



# **CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

**REVISION 2009 – 2011**

# CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

### REVISED STRATEGY 2009 -2011

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# CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVISION

**2009-2011**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must have a Homelessness Strategy for preventing homelessness and securing accommodation and support for homeless persons. Chiltern District Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003. This document revises and updates that strategy.

In the six years since the Council's original Homelessness Strategy was published, there have been a number of developments locally and nationally including:

- A wide range of Government guidance on homelessness with an emphasis on prevention services and a target to halve the number of homelessness households in temporary accommodation by 2010.
- An average of 186 homelessness applications per annum to the Council up to 2007/08 (including an average of 123 households per annum accepted for the main homelessness duty of being re-housed by the Council)
- Increased levels of working with the private rented sector in Chiltern, including over 200 households securing private sector tenancies via the Council's Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme
- Increased levels of homelessness prevention work locally contributing to a sharp drop in the number of homelessness applications and acceptances in 2008/09 (down to 112 and 63 respectively) and to a drop in the number of households in temporary accommodation (including bed and breakfast)

Over the last 18 months, the Council has been in discussions with CLG (Communities and Local Government) over making improvements to homelessness prevention work in Chiltern. This has been backed up by multi-agency training and a peer review exercise and supported by local developments including the implementation of a new Council Housing Advice Website, the appointment of a Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer and closer joint working with the Paradigm Housing Options Team and other partner agencies. This work has culminated in the Council making a successful joint bid with South Bucks District Council for £196,000 over two years (2009/10 and 2010/11) from the CLG Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer Programme to support the development of further housing advice and homelessness prevention services.

The revised strategy document incorporates an Action Plan that sets down the key tasks for tackling homelessness in Chiltern over the next two years and for delivering increased levels of homelessness prevention. It reflects the key homelessness priority areas agreed by the Council's Cabinet in October 2008:

**Key Priorities for Review of Homelessness Strategy (As agreed by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008)**

- (i) Promote the private rented sector as the primary option for persons seeking housing assistance and/or who currently lack suitable accommodation**
  - (ii) Maximise the use of the private rented sector to secure accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (by working pro-actively with clients and landlords)**
  - (iii) Prevent homelessness through targeted early intervention, including home visits by Council and Paradigm Officers to identify and pursue all housing options with clients (e.g. remain at current address, secure private rented accommodation) and multi agency partnership working to support vulnerable persons to sustain tenancies\***
  - (iv) Review the use of mediation services and identify and introduce methods to effectively utilise mediation to prevent homelessness (e.g. tackle family disputes and prevent parental eviction)**
  - (v) Receive a homelessness application and (if necessary) provide temporary accommodation only if all other housing options have been explored and are not available or appropriate**
  - (vi) Develop an improved private landlord service to attract and support local landlords, including officer intervention to help resolve disputes and prevent tenancy terminations (with an initial response provided within 24 hours)**
  - (vii) Develop new initiatives to increase the availability of accommodation for clients in the private sector (including the introduction of private sector leasing in partnership with Paradigm)**
  - (viii) Improve cross agency working between key partners and develop a common assessment form for use by all local agencies to deliver homelessness prevention advice and support to clients**
  - (ix) Secure effective debt and budget advice services to help prevent homelessness among clients facing rent and mortgage arrears (including the development of CAB services and use of Court desks)**
  - (x) Identify existing and potential schemes to deliver emergency and supported housing for clients in need of immediate temporary accommodation (including crash-pad and supported lodgings)**
  - (xi) Review the use of Discretionary Housing Payments and ensure they are being used as effectively as possible to prevent homelessness (within the existing financial limits)**
- (\*Priority (iii) was expanded following consultation on the strategy with Bucks County Council)**

The Action Plan reflects these priority areas and also the potential impact of the recession on homelessness locally.

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

### *What is homelessness?*

Under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) a person is homeless if he/she:

- (i) has no accommodation available that he/she has a right to occupy, or
- (ii) has accommodation available that he/she has a right to occupy, but which:
  - he/she cannot enter, or
  - it is not reasonable for him/her to occupy (e.g. due to a threat of violence), or
  - is a moveable structure (e.g. mobile home) and there is no place where it can legally be placed.

For the purposes of this Strategy, the definition of homeless includes those people who are threatened with becoming homeless within 28 days.

### *What is the Council's legal duty for dealing with homelessness?*

Under the Housing Act 1996, Chiltern District Council has a legal duty to:

- (i) ensure that advice and information about homelessness (and the prevention of homelessness) is available free of charge to any person in Chiltern district, and
- (ii) receive applications that are made for accommodation by people who are homeless (or threatened with homelessness).

### *Does the Council have to provide housing for everyone who is homeless?*

The Council does not have a legal duty to provide accommodation for all homeless households. This duty will only apply to those homeless households who apply for accommodation and who meet the criteria set down in the Housing Act 1996 (summarised in Appendix 1). If the Council does not have a legal duty to actually provide accommodation, it will still have a duty to provide advice and assistance to help the household find its own housing.

In Chiltern, applications for accommodation from homeless households are received by Paradigm Housing on behalf of the Council. Paradigm will undertake full enquiries into each application before referring it the Council for a decision on what legal duty is owed to the applicant. Paradigm will also act on the Council's behalf in providing temporary accommodation where required.

### ***Why does the Council have a Homelessness Strategy?***

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council must have a Homelessness Strategy for:

- (i) preventing homelessness in Chiltern District,
- (ii) securing that sufficient accommodation is available for those people who are homeless (or may become homeless), and
- (iii) securing the provision of satisfactory support services for people:
  - who are homeless (or may become homeless); or
  - who used to be homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

Chiltern District Council published its Homelessness Strategy in 2003.

### ***Why is the Council revising its Homelessness Strategy?***

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to revise their Homelessness Strategies within five years of publication. Chiltern District Council is exempt from this requirement because it was categorised as an “Excellent” authority following its CPA (Comprehensive Performance Assessment) in 2004. However, the changes and developments that have occurred in homelessness both locally and nationally means that it is important for the Council to revise and update its Strategy to ensure that it remains robust and continues to meet the requirements of the 2002 Act.

### ***What are the contents of the revised Homelessness Strategy?***

This revised Homelessness Strategy document contains an overview of the developments that have occurred in homelessness (both locally and nationally) since 2003, including a review of the outcomes achieved against the original strategy’s Action Plan.

This Document goes on to summarise the background to the Strategy revision and includes an Action Plan setting down the key tasks for the Council and its partners in tackling homelessness over the next two years (2009/10 and 2010/11).

### ***How will the Strategy be monitored and when will it be revised again?***

The Strategy will be monitored on a quarterly basis by reviewing progress against the Action Plan. At the end of 2010/11, a full review of the strategy will be carried out to determine if it needs to be revised and updated.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE STORY SINCE 2003

## TIMELINE

Since the Council adopted its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003, there have been a number of developments around homelessness at both a national and local level. The key events are summarised in the following timeline (with national developments shaded grey):

DATE	EVENT
<b>Aug 2004</b>	The Council commences a new <b>Housing Options Officer</b> post to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- co-ordinate housing advice and homelessness prevention work in Chiltern and</li> <li>- launch and manage the local Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>Oct 2004</b>	The Council formally launches its local <b>Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme</b> to assist low income households to secure tenancies in the private rented sector.
<b>Apr 2005</b>	The Government launches a new performance indicator, <b>BVPI 213</b> , to monitor the number of cases where local authority action has successfully prevented homelessness.
<b>Jun 2005</b>	The Government publishes “ <b>Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes; Changing Lives (A Strategy For Tackling Homelessness)</b> ”. The key points of the Strategy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a target to halve the number of households in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010,</li> <li>- a focus on supporting households to prevent them becoming homeless,</li> <li>- the importance for effective multi-agency working and</li> <li>- the need to provide more settled homes, including making more use of the private rented sector and empty homes.</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<b>Jun 2006</b>	The Government publishes “ <b>Homelessness Prevention – A Guide to Good Practice</b> ” which focuses on 6 key areas of activity for delivering homelessness prevention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- housing advice,</li> <li>- rent deposit schemes,</li> <li>- family mediation,</li> <li>- domestic violence victim support,</li> <li>- assistance for ex-offenders, and</li> <li>- tenancy sustainment services.</li> </ul>

<b>Jul 2006</b>	The Government publishes a revised “ <b>Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities</b> ” which provides guidance to all authorities on how they should exercise their statutory responsibilities under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).
<b>Jul 2006</b>	Bucks CC and four district councils launch Care Leaver’s Protocol (following pilot in Chiltern) to promote joint working to prevent homelessness among care leavers.
<b>Aug 2006</b>	The Council’s Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme reaches a total of <b>50 households placed in private sector tenancies</b> since the scheme’s inception.
<b>Sep 2006</b>	The Government issues “ <b>Preventing Homelessness: A Strategy Health Check</b> ”. This is a self assessment tool for local authorities to establish how effective their services are in tackling and preventing homelessness.
<b>Mar 2007</b>	The Council launches its <b>Homelessness Prevention Fund</b> to provide small one-off payments to help households avoid homelessness (e.g. by clearing rent arrears, meeting removal costs, covering repair costs etc.)
<b>Apr 2007</b>	The Council’s Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme reaches a total of <b>100 households placed in private sector tenancies</b> since the scheme’s inception.
<b>Jan 2008</b>	The Council meets with the Government’s <b>Specialist Homelessness Adviser</b> to discuss how to develop the local homelessness service and particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how to reduce the high level of homelessness applications (compared to other authorities in the south east) and</li> <li>- how to deliver an increased level of homelessness prevention work in Chiltern.</li> </ul>
<b>Feb 2008</b>	The Audit Commission implements new <b>KLOEs (Key Lines of Enquiry)</b> for assessing Homelessness and Housing Advice Services
<b>Mar 2008</b>	The Council hosts a <b>multi-agency training day</b> on homelessness which is led by one of the Government’s homelessness advisers and focuses on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying local issues and</li> <li>- ways of increasing the level of homelessness</li> </ul>

