

Report to DMT 22nd August 2006

The Homelessness Service – Annual Report 2005/6

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To advise of homelessness activity during 2005/6 and consider any implications.

2. Background

- 2.1 A management review of service delivery was undertaken in June 2003 alongside the production of the first Homelessness Strategy.
- 2.2 The Strategy published in July 2003 included a commitment to produce an annual report on service development and delivery. This is the third annual report.

3. Demand

- 3.1 Following several years of escalating numbers of initial enquiries, demand for service levelled out from 2003/4 at around 2000 per year. In 2005/6, the number of full duty acceptances has decreased, because homelessness has been prevented in 138 cases.

| | 1999/00 | 2000/01 | 2001/2 | 2002/3 | 2003/4 | 2004/5 | 2005/6 |
|---------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Full duty decisions | 200 | 288 | 404 | 489 | 813 | 602 | 448 |
| All decisions | # | 503 | 715 | 1239 | 2358 | 2103 | 2009 |
| % full duty | # | 57% | 56% | 40% | 34% | 28% | 22% |

- 3.2 The majority of households with a full rehousing duty are in priority need because they contain children or an expectant mother.

| | 1999/00 | 2000/01 | 2001/2 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/5 | 2005/06 |
|--|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
| Total households accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need | 200 | 288 | 404 | 489 | 813 | 602 | 448 |
| Those with dependent children/pregnant | 153 | 214 | 286 | 278 | 419 | 396 | 331 |
| Households without children | 47 | 74 | 118 | 211 | 394 | 206 | 117 |







- 3.3 For the past three years, and as one of the conditions of paying Homelessness Grant, ODPM/DCLG have required quarterly reports on progress in tackling the main causes of homelessness (Appendix A). During 2005/6, we have reduced acceptances against three of our four main causes, and have been particularly successful in respect of the categories parents or other family or friends no longer willing to accommodate.

| | Number 2003/4 | Number 2004/5 | Number 2005/6 | % of Total 2005/6 |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Relationship breakdown | 198 | 143 | 101 | 23% |
| (Of which violent) | 118 | 100 | 77 | |
| (Of which non-violent) | 80 | 43 | 24 | |
| Breakdown of relationship with parents/other host household | 171 | 112 | 64 | 14% |
| (Of which parents) | 88 | 72 | 32 | |
| (Of which other family/friends) | 83 | 50 | 32 | |
| Termination of assured shorthold tenancy | 119 | 102 | 82 | 18% |
| Mortgage arrears | 107 | 69 | 94 | 21% |

- 3.4 Data is collected nationally against 21 identified main causes of homelessness. After those mentioned above, the next two in Dudley in 2004/5 were end of NASS accommodation (37 cases) and leaving prison, hospital etc (36). In 2005/6, these have been responsible for 23 and 24 cases respectively.

4. Performance

- 4.1 The Homelessness/Housing Advice service has been subject to an increasing number of Best Value Performance Indicators. Performance has met or exceeded targets in respect of decision times, numbers in temporary accommodation and repeat homelessness, but not met targets in respect of hostel/bed & breakfast stays or homelessness prevention. These are being addressed in performance planning for 2006/7. Targets and outturns are shown in the table below.

| BVPI Description | 2003/04 Actual | 2004/05 Actual | Top Quartile for Met. Auth. 2004/05 | 2005/06 Target | 2005/06 Actual | Symbol |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| BVPI 183 Key CPPI – The average length of stay in 1) B&B and 2) Hostel accommodation of households which are unintentionally homeless and a priority need | 1) 1 week 2) 10 weeks | 1) 0 weeks 2) 8 weeks | 1) 1 week (AE 04/05 = 1 week) 2) 0 weeks (AE = 04/05 = 0 weeks) | 1) 0 weeks 2) 6 weeks | 1) 0.57 weeks 2) 8.31 weeks |  |
| BVPI 202 – The number of people sleeping rough on a single night | New for 2004/05 | 1 | Under 10 | Under 10 | 3 to 5 year survey |  |
| BVPI 203 – The percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation under homelessness legislation compared to the average the previous year | New for 2004/05 | (Plus) 68.46% | 0.41% (AE 04/05 = minus 6.94%) | (Minus) 25% | (Minus) 34.73% |  |
| BVPI 213 – Number of households who considered themselves as homeless, who approached the LA's housing services and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation. | New for 2005/06 | New for 2005/06 | Not Published | 1.5 | 1.1 (138 households) |  |
| BVPI 214 – Proportion of households accepted as statutorily homeless who were accepted as homeless by the same LA within the last two years. | New for 2005/06 | New for 2005/06 | Not Published | 7.5% | 0.89% (4 households) |  |
| LPI 3 – Percentage of decisions made within 33 days | 90% | 97% | Local | 98% | 97.51% |  |

