings with it a new set of problems. Although a much better option than bed and breakfast, promoting Homelessness at Home and placing households in accommodation with no clear indication of the likely duration is likely to cause distress and anxiety. We need to keep this under close scrutiny and undertake research into the medium term effects of these approaches.

We need to work closely with the Private Sector to offer the widest range of housing options possible. Through this developing relationship, we also need to challenge existing perceptions such as accommodation in the private sector not being secure. We will do this while ensuring that we stringently monitor standards and the quality of management amongst private landlords through our Housing Renewal policies.

However, whilst recognising the need and potential benefits of developing an innovative and effective prevention strategy, we remain convinced that the best solution to homelessness on the Island remains adequate access to suitable permanent housing. This continues to elude the Council as the result of insufficient resources to sustain the level of new building required to meet local needs.

The Housing Needs Survey conducted in 2001 indicated, *"The total affordable housing need annually is for 1,061 units. Re-lets of the existing social stock average 686 units and is the major means of addressing the scale of need identified. In the years to 2006, an average of 133 new rental units and shared ownership are predicted to*

be delivered through the new programme and it is assumed that this will be able to be sustained for the next 5 years”.

The effects of this level of activity is clear, "Even after allowing for this level of supply, there will still be an annual affordable housing shortfall of 375 units which projected over the five year period to 2006 is a total of 1,875 units”.

Addressing the Causes of Homelessness

An analysis of the homeless activity during 2001/2 indicated that out of 462 decisions taken, 305 were accepted as homeless with a priority need, were eligible for assistance and unintentionally homeless. Of these, the top three households types were: lone parent households (female) with dependant children, couples with dependant children and one-person households (male). Of the 305 accepted households, the main reasons for the loss of their previous home, were:

- 1) Loss of rented or tied accommodation (37%)
- 2) Parents, friends or relatives no longer or willing to accommodate (25%)
- 3) Breakdown of relationship with partner (19%)

In order to reduce future levels of homelessness on Island, we recognise the need to address these main, recurring reasons for homeless.

1. Loss of rented or tied accommodation

This is the largest cause of homelessness on the Isle of Wight, accounting for 151 or nearly half of all homelessness acceptances. Such situations are often endemic to areas with highly seasonal industries such as tourism. The existence of this market creates a revolving door situation in which households come to the Island, remain for six months and then present as homeless. However, this figure includes acceptances as a result of the termination of assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) and rent arrears in both the private and public sector. Instances are often due to:

- rent arrears following a break in housing benefit claim
- rent arrears or potential rent arrears from increases in rent or non-dependant deductions
- eviction due to landlord/tenant dispute concerning property management
- eviction due to landlord wishing to return to their property or sell.

What we will aim to do to prevent homelessness from private/public sector tenancies:

- Anyone with a Notice will be interviewed
- Landlords or agents will be contacted to fully investigate the situation
- A prevention checklist will be devised for landlords/agents to see if prevention is possible
- Where the landlords want to sell, put them in touch with housing associations that might be able to purchase and keep the tenant in situ
- Enquire whether landlord/agent have alternative property for the tenant. Applicants should also be encouraged to look in the private sector and offered a rent deposit/ advance as encouragement
- Work with landlords and their tenants to raise the standards of housing accommodation through a balanced approach of facilitation and enforcement
- Visit landlord and tenant to see whether mediation might be a way to resolve problems.
- Work with GPs to identify instances where additional support may be needed and, if appropriate make a referral to an agency that can provide support
- Liase with child care social workers where the household is a looked after young person

In addition to the above generic responses, we will also consider the viability of developing some or all of the following mechanisms for working more closely with the Private Rented Sector.

- Encourage landlords to identify and access support for vulnerable people instead of seeking eviction
- Private landlords forum including welfare benefits, environmental health etc and encourage them to approach us prior to serving Notices.
- Maintain a register of landlords willing to take tenants on HB or those needing extra support.
- Operate a rent deposit scheme
- Negotiate with landlords about money in advance
- Ensure good financial advice is available – e.g. DSS loans etc
- Build good relationships with letting agencies to establish better communication about properties becoming vacant (especially those accepting HB)
- Create a guide for landlords wanting to let out their property
- Consider providing landlords with payments to cover loss in rent up to a set amount where the tenant has not been negligent

In addition to closer working relationships with the private rented sector, there are also ways in which social rented tenancies might be secured, thus preventing homelessness. For instance, Housing Officers are well placed to identify instances where additional support may be needed and, if appropriate make referrals to support agencies.

Housing Benefit (HB)

The operation of Housing Benefit has often proved to be a disincentive for landlords to become involved with people who are in receipt of benefits. It is not only a potential cause of homelessness by creating technical arrears, but dissuades many landlords from letting to those households in greatest need.

Some of the existing problems experienced with HB on the Island include, delays in the initial assessment of claims leading to late payments, a more onerous verification procedures, breaks in claims at the point of review, liability for overpayments falling on landlords and the payment of benefits in arrears, which can cause confusion and often acts as a disincentive to let

We recognise the need to work with the HB section to ensure that any systemic problems are minimised in terms of their impact on the availability of rented housing. This will include establishing dialogue about the discretionary Housing Benefit fund to ensure it is being used in the most productive manner. We will also wish to ensure that the rent service setting rates for Housing Benefit reflect realistic local rents. We will work over the coming year to establish good practice protocols that link closely homeless prevention and HB.

Areas for Consideration to Establish Good Practice for Housing Benefit

- New tenants for leased properties or direct lettings might be signed up at the housing benefit office. Queries can then be resolved on the spot
- A named HB officer should be identified for all liaison/ prevention issues
- Housing Associations who run temporary housing leased schemes should have a named HB officer for their scheme
- A HB Forum should be set up meeting periodically to discuss HB issues relating specifically to homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation
- HB service should deliver training sessions for all homelessness staff to include a basic guide to HB rules and possibly act as verification officers
- Advocacy on HB issues, accessing grants from charities and liaising with landlords to reduce rent levels or retrieve deposits
- Assisting clients in renewing HB claims to ensure continuity of payments

2. Parents, friends or relatives no longer or willing to accommodate

This is the second largest area of homelessness on the Isle of Wight accounting for 75 (25%) of all homelessness acceptances.

This is often one of the most difficult areas to influence or control. Relationships are generally unpredictable and often not open to negotiation. However, we have already made some progress in the development of the Homeless at Home approach.

However, despite the unpredictability, there are certain indicators that we may be able to further develop. For instance, Potentially young homeless can sometimes be identified as those who truant from school, have poor performance or behavioural problems. Assisting young people and their families whilst at home can help prevent

a crisis point. There is also often increased pressure on families in respect of worsening poverty when a child reaches 16. With these factors in mind, it is essential that staff involved in homelessness prevention develop close links with the Education Service in respect to both schools and the youth service. Not only will this offer the opportunity to project and react to potential needs, but also to deliver proactive services in terms of information and advice to those considering leaving home.

