

Isle of Wight Council

# Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

COS447

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# 1 Introduction by the cabinet member for health, housing and community wellbeing

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## **Implementing our homelessness strategy** **Councillor Dawn Cousins**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Isle of Wight's new homelessness strategy. This is our second strategy and builds on the original which was produced in July 2003 and is an integral part of the Island's overarching housing strategy. Homelessness and its prevention continue to be given a very high priority by the council and there can be no clearer indication of this than our investment in preventative measures and the introduction of schemes like the Find-a-Home scheme which will see us engage with the private sector to bring new housing solutions to the Island's residents.

In this key strategic document I have been keen to ensure that the Isle of Wight Council sets out how we will tackle homelessness and how the housing options and homelessness teams will deliver services to residents of the Island in partnership with our strategic housing allies. We have therefore developed this strategy having first developed a clear understanding of the levels of housing need on the Isle of Wight. Our approach to the critically important prevention agenda is a collective one which is set out in this strategy and is one designed to deliver continuous improvement in service provision for every household who needs our assistance to avoid becoming homeless.

We have worked hard to ensure that the needs data around which this strategy is built is robust and have used it to produce a strategy which is clear and user friendly. This strategy will be part of our preventative toolbox and consequently focuses on identifying how we can help deliver solutions for people. We have set ourselves a range of clear objectives and these are explored in full in the strategy, but I have summarised them here for you:

- We will seek continuous improvement in service delivery.
- We will ensure that potentially homeless households make informed choices.
- We will continue to reduce the use of temporary accommodation.
- We will deliver support to families in temporary accommodation and make their stay there as short as possible.
- We will increase the range of housing options available for Island residents.
- We will ensure that our services promote diversity and that they do not discriminate.
- We will increase consultation with service users.
- We will improve our advice services.

I am sure you will find this strategy helpful and valuable. An action plan has been included at the end of the strategy which clearly sets out the targets we have set ourselves and the timescales in which we will achieve our goals. I commend this strategy to you and encourage you to contact my housing team if you have any comments or questions.



**Dawn Cousins**  
Cabinet member for health,  
housing and community wellbeing

## 2 Executive summary

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### **Housing and the Isle of Wight**

The housing need of the Island is not currently being met and there is a real shortage of affordable housing. The housing services team plays an important role in supporting families who are homeless or potentially homeless.

- Housing services has commissioned research to determine the future housing need of the Island but external factors mean this may not be deliverable.
- It is important we consider the needs of specific client groups such as those households from black and minority ethnic groups, gypsies and travellers and those fleeing domestic abuse.

### **National and regional strategic context**

- The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to provide housing to those people who are homeless through no fault of their own and who are considered by the local authority to be in a priority need category.
- In addition to the statutory responsibility, there have been a number of government publications providing guidance and targets on homelessness and in recent years the government has placed a stronger emphasis upon taking a regional and sub regional approach to housing issues.
- Local factors such as the council's Eco Island agenda, our housing strategy and the Local Area Agreement have also been taken into account when preparing this strategy.

### **Review of current service**

- It is important to understand our current service at an operational level to see the improvements that have already been achieved since the publication of our last homelessness strategy in 2003. The number of households that have made an application to the council as homeless has dropped considerably and the number of households prevented from becoming homeless have increased.
- This strategy sets out plans for undertaking a programme of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation as per statutory guidance. This strategy contains a clear analysis of the housing need on the Island.

### **Consultation**

- This strategy has been developed in conjunction with consultation with our users, stakeholders and staff.
- While the majority of feedback was positive, we also need to look at the negative comments so that they may help us review our services appropriately.

### **A strategic response to the challenges we have identified**

We have identified five key objectives to focus resources on over the next five years. These are:

- to assist delivery of Eco Island agenda;
- to engage with the private sector to maximise options for potentially homeless households;

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- to further understand the causes of and levels of homelessness and develop our service to meet these needs;
  - to work with other agencies and stakeholders to offer a holistic approach to housing advice and homelessness;
  - to provide an accessible and responsive housing advice and homeless prevention service.

### **Action plan**

- To achieve the five objectives, they have been further broken down into achievable action points which will be filtered through the housing needs team plan into employees' objectives and individual work plans.
- Managers will have regular meetings to ensure our objectives are met and feed back results to stakeholders through an annual review process.

### **Resources**

- Funding for the implementation of this strategy comes from a number of sources, however, we must be realistic about the outcomes we can deliver for Island residents.
- We will make best use of existing resources and explore opportunities for multi-agency working to pool resources and increase efficiencies.
- We will actively seek additional funding to assist with the delivery of this strategy as has already been achieved with additional funding from CLG for the implementation of a choice based lettings scheme and further funding from the council to assist us in reaching our temporary accommodation target.

## 3 The national and regional strategic context

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### 3.1 The statutory position

The Housing Act 1996 consolidated various pieces of homelessness legislation. In summary, it places a duty on local authorities to provide housing to those people who are homeless through no fault of their own and who are considered by the local authority to be in a priority need category as defined by legislation. Those in priority need include families with dependent children or whose household includes a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable due to illness, disability or other special reasons. The main duty is to take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of existing accommodation and to secure new accommodation if this is not possible. If the applicant is not in priority need or is homeless intentionally, the duty is restricted solely to the provision of advice and assistance.

The Homelessness Act 2002 made some significant amendments. In particular it extended the priority need categories to include all 16 and 17 year olds, 18 to 21 year olds who are leaving local authority care, people who are considered vulnerable as a result of abuse or threats of abuse, or as a result of spending time in the armed forces, serving a prison sentence or who have a care background.

Allied to the above is the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. This placed a new duty on social service departments, particularly with regard to what were described as 'eligible' or 'relevant' children (children who are 16 or 17 years old and are either currently being looked after by the local authority or who have left care) and former 'relevant' children (those aged 18 to 21 who have left care). The duties include the provision of accommodation and financial support for care leavers until they are 18 and the provision of help and support for all care leavers until they are at least 21.

### 3.2 The national context

In addition to the statutory responsibility, there have been a number of government publications providing guidance and targets on homelessness.

In March 2005, the government published a strategy for tackling homelessness entitled 'Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives'. The main focus of this was to set a target for halving the number of homeless households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010. This followed the government's earlier target of ending the number of homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation, except in emergencies, by 2004. Government proposed a series of measures through which it intended to deliver its strategy. These included:

- increasing funding for homelessness by 23 percent by 2007/2008;
- evaluating new initiatives developed with homelessness grant funding and supporting those which have worked;
- considering changes to homelessness legislation to improve the provision and take-up of preventative services and housing options;
- increasing the supply of new social housing by 50 percent and making better use of existing social and private rented stock to provide settled homes;
- developing area based initiatives;

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- working in partnership with local authorities, voluntary sector agencies, landlords and homelessness service users;
  - improving information about homelessness to support more effective solutions.

The government has also (September 2006) updated its Homelessness Code of Guidance and published 'Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check'. Both documents have been taken into account in preparing this strategy. In particular, any issues identified as a result of reviewing the Strategy Health Check have been incorporated into the future priorities and the action plan.

In March 2006, the Housing Corporation published a consultation paper on 'Tackling Homelessness'. The objectives set out by the corporation included:

- encouraging better partnership working among housing associations, local authorities and other agencies including Supporting People teams and to improve co-operation in delivering local housing strategies and offering alternative housing options;
- supporting housing associations to prevent homelessness by promoting holistic and seamless housing allocation and management approaches, with eviction very much as a last resort;
- encouraging housing associations to make better use of existing stock, including reducing under-occupation and bringing empty homes back into use, hand in hand with more efficient lettings procedures and exploration of the scope to convert temporary tenancies into settled homes.

In October 2007, the new national indicator set for local authorities and local authority partnerships was announced as part of the chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review.

The new national indicators will be the only means of measuring national priorities that have been agreed by government. The local government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' committed to a smaller more focused set of priorities as well as radically reducing the number of national indicators.

The number of national indicators has been reduced, from around 1,200 to 198. The new indicators will further strengthen the incentives for closer partnership working to deliver joined-up outcomes because they will also apply (where relevant) to other local partners - such as primary care trusts and police.

Finally the Housing Quality Network carried out a comprehensive evaluation of homelessness strategies on behalf of the government which reported in November 2004. This contained a large number of recommendations for future good practice, which have been taken into account in the preparation of this strategy.

One of the key issues the council needs to address in its strategy is how to balance its statutory obligations with subsequent guidance and requirements, not backed up by statute, which have seen a major shift of emphasis on preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation in all of its guises.

### **3.3 The regional context**

In recent years the government has placed a stronger emphasis upon taking a regional and sub regional approach to housing issues. National policies and priorities have fed into the development of regional priorities, developed jointly by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the Housing Corporation in

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consultation with the South East Economic Development Association (SEEDA). Following the establishment of regional housing boards, the South East Regional Housing Board has produced a new regional housing strategy to cover the period 2006 to 2008. This sets out an overall objective of enabling everyone in the south east to live in a decent home. In support of this objective are three key aims:

- Encourage the building of more homes with an increase in the proportion of social rented housing.
- Make decent all social housing stock by 2010.
- Improve the quality of private sector housing, focussing on the worst locations, vulnerable households and households with children.

### **3.4 The local context**

#### **3.4.1 Eco Island**

In March 2008, the Isle of Wight Council in conjunction with the Island Strategic Partnership (ISP) launched its Eco Island strategy. Eco Island is an ambitious change programme; it will turn the Isle of Wight into the ultimate Eco Island, with strong communities and the lowest carbon footprint in England by 2020.

The ambition for an Eco Island grew out of public opinion on the Island. 'Green' issues were consistently high in residents' surveys and the ISP members wanted to respond to this. The environment and its importance to the Island's way of life is the Isle of Wight's major selling point.

The strategy builds on the Eco Island vision 'we want the Isle of Wight to become a world renowned Eco-Island, with a thriving economy, a real sense of pride and where residents and visitors enjoy healthy lives, feel safe and are treated with respect'.

The ambitions that underpin the Eco Island vision are set out under four themes:

- thriving Island;
- healthy and supportive Island;
- safe and well-kept Island;
- inspiring Island.

The council has developed these four themes into 30 deliverable promises (see Appendix 1), which have been taken into account when preparing this strategy.

#### **3.4.2 Housing strategy**

In September 2007, the Isle of Wight Council published its five year housing strategy, the Island's key housing document which represents a clear vision of what needs to be achieved over future years.

In its housing strategy, the Isle of Wight Council has to respond to both the needs and wishes of its communities and other priorities that have been agreed with key government agencies, regulators and through partnership working at a local level.



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The strategy is designed to ensure that the housing service assists with the local delivery of the following:

- Best value performance targets.
- Corporate objectives of the Isle of Wight Council.
- Community strategy.
- Local Area Agreement targets.
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- Joint Area Review.
- Gershon efficiency savings.
- Risk management.
- Local government White Paper.
- Housing Green Paper.
- Eco/One Island.

### 3.4.3 Local Area Agreement

In March 2006 the government and the Isle of Wight, as represented by the chair of the Local Strategic Partnership, John Owen and the Leader of the council, Councillor Andy Sutton, signed our first Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The agreement creates a contract between the government and the Isle of Wight, which identifies priorities for the Island and the improvement targets that the Island wants to achieve in addressing these priorities.

Priorities were focused around the following areas:

- Children and young people.
- Healthier communities and older people.
- Safer and stronger communities.
- Economic development.

Some of the benefits of a Local Area Agreement are:

- A focus for delivering our community strategy.
- A focus for improved partnership working and better use of resources.
- More joined up performance management.
- Potentially more flexible use of government funding in the medium term.

In partnership with the government, housing services agreed the following targets:

Goal	Indicator	
Reduce homelessness and use of temporary accommodation (Local Public Sector Agreement).	1	Households in temporary accommodation.
	2	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks).
Provide healthy, safe, affordable housing according to the needs of island people, including those in rural areas and those with least housing choice.	3	Number of units of affordable housing per year.
	4	% of affordable new homes built to lifetime home standard.
	5	Number of homes made suitable under Housing Health and Safety rating system (number removed from category 1 hazard).

The reduction of homelessness and use of temporary accommodation was accepted as a Local Public Sector Agreement (LPSA) target and provided £30,000 pump priming monies for each year of the Local Area Agreement.

## 4 Housing and the Isle of Wight

### 4.1 Current and future housing need

To produce a realistic, practical and deliverable homelessness strategy, it is essential to understand the housing needs of the Island. Consequently, between September 2006 and June 2007 the Isle of Wight Council commissioned research to find out the level of need for housing and affordable housing on the Isle of Wight.

This research was undertaken by:

- consulting with statutory agencies and our partners;
- consulting with private developers and landowners;
- commissioning research company GVA Grimley to complete a strategic housing market assessment;
- reviewing the needs of supported housing clients;
- reviewing the needs of older people;
- commissioning research company MRUK to complete an updated housing needs survey of residents.

This research was used to compare the current housing provision on the Island against what is needed now and what will be needed in five year's time.

The following research shows that the Island has a very high need for 'affordable housing', 'low cost market housing' and 'market housing' to be delivered over the next five years.

The following tables show the headline needs for the Island.

#### Total Island housing stock

Household size	% of total	Current provision	Actual need*	Need in five years
1 bed	15%	9600	9773	10457
2 bed	37%	24320	26728	28598
3 bed	41%	26240	28549	30551
4 bed	5%	3200	3296	3526
4+ beds	2%	1280	1331	2262

\*Actual need HNS2006. Five year need 13 percent new household's in-migration every ten years (Housing Market Assessment 2006)

#### Social rented housing

Household size	% of total	Current provision	Actual need*	Need in five years**
1 bed	33%	2152	3698	4728
2 beds	32%	2097	3742	4786
3 beds	32%	2075	3719	4757
4 beds	3%	109	250	307
4+ beds	0.04%	5	36	46

*\*Actual need: Number of people currently in social rented housing plus the total on the register less the proportion of those on the register who already live in social rented housing.*

*\*\*Need in five years: Newly forming households times the number of HNS respondents who indicated a wish for moving into social rented housing plus actual need.*

While the overall current provision of housing on the Island is only seven percent less than the estimated actual need, the social rented housing provision is more than 40 percent less than the actual need.

