SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

2007 - 2012
## Contents

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FOREWORD

South Staffordshire Council has a statutory duty to provide a homelessness service. The review of homelessness within the District has confirmed that homelessness is a varied and complex issue and that there are no quick fixes.

The Council’s first Homelessness Strategy published in July 2002 provided a strategic steer for the homelessness services provided within the South Staffordshire area. The proactive approach in dealing with Homelessness has led to reductions both in the numbers of households accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need and the use of all temporary accommodation. By working in partnership with both voluntary and statutory agencies, it is anticipated that this trend will continue and is very much reflected in the Council's new 2007 – 2012 Homelessness Strategy.

Councillor Robert Marshall
Deputy Leader of the Council (Community Services)
CHAPTER ONE - Introduction and Background

Introduction

Homelessness has had an increased profile on Central Government’s agenda with new legislation and policy initiatives being introduced in February 2002. There is great emphasis on preventing homelessness with early intervention, and tackling the root causes of homelessness in a coordinated and strategic manner.

The Homelessness Act 2002 was given royal assent in February 2002. This addresses both homelessness and allocation schemes administered by housing authorities. The homelessness provisions have been phased in, with the majority coming into force in July 2002. This Act brings about fundamental changes in the way local authorities deal with homelessness within their area, changes that impact strategically and on the day to day business of the homelessness and advice service.

Overview of South Staffordshire

South Staffordshire is a rural district covering an area of 101,000 acres on the northwestern edge of the West Midlands conurbation and has a population of nearly 106,000. It is made up of 27 parishes with a collection of diverse settlements, with their own distinctive character, ranging from small hamlets to large villages with over 13,000 residents. There is no single dominant settlement and South Staffordshire can be described as a “Community of Communities”.

The population is fairly affluent and the District scores well in most socio-economic indicators. However, there are significant areas of unemployment and poverty, particularly in the north east of South Staffordshire, as a result of pit closures. With high house prices, especially in the south of the District, affordability is a key issue.

Much of South Staffordshire lies within the West Midlands Green Belt (80%); the remainder to the north of the Green Belt boundary is defined as ‘Open Countryside’. The district has also seen rapid housing expansion in the last 30 years as its villages have proved attractive to people prepared to travel to work in the nearby urban areas and there is a balance to be maintained between conserving and enhancing the rural nature of the District and meeting the needs and demands for development, particularly of affordable housing which is being addressed through the Local Development Framework.

The 2001 census indicated that 98% of the population is white, higher than the average for England (90.9%).
Homelessness – The National Context

“Sustainable Communities: Homes for All” outlined the Government’s Strategy for tackling homelessness. It aimed to expand housing opportunities for all including those who need support and for disadvantaged sectors of society. They aimed to reduce homelessness by offering a wider range of preventative measures and increasing access to settled homes.

In June 2005, “Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives” sets out a more detailed strategy on how this will be achieved.

The main aims of the Department of Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG), Homelessness Directorate are to:-

- Reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough
- Reduce the number of families with children and/or expectant mothers placed into bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation with shared facilities for longer than six weeks.
- Reduce the number of acceptances of households who are accepted as being “unintentionally homeless and in priority need” against the main causes of homelessness, (family and friends unable to accommodate, relationship breakdown and loss of private rented accommodation).
- Reduce the use of ALL temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 compared to a baseline of those in such accommodation as reported to DCLG on 31st December 2010.
CHAPTER TWO – Progress to Date

Since the Council’s first Homelessness Strategy was launched in July 2003, significant progress has been made to the Homelessness and Housing Advice service provided by this Council. The key successes are detailed below.

Service Delivery

Following the Best Value Review Improvement Plan being adopted alternative options for delivery of the service were explored. Due to the excellent performance on homelessness it was determined that the homelessness and housing advice service should remain with the Council until 2012, at which time a further review will be carried out.

Housing Options Approach

The housing options approach to dealing with clients has contributed to the following:

- A reduction in the numbers of households accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need;
- Decommissioning of 11 units of temporary accommodation for homeless households at Glenthorne House;
- A total of 34 households prevented from becoming homeless since July 2005.

Following completion of the Best Value Review of Homelessness Housing Advice and the Housing Register in 2006, the current services have been realigned to incorporate a restructure of the service which will enable the housing options approach to be further developed.

Performance

The service is currently performing well against targets set within the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) with 183a and 183b - Use of bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation, and 213 – Prevention of Homelessness being in the upper quartile. The performance on the remaining indicators is above the national average for other district councils.

Customer satisfaction

A survey carried out with customers in 2005, as part of the Best Value Review process indicated that 68% of customers were satisfied with the overall level of service they received. For this year to date (January ‘07), this has increased to 85%.

Support Needs

To help individuals who may be vulnerable maintain a tenancy in a sustainable way, it has been recognised that there is a need for support tailor
made to suit their individual needs. By working in partnership with South Staffordshire Housing Association and the Staffordshire Supporting People Team, a generic floating support service has been commissioned from Carrgomm, a housing support specialist.

**Choice Based Lettings**

To enable greater freedom of choice for households seeking rented accommodation within the area, the Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Scheme has been developed in partnership with South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA). This Council will initially launch the scheme in April 2007 with an evaluation being completed by August 2007. Following evaluation, the scheme will be extended to include SSHA.

**Private Rented Sector**

Maintaining and developing working relationships with local landlords has taken on greater importance in recent years through the Council’s strategic housing role with a more holistic approach to the housing market being taken.

Private landlords have a vital role in helping to meet housing needs across the District and we have been working with landlords through the Private Landlords Forum with some success over the last three years. It was clear from the Forum that there is a core of good landlords operating in the District who are keen to provide high quality and well managed accommodation and it was felt that this ought to be recognised in some way, as it has in neighbouring authorities and many others nationally.