Mediation

Where relationships have broken down, the options for resolving the situation are relatively few. However, we consider that mediation may provide an effective way forward. This will be achieved by home visiting all family exclusions for verification of the exact nature of the problem. Mediation can then be brokered to resolve the problem where possible. This potential effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated in Harrow.

The adoption of mediation will be a new approach for the Council. We will aim during 2003/4 to fully evaluate its appropriateness in an Island context and subject to our findings develop the following related mechanisms:

- An agreed protocol between a council and the mediation partner organisation
- A standard referral form to family mediation
- A statement of outcome reply form from the mediation service
- Information leaflet on mediation for applicants threatened with homelessness

In addition to mediation, there is also a range of other options for addressing housing needs amongst young people. It is essential to recognise that these can only be developed and delivered in partnership with other agencies and Council services.

- Start a housing education programme for young people in schools
- Consider the development of respite to relieve housing related pressures
- Advice and Counselling for young people on housing, health, sexual and drug issues
- Returning home schemes
- Starter packs of furniture and household goods

- Providing young people with information about the choices available to them and the implications of leaving home
- Working with former homeless people to give advice and information in high schools

3. Breakdown of relationship with partner

This is the third largest area of homelessness on the Isle of Wight accounting for 58 (19%) of all homelessness acceptances. We recognise the difficulties experienced by people experiencing such circumstances and on their support networks. We will aim to work with other agencies to:

- Develop local support and advice for families who are at risk of being evicted
- Provide support families or friends who are required to help homeless households at home
- Offer family mediation for those whose relationships are at the point of collapse

Approximately a half of relationship breakdowns involved violence. We will aim to respond by:

- Working closely with Domestic Violence groups and the Police as necessary
- Research and promote a range of measures to support women wishing to remain in the family home
- Working to take action against the perpetrators of domestic violence
- To introduce Joint interviews with relevant agencies to establish a single point of data collection
- Encourage management transfers where appropriate
- Provide support for applicants to consult solicitors to protect their interests
- Consider the provision of short term accommodation where appropriate

We will also examine whether increased security and support might be provided more quickly to maintain women in the family home. Potential measures might include:

- additional locks to doors and windows
- additional lighting
- fire resistant letterbox, smoke detectors

- personal alarms
- strengthening doors
- help line for victims
- police mobile phones

The cost of these works could be met in part by the Housing Department as part of the homelessness prevention strategy

Other models for prevention are contained in Appendix 5. These relate to experience elsewhere and will be examined in terms of their potential application to the Island's residents.

5. Developing Alternatives

It is recognised that an effective approach to tackling homelessness cannot be developed and delivered as a short-term response to a long-term issue. However, we are committed to acting as early as possible to improve the situation of households who find themselves homeless and need assistance and support. This strategy therefore adopts a series of related and complementary measures that build over time to produce a coherent and sustainable response to homelessness on the Island.

Short-term measures (within the next twelve months):

- Prevention – introduce measures which recognise differences and offer a diverse range of options
- Quick and effective investigations, which ensure that households pass through the system as quickly as possible, while ensuring proper investigations
- Incentives for initiatives such as homeless at home and households making their own arrangements – these avoid the use of costly and unsuitable temporary accommodation
- Target empty properties – we will use all possible measures and resources to bring empty properties back into use. This dovetails with objectives contained in the Housing Renewal Strategy
- Increase PSL units – we will increase the number of units provided on temporary leases, provided either through housing associations or directly with private landlords
- We will investigate ways of working with the private rented sector in a more innovative manner, recognising the seasonal nature of many of the lets
- Greater use of social lets – we will use the new Common Housing Register as a more sensitive and sophisticated tool for letting social housing

Medium term measures (1-2 years):

- We will consider the need to increase the number of hostel places, linking closely with the Supporting People Strategy – this may be particularly relevant for younger single homeless applicants
- We will examine ways of addressing the unmet need experienced by women fleeing domestic violence. This might include the provision of additional refuge spaces
- We will work with the Planners to produce a robust and deliverable Supplementary Planning Guidance – this will require higher numbers of social housing units being generated through the planning system
- We will work with the Rural Community Council (RCC) and the Rural Housing Enabler to recognise and evaluate the need for rural investment and provide housing opportunities in rural locations
- We will work with housing associations to develop schemes to free up social dwellings
- We will work with our neighbouring mainland authorities to examine the phenomenon of cross boundary flow – currently over 10% acceptances are generated in this way

Longer term measures (three-five years):

- We will look to extend housing choices for those unable to afford market options – these might include shared ownership, key worker housing, co-operative housing
- We will work with other corporate services to deliver the Social Inclusion Strategy
- We will work with others to create options for addressing basic skills and vocational skills, thus improving employment prospects for potentially vulnerable households
- We will investigate alternatives to the current system of private renting which generates large numbers of homeless households as a result to the ending of assured shorthold tenancies

6. Implementation Plan

The final component of the strategic development process relates to deliverability. We recognise that strategies, which are largely aspirational, are of limited value. The Government has set out explicitly that strategic intentions need to be underpinned by effective performance management mechanisms. These must indicate the effectiveness of the strategy in reconciling need with services, which are appropriate and achievable.

We recognise that there are a number of key elements that together will make up the Homelessness Strategy. We have made more progress in implementing some than others. A position statement of where we are in our programme is contained in the Implementation Matrix located in figure 2 below.

Matrix Key: ● – already well developed ● – in the process of development ● – needs development

Topic	Homeless Reception	Temporary Accommodation	Prevention	BME Issues	Domestic Violence	Single Homeless	Supporting People	Housing Benefit
Strategic Overview	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Written policy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Implementation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Training	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Review	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Joint Protocols	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
User Consultation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

The content of the matrix indicates that considerable work needs to be conducted in the areas of Single Homelessness and links with Housing Benefit. Further development work also needs undertaking to ensure that we are as focussed as possible in the processing of homelessness claims. These will become key areas of activity over the coming year in consultation with partners and key stakeholders.

One of the other critical targets for our implementation plan relates to the removal of families with children from bed and breakfast. This is due for achievement by April 2004. However, such a target will not be delivered without some difficulty. We recognise that moving from a set of practices which have been reliant on the use of bed and breakfast to one that has to rely on other measures will require a lot of fine tuning.

We will therefore aim to avoid using bed and breakfast except in exceptional circumstances by December 2003. This will allow for six months in which to work through the logistical issues that might arise and make appropriate practices and protocols to deal with them.

We would also expect to maintain relationships with a small number of bed and breakfast hotels to use for short-term emergencies and for households without children for an interim period. We will aim, through our Public Service Agreement (PSA) to remove all households from bed and breakfast by April 2006.

