



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives

A strategy for tackling homelessness





Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

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*Sustainable Communities:
settled homes; changing lives*

March 2005

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Telephone 020 7944 3000
Website: www.odpm.gov.uk

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or online via the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's website
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Sustainable Communities:
Settled homes; Changing lives

Foreword

Homelessness has no place in a sustainable community. Like poverty and disadvantage, our aim should be to eradicate it.

In recent years, we have shown what can be achieved when challenging targets are set and when Government, councils, voluntary agencies and others come together with the passion, resources and commitment to change people's lives for good.

Our approach has been to help those who are most vulnerable or at greatest risk, while building up a more effective system for meeting wider housing and support needs. Our 2002 report, *More than a roof*, set out new approaches to tackle the personal and social causes of homelessness alongside structural issues like housing supply.

There has been good progress so far, but we have further to go.

The number of people sleeping on our streets has fallen by more than two-thirds since 1998.

During 2002 we improved the homelessness legislation to protect more people. In the short-term, this has added to statistics on the number of people helped by councils. But it means young and vulnerable people being housed instead of being left to fend for themselves.

In 2003, every council in the country put in place a strategy to prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and support. Since those strategies have been in place, the number of new homelessness cases has been falling.

The long-term use of cramped B&B hotels to house homeless families with children was ended in 2004.

The days of *Cathy Come Home* are, thankfully, a thing of the past. Our strong legislation ensures that families with children and other vulnerable people are given accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own.

Over 80% of the people accommodated under the homelessness legislation today are in self-contained homes. But they lack certainty over how long they will live there and this can make it hard for them to put down roots in the community, to settle their kids in school, or to call where they live a home. And there are too many households living in these circumstances.

That is why, in our recent 5 Year Plan, *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All*, we have set a challenging new target to halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010.

This document sets out in more detail our strategy for working across Government, with local authorities, with voluntary sector agencies and other partners, to achieve this aim. It takes into account the report and recommendations made by the ODPM Select Committee following its inquiry into homelessness last year.

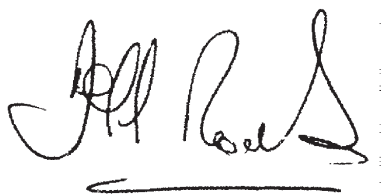


We want to modernise the way in which homelessness is tackled locally. There should be more opportunities for people at risk of homelessness to avoid it altogether. And for those who do become homeless, there should be more opportunities to find settled homes and support.

This will take increased resources. We are providing these.

It will require new approaches and a real transformation in service delivery. We are committed to testing and supporting innovation and positive change.

I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to the progress achieved over the last few years. I hope you will continue to work with us in this important endeavour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Rooker', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Lord Rooker
Minister of State for Regeneration and Regional Development

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Section 1

Our strategy for tackling and reducing homelessness

SUMMARY

“We are going to build on the progress that we have made over the past seven years to really get to grips with homelessness and poverty. I’m proud of the work we’ve done so far.”

Rt. Hon JOHN PRESCOTT MP, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER¹

- 1.1 Our strategy for tackling homelessness was outlined in ‘Sustainable Communities: Homes for All’*. It aims to expand housing opportunities, including for those who need additional support, and for disadvantaged sections of society. We will reduce homelessness by offering a wider range of preventative measures and increasing access to settled homes, halving the numbers living in temporary accommodation by 2010.
- 1.2 We have already achieved major breakthroughs in tackling the worst forms of homelessness and helping the most vulnerable. Rough sleeping is at its lowest recorded level ever, which means fewer vulnerable people on our streets. Ending the long-term use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children means fewer adults and children with disrupted lives.
- 1.3 We will use what we have learned since ‘More than a roof’ about tackling the social and personal causes of homelessness. Initiatives such as mediation have prevented young people from losing their home at a moment of crisis; women and children experiencing domestic violence have avoided losing a home, school, friends and family networks through sanctuary schemes; and targeted floating support has enabled vulnerable people to remain in their tenancies, preventing future homelessness. Personal intervention by housing advice workers, through home visits, have saved thousands of needless exclusions. And rent deposit schemes are helping people to find decent homes in the private rented sector.
- 1.4 New cases of homelessness have been falling for over a year. We want to build on these achievements. We want fewer people to experience the damaging crisis of homelessness and ensure that those who do can find a settled home as quickly as possible.
- 1.5 Our strategy aims to halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010. We will do this by:
 - Preventing homelessness;
 - Providing support for vulnerable people;
 - Tackling the wider causes and symptoms of homelessness;
 - Helping more people move away from rough sleeping; and
 - Providing more settled homes.

¹ Rt. Hon John Prescott MP, Deputy Prime Minister, *Society Guardian*, October 13, 2004

* TSO, January 2005; Cm 6424, £17.75

1.6 To deliver our strategy we will:

- increase our funding for homelessness by 23% from £60 million to £74 million by 2007-08;
- support what works, based on an evaluation of new initiatives developed and piloted with our funding over the last three years;
- consider changes to the homelessness legislation to improve the provision and take-up of preventative services and housing options;
- deliver our agenda across Government overseen by the Ministerial Committee on Homelessness;
- provide better services in hostels through a £90m capital improvement programme to ensure people can be helped to move away from the streets and homelessness more quickly and permanently;
- increase the supply of new social housing by 50% and make better use of existing social and private rented stock to provide settled homes;
- develop area based initiatives;
- support and work in partnership with local authorities, voluntary sector agencies, landlords, homelessness service users and others; and
- improve information about homelessness to support more effective solutions.

Section 2

Homelessness in context

Homelessness in 2005:

- Lowest ever levels of rough sleeping – 70% less than in 1998
- Reductions in homelessness during 2004 – the first sustained fall since the mid 1990s
- Reductions in the use of bed & breakfast hotels as temporary accommodation
- Every local authority has a homelessness prevention strategy in place
- Increased investment in new social housing providing 75,000 new homes by 2008
- Supporting People is in place, providing £5 billion over the next 3 years

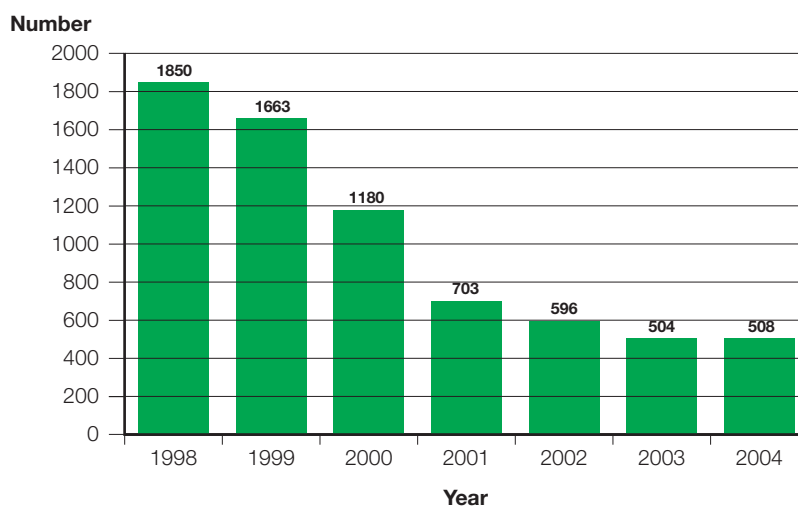
“When considering homelessness, the instinctive response is to think of people who are literally roofless and sleeping rough on our streets. However rough sleepers are only the tip of the iceberg.”

AUDIT COMMISSION ²

2.1 Homelessness is caused by a number of factors, some of which relate to the wider state of the economy and the housing market and others which are personal to the individual or family, or reflect social and demographic change. We have taken action to improve the quality of existing housing and to maximise its use, as well as increase new provision (see section 7). Key to our approach to reducing

homelessness has been our encouragement of innovative responses to help people overcome personal problems which might otherwise lead to homelessness. Over the next five years we will build on our achievements and expand housing opportunities for all.

Rough sleeping, England, 1998–2004



Source: ODPM

² Homelessness. Responding to the new agenda, Audit Commission, 2003

Rough Sleeping

2.2 The most visible, and extreme, form of homelessness is that of people sleeping on the streets. In 1998 the Prime Minister set a target that by 2002 the numbers of rough sleepers should be reduced by at least two thirds from the then level of 1,850. This target was met ahead of time in 2001 and to date is being sustained with levels in 2004 of just over 500. Our £90 million commitment to a Hostels Improvement Programme over the next three years will help to achieve further reductions in rough sleeping.

Homelessness trends

2.3 Since 1978, when the homelessness legislation was introduced, the number of households accepted by local authorities as being owed the main homelessness duty increased steadily from 53,000 a year to a peak of around 140,000 in the early 1990s. They decreased to 102,000 in 1997 and continued to rise until the end of 2003. Since then they have been reducing.

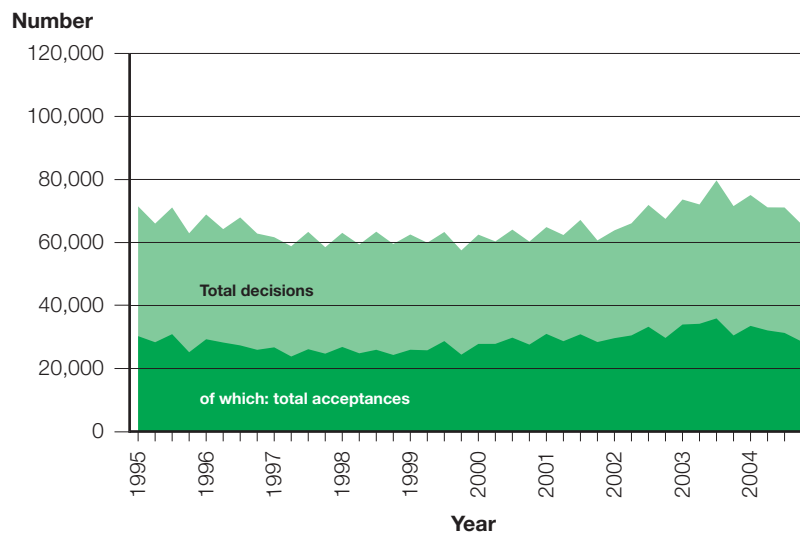
KEY FACTS:

In 2003/04 the main causes of homelessness were:
 38% Evicted by family or friend
 20% Relationship breakdown
 13% End of assured shorthold tenancy
 62% of accepted households included dependent children or an expectant mother.

2.4 In 2002 we amended the homelessness legislation to strengthen the statutory protection available to people who face homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 widens eligibility for local authority help, and adds to the duties and powers local authorities have to tackle all types of homelessness.