To this end, a Private Landlord Property Accreditation Scheme has been developed, and is due to be launched in April 2007, which will not only recognise the work of good landlords within the area, but will help build confidence in the private rented sector, which will be seen to provide properties of a high standard.

**Domestic Violence**

As highlighted later in this report, the prevalence of domestic violence as a cause of homelessness remains high. One of the prevention measures in place for this client group is the South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme, launched in April 2006 and to date has enabled 11 households to remain in their own homes in a safe and secure environment.

**Temporary Accommodation**

The temporary accommodation for homeless households provided by South Staffordshire Council has always been of a high standard with the use of bed and breakfast and hostel accommodation being kept to a minimum and used in emergencies only.
The “housing options” approach now taken with clients has contributed to the decommissioning in April 2005, of Glenthorne House, Cheslyn Hay which contained 11 bed-sitter type self contained units.

Homelessness Acceptances

Again, due to the prevention work now being undertaken, homelessness determinations for April 2006 – December 2006 have decreased from 283 to 90, a decrease of 68% compared to the same period in 2005. For the same period, homelessness acceptances have also dropped from 121 to 70, a decrease of 42% for the same period. It is anticipated that this downward trend will continue.
CHAPTER THREE – Strategic Links

A wide variety and a large number of strategies, policies, and partnerships, locally and regionally, impact upon the homelessness strategy. This strategy in turn influences them as its aims and objectives link in with those of other strategies.

Coordination of all these strategies will help ensure that both the needs of homeless households and all other residents of South Staffordshire are met.

*The South Staffordshire Community Strategy*

The Community Strategy is produced by the Local Strategic Partnership and concentrates on five key themes:

- Quality of Life
- Environmental Quality
- Economic Vibrancy
- Community Safety
- Lifelong Learning

Housing is included within the Quality of Life theme, although it cuts across work carried out in other theme groups, such as Community Safety where domestic violence issues are tackled.

The overall vision of the Community Strategy is:

*“We will strive to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities, where people can develop their abilities to the full, and pass on to future generations a better environment.”*

The action plan includes the following as priorities:

- To provide more affordable housing; reduce homelessness; to support vulnerable people of all age groups in their own homes and to expand the re-ablement service.
- To reduce the incidents of anti-social behaviour and peoples fear of crime.

The Community Strategy is currently being reviewed and this Homelessness Strategy will help the Community Strategy achieve its aims by:

- Taking a proactive housing options approach to housing advice to help reduce homelessness through prevention work.
- Identifying the needs of households that may face homelessness, and addressing them through a raft of measures appropriate to their needs which will be delivered in partnership with other agencies.
- Work with key agencies to support vulnerable and at risk individuals.
**South Staffordshire Council’s Corporate Strategy 2003 - 2007**

This strategy sets out the aims and priorities the Council intends to pursue, reflecting the needs and aspirations of residents of South Staffordshire.

Prudent financial planning and commitment to high standards of public service are at the heart of the South Staffordshire approach.

Our current corporate strategy has five aims, each having a number of priorities with indicators to monitor success

**Corporate Aims:**

- **Aim 1:** Protect and improve South Staffordshire’s distinctive environment
- **Aim 2:** To ensure at all times that the requirements of the people of South Staffordshire are effectively represented using partnership working where appropriate
- **Aim 3:** Reduce crime and disorder and make South Staffordshire safer
- **Aim 4:** To develop South Staffordshire as an even more enjoyable and healthy place to live in and visit
- **Aim 5:** To maximise in a sustainable way the employment potential and prosperity within South Staffordshire

The aims are supported by a number of objectives which outline the approach to service delivery. An annual service plan for Housing Services (Operations) is produced which highlights how priorities for the service are met and in doing so link into the Council’s aims through the Council’s Performance Pyramid.

The actions within this revised Homelessness Strategy will help meet the aims of the Council’s Corporate Strategy and will be built into service planning through the Council’s Performance Pyramid.

**The Housing Strategy 2003 - 2008**

Priorities within the Council’s “Fit For Purpose” Housing Strategy includes the following priorities:-

- We will continue to provide additional affordable housing. We will do this by continuing with a housing capital programme, despite the abolition of Local Authority Social Housing Grant. We will build on our excellent record of attracting social housing grant from the Housing Corporation, in partnership with registered social landlords. We will include in our revised Local Plan a robust affordable housing policy
which will deliver approximately 600 affordable homes by 2011, requiring 30% affordable housing on housing sites over 0.5 hectares.

- We will deliver our Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, improving our housing advice and homelessness service. We will provide a mediation service to reduce homelessness caused by relationship breakdown between families and friends. We will support and facilitate the Domestic Violence Forum and provide support to people threatened with homelessness or made homeless as a result of domestic violence.
- We will work with our partners to provide housing and support for people with specific needs, particularly the frail elderly, people suffering from a mental illness, and people escaping domestic violence.
- We will continue to improve the condition of homes, making fit at least 33 unfit properties a year using renovation grants, tackling poor property conditions in the private rented sector using enforcement action, giving advice to homeowners, bringing empty properties back into use, and providing advice to private landlords through seminars, meetings, and mail shots.

This Homelessness Strategy will help identify the gaps in service provision for homeless households. By doing so, it will inform the Housing Strategy and help it fulfil the corporate aim “… to deal effectively with the housing requirements of South Staffordshire residents”.

The Supporting People Strategy “Supporting the Future” 2005 – 2010

The Supporting people Team are currently undertaking strategic reviews of the services that currently support for client groups including those with mental health and/or substance misuse issues, ex offenders, domestic violence, young people, frail elderly, homelessness services, learning disabilities etc.

The priorities identified within this strategy will help inform the outcomes of the strategic reviews ensuring that services are provided where most needed within the Staffordshire area.

The South Staffordshire Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is extremely important in addressing housing need within South Staffordshire.