- 4.5 A further new BVPI was introduced from April 2005, under the heading of Community Safety and representing a composite of activities around domestic abuse. Housing services are involved in delivering these, as they include having a sanctuary scheme, and achieving a year on year reduction in repeat homelessness occurring as a result of domestic abuse. There is also a relevant Housing Management BVPI, which measures performance in reducing the number of evictions carried out for rent arrears by the local authority landlord. Targets have been set for these, and they will be referred to in future Homelessness Annual Reports.
- 4.6 In addition to BVPIs, performance is monitored quarterly by ODPM on the reduction in homelessness against main causes (as described in 3.3 above) and progress in reducing the inappropriate use of temporary accommodation. DMT will be aware that Government set a target of reducing overall numbers in all forms of temporary accommodation by 50% from its December 2004 level by 2010. Dudley has a comparatively high number of households in temporary accommodation because of the continuing use of non secure tenancies under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended.
- 4.7 In addition to setting the target, Government is encouraging authorities to consider and debate locally how they might reduce their reliance on temporary accommodation, the reasons for which will vary according to local conditions. Historically, London boroughs and other exceptionally high demand areas have

had high numbers in bed & breakfast. Others may have high numbers in hostels and other short stay accommodation because they have poor arrangements for move-on.

- 4.8 In Dudley, the vast majority of households in temporary accommodation are in independent council tenancies, but have not been given security of tenure because they have a poor record of rent payment and/ or anti social behaviour. The Lettings Policy allows for their occupation to be converted to a secure tenancy as soon as they have demonstrated their suitability as tenants, and our management of this process has improved considerably over the last year or so. Our argument has been that it is unfair to other applicants if we allow homeless applicants to effectively bypass the waiting list with arrears or other issues, and that a firm but fair approach helps to reduce repeat ("revolving door") homelessness. The fact that our performance on repeat homelessness is upper quartile, and we had none at all in the second half of the year, would seem to support our approach. Nonetheless, DMT is invited to reconsider this position.
- 4.9 In addition to performance matters noted above, two other successes were recorded during the year: our Tenancy Sustainment Service successfully completed its first Supporting People Inspection, and our Homelessness/Housing Advice Service received the accolade of being selected as a Homelessness Regional Champion for 2006/7.

5. Resources and Value for Money

- 5.1 From April 2004, the General Fund contribution to Homelessness/Housing Advice was increased by £50,000 to £203,200 and our ODPM Homelessness Grant by £25,000 to £53,000. Our case for additional General Fund from April 2005 and April 2006 was rejected. Income in 2005/6 was £209,400, including £6,200 towards Bed & Breakfast costs, but excluding the Supporting People contributions to Lye HFC and Tenancy Sustainment.
- 5.2 The service has again been successful in 2005/6 in attracting new funding from other sources. Our Tenancy Sustainment service was invited to manage two entirely new posts funded from Community Safety sources to support people who are on drug treatment programmes, and these two posts have recently been recruited to. The CAB have secured funding for a new project providing outreach money advice at locations including hostels, housing offices and at Dudley Council Plus in conjunction with our Housing Advice service. Our Crash Pad project in partnership with the Youth Offending Service, Heantun Housing Association and Time2Talk (mediation service) won a grant of £60,000 for 2005/6 and 2006/7 from the DCLG Homelessness Innovation Fund.
- 5.2 Lye Family Centre continues to provide good value for money in terms of covering its own running costs. Although occupation charges have been increased following its conversion from 10 units with shared facilities to six self-contained flats, they are still on a par with average costs in neighbouring authorities and voluntary sector provision. The revised charges have also been calculated to ensure that the centre can be maintained in its current condition. Elsewhere in the borough, up to eight dispersed units of furnished accommodation are maintained for use as temporary accommodation.