2.5 In the short-term, this has meant more applications and more people being accepted by local authorities as being owed the main homelessness duty and has added to the numbers in temporary accommodation. But many of these are people who may not have received help under the previous legislation. In particular, priority need for accommodation has been extended to cover certain categories of young people, people vulnerable as a result

Homelessness applications: Total decisions and of which acceptances, England, 1995-2004



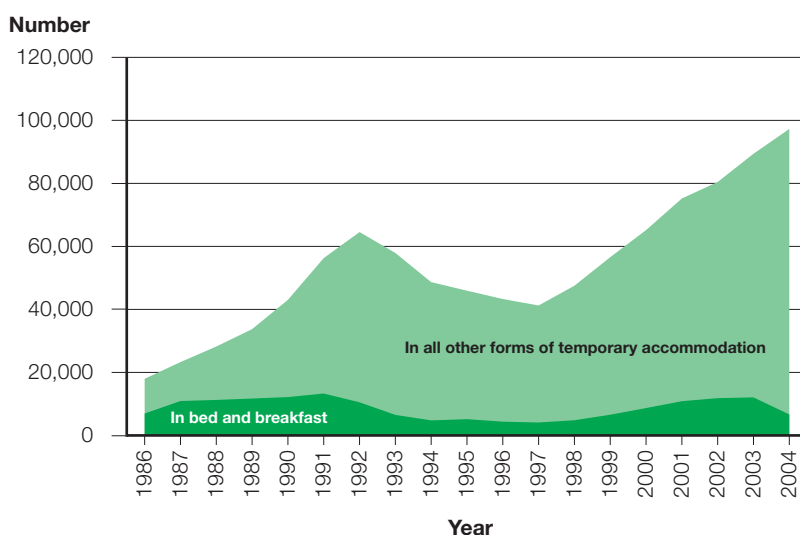
Source: ODPM P1E returns (quarterly)

of fleeing their home because of violence and people vulnerable as a result of time spent in the Armed Forces, in care or in prison. These latter groups had previously been over-represented amongst those sleeping rough.

Trends in temporary accommodation use

2.6 We have acted to reduce the worst aspects of temporary accommodation use – families with children forced to live for excessive lengths of time in cramped bed and breakfast (B&B) hotel rooms, with no room to play or do homework, and having to share washing and cooking facilities with strangers. But wider use of temporary accommodation has continued to grow, reaching 100,000 households in 2004 – around 60,000 in London. Over 80% of these households are in self-contained homes. But they occupy them on an insecure basis. This can be damaging to them and to the community.

Households in temporary accommodation at end March: 1986-2004



Source: ODPM P1E Housing Activity returns (quarterly)

Homelessness strategies

2.7 Every local authority in England has developed a new homelessness strategy; we have promoted prevention initiatives, and have provided additional funding and guidance on good practice. These strategies and prevention initiatives go much wider than the groups who are owed the main re-housing duty in the homelessness legislation and provide a more comprehensive response to all forms of homelessness. They are helping to break down the old distinctions between 'statutory' and 'non-statutory' homelessness and between family and single homelessness. They are also helping to forge stronger partnerships between local authorities, housing associations and other voluntary and statutory sector agencies.

2.8 These partnerships have been an important part of our work to improve the links between housing and other services that can help people to avoid or overcome homelessness.

KEY FACT:

After several years of increases, homelessness decisions and acceptances have been reducing steadily throughout 2004, the first sustained reductions since the mid-90s.

KEY FACT:

Since 2002, the number of families with children in B&B hotels has been reduced from 6,700 to less than 1,000.

Supporting People

2.9 The introduction of Supporting People has provided a more strategic basis for housing related support services that help vulnerable people begin to live independently or to maintain independent living. We will provide £5 billion over the next three years which will help 1.2 million vulnerable people to stay in their own homes.

Working across Government

2.10 Work across Government plays a key part in our strategy including, for example, initiatives to address the health needs of homeless households and better co-ordination with strategies to tackle domestic violence and re-offending.

2.11 Improvements in the range of effective front-line prevention services have led to recent reductions in homelessness. We believe that with continued, and increasing, investment even more people will be helped to avoid homelessness in future.

Increasing the supply of affordable housing

2.12 Our priority for new action and investment is to increase housing supply where it is needed and additional resources, together with efficiency improvements, will produce 75,000 social rented homes and 40,000 homes for essential public sector workers and low cost home ownership over the three years to 2007/08.

2.13 Our policies and actions to date have reduced the most damaging aspects of homelessness and provided a stronger statutory safety net. We will continue to promote more strategic and preventative approaches and will improve the supply and condition of social housing. There is further to go, but we believe this combination of approaches will work to halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010. The rest of this document sets out our future strategy which will ensure homelessness is tackled more effectively.

Section 3

Preventing homelessness

We will:

- Provide £200m over the next three years to support local authority and voluntary sector homelessness prevention schemes
- Evaluate the effectiveness of homelessness prevention schemes and promote improvements to front-line services
- Promote effective mediation and counselling services which will reconcile families and prevent homelessness
- Promote approaches towards domestic violence which prevent homelessness, and work with Home Office ACU to improve front-line services in refuges
- Consult with stakeholders about possible changes to legislation to support initiatives to prevent homelessness

“Shelter supports the work of the HHS [ODPM’s Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate] and its continued emphasis on promoting innovative services aimed at preventing homelessness.”

SHELTER, 2004³

Introduction

Prevention and options

- 3.1 *More than a roof* set out a new approach to tackling homelessness which focused on peoples’ personal problems rather than just structural bricks and mortar causes. We recognised that the provision of housing alone cannot solve homelessness. Underlying problems which led to homelessness in the first place have to be addressed in order to provide long-term solutions. Failure to address these root causes can lead to repeated episodes of homelessness.
- 3.2 Preventing homelessness more effectively will remain at the forefront of our work. The plans we set out in *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* to improve the supply of new private and social housing will help greatly in this. But it also requires more help to tackle the social and personal causes of homelessness, a wider range of housing options to meet people’s

³ Shelter, written Memorandum submitted in evidence to ODPM Select Committee Homelessness Inquiry, 2004

housing needs, and earlier interventions to stop a problem growing into a crisis. Our strategy for preventing homelessness more effectively has three main strands:

- encouraging and rewarding the modernisation of services provided by local authorities which offer a wider range of preventative help, support and housing options – so that they reach more people, earlier on;
- encouraging and supporting stronger partnerships between local authorities, housing associations, private landlords and other statutory and voluntary sector agencies – so that they act in concert to help people avoid homelessness and provide solutions to homelessness; and
- working across Government to achieve wider social policy improvements that help tackle the problems that can cause homelessness or be exacerbated by it – so that people at greatest risk of homelessness are able to access services to enable them to lead healthy, independent lives.

What do we mean by homelessness prevention?

- 3.3 Preventing homelessness means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs in order to avoid homelessness. Prevention activities include those which enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate, or to enable a planned and timely move and help sustain independent living.
- 3.4 The examples below illustrate how homelessness can be prevented. They led to significant falls in levels of homelessness within many districts in 2004, when many local authorities recorded the first sustained decrease in homelessness decisions and acceptances since the mid-1990s.

How homelessness can be caused and prevented

Cause: Parents, relatives or friends not being able or willing to provide accommodation

Action: Mediation services, usually contracted out by local authority to, for example, Relate

Cause: Relationship breakdown, including domestic violence

Action: 'Sanctuary' schemes, which allow domestic violence victims to remain in their homes once security measures are in place

Cause: End of assured short-hold tenancy

Action: Housing advice. Rent deposit or bond schemes to encourage landlords to let to potentially homeless people

Cause: Mortgage and rent arrears

Action: Debt counselling. Advocacy services in magistrates' court. Fast tracking housing benefit claims

How homelessness can be caused and prevented (continued)

Cause: Person ill-equipped to sustain a tenancy

Action: Advice and support under the Supporting People programme for vulnerable people at risk of homelessness, for example improving budgeting and 'life' skills

Cause: Lack of information

Action: Early and proactive intervention from local authority homelessness services to discuss options and offer assistance and advice

More than a roof: Progress in tackling homelessness, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General HC286, February 2005

- 3.5. Preventing homelessness effectively can also lead to significant savings in local authority expenditure on temporary accommodation. In October 2003, 177 local authorities estimated that they would achieve savings of around £29 million – an average of £163,000 per authority as a result of prevention initiatives.
- 3.6 We have commissioned an external evaluation of a range of approaches which have been developed with homelessness grants since 2002 and will produce good practice guidance based on this study during 2005. We will continue to support schemes that work, through £200 million of funding over the next three years and will monitor authorities' performance on prevention.

Reducing the Impact of family, relationship breakdown and domestic violence

- 3.7 Relationship breakdown and domestic violence can all too often lead to homelessness. Family tensions can make living conditions intolerable for teenagers and other young people and their parents. Many local authorities have been implementing approaches aimed at avoiding the crisis of homelessness resolving problems in the long-term or providing respite and time for a planned, and often more sustainable move. Services being developed include home visits mediation and counselling services to help couples and families reconcile their differences.
- 3.8 We want to promote these services where there is no risk of abuse or violence. Our future action will include continuing work with Relate to evaluate approaches which reconcile families and we will continue to fund them as part of an effective homelessness prevention service.
- 3.9 Each year a significant number of people are forced to leave

KEY FACT:

Eviction by parents or other friends and family accounted for 38% of homelessness in 2003/04.

KEY FACTS:

Between 1997 and 2004 more than 146,000 homeless households were re-housed by local authorities because of domestic violence.

In 2004 approximately 13% (equivalent to about 16,000 households) stated that domestic violence was the reason for the loss of their last settled home.

their homes because they are victims of domestic violence. Most, but not all, victims are women, often with children. Domestic violence is also a major cause of repeat homelessness.

- 3.10 We will continue to support UKRefugesonline, (an online database showing refuge vacancies, for use by local domestic violence service providers). We will also increase the number, and improve the quality of, refuge places and will support new approaches to domestic violence and homelessness, including 'Sanctuary' schemes that provide extra security to help the victims of domestic violence to stay in their own homes, where it is safe for them and they choose to do so.
- 3.11 We will work with the Active Communities Unit in the Home Office which, through the Change-Up programme, will be providing additional funding of £200,000 to support a capacity building programme to improve front-line services in refuges.
- 3.12 We will also work with the Department of Health and the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) in its introduction of programmes to improve access to information, care and support within NHS health and mental health services for victims of domestic violence. These will be focussing initially on ante-natal services as set out in the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services and in the Public Health White Paper Choosing Health.