<b>Apr 2008</b>	The Council's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme reaches a total of <b>150 households placed in private sector tenancies</b> since the scheme's inception.
<b>Apr 2008</b>	The Government <b>abolishes the performance indicator BVP1 213</b> . Instead, information on homelessness prevention is collected via the quarterly PIE (Homelessness Statistics) returns submitted to the Government by each local authority.
<b>May 2008</b>	Officers from Oxford City Council carry out a <b>Peer Review</b> of homelessness services in Chiltern. The key findings include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A positive direction of travel for services locally with manageable numbers in temporary accommodation</li> <li>- Effective links with the private rented sector</li> <li>- Good working between the Council and partner agencies (but with a need to improve the co-ordination of the work carried out by different partners)</li> <li>- A need for increased early intervention (including home visits) to prevent homelessness by providing effective advice and support at an early stage.</li> <li>- A need to increase joint working with private landlords (including intervention to help resolve tenancy problems and prevent tenants being evicted)</li> <li>- The need to look at providing more emergency and "Crash-pad" accommodation locally</li> </ul>
<b>May 2008</b>	The Council launches its new <b>Housing micro-website</b> providing a one-stop shop (within the Council's website) for anyone seeking housing information and advice, including a full range of homelessness prevention information.
<b>Aug 2008</b>	The Council commences a new <b>Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer (2 Years)</b> post to support the continued delivery of the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and housing options work in Chiltern.
<b>Oct 2008</b>	A report reviewing homelessness services in Chiltern is submitted to the <b>Council's Housing and Planning Overview Committee and Cabinet</b> . The Cabinet agrees the key priorities for the revision of the Council's Homelessness Strategy.
<b>Nov 2008</b>	The Government publishes " <b>No One Left Out (Communities Ending Rough Sleeping)</b> " which includes a target to end all rough sleeping by 2012.
<b>Nov 2008</b>	The Council and South Bucks District Council are successful in a joint bid for funding from the Government's <b>Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer Programme</b> . The successful bid secures funding of £98,000 per year over two years (2009/10 and 2010/11) to support the delivery of homelessness prevention services across the two districts.

	<p>The focus of the <b>Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer Programme</b> bid is to support the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- debt advice (including advice on mortgage arrears),</li> <li>- outreach work to deliver housing advice to the community, and</li> <li>- homelessness prevention work among young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Dec 2008</b>	The Chartered Institute of Housing (in partnership with the Government) publishes “ <b>Tackling Worklessness – A Toolkit</b> ” to provide guidance to local authorities and social landlords on tackling worklessness among social housing tenants (and those seeking social housing)
<b>Dec 2008</b>	The Council’s Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme reaches a total of <b>200 households placed in private sector tenancies</b> since the scheme’s inception.
<b>Jan 2009</b>	The Government launches the <b>Mortgage Rescue Scheme</b> to assist homeowners who are facing repossession because they cannot pay their mortgage. The scheme allows a RSL (Registered Social Landlord) to acquire the property outright or on a shared ownership basis (with the owner remaining in occupation). This is followed by the launch of the <b>Homeowners Mortgage Support Scheme</b> in April 2009 which allows home owners to defer some of their mortgage payments for up to two years.
<b>Mar 2009</b>	End of year statistics for 2008/09 show a <b>significant reduction in homelessness applications and acceptances in Chiltern</b> compared to the previous years. During 2008/09 the Council received 112 formal homeless applications (compared to 189 during 2007/08) and accepted the main homelessness duty on 63 of them (compared to 126 in 2007/08).
<b>Apr 2009</b>	The Council commences <b>co-location arrangements</b> with Paradigm Housing Options Team. The Housing Choice Officer or Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer are based with the Team for two days per week to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improve joint working between the agencies and</li> <li>- provide an appointment-based service for Housing Options Team clients to provide early intervention to prevent homelessness and help clients access private rented housing where possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Apr 2009</b>	The Government publishes a <b>guide for local authorities</b> on what action can be taken at a local level to prevent homelessness due to mortgage or landlord repossession.
<b>May 2009</b>	The new choice based lettings scheme, <b>Bucks Home Choice</b> , is launched jointly by Chiltern, Aylesbury Vale, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils.

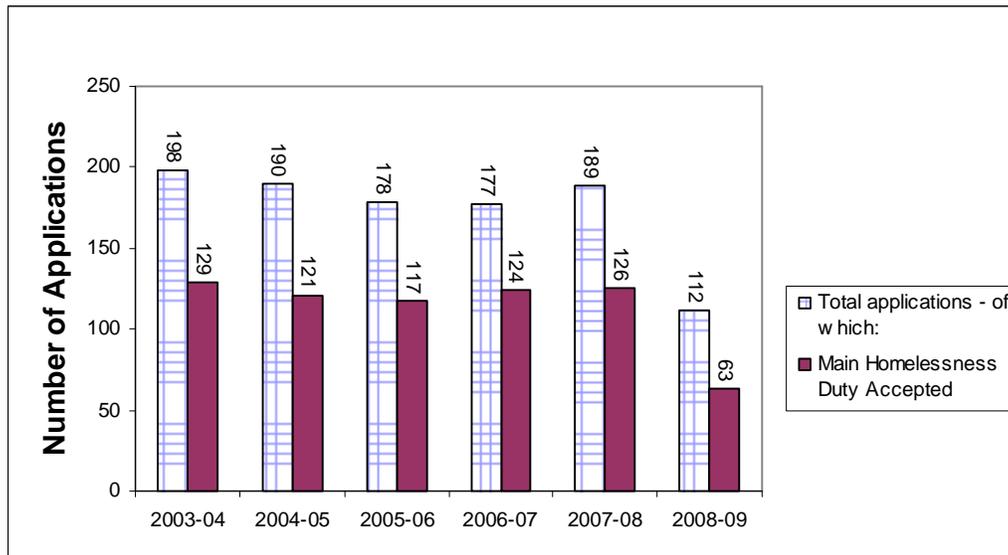
## CHAPTER 3

# THE STORY SINCE 2003

## KEY STATISTICS

This Chapter illustrates some of the key statistics and trends around homelessness in Chiltern over the last six years.

### (i) CDC Homelessness Applications 2003/04 to 2008/09

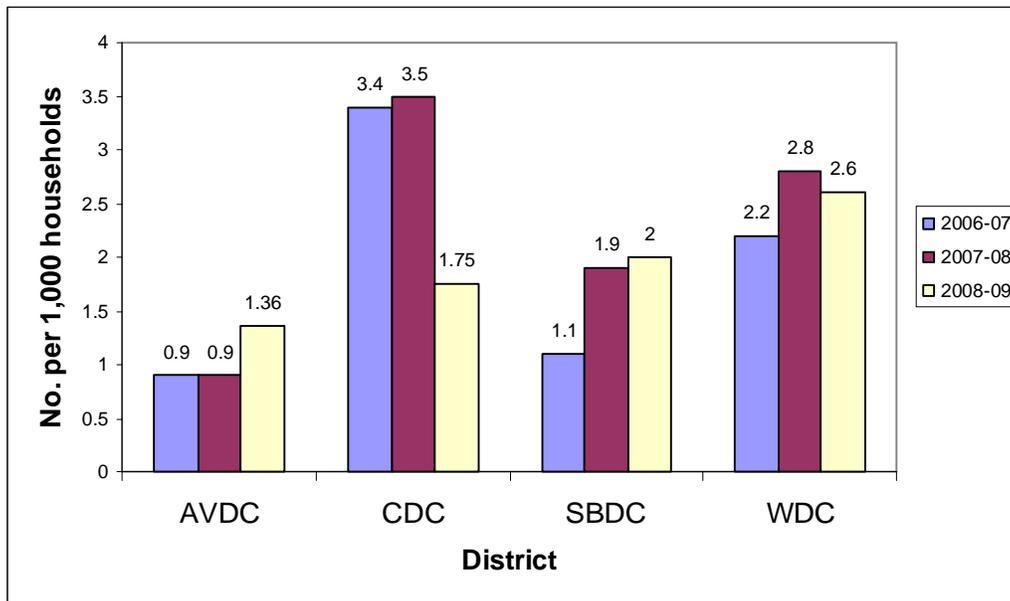


**Chart (i)** shows:

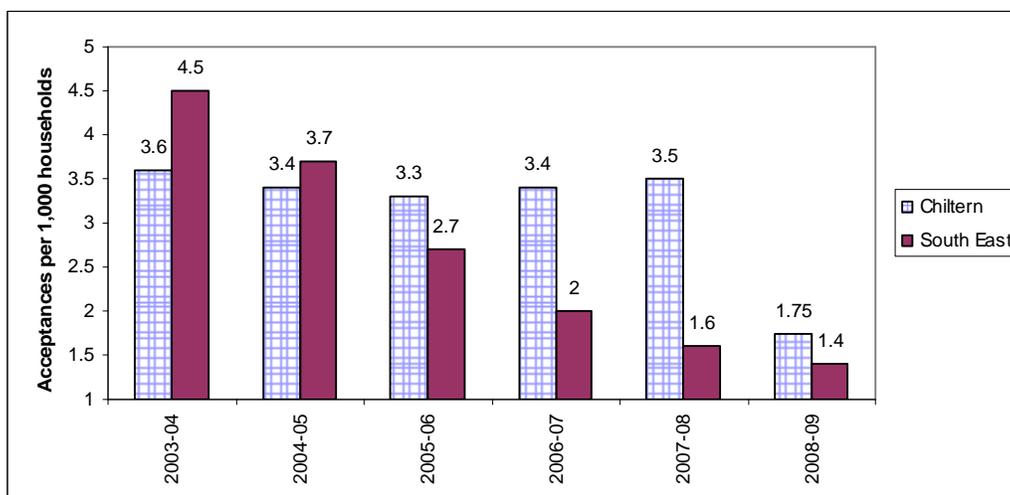
- the **total** number of homeless persons applying to Chiltern for accommodation, and
- 
- the number of those households who were deemed by the Council to be subject to the **main homelessness duty** (i.e. the duty for the Council to provide accommodation for the household concerned)

It can be seen that both the total number of applications and the number of acceptances remained broadly the same year on year from 2003/04 to 2007/08. However, this was followed by a significant drop in the most recent completed year, 2008/09, when the total number of applications fell by 40% and the number of applicants subject to the main homelessness duty fell by 50%.