In 2005 the Council resolved to cease work on the Local Plan and to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF) for South Staffordshire. As part of the LDF, a Core Strategy is being prepared providing the broad planning policy framework and spatial strategy to guide future development within the District up to 2021. The Core Strategy will set out the housing requirements in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and a Housing Site Allocations and Policies document will identify and allocate land in appropriate locations to meet the development requirements. The core strategy and
hiring allocations document will take into account the principles, aims and objectives of the RSS

This Strategy will inform the Local Development Framework by advising on the nature of homelessness within South Staffordshire.

**South Staffordshire Council's Housing Services Best Value Review 2005**

The review completed March 2006 identified the following action points for the Council's homelessness and housing advice service:

- Service standards to be set in relation to the standard of housing advice given.
- Revised Local Performance Indicators to be developed incorporating, and expanding on LPI 34 to reflect quality rather than quantity of work carried out which will improve customer satisfaction levels.
- To meet targets set within BVPIs 213 and 214, both relating to prevention of homelessness, current resources should be realigned to provide a good quality housing advice and homelessness prevention service.
- Private landlords have a key role to play in helping prevent homelessness. The current rent guarantee and deposit scheme is to be developed in conjunction with a Landlord’s Accreditation Scheme.
- To ensure that the standard of advice currently given is appropriate and adequate, monitoring of casework will be developed in line with Community Law standards.
- To acknowledge that the service provided is of an excellent standard and is “Fit for Purpose” Charter Mark accreditation is to be achieved.
- Joint working protocols with other agencies will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they respond to current needs.
- Information to be collected on clients with regard to ethnicity, vulnerability and disability issues to help inform service provision.
- The Council’s current Housing Register is be replaced with a Choice Based Lettings system.
- Alternatives options for service delivery are to be explored.

By building on these initiatives, this Homelessness Strategy will continue to improve the standard of service to homeless or potentially homeless households within South Staffordshire.
South Staffordshire Community Safety Strategy 2005 - 2008

The Strategy identified a number of targets to help combat domestic violence:

- Reduce the number of domestic violence offences over the next three years.
- Reduce the number of repeat incidents of domestic violence
- Increase the number of reported non-crime incidents
- Reduce the number of collapsed court cases

Addressing the needs of those made homeless or are threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence, will not only meet client’s needs, but also help to achieve targets set within the current Community Safety Strategy.

South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2006- 2009

The Domestic Abuse Strategy “A Strategic Partnership for Change” highlighted the following priorities to ensure a safer South Staffordshire by:

- Reducing homelessness through domestic violence by working with the Housing Services team.
- Reducing the incidence, severity and dangers of domestic violence.
- Tackling Repeat victimisation
- Addressing negative consequences of domestic abuse for men, women and children
- Challenging the social acceptance of domestic abuse.

Working in partnership with the South Staffordshire Domestic Abuse Forum will help address the needs of victims of domestic violence and reduce homelessness caused by domestic violence.

South Staffordshire Council’s Empty Property Strategy 2006 - 2011

The empty property strategy is a sub-strategy of South Staffordshire Council’s *Fit For Purpose* Housing Strategy 2003 –2008. One of the Key Priorities identified in the Housing Strategy’s Action Plan is to improve private sector housing conditions in South Staffordshire. Operating an effective Empty Property Strategy is one of the tools identified to address this.

The Housing Strategy identified a shortfall in the number of properties available for rent or sale in both the private and social sectors, and the supply could be increased if empty properties were brought back into use.
When the percentage of empty properties in the District is compared with the number of homeless families in the District, it is clear that bringing empty properties back into use would be an important factor in helping to reduce homelessness.

This Homelessness Strategy will help inform the ongoing work of the Empty Property Strategy in relation to the requirements and needs of homeless households within the district by providing more housing opportunities.

*Tackling Homelessness - The Housing Corporation Strategy 2006*

The Housing Corporation in its strategy “Tackling Homelessness” has identified the following priorities to help tackle homelessness:

- Support local authorities in their leadership role to tackle homelessness;
- Ensure housing associations are fulfilling their statutory duty to work with local authorities to contribute to tackling homelessness;
- Promote co-operation between housing associations and local authorities in tackling homelessness;
- Embed prevention of homelessness and tenancy sustainment as one of housing associations’ strategic and operational priorities;
- Promote cross-boundary co-operation, choice and mobility for all households;
- Promote better use of existing housing stock
- Contribute to reducing homelessness in line with our commitment to promoting sustainable and mixed communities.

Incorporating these priorities into this Homelessness Strategy and working in partnership with housing associations will ensure that the identified priorities will be met.

*West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy 2005*

This Strategy was commissioned by the Regional Housing Board to help inform the Regional Housing Strategy.

One of the key priorities identified within the strategy was to agree key priorities and establish SMART targets for the sub-regions.

The priorities identified within this Homelessness Strategy will help inform the priorities within the West Midlands Regional Homelessness Strategy.
CHAPTER FOUR – Homelessness – The Local Context

The statistical information comes from a range of sources but primarily from the Council’s Housing Services (Operations) unit.

Homelessness overall within South Staffordshire has shown a decrease over the past 5 years with a steady decline in the number of homelessness acceptances dropping from 121 (April 05 – December 05) to 70 (April 06 – December 06), a decrease of 42% for the same period. It is anticipated that with the improved housing options approach to prevention of homelessness, this downward trend will continue in future years.

[Households Accepted as Unintentionally Homeless and in Priority Need graph]

Whilst the number of acceptances has fallen over the past five years, there has also been a decline in the overall number of homelessness decisions made. Homelessness decisions for April 2006 – December 2006 have decreased by 68% (283 to 90) compared to the same period in 2005.