Our ability to achieve of these targets will be based on our ability to manage the balance of supply and demand. This is not only in the short-term to move households out of hotels, but as an on-going, sustainable policy. The equation for this process is made up of homeless presentations on the demand side, set against relets, new build, leased, and a small number of other units on the supply side. In addition, there will be a reliance on our prevention measures reducing the numbers of homeless presentations in the medium- to longer terms.

We are also, in conjunction with our Housing Renewal Strategy, putting measures in place to ensure that best possible use is made of existing accommodation. An example of this is the potential for funding moves for people who are under occupying accommodation to release family units into the market place.

Figure 3 below projects how we will manage this objective and sets targets for the number of leased property we will need to commission and the expected impact of our prevention measures. The bottom line shortfall for

demand over supply is conservative in that it assumes that all family accommodation would be allocated to homeless households, which will not, in practice be the case.

Although these projections are by their nature speculative, based on previous levels of activity, they indicate a need for a constant number of new leased dwellings each month based on the projections of new build completions. How we will meet this target is indicated in figure 4, below. Even with such a number, there may still be `hot spots' through the year when demand may exceed supply. In such circumstances we need to ensure that we can recognise such shortfalls far enough in advance to be able to effectively respond.

Implementation Costs

We recognise that a number of the measures proposed in this Strategy will have implications for future resourcing. Some of these can be estimated with a reasonable level of accuracy. However, others will only emerge over time with the completion of research and structured analysis. Robust costings will therefore need to be determined at the beginning of each of the three years of the action plan.

Figure 3 – Supply and Demand Projections

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Families to be rehoused from b&b	5	5	4	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Homelessness Applications	25	25	25	30	30	30	15	25	25	30	30	30	25	25	25	30	30	30
Reductions due to prevention	-1	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2	-2	-3	-3	-3	-3	-4	-4	-4	-5	-5	-5	-5
Sub total	29	29	28	32	32	32	13	22	22	27	27	26	21	21	21	25	25	25
Cumulative total	29	58	86	118	150	182	195	217	239	266	293	319	340	361	382	407	432	457
New Build Handovers	1x4 4x1 8x2		11		10			15		11			36				25	
Family sized Relets	10	22	15	20	16	6	14	13	13	21	14	15	10	22	15	20	16	6
Others/Empty Properties	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sub total	24	24	27	21	27	7	16	28	13	32	14	15	46	22	15	20	41	6
Cumulative total	24	48	75	96	123	130	146	174	187	219	233	248	294	316	331	351	392	398
Surplus/ Deficit	-5	-10	-11	-22	-27	-52	-49	-43	-52	-47	-60	-71	-46	-45	-51	-56	-40	-59

Figure 4 – Leasing Targets

	2003								2004									
	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Families to be rehoused	29	29	28	32	32	32	13	22	22	27	27	26	21	21	21	25	25	25
Available housing units	24	24	27	21	27	7	16	28	13	32	14	15	46	22	15	20	41	6
Surplus/Deficit	-5	-5	-1	-11	-5	-25	3	6	-9	5	-13	-11	25	1	-6	-5	16	-19
Leased property from Vectis	1	1	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leased through Home Challenge	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leased from SWHA	-1	-2	-1	2	0	-1 2	-1	0	3	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	0
Leased from Private Landlords	8	10	8	10	10	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	4	3	3	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Leased Units	8	7	9	15	16	7	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	6	3	3	0

The delivery of the programme will depend on a mix of capital and revenue funding required for the development of new housing together with the related support and prevention services which run along side it. Our capital programme remains uncertain from year to year, particularly in the light of the move to a new system of Regional Housing Boards. Under this new arrangement, the Island is guaranteed a minimum of 70% of 2003/4 HIP resources for the years 2004/5 and 2005/6. This would amount to approximately £1 million in each of these years. In addition to this, the Council has a small pot of capital generated by capital receipts. During 2003/4 this amounted to £30,000 for improving two temporary accommodation units and £260,000 as matched funding for ODPM awarded Disabled Facilities Grant. In the light of the projections of housing need on the Island these amounts are completely inadequate to sustain the avoidance of bed and breakfast in the medium term.

From a revenue perspective, the position is slightly better. The Council received £100,000 in 2002/3 and £65,000 in 2003/4 from the Bed and Breakfast Unit for initiatives to move families from bed and breakfast. A further £27,000 was received from the Unit for funding the impact of the Priority Needs Order that extended the groups covered by the legislation. These amounts have been used to fund the Homeless Prevention post and to lease properties from private landlords.

We would also expect that the switch from the use of bed and breakfast to leasing in the short term would release some funds that can be used to further resource prevention initiatives. However, the exact savings will only be known over time.

A number of the proposals in the Strategy will be heavily dependent on available staffing levels. These may need to be revised in the light of the changing focus of the Strategy towards a more proactive and preventative model. It is highly likely that the existing complement of one member of staff engaged in prevention work will prove insufficient. Also, the increased usage of temporary accommodation will require additional management resources. However, any proposals for further staffing need to be considered in the light of closer working relationships with other agencies to gauge where such resources can deliver most benefit.

Homelessness Action Plan 2003-6

In 2003/4 we will:

- procure 80 additional leased properties (£170,000 net)
- bring 32 empty properties back in to use
- fund a new mother and baby home through Isle of Wight Housing Association (£25,000)
- introduce a new affordable housing policy in conjunction with the Planning Department
- allocate £30,000 for rent deposits to enable people to access the private rented sector
- continue to fund floating support for households in temporary accommodation or who are homeless at home
- work with the Housing Benefit section to ensure that payments are targeted so as to prevent homelessness
- Undertake a full review of information relating to homelessness services
- Review future usage of non SFD temporary accommodation
- work with the Education directorate to develop materials and mechanisms for communicating with young people in schools and youth clubs
- liaise with groups involved with the single homeless to develop protocols and closer working arrangements
- develop a mediation facility for relationship breakdown cases
- research the needs of women on the Island
- conduct a review of domestic violence resources
- further investigate the nature of, and the needs of the BME community on the Island
- enter a dialogue with local landlords to consider alternatives to the current assured shorthold tenancy market

In 2004/5 we will:

- Procure 80 additional leased properties
- Bring 32 empty properties into use
- Update and revise our Empty Property Strategy
- Undertake additional research with Housing Associations about releasing family accommodation through incentives to address under-occupation, incentives to buy or LAWN (i.e. moves to other parts of the UK)
- Undertake research into the impact of temporary accommodation on health and social well being
- Aim to implement, together with local housing associations, a scheme to reduce under-occupation in social rented dwellings
- Aim to have programmes in place to implement the findings of the reviews of Domestic Violence, BME needs and women
- Consult widely on the success of the measures in the Homeless Strategy
- Review the effectiveness of the Rent Deposit Scheme

In 2005/6 we will:

- Evaluate means of offering increased choice. This may be through Choice-based letting schemes, key worker housing, shared ownership, etc.
- Procure 30 additional leased properties
- Bring 32 empty properties into use
- Work with housing associations to develop mechanisms to sustain social inclusion
- Consider ways of working with the private rented sector to improve the standard and the security of private lets