**(ii) Number of Applicants subject to main Homelessness Duty (per 1,000 households) – Comparison with other Bucks District Councils**



**(iii) Number of Applicants subject to main Homelessness Duty (per 1,000 households) – Comparison with South East Average**



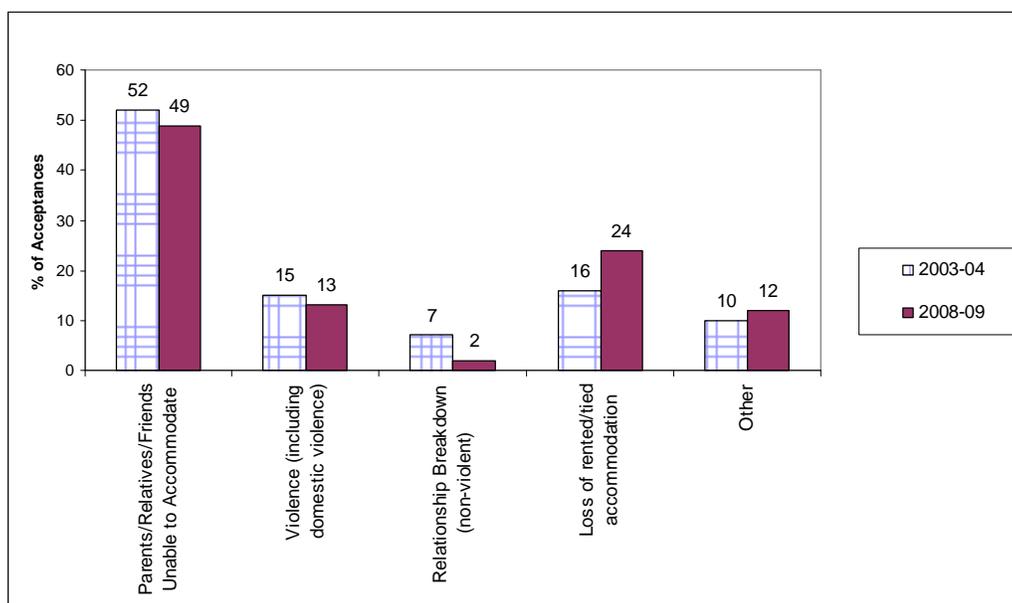
**Charts (ii) and (iii)** compare the number of homelessness acceptances in Chiltern with the position elsewhere in Buckinghamshire and across the south east as a whole. This is done by recording the annual number of applicants accepted for the main homelessness duty per 1,000 households (e.g. During 2008/09, Chiltern accepted the main homelessness duty in 63 cases. As the district household population is 36,000, this equates to 1.75 acceptances per 1,000 households in the district).

Across the county, **Chart (ii)** Chiltern was showing a noticeably higher rate of acceptances than the other districts during 2006-07 and 2007-08. However, it was the only district to show a significant drop in 2008/09.

**Chart (iii)** gives a comparison between Chiltern and the south east region as a whole. Until 2008-09, the number of applicants subject to the main homelessness duty in Chiltern remained broadly unchanged and did not reflect the year-on-year reduction shown across the south east as a whole. However, the significant drop in 2008/09 has brought Chiltern more in line with the overall position in the region.

**Charts (i), (ii) and (iii)** show the impact of the increased levels of homelessness prevention that have been achieved in Chiltern District during 2008/09, with more prevention resulting in less households being accepted for the main homelessness duty. The number of households who have been assisted by homelessness prevention measures are shown in more detail in **Chart (v)**.

**(iv) Reasons for Homelessness**

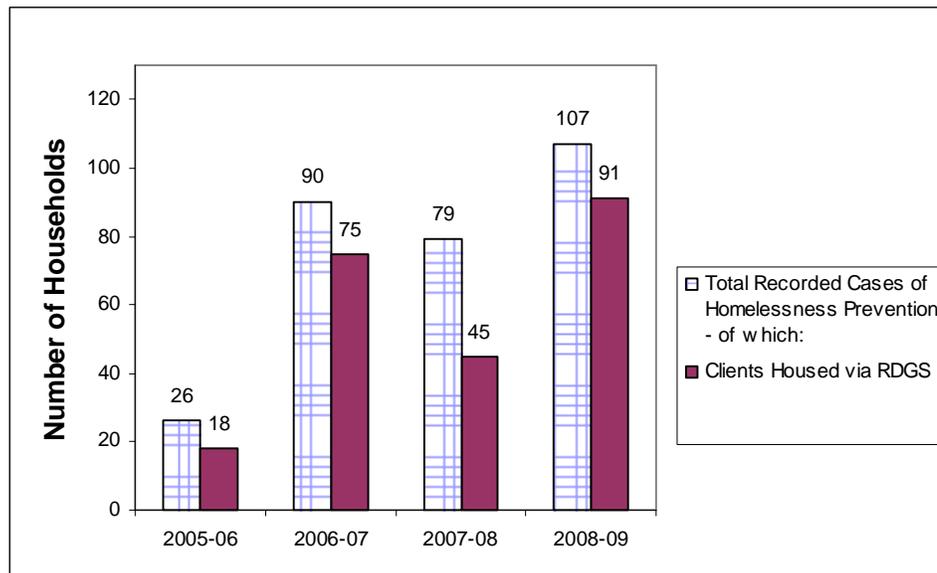


**Chart (iv)** shows the reasons for homelessness in the year of Council’s first Homelessness Strategy (2003/04) and compares it with the position in the most recent year (2008/09). The figures refer to those households where the Council has accepted the main homelessness duty and show that eviction by parents, relatives or friends

continues to be the major reason for homelessness. This could be a reflection of the high cost of buying or renting in Chiltern over the last five years, which has meant many households have had no option but to remain in the family home or stay with other relatives or friends until such time as this can no longer continue (e.g. due to family dispute, overcrowding etc.). Aside from this:

- Households fleeing violence (including domestic violence) have consistently accounted for 10% to 15% of homeless acceptances year on year. This is normally because such households have had to flee their home in an emergency and have had no opportunity to make their own alternative housing arrangements.
- The slight upturn in the percentage of households losing rented accommodation compared to 2003/04 may be due to an overall increase in the number of households renting privately in Chiltern.
- The loss of accommodation due to mortgage repossession has accounted for 18 households accepted for the main homelessness duty during the last six years. This relatively low number (an average of 3 per year) reflects the fact that Chiltern traditionally has one of the lowest rates of mortgage repossessions in the south east. It also indicates that where repossessions have taken place, the households concerned have normally made their own housing arrangements rather than seek help from the Council.

**(v) Prevention of Homelessness and the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme**

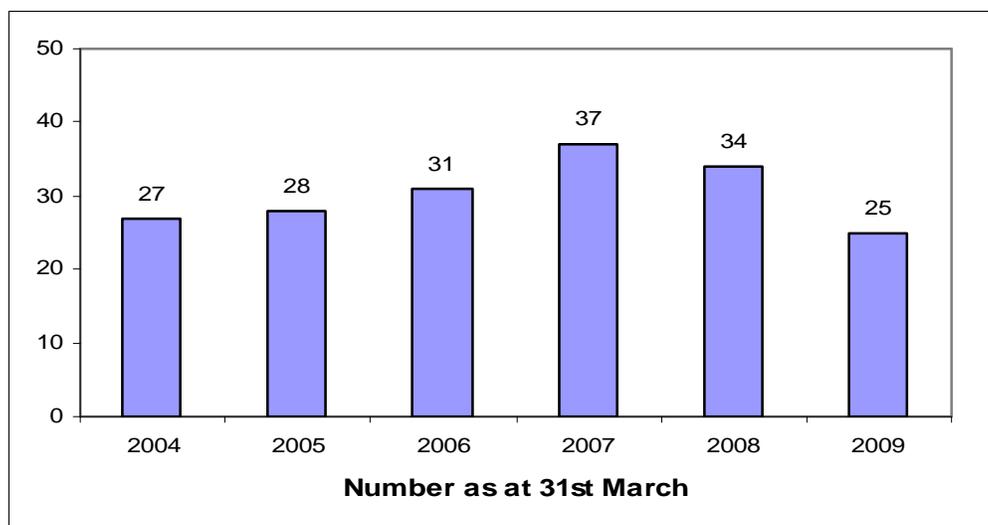


**Chart (v)** shows the number of households who have had their homelessness prevented or relieved by the work of the Council and its partner agencies. It also shows how many of these households have secured tenancies in the private rented sector via the Council’s Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

The chart illustrates the significant impact of the Council's homelessness prevention work over the last three years and, in particular, the success of the rent deposit guarantee scheme in helping households to secure private rented accommodation (the dip in 2007-08 was due to the Housing Choice Officer post being vacant for several months with a consequent impact on service delivery). A comparison with **Chart (i)** shows that:

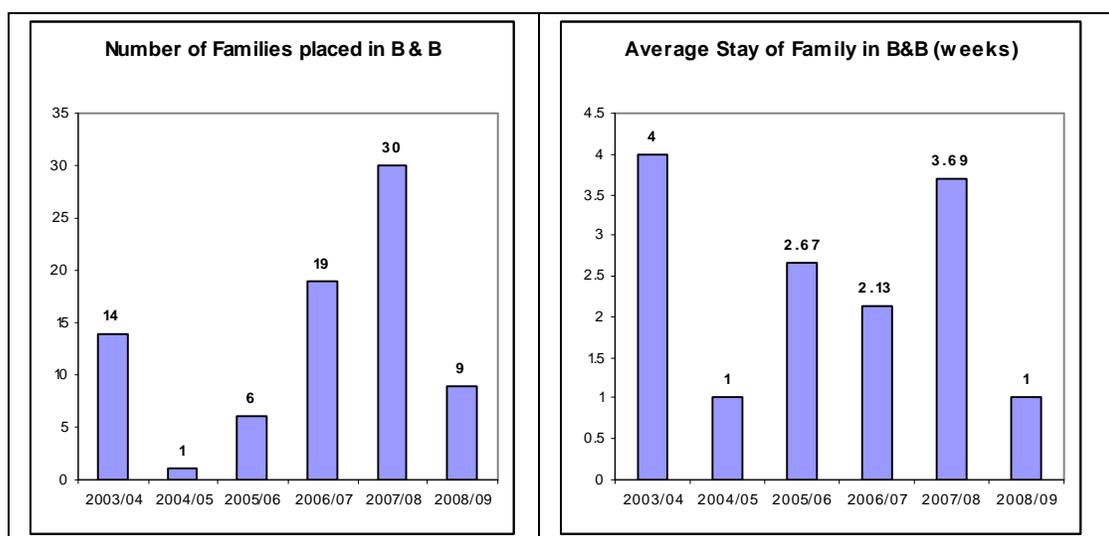
- the prevention work in 2006/07 and 2007/08 helped to avoid a major upturn in the number of homelessness applications made to the Council, and
- the increased levels of prevention achieved in 2008/09 helped to significantly reduce both the overall number of homelessness applications and the number of households accepted by the Council for the main homelessness duty (the increase in successful preventions was supported by the appointment of the Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer Post in August 2008).