**Table 1 Total Homelessness Decisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unintentionally Homeless and in priority need</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless, in priority need but intentionally so</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless but no priority need</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not homeless</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not eligible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>292</strong></td>
<td><strong>340</strong></td>
<td><strong>364</strong></td>
<td><strong>325</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* April ’06 – December ’06 only

Source Quarterly PIE returns to CLG

* April ’06 – December ’06 only
Causes of Homelessness

Although acceptances have decreased, the three main causes of homelessness have remained constant as detailed in Table 2 below. These are:

- Relationship breakdown (Violent and non-violent)
- Family and/or friends being unable to accommodate
- Loss of private accommodation due to the end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST).

Table 2 Main causes of homelessness for those accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/other family/friends unwilling or unable to accommodate</td>
<td>53 25%</td>
<td>57 29%</td>
<td>40 26%</td>
<td>43 30%</td>
<td>12 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy</td>
<td>35 16%</td>
<td>26 13%</td>
<td>28 18%</td>
<td>26 18%</td>
<td>7 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship breakdown (violent)</td>
<td>60 29%</td>
<td>37 19%</td>
<td>39 26%</td>
<td>36 25%</td>
<td>32 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship breakdown (non violent)</td>
<td>24 11%</td>
<td>35 18%</td>
<td>21 14%</td>
<td>17 12%</td>
<td>8 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage Arrears</td>
<td>4 2%</td>
<td>2 5%</td>
<td>5 14%</td>
<td>4 12%</td>
<td>5 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Arrears (all sectors)</td>
<td>7 4%</td>
<td>4 5%</td>
<td>5 3%</td>
<td>3 2%</td>
<td>2 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including emergency)</td>
<td>25 11%</td>
<td>34 18%</td>
<td>13 14%</td>
<td>16 12%</td>
<td>4 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208 25%</td>
<td>195 29%</td>
<td>151 30%</td>
<td>145 30%</td>
<td>70 46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source Quarterly PIE returns to CLG
The figures shown in brackets are the totals as a percentage of all acceptances.
* April '06 – December '06 only

The above table confirms that the housing options approach that has been taken this year (2006/07) has helped to reduce the numbers of households that have become homeless, whilst making sure that those in need are able to receive assistance.

The table also shows, domestic violence has been a major cause of homelessness within the past 5 years and is clearly the biggest cause of homelessness this year (2006/07). This must be addressed through the action plan of this strategy.

INSERT INFO ON AGE RANGES
Priority Need

Of those households accepted for re-housing, the main reason they have been in priority need is due to having dependant children, being an expectant mothers or have fled violence. Of those fleeing violence, in 2006/07 80% was domestic violence related.

Many of the households experiencing domestic violence have children within them. “As a result of domestic abuse in the home, children can suffer from neglect, emotional and physical abuse and other conditions that may lead to a referral to us (Social Services) because of their own activities such as substance misuse, self harming or perpetrating abuse” (South Staffordshire Domestic Busi Form: A Strategic Partnership for Change, 2006/09)

Acceptances by Priority Need 2006 - 2007

Other Statistical Data

Whilst the majority of statistical data is obtained from the Homelessness returns to Communities and Local Government each quarter, it is acknowledged that this does not capture the full picture of homelessness within an area, as many homeless households do not approach the local authority for help.

To try and obtain a clearer picture of homelessness within South Staffordshire, a “snapshot” of information has been collected from both other statutory agencies and the third sector to provide a fuller picture of the issues around homelessness within the area.

In October 2006, a questionnaire was sent to a total of 22 statutory and voluntary agencies requesting that they complete a form for any approaches...
from homeless or potentially homeless people who have originated from the South Staffordshire area for a one-week period in November 2006.

Responses were received from neighbouring councils, domestic violence refuges, Connexions (who provide support to 16 – 18 year olds), and South Staffordshire Citizen’s Advice Bureau (CAB). The local authorities and CAB had dealt with a total of 7 clients from South Staffordshire providing general advice and assistance. Neither the DV refuges nor Connexions had received any enquiries for that period.

Of the seven enquiries, 3 were from the 16 – 34 years age group with the other 4 being aged 25 – 59 years, and all were white.

**Rough Sleepers**

Rough Sleeping is the worst manifestation of homelessness. To gauge the extent of the problem within South Staffordshire, this Council carries out a “Street Homelessness” Survey annually. Questionnaires are sent to all parish councils and a range of voluntary and statutory organisations operating within parishes that have a local knowledge of the area. They are asked to provide estimates on how many people are sleeping rough to their knowledge both within the past 6 months and on a particular predetermined night, the results of which are detailed below.

**Table 3 – Street Homelessness Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many people do you estimate sleep rough in your parish at this time?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 – 3</td>
<td>1 - 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: The estimate for a particular night has only been included since 2005.

Of these estimates it was observed that there were possible alcohol and drug issues, and mental and physical health issues.

The areas that were identified where rough sleeping had been observed was as would be expected, in woods, in a car on someone’s garden, in car parks, by the canal and on the railway walk.

Whilst the numbers remain low, measures must be in place to ensure that this client group are able to access the housing options service.

**Gypsies and Travellers**

There is only one official “transit site” within Staffordshire and that is based in Stafford Borough Council’s area. Within South Staffordshire there are a total of 12 licensed caravan sites that are owned and occupied by gypsies and a further 5 (3 full and 2 part) that are occupied by gypsy families.

An annual Count is carried out by this Council, which are detailed in the table below.
### Annual Gypsy Count

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Sites</th>
<th>Number of caravans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2005</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2005</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond this raw data there is very little known about the accommodation requirements of gypsies and travellers.

In addition, the Housing Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to carry out a Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment. To address this, this Council is working in partnership with Lichfield District Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Tamworth Borough Council, North Warwickshire District Council, Rugby Borough Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council to commission a specialist to carry out the assessment.

The findings of this study will help inform the future provision of services for Gypsies and Travellers through future reviews of this strategy.