Recognising prevention in legislation

- 3.13 The importance of homelessness prevention was recognised in the Homelessness Act 2002, which required local authorities, for the first time, to publish a strategy based on a review of all homelessness in their district. These strategies should aim to prevent homelessness and ensure that accommodation and support are available for anyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 3.14 Local authorities have indicated to us that relatively few people are literally roofless when they first seek assistance from a local authority. Many people have benefited from help which has enabled them to stay in their existing home or to help them find reasonable alternative housing. We want to build on these successful approaches. We want all local authorities to offer a wider range of options at an early stage, before homelessness actually occurs. These options would help more people to avoid homelessness altogether – by enabling them to stay in their existing accommodation, delaying homelessness for long enough to allow a planned move, or finding alternative accommodation – and reduce authorities' need to place people in temporary accommodation.
- 3.15 We will consult later in 2005 on proposals to look at possible changes to the legislation that would enable such improvements to be introduced. We will also consider whether legislative changes could be made to encourage greater use of the private rented sector to provide settled housing options, where these are suitable and meet the needs of households in temporary accommodation.

Section 4

Support for people when they are vulnerable

We will:

- Work with Supporting People authorities to promote better delivery and use of resources, including through cross-authority planning
- Work with DfES to achieve improved outcomes for children of families at risk of homelessness or in temporary accommodation
- Work with DfES to ensure effective joint working between housing and social services
- Promote innovative approaches towards preventing homelessness amongst BME communities
- Work with NASS to prevent homelessness amongst refugees
- Work with the Home Office to develop effective solutions to homelessness amongst ex-offenders
- Work with the MOD to develop effective solutions to prevent homelessness amongst former Service personnel
- Work with the Department of Health to encourage PCTs and local authorities to agree joint protocols for patients at risk of homelessness on discharge from hospital

“Never give up on the most vulnerable ... focus on those most in need”

COMING IN FROM THE COLD⁴

- 4.1 For some people, the causes of homelessness are clear cut, but for others they can be more complex – where homelessness is not just a housing problem. People may have mental health problems, or substance abuse, or unemployment or a history of offending and chaotic lifestyles. In many cases these issues mean that people are vulnerable and at risk of homelessness for a short period of their life. Services must be flexible enough to ensure that they can respond to short-term as well as life-long needs, and to multiple needs.

Supporting People

- 4.2 In 2004/05, under the Supporting People programme in England, we estimate that around £50m of funding is being spent on support for 17,000 families, £290m on 47,000 single people who have experienced homelessness or are at risk of it, and about £13m on 1,600 former rough sleepers. Additionally, a further £100m is being spent to provide housing related support to groups who are particularly at risk of homelessness, such as victims of domestic violence and people with drug and alcohol problems.
- 4.3 It is essential that this funding is well directed and achieves best value for money. To this end, Supporting People authorities are undertaking comprehensive reviews of all these services to ensure they meet locally identified priorities, are strategically relevant, of good quality and

⁴ *Coming in from the Cold, Progress Report on the Government. Strategy on Rough Sleeping, Summer 2001*

provide value for money. These service reviews will challenge providers to think about how they deliver support and demonstrate they deliver effective services. In 2005/06 the service review programme will accelerate, for completion by April 2006.

- 4.4 We will work with Supporting People authorities to help them improve their delivery of the programme and to promote better use of their resources. We will encourage better cross-authority planning and delivery of services to vulnerable groups. In particular we will seek to help district councils to improve the links between their homelessness services and the Supporting People services delivered through county councils.

Helping those at greatest risk

- 4.5 Research and data on homelessness also indicates that certain groups in society are at greater risk of homelessness. By focussing policies and services on these groups we can help to prevent homelessness or limit the impact it has on people's lives. We will work with the SEU to build on the findings from the Social Exclusion Unit's *Breaking the Cycle*⁵ report which highlighted the importance of delivering homelessness solutions for older and disabled people, and through their current project 'Better Service Delivery for Disadvantaged People who Move Frequently', which will consider the experiences of a number of groups at risk of homelessness, including care leavers, ex-offenders, ex service personnel, Gypsies and Travellers, and those who have experienced homelessness.
- 4.6 We will help older and disabled people to live independently, through assistance to remain in their own home or through accommodation-based support such as sheltered housing.
- 4.7 On almost every measure, Gypsies and Travellers are one of the most disadvantaged groups on in society. We have recently conducted a review of provision for the Gypsy and Traveller population and have put together a package of measures which will be overseen by a new dedicated Unit which will work with local authorities to help prepare them to deliver sites and offer support on practical issues on site delivery, planning and enforcement.

Children

- 4.8 The homelessness legislation provides a strong safety net for families with children where they become homeless through no fault of their own. Authorities must secure suitable accommodation for such families.
- 4.9 We are working in partnership with DfES (Department for

KEY FACTS:

Children of families who have experienced homelessness:

– are more likely to be on the Child Protection Register (in one study 12% compared with less than 1% in the general population)

– suffer educational disruption and disadvantage (in one study only 29% of children in homeless families were attending school compared with 73% before they experienced homelessness).

⁵ *Breaking the Cycle. Taking stock of progress and priorities for the future.* A report by the Social Exclusion Unit, 2004

Education and Skills) to improve links between housing authorities and children's services, to minimise the impact of homelessness on children where their families are living in temporary accommodation.

- 4.10 We will support and inform statutory guidance linked to the Children Act 2004, covering multi-agency working, joint commissioning and other approaches to achieve better outcomes for the children of families that have experienced homelessness, living in temporary accommodation.
- 4.11 In partnership with DfES we will ensure that children of households placed in temporary accommodation can access Sure Start services, especially children's centres and neighbourhood nurseries.
- 4.12 The Children's National Service Framework⁶ treats children in households living in temporary accommodation as one of the groups⁷ of children in special circumstances, for whom access to services has often been a particular problem and who are also at risk of achieving poorer outcomes than their peers. We will use this, and guidance produced in November 2004 by the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA), *The Vital Link – Preventing Family Homelessness*, to encourage Primary Care Trust involvement in local authority homelessness strategies, strengthen the support provided to vulnerable children and develop quality children's services.

CPHVA – The Vital Link – Preventing Family Homelessness

The Vital Link – Preventing Family Homelessness sets out research evidence about the impact of homelessness on the health of families with young children and puts forward good practice principles for effective working to address the health needs of children and families, planning services and sharing information and good practice to prevent homelessness.

Young People

- 4.13 Our strategy recognises that young people can become homeless for a wide range of often complex reasons.
- 4.14 We have strengthened the statutory protection available for young people and encouraged local authorities to take particular account of youth homelessness. Since 2002 all 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers aged between 18 and 20 have had a priority need for accommodation if they become homeless through no fault of their own. However, it remains important that agencies working with young people deliver effective interventions to prevent homelessness.

⁶ **Children's NSF**

The Children's National Service Framework, published on 15 September 2004, is a 10-year programme to ensure fair, high quality and integrated health and social care from pregnancy, right through to adulthood.

⁷ Other groups include looked after children and care leavers, children who have run away from home or care, children exposed to domestic violence family conflict and/or family breakdown. <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/09/05/66/04090566.pdf>

4.15 *Every Child Matters*⁸ recognised that tackling and preventing homelessness amongst young people and their families is critical to ensuring young people are able to realise their potential. We will work with DfES to ensure effective joint working between housing and social services in the development of Children's Trust arrangements by 2008, including:

- promoting effective care leaving strategies;
- extending the use of referral and tracking systems and protocols to support young people at risk of parental exclusion and homelessness;
- encouraging local authorities to develop a wider range of services which can prevent youth homelessness and provide respite care provided in Foyers and through other projects;
- increasing the take up of Education Maintenance Allowances by young homeless people, or those at risk of homelessness, to help them stay in education.

4.16 We will continue to explore housing solutions for young people and will support the Social Exclusion Unit's 'Young Adults with Troubled Lives' project to inform the delivery of positive outcomes which help young people to remain at home, where possible, so they have a stable basis from which they can access the support they need.

Black and Minority Ethnic Groups

4.17 On a range of measurements, black and minority ethnic (BME) households are at disproportionate risk of social exclusion and in the case of homelessness, this is no exception. Statistics collected by local authorities show that in every region in England BME groups are over-represented amongst those accepted by local authorities. In fact, people from BME communities are nearly three times more likely to be homeless than other people.

4.18 In order to investigate the reasons why such groups might be more vulnerable to homelessness we commissioned research into the causes of homelessness amongst people from different BME communities. The research, undertaken by Ethnos, has highlighted the complexity of the issues and the importance of tailoring solutions to suit the needs of different communities.

4.19 We will publish a development guide later in 2005 that will promote good practice and assist local authorities housing associations (general needs and specialist BME associations) and other agencies in developing innovative services for BME groups. The guide will suggest that in order to develop effective homelessness prevention schemes targeted at BME communities, local authorities should develop:

- A better understanding of the causes of homelessness amongst BME groups;
- A profile of their local BME communities;
- Better mapping of the needs of BME households who are or may become homeless;

KEY FACTS:

Around 8% of the population of England is from BME communities.

BME households represent about 23% of people accepted as owed the main homelessness duty.

⁸ The Children's Green Paper *Every Child Matters* sets out the Government's commitment to improving outcomes for all children and young people – including the most disadvantaged. www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

- Strategies for providing appropriate and accessible services for all BME groups to prevent and tackle homelessness; and
- Approaches for meeting the legal duties on race equality.

4.20 To support the delivery of good practice we will also invite and fund innovative approaches that focus on the specific homelessness issues faced by BME groups.

Refugees

As a result of their experiences and circumstances refugees have very specific needs. We want to encourage the development of local services designed to meet refugees' needs, which enable access to stable and safe accommodation and avoid homelessness. These objectives are also reflected in the Home Office's National Refugee Integration Strategy, *Integration Matters*.

We will encourage local housing authorities to work closely with the asylum seeker regional consortia so that local homelessness strategies are clearly linked to regional refugee integration strategies. Together these should provide a strong mechanism for planning and forecasting the measures that need to be taken to ensure that accommodation and support will be available for refugees alongside other groups at risk of homelessness. We aim to identify examples of good practice and to share these with service providers and refugee advisers.

We will work with the National Asylum Support Service, the National Refugee Integration Forum, refugee agencies, local authorities and housing providers to develop local protocols and innovative solutions to prevent homelessness amongst refugees.