Background Documents

Brafield. H (2003) *A Study on the Isle of Wight mapping availability of accommodation for young offenders*, Wessex Youth Offending Team

DTLR, 2002, *Homelessness Strategies – A good Practice Handbook*

DTLR, 2002. *More Than a Roof – A report into tackling homelessness*

Isle of Wight Council, 2001, *Island Futures*

Isle of Wight Council, 2001, *Social Inclusion Strategy 2001-5*

Isle of Wight Council, 2002 *Young People’s Housing Strategy 2003-4*

Isle of Wight Council, 2002 *Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy 2003-4*

Isle of Wight Council, 2002 *Domestic Violence Strategy 2002-3*

Isle of Wight Council, 2002 *Empty Property Strategy 2003-6*

Isle of Wight Council, 2002, *Housing Strategy 2003-6*

Isle of Wight Council, 2003, *Race Equality Scheme*

Isle of Wight Council, 2003, *Housing Renewal Strategy*

Isle of Wight Council, 2003, *Annual Action Statement 2003/4*

Appendix 1 - Homelessness and Special Needs Fora on the Isle of Wight

Supporting People Strategic Core Group and Commissioning Body

The Supporting People Inclusive Forum

Learning Disability Housing Group

Mental Health Housing Forum

Older People Housing Group

Younger People Housing Group

Physical Disability & Sensory Impaired Group

Blood Borne Virus Group

Womens' Issues

Appendix 2 – Homelessness Supply

	16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Childless Couples	Families with Children
Sandham House, 17 Fort Street, Sandown			Mentally disordered offenders (10)	People with mental health problems (8)							
Hazel House, 27 Carisbrooke Road, Newport				People with mental health problems (7)							
Macadamia House, 35 Carisbrooke Road, Newport				People with mental health problems (14)							
St Philberts, Carisbrooke Road, Newport				People with mental health problems (8)							
22 Argyll Street, Ryde					People with learning disability (8)						

	16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Childless Couples	Families with Children
Solent View, 47 Argyll Street, Ryde					People with learning disability (8)						
23 Sherbourne Avenue, Ryde					People with learning disability (8)						
Hill Voew, 57 Longmead Road, Ryde					People with learning disability (4)						
Young Person's Accommodation Schemes – Atkinson House, Newport and St Johns Road, Ryde	Young people at risk (10)	Young people leaving care (9)									
Eversleigh House, Chapel Street, Newport	Young People at risk (2)		Offenders and people at risk of offending (3)								
Oakleigh House, 24 Ashley Road, Ryde											Teenage parents (4)

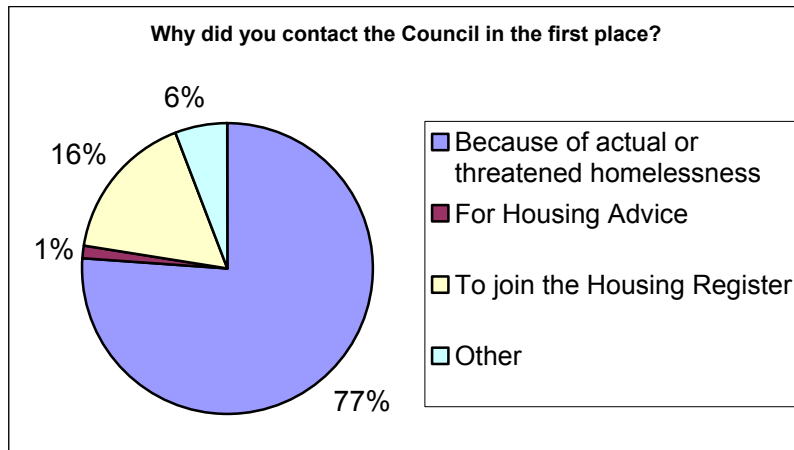
	16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Childless Couples	Families with Children
Foyer for the Island, George Street, Ryde	Young people at risk (25)	Young people leaving care (20)									
Stoneham Housing Association, 8 High Street, Newport			People with mental health problems (32)						Single homeless with support needs (9)		
Stonham Housing Association, Housing Accommodation and Advice Service, 8 High Street, Newport			Offenders or people at risk of offending (15)								
Kasa, Stonham Housing Association, York Avenue, East Cowes	Young people at risk (6)										Homeless families with support needs
Milligan House, West Street, Ryde				People with mental health problems (8)							
The Kestrals,				People with							

	16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Childless Couples	Families with Children
51 Castle Road, Newport (hospital)				mental health problems (8 beds)							
Bed and Breakfast									Accommodation for homeless households (55) as at 31 March 2003		
Temporary Accommodation , including PSL, HALS, LA & RSL									Accommodation for homeless households (209) as at 31 March 2003		
Island Women's Refuge, PO Box 5, Sandown								Women Fleeing Domestic Violence (6)			Homeless Families with Support Needs
Island Women's Refuge, PO Box 5, Sandown (Outreach Service)								Women Fleeing Domestic Violence (20)			Homeless Families with Support Needs
Real World Trust, Butler Gardens, 18 Orchardleigh Road, Shanklin							People with drug and alcohol problems (10)				
Real World Trust Positive Engagement Team, Butler Gardens, Shanklin	Teenage Parents (10)			People with mental health problems (10)		People with HIV/Aids (5)	People with alcohol and drug problems (6)				Homeless families with support needs

	16/18 year olds	Care Leavers	Discharged Prisoners	Mental Illness	Learning Disability	Other Vulnerability	Drug and Alcohol Abuse	Women	Single Homeless	Childless Couples	Families with Children
Combined Accommodation Scheme	Single homeless with support needs (5)	Young People Leaving Care (6)									
Cross Keys Support Group, 1 Warwick Street, Ryde			Mentally disordered offenders (7)								
Christian Restbite Centre, 35 Carter Street, Sandown				People with mental health problems (10)			People with alcohol problems (10)				
People off the Streets, 118 St James Street, Newport				People with complex needs (5)					Single homeless with support needs (5)		
St Annes Support Team, Central Tap Hotel, 64 High Street, Ventnor					People with learning disability (6)		People with alcohol and drug problems (6)				

Results of Homelessness Consultation

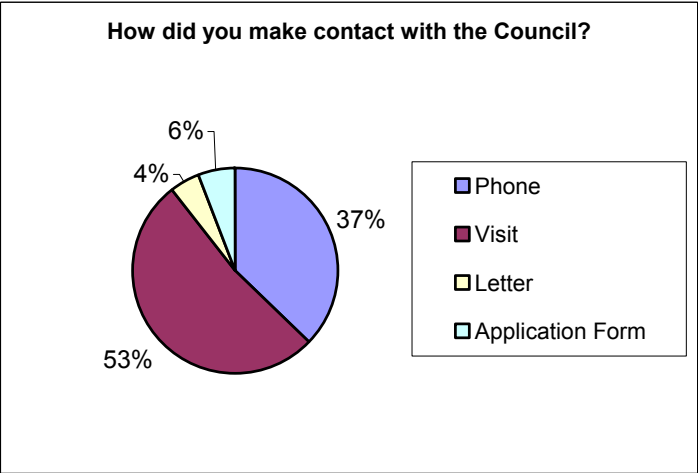
Question 1



Question 2

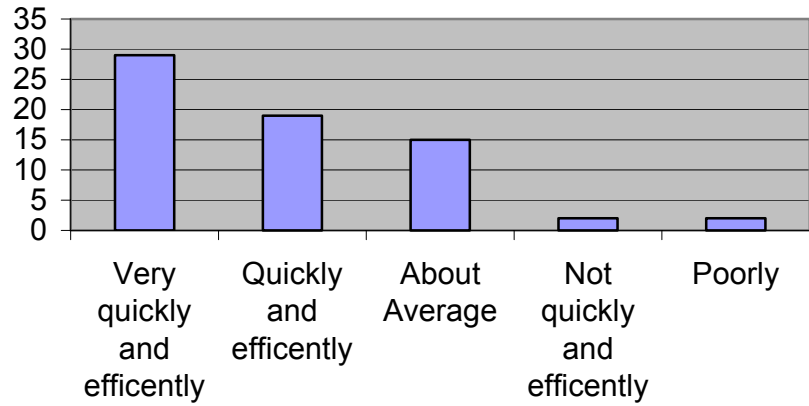


Question 3

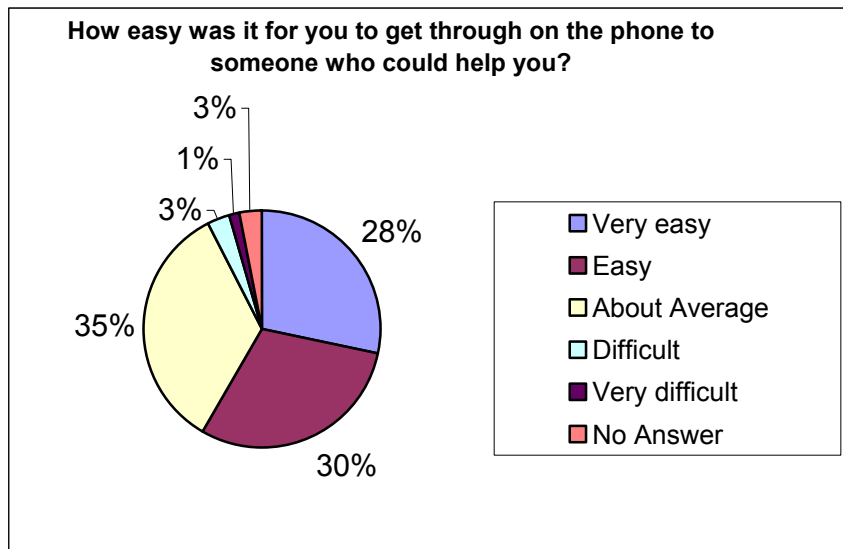


Question 4

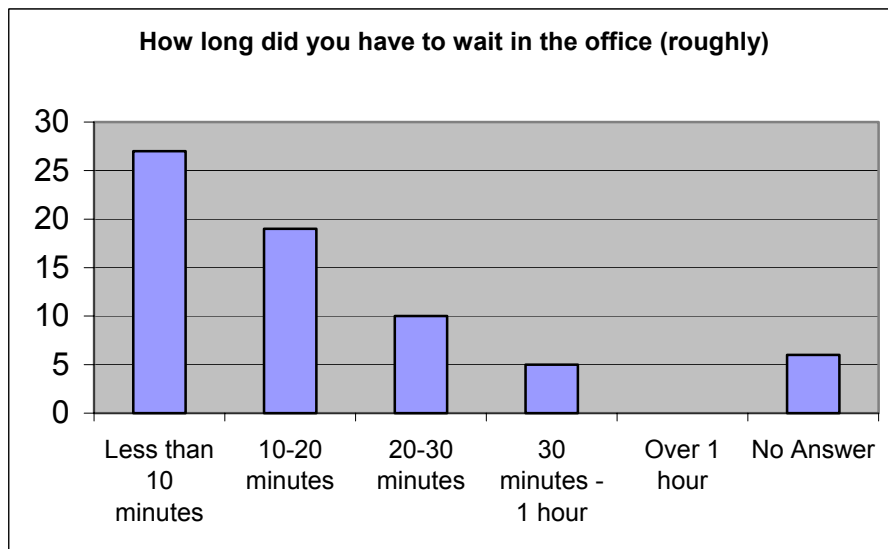
How do you think your enquiry was dealt with?



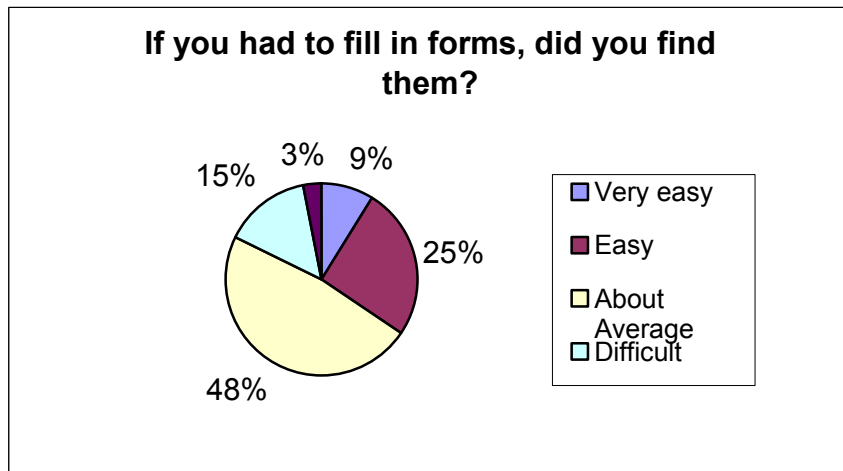
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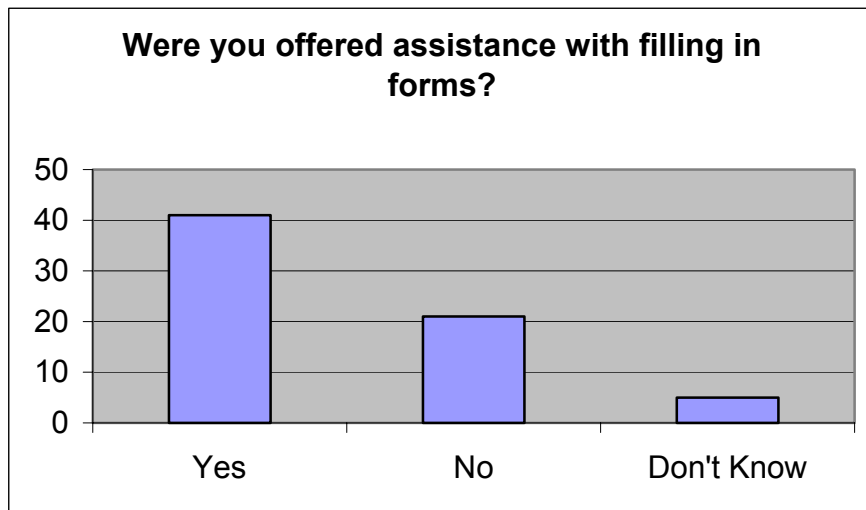
Question 6



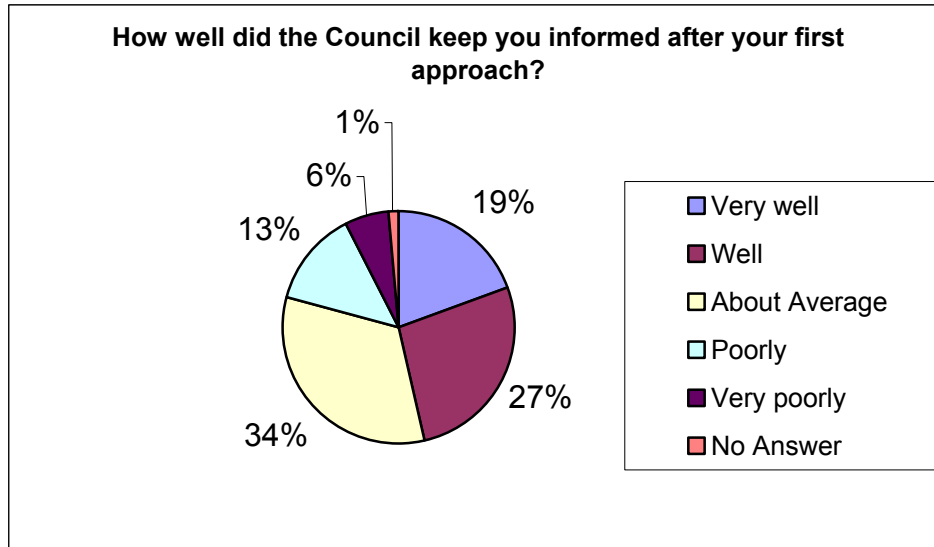
Question 7



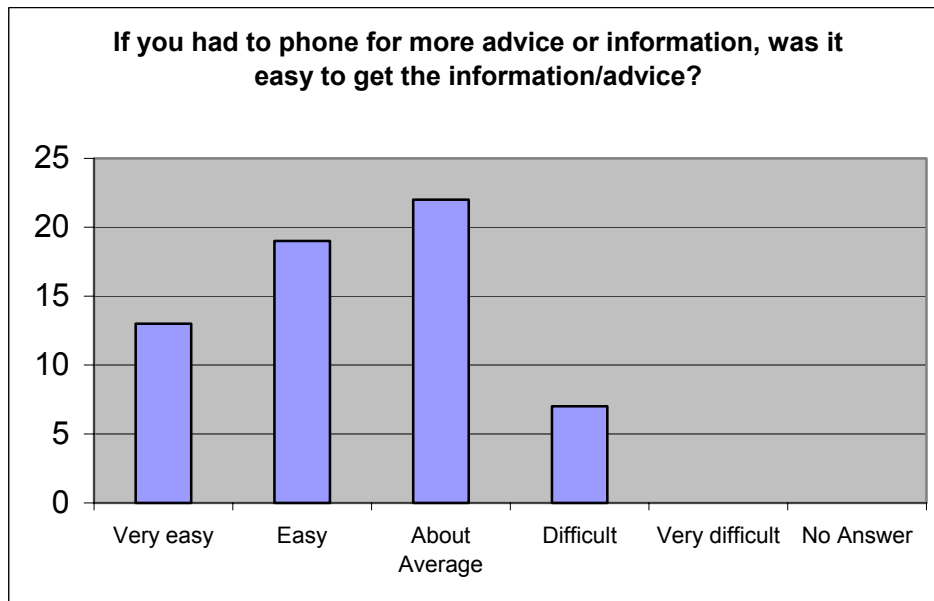
Question 8



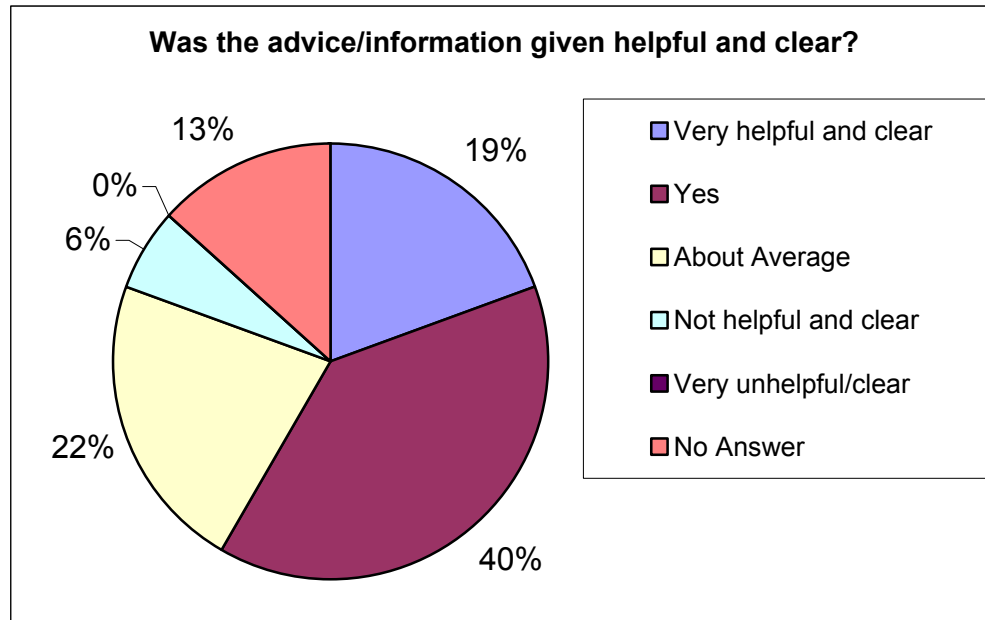
Question 9