- 5.3 Bed & breakfast accommodation continues to be used on a strictly controlled basis, and is eligible for housing benefit subject to the circumstances of the customer.
- 5.5 In terms of human resources, the team is fully staffed and includes a new post of Homelessness/Housing Advice Manager. During the year, members of staff have received refresher/update training in homelessness legislation, and new training in homelessness prevention, an introduction to mediation, and problem solving skills, as well as being included in directorate/corporate events such as domestic abuse, equality & diversity and disability awareness. An additional new development during the year has been the introduction of group supervision sessions, to support them in a job role that can be emotionally demanding and therefore potentially stressful.
- 5.6 From April 2006, all of the Homelessness/Housing Advice Service, including Lye Family Centre and Tenancy Sustainment, has been brought together as a distinct business unit in terms of both its financial management and line management. This will enable us to ensure that the whole service continues to be efficient and effective, and to demonstrate the degree to which resources are channelled into preventing homelessness wherever possible, rather than simply responding to it when it occurs. A service review is also being carried out and will be reported separately, to ensure that we have the right team structure and business processes to focus on prevention.

6 Service Delivery and Access

- 6.1 Although the Homelessness/Housing Advice Service is delivered through surgeries and videolinks at the area housing offices, the team is based at 5 St James's Road, and about half of all homeless enquiries have typically been made to that location. The transfer of front line housing services to Dudley Council Plus therefore has significant implications for our service area, and detailed work is taking place to ensure that the new service is even better than the one it replaces. We are currently working with the CATS and DC+ teams towards an October 2006 changeover from our current appointments system to a new referral system, whereby everyone presenting as homeless will be either seen or contacted by our staff within one working day, and allocated a personal case officer at that point. This has the dual purposes of both improving the service to the customer, and maximising the ability of our staff to prioritise their casework and increase the number of cases where homelessness can be prevented.
- 6.2 In response to customer comments, we are also endeavouring to improve day-to-day communication with customers and their representatives, and have during the year put in place written assessments and advice for all customers irrespective of whether a homeless claim is taken. Customer feedback has been gathered through a variety of exercises, and it is intended to establish either a user focus group or panel to assist us in future service development.
- 6.3 A pilot exercise has been carried out to test the value of home visits in connection with homelessness claims. The results showed clear benefits, both in terms of verifying circumstances and of more fully assessing the customer's accommodation needs and any support needs, as well as providing opportunities to attempt prevention. Resources have been the main stumbling block to

implementing routine visiting, and one of the objectives of our current service review is to ensure that we create this capacity.

7 Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 The number of homeless acceptances involving BME households remains disproportionately high at 19.55% (14.38% if acceptances resulting from the end of NASS accommodation are excluded). Three homeless acceptances resulted from racial violence/racial harassment. The updated Homelessness Strategy will include work to examine and address this continuing over representation of BME groups.
- 7.2 There is a particular issue about temporary accommodation for homeless women. The numbers of single men and women accepted as homeless are almost identical: 59 women and 55 men. This understates the true extent of the problem, since the majority of single people are not in priority need, but are nevertheless genuinely homeless and deserving of a proper response. Apart from domestic violence refuges, there is very little temporary accommodation for women; Gibbs Road House is the main provision for single people, and caters almost exclusively for men. Again, this gap in service has been identified as a priority in the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.
- 7.3 In 2004/5, twelve priority need acceptances were the result of physical disability and 25 of mental illness or disability. In 2005/6, these figures were 16 and 13 respectively. A Mental Health Housing Forum has recently been established in the borough, and is developing a work plan of activities at both strategic and operational levels to address the housing needs of this group.
- 7.4 The number of people accepted as priority need through old age reduced from 29 in 2004/6 to 15 in 2005/6. There were just five 16- and 17-year olds accepted as priority need because of their ages this year, compared to 24 last year, and thirteen homelessness preventions in this age group. Our Service Improvement Plan for 2006/7 includes several initiatives designed to prevent and respond to homelessness amongst young people
- A pre tenancy savings plan to encourage young people to plan ahead for their future housing needs and be rewarded for doing so
 - A schools project for year 10/11 pupils, concerning housing, homelessness and personal safety
 - A second Crash Pad, which will cater for young parents as well as young single people

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 DMT is invited to comment on and note the contents of this Annual Report.