People Leaving Institutions

4.21 Most people leaving custody, hospital or the Armed Forces are able to arrange suitable accommodation by themselves or with a little support. But for some, experience of an institutional based lifestyle may reduce their coping skills, employability and support networks, which means that upon release they may be at risk of homelessness. Groups include ex-offenders, former Armed Forces personnel and those leaving hospital after a lengthy stay. The homelessness legislation has been strengthened to give priority need to people who are homeless and vulnerable as a result of having spent time in care, custody or the Armed Forces. That provides an important safety net. But our future work will focus more strongly on approaches that help people with institution alised backgrounds to avoid homelessness altogether.

Ex-Offenders

4.22 We are working closely with the Home Office in the delivery of the Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan⁹. A number of developments are underway to ensure that all prisoners' housing needs are assessed. All local prisons now have dedicated housing advisers and the Prison Service are increasing the number of Category C establishments which have dedicated housing advice centres. From April 2005 all local prisons will be required to carry out housing needs assessments for every new prisoner, including those serving short sentences. This will identify those who require assistance closing down, sustaining, or transferring tenancies and Housing Benefits claims, and those who need help finding accommodation for discharge. The Prison Service will be introducing a Key Performance Target from April 2005 to increase the

9 www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/5505reoffending.pdf

number of prisoners with an address to go to on release. This will measure the housing need assessment on induction. Information will also be collected showing where prisoners at risk of homelessness will be returning to, so that housing authorities and advice agencies can plan services and support.

KEY FACTS:

Around one third of prisoners lose their housing on imprisonment.

Addressing severe accommodation problems can reduce re-offending by up to 20%.

- 4.23 We will continue to work with the National Offender Management Service to identify and promote a range of interventions that are effective in preventing and reducing reoffending of those leaving prison, for example assisting with access to benefits, including Housing Benefit to sustain tenancies; and rent deposits for drug-misusing offenders.

Armed Forces personnel

- 4.24 We support the cross cutting Veterans' Task Force and Forum and have worked with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the ex-Services benevolent sector and key business partners to implement a range of projects. These are working to prevent ex-Service homelessness, promote employability (such as Project Compass), and to provide accommodation for those who have served who are at risk of homelessness. We will continue to work with the MoD to implement an effective support system for ex-Service personnel who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

KEY FACTS:

Around 24,000 people leave the Armed Forces every year.

In 2001, 14% of rough sleepers had served in the Forces at some point in their lives. More recent analysis suggests this has fallen to 10%.

- 4.25 To improve our understanding of the issues faced by ex-Service personnel we have commissioned jointly with the MoD a study into ex-Services rough sleeping and homelessness which will report later in 2005. We are also investing in additional supported housing provision in London and Aldershot linked to training, employment and support for ex Service personnel at risk of homelessness.
- 4.26 We will also consider issuing good practice guidance to local authorities and agencies working with ex-offenders to encourage the development of protocols which meet the housing needs of offenders and prevent homelessness.

People Leaving Hospital

- 4.27 The hospitalisation of a homeless person may present an opportunity to deal with underlying medical, social and mental health problems in a structured manner.
- 4.28 We will work with the Department of Health and Primary Care Trusts to ensure that where homeless people are admitted to hospital, their homelessness is identified and that pending discharge, their need for accommodation is notified to primary health care services and to homelessness service providers. We will encourage Primary Care Trusts and local authorities to agree joint protocols that include guidance and training for staff dealing with individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Section 5

Tackling wider causes and symptoms

We will:

- Work across Government to ensure services are targeted at the most vulnerable groups to prevent homelessness and improve access to services and opportunities
- Work with DWP to improve access to employment and benefits for households who are homeless or in temporary accommodation
- Work with the Home Office to develop a rent deposit model for former drug misusing ex-offenders
- Work with the Department of Health to promote the take up of shared health and homeless outcomes
- Work with the Department of Health and Home Office to improve areas to drug and alcohol treatment services
- Undertake jointly with the Department of Health and NIMHE research to identify and promote good practice on the provision of mental health services for people at risk of homelessness
- Work with the DCA on the development of a pre-action protocol to minimise possession actions which can lead to homelessness and on the development of good practice guidance for social landlords in the treatment of rent arrears
- Work with the Home Office to prevent homelessness caused by anti-social behaviour
- Set out minimum standards for temporary accommodation in statutory guidance
- Work with DCMS to maximise the opportunity for Lottery funding to support homelessness initiatives

“Through its engagement with a range of central Government Departments and agencies, the [ODPM Homelessness and Housing Support] Directorate has helped to achieve a number of changes in policies and procedures and sponsored a number of promising initiatives. These have brought about, or have the potential to bring about, improvements in the services provided to homeless people.”

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, 2005¹⁰

- 5.1 Preventing homelessness is a key area of our work in tackling disadvantage and creating sustainable communities. Joint action across Government to tackle homelessness should have a positive and significant impact on reducing the prevalence of these problems and the wider costs they impose on people, communities and society. We will continue to work closely with other parts of Government to develop new approaches that help the groups most at risk of homelessness, including targeting preventative services at the most disadvantaged. A Ministerial Committee on Homelessness oversees this work.

¹⁰ *More than a roof: progress in tackling homelessness*, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General – NAO, 2005

Benefits reform and employment

- 5.2 We will promote help for people at risk of homelessness through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) policies, such as using Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness and improving the subsidy regime to reflect the costs of temporary accommodation, whilst at the same time discouraging the use of bed and breakfast hotels. We support DWP's ongoing improvements to standards of administration of Housing Benefit. We also support the delivery of employment and benefits advice through Jobcentre Plus and their engagement with the homelessness sector through organisations such as Business Action on Homelessness.
- 5.3 As part of the proposed Building on New Deal, DWP will be developing local delivery plans and a national strategy for benefit claimants who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. We will support Jobcentre Plus and key partner agencies to promote training and employment outcomes for people who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation. This work will also be informed by the Off the Streets and into Work's EQUAL Programme to overcome barriers to employment for households living in temporary accommodation which we are supporting with DWP. The 'block grant' pilot we are taking forward with East Thames Housing Group is a key strand of this work (see section 7).
- 5.4 We are also working with the National Learning and Skills Council to develop 'Outside In', a pilot learning programme providing Vocational Qualifications for homeless people and those that work with them.

KEY FACT:

Off the Streets and Into Work research showed that 20% of its service users had been unemployed for more than 3 years.

Improving access to health services

- 5.5 People who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation are more likely to suffer from poor physical, mental and emotional health than the general population, and ill health is often associated with poverty and homelessness. Children from families who have experienced homelessness have an increased risk of a low birth weight and greater likelihood of illness, behavioural problems and delayed development. Homeless people are at greater risk of infection, musculo-skeletal disorders, poor diet and nutrition, stress, and depression. Drug and alcohol misuse and mental health problems are also prevalent amongst the homeless population, and many rough sleepers have multiple needs (e.g. a mental health problem plus one or more other issues, such as alcohol or drug misuse).

KEY FACTS:

Families in temporary accommodation have a higher incidence of infection, illness and accidents and homeless households are more likely to attend hospital Accident & Emergency Departments.

One in three problem drug users are homeless or in need of housing support.

9% of people accepted as owed a main housing duty are vulnerable due to mental illness.

- 5.6 We have issued joint guidance¹¹ with The Department of Health (DH) to local authorities, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), and health care providers on delivering positive outcomes in health and homelessness. We will use the opportunities offered by the Healthier Communities shared priority pathfinder programme and the creation of the Spearhead Group¹² of local authorities and PCTs to encourage local action to address the needs of people, who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation.
- 5.7 The Department of Health recently announced that £135 billion would be allocated to PCTs for 2006/07 and 2007/08, with higher funding going to those most in need such as the Spearhead PCTs.
- 5.8 In conjunction with the Department of Health we are encouraging PCTs to commission flexible, responsive services which meet the specific needs of people who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation in their area.
- 5.9 Primary Care Trusts have a range of contracting routes available to commission or provide primary medical services for the health needs of their populations. We will continue to work with DH to promote National Enhanced Services and Specialist Primary Medical Services (SPMS) for homeless people.

Drug and alcohol services

- 5.10 We will improve access to drug treatment services by working with the Department of Health, National Treatment Agency and PCTs ensuring that strategies covering areas with historically high levels of rough sleeping and continuing high levels of single people living in insecure accommodation are aligned to provide effective treatment and support. Such strategies could include DAT Treatment plans.
- 5.11 Using the national audit of alcohol treatment services and the new 'Models of Care' guidance for PCT commissioners, we will work with the Department of Health, the National Treatment Agency and the Home Office to take forward the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy recommendations to improve alcohol treatment services through early intervention and improved access to specialist treatment.
- 5.12 In December 2004 we issued joint guidance¹³ with the Home Office to local authorities and Drug Action Teams (DATs). This highlighted how Drug Intervention Programme Throughcare and Aftercare funding can complement existing housing related support for drug misusing offenders prior to and after release from custody, such as joint funding for dedicated workers and rent deposit schemes. We will work with the Home Office and other partners to support the delivery of this joint guidance using a comprehensive rent deposit model from 2005 to improve support for drug misusing offenders who are at risk of homelessness in selected DAT areas.

KEY FACT:

Between 1997/98 and 2003/04 around 135,000 households were accepted as unintentionally homeless and owed the main duty by local authorities under the homelessness legislation because of a mental illness, learning or physical disability.

¹² 88 PCTs covering 70 Local Authority areas in England who face the greatest health challenges. These areas will be the first to pilot initiatives aimed at improving health and narrowing the gap in health inequalities in the most disadvantaged communities

¹³ Providing for the Housing Needs of Drug Interventions Programme Clients (ODPM/ HO 2004)

Mental health services

- 5.13 We will, with the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE), promote joint working across health and homelessness services and will consider strengthening guidance to local authorities on homeless applicants who may have a priority need for accommodation because they are vulnerable as a result of mental health problems.
- 5.14 We are commissioning research with DH and NIMHE to identify and promote practical ways to overcome barriers homeless people or those living in temporary accommodation may face when accessing mental health services. We will publish this research in 2006.

Improving access to legal services

- 5.15 Problems such as debt can, if left unaddressed, lead to homelessness. It is therefore important that people who need help are able to access good quality advice. The Department of Constitutional Affairs (DCA) Community Legal Service (CLS) aims to increase access to good quality legal and advice services by promoting early intervention. The CLS Fund, amounting to £900 million in 2003/04, is spent on contracts with quality assured advice providers, of which £39 million relates to funding on Housing and Homelessness issues.

CLS Direct

CLS Direct was launched in July 2004 and includes a national Telephone Advice Service (0845 345 4 345) which offers free initial legal advice for all on Welfare Benefits, Debt and Education. The service offers advice on housing matters in the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, and the West Midlands.