### Young People

There is very little information known about the true extent of homelessness within this client group. Many do not approach the local authority for assistance, so are not included on official returns to central government. Whilst the snapshot survey carried out recently gave limited information on the amount of “sofa surfers” more detailed information must be gathered which will be addressed through the action plan of this strategy.
CHAPTER FIVE – Housing Options within South Staffordshire

Housing Tenure

The majority of properties within South Staffordshire are either owned outright (34%) or are mortgaged (45%) which is slightly more than the rest of England and Wales. Around 4% of properties are privately rented with social housing accounting for 14% of all tenures, which is slightly less than the rest of England and Wales.

The Private Rented Sector

The private rented sector plays its part in the provision of rented accommodation across the district. There is an active Private Landlords’ Forum (PLF) in South Staffordshire which is currently working with the Council’s Housing Services team and Environmental Health to develop a Private Property Accreditation Scheme which will ensure that accredited properties awarded standard accreditation will meet a minimum predetermined standard. The long term aim of the scheme will be for all properties to be awarded “Gold” standard, thereby meeting the minimum requirements set by Central Government in the “Decent Homes Standard”, ahead of the 2020 target for the private sector. The Accreditation Scheme will be launched in April 2007.

The Council also has a Rent Guarantee and Deposit Scheme, which has not reached its full potential in the past. Work is currently ongoing to develop a scheme that will fit both the needs of private landlords and prospective tenants within the South Staffordshire area.

Work is ongoing through the Private Landlord’s Form to provide information through its meetings held twice yearly and a comprehensive advice pack which includes information on landlord and tenant responsibilities, repairs, gas safety and illegal eviction. The homelessness and advice team and the Council’s Environmental Health team address issues of disrepair with private landlords. Issues around illegal eviction and harassment are dealt with by the Housing Services (Operations) team.

A consultation exercise with applicants on the Council’s Housing Register carried out in 2005 asked if they had tried to access the private rented sector. The majority of those answering yes already lived in private rented property, of those answering no, 65% felt that private rents were unaffordable.

The perception of the private rented sector by the general public is generally not a very good one. Working with the Private Landlord Forum on initiatives such as the Property Accreditation Scheme and Rent Deposit/Guarantee Scheme will help build trust in this sector.
**Social Rented Housing**

There are currently seven housing associations operating within the District who own a variety of general needs and specialist housing totalling in excess of 6,000 units throughout the South Staffordshire area. This is accessed either by direct application to an association or by nomination from the Council from its Housing Register.

There are currently service level agreements between this Council and all housing associations governing the number of nominations received and how they are dealt with, which are reviewed annually. Monitoring of these agreements indicate that although individual nomination targets are being met, in the past, the limited number of properties that have been available has only enabled this Council to fulfil its statutory duties towards those accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need. However during the past year, the housing options approach being developed has resulted in more applicants being offered housing from the general waiting list, as indicated in the table below.

**Table 4 Housing Register and Nominations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total re-housed through Nominations to RSLs</th>
<th>Total homelessness acceptances</th>
<th>Total number of applicants on the Housing Register as at 1st April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>1184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>112*</td>
<td>70*</td>
<td>1568**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* NB Figures for 2006/07 are for 1st April 06 – 31st December 06 only.  
** Housing Register as at 31st December 2006.  
Source: Annual housing association nomination return, Annual HIP return and the Council’s Housing Register

**Owner Occupation**

The 2001 census showed that 80% of householders in South Staffordshire own their own homes with the average price for all property types £111,358, compared to the national average of £119,436. In February 2007 the average price had increased to £210,084 compared to the national average of £210,116.

A consultation exercise with applicants on the Council’s Housing Register carried out in 2004 asked if they had tried to access the owner occupation sector. The majority of those answering yes already lived in their own property, of those answering no, 92% felt that buying their own home was unaffordable. This would appear to be so with the average household income being £27,492 for a single person household and £34,159 for a joint household.
Being unable to afford to buy a home, clearly limits the number of households being able to access the owner occupied sector, therefore placing more pressure on both the social and private rented sectors.
CHAPTER SIX – Current Service Provision

The Homelessness and Advice Service

The Council’s Service

Our homelessness, housing advice, and housing register services were carried out by South Staffordshire Housing Association on our behalf, via an agency agreement, from 1997 to 2002. On expiry of the five-year agreement, and following a fundamental review, these services were subject to competitive tender, with a new five-year contract commencing in April 2002. Our in-house bid was successful and our housing team now provides these services.

Following the Best Value Review of the service completed in March 2006, due to the continuing excellent performance of the service it has been determined that the service will remain with the Council and be subject to a further review in 2012.

The homelessness and housing advice service provided by the Council is currently administered from the main Council Offices, which is central to the District. Due to staffing capacity, in the past visits have only been made in rare circumstances where clients are physically unable to get to the Council Offices for an interview. 80% of customers completing a Customer Satisfaction Survey have indicated that they have no preference as to whether or not they had a home visit or the opportunity to be interviewed at a venue closer to their home.

Although only a minority stated that a home visit would have been preferable, (10%) it is recognised good practice that where possible a visit should be made to all homeless or potentially homeless households to verify their circumstances.

An emergency “Out of Hours “ homelessness call out service is provided through “First Response”, with callouts being minimal.

Other providers of Housing Advice

The Citizen’s Advice Bureaux operate within South Staffordshire, from a main base in Wombourne in the south of the district with an outreach service provided in Kinver, Cheslyn Hay, Perton, and Penkridge. Residents are able to obtain free independent and impartial advice on housing matters at these surgeries. South Staffordshire Council financially supports this service.

Residents are also able to access independent housing advice through the Shelter free phone helpline.

Housing associations operating within the district also provide advice to their tenants on general housing matters including debt advice, which helps prevent evictions taking place.
**Domestic Violence**

As demonstrated earlier in this report domestic violence has constantly remained a major cause of homelessness for the past five years. To address the needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse, a range of initiatives have been developed as follows:-

**South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme**

Launched in April 2006, the Scheme is based on the London Borough of Harrow’s “Sanctuary Scheme” and provides additional security measures to be carried out to a property, enabling the client to remain their in a safe and secure environment. Where additional specialist help is required, support is provided through the Stafford Women’s Aid “Reach Out” floating support scheme.