Sian Evans
Area Housing Manager
Brierley Hill

ODPM GRANT 2005/06 (Homelessness) Performance Monitoring Report
(Please read the attached guidance notes before completing this form)

Local authority: Dudley MBC

Is the delivery of your Homelessness Strategy Action Plan:

- ☒ on track?
☐ ahead of schedule?
☐ behind schedule? (please tick as appropriate)

| | | Q1 (1/4/05 - 30/6/05) Due 22 July | Q2 (1/7/05 - 30/9/05) Due 21 October | Q3 (1/10/05 - 31/12/05) Due 20 January | Q4 (1/1/06 - 31/3/06) Due 21 April |
|--|---------------------|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Current count or estimated number of rough sleepers out on a single night. | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2. Number of families with children and households with a pregnant woman in B&B for more than 6 weeks at end of quarter. Please indicate (in brackets) how many of these have been housed under discretionary powers. | | <u>0</u> | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Number of households in temporary accommodation. | 2005/06 | 127 | 117 | 100 | 95 |
| | At 31 December 2004 | 171 | | | |
| 4. Levels of homelessness acceptances against the three main causes during quarter | | | | | |
| a. Parents, relatives or friends not being able to provide accommodation. | 2005/06 | 10 | 20 | 19 | 14 |
| | 2004/05 | 53 | 43 | 18 | 8 |
| b. Relationship breakdown. | 2005/06 | 32 | 27 | 20 | 24 |
| | 2004/05 | 50 | 38 | 27 | 28 |
| c. End of assured shorthold tenancy. | 2005/06 | 24 | 17 | 16 | 26 |
| | 2004/05 | 36 | 29 | 19 | 18 |
| d. Other main causes please specify (mortgage arrears) | 2005/06 | 30 | 21 | 15 | 28 |
| | 2004/05 | 23 | 22 | 12 | 12 |
| 5. Levels of repeat homelessness during quarter | 2005/06 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| | 2004/05 | 25 | 23 | 12 | 3 |

Submitted by Sian Evans
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Date 22.5.06

Homelessness Grant 2005/6 Dudley MBC Additional narrative

Quarter 1

In this quarter we have:

- Commenced a project which will convert our family hostel into modern, fully self contained accommodation
- Secured Home Office funding to extend our tenancy sustainment service for people with drug problems
- Held our use of bed & breakfast at three nights or less
- Commenced a family mediation service (Time2Talk)
- Carried out a Rough Sleeping Count
- Established a working group to review our Homelessness Strategy

Quarter 2

In this quarter we have

- Commissioned a homelessness directory in partnership with neighbouring boroughs
- Set up our Crash Pad project for young people excluded by family & friends
- Restructured our staffing arrangements for temp accom
- Started to review move on arrangements from voluntary sector hostels & supported housing
- Agreed to trial Experian

Quarter 3

In this quarter we have

- Appointed a Service Manager to take charge of all of our Homelessness/Housing Advice and Tenancy Sustainment services
- Received a positive outcome to the Supporting People review of our Tenancy Sustainment service
- Been selected for a Homelessness Innovations Fund Grant to support our Crash Pad project
- Completed the conversion of our family hostel to family flats
- Trained all of our Housing Advice Officers in Problem Solving
- Had no repeat homelessness

Quarter 4

In this quarter we have

- Commenced our pilot of Experian credit referencing
- Developed a pre-tenancy savings scheme which will enable young people to be rewarded for planning ahead for their housing needs
- Updated our Service Improvement Plan, which for 2006/7 includes
 - Launching a year 10/11 lesson plan on housing, homelessness and personal safety
 - Piloting a new debt project with CAB
 - Producing a prevention toolkit for Housing Advice Officers
 - Establishing a Homelessness Prevention Fund
 - Reviewing services for offenders and people with poor mental health
 - Setting up a user group of people who have experienced our homelessness service and can help us to improve it
 - Developing Choice Based Lettings and a new Housing Options Service
- Had no repeat homelessness again