CLS Direct also offers a website (www.clsdirect.org.uk) which allows the public to search on-line for advice providers in their locality and to download leaflets setting out their rights and responsibilities in a wide range of categories of law which have won Plain English awards.

- 5.16 We are working with DCA who are leading the development of a pre-action protocol in relation to possession actions, in conjunction with DWP, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Housing Corporation and private landlords. The aim of the protocol will be to minimise the number of possession actions brought to court, encouraging earlier intervention to try and resolve problems, such as rent arrears.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

- 5.17 Wherever possible the root causes of anti-social behaviour should be tackled before problems escalate to the point where a landlord seeks the eviction of tenants. Social housing providers have a key role in identifying the nature of problems their tenants face and will work with other agencies, including the police, to counter those problems effectively. Many are already doing so successfully, having prioritised this as a key element of their housing management function.

KEY FACT:

The 2001 National Periodic Survey of Legal Need showed 84% of respondents living in temporary accommodation had experienced social welfare problems compared with 36% for other households.

- 5.18 However, sometimes the impact on neighbours and the community of persistent anti-social behaviour is so severe that eviction becomes inevitable. In these cases it is important to find solutions that stop the problem recurring in a future home, and leading to a cycle of repeat homelessness. We will work with the Home Office to promote approaches that avoid the use of eviction wherever possible and which stop repeated episodes of homelessness where eviction has occurred.
- 5.19 In September 2004, the Home Secretary announced funding for new family support projects to work with families involved in anti-social behaviour in the ten 'TOGETHER' trailblazer areas during 2004/05 and 2005/06. The aim is to stop the anti-social behaviour in the short term, and prevent it recurring in the future by stabilising the lives of the families concerned through intensive support. On 1 March 2005 support was announced for such projects in a further 50 areas for 2005/06. We will work with the Home Office to implement the results of research, which aims to evaluate residential and outreach projects for tenants at risk of being evicted for anti-social behaviour in terms of costs and benefits, effectiveness and lessons for wider dissemination.
- 5.20 Anti-social behaviour also has an impact on city centres, where problems such as begging and street drinking are often perceived by the public to be associated with homelessness. Research has shown that the majority of individuals involved with begging or street drinking are not sleeping on the streets and indeed, without assertive interventions to reduce their anti-social behaviour, they may enter a downward spiral that ends with sleeping rough. We will continue to work with the Home Office to promote best practice in city centres to prevent homelessness and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Improving standards of temporary accommodation and ensuring access to services

- 5.21 We have consulted on, and will include in revised statutory guidance, the minimum standards that should apply to all temporary accommodation used by local authorities to re-house homeless households, including the space that should be available, heating, cooking and washing facilities, management standards and the physical quality of the properties used.
- 5.22 We have worked with the Association of London Government and the Greater London Authority who have set up NOTIFY, a pan-London initiative designed to improve access to services and support for people living in temporary accommodation when they move into, between and out of temporary accommodation. NOTIFY is an online system that will ensure that housing, health, social services and education authorities are notified when a household moves. In addition, NOTIFY will improve the coverage and quality of aggregate information about homelessness in the capital.
- 5.23 We want to ensure that all households in temporary accommodation have access to health, education and social services and will promote the adoption of information, tracking and referral systems by local authorities in every region.

Changing lives through sport and the arts

- 5.24 The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), through its sponsorship of public bodies, seeks to increase and broaden the impact of culture and sport, to enrich individual lives, strengthen communities and improve the places where people live, now and for future generations.

Street League uses sports life coaches to deliver a multi-sports programme to promote physical health and transform the lives of homeless and disadvantaged adults by building self-esteem and training and employment opportunities. Almost £0.5 million from Sport England's Active England fund is helping to create sport opportunities for disadvantaged people in Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

- 5.25 Arts Council England is supporting a number of projects to improve the self esteem and engagement of people who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation. A major focus of Arts Council England's health strategy will be workforce (artists and arts managers) development. This will impact on practitioners in the homelessness sector, ensuring that those that work with homeless people have the right skills.
- 5.26 In 2005 the Big Lottery Fund will publish the findings of consultation on its future themes, outcomes, priorities and new funding programmes. We will work with DCMS to ensure that the fund supports projects increasing community participation in sport, dance, play and physical and creative activity. The potential for homelessness initiatives to receive funding will be made explicit as part of the Big Lottery Fund's communications and publications.

Section 6

Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping: Improving hostels

We will:

- Publish a best practice Toolkit to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of hostels
- Invest £90 million to improve the physical standards and re-shape services in hostels to achieve better outcomes for hostel users
- Sustain reductions in levels of rough sleeping and further reduce numbers in London

“We welcome unreservedly the reduction in rough sleepers. The achievements to date have not been overstated and we congratulate the Government on meeting its targets ahead of time.”

ODPM SELECT COMMITTEE¹⁴

- 6.1 The most visible form of homelessness is that of people sleeping on the streets. In 1998 the Prime Minister set a target that by 2002 the number of rough sleepers should be reduced by at least two thirds. This target was met ahead of time and to date is being sustained. The success of this reduction is a result of effective partnership working between local authorities, voluntary sector agencies and others. Hostels have been critical in achieving this.
- 6.2 In the Government’s 2004 Review of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), we identified and agreed that improving hostel provision was a key public service priority area.
- 6.3 Concern about the effectiveness of hostels has focused on the inability of ageing stock to deal with the increasing number of residents with complex needs (notably increasing levels of drug dependency). In some cases the physical decline of hostels makes them inappropriate for today’s client group. In others, the design of the hostels is poor, with dormitory style accommodation and a lack of suitable space for keyworking and training areas. Placements are often shortlived, with a high number of residents (up to 70%) leaving for negative reasons, either being evicted or abandoning their places after only a few weeks.
- 6.4 In order to improve our understanding of the reasons for high turnover we invited Westminster, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol to take part in a pilot review. The review was aimed at direct access hostels for homeless people without children.

KEY FACTS:

In 1998 there were 1,850 rough sleepers on the streets of England on any single night. In 2004 there were just over 500.

There are around 40,000 hostel bed spaces in England.

¹⁴ ODPM Select Committee: Homelessness: Third Report of session 2004/05

6.5 The overall aim of the pilots was to help decide what was needed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of hostels in helping people move away from the streets and homelessness more generally.

6.6 The pilots tested the contribution of the following factors:

- Physical fabric of the building;
- Cleanliness;
- Residents safety;
- The initial welcome for residents;
- Motivation for clients;
- Access to support services, specialist/mental health services;
- Access to training/jobs; and
- Mediation services.

Investigations included in-depth interviews with hostel staff, referral agencies and with residents themselves with a view to considering ways that hostel services could be improved and encourage best practice. A best practice 'Toolkit' is being published alongside this strategy.

6.7 We are investing £90m over the next three years through the Hostels Capital Improvement Programme. Underlying the programme is the need to change the very nature of hostels so that they provide better opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness and prevent them from becoming homeless again. Hostels will cease to be a place of last resort, but instead will be centres of excellence and choice which positively change lives. Re-modelling will allow staff to better address the needs of residents and could also be used to link in other services such as Job Centre Plus or drug treatment work.

6.8 Combined with the other action set out in this strategy to prevent homelessness, provide support for vulnerable people, tackle wider causes and symptoms and improve access to settled homes, we expect hostel improvements to sustain reductions in rough sleeping and lead to further reductions in London.

Section 7

Providing more settled homes

We will:

- Halve the numbers living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010
- Tackle shortages of social housing and provide 75,000 new social rented homes by 2008
- Examine options for making greater use of the private rented sector to provide settled housing
- Examine options for converting temporary accommodation into settled housing and pilot new funding approaches to tackle high rents and work disincentives
- Review allocation and nomination arrangements for council and housing association homes
- Ensure homeless households have a choice about their housing options
- Publish good practice guidance on managing rent arrears and avoiding evictions

“We want to create a fairer society where everyone has the chance of a decent home in a sustainable community.”

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: HOMES FOR ALL¹⁵

7.1 *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* set out the challenges that we face in providing everyone with the opportunity of a decent home. Concerted action has succeeded in cutting the number of people sleeping rough by more than 70% since 1998 to around 500 on a single night. And, after rising in recent years, the number of people being accepted as owed the main homelessness duty has begun to fall, with fewer households going into temporary accommodation.

7.2 Despite this, the number of people in temporary accommodation remains too high. Increases are partly explained by changes we made to legislation to make more people eligible for help –

KEY FACTS:

In March 2002 there were 6,700 families with children accommodated in B&B hotels. In March 2004 there were 830.

Around 4,000 families with children had been in B&B for more than 6 weeks in March 2002. In March 2004 there were 28.

Use of B&B for all households nearly halved from over 13,000 in 2002 to less than 8,000 in 2004.

In December 2004 91% of families with children in temporary accommodation were living in self-contained properties with private bathing and cooking facilities.

¹⁵ *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All*, ODPM, January 2005 (published by TSO)

people who would otherwise have to fend for themselves. They are also a result of changes in demographic trends with changing family size and relations, house prices and the availability of social housing. As a result, local authorities have been housing more people under the legislation and they are staying longer in temporary accommodation. An important step forward is that most temporary accommodation is of reasonable quality, and 84% are self-contained homes, undistinguishable from other private or social rented homes. But lack of certainty about the future and the disruption of frequent moves makes it unsatisfactory for too many people.

- 7.3 The availability of a settled, affordable home is a vital part of our work to tackle homelessness and create sustainable communities. We will increase the available supply by providing new housing in areas of shortage and by maximising the use of existing housing stock to ensure that it is addressing people's housing need. In doing so, we aim to halve the number of households living in insecure temporary accommodation by 2010.

Tackling shortages of social housing

- 7.4 *The Sustainable Communities Plan and Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* set out how we are creating new communities and expanding existing communities in four areas in the wider South East. Taken together, these areas have the potential to deliver an extra 200,000 homes above current planning totals. But growth is not just about homes – these areas also have the potential to deliver over 300,000 jobs by 2016.
- 7.5 Over the next three years, increased investment, together with efficiency improvements, will produce 75,000 social rented homes and 40,000 homes for essential public sector workers and low cost homeownership.

The Private Rented Sector

- 7.6 Whilst the majority of people may aspire to home ownership, it is not the right tenure for everybody. There are times in most people's lives when renting offers a more practical solution to housing need, perhaps because they are not settled in an area, or do not want to take on the commitment or have the resources necessary to own their own home.
- 7.7 The private rented sector is the tenure of choice for many people as it offers the flexibility they want. However, the disadvantage of flexibility is that private sector tenancies can be less secure and this can, in some cases, lead to homelessness.
- 7.8 Many local authorities have recognised the high levels of homelessness in their districts as a result of people losing their tenancies in the private sector. They have responded positively, by investigating ways in which the private sector can be helped to provide solutions to homelessness. They have done this through the provision of rent deposits or guarantees, by offering approved lettings with accredited landlords, and by mediating to resolve problems between landlords and tenants.