To date (February 2007), 11 households have been assisted through the scheme. Customer feedback is positive with clients stating that they would have been homeless if the work had not been carried out to their property.

Funding has been provided through the Department of Community and Local Governments (DCLG), “Prevention of Homelessness Grant” for 2006/7 and 2007/08, and a grant from GOWM. Future funding for the scheme is currently secured until March 2008.

**Victim Support**

It is recognised that the psychological effect on victims of domestic violence must also be addressed to help break the cycle of abuse. The Staffordshire Supporting People Strategy highlighted the need to provide a support service to victims within South Staffordshire and in October 2006 Stafford Women’s Aid – The Artemis Project were commissioned by the Supporting people Team to provide a floating support service to victims within the area. The service currently has funding secured until December 2007.

The service built on an existing service provided by the Artemis Project in the north of the district and is able to provide support for an additional 15 clients at any one time. This support has also been linked to the refuge spaces currently being developed within the district.

**Domestic Violence Refuge Provision**

There is currently no specific provision of accommodation for victims of domestic violence within the District. When required, clients are referred to refuge accommodation in neighbouring areas, usually Wolverhampton, Cannock, Stafford, or Sandwell.
BVPI 225 places a requirement on all local authorities to ensure that there is adequate provision within their area of domestic violence refuge spaces—equating to 10 spaces for South Staffordshire.

Between April 2006 and December 2006 14 referrals were received from refuges in Wolverhampton, Cannock and Stafford. Ten were accommodated, 4 were not.

Work is currently ongoing on an options appraisal for provision of domestic violence refuge spaces within the district and will be completed by April 2007.

**Temporary Accommodation**

*Tildesley Court, Penkridge*

Where this Council has a duty under the homelessness legislation to provide temporary accommodation to a homeless household, they are placed in short stay accommodation owned by South Staffordshire Housing Association. This consists of 15 self-contained units in the north of the District. There is a designated unit that has been adapted for a wheelchair user with the kitchen being fitted with low-level units and the bathroom having a level access shower. Access to this accommodation is by referral from the homelessness services section only and is governed by a service level agreement that is reviewed annually. In addition, an additional 6 “floating” units can be made available when required to accommodate larger families. A total of 18 households have been accommodated this year to date (February 2007).

There is a dedicated manager of the scheme employed by South Staffordshire Housing Association who is able to provide general support to the clients. Where more acute support needs are identified, these are addressed by referral to Carrgomm, a specialist support provider jointly funded by this Council and Staffordshire Supported People funding.

**Other Temporary/Emergency Accommodation**

In line with Central Government guidance and targets, the use of bed and breakfast (B & B) accommodation is kept to a minimum with only three households with children or a pregnant woman being placed into B & B this financial year, for one night each on an emergency basis until they could be moved to more suitable accommodation.

Use of any hostel accommodation has been zero for the past five years.

**Supported Housing**

There is a range of supported housing, either permanent of floating, provided throughout the district, which receives Supporting People Grant.

There are 20 schemes within the district providing accommodation-based support for older people within sheltered housing schemes providing a total of
705 separate units. In addition there are 2 schemes providing 97 units for the frail elderly and 1242 households are supported through a community alarm system.

Specialist support for other vulnerable client groups including people with learning disabilities, young people, domestic violence victims, mental health issues and general floating support is detailed in the table below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Name</th>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Provider type</th>
<th>Accommodation Type</th>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>Primary Client Group</th>
<th>Total Number of units</th>
<th>South Staffordshire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heantun Supported Living Service</td>
<td>Heantun Housing Association</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td>Supported Housing (shared or self contained)</td>
<td>Accommodation Based Service</td>
<td>People with Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perton Fixed</td>
<td>Bromford Housing Group</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td>Supported Housing (shared or self contained)</td>
<td>Accommodation Based Service</td>
<td>Single Homeless with Support Needs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Staffs Floating Support Service</td>
<td>South Staffordshire Housing Association Ltd</td>
<td>LSVT(RSL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24hr Group Support (SLA) - 8 Beverston Road, Perton (SP Ref: 655, Provider: Milbury Care)</td>
<td>Social Care &amp; Health Directorate - Commissioning Dept, Staffordshire County Council</td>
<td>Local Authority - Joint Social Services/Housing</td>
<td>Supported Housing (shared or self contained)</td>
<td>Accommodation Based Service</td>
<td>People with Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Staffordshire Reach Out</td>
<td>Stafford Womens Aid</td>
<td>Voluntary Not for Profit Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Women at Risk of Domestic Violence</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accord - Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Accord Housing Association</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating Support - High Risk Offenders</td>
<td>Heantun Housing Association</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Offenders or People at risk of Offending</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethink Floating Support</td>
<td>Rethink</td>
<td>Charitable Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>People with Mental Health Problems</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISP Floating Support Scheme</td>
<td>Action Housing Association</td>
<td>Charitable Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>People with Drug Problems</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Support Service</td>
<td>The Beth Johnson Housing Association Ltd</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County-wide Floating Support</td>
<td>Bromford Housing Group</td>
<td>RSL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floating Support Service</td>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SEVEN – Setting the Priorities

The Homelessness and Housing Advice Service

If the homelessness prevention work is to be further developed, a clear and effective homelessness advice service is required. It is therefore essential that advice and assistance be given to people as soon as they encounter housing difficulties.