**(vi) Number of Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation**



**Chart (vi)** shows the snapshot figure for the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation at the end of each financial year. This figure showed an upturn over the 2006-2008 period followed by a significant drop in 2008/09. This reflects the increased levels of homelessness prevention and reduced level of homelessness applications in 2008/09 as highlighted elsewhere in this Section. In line with all housing authorities, the Council is subject to a target of halving the number of households in temporary accommodation by the December 2010 (compared to the baseline figure at the end of 2004). The Council's target is to have no more than 17 households in temporary accommodation by that date (the Council is on track to achieve this with the actual number in temporary accommodation having reduced to 20 as at June 2009).

**(vii) Homeless Families in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation**



A key national and local target has been to reduce the number of homeless families (i.e. households with or expecting children) who are being placed in bed and breakfast as temporary accommodation. **Chart (vii)** shows that a notable upturn occurred in Chiltern in 2007/08 when there were significant pressures on temporary accommodation locally which left no option but to make use of bed and breakfast accommodation in order to meet the Council's legal duties. However, the increased levels of homelessness prevention highlighted elsewhere in this section meant that 2008/09 saw a significant reduction in both the number of families being placed in bed and breakfast and the length of time that they had to stay there.

## CHAPTER 4

# HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2003 - OUTCOMES FROM THE ACTION PLAN

The Council's first Homelessness Strategy set down an Action Plan that was broken down into three parts:

1. Continuing Research into Homelessness in Chiltern District
2. Advice and Support for Homeless Persons
3. Provision of Accommodation for Homeless Persons

This section provides an overview of the outcomes delivered over the past five years against each part of the Action Plan

### 1. Continuing Research into Homelessness in Chiltern District

Action Plan Included:	Outcomes
Monitor reasons for homelessness	Ongoing analysis of P1E returns (quarterly statistical returns submitted to Government) is carried out (see Chart (iv) in Chapter 3)
Secure regular feedback from homeless persons	Some limited research has been carried out, but regular customer feedback still needs to be put in place
Secure regular feedback from partner agencies	Key partners provide regular statistical reports and one-to-one discussions on trends and issues

### 2. Advice and Support for Homeless Persons

Action Plan Included:	Outcomes
Develop a formal housing advice strategy	CDC's appointment of the Housing Choice and Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officers has improved co-ordination and delivery of housing advice locally, including working with partner agencies. As the delivery of housing advice clearly overlaps with the Council's homelessness prevention work, it has been decided that a separate housing advice strategy is not required as this area of work will be encompassed by the Homelessness Strategy review.
Assess the possibility of a centralised advice service	
Improve cross agency working (statutory and voluntary sectors)	

<b>Improve delivery of advice in a range of community locations</b>	The delivery of information has improved through initiatives such as the CDC Housing micro-website. More work is needed to get information into more community locations, but the work of partners such as CAB and HIT is starting to address this.
<b>Secure effective debt management and budget advice</b>	Debt and budget management is being delivered by CAB (supported by funding from the CLG Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer programme).
<b>Work with RSL partners to minimise tenancy breakdowns</b>	Further work is needed to review local RSL policies and work on preventing tenancy breakdowns (based on CLG/TSA 20-point plan for RSLs published in May 2009)
<b>Secure improved services for young people, victims of domestic violence and households requiring mediation</b>	CDC has increased the level of support to HIT (including funding from the CLG Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer Programme) to deliver advice services for young people and outreach work in schools. CDC has also maintained support for Wycombe Womens Aid. Efforts to launch a local Sanctuary Scheme (providing security improvement works to victims of violence) has had only limited success, but this is being re-launched via the new Home Improvement Agency. Similarly, local Mediation services have had only limited take-up for homelessness prevention work.
<b>Ensure persons of no fixed abode can access health services</b>	Work has been undertaken via the Bucks DAAT (Drugs and Alcohol Action Team) Housing Group (chaired by CDC's Principal Housing Officer) to ensure that GP services are accessible to all, including those with no fixed abode.

### **3. Provision of Accommodation for Homeless Persons**

<b>Action Plan Included:</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
<b>Limit the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families (with no stay exceeding 6 weeks)</b>	The use of B & B for homeless families showed a sharp decline in 2008/09 and average stay over last five years has been below 6 weeks (see Chart (vii) in Chapter 3)

<b>Explore the possibility of providing direct access accommodation for street homeless</b>	No direct access accommodation has been provided in Chiltern, although good links have been developed with night shelters elsewhere. On a countywide basis, Supporting People is funding a winter night shelter in Wycombe DC and sharing good practice from this across charitable and faith groups.
<b>Work with private landlords to accommodate low income households and develop the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to support this</b>	CDC's Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme has now secured tenancies for over 200 clients (see Chart (v) in Chapter 3). CDC has developed good links with local private landlords, including a regular landlord's forum and newsletter.
<b>Explore the idea of a Central Accommodation Register bringing together details of private rented vacancies</b>	This idea has not yet been taken forward, but may be progressed as part of the future development and expansion of the Bucks Home Choice scheme.
<b>Fund works (including adaptations) in private sector dwellings to help households remain in their own home</b>	CDC has maintained a successful grant programme, including Disabled Facilities Grants (an average of 43 per annum), Decent Homes Equity Loans, Flexible Home Improvement Loans and Essential Works Grants.
<b>Establish a HIA (Home Improvement Agency) to co-ordinate delivery of services to people in their own homes</b>	The HIA was established in 2004 and a new contract is due to be let in 2009.
<b>Promote schemes to return empty homes back into use</b>	CDC has successfully helped to return an average of 72 empty homes per annum back into use (2005/06 to 2007/08) via the work of the Rural Housing Enabler.
<b>Explore possibility of providing a refuge in Chiltern for women fleeing domestic violence</b>	Research undertaken via the local Domestic Abuse Forum concluded that this should not be progressed due to uncertainties over capital and revenue funding.
<b>Secure accommodation for households with support needs</b>	Schemes and initiatives delivered over the past five years include the Bucks DAAT Housing Scheme (20 flats countywide for clients recovering from substance mis-use), Bucks Care Leavers Protocol (helping care leavers avoid homelessness) and the development of the new Bucks Floating Support Service.

## CHAPTER 5

# REVISION OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The revision of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan has taken account of the wide range of developments and trends that have occurred since the Council adopted its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003 (as summarised in the previous sections).

**The key elements informing the revision have been:**

- **Review of Government Guidance**
- **Review of the Audit Commission KLOEs (Key Lines of Enquiry)**
- **Meeting with the CLG Specialist Homelessness Adviser**
- **Multi-Agency Homelessness Training Event (led by CLG)**
- **Peer Review of Homelessness Services (undertaken by Oxford City Council)**
- **Consultation with Members**
- **Bid to Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer Programme (with South Bucks DC)**
- **Review of the impact of recession**

This section provides further details of each of these key elements.

### **Review of Government Guidance**

As shown in the timeline in Chapter 2, Central Government has issued a wide range of guidance since the first Homelessness Strategy was adopted. This guidance has focussed on good practice for Councils and their partners, both in the general delivery of homelessness services and in supporting specific client groups (e.g. rough sleepers, workless, home owners facing mortgage problems etc.).

**Government guidance in general is underpinned by an emphasis on preventing homelessness by using tools such as**

- **effective housing advice,**
- **tenancy sustainment support,**
- **links with the private rented sector (through initiatives such as Rent Deposit Guarantee Schemes),**
- **mediation**
- **sanctuary schemes to support victims of domestic violence**
- **homelessness prevention funds**
- **mortgage rescue**

The Council has taken account of Government guidance in developing its local homelessness prevention services in recent years. These prevention services have enjoyed increasing levels of success up to the end of 2008/09 (see Chapter 3). The revision of the homelessness strategy building on this success and reflecting the main themes and good practice highlighted by the Government.

### **Review of Audit Commission KLOE's (Key Lines of Enquiry)**

In February 2008, the Audit Commission implemented new KLOEs for assessing Homelessness and Housing Advice Services. The Council has used these KLOEs to provide a guideline for levels of the homelessness service that it should aim to deliver.

#### **Questions highlighted by the KLOEs include:**

- **Do all users have fair and equal access to homelessness and housing advice services?**
- **Does the Council provide appropriate support to all those who are homeless or at risk of homeless?**
- **How effectively does the Council set out plans for homelessness prevention and ensure that accommodation is available for those service users where prevention is not possible?**
- **Does the Council administer homelessness applications in line with Government legislation and guidance?**
- **Is adequate and suitable temporary accommodation provided where necessary?**
- **Does the Council make the best use of its resources and work effectively with partner agencies?**

The Council has to ensure that existing and new homelessness services continue to contribute positively answering the Audit Commission KLOEs.

### **Meeting with the CLG (Communities and Local Government) Specialist Homelessness Adviser**

In January 2008, Council officers met with the CLG's Specialist Homelessness Adviser to discuss methods for tackling the relatively high level of homelessness applications being made in Chiltern (in comparison with other South East authorities). The meeting identified several main areas for attention:

- The need for a higher level of homelessness prevention work
- The importance of early intervention to prevent homelessness, including home visits to discuss options with clients, families, landlords etc.
- The need to make the best use of Government resources (e.g. Discretionary Housing Payments, Homelessness Grant etc.)