KEY FACT:

In 2003/04, 13% of people accepted as being owed the main homelessness duty were homeless as a result of the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy in the private sector.

- 7.9 In response to the Government's drive to end the use of Bed & Breakfast hotels to accommodate homeless families with children, many local authorities have used the private

rented sector as a source of good quality, self contained temporary accommodation. Currently over half of all temporary accommodation is in the private rented sector. The private rented sector also provides a source of settled accommodation, where qualifying offers of assured shorthold tenancies are accepted by households owed the main homelessness duty. We believe there is scope to make greater use of the private rented sector, either to help households avoid homelessness or to give more settled homes to those in insecure temporary accommodation.

- 7.10 The Housing Act 2004 reinforced our commitment to a healthy private rented sector which also supports our homelessness aims and objectives. Our plans, set out in *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All*, include giving local authorities powers that will enable them to bring around a quarter of usable private sector empty homes back into use by 2010. We will also be taking forward the proposals previously consulted on, to introduce Property Investment Funds (PIFs) to encourage new sources of funding in the property market, for example professional investors.
- 7.11 We will examine the options for making greater use of the private rented sector as a source of settled solutions for homeless households and will consult later in 2005 about possible changes to the homelessness legislation. Where temporary homes in the private rented sector are of good quality and are suitable for the tenant we will encourage their conversion into settled homes with more secure tenancies.

Enabling temporary accommodation to become a settled home.

- 7.12 In *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* we said we would test new approaches with households in temporary accommodation. Rents for temporary accommodation in some areas of England can be higher than local market rents as local authorities and housing associations have to cost for the higher management charges that these properties attract and make allowances for voids. This can create disincentives to work for those on Housing Benefit.
- 7.13 We have provided funding, support and advice to a number of London Boroughs and housing associations seeking to develop a range of temporary to permanent housing initiatives to capture the revenue flow as a longer term social housing asset. Those supported to date include: Newham's Local Space proposal; Ealing's Safe Haven partnership; L&Q Housing Trust's HILLS programme; as well as a range of other buy to let programmes delivered by housing associations including Acton, Wandle and East Thames Housing Associations.
- 7.14 We will continue to support innovative schemes which provide settled housing solutions for households in temporary accommodation. Where they offer value for money but require capital investment we will encourage Regional Housing Boards to support bids for the Approved Development Programme funding.

Testing a block grant approach

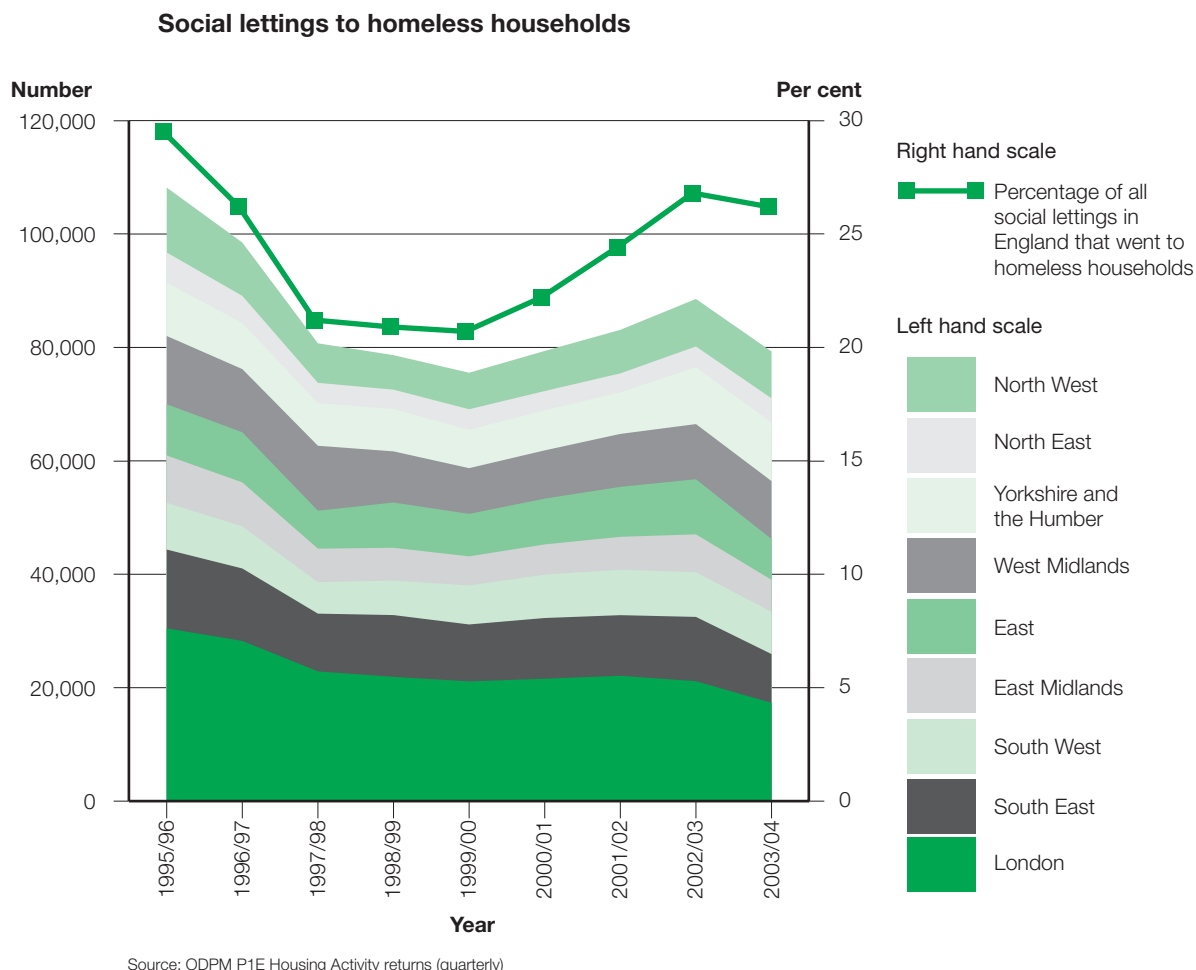
- 7.15 An alternative approach to funding has been developed with DWP, the Greater London Authority and East Thames Housing Group. Over £2 million will support a two year pilot to test the use of a central Government 'block grant' to subsidise the cost of procuring temporary accommodation, promote affordable rents and improve work incentives for households that have experienced homelessness.

7.16 Through this scheme, we will work with ‘block grant’ pilot authorities of Waltham Forest, Newham and Redbridge. We will develop and share good practice in providing a range of interventions which promote employment and settled housing options. These will inform the future development of Housing Benefit.

Maximising Use of Existing Social Housing

7.17 Our planned increased investment will deliver a significant increase in the number of new social housing units. But we also need to increase the rate at which settled homes can be made available for households in temporary accommodation. We want to ensure that our existing homes are managed effectively to meet people’s housing needs.

7.18 As more social housing becomes owned or managed by housing associations, collaboration with housing associations becomes more important in enabling local authorities to meet their strategic and statutory obligations to tackle homelessness and overcrowding and to meet housing need.



7.19 In *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* we said we would review current housing allocation arrangements to see whether greater co-operation could be achieved between local authorities and housing associations in order to reduce homelessness. This review will complement recent guidance, *Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness: Nomination*

Agreements and Exclusions,¹⁶ published in association with the Housing Corporation, the National Housing Federation and the Local Government Association. This guidance marked the beginning of a proactive programme of work to promote better co-operation between social housing providers. In parallel, we will work with the National Housing Federation on a project to identify and disseminate best practice in homelessness prevention and the use of social housing during 2005/06.

- 7.20 Around 25,000 households in temporary accommodation are living in council or housing association stock. We will review with local authorities and housing associations what scope exists to provide these homes on a secure basis.

Offering choice and delivering effective housing management

- 7.21 We will undertake further work to improve the choice that is available for homeless households. We will support the expansion of choice-based lettings with the aim of achieving nationwide coverage by 2010 and will liaise with those developing schemes to ensure that they are an effective tool in tackling homelessness, as well as giving all tenants the maximum possible choice over where they live.
- 7.22 But to have real choice, people need jobs as well as homes. So we will launch *moveUK* later this year – an online service that brings together information about jobs and housing nationwide, giving people the chance of a fresh start with a better quality of life in a new area.
- 7.23 We will also continue to encourage effective housing management practice. Such practice might include the development of an attractive incentive package to encourage those living in high demand family-sized accommodation that is larger than they need (for example a couple living in a family sized home after their children have moved out) to move to a smaller property.
- 7.24 We will also be publishing later in 2005 a good practice guide on managing rent arrears and avoiding the need for eviction, so preventing homelessness.
- 7.25 **These measures – along with the wide range of other innovative ways that local authorities and social landlords employ to make best use of the existing stock and the new homes outlined in *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* – will increase the settled housing options available to households in temporary accommodation, and help create mixed, sustainable communities.**

¹⁶ *Effective Co-operation in Tackling Homelessness: Nomination Agreements and Exclusions*, ODPM, Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation; Local Gvt Association, 2004

Section 8

Developing area-based approaches

We will:

- Provide a framework to ensure that Local Strategic Partnerships are active partners in the delivery of local authorities' homelessness strategies
- Ensure that rural homelessness issues are addressed
- Ensure Regional Housing Strategies consider homelessness issues in the region
- Support sub-regional, cross authority projects which reduce homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation

“Tackling homelessness is a complex issue that cannot be best addressed by authorities acting alone. We would like to see sub-regional or cross-authority initiatives that provide more effective solutions to homelessness, whether through prevention or helping people find settled homes more quickly”

TERRIE ALAFAT, DIRECTOR, ODPM, HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

8.1 Homelessness problems often transcend local authority boundaries. They require solutions that are delivered in specific areas that don't overlap exactly with districts, or which cover a broader region or sub-region. Over the next five years, we want to improve joint working and partnerships to develop approaches that deliver in deprived areas, rural areas and across regional and appropriate sub-regions.

Deprived areas

8.2 Many deprived neighbourhoods have high levels of homelessness or households that are at risk of homelessness due to below average health, education and opportunities and high levels of crime, substance misuse and family breakdown.

8.3 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are made up of a wide range of community and themed groups. Their aim is to ensure public services work better and are delivered in a way that really meets the needs of local people, narrowing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country.

8.4 Although there are good examples of LSPs working to tackle and prevent homelessness, overall there is low representation of housing interests on LSP boards, and few housing specific sub-groups have been developed, although there is widespread interest in the issue. We therefore plan to work with LSPs to develop new approaches to tackle homelessness in deprived areas.

Rural areas

- 8.5 Research and statistics have shown that there is wide variation between different geographic areas in the scale and nature of homelessness problems. Rural areas, like large cities and small towns, have their own specific homelessness problems and appropriate solutions.
- 8.6 An evaluation of local authorities' homelessness strategies¹⁷ found that the types of problems faced by rural areas could include limited access to affordable housing, less developed partnership working and difficulties accessing services that are dispersed over a wide area.
- 8.7 We will continue to work to ensure that the needs of rural communities are met. The Housing Corporation will exceed its target for providing affordable homes in rural areas – funding 4,000 homes by 2006. *Sustainable Communities: Homes for All* responds further to concerns about affordable housing in rural areas, outlining how we have given local authorities flexibility to require owners of second homes and empty homes to make a greater contribution to the local community through council tax changes. And we have made it easier for local authorities to limit the resale of ex-council homes in rural areas, so that they are reserved for local people.
- 8.8 We will promote approaches that work in a rural context, where access to affordable housing can be more limited, and where remoteness can act as a barrier to accessing relevant services. This will include working with the Voluntary and Community Sector as part of the 'Change-Up' programme, to increase their capacity so they are able to contribute to preventing homelessness and meet the needs of homeless people in rural areas.
- 8.9 Through regional workshops and training we will help the preparation of sub-regional homelessness strategies that link into the Regional Housing and county Supporting People strategies, and draw on the strengths of the LSPs, to tackle the causes of homelessness in rural areas.

Promotion of cross-authority working and regional/sub-regional working

- 8.10 Since 1997 we have strengthened the Government Offices and devolved more responsibilities to new regional bodies, including the Regional Housing Boards (RHBs). RHBs have a strategic responsibility for recommending investment decisions in housing in the region and it is crucial that they, and the new bodies incorporating Regional Planning Bodies, take account of the needs of homeless households and levels of temporary accommodation in the region. Regional Housing strategies should also take account of other relevant plans and strategies, including Supporting People and homelessness strategies, which aim to prevent homelessness and provide accommodation and housing related support for vulnerable groups.
- 8.11 We will work together with the Government Offices to raise performance standards and disseminate good practice to prevent homelessness and deliver our aims to halve the use of temporary accommodation.
- 8.12 We will encourage and support the development of regional homelessness groups, including the development of regional (and sub-regional) homelessness strategies and Supporting People strategies.

¹⁷ *Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies, Evaluation and Good Practice, Housing Quality Network Services, November 2004*

Section 9

Delivering the strategy

We will:

- Ensure that every local authority has the opportunity of practical support
- Encourage the development and dissemination of good practice
- Work with the Home Office to build capacity of voluntary sector agencies
- Create a performance framework which reflects achievement of positive homelessness outcomes
- Provide certainty in future funding through provision of settlements beyond a single financial year
- Continue to improve our understanding of homelessness, its causes and its solutions

“Almost all strategies demonstrated that homeless prevention is now seen as a priority, not just in words but also in practice.”

HOUSING QUALITY NETWORK SERVICES, 2004¹⁸

Support for local authorities

9.1 Every local authority in England published a homelessness strategy in 2003. We will continue to support local authorities in implementing their homelessness strategies and achieving positive outcomes on prevention, reducing repeat homelessness and reduced use of temporary accommodation. We will develop a work programme to help improve the effectiveness of front-line service delivery which will cover:

- Targeting priority councils who require additional support. This will include help with identifying problems and developing effective solutions; action planning; training; and renewing homelessness strategies. Each priority council will have a specialist link officer who is able to offer help and advice.
- Regional Roadshows and other events aimed at helping local authorities prevent homelessness and reduce the number of households in insecure temporary accommodation. A roadshow will be held in every region at least annually.
- Helping local authorities to review and take forward the implementation of their homelessness strategies, acting on the findings of the recent evaluation of the first round of strategies put in place during 2003, including making effective links with Supporting People, Health and other relevant services.

¹⁸ Local Authorities' Homelessness Strategies, Evaluation and Good Practice, HQNS, November 2004

- 9.2 Building on the success of the Beacon Council themes for Tackling Homelessness, we have selected Regional Champions to offer support to councils who require further help. Regional Champions will help to build local capacity to effectively tackle homelessness offering a range of help including peer reviews. It is hoped that the scheme will operate over a 3-year period with a new group of councils selected annually who are able to demonstrate excellence.

Building Capacity in the Voluntary Sector

- 9.3 ODPM's homelessness grants to local authorities are often used to fund local voluntary sector services that contribute to a local homelessness strategy. Local authorities also fund voluntary sector agencies from their own resources. In 2003, local authorities reported a 71% increase in their grants to voluntary sector homelessness agencies, from £21 million in 2001-02 to £36 million in 2003-04. Such funding will enable the voluntary sector to continue its role at the forefront of action on homelessness.
- 9.4 We are working with the Home Office's Active Communities Unit and the voluntary sector to develop a new approach to capacity building and infrastructure support for the homelessness sector. This will enable us to strengthen the voluntary sector by improving leadership, information exchange and best practice, create regional and sub-regional support arrangements and develop practical support for smaller, harder to reach, frontline agencies.
- 9.5 We will also encourage strong partnerships between local authorities and voluntary agencies in preventing homelessness, building on the closer engagement that has resulted from the development of local homelessness strategies.
- 9.6 In addition we will support the work of, and engage with, national service deliverers such as the National Homeless Advice Service (NHAS), the National Rent Deposit Forum and the Chartered Institute of Housing, where these services prove of value locally and contribute to preventing homelessness and reducing use of temporary accommodation.

Targets and performance monitoring

- 9.7 We will continue to monitor local authorities' delivery of their strategies; through quarterly self-assessments; quarterly reported statistics on local authority homelessness decisions; and through annual estimates of rough sleeping.
- 9.8 Homelessness funding is allocated to local authorities partly on a formulaic basis, based on historical levels of homelessness, including rough sleeping, and partly on a performance basis. For 2005/06 funding, performance was assessed on:
- delivery of positive homelessness outcomes;
 - existing homelessness data (i.e. PIE homelessness returns and Annual Housing Strategy statistical annexes);
 - local authorities' monitoring returns;
 - the completion by authorities of a 'self-assessment' return providing an opportunity for them to demonstrate their achievements to date and the outcomes they expect to deliver through their homelessness strategies.

- 9.9 Our funding will increase by 23% to £74 million in 2007/08. Future allocations will be used to support action that meets our aim to prevent homelessness and halve the use of temporary accommodation by 2010. We will consider ways in which greater certainty can be given on likely grant levels beyond a single financial year. We will also look for new ways to encourage innovative approaches, for example in tackling homelessness amongst particular groups and in promoting more effective cross-cutting action on health, employment and child poverty.
- 9.10 Local authority performance is subject to formal assessment by the Audit Commission through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process, which looks at how well councils deliver their services, and how well the council is run. The CPA is based on performance information from a variety of sources including Best Value Performance Indicators set by Government.
- 9.11 From April 2005 a new more challenging CPA framework will be introduced, which will assess performance against shared priorities of:
- sustainable communities and transport;
 - safer and stronger communities;
 - healthier communities;
 - older people; and
 - children and young people.
- 9.12 Achieving positive outcomes in tackling and preventing homelessness can make an important contribution to a number of these strands. The new CPA framework will also give greater recognition to the way in which councils are increasingly using partnership working to deliver local services – a key feature of successful approaches to tackling homelessness. Underpinning these different aspects of the new framework will be a measurement of councils' ability to fulfil their responsibilities in a way that is most cost-effective.
- 9.13 Existing BVPIs related to homelessness monitor the length of time homeless families spend in B&B accommodation and hostels (BVPI 183), levels of rough sleeping (BVPI 202), and changes in the level of homeless families placed in temporary accommodation (BVPI 203). From April 2005, three additional BVPIs will measure the effectiveness of local authorities interventions to prevent homelessness (BVPI 16), their efforts to tackle repeat homelessness (BVPI 17) and the number of domestic violence refuge places provided or supported by the authority (BVPI 176). In addition to the BVPIs, we have been working with the Audit Commission to develop a wider set of homelessness performance indicators which will be taken into account in the CPA process.
- 9.14 There is also scope for local authorities to set local targets reflecting local priorities, such as tackling homelessness, through Local Public Service Agreements and Local Area Agreements.

Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs)

- 9.15 The LPSA process allows local authorities to identify key areas for improvement, on which stretching targets are set. The authority is offered initial pump priming funding and significant reward grant when targets are met. The process also allows authorities to negotiate individual freedoms and flexibilities, which can cut through 'red tape'.

- 9.16 Almost all top tier local authorities took the opportunity to be involved in round one of the LPSA process and the second generation of agreements are currently being negotiated. Local authorities focusing on homelessness issues in their second generation LPSAs are proposing innovative schemes to address issues such as reducing homelessness against its main causes, reducing the use of temporary accommodation and reducing levels of repeat homelessness. As with all LPSA focus areas, stretching performance targets are being agreed that will deliver real improvements for local people on issues that matter most in their area.
- 9.17 We will continue to work with authorities to help them use the funding and processes available to improve their performance and provide an effective response to their key local issues.

Improving the evidence base

- 9.18 Performance in tackling homelessness is enhanced where action is based on good information and a good understanding of the problems that need to be addressed. We have already taken a number of steps to improve our understanding of homelessness, for example investigating the underlying causes and trends of homelessness, including a better understanding of BME issues; and identifying and promoting effective measures to reduce and prevent homelessness. Other recent research undertaken to help improve the evidence base on homelessness policy includes:
- a report on the support needs of homeless households, which was published in 2003;
 - an evaluation of homelessness strategies, published in 2004; and
 - a research project on the costs of homelessness, still in progress.
- 9.19 All published research reports are available on the ODPM web-site at www.odpm.gov.uk
- 9.20 During 2005 we will ask 2,500 households in temporary accommodation to tell us about their experiences. This will be the most important study of homelessness in England for more than a decade. It will help to improve our understanding of the problems homeless people face, the impact of different types of temporary accommodation and the services people need to stay in their homes. And we will be reviewing the way we collect statistics, to improve our understanding of who is homeless and the circumstances in which they are living.
- 9.21 **We expect the approaches set out in this strategy to sustain reductions in homelessness, use of B&B hotels for families, and rough sleeping; increase access to settled homes; and halve the number of households living in temporary accommodation by 2010.**

Section 10

Action Plan

Section	Action
Preventing homelessness	
Prevention	Provide £200m over three years to support prevention schemes
Prevention	Produce good practice guidance on prevention based on an evaluation of a range of approaches
Prevention	Consult stakeholders on possible changes to homelessness legislation that encourage homelessness prevention
Family and relationship breakdown	Work with Relate and others to evaluate approaches which reconcile families and so avoid homelessness
Family and relationship breakdown	Continue to fund approaches which reconcile families as part of an effective homelessness prevention service
Domestic Violence	Continue to support UKRefugesonline, increase the number and improve the quality of refuge places and support new approaches to domestic violence
Domestic Violence	Work with the Active Communities Unit to implement a programme to improve front-line services in refuges
Support for people when they are vulnerable	
Supporting People	Work with Supporting People authorities to help them improve their delivery of the programme and promote better use of their resources
Supporting People	Encourage better cross-authority planning and delivery of services to vulnerable groups
Supporting People	Help district councils to improve the links between their homelessness services and the Supporting People services delivered through counties
Children	Support and inform statutory guidance linked to the Children Act 2004 to improve outcomes for children of families who have experienced homelessness
Children	Work with Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to ensure that children of households placed in temporary accommodation can access Sure Start services, especially children's centres and neighbourhood nurseries
Children	Use the Children's National Services Framework and guidance produced by CPHVA to encourage Primary Care Trust involvement in homelessness strategies
Children & Young People	Work with DfES to ensure effective joint working between housing and social services in the development of DfES's Children's Trusts arrangements

Section	Action
Support for people when they are vulnerable (continued)	
BME	Publish and promote a development guide of best practice in preventing homelessness amongst BME groups
BME	Fund innovative approaches that focus on specific issues faced by BME groups
Refugees	Encourage local housing authorities to work closely with regional consortia to link regional refugee integration strategies with homelessness strategies
Refugees	Identify and share good practice with service providers and refugee advisers
Refugees	Work with National Asylum Support Service, National Refugee Integration Forum, local authorities and housing providers to develop protocols and innovative solutions to prevent homelessness
Ex-offenders	Support the Accommodation sub Board of the Reducing Reoffending Action Plan to identify and implement policies to prevent homelessness and reduce reoffending
Armed Forces personnel	Work with the MoD to implement research investigating housing issues faced by ex Service personnel.
Hospital inpatients	Work with Department of Health (DH) to encourage Primary Care Trusts and local authorities to agree joint protocols that include guidance and training for staff dealing with patients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
Tackling wider causes and symptoms	
Benefits Reform & Employment	Work with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to develop a national strategy for benefit claimants who are most disadvantaged in the labour market
Improving Skills and employability	Support roll out of National Learning and Skills Council programme to help train homeless people and those helping them to improve their skills
Health	Promote the take up of shared health and homelessness outcomes in areas with high levels of homelessness that are also shared priority pathfinders or Spearhead PCTs
Health	Work with DH to encourage PCTs to commission flexible, responsive services, including National Enhanced Services and Specialist Personal Medical Services, to meet the needs of homeless people in their area
Drugs	Work with DH, National Treatment Agency (NTA) and Primary Care Trusts to improve access to drug and alcohol treatment by ensuring all strategies covering areas with historically high levels of rough sleeping and continuing high levels of single homelessness are aligned to provide effective treatment and support
Alcohol	Work with the DH, NTA and Home Office to improve access to alcohol treatment services by developing guidance on Models of Care for alcohol misusers

Section	Action
Tackling wider causes and symptoms (continued)	
Drugs	Work with Home Office, NTA and a range of partners to develop a comprehensive rent deposit model to support drug misusing offenders in selected DAT areas
Mental Health	Work with NIMHE's National Social Inclusion Programme and Housing Project Team to promote joint working across health and homelessness services
Mental Health	Consider strengthening the Homelessness Code of Guidance on mental health and vulnerability
Mental Health	Ensure joint research being commissioned with DH and NIMHE identifies and promotes good practice in the provision of mental health services for homeless people
Minimising possessions/ legal problems	Work with DCA and others to minimise the number of possession actions brought to court by encouraging earlier intervention to resolve problems such as rent arrears
Anti Social Behaviour	Work with the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit to promote approaches that avoid the use of eviction and stop repeat episodes of homelessness where eviction has occurred
Anti Social Behaviour	Promote best practice and targeted interventions in key city centres to prevent homelessness and reduce anti social behaviour
Anti Social Behaviour	Work with the Home Office to review the results of our research to evaluate residential and outreach projects for tenants at risk of being evicted for anti-social behaviour
Standards in temporary accommodation	Set out minimum standards for all temporary accommodation in revised statutory guidance and promote the adoption of tracking and referral systems for housing, education, health and social services
Sport and Arts	Work with Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to promote the use of Sport England and Arts Council England funding and the Big Lottery Fund to improve community participation in arts and sports projects working with homeless people
Sustaining reductions in rough sleeping: Improving hostels	
Rough sleeping	Publish a best practice 'Toolkit', to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of hostels
Rough sleeping	Implement a £90m programme to refurbish and reconfigure hostels to improve outcomes for single homeless people/rough sleepers

Section	Action
Providing more settled homes	
Increasing social housing	Produce 75,000 social rented homes and 40,000 homes for essential public sector workers and low cost homeownership
Private rented sector	Bring around a quarter of usable empty homes back into use by 2010
Private rented sector	Take forward proposals to introduce Property Investment Funds to encourage new sources of funding in the property market
Private rented sector	Examine the options for making greater use of the private rented sector as a source of settled solutions for homeless households, and consult on possible changes to the homelessness legislation
Temporary to settled homes	Encourage the conversion of temporary homes in the private rented sector into settled homes with more secure tenancies where they are good quality and suitable for the tenant
Temporary to settled homes	Support innovative schemes providing settled housing solutions for households in temporary accommodation and, where they offer value for money, encourage Regional Housing Boards to support bids for the ADP funding
Testing a block grant approach	Work with Waltham Forest, Newham and Redbridge pilot authorities to test block grant approach, and develop and share good practice to promote employment and settled housing options, and inform Housing Benefit reform
Maximising use of existing social housing	Undertake a review of current housing allocation arrangements
Maximising use of existing social housing	Work with the National Housing Federation to identify and disseminate best practice in the use of social housing
Maximising use of existing social housing	Review with local authorities or housing associations what scope there is for providing temporary homes on a more secure basis where they are already being used for households who have experienced homelessness
Offering choice	Support the expansion of choice-based lettings schemes to ensure they are an effective tool in tackling homelessness
Offering choice	Launch <i>moveUK</i> to provide online information about jobs and housing nationwide
Effective housing management	Encourage effective housing management practices, such as an incentive package to encourage people to move to more appropriately sized accommodation
Effective housing management	Publish good practice guidance on managing rent arrears and avoiding the need for eviction

Section	Action
Developing area-based approaches	
Deprived areas	Work with LSPs to develop new approaches to tackle homelessness in deprived areas
Rural areas	Continue to ensure rural needs are met
Rural areas	Assist the Voluntary and Community Sector, as part of the 'Change Up' programme, to increase their capacity to contribute to preventing homelessness in rural areas
Rural areas	Facilitate the preparation of sub-regional homelessness strategies linking Regional Housing and county Supporting People strategies to tackle the causes of homelessness in rural areas
Cross authority and regional/sub regional working	Work with Government Offices to raise performance standards and disseminate good practice to prevent homelessness
Cross authority and regional/sub regional working	Encourage and support the development of regional homelessness groups and development of regional (and sub-regional) homelessness and Supporting People strategies
Delivering the strategy	
Support for local authorities	Develop a practically based work programme to improve effectiveness of front-line service delivery and strategies
Support for local authorities	Offer support and build local capacity through Regional Champions
Building capacity in the voluntary sector	Work with Home Office's Active Communities Unit and the voluntary sector to develop a new approach to capacity building and infrastructure support for the homelessness sector
Building capacity in the voluntary sector	Support the work of, and engage with, national service deliverers where these services prove of value locally and contribute to achieving increased homeless prevention outcomes
Targets and performance monitoring	Monitor local authorities' delivery of their strategies through self-assessments, quarterly statistics on homelessness decisions, and annual estimates of rough sleeping
Targets and performance monitoring	Use future funding allocation to support our aim to halve numbers in temporary accommodation, consider how greater certainty over likely grant levels could be given beyond a single financial year and look for new ways to encourage innovative approaches
Targets and performance monitoring	Work with Audit Commission to monitor performance through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process, and Best Value Performance Indicators

Section	Action
Delivering the strategy (continued)	
Targets and performance monitoring	Continue to work with local authorities to help them use the funding and processes available to improve performance and provide an effective response to key local issues
Targets and performance monitoring	Continue to improve information on homelessness, including through reviewing the way statistics are collected and a survey of 2,500 households in temporary accommodation

ODPM Homelessness Publications

More than a roof: a report into tackling homelessness

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_601520.hcsp

Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=869&l=3

Homelessness strategies: a good practice handbook

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_601517.hcsp

Housing associations and homelessness briefing

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_027314.hcsp

Homelessness Act 2002 – summary of provisions

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_601519.hcsp

Achieving positive outcomes in homelessness

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpmhomelessness/documents/downloadable/odpm_home_609541.pdf

Reducing B&B use and tackling homelessness: What's working

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_023783.hcsp

Achieving positive shared outcomes in health and homelessness

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_027792.hcsp

Effective co-operation on tackling homelessness, nominations, agreements and exclusions

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home_032826.pdf

Homelessness Policy Briefings

Policy Briefing 1: BME issues.

Policy Briefing 2: Domestic violence

Policy Briefing 3: Bed and breakfast

Policy Briefing 4: Prevention of homelessness

Policy Briefing 5: Improving employment options for homeless people

Policy Briefing 6: Repeat homelessness

Policy Briefing 7: Addressing the health needs of homeless people

Policy Briefing 8: Improving the quality of hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation

Policy Briefing 9: Homelessness Strategies: Moving Forward

Policy Briefing 10: Delivering on the Positive Outcomes

All found at:

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_control/documents/contentservertemplate/odpm_index.hcst?n=855&l=1

Hard copies available from ODPM Publications; tel 0870 1226 236, email odpm@twoten.press.net

Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives is a comprehensive strategy for tackling homelessness and achieving the Government's aim to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010. It sets out plans for delivering this aim which include working across Government to support homelessness prevention and provide more settled homes.

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