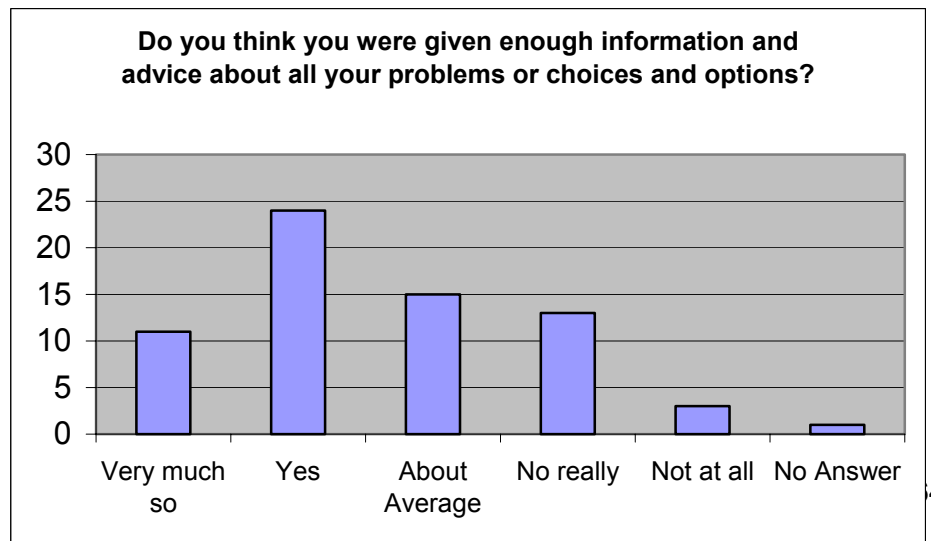
Question 10



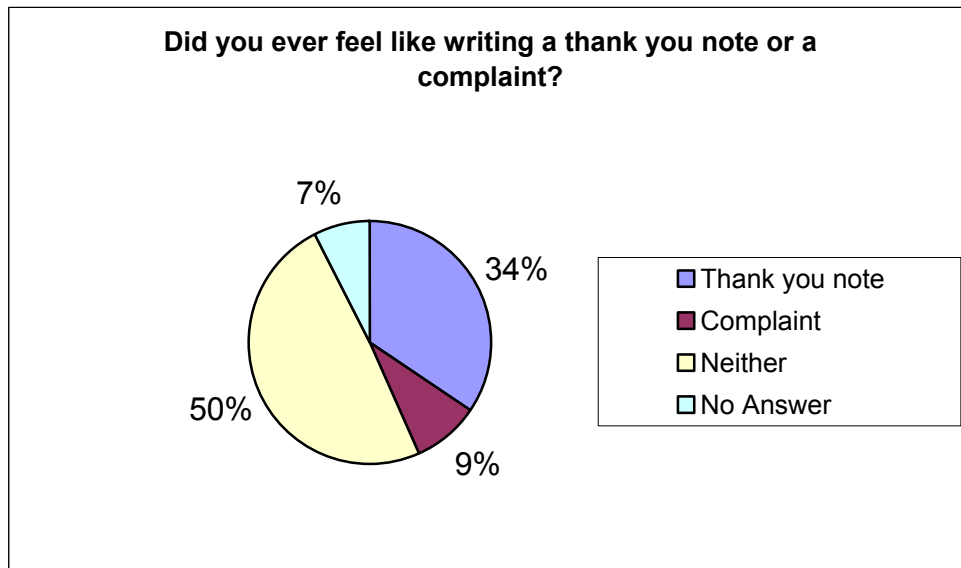
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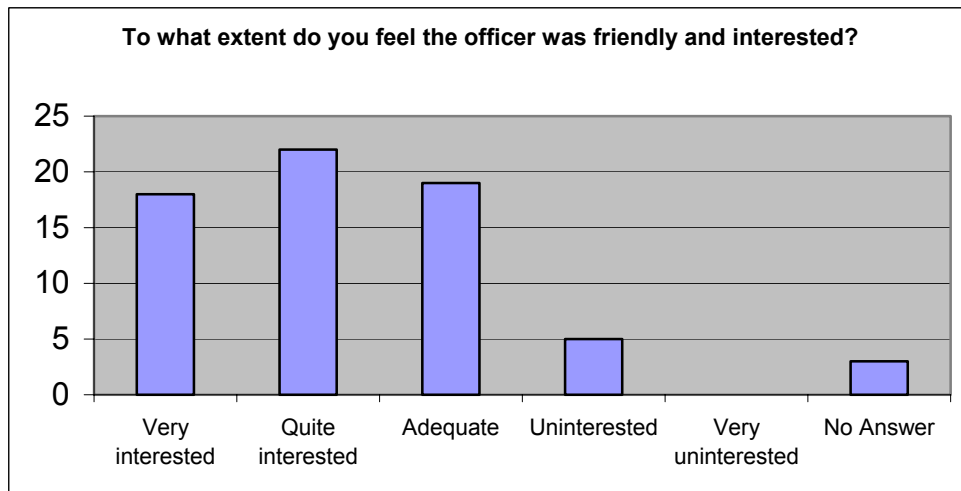
Question 12