In order to build on and improve existing services:-

- An outreach housing advice service is to be piloted in Wombourne Leisure Centre. If successful, it will be rolled out to other Leisure Centres within other well-used centres within the district.
- The Housing Options approach will be further developed following the staffing restructure being implemented from 2nd April 2007.
- Established Best Practice to be included in the homelessness investigation process, i.e. visits to be carried out to potentially homeless households to verify their circumstances.
- Views of customers to be sought through satisfaction surveys and focus groups to enable the service to respond to customers needs.
- Chartermark Accreditation to be achieved for the homelessness service to ensure that the service provided is “Fit for Purpose”
- Appropriate training of staff to ensure compliance with legal requirements and established best practice.
- Carry out a review of the “out of hours” provision for homelessness.

It must also be recognised that work around homelessness cannot be dealt with in isolation by this Council, indeed a more holistic approach must be taken that can be achieved by working in partnership with both voluntary and statutory agencies. For example, working with other Council departments such as Leisure services and Environmental Health will facilitate the development of health packages for homeless households. The development of the Local Area Agreements, in particular the blocks dealing with Children and Young People, and Youth Offending will provide greater opportunities to build on existing partnership arrangements to address the needs of these client groups.

Homelessness Prevention

It is recognised that not only do we need to provide a good quality housing advice and homelessness service on the front line, to prevent homelessness in the longer term; there must also be mechanisms in place to support this.

To achieve this, it is proposed to:-

- Develop a range of services in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to support young people who are in danger of being made homeless due to relationships breaking down with families and friends.
• Continue to support the South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme enabling victims of domestic violence to remain in their own homes in a safe and secure environment.
• Develop links with existing services to improve the health and wellbeing of homeless households, which will help to prevent repeat homelessness.
• Further develop a support services for all tenures for vulnerable and socially excluded groups, ie those with mental health issues, substance misuse, domestic violence etc.

Temporary Accommodation

As demonstrated earlier in this strategy, the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households is minimal. This Council is committed to maintaining this minimal use by only placing households in this type of accommodation in the most pressing emergency, eg. Out of normal office hours. When this occurs, the household will be referred to other more suitable accommodation on the next working day.

The accommodation provided at Tildesley Court is of a high standard. Work will continue with South Staffordshire Housing Association to ensure that the current standards are maintained.

To ensure that the current temporary accommodation meets the needs of the both the clients needs and the Council’s statutory duties the following priorities have been identified:-

• An options appraisal for the provision of all temporary/emergency accommodation to be carried out which will include the development of domestic violence refuge space provision. It will examine the current usage of existing temporary accommodation, look at the cost benefits of change of use and will ensure that empty properties are fully utilised.

• A user survey will be carried out of all households placed in any temporary accommodation to ensure that the accommodation is meeting the needs of the client group. Any shortfalls identified will be addressed.

• The service level agreement for the temporary accommodation between South Staffordshire Housing Association, and this Council will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Housing Options

Owner Occupation

As highlighted in chapter five of this strategy, with the average house price in the area being £210,084 and the average income for a single person
households being £27,492 and a joint income households, £34,159, there are clear affordability issues. To help households on low incomes to enter the owner occupation sector it is recognised that there is a need to develop shared ownership schemes on new build sites through section 106 agreements.

**Social Housing Sector**

As a stock transfer authority this Council provides housing to those applicants on its housing register, including homeless households through nomination agreements with housing associations operating within South Staffordshire.

This Council will launch the Homefinder- Choice Based Lettings Scheme in April 2007. This scheme has been developed in partnership with South Staffordshire Housing Association. This more transparent system of allocating social housing will allow those seeking rented accommodation to make more informed choices as to the housing options available to them.

- To ensure that the needs of all client groups, including homeless households are met through the Homefinder Scheme, an evaluation of the scheme will be completed by September 2007.
- Service level agreements between this Council and all housing associations operating within the area to be reviewed annually.

**The Private Rented Sector**

As demonstrated earlier in this strategy access to private rented accommodation may be the only option available to those wishing to live within the South Staffordshire area. To help facilitate this it is essential that the work currently ongoing with private landlords through both the Private Landlord Forum and the Private Landlords Initiative be further developed.

The following actions have been identified to facilitate the improved working with the private rented sector:-

- Develop and implement a revised rent guarantee/deposit scheme to meet the needs of private landlords and prospective tenants.
- Further develop the Private Landlord Property Accreditation Scheme
- Further develop links with the Private Rented Sector to facilitate easier access for clients on the Council’s Housing Register access to properties.

**Gypsies and Travellers**

There is very little information known on the needs of gypsies and travellers in the South Staffordshire area. To address this, this Council is working in partnership with Lichfield District Council, Cannock Chase District Council, Tamworth Borough Council, North Warwickshire District Council, Rugby
Borough Council and Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council to commission a specialist to carry out the assessment.

The priorities set out above are summarised in table form in the action plan at the end of this chapter.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring of the action plan will be through the Council’s Communities and Environmental Scrutiny Committee.
Action Plan

The Housing Services Manager (Operations) from South Staffordshire Council will co-ordinate the lead agencies in carrying out the agreed actions.

**Homelessness and Housing Advice Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
<th>Lead Agencies</th>
<th>Strategic Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide an outreach service throughout the district</td>
<td>A housing advice service to be provided at Wombourne Leisure Centre as a Pilot Scheme. Evaluation of the scheme to be carried out.</td>
<td>Improved access to services for residents in outlying areas of the district.</td>
<td>Commence April 2007 &amp; ongoing</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Leisure Services</td>
<td>Community Strategy Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer views to be sought on the service provided</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction surveys to be carried at the end of the homelessness process Focus groups for homeless households to be established</td>
<td>Identify and respond to the needs and requirements of customers within the statutory framework of homelessness</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Adult and Community Learning Outreach Worker (Staffs County Council)</td>
<td>Housing Corporation Strategy – Tackling Homelessness Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training</td>
<td>Appropriate training of staff to ensure compliance with legal requirements and established best practice</td>
<td>Ensure that the authority acts within the law.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations)</td>
<td>Corporate Strategy Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review the Out of Hours emergency call out service</td>
<td>Evaluate the current emergency service.</td>
<td>Ensure that the needs of homeless households are met at all times.</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations)</td>
<td>Community Strategy Corporate Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartermark Accreditation to be achieved</td>
<td>Continue the work to obtain Chartermark Accreditation</td>
<td>Ensures that the service provided is “Fit for Purpose”</td>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations)</td>
<td>Community Strategy Corporate Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Homelessness Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
<th>Lead Agencies</th>
<th>Strategic Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young People</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop range of services for young people appropriate to their needs</strong></td>
<td>Carry out an options appraisal on the support and accommodation requirements of young people within the district</td>
<td>Young people, where appropriate, enabled to remain in their homes in a supportive environment, resulting in their homelessness being prevented.</td>
<td>March 2008</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Social Care and Health Connexions Youth Offending Service Registered Social Landlords</td>
<td>Local area Agreement – Block 1 – Children and Young People Tackling Homelessness – A Housing Corporation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 2008</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further develop the Joint working Protocol for Young People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March 2008</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a mediation service for young people who are potentially homeless due to family and/or friends no longer being able to accommodate them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic Violence</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enable victims of domestic violence remain in their home</strong></td>
<td>Further develop the “South Staffordshire Stay Safe Scheme”</td>
<td>Enables victims of domestic violence to remain in their in homes in a safe and secure environment</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Community Safety Partnership South Staffordshire Domestic Violence Forum</td>
<td>Community Safety Strategy Community Strategy Corporate Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide training around domestic violence awareness</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Wellbeing of Clients</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improve the health and wellbeing of homeless households</strong></td>
<td>Develop links with existing services to improve the health and wellbeing of households who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of</td>
<td>Will help reduce the number of repeat homelessness cases.</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Leisure Services Environmental Health (Commercial)</td>
<td>Community Strategy Corporate Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
becoming homeless.

### Homelessness Prevention (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
<th>Lead Agencies</th>
<th>Strategic Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generic Support Services</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that there is adequate support for homeless or potentially homeless households</td>
<td>Further develop generic support services for vulnerable and socially excluded households, i.e., those with mental health issues, substance misuse issues, etc. to cover all tenures.</td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Staffordshire Supporting People Team South Staffordshire Housing Association</td>
<td>Community Strategy Supporting People Strategy Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Will enable households to live independently by providing them with support appropriate to their needs, reducing the risk of homelessness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporary Accommodation</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that the general needs accommodation provided is appropriate and suitable.</td>
<td>Complete an options appraisal for the provision of temporary/emergency accommodation for homeless households to incorporate: - Customer satisfaction surveys - Review the Service Level Agreement for Tidesley Crt</td>
<td>December 2007 Ongoing March 2008</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) South Staffordshire Housing Association</td>
<td>Community Strategy Corporate Strategy Tackling Homelessness – A Housing Corporation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensures that the accommodation provided is suitable and meets the needs of both clients and the Council’s statutory duties and is fit for purpose.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domestic Violence Refuge Spaces</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that refuge accommodation</td>
<td>Further develop the provision of domestic violence refuge spaces within the district</td>
<td>March 2008</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations) Community Safety</td>
<td>Empty Property Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
is available for victims of domestic violence.

### Housing Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
<th>Lead Agencies</th>
<th>Strategic Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner Occupation</strong></td>
<td>Develop shared ownership schemes and low cost market housing with developers on new build sites through section 106 agreements.</td>
<td>Enable households on low incomes to purchase their own homes.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Strategic Housing Development Plans, Development Control Services, Registered Social Landlords</td>
<td>Local Development Framework, Housing Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Housing Sector</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate the Homefinder Choice Based Lettings Scheme</td>
<td>Ensures that those in housing need are able to access social rented housing</td>
<td>August 07</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations), South Staffordshire Housing Association</td>
<td>Tackling Homelessness – A Housing Corporation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Rented Sector</strong></td>
<td>Develop a rent guarantee and deposit scheme that meets the needs of private landlords and enables socially excluded and vulnerable households to obtain private rented housing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Housing Services (Operations), Housing Strategy</td>
<td>Housing Strategy, Empty Property Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Gypsies and Travellers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gypsies and Travellers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explore the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### South Staffordshire Council – Homelessness Strategy 2007 - 2012
**Service Delivery**

### Provision of a Homelessness and Housing Advice Service

| Provide a comprehensive housing advice and homelessness service free to all residents | Carry out a review of the homelessness and housing advice service currently provided by South Staffordshire Council. | Ensures that the service provided is:-  
- fit for purpose;  
- provides value for money;  
- complies with legal; requirements and best practice. | March 2012 | Housing Services (Operations) | Corporate Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

If you require further information regarding this Homelessness Strategy please contact:

Ms Pat Main  
Housing Services Manager (Operations)  
South Staffordshire Council  
Council Offices  
Codsall  
Wv8 1PX

Telephone: 01902 696427  
E Mail: p.main@sstaffs.gov.uk
YOUR VIEWS

Thank you for taking the time to read our Homelessness Strategy for 2007 - 2012. As your views are important to us, we would appreciate it if you could take the time to fill in the following questionnaire. Having your say enables you to play a part in the future of our Services, helping us to meet the needs of the people of South Staffordshire.

1. Did you find the Homelessness Strategy easy to understand?  
   Yes ☐  No ☐

2. If you felt that it was difficult to follow how do you feel it could be improved?
   _____________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________________

3. Did you find the Homelessness Strategy informative?  
   Yes ☐  No ☐

4. Do you think that the targets set are sufficiently challenging?  
   Yes ☐  No ☐
Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to the FREEPOST address below

Ms Pat Main
Housing Services Manager (OP
South Staffordshire Council
FREEPOST
MID 21881
Nr. Wolverhampton
South Staffordshire
WV8 1BR