Following on from this meeting, a series of actions were put in place to tackle the issues that had been raised. In addition to setting up a Multi-Agency Training Event and a Peer Review exercise (see below) the Council also:

- Set up a new Housing Advice micro-website within the main CDC website
- Appointed a Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer (2 Years) to provide increased officer capacity to support work with private landlords and the delivery of housing advice
- Reviewed joint working arrangements with Paradigm Housing on dealing with homeless persons.

As shown in Chapter 3, these actions have contributed to increased levels of homelessness prevention and a downturn in the number of homelessness applications in Chiltern during 2008/09.

### **Multi-Agency Training Event (led by CLG)**

In April 2008, a member of the CLG Specialist Homelessness Advice Team lead an all day training event attended by officers of the Council, local partner agencies and other district councils. The event highlighted good practice in homelessness prevention and included several discussion sessions where attendees identified strengths and weaknesses in homelessness services in Chiltern:

#### ***Strengths identified by partners at multi-agency event included:***

- *Working with private landlords and the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme*
- *Homelessness Prevention Fund*
- *Good range of agencies offering housing advice and support*
- *Good partnership working across agencies*
- *Outreach work in schools (by HIT)*
- *Good links between Paradigm tenancy management team and housing options team*
- *Housing Support Worker providing help for clients leaving supported accommodation*
- *Good links with some supported housing schemes and night shelters*

#### ***Weaknesses and Areas for Improvement identified by partners at the multi-agency event included:***

- *More homelessness prevention tools and options are needed*
- *There is a lack of emergency accommodation for people with nowhere to go*
- *Clients should not be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation*
- *Links with support agencies (e.g. Social Services) are patchy*

- *Mediation has only limited impact in homelessness prevention*
- *More support lodgings and respite beds (crashpad) are needed for young people*
- *CDC needs to make better use of Discretionary Housing Payments*
- *The use of the private rented sector needs to be maximised (including working with landlords to prevent evictions)*
- *A common homelessness assessment/advice form used across all agencies would ensure a consistent approach and improve cross agency working and referrals*
- *A Sanctuary Scheme is needed to provide security improvements for victims of domestic violence*

### **Peer Review of Homelessness Services (undertaken by Oxford City Council)**

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008, the Council was subject to a peer review of its homelessness services by officers from Oxford City Council. The purpose of the peer review was to help determine:

- where Chiltern District Council currently stood in respect to talking homelessness, and
- what actions could be taken to further develop the homelessness service.

The review report was issued in September 2008 and recorded a number of strengths in the existing service and areas for improvement.

#### ***Strengths identified by the Peer Review included:***

- *Positive results already in increasing levels of homelessness prevention and reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation*
- *Good links with the private rented sector*
- *Increased staffing capacity through decision to appoint Temporary Homelessness Prevention Officer*
- *Good partnership working with other agencies*
- *Launch of new Housing micro-website*

#### ***Areas for Improvement identified by the Peer Review included:***

- *Need to increase focus on early intervention to prevent homelessness (e.g. home visits to deliver focused advice and support)*
- *Improve co-ordination of work across partner agencies*
- *Increase promotion of private rented sector and look at ways of encouraging joint working with more landlords*
- *Look at developing emergency nightstop/crashpad facility to provide temporary accommodation*
- *Review working arrangements with Paradigm Housing to secure continued reduction in use of temporary accommodation*

## **Consultation with Members**

Following the completion of the Peer Review process, the Council's Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008 considered a report highlighting the actions that were being taken to address the issues raised by the work with the CLG and by the Peer Review. The Cabinet agreed a number of key priorities for the Council's revised Homelessness Strategy.

### **Key Priorities for Review Homelessness Strategy (As agreed by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008)**

- (xii) Promote the private rented sector as the primary option for persons seeking housing assistance and/or who currently lack suitable accommodation**
- (xiii) Maximise the use of the private rented sector to secure accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (by working pro-actively with clients and landlords)**
- (xiv) Prevent homelessness through targeted early intervention, including home visits by Council and Paradigm Officers to identify and pursue all housing options with clients (e.g. remain at current address, secure private rented accommodation)**
- (xv) Review the use of mediation services and identify and introduce methods to effectively utilise mediation to prevent homelessness (e.g. tackle family disputes and prevent parental eviction)**
- (xvi) Receive a homelessness application and (if necessary) provide temporary accommodation only if all other housing options have been explored and are not available or appropriate**
- (xvii) Develop an improved private landlord service to attract and support local landlords, including officer intervention to help resolve disputes and prevent tenancy terminations (with an initial response provided within 24 hours)**
- (xviii) Develop new initiatives to increase the availability of accommodation for clients in the private sector (including the introduction of private sector leasing in partnership with Paradigm)**
- (xix) Improve cross agency working between key partners and develop a common assessment form for use by all local agencies to deliver homelessness prevention advice and support to clients**
- (xx) Secure effective debt and budget advice services to help prevent homelessness among clients facing rent and mortgage arrears (including the development of CAB services and use of Court desks)**
- (xxi) Identify existing and potential schemes to deliver emergency and supported housing for clients in need of immediate temporary accommodation (including crash-pad and supported lodgings)**
- (xxii) Review the use of Discretionary Housing Payments and ensure they are being used as effectively as possible to prevent homelessness (within the existing financial limits)**

### **Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer**

At the time of the report to Cabinet in October 2008, Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council had submitted a joint funding bid to the CLG EHO (Enhanced Housing Options) Trailblazer programme.

The EHO Trailblazer programme is intended to support local authorities in delivering enhanced and innovative advice services to tackle housing need and prevent homelessness. The bid submitted by Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils focussed on delivering enhanced debt advice services, increased levels of outreach work in the community and more housing advice and support for young people. These proposals sat within a wider Action Plan that was submitted with the bid and summarised the key actions being undertaken to tackle homelessness locally. In Chiltern, the bid was developed in partnership with Chiltern CAB and HIT (Housing Interaction Trust).

In November 2008, CLG announced that the Chiltern and South Bucks bid had been awarded £98,000 per annum for 2009/10 and 2010/11 (with the second year's funding subject to the review depending on the outcomes achieved in the first year). The Action Plan agreed with CLG for EHO Trailblazer bid is also forming the basis for the Action Plan for this revised Homelessness Strategy.

### **Review of the Impact of the Recession**

The report to Cabinet in October 2008 also took place at a time when the impact of the economic downturn on housing was still being assessed. Since that time, the United Kingdom has formally entered recession. Research by the CLG has highlighted a number of housing impacts of the recession that councils and stakeholders are seeing.

#### **Housing Impacts of the Recession (CLG Research)**

- **An increase in rent arrears and claims for housing benefit**
- **An increase in the number of mortgage lenders applying to court for possession orders due to mortgage arrears**
- **A substantial increase in demand for debt, budget and financial advice**
- **An increase in the number of households applying for social housing**
- **An increase in the availability of private rented accommodation**

At the time of this revised strategy, there are still mixed views on whether the recession will result in increased levels of homelessness. Locally, there are a number of factors that are relevant including:

- In common with other district councils, Chiltern has seen an upturn in Council Tax and Housing Benefit claims, but this at least means that the tenants concerned are accessing financial help and hopefully avoiding arrears (and the possibility of eviction).

- Chiltern district has traditionally had the lowest level of mortgage repossessions of any district in the south east. Alongside this, national forecasts for mortgage repossessions that were made at the start of the economic downturn have subsequently been reduced. This may be due to the impact of measures such as the Civil Action Protocol which requires mortgage lenders to explore all possible hardship measures before they can seek a possession order for arrears. Additionally, the Government has introduced a range of measures to help home owners facing financial problems, including the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.
- The recession has prompted an increase in the number of landlords and letting agents who wish to work with the Council and let properties via the Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme. Consequently, this has increased the availability of private rented housing for low income households.

The current uncertainty means that the Council needs to be flexible in its response to the recession and its impact on housing and homelessness. Most importantly, it needs to ensure that sufficient and effective advice and support services are available for all those households that need them.

## APPENDIX 1

# HOUSING ACT 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)

### **Duty on Local Authorities to provide accommodation for homeless persons**

Under the Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, Chiltern District Council has a legal duty to:

- (iii) ensure that advice and information about homelessness (and the prevention of homelessness) is available free of charge to any person in Chiltern district, and
- (iv) receive applications that are made for accommodation by people who are homeless (or threatened with homelessness).

With regard to (ii), the Council does not have a legal duty to provide accommodation for all homeless households. This duty will only apply to those homeless households who apply for accommodation and who meet the criteria set down in the Housing Act 1996.

These criteria state that an applicant will be owed the main homelessness duty (i.e. the duty to provide accommodation) if he/she:

- is eligible for assistance (e.g. is not subject to immigration control that prevents him/her from being eligible),
- is homeless (or threatened with homelessness),
- is in priority need (see next page),
- is not intentionally homeless (i.e. homeless as a result of his/her own actions), and
- has a local connection with the district concerned.

On the question of priority need, Section 189 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, state that priority need generally arises when a person: -

- (i) is pregnant or has dependant children residing with him/her,
- (ii) is aged 16 or 17 years old (in certain cases),
- (iii) is aged 18 to 21 years old and was previously in care,
- (iv) is homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster,
- (v) is vulnerable as a result of:
  - old age;
  - mental illness or disability;
  - physical disability;
  - having been looked after, accommodated or fostered (under the terms of the Children Act 1989);
  - having been a member of the armed forces;
  - having been in prison or custody;
  - having been forced to leave accommodation because of violence or threats of violence;
  - other special reason

*(Note - a person who is vulnerable is someone who has less ability than others to fend for him/herself)*

Any household who does not fall into any of the above categories will not be deemed to be in priority need and will not be subject to the Council's main homelessness duty.