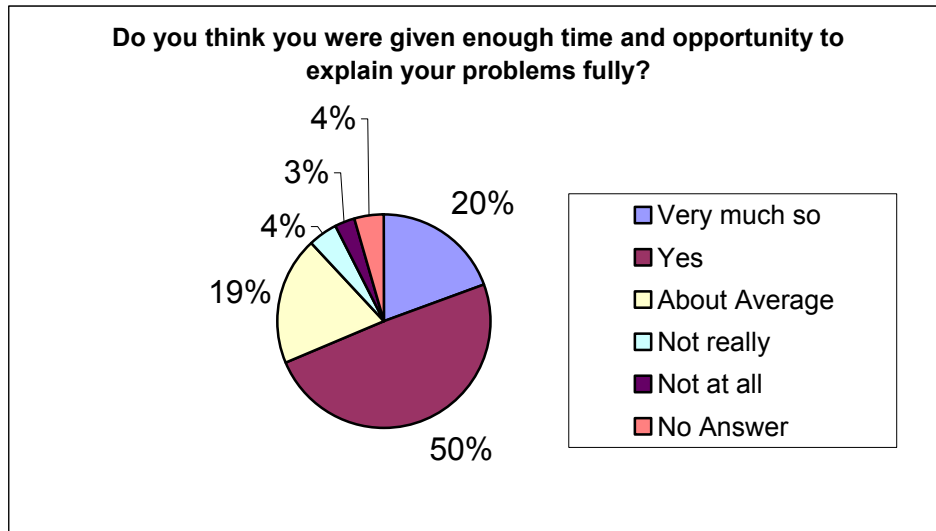
Question 13



Question 14

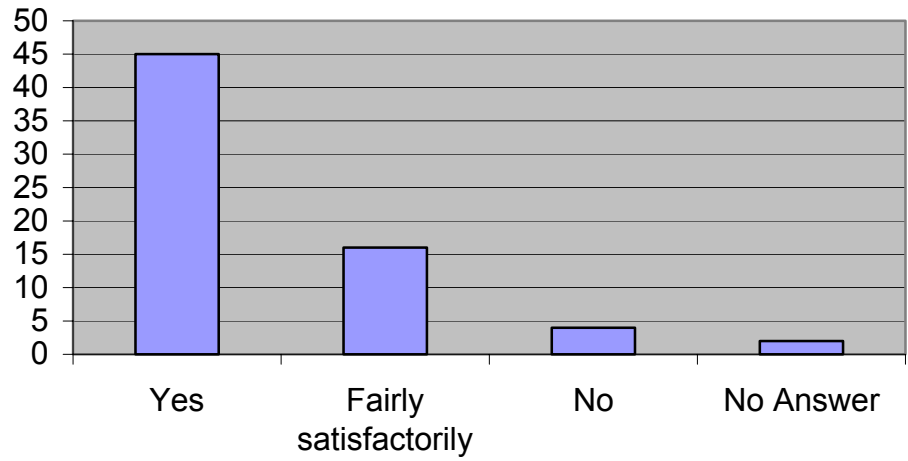


Question 15



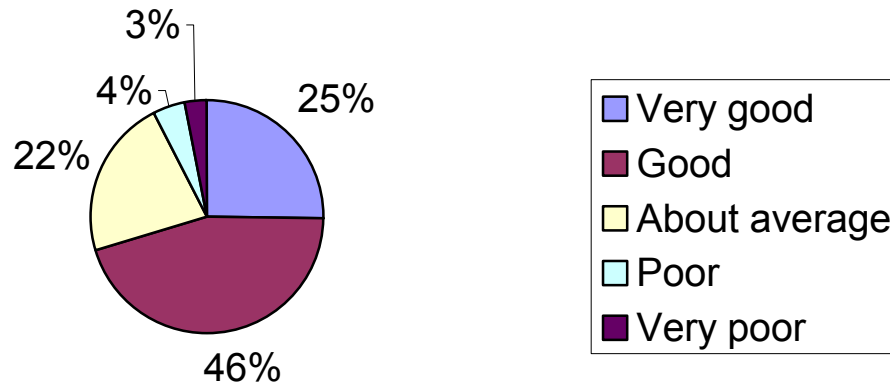
Question 16

Did the Council deal with your problem satisfactorily?



Question 19

Overall, how would you rate our service?



Women and Health Issues for Review

- Personal safety - including accident prevention, dealing with aggression from co-residents, physical security within shared accommodation and domestic violence
- Issues in pregnancy - including issues presented by teenage parents
- Child health - including development, behavioural issues, healthy eating, respiratory diseases, risk of infection and accidents
- Mental health and self-harm
- Substance misuse
- Other general health issues - including skin diseases, infectious diseases including management of blood-borne viruses, sexual health, foot care, oral health, healthy eating
- Use of A & E - due to having no GP, patterns presenting from homeless patients, dealing with domestic violence
- Mobility/disability issues

Infrastructure issues

- Access to a GP for a homeless person
- Information - including information sharing protocols between professionals, mapping support and advice services and signposting
- Implications for staff training
- Alternative ways of providing health services - e.g. drop-in health visitor sessions, Surestart

Other Prevention Proposals

Housing Advice

- Make housing information and advice freely available
- Encourage people to come forward for help as soon as any problems arise

Care Leavers/Hospitals

- Help people leaving institutions like hospitals or care to find a home
- Timely arrangements for people leaving long-stay institutions (e.g. mental health institutions)
- Planned move-on and support for care leavers
- Lack of furniture or equipment needed to maintain accommodation can sometime mean that people abandon their property soon after moving in (increase availability of community care grants etc)

Prison/Armed Forces

- Prisoners to return to the Island could be provided with an information pack
- Leaflet giving details of available housing and support.
- Lack of furniture, etc (see above)

Day Centres

- Day Centres to offer a variety of activities:
 - 1) Basic Services – food, showers, access to housing/benefit advice
 - 2) Advice & Information – healthy eating, cooking, shopping on a low income, life skills, budgeting, access to GP, CPN, Dentist, chiropody
 - 3) Activities – art and creative writing, running the centre itself

Debt Advice

- Bring help early to people with housing benefit, rent or debt problems
- Money advice for people with rent or mortgage arrears

- Mortgage rescue schemes such as “mortgage to rent”
- Debt management schemes so debts can be consolidated and ensure payments are tailored to client income levels

Stock

- Work with partners to increase the stock of affordable home on the IW
- Furnished tenancies – particular for the one beds
- Council’s should assess the need for wet and dry hostels for people with drug and alcohol problems. Needle disposal and storage of prescribed drugs should be taken into account.

Education and awareness training

- Information on housing issues for members of the armed forces.
- Start a housing education programme for young people in schools
- Offer education, training and employment through Day Centres “Learning Zones” or “Healthy Living Centres”
- Ensure good links between the Council and other providers (e.g. management centres, neighbourhood offices) so there is a wide coverage of where people can access help.

Effective Tenancy Sustainment/Support

Costs associated with providing floating support are far less than providing crisis intervention. Try and combat the revolving door of repeat clients by helping people to sustain their tenancies

- Floating support schemes to maintain some people in tenancies, especially vulnerable tenants.
- Attach support packages to individual people wherever they are housed, support should be considered in Temporary Accommodation and B&B placements.
- Basic support to include – budgeting and money management, shopping, claiming welfare benefits, ensuring payment of rent, resolving disputes between neighbours or landlords
- Identify potential clients through neighbour complaints, rent arrears etc.
- Help people with disabilities find suitable housing and help with moving in and furnishing home
- Basic help with personnel and emotional problems

- Encouraging education, employment & training
- Access to specialist support for mental health and substance abuse problems

Innovative ideas:

- Notice Board in reception displaying properties to rent, updated each week
- Phone in reception for people to call around estate agents
- Computer in reception for people to find private accommodation
- Newsletter for people accepted as homeless/applicants giving details:
 - who has been housed (graphs)
 - facts and figures (number of applicants etc)
 - number of properties received
- Photos (mug shot) of staff in reception with job title and description of role/responsibility
- Holders for leaflets to be displayed
- Leaflets to be put onto the IW Council's Internet site
- Welcoming reception facilities – drinks machine, toys or play area for children, leaflets that are bright, practical information for people to pass the time
- Assist clients to access funds to prevent future homelessness (money up front saves in the long term)
- Help moving home – removal costs, repairs
- Advertise through Housing Benefit verification procedures and any landlords forum
- "Change a Life" campaign can urge the public to give their time, gifts in kind, money, time to befriend and mentor homeless people to reduce the effects of loneliness and isolation.

Other Potential Models

Dundee Family Model

Putting all anti-social tenants in one area with exceptionally high support

Portsmouth – Roberts Centre

Giving people a high level of support, once they have had 6 months of no debt or nuisance to anyone then they get a tenancy

Harrow

Mrs Fix it – pays off rent arrears, arranges support

Harrow

Mediation is compulsory for every young person before they get B&B (except in a crisis)