Additionally, 12 percent of respondents to the housing needs survey indicated a wish for shared ownership or low cost housing. This is more than 25 times the current provision of 117. It is estimated that 80 percent of new first time buyers cannot afford to get onto the property ladder on the Island. With an average Island wage of £17,464, a house price to income ratio of 10.2 is needed to purchase the average Isle of Wight house at £177,730. *Source National Housing Federation SE Housing Time Bomb Sept 06, Average wage: ASHE 2005.*

### Market rented housing

Household size	% of total	Current provision	Actual need*	Need in five years**
1 bed	33	1,838	2,003	2,143
2 beds	32	2,477	2,600	2,782
3 beds	32	1,191	1,212	1,297
4+ beds	3	445	445	476

*\*Actual need HNS2006:- no respondents indicated a need. Five year worked out need taking into consideration new household's in-migration seven percent.*

### Intermediate rented housing

Household size	Current provision	Actual need*	Need in five years**
1 bed	0	67	70
2 beds	0	66	69
3 beds	0	66	69
4+ beds	0	-	-

*\*Actual need HNS2006:- no respondents indicated a need. Five year worked out need taking into consideration new household's in-migration seven percent.*

To help meet the ever growing housing needs on the Island, the housing strategy set a target for the completion of an average of 180 housing units per year which will also assist the council in its delivery of the temporary accommodation target. However, at the time of writing this strategy, the economic climate will challenge this target. Therefore the more affordable housing we deliver the fewer properties we would be required to lease as temporary accommodation. In 2008/2009 the Isle of Wight Council has therefore made £250,000 available to pump prime the delivery of affordable units. This authority will also continue to bid for additional funding towards resources in future years to ensure that this momentum continues.

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Housing services is actively working with our partner registered social landlords to ensure that households in temporary accommodation are given due consideration for appropriate lettings through the common housing register. This target is a realistic one based on our understanding of the resources we have to enable the delivery of new affordable homes.

## **4.2 Lettings - a joint approach**

In 2003, the Isle of Wight Council and its partner registered social landlords (RSL), formed the common housing register with a target of 80 percent of lettings to be made from the register, the remainder being used for existing RSL tenants wishing to transfer to another property. Over the past five years, average lettings from the common housing register have remained stable at around 345 per year, however, in 2007/2008 the number of lettings dropped slightly.

The low turnaround of lets through the common housing register and the seasonal nature of the private rented sector have impacted on the homeless service. Many households are unable to access the accommodation they desire and therefore see homelessness as a shortcut into more settled long term accommodation.

It is important to note that during the last five years, the number of households registered with the local authority for housing has risen significantly. This could be attributed to the fact that the average house price on the Isle of Wight has risen by just over 30 percent during the same period.

A review of the common housing register is currently being undertaken with our partner registered social landlords with a view to implementing a choice based lettings scheme. It is believed that the current operation of the register does not provide applicants with the choice that is expected from allocation policies today. By moving to a choice based lettings scheme, the register will become more open, transparent and empower applicants to take more control over their housing options. It is envisaged that a move to choice will enable more effective partnership working with the private sector to offer real options to service users. It is also important that, to a degree, homelessness is de-incentivised so that it is not seen as a stepping stone by applicants and used purely to gain an advantage on the waiting list but as a safety net, as it was always intended.

## **4.3 Diversity**

The Island has a slightly higher population of households who consider themselves to be white British resulting in a lower than average BME population (see Appendix 2). Comparing the above statistics to the ethnicity of the households on the Island's common housing register, the BME population of the Island is 3.23 percent whereas 7.03 percent of households on the common housing register consider themselves to be of an BME group. This might suggest that the needs of BME households are not being met in the open market. However, it is important to note that since the census of 2001 (from which this information has been gained), the diversity of the Island has changed and therefore a direct comparison cannot be made until more up to date statistics are available. In 2004, the Isle of Wight Council commissioned Faith Regen UK to produce a 'Guide to BME and faith communities on the Isle of Wight'. It is essential that we work with the communities identified in this guide to ensure there is adequate provision for their housing needs.

## **4.4 Gypsies and travellers**

In 2007, a survey identified the need for a combination of 24 transient and permanent pitches on the Island to

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meet the current need of gypsies and travellers. Consultation and research is currently being undertaken to ascertain where these pitches would be best placed on the Island to meet the needs of this community. The result of this work will form part of the Island's new plan.

#### **4.5 Domestic abuse**

There is one women's refuge on the Isle of Wight, consisting of five family rooms. In recent years, the need for this type of accommodation has outweighed availability. For example, in 2007, the refuge accommodated 22 households; however, it had to turn away twice that many, including 60 children. The majority of residents stay between one and three months with 41 percent of residents in 2007 being from the Island. This indicates a large uptake of refuge places from off Island households. This can be explained by the fact that the Island is often considered a 'safe haven' as the Solent is seen as a protection from being found from the mainland. In comparison, for Islanders wanting to flee a violent relationship, the thought of moving to a mainland refuge is too much of a step at a vulnerable time and often victims want to remain on the Island for support from their network of relatives and friends.

With regard to the number of households that the refuge are unable to accommodate, it is important to remember that these households need assistance at an extremely vulnerable time, the effect of domestic abuse on children is well documented and their needs are not currently being met with the current resources. However, the refuge offers an outreach service to an increasing number of households and in 2007, provided support to 218 households which included 266 children. Should a refuge place not be available to a household there is still the option to approach the local authority to provide alternative accommodation and receive support from the refuges outreach service.

In 2007 housing services, in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Forum, developed the 'Sanctuary' scheme to provide victims of domestic abuse additional security measures to enable them to remain in their own home. Additionally, at the time of writing this strategy, a new domestic abuse coordinator post is being created to liaise between the different agencies that are involved in these complex cases.

Housing services continues to work with the refuge to offer choices to women subjected to domestic abuse and will investigate further funding opportunities to provide more accommodation for this client group.

Additionally, there appears to be an emerging need for a service for male victims of domestic abuse which we will need to research/monitor in partnership with the expertise of the refuge and with the assistance of other support services.

#### **4.6 Rough sleepers**

In 1998 the Prime Minister set a target that by 2002 the number of rough sleepers should be reduced by two thirds. The Island target was met in 2001 and has since been sustained. However, in September 2007 Communities and Local Government (CLG) published a rough sleeping policy brief 'Rough Sleeping - 10 Years on from the Target' to mark the tenth anniversary of the rough sleeping target and to look at future challenges.

While regionally, rough sleepers may represent a problem, this does not appear to be the case on the Island. A night count of rough sleepers (as defined by CLG) in March 2004 identified only one. However, it is imperative that we continue to closely monitor the situation and that we continue to work with other agencies to prevent any incidences of rough sleeping arising. Where this does occur temporarily, we will offer support through the

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supporting people programme to appropriate agencies to enable them to support and find housing solutions.

It is envisaged that a further rough sleepers count will be carried out during the life of this strategy to monitor the efforts being made to keep the incidences of rough sleeping at a minimum if not eradicated altogether. It is also anticipated that we will carry out our own count of 'hidden homeless' that doesn't fall into the government's rough sleepers definition by doing a snap shot survey of homeless households known to supporting agencies at anyone time.

#### **4.7 Substance misusers**

For many people who misuse substances, housing can be difficult to sustain and access. While the council may have a duty to assist some households who substance misuse, in reality, these are very few and we need to work with partner agencies to offer appropriate support and advice.

The most recent figures (2005/2006) estimate that there are between 432 and 621 'problem drug users' on the Island and between 203 and 367 'injecting drug users' aged 16 to 64. Additionally, by September 2007 local services had successfully attracted approximately 457 of these problem drug users into treatment, of which 116 were under 18 years.

Drug misusers without housing or with housing problems have difficulty sustaining or entering drug treatment. Those leaving drug treatment or custody without suitable housing and support are likely to relapse and may re-offend. The provision of housing and housing support is therefore, crucial. We know stable accommodation can reduce the rate of reconviction by 20 percent, and that one in three drug users in treatment have housing needs or are homeless.

In view of this, the Salvation Army is developing a supported hostel on the Island which will provide a total of 27 units. While homelessness will be the defining characteristic of individuals admitted, it is possible that these individuals will have a range of other needs that will be addressed within the framework of the project. These may include mental health and substance misuse issues. The hostel is due to be completed by the end of 2009/2010.

#### **4.8 Offenders**

The council recognises that a significant number of person leaving custody may have a housing need and in partnership with other stakeholders developed the Offenders' Nomination Panel. The panel is chaired by Safer Neighbourhoods and meets regularly to discuss cases referred by probation. It has been agreed that up to three cases per year will be given priority for social housing through the Common Housing Register, in conjunction with the supporting people programme. This panel has been running for approximately two years and the success will be closely monitored by our partner registered social landlords.

#### **4.9 Households with physical disabilities**

It is often difficult to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households who approach the service for assistance when a member of the household may have a physical disability. The unique nature of their needs often means that adequately adapted housing is not always available at the time it is required. It is therefore imperative that the preventative work we do with these clients is at the earliest stage as possible to provide adequate time to source the correct accommodation to meet their needs. We must continue to work with not only our partner registered social landlords to access suitably adapted housing wherever possible, but

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also with the private sector whose resources have probably been under used in this area to date. We also need to continue to work with our colleagues within the physical disability team to take the proactive approach required to households with physical disabilities who are facing homelessness. We also need to make these colleagues aware of the limited resources available and what part they can play in ensuring they reach the housing services as early as possible. This is so that all their options can be explored fully, before crisis means that they end up in unsuitable temporary accommodation which could potentially be a further threat to their health.



## 5 Review of current service

In 2003, the council published its first five year homelessness strategy, the following action points were listed as priorities for the service:

Household size	Current provision
Procure 190 additional leased properties.	Achieved.
Bring 96 empty properties back in to use.	Achieved.
Fund a new mother and baby home through Isle of Wight Housing Association.	Achieved.
Introduce a new affordable housing policy in conjunction with Planning Services.	Working progress as part of the Island Plan project, plans for every property built to make a contribution to the delivery of affordable housing.
Allocate £30,000 for rent deposits to enable people to access the private rented sector.	Achieved.
Continue to fund floating support for households in temporary accommodation or who are homeless at home.	New initiative implemented.
Work with the Housing Benefit section to ensure that payments are made in an effective and timely fashion and targeted so as to prevent homelessness.	Ongoing.
Undertake a full review of information relating to homelessness services.	Ongoing.
Review future usage of non SFD temporary accommodation.	Achieved.
Work with the education directorate to develop materials and mechanisms for communicating with young people in schools and youth clubs.	Ongoing.
Liaise with groups involved with the single homeless to develop protocols and closer working arrangements.	Achieved through Supporting People programme.
Develop a mediation facility for relationship breakdown cases.	Mediation engaged for family relationship breakdown.
Research the needs of women on the Island.	Conference held February 2006, Women and Health group established.
Conduct a review of domestic abuse resources.	Achieved in partnership with DA Forum.
Further investigate the nature of, and the needs of the BME community on the Island.	Ongoing, more up to date information needed on demographics of Island.
Enter a dialogue with local landlords to consider alternatives to the current assured shorthold tenancy market.	Continue to work with private sector landlords to develop service through regular forums and fairs.

Household size	Current provision
Undertake needs assessment work with the professionals working in health and social care, with the voluntary sector and people experiencing homelessness to determine priorities for improving health and health services and inform service planning and development (see Appendix 6 for key areas for consideration).	Assessments ongoing through other partnership groups.
The primary care trust will explore options for the delivery of enhanced care for homeless people under the framework of the new national GP contract.	Enhanced GP contract not deemed necessary as households are offered support to gain access to necessary services, which is meeting the current need.
Update and revise our Empty Property Strategy.	Achieved.
Undertake additional research with Housing Associations about releasing family accommodation through incentives to address under-occupation.	Achieved and being reviewed through Housing Register review to agree common policy.
Undertake research into the impact of temporary accommodation on health and social wellbeing.	Government target in 2005 to reduce households in temporary accommodation overrode need to complete research.
Aim to implement, together with local housing associations, a scheme to reduce under-occupation in social rented dwellings.	As above.
Aim to have programmes in place to implement the findings of the reviews of domestic abuse, BME needs and women.	Ongoing.
Consult widely on the success of the measures in the homelessness strategy.	Ongoing.
Evaluate means of offering increased choice. This may be through choice based letting schemes, key worker housing, shared ownership etc.	Achieved.
Work with housing associations to develop mechanisms to sustain social inclusion.	Achieved.
Consider ways of working with the private rented sector to improve the standard and the security of private lets.	Achieved.

In July 2004, our homelessness and housing advice service was inspected by the Audit Commission, which stated that; "A number of improvements have taken place over the past 18 months. We found some good examples of positive practice, a partnership with the local law centre which has increased capacity within the service and an open approach to learn from external beacon councils. Further work is required in fully demonstrating value for money from the service and developing further preventative work with potential homeless applicants." The service was rated as providing a 'fair', one star service that has excellent prospects for improvement.

In the five years since the publication of the first homelessness strategy, the Island's housing services has evolved significantly and made a wide range of improvements. New procedures and schemes have become operational. We have identified the key changes to service since the last strategy as follows:

- Increasing the employees engaged at front end of service.
- Creation of housing needs manager post.
- Creation of the housing options team.
- Creation of senior housing options officer post.
- Development of Rent Deposit Scheme.
- Introduction of home visits for all parental eviction cases.
- Development of the Sanctuary Scheme in partnership with the local Domestic Abuse Forum.
- Refurbishment of several units of temporary accommodation.
- Re-organising the service placing the emphasis on homelessness prevention.
- All front line staff completed comprehensive housing advice training provided by Shelter.
- Review of housing register pointing, homelessness de-incentivised.
- Creation of Local Area Agreement.
- Increase in performance from the housing benefits department from poor performing to excellent.
- Interview skills training provided by communities and local government.
- 431 new social rented homes completed since April 2003.
- Reduced the number of homes empty for six months from 668 to 117.

The above changes have resulted in a significant reduction in homelessness applications and acceptances over the last five years.

	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Applications	758	452	327	247	218
Acceptances	391	318	212	138	137

In March 2002 the government announced a target to end the use of bed and breakfast hotels to accommodate homeless families with children, except in an emergency, and then for no longer than six weeks. The Isle of Wight Council met this target in March 2004 and is continuing to maintain this requirement.

In addition, the length of time all households have to stay in bed and breakfast accommodation has dropped over recent years.

2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
10.8 weeks	7.8 weeks	7.0 weeks	5.2 weeks	7.1 weeks

While the reduction in time is a significant improvement, the figure for 2007/2008 highlights how other factors can have a detrimental influence. During 2007/2008, we continued to reduce our stock of temporary accommodation and had a low number of new build completions compared to previous years. Additionally, the drop in lettings from the Common Housing Register meant that fewer households in temporary accommodation moved on, creating a 'backlog' of households in bed and breakfast accommodation.

The Isle of Wight Council is aware that these statistics may suggest that Housing Service has adopted a 'gatekeeping' position, however, analysis of our prevention service, shows that the number of households prevented from becoming homeless have increased each year. This is partly due to the work done by our homeless prevention team to work with landlords in the private sector. However, this is also a direct result of a shift of resources from homeless investigations to prevention.

2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
284	329	343

The most successful tool for the prevention team is our rent deposit scheme, in which we are able to financially assist households to secure accommodation in the private sector by funding a deposit on their behalf. While this scheme was launched in 2003, it has grown significantly. The table below shows the number of households assisted through this scheme and the average cost per households.

	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
No. of households	60	82	140	160	119
Average costs	£627.87	£466.59	£477.08	£484.04	£564.72

The number of households assisted in 2007/2008 was significantly lower than previous years and defied the trend, however, we believe that changes in the legislation relating to private sector renting may have had a detrimental effect, along with the instability of the buy to let market. We envisage that our new Find A Home scheme will overcome these issues, offering a more robust and secure package for landlords against the risks associated with renting private accommodation.

Since 6 April 2007, all deposits taken by landlords and agents for assured shorthold tenancies (AST) in England and Wales have to be protected by an authorised tenancy deposit scheme. The two main reasons for implementing such legislation are:

- to ensure good practice in deposit handling, so that when a tenant pays a deposit, and is entitled to get it back, he or she can be assured that this will happen;
- to assist with the resolution of disputes by having an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) service. It will also encourage tenants and landlords to agree - at the start of the tenancy - the condition and contents of the property.

In 2005, all local authorities were tasked with reducing the number of households currently in local authority temporary accommodation by half. We incorporated this target into our Local Area Agreement and therefore

have pledged to reach this target by March 2009, one year ahead of the national target. We are working hard to achieve the target by 2009 but given the current housing market conditions, it is possible that we will not do so until 2010. The table below shows our current performance:

Baseline Figure Dec 2004	March 2006	March 2007	March 2008	March 2009 (Target)
350	332	270	257	175

One of the consequences of the reduction in the use of temporary accommodation is that residents are spending longer in their temporary homes. Set out in the table below is an analysis of the time spent in temporary accommodation over the last three years. The average time a household spends in temporary accommodation cannot be calculated until that household actually leaves that accommodation. Households with a specific housing need may face a long period of time in their temporary home until those needs can be satisfactorily met. This coupled with the influence of several external factors can delay alternative accommodation being made available to households. Clearly most of these are outside our direct control and include the frequency and location of vacancies, and others not in temporary accommodation competing for such vacancies. We will continue to work hard to minimise the length of stay households experience in temporary accommodation.

<b>2005/06</b>	66.3 weeks	<b>2006</b>	91.3 weeks	<b>2007</b>	95.9 weeks
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Since 2005, housing services has ensured that priority for rehousing has been given to those longest in temporary accommodation, thus the average time indicator has increased over recent years.

However, over the next two years we are expecting to have 140 social rented new build properties completing and several larger new build schemes completing within the timescale of this strategy that will assist us to further reduce the numbers of households in temporary accommodation and therefore reduce the recorded time spent in temporary accommodation.

Additionally, the housing options team will continue to work closely with the housing enabling team to respond to the level of housing need not only in this strategy but in the overarching housing strategy as well. Our aim is to maximum the delivery of social rented housing as this has the biggest impact on homelessness. As highlighted in this strategy we are developing new responses to the recent decline in the housing market.

Additionally, the introduction of a choice based lettings scheme will also enhance options for potentially homeless households and it is anticipated that this will reduce the numbers of households making an application to the authority as homeless and therefore further reduce the need for temporary accommodation.

## 6 Consultation

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To produce this strategy we have reviewed our service in conjunction with users and stakeholders as well as staff. By consulting with these groups we have a range of comments and suggestions that have been fed into this document and will help us to improve our service.

### 6.1 User consultation

We are committed to ensuring that our services are user focused, flexible and responsive. In preparing this strategy we have therefore consulted and sought the views of all households who made an application to the authority as homeless in 2007/2008 for their feedback on our service. We felt that these applicants would provide the most useful comments on our team following our restructure in late 2006. (The full results can be seen in Appendix 3.) It is important to recognise the nature of our business and that there are some clients who we are unable to assist and that this must be taken into consideration when reviewing the consultation results.

While we appreciate positive feedback on the development of our service, it is imperative we learn from all of the comments and feedback we have received and use this information to further enhance our service to our clients.

### 6.2 Analysis of results

The majority of responses to our consultation were positive with almost three quarters of respondents rating us as either excellent or good. However there was a slight difference between how different age groups rated our service and it may highlight a problem with how we work effectively with different client groups. There is therefore scope to target these less satisfied client groups to see how we can improve the service offered to meet their needs.

Our research has shown that a third of our service users were seeking employment at time of applying to the council as homeless whereas the 2001 census recorded that 2.5 percent of the population on the Island was economically active but unemployed. The difference between the two figures suggests that worklessness and homelessness are linked and reinforces the need for joint working with the DWP.

Almost half of the respondents were signposted to our service through their own friends and family and a third through other professionals. This validates national research that our front desk service may not be provided by ourselves for a significant number of users. We therefore need to target those areas where clients are seeking their first line of advice to ensure that the information they receive is both accurate and effective.

All the households who contact us have an options interview in the first instance. This interview is crucial as it defines our future relationship with the client. We must ensure that we are able to disseminate relevant information personalised to the client's individual needs. Our research has shown that some clients felt that they didn't have all their options explained to them clearly and that they didn't always understand the advice they were given. We need to ensure that clients fully understand the options available to them and offer the opportunity for clarification and questions. Additionally, we need to identify clients that may need extra support to help them resolve their housing problems by signposting them to the relevant support agency.

### 6.3 Stakeholder consultation

We also consulted with all of our known stakeholders and asked them about their experiences when dealing with the housing services. We are fully aware that some households are referred to our service through our stakeholders and it is therefore important we engage with these stakeholders when reviewing our service and

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setting action points for the future (the full results can be seen in Appendix 4).

The majority of respondents estimated that more than half of their service users had current housing issues, highlighting the extent and diversity of the overall problem.

A proportion of respondents are not aware of what housing options and support are available to service users, nor where to refer them on for advice. This demonstrates the need to provide training for our stakeholders to ensure all are aware of our service and the vital role we can play in resolving housing issues. This will also ensure that consistent housing advice is given wherever the client chooses to obtain it.

A third of respondents don't have a strategy for dealing with homeless or potentially homeless households. We therefore need to work with these agencies to assist them to develop such protocols and to include in them the joint working partnerships required to provide successful housing advice across the Island.

Only a few respondents rated our service as below average or poor, however, we must remember that we are not always able to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, but where this is not possible we must communicate effectively our reasoning to help increase understanding of our limitations.

## 6.4 Employee consultation

In addition to the above consultation, we have undertaken an internal SWOT analysis of our service to help highlight to areas we as a service need to improve.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular liaison with registered social landlords / hostels / children's services / housing benefit.</li><li>• Joint protocol in place with children's services.</li><li>• Home visits.</li><li>• Rent deposit scheme.</li><li>• Fix It Scheme.</li><li>• Councillors backing service.</li><li>• Reductions in temporary accommodation already achieved.</li><li>• New Investment in service.</li><li>• Joint working with housing benefit department.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility of private rented sector.</li><li>• Lack of a choice based lettings scheme.</li><li>• Limited service user involvement.</li><li>• Accessibility of service.</li><li>• Lack of funding from government to meet targets.</li></ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find a home scheme.</li> <li>• Choice based lettings (transparency/e-enablement?).</li> <li>• Developing partnership working with internal/external agencies – joint training?</li> <li>• Better education for stakeholders.</li> <li>• Engaging with service users effectively.</li> <li>• Connexions returning to local authority control</li> <li>• Joint home visits with HB/children’s services.</li> <li>• Use of appropriate technology.</li> <li>• Proper service mapping to ensure adequate resourcing.</li> <li>• Development of debt advice techniques/training</li> <li>• Landlords’ (fairs, forum).</li> <li>• Utilising employee skills effectively, carry out a skills audit.</li> <li>• Better analysis of attendances in order to develop targeted services.</li> <li>• Develop communications strategy</li> <li>• Joint initial assessments with children’s service.</li> <li>• Development of accommodation officer post.</li> <li>• Remote working for staff.</li> <li>• Review of operational functions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgets.</li> <li>• State of national housing market.</li> <li>• Maintaining relationship between housing and children’s services.</li> <li>• Inadequate office accommodation.</li> <li>• Not meeting government targets.</li> </ul>

### 6.5 Private sector landlord consultation

Our partnership work with local private sector landlords is crucial to the success of our service and therefore it is important that their views and opinions were taken into consideration when compiling this document. Subsequently, this document was presented to the Landlords’ Forum for its feedback and comments.

While the Housing Strategy published in 2007 states that we will host four landlord forums per year, at the last landlords’ forum our partner private sector landlords suggested we might reduce the frequency to two forums per year. We will therefore review the frequency in conjunction with the forum.

### 6.6 Member consultation

Elected members have been extensively consulted as part of the development of this strategy and their views taken into consideration.



## 7 A strategic response to the challenges we have identified

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This strategy has made it clear that while the challenges facing housing services are real and significant; our new housing strategy has helped focus our efforts and resources to effectively deal with these challenges. However, we recognise we can't achieve the desired results in isolation and we need to work in partnership with all our stakeholders if we are to meet the challenging targets we have set ourselves

Through reviewing our service we have identified five key objectives that will be our priority over the next five years.

### **1. Assist delivery of Eco Island agenda**

In 2008, the Island Strategic Partnership announced its Eco Island agenda that the Island 'will become a thriving, dynamic and confident community in balance with its local environment'. The publication of the Isle of Wight's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020 sets out how this will be achieved and this strategy has been written with the ethos of Eco Island in mind.

Our client groups vary significantly and where at all possible, we must engage with all to better understand their needs. The Eco Island agenda and our own research has highlighted to the need to engage with people with learning disabilities. As part of the Eco Island agenda, the council has highlighted the need to assist persons with learning disabilities to live independently. We will work with other departments such as the learning disabilities team to help achieve this aim.

The consultation undertaken as part of this strategy has highlighted the need for further customer service training for our staff. While we are not always able to meet the expectations of our clients and stakeholders it is imperative we engage in positive communication at all times.

### **2. To engage with the private sector to maximise options for potentially homeless households**

While the council's leasing scheme was introduced in 2003 to help tackle the shortage of appropriate temporary accommodation, has been successful, it has also provided a platform on which we can build our relationship with the private sector. The need to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation has meant that we have to end a number of leases but we are keen to engage with these landlords and to make alternative use of these properties either through our own schemes or signposted to a partner registered social landlord. Additionally, the recruitment of the empty homes officer within the last few years has meant that hundreds of previously empty properties have been brought back into use. We need to develop a protocol to ensure that where possible, landlords are directed towards the council's own schemes to assist potentially homeless households so that we can target these resources towards the needs of our clients.

Our relationship with the private sector is crucial in developing our service. Over the past few years, we have facilitated numerous landlords' fairs and developed a landlords forum, however changes in personnel has meant these have been inconsistent. To build a meaningful partnership with the sector we must gain their trust and involve them in key decisions. By creating an accommodation officer post, we will have a dedicated member of staff as a contact for the service and we will be able to move forward and allocate the time needed to nurture our relationship without depriving other service areas. This officer can also begin work on the implementation of the Respect Standard of Management in the Isle of Wight Council's managed temporary accommodation.

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### 3. To further understand the causes and levels of homelessness

In the last five years, housing services has significantly reduced the number of households becoming homeless through investing and prioritising resources towards an effective prevention service. However the service must evolve and adapt to the ever changing housing market. To ensure that we are providing value for money, we need to identify our service users at the earliest possible moment and resolve the problem before it escalates and comes to a crisis point. By looking at the information gathered over recent years on our client groups, we can map any trends and target resources appropriately.

Unfortunately, we are currently unable to assist all households who approach the service in the way in which they or we would like. Managing these differing expectations can be difficult and ideally we would like to be a service that can offer more options to a wider audience. Over the next five years, we must identify services offered from other agencies and provide more relevant information and assistance to these clients

While we have been able to reduce the numbers of households needing temporary accommodation, we must ensure that their needs are still being met once they have been housed. Therefore we will survey all households in temporary accommodation and undertake regular assessments of their needs.

Following on from the 2004 rough sleepers' night count, we must repeat this exercise in 2009 and work with partner agencies to resolve any identified incidences of rough sleeping.

At the time of writing this strategy, we have seen an increasing number of households with housing difficulties as a direct result of debt problems. It is important that our front line staff have training in this field and are aware of which agencies can provide more specialised case work to enable our clients to escape from debt and successfully manage their own finances. Additionally, we must work with our colleagues within the DWP to ensure that we are providing a joined up service to assist clients not only to return to work but to sustain that employment. We will also work with our colleagues in housing benefit to ensure that benefit take up is maximised and the Housing Service is an active party in the recently developed anti poverty working group in conjunction with colleagues from housing benefit, supporting people and the DWP.

In the last five years, the number of households making an application to the Isle of Wight Council as homeless as a result of mortgage arrears has increased by 5.5 percent. However, mortgage repossession orders made during the first quarter of 2008 are up 17 percent from the same period last year. The current financial market, which is expected to continue for some time, is likely to continue this trend straining existing resources further. Staff have recently undertaken independent training on how to deal with mortgage arrears and will be implementing the advice given to further assist this client group.

We have recently received funding from the DCLG for the setting up of a court desk to reach those facing repossession who may not have sought advice before reaching the court stage. It is envisaged that we will work with our partners at the Law Centre to increase their availability to attend court and extend their court desk service to be able to reach the increase in households being affected by mortgage arrears and the potential loss of their homes. Further to this we are working with our colleagues in supporting people to enable the funding of a debt advisor specifically to address the needs of households whose homelessness could be prevented with the input of this specific advice.

The supporting people team in conjunction with the Isle of Wight Credit Union has recently introduced a scheme to assist supported clients access finances to enable them to retain or secure their own

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accommodation. Housing services will continue to promote and signpost eligible clients to this 'CUSP' service where it is considered that it would be a viable option to resolve homelessness.

The recent introduction of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has caused some concern among our stakeholders that direct payments will cause an increase in rent arrears. However, the research from the pilot authorities do not support this. In fact, locally since the introduction of the LHA there has been an increase in claims and very few vulnerability applications. However, it is important we monitor the situation closely in partnership with other support agencies.

#### **4. To work with other agencies and stakeholders to offer a holistic approach to housing advice and homelessness**

Working with other agencies is an integral part of our role. We can't achieve the desired results and achievements in isolation and subsequently developing partnerships is crucial.

We fully understand that different services have differing goals and agendas but we must work together to develop services for the benefit of our service users.

In 1999, the government set up the 'Beacon Scheme' to disseminate best practice in service delivery across local government. Beacon status is granted to those authorities who can demonstrate a clear vision, excellent services and a willingness to innovate within a theme. We must benchmark our service against these beacon authorities and adopt policies and procedures that benefit our service. To this end we will also review the possible introduction of the use of the Housemark benchmarking system. In addition, we must continue to engage with neighbouring local authorities to share examples of best practise and investigate the possibilities of developing joint initiatives.

While we ensure that our front desk service offers all clients appropriate advice and assistance, as evidenced earlier in this strategy, our front desk is not always the first port of call for our clients. Therefore it is essential that we work with our stakeholders to ensure that they have the information to advise their clients. Our consultation with stakeholders confirmed that they would also find this useful. It might also be prudent to provide stakeholders with a service directory for quick and easy reference on housing options.

We are keen to develop a programme involving local schools, to educate young people on the difficulties and realism of the housing market. However, we must engage with appropriate agencies such as the Connexions service and the Youth Council to ensure that the programme is audience specific and if possible, invite young people to contribute. We have already undertaken steps to engage with young people through the local Wight 2B Heard conferences and believe that an educational programme is both relevant and appropriate.

#### **5. To provide an accessible and responsive housing advice and homeless prevention service**

We are aware that national research has shown that housing departments are not the first point of contact for 61 percent of housing enquiries; our own research has shown that 34 percent of our client group may have been signposted to our service from other services and therefore it is essential that we work with our partners and stakeholders to deliver the appropriate training.

On the Island, housing services is based in the county town of Newport. While users can access our service via the phone, internet and local offices, it is important to consider the needs of our service users. It is imperative that we utilise all methods of communication and consider making use of appropriate technology to enable remote working.

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Our recent consultation has shown that 92 percent of respondents felt that our office was accessible in terms of its location, but we will need to further investigate the operation of our service and investigate whether remote working may provide a more pro-active approach to homeless prevention. It is intended that by analysing our service users we may be able to identify areas on the Island that we can target our resources.

We may also need to look at working hours as our current arrangements may be restrictive to households who are in employment and also consider our service in line with other council front line departments.

As discussed earlier, it appears that the needs of the BME population on the Island may not be fully met through our current service. We must therefore engage with the groups identified through existing research, to further understand the issues facing these communities and assist where appropriate.

## 8 Action Plan

### 8.1 Action points

Having considered our five objectives, we have produced the following action plan, detailing how we will meet these objectives and by when.

What we want to do	How are we going to do it	When will we do it by
Assist delivery of Eco Island agenda.	Train front line staff in customer services.	Winter 2009.
	To provide 180 new affordable homes each year.	Annually.
	To develop protocol with empty homes team to assist delivery of bringing 100 empty properties back into use.	Winter 2008.
	Assist people with learning disabilities live independently in partnership with other agencies and provide a named contact within the service.	Ongoing.
	Review current efficiency of correspondence and written material.	Summer 2009, then to be continuously reviewed.
	To complete at least one rural housing scheme in 2008.	Winter 2008.
	To develop by 2009, in partnership with town and parish councils, a rural affordable housing policy for each area through the Island Plan process.	Winter 2009.
	To introduce by 2009 specific allocated sites for rural affordable housing as part of our Island Plan.	Winter 2009.
To engage with the private sector to maximise options for potentially homeless households.	Reduce temporary accommodation to 175 by March 2009.	Spring 2009.
	To hold two landlord forums per year.	Ongoing.
	Review current Rent Deposit Scheme.	Winter 2008.
	Develop choice based lettings scheme in partnership with private sector landlords.	Winter 2009.
	Investigate prospect of introducing landlord accreditation scheme.	Summer 2010.
	Introduce the Find A Home scheme.	Summer 2008.
	Develop HAL scheme in partnership with RSL.	Autumn 2008.
	Maximise qualifying offers to private sector.	Ongoing.
	Employ accommodation officer to engage with private sector landlords and maximise lettings.	Autumn 2008.
	Maintain homeless acceptances below 140 per year.	Ongoing.
Commence implementation of the Respect Standard of Management in Isle of Wight Council managed temporary accommodation.	Winter 2008.	

What we want to do	How are we going to do it	When will we do it by
To further understand the causes of and levels of homelessness and developing services to meet these needs.	Survey households in temporary accommodation to ascertain whether there has been any changes in household or housing need and regularly review.	Autumn 2008.
	Review assistance available to those households not considered as statutorily homeless.	Summer 2010.
	Carry out count of 'hidden homelessness' in partnership with supporting agencies.	Spring 2009.
	Identify any trends in homelessness data and adapt service appropriately.	Winter 2009.
	Identify key areas on the Island that produce the most incidences of homelessness and target resources appropriately.	Winter 2009.
	Undertake a rough sleepers' night count.	Winter 2009.
	Research need for service to support male victims of domestic abuse in partnership with supporting agencies.	Summer 2009.
	Front line staff to have debt advice and mortgage repossession training.	Spring 2009.
	Target homelessness and worklessness in partnership with DWP.	Spring 2009.
	Continue to review cost of temporary accommodation to ensure we are getting value for money.	Ongoing.
To work with other agencies and stakeholders to offer a holistic approach to housing advice and homelessness.	Establish housing education programme for young people in partnership with Connexions.	Spring 2009.
	Continue to engage in sub-regional working with other local authorities on prevention.	Ongoing.
	Benchmark service against Beacon authorities.	Ongoing.
	Provide regular training opportunities to stakeholders on role of service and to attend training offered by stakeholders.	Ongoing.
	Develop service directory for stakeholders.	Autumn 2009.
	Work with partner agencies to develop affordable housing opportunities.	Ongoing.
	Consider using Housemark benchmarking system.	Spring 2009.

What we want to do	How are we going to do it	When will we do it by
To provide an accessible and responsive housing advice and homeless prevention service.	Review operation of service in line with other council front line services.	Winter 2009.
	Develop action plan to implement improvements to be made to service highlighted through SWOT analysis.	Autumn 2008.
	Continue to provide written housing option plans for every service user wherever possible.	Ongoing.
	Fully utilise information technology available.	Ongoing.
	Investigate housing needs of BME groups.	Winter 2009.
	Review progress of this action plan through regular meetings.	Ongoing.

As a socially responsible service, we are more than aware of today's economic climate; the increased cost of living, more stringent mortgage criteria and the possible lead to unemployment and increase in mortgage repossessions, all potentially have a knock on effect on our service. We therefore must adapt our service and be proactive in addressing these issues as well as providing and investing in services for the long term.

## 8.2 Monitoring of strategy

This strategy will be monitored throughout its life as follows:

- Regular monitoring meetings attended by managers of the service on a monthly basis.
- Results of managers meetings discussed and remedial action agreed for implementation at the bi-monthly housing service team meetings.
- Lead director to take regular monitoring summary to the directors team.
- Monitoring summary to be present to the key delivery partnerships of the Island Strategic Partnership.
- Annual review process with stakeholders.
- Action plans fed into team plans; employee development reviews and employee objectives.

## 9 Resources

In this section we have set out a breakdown of the current revenue, capital and building resources that the Isle of Wight Council and its partners have each year to deliver the action plan contained in this strategy. We have set out what we can do with our funding and where we have to seek additional funding from external sources to deliver the aims of this strategy.

We will also be realistic, and if we are unable to secure additional funding then we will have to look for alternative funding methods or be realistic about the outcomes we can deliver for Island residents.

### 9.1 Revenue funding to deliver housing services

Funding to deliver homelessness services on the Isle of Wight comes from a variety of sources. These are:

- revenue funding from the Isle of Wight Council;
- revenue funding from the government.

The following funding for homelessness services is currently being made available over the next two years of this strategy:

Gross revenue budget	2008/2009	2009/2010
Homelessness and housing options	2,358,124	2,358,348
Rent deposit scheme	30,000	30,000
Fix-it fund	20,000	20,400
Homelessness prevention (new funding)	100,000	110,000
Supporting people	877,070	877,070
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>£3,385,194</b>	<b>£3,395,818</b>
Funded by		
Government grant		
• Choice based lettings	45,312	0
• Homelessness	80,000	80,000
• Supporting people	877,070	877,070
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>1,002,382</b>	<b>957,070</b>
Isle of Wight Council	2,382,812	2,438,748
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>£3,385,194</b>	<b>£3,395,818</b>

To become an efficient and effective local authority we will continue to benchmark our services in terms of quality and cost. This strategy sets out the detail of our intention to join the Housemark benchmarking club. However, it is evident that to maximise our revenue savings potential the reduction in homelessness and temporary accommodation will be our priority. We can reduce this cost by:

- reducing homelessness by increasing our prevention activities; or
- delivering more social rented units than households we accept as homeless each year.



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We make best use of existing resources; in particular we take opportunities for multi-agency working to pool resources and increase efficiencies.

In 2007, we secured an additional £45,312 funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government for the development of a subregional choice based lettings scheme. As a subregion in itself, the Isle of Wight Council is working with its partner RSL's to deliver choice by the end of 2009.

In 2008, the council has made an additional £100,000 of revenue funding available to assist us in reaching our temporary accommodation target. We will utilise this money through partly funding an additional post to work exclusively with the private sector to maximise lettings potential and to facilitate the development of our new Find-a-Home scheme.

## 9.2 Capital Funding to deliver housing services

Funding to deliver housing services on the Isle of Wight comes from two main sources. These are:

- capital funding from the Isle of Wight Council;
- resources of public/private and voluntary bodies to deliver services in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council.

Capital budget	2008/2009	2009/2010
Choice based lettings	100,000	0
Empty property grant	30,000	30,000
General needs housing schemes	300,000	750,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£130,000</b>	<b>£30,000</b>

# 10 Glossary of Terms

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## **Priority need**

The categories of homeless people who are entitled to be housed by the council housing department.

## **Registered social landlord**

Term introduced by the 1996 Housing Act applying to housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation. RSLs have access to Social Housing Grant public funding for the capital costs of providing housing.

## **Rent deposit scheme**

A scheme that helps people on low incomes move into accommodation rented out by private landlords. It pays a deposit for you, or agrees to pay the landlord some money if, when you leave a property, it has been left in a state of disrepair or with money outstanding on the rent account.

## **Stakeholders**

Any person, group or organisation with an interest in, or who may be affected by, the activities of another organisation.

## **Affordable housing**

Affordable housing is one of the following types of housing:

- Social rented housing - social rented housing is rented housing for which guideline target rents are determined through the National Rent Regime.
- Intermediate rented housing - intermediate rented homes are provided at rent levels above those of social rented but below private rented.
- Discounted sale housing - discounted sale homes have a simple discount for the purchaser on its market price, so the purchaser buys the whole home at a reduced rate.
- Shared equity housing - shared equity is where more than one party has an interest in the value of the home eg an equity loan arrangement or a shared ownership lease.

Affordable housing should also:

- be available at a cost low enough for people to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices;
- be retained for future eligible households;
- or if these restrictions are lifted, for any subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

## **Low cost market housing**

If a housing scheme does not:

- provide accommodation at a cost low enough for people to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices;
- provide accommodation retained for future eligible households, or if these restrictions are lifted, for any subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision,

then it is not considered as affordable housing eg homes sold at a discounted price should only be considered

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affordable housing if they meet the criteria in the definition. If they do not, even if offered at less than market price, they should be considered low cost market housing, outside the definition of affordable housing.

### **Market rented housing**

Accommodation provided for rental in the private sector with rents subject to market forces.

### **Intermediate rented housing**

Intermediate rented homes are provided at rent levels above those of social rented but below private rented.

### **Temporary accommodation**

Accommodation provided by local authorities to households to whom there is a duty to house while more settled housing options are being sought.

### **Refuge**

A safe place for women and children who have had to flee their home because they are victims of abuse.

### **Move on**

The term used to describe the future accommodation provided for a temporary supported housing resident. 'Lack of suitable move on' is a term often used to explain why a temporary supported housing resident cannot move out of a project even if they are ready and willing to do so.

### **Beacon authority**

Certain local authorities and other organisations identified as centres of excellence for particular service areas.

### **Housing benefit**

Housing benefit helps people pay their rent. It is also known as a rent rebate or rent allowance. In nearly all cases, local councils run the scheme for their tenants. But in a few cases, other organisations run the scheme for their tenants and in some areas the local councils have contracted out part of the administration to private firms.

### **BME**

Black and minority ethnic.

### **Choice based lettings**

New method for council's allocating homes, which give applicants more choice in where they live. The approach is similar to that of an estate agent.

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## **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)**

Formed in June 2001, combining parts of the former Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE). The department is committed to providing people of working age, pensioners and children with the advice and help they need to achieve financial independence and make the most of life.

### **Sheltered housing**

Sheltered housing covers a wide range of supported housing for older people. Generally it provides specially designed self-contained housing. Schemes may have communal facilities such as a common room, laundry and guest room and the provision of warden services. Some have a warden service but no communal facilities. In these schemes the housing may be dispersed. Wardens do not provide personal care but offer low-level support including emergency support often through a linked alarm system. They also help older people to obtain the care and support they need, manage the scheme and organising activities.

### **Supporting people**

General term used to cover the programme of reform of funding for support services for vulnerable people to improve their quality of life and independence. It is a preventative service providing people with housing-related support services to remain independent or gain independence in their own home. Existing funding streams for these support services have been brought together and placed into a specified grant paid by central government to be administered by local authorities in partnership with NHS bodies and the probation service from April 2003, when the programme started.

### **Dependent children**

Dependent children are persons aged under 16, or single persons aged 16 to 18 and in full time education.

### **Island Strategic Partnership**

The Island Strategic Partnership - bringing together representatives from the public, business, voluntary and community sectors to deliver a community strategy for the Island.

### **Local Housing Allowance**

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a new way of working out housing benefit for private tenants. It was introduced nationally on 7 April 2008. The LHA rate is based on the number and mix of occupiers, and the area in which the tenant lives. Payment will normally be to the tenant, who will then pay the landlord.

# 11 Appendices

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Appendix 1 Eco Island deliverable promises

Appendix 2 Ethnicity of the Isle of Wight

Appendix 3 Results of user consultation

Appendix 4 Results of stakeholder consultation

# Appendix 1

## 30 One Island deliverables 2008/9

### Eco Island

- Eco Island conference and Big Green Picnic.
- 200 Green Island awards.
- 13 council fleet vehicles running on biofuels.
- Four per cent reduction in council's carbon emissions.
- Introduce zero plastic bag scheme.
- Five new electric charging points in car parks.

#### A safe and well-kept Island

- Additional £1.75 million for Island roads.
- Six new public toilets.
- 20mph zones outside all schools.
- Three more 'no drinking in public places' zones to tackle antisocial behaviour in town centres.
- Roll out One Million Blooms to three showcase areas and 20 community-led areas.

#### A thriving Island

- Sir Terry Farrell new design champion for Island.
- New town square and community facilities for East Cowes.
- Use planning powers to generate sustainable development.
- Design brief for Shanklin, Ventnor, Ryde, Newport and Sandown.

#### A healthy and supportive Island

- Warm Island: £500,000 towards grants to insulate up to 1,500 homes.
- Bring 100 empty properties back into use and deliver 163 affordable homes.
- Enable 100 people with learning disabilities to live independently at home.
- 1,050 people over 80 to receive free home care.
- Encourage 22,000 more visits to leisure centres.

#### An inspiring Island

- Raise performance in KS2 (ages seven to 11) and KS4 (14 to 16) to at least national average by 2010.
- Establish a new 'children in care' council by September 2008.
- Ensure at least 95 per cent of 16 and 17 year olds are in employment, training or education.
- Reduce the number of exclusions from school by 120.
- Start building new secondary school in Cowes.

### A modern council

- Save £2 million by being more efficient.
- One phone call to the call centre to access 113 council services.
- Response from customer services to residents' enquiries by email within two days, by letter within 15 days, and face to face within five minutes.
- Process new council tax and housing benefit claims within 20 days.
- Train all front line staff in customer services.

## Appendix 2

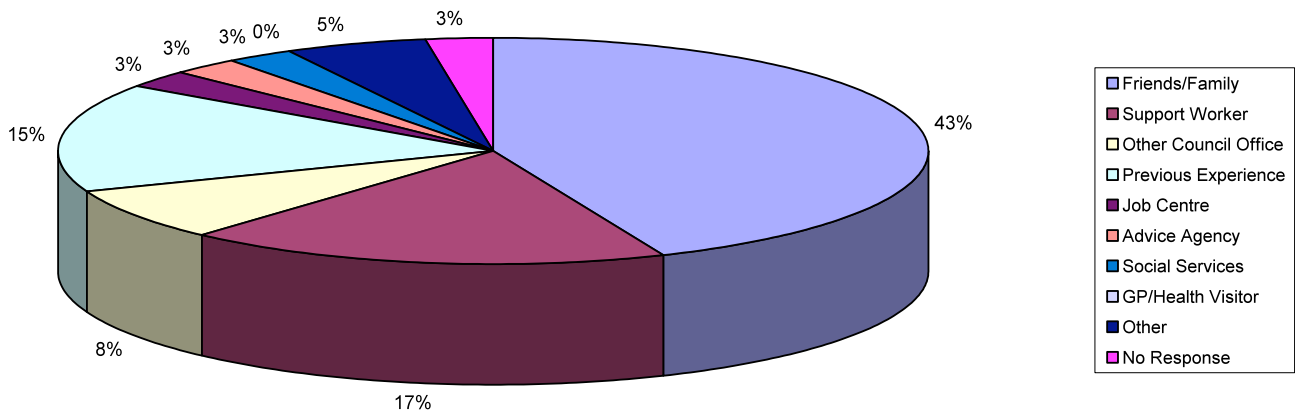
The table below shows the ethnicity of the Island, compared to the rest of the south east and England.

	IW	South East	England
White: British	96.77%	91.30%	86.99%
White: Irish	0.68%	1.03%	1.27%
White: other white	1.24%	2.77%	2.66%
Mixed: white and black Caribbean	0.20%	0.30%	0.47%
Mixed: white and black African	0.05%	0.12%	0.16%
Mixed: white and Asian	0.18%	0.37%	0.37%
Mixed: other mixed	0.11%	0.28%	0.31%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	0.14%	1.12%	2.09%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0.07%	0.73%	1.44%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.07%	0.19%	0.56%
Asian or Asian British: other Asian	0.05%	0.29%	0.48%
Black or black British: Caribbean	0.12%	0.34%	1.14%
Black or black British: African	0.08%	0.31%	0.97%
Black or black British: other black	0.03%	0.06%	0.19%
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese	0.09%	0.41%	0.45%
Chinese or other ethnic group: other ethnic group	0.13%	0.37%	0.44%

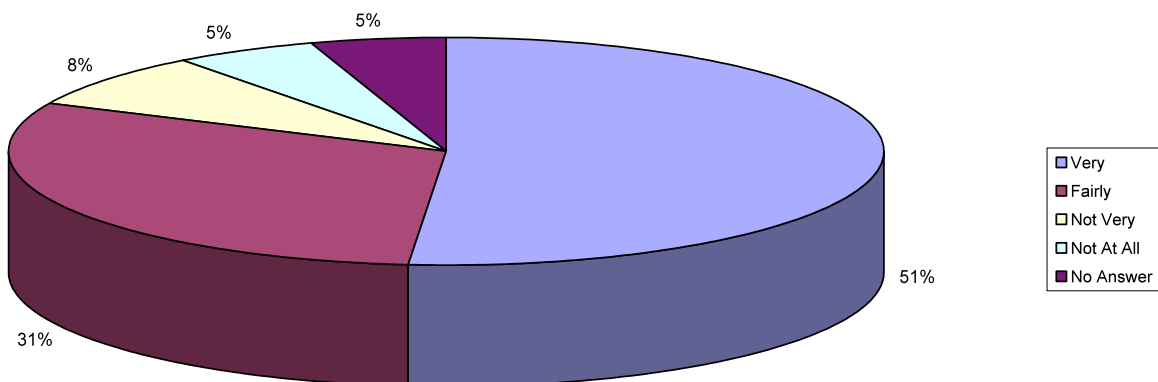
*Source: 2001 census.*

## Appendix 3

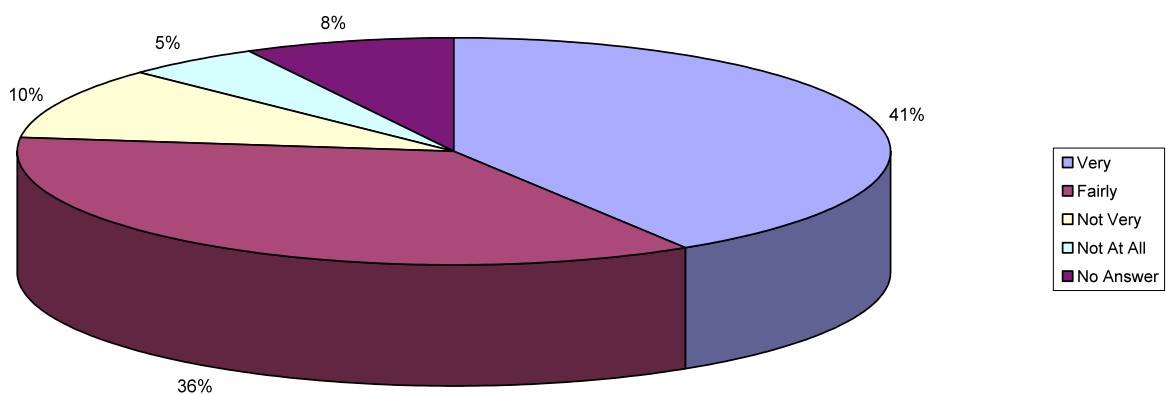
How did you find out about the services the council provides for people who are, or think they might be, homeless?



Think about the person in the council you first spoke to about your homelessness, did you find them friendly?

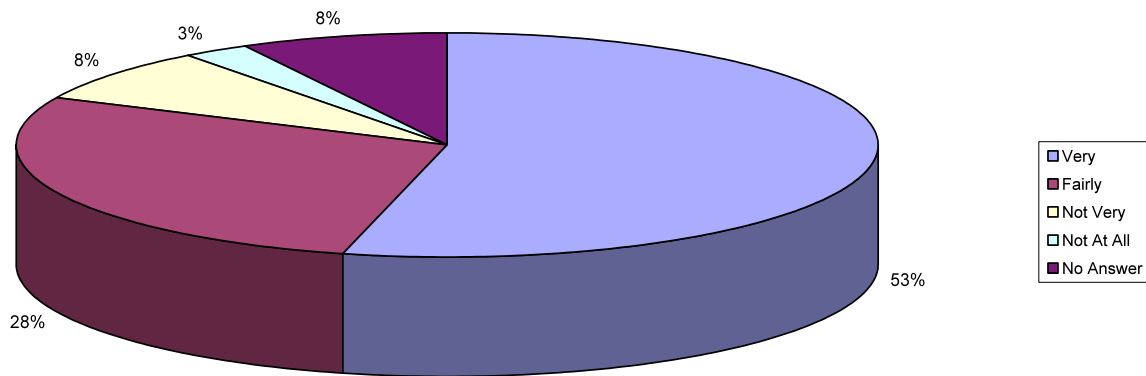


Think about the person in the council you first spoke to about your homelessness, did you find them useful?

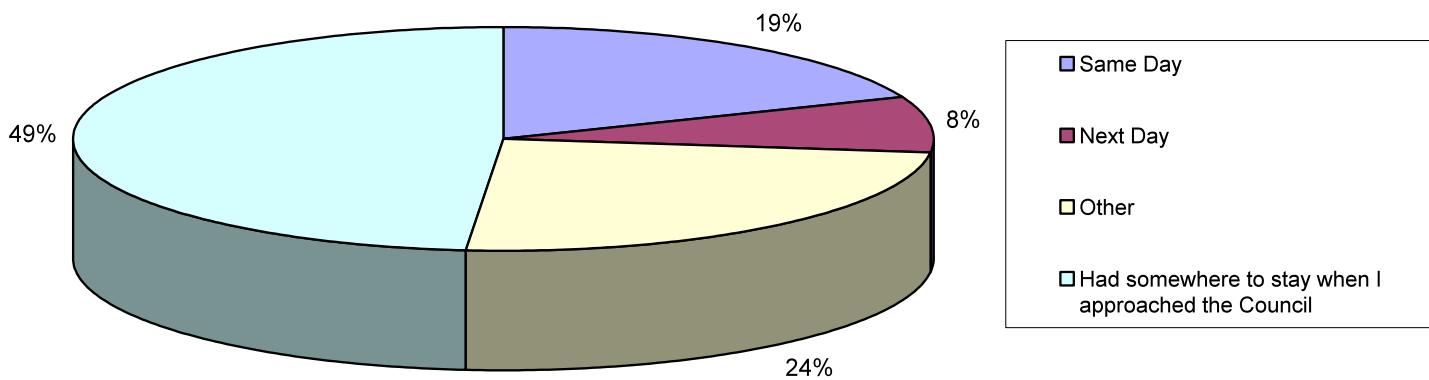




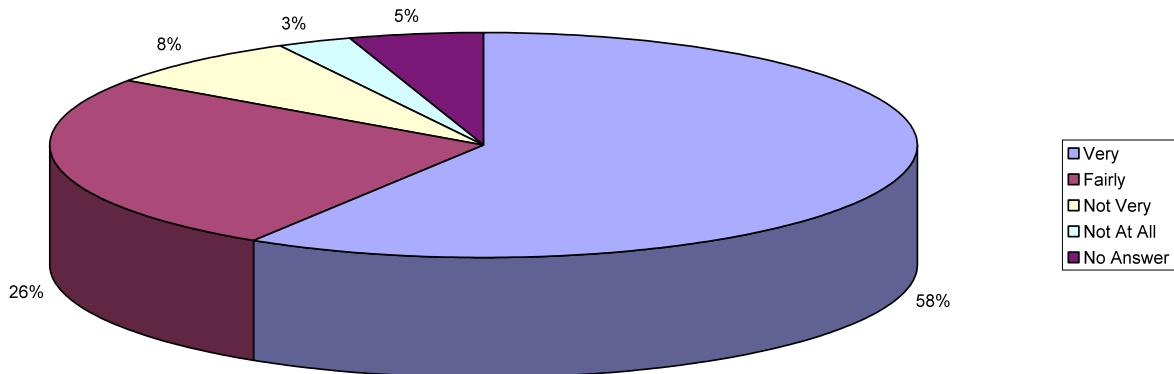
Think about the person in the council you first spoke to about your homelessness, did you find them polite?



If you had nowhere to stay when you approached the council, when did you get to see the officer dealing with your homelessness case?

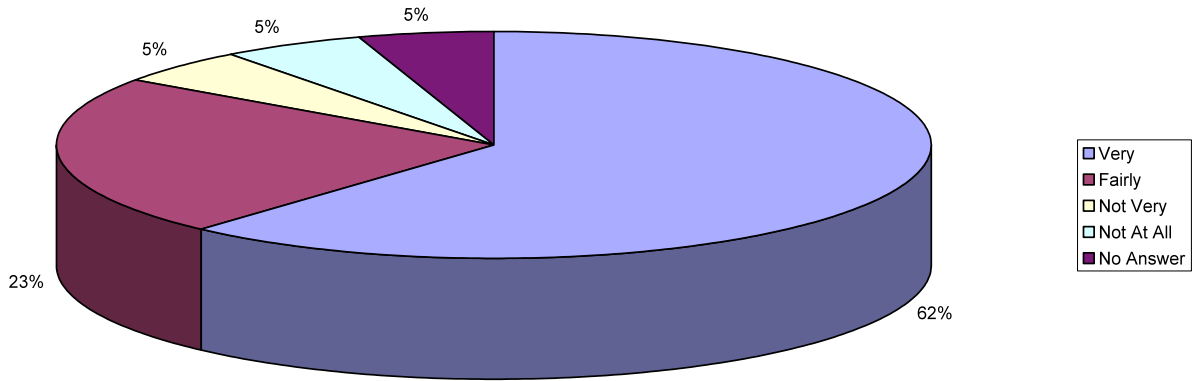


Was the housing officer dealing with your homeless case friendly?

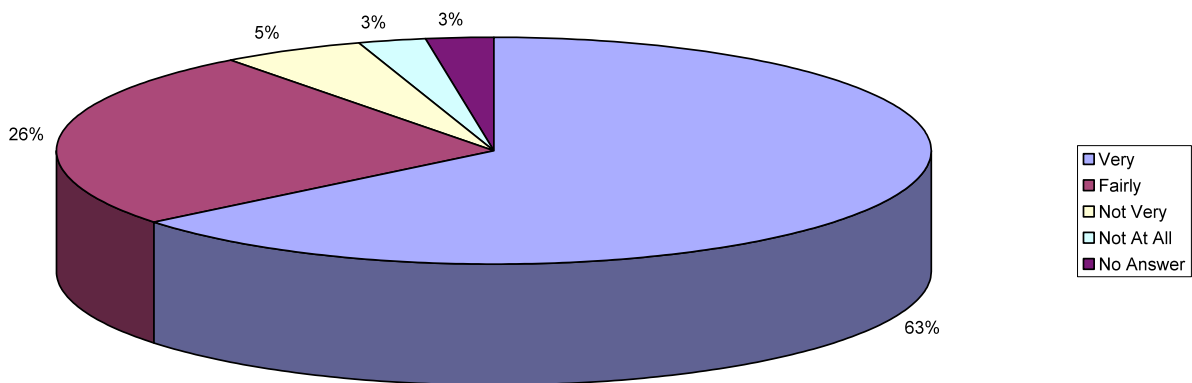


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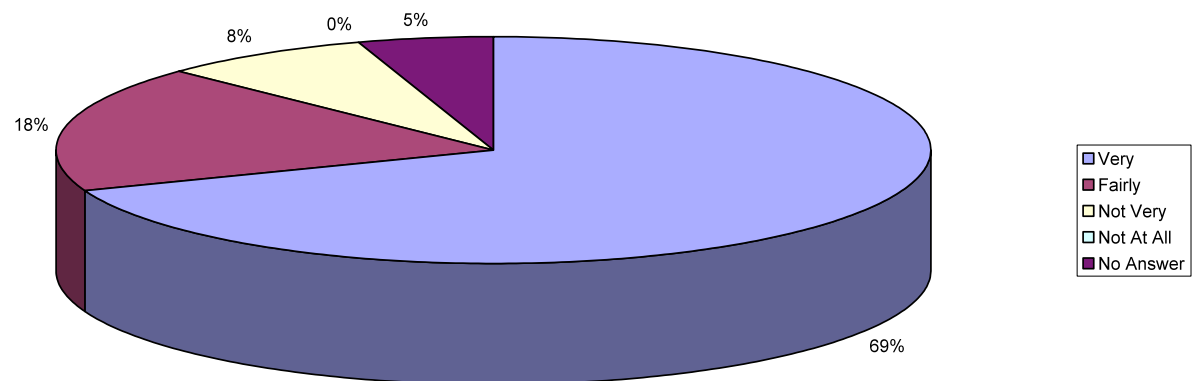
Was the housing officer dealing with your homeless case useful?



Was the housing officer dealing with your homeless case polite?

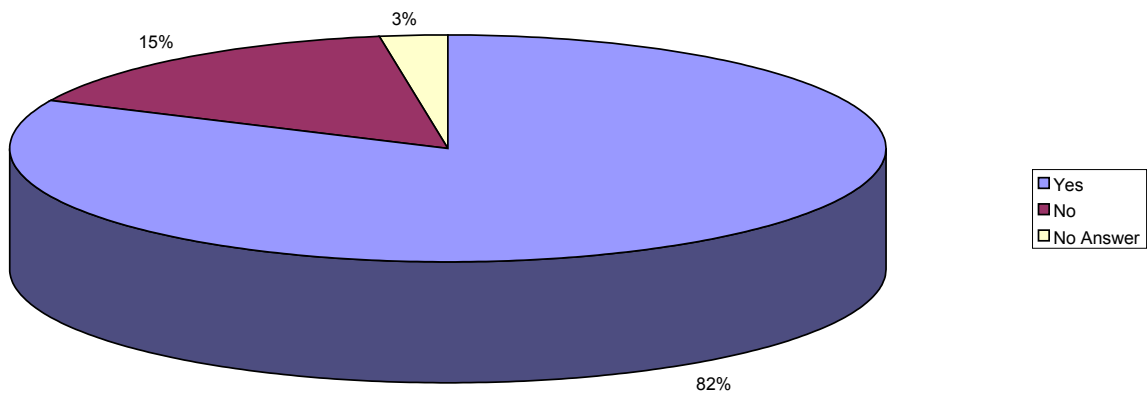


Was the housing officer dealing with your homeless case professional?

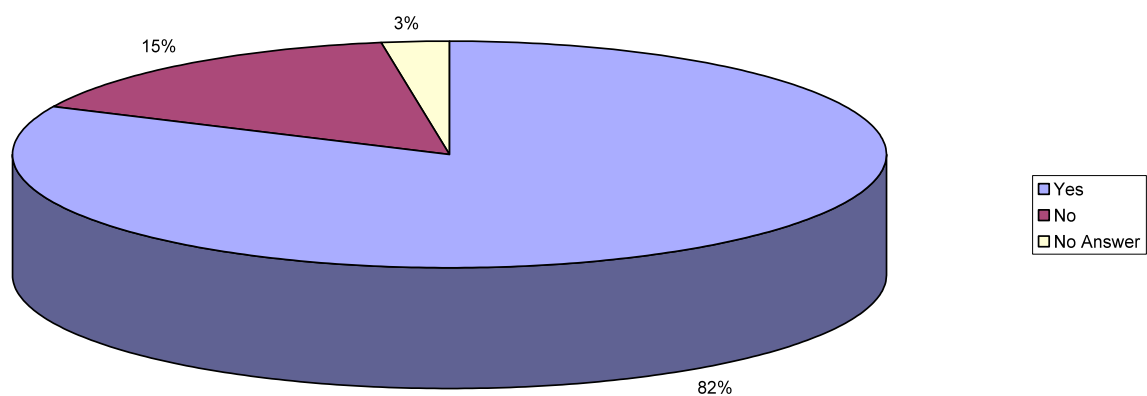


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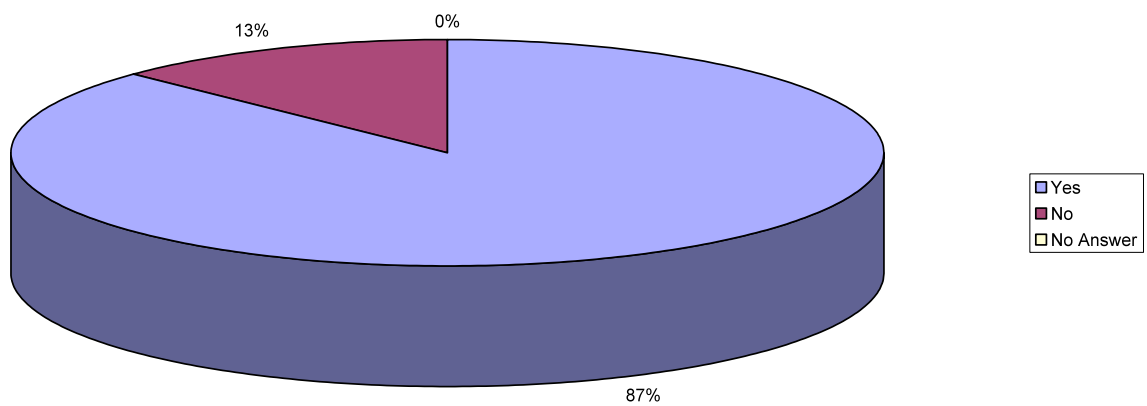
At your homelessness interview, did you feel the interview room used was private?



At your homelessness interview, did you feel the interview room used was comfortable?

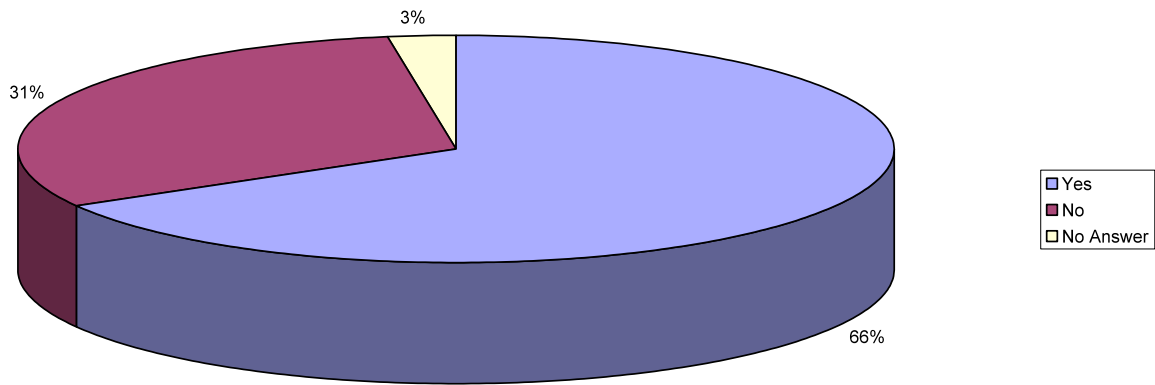


Did the housing officer dealing with your homeless case give useful information and advice to you?

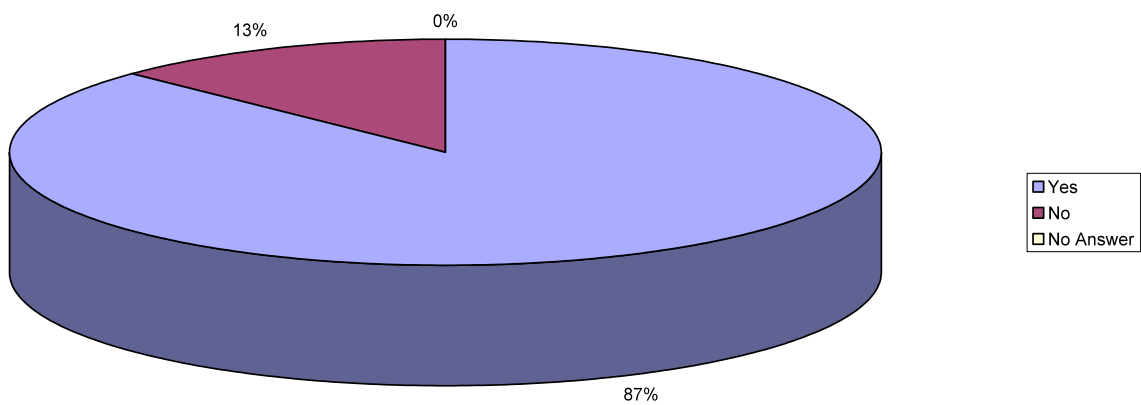


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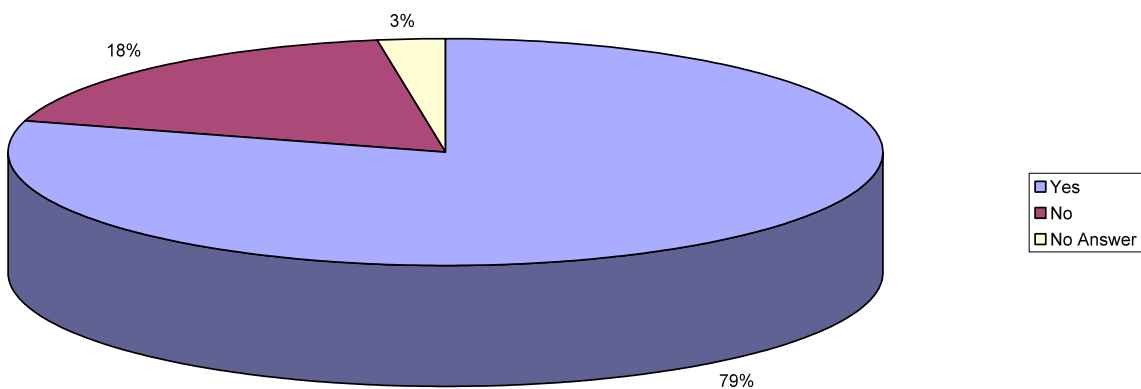
Did the housing office dealing with your homeless case give you any written information to take away?



Did the housing office dealing with your homeless case explain the different housing options available?

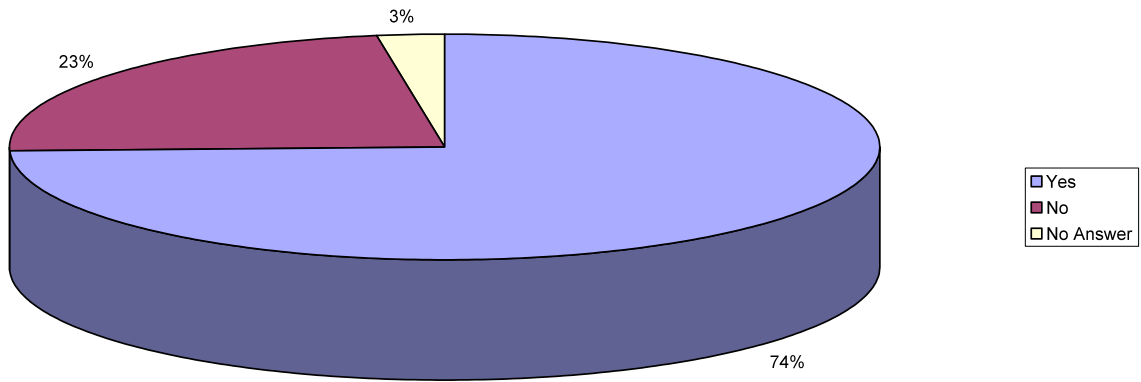


Did the housing office dealing with your homeless case explain what would happen once you had filled in your homeless application?

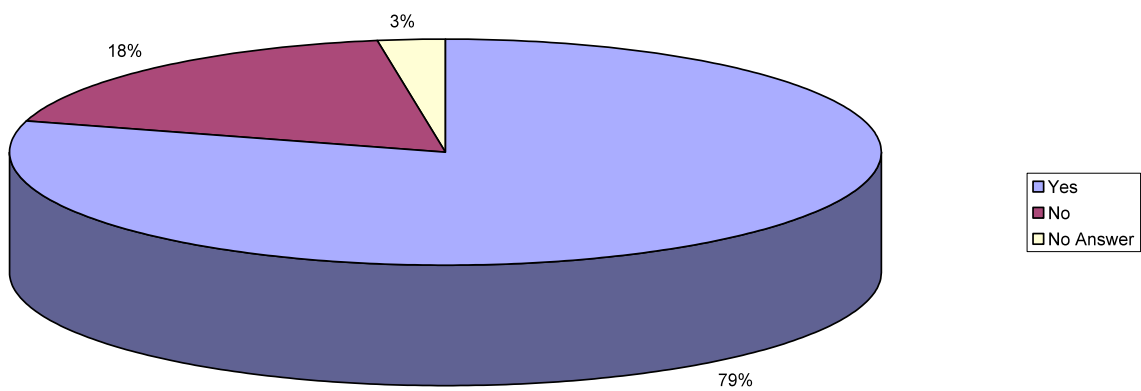


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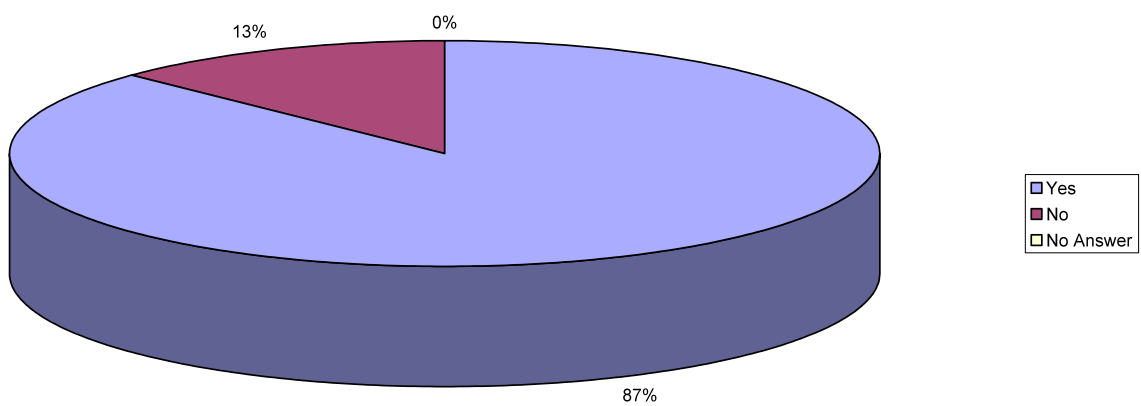
Did the housing officer dealing with your homeless case explain your homelessness and housing rights to you?



Did the housing officer dealing with your homeless case listen to you and encourage you to ask questions?

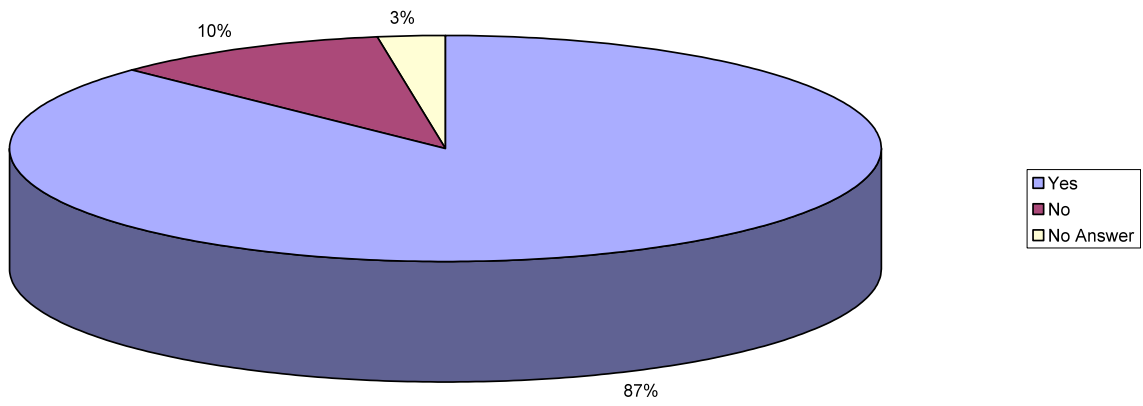


Did the housing officer dealing with your homeless case tell you how to contact them?

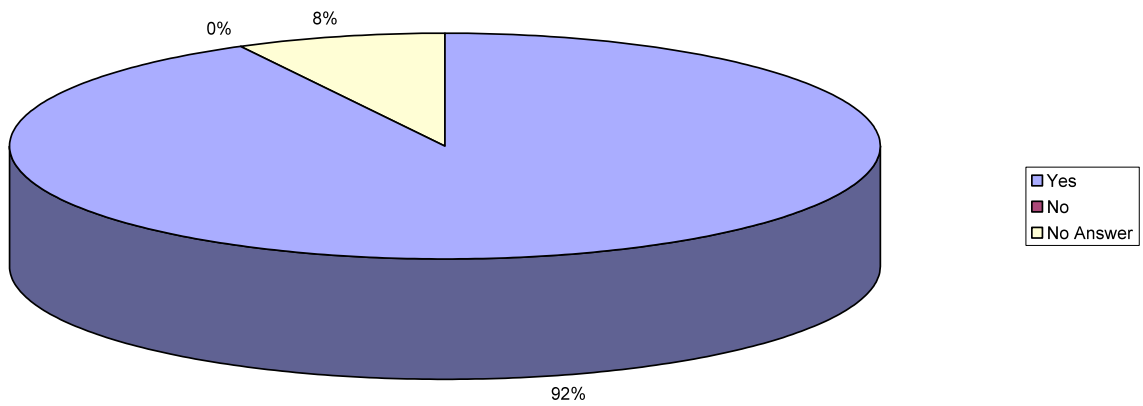


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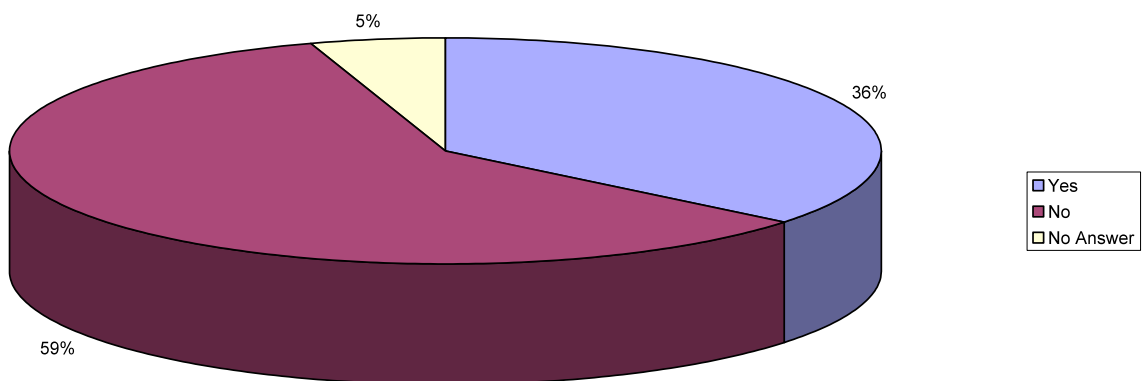
Did you fully understand the advice given?



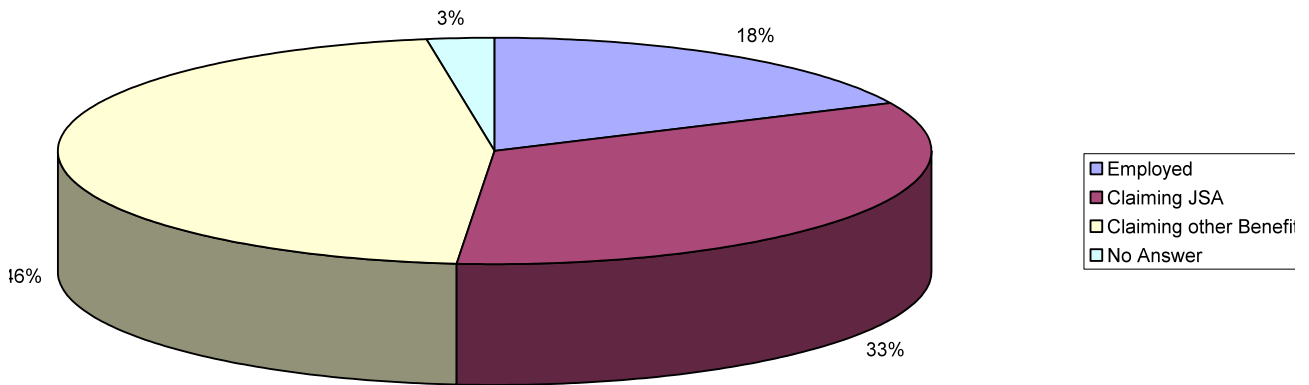
When we wrote to you about your homeless application, did you understand the letter?



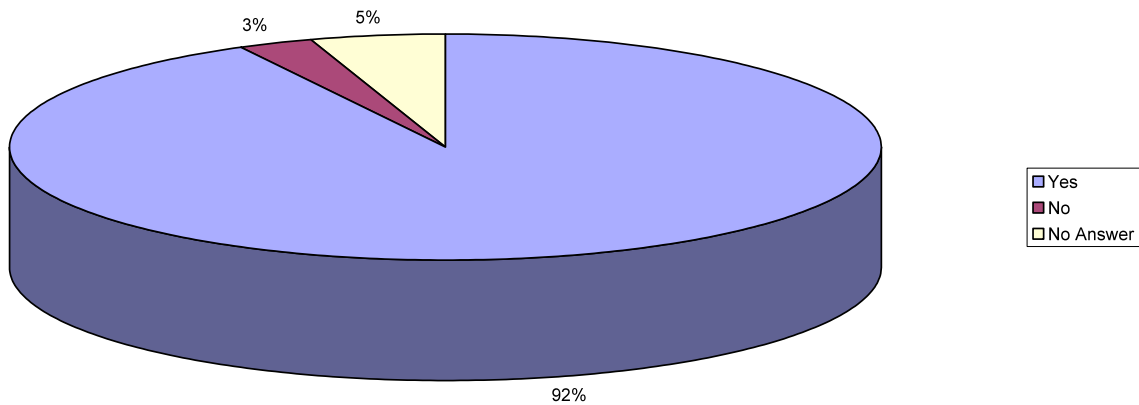
Did we help you contact any other advice agencies?