**Important Note – When dealing with a client who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, the aim of the Council and its partners will always be to work with the client to relieve or prevent homelessness without the need for the Council to exercise its duty to provide accommodation for the household concerned.**

## APPENDIX 2

# KEY HOMELESSNESS SERVICES IN CHILTERN

### **Chiltern District Council (CDC)**

- CDC is the Local Housing Authority with statutory duty to ensure that advice and information on homelessness is available for persons in Chiltern District.
- CDC assesses applications for accommodation from persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (in accordance with Part VII of the Housing Act 1996), issues decisions on what duty is owed and undertakes review of any decision when requested.
- CDC delivers housing advice (including web based information) and co-ordinates the advice and support delivered by partner agencies
- CDC administers the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Homelessness Prevention Fund and other homelessness prevention schemes as and when necessary (e.g. Mortgage Rescue Scheme)

### **Paradigm Housing Group (PHG)**

- PHG acts on CDC's behalf in receiving applications for accommodation from people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including undertaking full enquiries into each application (before passing it to the Council for a decision) and providing temporary accommodation in accordance with the Council's statutory duties
- PHG Housing Options Team works in partnership with CDC to help clients secure accommodation and prevent homelessness where possible
- PHG acts on CDC's behalf in administering the Bucks Home Choice Scheme locally

### **Chiltern Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

- Chiltern CAB delivers a range of advice and information to local people, including debt and budget advice, support for homeowners with mortgage problems and housing and homelessness prevention advice

### **Housing Interaction Trust (HIT)**

- HIT delivers housing advice and support to young people aged 16 to 25 years old, including homelessness prevention and help with finding accommodation
- HIT provides support to clients in six designated flats via the MUSE project and also tries to secure accommodation via supported lodgings where possible
- HIT undertake outreach advice work at several locations and works with local schools to deliver housing education sessions to pupils

**Bucks Floating Support Service (BFSS)**

- BFSS is a countywide service with a satellite office in Chiltern delivering one-to-one support to vulnerable clients to help them with issues such as managing tenancies, paying bills, claiming benefits, accessing services etc.

**Wycombe Womens Aid (WWA)**

- WWA provides advice, support and emergency accommodation for women experiencing domestic abuse.

### APPENDIX 3

#### CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2009-2011

##### ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan on the following pages provides full details of the initiatives being taken forward in Chiltern over the next two years to prevent and tackle homelessness in the district.

The Action Plan is broken down into three themes:

- A. Support Homeless Households to Secure and Retain Private Rented Accommodation
- B. Deliver Effective Advice and Support to Prevent or Resolve Homelessness Where Possible
- C. Provision of other Homelessness Services and Research

Each Action listed is accompanied by details of:

- **Who will undertake it**  
This will include any partners involved in the Action
- **Key milestones in undertaking the action**  
This summarises the key stages in undertaking the Action to support monitoring
- **Funding and Resources**  
This covers staff and funding resources (e.g. where funding has been allocated from the Council's successful Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazers bid, this is highlighted in this column)
- **Key Outcomes**  
This summarises what the Action is intended to achieve, including the current baseline position (i.e. where we are now) and the target (i.e. where we want to be)

##### IMPORTANT NOTE ON FUNDING

**Where any of the Actions listed require additional funding that is not identified, this does not mean that direct funding will automatically be available from the Council. Direct funding from the Council for any Actions will be dependent on available resources. FOR ALL OF THE ACTIONS THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK TO SECURE FUNDING FROM PARTNER AGENCIES AND EXTERNAL SOURCES WHERE POSSIBLE.**

**A - SUPPORT HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS TO SECURE AND RETAIN PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION**

Action	By whom	Key Milestones	Funding & Resources	Key Outcomes
<p><b>A1. Support households to secure private rented accommodation</b></p>	<p>CDC &amp; Private Landlords</p>	<p>Continued delivery of Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (Review Quarterly)</p>	<p>Work with private landlords is co-ordinated by HCO (Housing Choice Officer) and THPO (Temporary Homeless Prevention Officer) – assisted by HSO (Housing Support Officer). Both THPO and HSO posts are funded by CLG Homelessness Grant until the end July 2010. If posts does not continue beyond that date then this will impact on delivery</p> <p>Rent Deposit Guarantee fund currently holds £19,500 to cover cost of any end-of-tenancy payouts to landlords</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>More clients who are facing homelessness are able to access private rented accommodation</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Chiltern DC Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme securing an average of 17 PRS tenancies per quarter in 2008  <i>Target</i> – An increase in the number of PRS placements compared to 2008</p>

<b>A2. Pilot a Landlord Standards Partnership linked to Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (with all RDG tenancy documents &amp; properties subject to checks including basic HHSRS assessment)</b>	CDC & Private Landlords	Draft accreditation requirements and consult landlords (Oct 2009)  Finalise scheme (Dec 2009)  Launch scheme (Mar 2010)	Process would be developed and administered by existing CDC officers	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Landlords in Chiltern RDGS scheme operate in accordance with agreed standards</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – No formal “accreditation scheme” is currently in place  <i>Target</i> – Formal RDGS Landlord Standards Partnership is launched</p>
<b>A3. Introduce a support and intervention service for all private landlords to prevent evictions where possible</b>	CDC & Private Landlords	Consult landlords (via Private Landlords Forum) and draft scheme (Oct 2009)  Introduce scheme (Dec 2009)	Scheme would be developed and administered by existing CDC officers (although ability to deliver scheme will be limited if THPO post does not continue beyond July 2010)	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Landlord support/intervention scheme in place</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – General support is provided to landlords letting via RDGS scheme  <i>Target</i> – Support and intervention on tenancy problems is available to <u>all</u> private landlords</p>
<b>A4. Implement PSL (Private Sector Leasing) scheme to increase the availability of private rental properties for Council nominees</b>	Paradigm Housing & CDC	Finalise SLA with Paradigm (July 2009)  Implement Scheme (Sept 2009)	Paradigm will meet cost of operating scheme.  Cost to CDC will be officer time and publicity.	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>PSL Scheme in place</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – No scheme currently operating  <i>Target</i> – PSL scheme operating and delivering 20 to 50 lettings per annum</p>

**B - DELIVER EFFECTIVE ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO PREVENT OR RESOLVE HOMELESSNESS WHERE POSSIBLE**

Action	By whom	Key Milestones	Funding & Resources	Key Outcomes
<p><b>B1. Secure that specialist debt and money advice is available to all residents in Chiltern</b></p>	<p>Chiltern CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) in partnership with CDC</p>	<p>Chiltern DC agrees Enhanced Housing Options SLA with CAB (April 2009)</p> <p>Debt/money adviser in place (Apr 2009)</p> <p>All CAB staff given continuation training to ensure they can deliver basic debt advice and channel the more complex cases to the specialist debt adviser (Oct 2009 then ongoing)</p>	<p>Delivery of service is underpinned by contribution from CDC's Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer funding (£25,000 p/a in 2009/10 and 2010/11) and supplemented by funding from CDC Community Grant (£122,000 p/a) and Paradigm Housing to support Chiltern CAB in the delivery of core advice services</p> <p>Chiltern CAB will continue to seek to secure funding from other sources to help build capacity</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>More clients able to access debt advice in Chiltern</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – Current average of 200 clients per quarter  <i>Target</i> – Increase to 275 clients per quarter</p> <p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Increased number of re-possession actions averted by CAB intervention</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – Total of 20 repossessions prevented in 2008  <i>Target</i> - Increase to 30 preventions per annum</p> <p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Increase in benefit uptake following debt/money advice</b>  To be monitored against uptake in previous years</p>

<p><b>B2. Increase the provision of outreach advice sessions in GP surgeries and outlying locations</b></p>	<p>Chiltern CAB (in partnership with CDC, SBDC and Primary Care Trust)</p>	<p>Chiltern DC agrees Enhanced Housing Options SLA with CAB (April 2009)</p> <p>Outreach locations agreed (June 2009)</p> <p>Outreach sessions underway (July 2009)</p>	<p>Delivery of service is underpinned by contribution from CDC's Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer funding (£10,000 p/a in 2009/10 and 2010/11)</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Increase in the number of hours of advice being delivered in outreach locations</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – Outreach sessions being delivered from four GP surgeries  <i>Target</i> - An additional 400 hours of outreach work per annum and at least two additional outreach locations (potentially in Chesham and Prestwood)</p>
<p><b>B3. Develop and deliver Financial Capability Support/Training for householders facing changing financial circumstances (e.g. new tenants and homeowners, persons facing redundancy etc.)</b></p>	<p>Chiltern CAB (in partnership with CDC)</p>	<p>Identify key partners and consult (May 2009)</p> <p>Agree support/training model and referral process (Sep 2009)</p> <p>Launch Scheme (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>CAB will be utilising existing and new funding streams to implement training and support</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Financial capability training in place</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – No training currently in place  <i>Target</i> – Training established and delivering up to 120 group/individual training sessions per annum.</p>

<p><b>B4. Pilot the use of information kiosks to deliver housing and debt advice in community locations</b></p>	<p>Chiltern CAB (in partnership with CDC and SBDC)</p>	<p>Introduce Information Kiosks (June 2010)</p>	<p>Delivery of pilot underpinned by contribution from CDC's Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer funding (£5,000 p/a in 2009/10 and 2010/11)</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Clients able to access tailored housing advice remotely via kiosks</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – No kiosks currently operational</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Kiosk operating in a community location and being used by local residents</p>
<p><b>B5. Increase the provision of housing-related advice and support to young people (age 16 – 25)</b></p>	<p>Housing Interaction Trust (in partnership with CDC)</p>	<p>Chiltern DC agrees Enhanced Housing Options SLA with CAB (April 2009)</p> <p>CDC agrees revised SLA with Housing Interaction Trust for core services (June 2009)</p> <p>Additional part time support worker in place at HIT (April 2009)</p>	<p>HIT Service delivery underpinned by core funding contribution from CDC (£30,000 in 2009/10) and contribution from CDC's Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer funding (£19,000 p/a in 2009/10 and 2010/11)</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Increased levels of housing advice and support is given to young people to help prevent homelessness</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Housing Interaction Trust currently delivering advice and support to this client group</p> <p><i>Target</i> - An additional 14 hours of advice and support work per week delivered by the Trust, encompassing one-to-one advice work, mediation, outreach and tenancy sustainment.</p>

<p><b>B6. Increase the number of outreach housing education sessions being provided to young people (age 14-18) and youth workers/teachers</b></p>	<p>Shelter, Padstones and Housing Interaction Trust (in partnership with CDC and SBDC)</p>	<p>Agree delivery plan for outreach sessions (Dec 2009)</p> <p>Commence delivery of sessions (Mar 2010)</p>	<p>See (5) above</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>More young people are receiving housing education within school</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Housing Interaction Trust currently deliver sessions in local schools, but delivery is limited by officer availability and workload.</p> <p><i>Target</i> – An increased number of education sessions being delivered in schools/youth clubs across Chiltern and South Bucks</p>
<p><b>B7. Increase the range of housing options available for vulnerable young people (age 16-25 years) where immediate or long term homeless prevention is not possible</b></p>	<p>CDC, Bucks CC (Children Services), HIT and other agencies as appropriate</p>	<p>Review existing housing options for young people including care leavers and other vulnerable groups (Mar 2010)</p> <p>Identify and implement actions for increasing range of options including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- crashpad (short term)</li> <li>- supported lodgings</li> <li>- HMOs</li> <li>- move-on from supported housing via Bucks Home Choice (June 2010)</li> </ul>		<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>More housing options available for young people when homelessness cannot be prevented</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Multi agency arrangements are currently in place to help specific client groups such as care leavers to move on to independent accommodation. However, housing options are very limited for young people as a whole.</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Ensure that all available housing options are identified and implement measures (in partnership with other agencies as appropriate) to try to increase the availability of accommodation</p>

<p><b>B8. Continue to commission housing related support services via Supporting People to help deliver homelessness prevention and support services to Chiltern residents</b></p>	<p>CDC (as a member of the Bucks SP (Supporting People) Commis'ing Body) and the Bucks SP Team</p>	<p>Continually review existing and new SP funded schemes to ensure the effective homelessness support and prevention services are delivered locally</p>	<p>Cost of services is met from Bucks Supporting People Budget</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Effective homelessness support and prevention services continue to be delivered via the Bucks Supporting People programme</b></p>
<p><b>B9. Ensure advice and information on home ownership and mortgage arrears support is effectively publicised and targeted</b></p>	<p>CDC, SBDC, Catalyst Housing Group (local Homebuy Agent) and CAB</p>	<p>Continually review existing and new schemes and the delivery of advice and information (e.g. via local Homebuy shows)</p>	<p>Support schemes (e.g. Mortgage Rescue, Home Ownership Support etc.) are directly funded by CLG. Publicity and targeting will be undertaken by existing officers</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>All clients facing mortgage arrears have access to suitable advice and information on the help that is available (and can access the support schemes that they qualify for)</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Information available via one-to-one advice, websites etc.</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Information is regularly being updated and methods of publicity etc. are regularly being reviewed to ensure that advice is effectively targeted.</p>

<p><b>B10. Introduce/Review:</b>  <b>- “Directory of Housing Advice and Support Agencies”</b>  <b>- Housing Options Packs</b>  <b>- Common assessment script/checklist (for use by authorities and partner agencies) for client interviews</b></p>	<p>CDC and SBDC</p>	<p>Complete audit of all key agencies &amp; services (Oct 2009)</p> <p>Finalise common assessment form (Oct 2009)</p> <p>Publish Directory and Packs (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>Review of existing literature and revision/development work will be undertaken by existing officers. Printing costs would be met from Council Revenue Budgets.</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Good quality written advice and information is available to all clients and a consistent cross-agency approach is in place for first assessments</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – A range of directories and written information is in place, but provision is patchy.</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Detailed and user-friendly written advice is available to all persons across the districts and all agencies are utilising a common assessment checklist when dealing with clients with housing issues.</p>
<p><b>B11. Ensure all frontline housing advice and support officers are trained to deliver basic advice on worklessness issues</b></p>	<p>CDC and SBDC (with training and guidance then to be rolled out to all partners delivering housing advice services)</p>	<p>Guidance developed on local worklessness advice (Oct 2009)</p> <p>Guidance issued to all partners and training delivered to frontline officers (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>Training and guidance to be developed by existing officers with reference to CIH “Tackling Worklessness: A Toolkit” document. Printing costs would be met from Council Revenue Budgets.</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Housing advice clients given effective help and “signposting” on worklessness</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – The current knowledge that Housing Options Advisers have on worklessness is patchy</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Housing Options Advisers across all agencies are equipped with skills and knowledge to give informed worklessness advice</p>

<p><b>B12. Monitor Rough Sleeping locally and ensure all frontline housing officers are trained to give suitable advice to rough sleepers</b></p>	<p>CDC and SBDC (with training and guidance then to be rolled out to all partners delivering housing advice services)</p>	<p>Guidance developed on local rough sleeping advice (Oct 2009)</p> <p>Guidance issued to all partners and training delivered to frontline officers (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>Training and guidance to be developed by existing officers with reference to CLG “No One Left Out” document. Printing costs would be met from Council Revenue Budgets.</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Rough sleepers can access tailored advice and help</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Basic advice and help is available through normal housing advice routes</p> <p><i>Target</i> - All frontline housing advice officers are equipped with skills to give advice to rough sleepers and CDC and SBDC monitor rough sleeping numbers (as part of the multi-agency Bucks Homelessness Strategy Group)</p>
<p><b>B13. Deliver basic housing advice training to front-line staff across statutory and voluntary partner agencies (housing and non-housing agencies)</b></p>	<p>CDC, SBDC, Aylesbury Vale DC and Wycombe DC</p>	<p>Training plan developed and key front line services identified (e.g. Health Workers etc.) (Oct 2009)</p> <p>Training programme put in place and underway (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>Cost of training will be met from CLG Recession Fund (£30,000 allocated to Bucks)</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Front line staff across all agencies can give basic housing advice and signpost clients to specialist assistance</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Knowledge of housing services within non-housing agencies is patchy</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Front line staff across all agencies are equipped to give basic housing assistance and to refer clients on for further help.</p>

<p><b>B14. Develop the Housing Options element of the Bucks Home Choice CBL scheme (acting as a hub for accessing options information)</b></p>	<p>CDC, SBDC, Aylesbury Vale District Council and Wycombe District Council</p>	<p>Liaise with Locata following Bucks Home Choice launch (Oct 2009)</p>	<p>Officers will work with Locata to develop the Housing Options element and identify costs involved</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Users of Bucks Home Choice scheme have access to a full range of housing options information</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Bucks Home Choice to be launched in May 2009 with limited housing options information available to applicants</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Scheme gives applicants a range of information on housing options tailored to their circumstances.</p>
<p><b>B15. Maintain and update CDC Housing micro-website</b></p>	<p>CDC</p>	<p>Maintaining and updating website (Review Quarterly)</p> <p>Assess the potential introduction of a Housing Options Diagnostic Tool on the website (to allow users to obtain advice tailored for their individual circumstances) (June 2010)</p>	<p>Housing Support Officer will manage website. This post is in place until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010. If post does not continue this will impact on website management.</p> <p>Develop of local diagnostic will depend on progress in developing Bucks Home Choice options package (see 12 above).</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>CDC Website users are able to use a diagnostic tool to provide tailored housing advice and information</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – CDC Housing micro-website currently provides wide range of written advice, but has no interactive element</p> <p><i>Target</i> – Website users can receive tailored housing advice by entering key personal details.</p>

<b>B16. Ensure that homeless advice and prevention services are accessible to all households</b>	CDC & Partner Agencies	Monitor use of services by BME households and households with support needs (Annually)	CDC officers will administer review process	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Advice and Prevention Services are accessible to all households</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Services are monitored via quarterly statistics etc.  <i>Target</i> – Analysis of statistics and customer feedback (see C8 below) identify any obstacles to accessing services</p>
<b>C- PROVISION OF OTHER HOMELESSNESS SERVICES &amp; RESEARCH</b>				
<b>Action</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>Key Milestones</b>	<b>Funding &amp; Resources</b>	<b>Key Outcomes</b>
<b>C1. Monitor partnership working to ensure work of all agencies is properly co-ordinated and delivering the best outcome for the clients</b>	CDC Paradigm HIT CAB (Others as and when required)	Quarterly review meetings  Ongoing monitoring of joint working with Paradigm Housing Options Team (including co-location)	CDC officers will administer review and monitoring process	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>All agencies are fully co-ordinated to deliver effective homelessness prevention work</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Range of agencies delivering advice and support and feeding back to CDC  <i>Target</i> – Clear joint working arrangements in place including review meetings</p>
<b>C2. Reduce use of temporary accommodation and do not use bed and breakfast accommodation other than in an emergency</b>	CDC & Paradigm	Review weekly  Ensure no more than 17 households are in temporary accommodation (Dec 2010)	Cost of temporary accommodation included Homelessness Service Agreement with Paradigm  CDC budget for B & B in 2009/10 is £35,000	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Meet Government Target to reduce number of household in TA (Temporary Accommodation)</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Number in TA at 31/12/04 was 34  <i>Target</i> – Maximum of 17 households in TA by 31/12/10</p>

<p><b>C3. Review (i) demand for and (ii) availability of emergency direct access accommodation and identify gaps in provision and how they can be filled</b></p>	<p>CDC &amp; Partner Agencies &amp; AVDC, SBDC &amp; WDC</p>	<p>Review existing demand and provision (Dec 2009)</p> <p>Identify models to meet any identified gaps (e.g. supported lodgings, crashpad etc.) and look at how they can be delivered (Mar 2010)</p>	<p>Provision of emergency direct access accommodation may involve capital and revenue costs and will be subject to available finances</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>Clear understanding of local need for direct access emergency accommodation</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Currently using out-of-district services and some local supported lodgings  <i>Target</i> – Clearly understand the level of need (at district and countywide level) and how it can be met</p>
<p><b>C4. Re-launch Homelessness Prevention Fund and utilise it as effectively as possible</b></p>	<p>CDC</p>	<p>Re-launch fund with publicity to all key partners (July 2009)</p> <p>Review scope to use fund to deliver loans to assist homelessness prevention (Aug 2009)</p>	<p>CDC Revenue budget currently has £15,000 set aside for the Prevention Fund)</p> <p>CLG Allocations for prevention of repossessions (£28,500)</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b>  <b>CDC Homelessness Prevention Fund continues to successfully prevent homelessness among clients</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Prevention Fund is in place, but take up is patchy  <i>Target</i> – Prevention Fund is fully integrated into CDC’s Homelessness Prevention toolkit and regularly used</p>