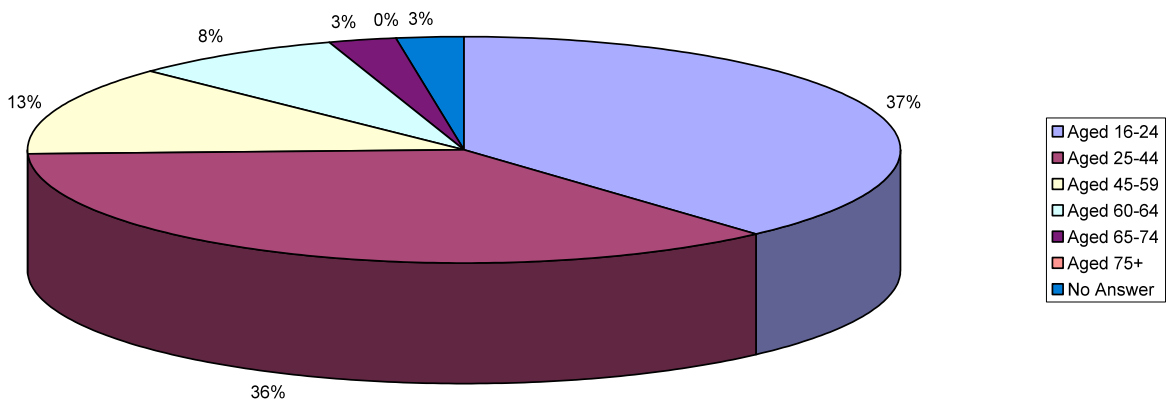
At the time that you contacted our service, what was your employment status?



Did you find our office accessible in terms of location?

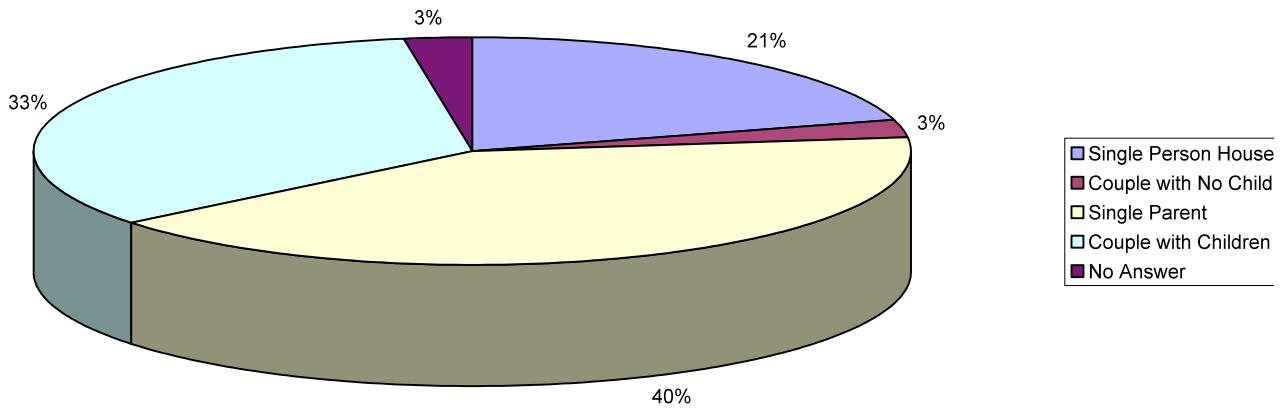


How old are you?

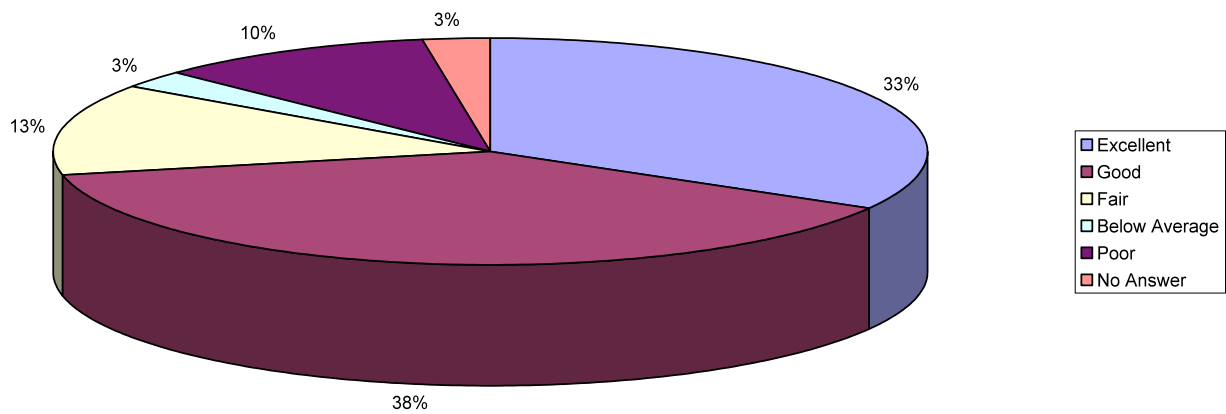


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How would you best describe your household?



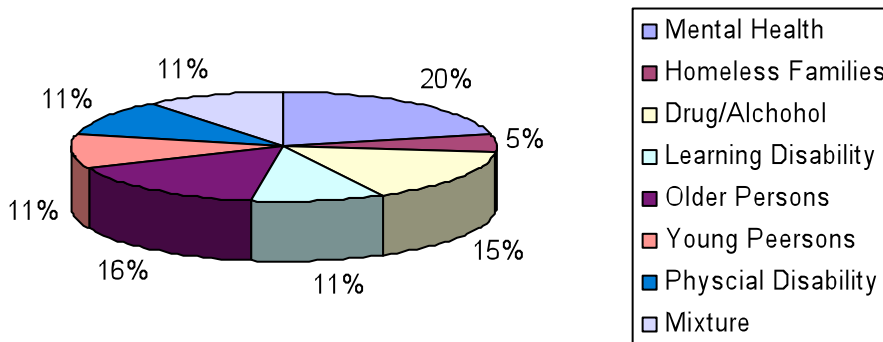
Overall, how would you rate our service?



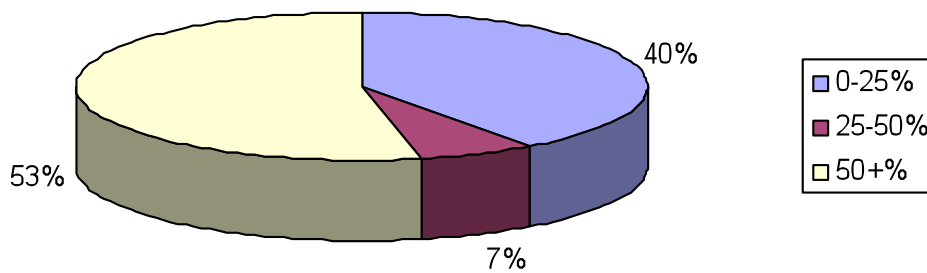


# Appendix 4

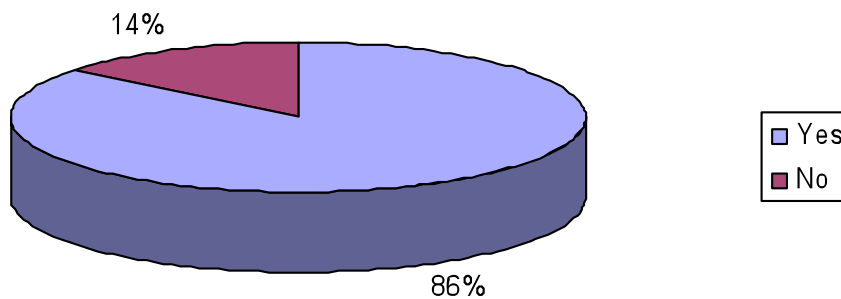
Which is the main client group that you generally work with?



Please estimate the percentage of your service users that currently have housing problems.

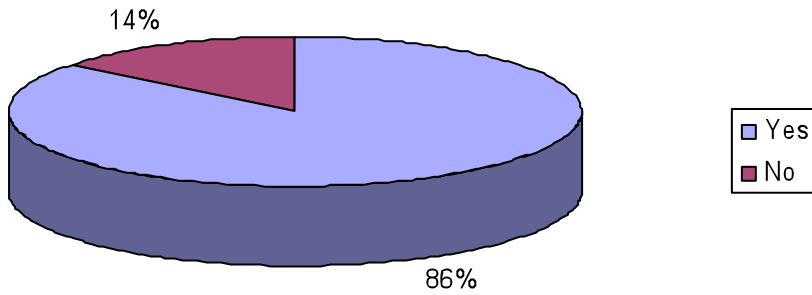


Are you aware of the housing options and support that is available to your service users?

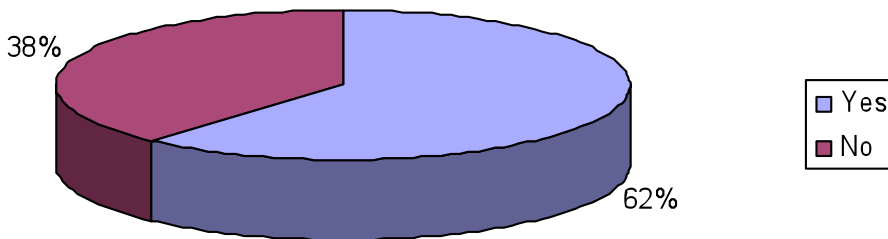


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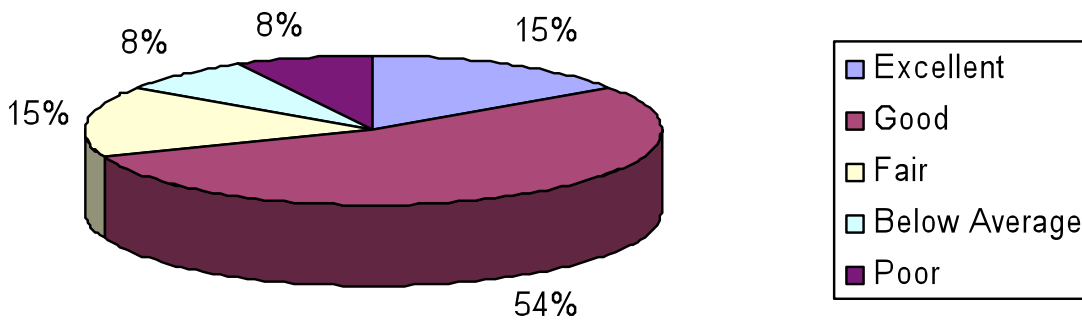
Do you know where to refer for advice?



Do you have a strategy for dealing with homeless or potentially homeless households?



In your dealings with housing needs, how would you rate our service?

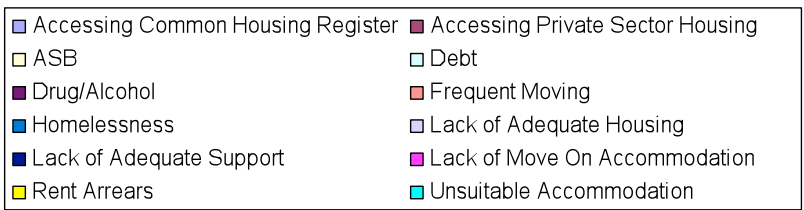
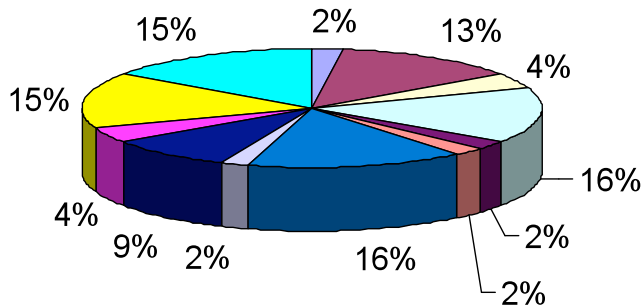


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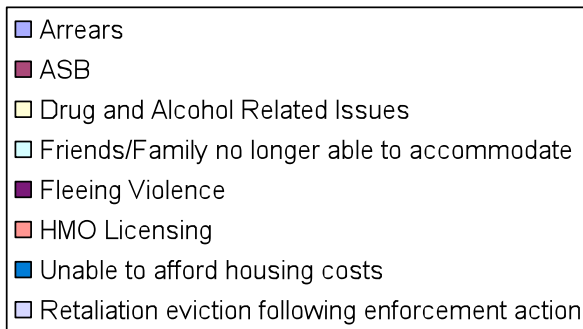
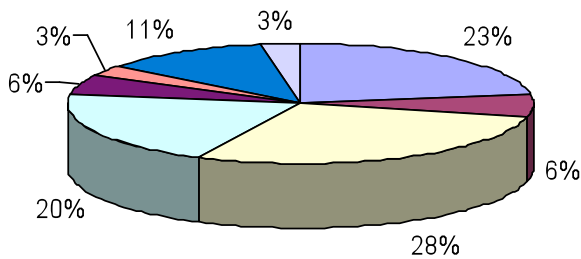
What housing options do you think could most assist your service users?

- Access to rent deposits.
- Accessible housing for people with a range of disabilities.
- Advice, guidance to help them remain and possible arbitration between landlord and tenant where relationships have soured.
- Availability of move in accommodation.
- Emergency housing for young people.
- Increase in private accommodation.
- Incentives for private landlords to work with clients.
- LA accepting a homeless application.
- More hostel accommodation.
- More housing for the elderly.
- More independent living arrangements with service users having tenancies.
- More new build.
- More sensitive landlords.
- One point of reference for acetate, impartial easily accessible housing guidance and advice.
- Priority for LAC children returning home requiring accommodation.

What are the most frequent housing problems for your service users?



From your experience, what are the most common causes of threatened or actual homeless for your service users?



We have collected a useful range of comments from our stakeholders and we will be contacting all of them to discuss ways in which we can work with them to help improve the service we offer.

We are also conscious of the fact that some of these comments suggest that there is a need to clearly explain to our partners and stakeholders what levels of service we are able to deliver and help manage the expectations of this council.