<p><b>C5. Secure delivery of homelessness prevention and support services to victims of domestic violence and monitor implementation of Sanctuary Scheme in HIA contract</b></p>	<p>CDC, Bucks Domestic Violence Forum, Bucks Supporting People Team &amp; Wycombe Womens Aid</p>	<p>Continually review delivery of advice and support to domestic violence victims, including reviewing the operation of Sanctuary Scheme (and feeding back any issues to ensure the service is operating effectively)</p>	<p>CDC contributed £11,000 to Wycombe Womens Aid in 2009/10. Funding is currently subject to countywide review.</p> <p>Sanctuary scheme is being funded via Bucks Supporting People Programme</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Effective advice and support available and Sanctuary Scheme in Place</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – WWA supporting Chiltern residents. Sanctuary scheme is in abeyance  <i>Target</i> – Effective support services in place and frontline staff trained in identification and assessment of domestic violence issues. Sanctuary scheme is operating and accessible to all victims of violence who wish to use it (including BME Households)</p>
<p><b>C6. Identify models for using mediation as an effective tool for preventing homelessness</b></p>	<p>CDC, HIT and Bucks Mediation</p>	<p>Review Government Guidance and obtain advice from CLG (Sept 2009)</p> <p>Utilise CLG advice to review delivery of mediation with service providers (Dec 2009)</p>	<p>HIT officers are trained mediators (see B5 for details of HIT funding)</p> <p>Bucks Mediation would require additional revenue funding to continue delivering homelessness prevention work</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>Mediation used as and when appropriate to support homelessness prevention</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – Limited use of mediation to prevent homelessness  <i>Target</i> – Ensure CDC and partners have a clear understanding of how mediation can be used as an effective homelessness prevention tool</p>
<p><b>C7. Review how Discretionary Housing Payments are being used to support prevention of homelessness</b></p>	<p>CDC</p>	<p>Review current operation of DHP in CDC and identify any ways Payments could be better utilised to support CDC's homelessness prevention work (Sept 2009)</p>	<p>CDC Officers will review use of DHP</p> <p>Annual DHP Budget is administered by CDC Revenues Team</p>	<p><b>Outcome</b>  <b>DHP continues to be used to support homelessness prevention where possible</b>  <i>Baseline</i> – DHP currently used on case by case basis  <i>Target</i> – Ensure DHP is used as an effective homeless prevention tool (within DHP budget limits)</p>

<p><b>C8. Introduce regular client feedback on the CDC Homelessness Service</b></p>	<p>CDC and Paradigm</p>	<p>Introduce questionnaire to obtain regular feedback from clients and landlords on homelessness service and RDGS and on the wider outcomes of homelessness prevention (e.g did client go on to access support, jobs, educations etc.) (Nov 2009)</p>	<p>CDC and Paradigm officers to develop feedback process</p> <p>Any costs of implementing process to be met from existing revenue budgets</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b> <b>Regular client feedback is being received</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Intermittent customer research carried out but no ongoing feedback in place <i>Target</i> – Introduce process for getting regular client feedback across all services</p>
<p><b>C9. Monitor ongoing impact of recession on homelessness and adjust homelessness service provision as necessary</b></p>	<p>CDC, AVDC, SBDC and WDC</p>	<p>Monitor local and national trends and identify where any changes need to be made to local services to respond to the impact of the recession (Quarterly)</p> <p>Monitor local homelessness trends against other local social and demographic information (e.g. ACORN statistics)</p>	<p>CDC officers will monitor in partnership with CLG and other district councils</p>	<p><b><u>Outcome</u></b> <b>CDC has a clear understanding of local impact of recession and adjusts services as necessary</b></p> <p><i>Baseline</i> – Local statistics and Government advice is being monitored <i>Target</i> – Continue regular monitoring and share information with other District Councils</p>

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **COST EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY**

The Audit Commission KLOEs (Key Lines of Enquiry) for Homelessness and Housing Advice (see Page 21) highlight that an organisation delivering an excellent service will operate “an effective and flexible “invest to save” policy that can be clearly demonstrated.” This reflects the range of Government guidance in recent years which encourages local housing authorities to invest in homelessness prevention work in order to avoid the costs that would otherwise arise from households becoming homeless at a later date.

Evaluating the cost effectiveness of homelessness prevention work is difficult. It involves assessing a notional cost of what the Council (and other agencies) would have spent if prevention had not taken place. The Government’s own study “Evaluating Homelessness” (CLG – December 2007) admitted that

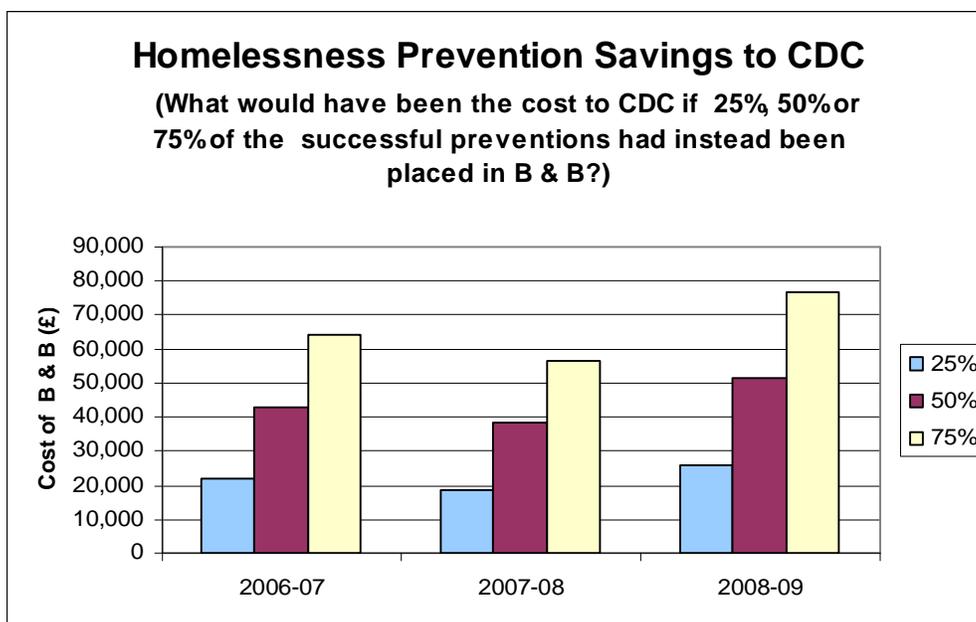
“Costs of homelessness are neither uniform nor easily calculated and clearly depend on the nature of the cause and type of household involved”

This uncertainty is reflected by other studies that have tried to assess the cost of homelessness. For example, the CRISIS study “How Many, How Much?” (2004) indicated that the cross agency costs of one person becoming homeless could be up to £24,500 after taking account of factors such as tenancy arrears, eviction costs, temporary accommodation and the work of support and health services.

Any analysis of the cost effectiveness of homelessness services in Chiltern needs to take account of the difficulties highlighted above. However, it is possible to do some broad analysis of the impact of homelessness prevention and support work in Chiltern.

For example, we can look at the impact of homelessness prevention work against the cost to the Council of providing temporary accommodation in bed and breakfast. Chart (v) on page 14 shows the annual number of recorded cases of homelessness prevention as delivered by the Council and its partners (e.g. CAB, Housing Interaction Trust etc.). During the course of the last three years, 2006/07 to 2008/09, the temporary accommodation at Tom Scott House was frequently full. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of these prevention cases may have ended up having to be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation if they had instead become homeless.

The financial impact of this over the last three years can be seen in the following chart. It shows what the cost to the Council would have been if 25%, 50% or 75% of the households concerned had instead become homeless and had to be placed in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation:



*(Note – This savings are based on an average cost of £954.00 per household placed in B&B over the three year period 2006/07 to 2008/09)*

This chart give one illustration of the significant impact of the Council’s investment in homelessness prevention through both:

- internal investment (supporting initiatives such the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Homelessness Prevention Fund), and
- external investment (supporting agencies such as CAB and Housing Interaction Trust to deliver advice and assistance).

In addition, the chart does not reflect the other costs that arise when a household becomes homeless, including:

- officer time spent helping clients to access appropriate help and support and administering B & B costs etc.,
- officer time involved in processing new benefit claims etc. that arise from clients moving into temporary accommodation, and
- costs and time incurred by partner agencies (e.g. health services, support services etc.) in supporting homeless households, which consequently reduces the resources available to assist other clients.

Therefore it can be argued that the cost effectiveness of the Council’s strategic homelessness work is actually greater than the notional B & B costs summarised in the Chart above. In addition, there are the benefits of addressing the wider community impacts of homelessness, which are summarised in Appendix 5.

In implementing the Action Plan in Appendix 3, the Council will closely monitor the financial impact and cost effectiveness of the various schemes and initiatives being undertaken.

## APPENDIX 5

### THE WIDER IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS

#### **Health**

The stress and difficulties linked to homelessness can exacerbate physical and mental health problems. Lack of settled accommodation can also make it hard to access health services.

#### **Education**

The upheaval caused by families having to move into temporary accommodation can create problems with children facing gaps in their education, having to change schools and lacking space for homework.

#### **Alcohol and Substance Misuse**

There is evidence that homelessness can exacerbate levels of drug and alcohol misuse among single persons.

### **HOMELESSNESS**

#### **Community Safety**

The lack of a stable home environment is a key factor in re-offending rates (with Home Office research suggesting that a stable home can reduce reconviction rates by over 20%). There is also evidence that some homeless persons may engage in criminal behaviour as a means of survival.

#### **Employment**

There is little robust evidence to suggest a link between homelessness and unemployment, but the disruption associated with homelessness (e.g. having to move to temporary accommodation, lacking a permanent address etc.) may make it more difficult for someone to get or retain a job.

Derived from Appendix 3 of “Homelessness Prevention: A Guide to Good Practice” (DCLG 2006)

**APPENDIX 6**  
**STRATEGIC LINKS**

As shown in Appendix 5, homelessness has a wide impact. The key Strategic links include the following:

