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# Homelessness Strategy

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2008-2013

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St Albans City and District Council  
Becoming Hertfordshire's premier Community

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**Improving service delivery and provision**

**Offering choice and diverse tenure types**

**Commitment to affordable housing**

**Developing partnerships and joint working**

**Preventing homelessness**

**Sustaining communities**



Our Vision, Our Values...

## **Framework for the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13**

### **Our Vision...**

Underpinning the Councils commitment to Homelessness prevention and affordable housing options – and in doing so, making a major contribution to social inclusion and the socio-economic well-being of homeless or potentially homeless people in St Albans

### **Our values...**

Commitment to qualitative inclusive service provision, coupled with the efficient and cohesive delivery of homelessness related resources across all sectors in St Albans

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## Table of Contents

Foreword.....	4
1. Introduction About St Albans .....	5
2. Homelessness Prevention Options.....	8
3. Current Service Delivery Business Model .....	12
4. Improving efficiency .....	14
5. Strategic links .....	16
6. Partnership working and brokerage .....	25
7. Equalities and Diversity .....	31
8. Financial Resources .....	36
9. Housing supply and Housing Development in St Albans .....	37
10. Homelessness Strategy Methodology steps 1-7 .....	38
<b>10.1 Homelessness Strategy Step 1:</b> Convene Homelessness Strategy Project Board 2008.....	38
<b>10.2 Homelessness Strategy Step 2:</b> Review of homelessness and data capture of core statistical information on homelessness within the St Albans locality .....	39
<b>10.3 Homelessness Strategy Step 3:</b> Communication and consultation with stakeholders .....	60
10.3.4 Stakeholder Consultation .....	62
10.3.6 Consultation Event .....	66
<b>10.4 Homelessness Strategy Step 4:</b> Action Plan 2003-2008 - Meeting our targets .....	71
<b>10.5 Homelessness Strategy Step 5:</b> Action Plan .....	80
<b>10.6 Homelessness Strategy Step 6:</b> Monitoring and implementation of the Homeless Strategy .....	115
 <b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: Housing Development Update.....	118
Appendix 2: Supported Housing Provision excluding Older People .....	125
Appendix 3: Meet the Homelessness Strategy Project Board .....	127
Appendix 4: List of respondents - Homelessness Review .....	129
Appendix 5: List of respondents - Supported Housing Providers.....	130
Appendix 6: List of attendees - Homelessness Strategy Consultation Event - June 2008 .....	131

**Foreword**  
**Housing portfolio holder**

This new Homeless Strategy is rightly very ambitious. With the determination of the Housing Officers it can and will make a difference to the lives of many people.

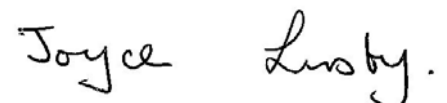
Our aim is to do all that we can to prevent homelessness, when that is not possible we will help in an efficient, fair and sympathetic way to find the right housing solution.

A sign of our success will be the continuing reduction of the number of people in the Council's temporary accommodation.

To achieve our aim we will continue to work with partners and providers of homeless and support services across the district and county.

This Strategy sets out the methods we will implement to prevent / reduce homelessness in St Albans City & District.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to everyone who has been involved in the production of this Strategy.



Councillor Joyce Lusby  
Housing Portfolio Holder

# **1 Introduction About St Albans**

## **1.1 Profile and demographics**

We have compiled some facts and figures about St Albans which helps to put the district in context both socially and economically .Throughout our Homelessness Strategy you will find further statistical information about the district which add further demographical context.

St Albans is located within Hertfordshire and boasts a vibrant and historic culture and our population stands at approximately 55,000 households. Transport links to London coupled with convenient access to main arterial motorway routes ensure that St Albans continues to be a popular place to live, work and do business.

## **1.2 Socio-economic context...**

The Hertfordshire Investing in Communities [iC] Partnership recognises that Hertfordshire as a region has a strong economic foundation however the region needs to target and address low educational attainment and employment progression. It is further recognised that many school leavers lack skills set requirements for local employers. Unemployment % rates across the whole of Hertfordshire are significantly lower that of England however the region has seen an increase in JSA claimants and % of adults classified as \*workless [\*combined measure of unemployment and incapacity benefits]

As a key statutory service we recognise the need to look at the secondary needs of those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness including skills escalation and access to employment pathways.

## **1.3 Demographics...**

The 2001 census showed that the largest ethnic group was white which accounted for over 85% of the then population. The second largest group is Asian or Asian British followed by Black or Black British. We are reliant upon census data however recognise that there have been a number of demographic shifts over the past decade. The following population estimate in 2005 provides a more recent overview:

## Estimated population by broad ethnic group, mid-2005

	%
White	90.9
Mixed	1.9
Asian or Asian British	4.1
Black or Black British	1.7
Chinese or Other	1.4

## Dwellings by tenure, April 2006

	%
Owner occupied/private rented	87.1
Local Authority	9.5
RSL's	3.1
Other Public Sector	0.3

Unfit dwellings are those that are deemed to have serious deficiencies. The following table shows the percentage of dwellings in each tenure category that are unfit.

## Unfit dwellings (by tenure), April 2006

	%
Owner occupied/private rented	3.1
Local Authority	0.0
RSL's	0.0
Other Public Sector	2.7

Sources: Communities and Local Government; Office for National Statistics, East of England Development Agency

### 1.4 St Albans City and District Council is improving...

A series of reports by external bodies - including an independent review by local government experts SOLACE, and by the Audit Commission - have confirmed that St Albans City & District Council continues to make good progress across a wide range of its services and its focus on customers. As is to be expected whilst the reports show a healthy picture there are some areas for further improvement in how the Council runs itself.

The main conclusion of the SOLACE report was that the council was undoubtedly an improved and improving council. Solace highlighted good performance in terms of:

Services that are getting better

An improved focus on the Customer  
Genuine attention to developing people  
An organisation which is friendly and receptive to learning  
The Council being seen in a positive light by businesses and voluntary sector partners

**Findings: Solace Peer Review 2008**

The recent Solace Peer Review has declared the council "good and improving".  
"High priority to affordable housing"

## 2 Homelessness prevention and Options

2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 required that Local Housing Authorities [LHA's] review amongst other things:

1. The current and future level of homelessness in their area
2. Activities undertaken in their area to:
  - a) Prevent homelessness
  - b) Secure that accommodation is available to homeless people
  - c) Provide support to homeless people

The Act requires local authorities to update and produce a revised Homelessness Strategy every five years. The purpose of the strategy is to make the prevention of homelessness a central activity. This means that we need to focus on helping clients to find the best solution to their housing problems before they become homeless.

### 2.2 Defining Prevention

In April 2003 '*Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness.*' defined homelessness prevention as:

"Activities that enable a household to remain in their current home where appropriate, or to provide options to enable a planned and timely move and to sustain independent living."<sup>1</sup>

Homelessness prevention operates on 3 distinct levels:

#### 2.2.1 Early intervention

Identify risks and co-ordinate services to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

#### 2.2.2 Pre-Crisis intervention

This involves responding to trigger factors and helping people to deal with any difficulties before things escalate. E.g. – referring to mediation services or debt /money advice etc. This requires the targeting of particular groups at risk of homelessness e.g. ex-offenders or children leaving care etc.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Achieving Positive Outcomes on Homelessness Homelessness Directorate (2003)

### 2.2.3 Preventing repeat instances of homelessness

There are some clients who we know are at risk of becoming homeless more than once. These include – victims of Domestic Violence, Drug/Alcohol users, care leavers, those with mental health issues, 16 and 17 Year olds or under 25's. Referring to floating Support services is often an effective way of ensuring that these client groups do not become homeless repeatedly.

There are a number of ways that homelessness can be prevented: examples -

1. By providing timely housing advice ie Landlord and Tenant Rights, Protection from eviction.
2. By working closely with Housing Management and Registered Social Landlord's so that we are notified about tenancy breakdown at the earliest possible stage
3. By ensuring that clients are referred or signposted to appropriate support services i.e. mediation , benefits and debt advice, mental health services etc
4. Through educational and stakeholder events
5. Through an emergency homelessness prevention fund

## 2.3 Government Policy

Since the previous Homelessness Strategy the Government has set local authorities a number of targets which are listed below:-

- A reduction in the number of households in temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010;
- A commitment to end by 2010 the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds;
- Reducing levels of rough sleeping as close to zero as possible;
- An end to the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homelessness families with children, except in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks.

The Council has met the target in relation to ending the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homelessness families and is on track to meet the other national targets.

In addition the Government's plans for reducing the number of people living in overcrowded housing conditions were published in December 2007.

Website: [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

Our Housing Register provides us with an insight into the scale of the problem within St Albans however we fully recognise that we need to look at this area in greater depth. The nature of overcrowding is such that it can have an adverse effect upon households in relation to: health and wellbeing, educational attainment in children as well as social exclusion. We recognise the links between homelessness and overcrowding and the need to gather qualitative information about overcrowding with a view to finding sustainable solution. Addressing under-occupancy is a crucial component in order to free up larger sized dwellings. There is also scope to encourage the take-up of private sector housing or moves out of the St Albans locality.

## 2.4 Housing Options...

We recognise that the majority of clients using our service have an expectation that they will be given a Council or Registered Social Landlord tenancy as these options are seen as more permanent or life long.

Demand for Social Housing continues to outweigh supply and therefore we have no alternative other than to adopt a fresh approach to tackling housing need within the district.

The private rented sector is now seen as a viable option for many clients. Our rent deposit guarantee scheme has allowed us to successfully place clients in private rented accommodation within the District. The private rented sector is fast becoming the most commonly used housing option amongst District Councils/ Local Authorities.

There are a number of different ways that we can help clients to identify suitable housing options e.g.:

1. Through home swapper – for mutual exchanges
2. Through under occupation initiatives
3. Through home buy or cash incentives to help to purchase a home
4. Through key worker accommodation
5. Through flat sharing
6. Through referrals to supported housing providers
7. By helping clients to access private rented accommodation in and around St Albans
8. Through our Allocation Scheme and \*Choice Based Lettings

\*St Albans City and District Council has successfully submitted a consortium bid for a sub regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme [CBL] which will allow clients to bid for suitable properties providing they meet bidding criteria. CBL has proved very popular across the Country as it offers both choice and transparency as clients can have clear information about properties including internal and external photos. We recognise that the introduction of CBL will have a direct impact upon the way we manage and deliver our services.

## **2.5 The wider homelessness context**

Homelessness is seen as part and parcel of the wider housing agenda and we recognise the social centrality of homelessness and its impact upon social and economic inclusion within St Albans.

## **2.6 Our biggest challenge...**

One of the biggest challenges we face is to change the culture and expectations about homelessness and Rehousing. We know that many clients and other stakeholders continue to expect to be rehoused via traditional routes. As a department we have a responsibility to shift this culture and help clients and stakeholders to understand that demand for social housing far outweighs current supply. Once we begin to get the message across we will see a steady shift and a steady increase in clients with realistic expectation but this will take both time and effort from all staff within the department as well as stakeholders.

### **3. Current service delivery: Business Model**

#### **3.1 St Albans Housing Options Services**

The Housing Options service forms part of Housing Services division and has 4 service delivery areas:

##### **3.1.1 Allocations and lettings**

Allocations and nominations relating to Council and Registered Social Landlord voids including specialist lettings

This team is headed by a Lettings Officer who takes day to day responsibility for the teams' activities which include processing transfer and other rehousing applications. Processing of medical assessments, pointing and system based amendments, allocations and nominations for Council, Registered Social Landlord and specialist housing.

The Housing Register consists of some 1600 applicants and combined lettings average 30-40 per calendar month. The service operates with a points based housing register which uses a standard needs assessed pointing system. The team handles a steady stream of varied activities ranging from points allocations to transfer applications and medical assessments.

##### **3.1.2 Homeless Casework**

Assessments under part V11 Housing Act 1996 [Homelessness Act 2002] All clients who are eligible under the Act are subject to a comprehensive assessment and verification process. Where a full duty arises the Authority is obliged to discharge duty by way of interim/temporary accommodation or securing permanent/settled accommodation for the household.

##### **3.1.3. Housing Advice**

Front line initial assessments and assistance to homeless /potentially homeless clients including homelessness prevention and home visits The team of housing advisers manage the front end of the service and have a wide remit which includes carrying a small caseload of statutory homelessness cases, referrals and signposting, pointing and other activities which support the administration of the Housing Register. We work in partnership with Shelter via a service level agreement. Shelter provides landlord and tenant related housing advice including protection from eviction and other advice relating to housing rights.

### **3.1.4 Temporary Accommodation**

The day to day and void management of the Council's temporary accommodation stock is handled by 1 emergency housing officer and 2 emergency housing assistants. The team is also supported by a cleaning/facilities operative. The gradual decline of temporary accommodation stock calls to question the necessity of having 2 emergency housing assistants. This is an area which could potential yield some efficiency savings for the department/Division.

### **3.1.5 Customer Care**

We recognise that there is scope for us to enhance our levels of customer care. We have taken a number of key steps to ensure that we operate within a quality assurance framework in relation to casework management. New work instructions and proformas were introduced in late 2007 and we will continue to review their effectiveness on a cyclical basis.

### **3.1.6 Re-defining our Business Model**

We recognise that our current business model does not fully deliver a housing options service to support our medium to long term business aims and our strategy action plan includes the development of a new business model which will ensure that we are better placed to deliver a range of holistic services as well as improving existing services and signposting. We also recognise that there is a need to increase home visits to ensure that we are better placed to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

We understand the importance of staff training to ensure that each Housing Options Officer has the knowledge, resources and authority to provide the right quality and level of advice, casework and assistance.

During the term of this strategy we aim to conduct benchmarking exercises which will provide us with new perspectives in relation to the prevention of homelessness as well as housing options and holistic service provision. The development of our new service model will also take into account the importance of quality assurance and fraud detection and prevention.

## 4. Improving efficiency ...



4.1 In 2007 we carried out a review of our Housing Options Service. We successfully developed and implemented a 3 month service improvement plan which focused on ways in which could we could improve both our front and back office functions. The key actions are listed below:-

- Produced temporary accommodation satisfaction survey for distribution
- Produced new medical assessment form in line with operational objectives
- Produced new proforma for Medical Adviser
- Created and agreed protocol between Rehousing and Leaving care service
- Produced housing register verification checklist for all Housing Register cases
- Produced landlord satisfaction questionnaire – Rent Deposit Scheme
- Updated our information pack for landlords
- Introduced new proforma for domestic violence cases to capture qualitative information as well as BV225 data
- Updated our temporary accommodation licence agreement
- Introduced managers appointments which allow clients to request an appointment with a manager to raise any concerns/complaints informally
- Improved communication flow between ourselves and Customer Services
- Produced home visit proforma for lettings team as part of new validation process
- Revamped our supply and demand model for temporary accommodation
- Introduced new Homelessness Application form
- Begun to explore homelessness prevention early intervention protocol with Housing Management Teams
- Secured read only access to Housing Benefit and extended Experian for the lettings team in support of investigative and verification processes

## **4.2 In pursuit of excellence**

The Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry [KLOE] guidance for homelessness services provides us with a framework for excellence as does the Communities and Local Government self assessment guide. We will also take into account Charter Mark and House Mark dictates as well as the Community Legal Services quality framework relating to signposting and referrals and case file management systems. The above frameworks will help us to configure our services taking into account the need for value for money and quality.

## 5. Strategic links

### 5.1 Homelessness Strategy links with other key strategic documents

We acknowledge the social and strategic centrality of homelessness and that the prevention of homelessness can be addressed by a range of statutory services providers including health and social care. We have identified some relevant strategic links which help to put our Homelessness Strategy into both local and national context.

### 5.2 Hertfordshire Supporting People Strategy 2007-12

Supporting People is a national programme aimed at promoting independence and quality of life for vulnerable people. By providing housing-related support services that enable people to live successfully in their accommodation, Supporting People is an opportunity to bring about a comprehensive change in the way the needs of vulnerable people are met. Launched on 1 April 2003, the programme has introduced a radically different system of providing and commissioning services – led by local needs, focused on the development of partnership working, and supported by a robust review and monitoring system.

The reasons it was introduced include:

- Housing Benefit was being used inappropriately to fund staff and support
- Different areas of the country were taking advantage of this loophole in drastically different ways
- The supported housing sector was developing in random ways, often led by providers (although responding to immediate needs), but with no or little direction.
- Little cost or quality data
- Service quality and safety was variable at best
- Too much provision was linked to buildings rather than individuals.
- The sector was under commissioned and inadequately monitored.
- Services were often established despite local authorities in the 70s and 80s, who had little formal responsibility and many subsequently had variable commitment to housing and supporting single vulnerable people.

Hertfordshire Council is responsible for administering the Supporting People programme for the St Albans District, which involves:

- Managing a Supporting People grant of over **£20 million** per year in Hertfordshire, funding over **£1.5 million** of support services in St Albans.
- Contracting, monitoring and reviewing **51** supported housing services in the District.
- Working in Partnership with **24** providers of housing support services, delivering support to over **1500** people.

The Programme has a very wide scope, reaching out to many vulnerable members of society, including:

- People who have been homeless or a rough sleeper
- People with drug or alcohol needs
- Older people with support needs, mental health problems and dementia
- People with mental health needs and mentally disordered offenders
- Women fleeing domestic violence
- People with a physical or sensory disability
- People with a learning disability
- People with HIV and AIDS
- Offenders, and people at risk of offending
- Refugees
- Young people leaving care or at risk
- Homeless Families
- Teenage Parents
- Travellers

Supporting People funds *\*housing-related* support – the primary purpose of which is to develop and sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in their accommodation. By promoting independence and quality of life, appropriate housing-related support can provide effective alternatives to institutional care and prevent downward spirals into homelessness, social exclusion and harm.

The support funded can either be linked to specific accommodation, or in the form of more flexible services provided to people in their own homes. The amount and type of support may vary, but typical support may include helping a person to establish and maintain a suitable home, help with managing tenancies such as budgeting and support in accessing benefits, and general help in accessing healthcare, community activities and social networks.

Examples of services funded by Supporting People include:

- Sheltered housing services for older people.
- Support workers who visit a wide range of people in their own homes.
- Specific housing-related support in a range of accommodation, including hostels and homes for residents who have specific short or long term needs.

The Department For Communities And Local Government monitor this closely and the SP grant is audited to ensure SP monies are not for instance spent on Care or Primary Care Trust responsibilities.

### 5.2.1 **What are the vision and aims of the Supporting People Strategy?**

Our vision is set within the framework of the St Albans City and District Community Plan. Supporting People plays a key role in meeting the strategic aim of the plan to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in the District. More specifically, Supporting People is a priority within the Community Plan aim to make St Albans a better place for Living Well – improving housing, health and social care and promoting healthy living. A key vision of the strategy is set out below.

*“At present the vast majority of Supporting People funded services in Hertfordshire are in accommodation based services. In order to address this, we will commission more support services that are able to work with people in a wide variety of accommodation. These services (often called ‘floating support’) will play a major role in tenancy sustainment, preventing homelessness, and enabling people to move on to more independent accommodation”*

### 5.2.2 **Move-On**

This area has been strategically explored within the Supporting People programme and a Move-On report was presented to the Herts Commissioning Body in March 2008. Move-on has been considered for adoption in Local Area Agreement 2. The Commissioning Body in its March meeting agreed that local action plans should be developed as part of the implementation plans for the new Homeless Strategies in each area and that a county-wide steering group for Move-On is established and Chaired by the Lead Officer for Supporting People.

Programme Development Group is asked to:

- Review the stretch target identified for planned Move-On
- Establish membership of the county-wide steering group for Move-On
- Comment on progress and inclusion on Move-on as part of Homeless Strategies across the County

This is in relation to the indicator for planned move on from temporary accommodation discussed at the April Programme Development Group. As reported and discussed at the April meeting, this indicator is relevant to District/ Borough Homelessness Strategies.

### Analysis of LAA 141 data (Supporting People KPI 2) by District/ Borough 207/08 Quarter 2

The table below provides information on the percentage of people in schemes/receiving support moving on to other accommodation.

Broxbourne	75%
Dacorum	77%
East Hertfordshire	77%
Hertsmere	75%
North Hertfordshire	57%
<b>St Albans</b>	<b>53%</b>
Stevenage	57%
Three Rivers	No departures reported in Q2
Watford	41%
Welwyn Hatfield	74%
<b>Hertfordshire – total:</b>	<b>58%</b>

The variation in performance appears to show a strong relationship to the location of night shelter type accommodation.

One of the crucial areas of focus for the Supporting people team is to ensure that floating support services are available to clients living across the various tenure groups. Housing Services recognises the centrality of floating support provision in relation to the prevention of homelessness and sustaining communities. We will continue to work with Supporting People to ensure that we broker strong relationships with all existing and future providers of floating support and supported housing within the St Albans locality.

### 5.3 Sustainable Community Strategy

Strategic links with Homelessness Strategy 2008-13

The Government published its national strategy in March 2005. The national strategy focuses on tackling and reducing incidences of homelessness. Our Sustainable Community strategy has been produced by St Albans and District Local Strategic Partnership – a group of key local public, business and voluntary/community sector organisations working together to improve the quality of life for everyone in the district – with considerable input from other members of the community. The strategy's priorities for the district have been identified from residents' surveys and other research and there has been extensive consultation on the development of the strategy with residents, community groups and other local organisations. The three key priorities are set out below:-

- Priority 1            Ensuring the District is a great place to be
- Priority 2            Keeping the District healthy
- Priority 3            Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future.

The Local Strategic Partnership has also identified where priorities are unlikely to be met by current plans and activities and is taking forward projects to address significant gaps where there is no obvious lead organisation.

The current strategy will enable the district to prepare to meet the new challenges of 2021 and we will regularly review the strategy to ensure that it continues to address the right priorities for the district

St Albans LSP has identified, through consultation, that residents are concerned about the area's lack of affordable housing and certainly this must be a priority if we are to meet the housing needs of people on lower incomes.

Community involvement underpins everything the Local Strategic Partnership and its partners are doing. Although volunteering is high in the district and the turnout to vote is good, we still want to encourage everyone to be involved in the decisions made in their district, particularly groups who have been less involved or have found it difficult to be involved in the past. The development of our Homelessness Strategy has involved us encouraging engagement from a variety of stakeholders, this commitment will be further progressed throughout the term of the Strategy and it is hoped that we will be in a position to make positive steps in this crucial area.

#### **5.4 St Albans City and District Corporate plan 2008-2011** Strategic links with Homelessness Strategy 2008-13

St Albans City and District Council's corporate plan for 2008 to 2011 sets out where we will concentrate our efforts for this period and will help the council to play its part, with others, in making the district an even better place to live, work and visit.

The corporate plan also helps us to look critically at our performance to identify how we can improve further. It is designed to give a simple overview of our performance and plans.

Our Corporate Plan 2008-11 acknowledges the following key achievements in relation to homelessness and housing need:

- developed a crash pad and mediation scheme for young homeless people with Herts Young Homeless
- introduced rent deposit scheme which helped to house 38 homeless applicants
- refurbished 18 houses on Marford Road, Wheathampstead to make them more energy efficient by putting in loft and wall insulation, double glazing and solar panels
- Eco House in Smallford has been pioneering the use of energy efficient technologies in the Council's housing stock and recently won a Green Apple Award for Environmental Best Practice
- completed a supported accommodation scheme for young people in partnership with Aldwyck Housing Association

## **Corporate priorities 2008-11**

- Providing leisure facilities at Westminster Lodge and London Colney, including youth provision
- Producing the Local Development Framework including the City Vision and protecting Green Belt and Environment to ensure a sustainable and greener community
- Achieving value for money quality services, efficiencies and below RPI Council Tax rises
- Enhancing the district by providing visible improvements to the street scene

## **Service Priorities**

- Continue to resist development of more than 7,200 homes in the District by 2021 in order to protect the green belt
- Maintain the focus on affordable housing by seeking to build an average of at least 100 homes each year
- Progress further household waste recycling to achieve at least 50% by 2010/11
- Continue efforts to reduce the Carbon footprint of the Council by at least 25% by 2013
- Promote renewable energy by residents
- Progress further improvements to cultural facilities and promote tourism
- Strengthen environmental regulatory response
- Continue to expand leisure opportunities for young people and the elderly to help combat deprivation
- Develop further community based sports, arts and play activities

By the end of 2011 we aim to have...

- a further 134 affordable homes on St Albans City Station site, in St Paul's Place, St Albans, on the BT Trial Site, Colney Heath and West Hall, Napsbury
- negotiated an additional 185 affordable homes by working with developers to provide a target level of affordable homes on larger sites Purchased an additional 10 street properties per year
- developed a scheme for frail elderly people in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council and a housing association
- improved the quality of accommodation and choice for older people
- developed a scheme to house 5 physically disabled young people and 4 with sensory disabilities

## **5.5 Empty Homes Strategy**

Strategic links with Homelessness Strategy 2008-13

The Council's Empty Homes Strategy defines empty properties are those houses and flats (including those units typically found above shops) that:

- have been unoccupied for over 6 months; or
- have been unoccupied for less than 6 months and are a special case (e.g. legal action has been taken by SADC as a result of serious disrepair, or other problems are being caused by the property); and
- do not have a reasonable prospect of being brought back into use by the owner working alone.

The primary aim of this Strategy is to bring about the economically viable reuse, conversion, renovation, improvement or sale of any empty property within SADC area.

It is hoped that this will, in turn, assist the Council in the following:

- meeting the needs of the homeless residents of SADC, or those currently placed in temporary accommodation;
- providing good quality affordable housing for key workers or those on restricted incomes;
- minimising greenfield development;
- improving the existing built environment within the district.

## 5.6 Housing Strategy

Our Housing Strategy is currently under review and is due for completion at the end of 2008. We will ensure that key strategic links exist between the Homelessness and Housing Strategy.

## 5.7 Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010

St Albans is located within the East of England Region which includes East Anglia, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The East of England published its Housing Strategy in 2005. The Strategy outlines options for targeting housing need and homelessness, including:

- providing a larger stock of affordable housing;
- increasing access to the private rented sector to provide temporary accommodation;
- using the above in combination with a policy option to develop more preventative measures for those threatened with homelessness.

The Government Office has also developed a Regional Homelessness Action Plan which identifies key priorities and deliverable actions.

## 5.8 Community Safety Strategy

Strategic links with Homelessness Strategy 2008-13

The strategy is produced by the Community Safety Partnership and focuses on reducing crime and anti social behaviour in the district as well as underpinning and contributing to the Districts Community Strategy shaped by the Local Strategic Partnership. It is based on an assessment, which the Government requires us to undertake annually, of the levels of crime, disorder and drug and

alcohol misuse in the district; the fear of crime; the results of a public consultation and national crime reduction priorities.

The Community Safety Strategy aims to create a safer St Albans by concentrating on three key aims;

- Reducing crime
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Promoting community safety by reducing the fear of crime

One of the areas highlighted in our Community Safety Strategy is domestic violence.

Although domestic violence is chronically under reported, research estimates it:

- accounts for 16% of all violent crime
- will affect 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men in their lifetime
- 77% of victims of domestic violence are women
- has more repeat victims than any other crime (on average there will have been 35 assaults before a victim calls the police)
- on average, two women are killed every week by a current or former male partner
- one incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every minute

[Source: Home Office website/Crime in England and Wales 2006/7 report]

## 5.9 Crime and Drug Strategy - Hertfordshire

In April 2008 a report was presented to the Hertfordshire Programme Development Group which focused on the need to further develop housing related provision and support offered by refuge providers to victims of domestic violence/abuse across Hertfordshire.

Supporting People have highlighted domestic violence/abuse service provision as a key strategic priority for 2008/09. Herts County Council and Herts Constabulary have also increased their investment into tackling domestic violence/abuse across the county.

There has been a huge shift forward in how we are strategically driving the Domestic Violence/Abuse agenda. As a result a high level, decision making strategic partnership has been formed under the governance of Chief Officers Group (COG).

The Programme Development Group endorse plans to scope the need to further invest in domestic violence/abuse service provision.

The report recommended that the Programme Development Group agree to the inclusion of consideration of additional bed spaces, with a specific focus on bed

spaces for male and same-sex victims within the scoping exercise. The PDG were further asked to give an in principle agreement to subsequent financial support.

#### 5.10 Hertfordshire Accommodation Strategy

Housing and Offenders/ Persistent and Prolific Offenders [PPO's]

The Herts Accommodation Strategy identified:

- A) The need to work closely with the Supporting Team to revise their strategy (consultation period during 2008)
- B) The need to create a protocol between borough/district councils and the Probation Service

Whilst the group considered this area of work was crucial to the PPO work and was linked to Local Area Agreements Safer & Stronger targets it may prove difficult if housing accommodation is not available for this client group. We recognise the need to ensure that our Allocation Scheme has adequate provision for this client group and are taking this on board during the developmental stages of our new Allocation Scheme

The new National Drugs Strategy - *"Drugs, Protecting Families and Communities"* stresses the need to help drug misusers to re-establish their lives by, amongst other things, ensuring links to appropriate housing. We will therefore work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that we provide socially excluded adults with suitable accommodation and access to support packages ie floating support.

## **6. Partnership working and brokerage**

Partnerships drive new ways of thinking and working...

Partnership working and integrated service responses may be beneficial to some homeless client groups i.e. those affected by domestic violence and young people. The authority is keen to explore and develop integrated service provision for these client groups and aims to create a Domestic Violence Policy document as well as a sanctuary scheme.

Advice services and others within the community sector provide a valuable link to a range of communities many of whom are affected by marginalisation and social exclusion. The district recognises the need to work collaboratively with these stakeholders with a view to ensuring that homeless advice, options and prevention activities can be appropriately monitored and services coordinated. We currently work closely with Shelter who provides a frontline service from our offices.

It is important to note that other organisations also provide support to clients who are affected by homelessness whilst not necessarily providing a direct homelessness service i.e. advice, casework or homeless prevention. In spite of this, such organisations continue to have an intrinsic role in relation to: community links, referrals and signposting, monitoring, marketing and information dissemination and therefore are viewed as key partners.

### **6.1 Joint working, signposting and referrals are central to service provision and delivery**

The merits associated with joint working, signposting and referrals are many and include intervention and prevention work and encourage policy and procedural formulation. The overall benefits include:

- a) Internal and external partners will have a greater understanding of the various service areas and will therefore be better equipped to respond to the needs of clients.
- b) The management and allocation of cross-sector resources can be effectively monitored which in turns aids the strategic planning process
- c) Clients will be able to speedily access the most appropriate service providers
- d) Referrals and signposting mechanisms encourage seamless service provision

## 6.2 Strategic Partnership in action...

We pride ourselves in our ability to built both ground level and strategic partnerships which centre on homelessness and housing needs. Here are a few examples of how we have successfully built partnerships with key service providers and stakeholders in and around St Albans:

- Milligan House - longer term accommodation for learning disabilities and mild mental health problems
- We are working with Hertfordshire County Council on an Adult Mental health strategy, accommodation for older people
- Castle Project - housing for young physically disabled people where transfer of a site to Ability Housing Association is in progress
- We are represented on the programme development group and Commissioning Body for Supporting People within Hertfordshire
- Housing Consultative Forum which meets with Registered Social Landlords twice per anum.
- Homelessness Related Partnerships - Herts Young Homeless-crash pad/mediation scheme
- Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association - Open Door resettlement/tenancy management support service
- Shelter - Housing Advice
- Herts County Council-Supporting People Programme
- Connexions
- Citizens Advice Bureau - debt advice
- Multi-agency Protection Panel (MAPP)
- Herts District Councils/Children Schools and Families - joint protocol 16/17 year olds
- Lettings Agents and Private Landlords - rent deposit scheme
- Martins Trust - accommodation for single homelessness - we lease a property to the Trust.
- Centre 33

## 6.3 RSL partnership in action...

*"The Housing Corporation's Homelessness Strategy primarily identifies the need to improve partnership working between housing associations and local authorities"*

[Homelessness Action Team CLG and Housing Corporation April 2008]

We pride ourselves in our ability to work constructively and cohesively with local Registered Social Landlords. One of our key partners is Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association who provide a valuable resettlement and tenancy support service to both existing tenants in the Council's housing stock and clients in temporary accommodation.

6.3.1 **Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association [HPCHA]**  
Floating support and resettlement service

The Resettlement/ Floating Support Service has been in operation since 1993 providing resettlement and tenancy sustainment to the one of the districts most vulnerable people in society, those who are street homeless, individuals in temporary accommodation or individuals who are housed, however, identified as at risk of losing their accommodation.

The aim of the service is to provide short-term housing related support, usually up to two years. The support delivered is identified through a matrix of needs and risk assessment and very much tailored to and led by the individual service user.

The information below shows the number of cases that were successfully referred to the floating service since April 2003. For the purpose of this exercise please note that the statistics shown only represent an individual or head of household as having received support, however, in a high number of cases the support may intrinsically included other members of the household such as partners and dependants.

**HPCHA Performance statistics**

Our records showed that there were a total of 269 cases referred to floating support between 2003 and 2008

In 2004 HPCHA began the Floating Support Service for young people. The aim of the service is to provide responsive floating support service to 16 and 17 years of age who approached the council as being homeless and placed in temporary accommodation pending investigation and mediation.

April 2004 - March 2005	13 new cases
April 2005 - March 2006	8
April 2006 - March 2007	10
April 2007- March 2008	10

**Total throughout period 41**

## 6.4 The Places for Change Programme

The Places for Change Programme is a three year programme run from 2008 to 2011. The aim of the programme is to continue to improve services available to rough sleepers, increase the number of people moving on in a positive way and increase the number moving into education and employment. The programme is about improving outcomes. There was £70m set aside for bids.

We successfully submitted a bid with Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association in relation to Open Door. The bidding round was hugely oversubscribed. In April 2008 we received confirmation that the bid of £525,000 for Open Door had been approved. The funds will be used by Hightown Praetorian to improve accommodation by replacing dormitory provision in the night shelter with single rooms and enhanced training facilities/other services.

## 6.5 St Albans CAB [Money Advice Service]

St Albans Citizens Advice Bureau provides money advice to local residents. The development of our homelessness strategy has afforded us the unique opportunity to identify new initiatives and collaboration with the CAB in St Albans. One of the things we are keen to explore is the delivery of financial literacy workshops for clients in temporary accommodation. We recognise that many clients are affected by debt long before they receive secure accommodation and this in itself may have a direct impact on future tenancy sustainment and the economic wellbeing of that household. We believe that the provision of financial related workshops focusing on for example – Consumer Credit Law, Priority debts, bailiff powers, loan agreements/loan sharks etc will provide participants with valuable insight and *skill sets* which can be carried forward into any future secure accommodation. This may be of particular benefit to young clients i.e. those under 21 years old who have not lived independently in the past.

## 6.6 Shelter – Frontline Housing Advice

We successful work in partnership with Shelter via a service level agreement. Shelter provides landlord and tenant related housing advice including protection from eviction and other advice relating to housing rights. The service provided by Shelter is invaluable and we will be taking steps to strengthen our relationship with Shelter by holding regular case conferences to discuss complex or contentious cases.

## 6.7 Homelessness Prevention Project - May 2008

We are pleased to report that we are working in partnership with North Herts and Watford District Council, The Crouch field Trust, Connexions integrated Youth Service and Youth Offending to develop and deliver a homelessness project for young people.

The project aims to develop and implement a homelessness prevention model in schools and targeted youth settings and to raise awareness and

understanding of the causes and symptoms of becoming homeless, targeting young people most at risk

This project contributes to objective 3 of the Accommodation Services for Young People Programme which aims to promote independent living for vulnerable young people (16-25 years) who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness. In addition, under the umbrella of the Local Area Agreement, it will be used to further develop partnership arrangements between the statutory and voluntary sector and maximise resources.

The aim of this project is:

To target the group of 14/15 year olds who are most at risk of homelessness. This includes those

- at risk of exclusion,
- not fully engaged in education and training,
- at risk or involved with drugs, anti- social and/or criminal behaviour.

## 6.8 St Albans & Hertsmere Domestic Violence Forum

SAHDVF, a multi-agency forum which includes Police and Council representatives, works to promote sources of help and advice to victims of domestic violence and to raise awareness of the issues which surround domestic violence, for example the impact on children. The Forum is the delivery arm of the Community Safety Partnership's work on domestic violence. As part of their work, the Forum is liaising with Council officers (Including Housing Services) to develop a Sanctuary scheme which will enable female victims who would prefer to remain in their own homes to do so through the provision of additional security measures such as door locks/chains/stronger front doors or the creation of safe rooms within the property. Although the current assessment is that the need for this service would be for about 3-4 properties a year, it may be that, if successful, the provision could be increased in future years. The Sanctuary scheme should impact on the numbers of women who might be regarded as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Hertfordshire Home Safety and Security Service aims, amongst other things to:

- Reduce the fear of crime, especially in relation to burglary, domestic violence and racial harassment
- Provide safer local communities
- Improve home safety and security, particularly for older and vulnerable people

### **Home security service**

This includes the fitting of security measures like locks, door chains, spy-holes and smoke alarms. Expert advice is also given on how to stay safe and secure in your own home.

The service, including labour and materials, is free of charge if the person is an actual or potential home burglary victim in one or more of the following categories:

- Those aged 60 or over
- Single parents
- Vulnerable or housebound

Labour is still provided free to all other users but a donation is requested or charge made to cover the cost of materials.

In 2007 we reviewed the way in which we collated client profiles of service users affected by domestic violence. This included introducing a specially designed domestic violence interview framework which helped us to capture qualitative information as well as data which support BV225. We consulted with our Community Safety Team as well as the Domestic Violence forum.

Housing Services will continue to work closely with the SAHDVF with a view to establishing a sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic abuse in the St Albans locality. Discussions are underway and an action plan is being developed with a view to executing the qualitative delivery of a sanctuary scheme for St Albans.

## 7 Equalities and Diversity

### In context

We recognise that St Albans is a diverse and culturally vibrant district. We have looked at the profile of our service users and recognise that some groups are underrepresented or over-represented. There may be a number of reasons for this however we will endeavour to encourage service take-up and access for all under-represented groups and redress any imbalances.

The collation of diversity monitoring has by and large focused on P1E\* data capture in relation to this area. We recognise that there is scope to expand diversity monitoring with a view to collating more qualitative data which can be used on a local level to help to inform the strategic planning process. Client profiling data – combined with other information, allows us to obtain a clear picture of our performance. We have created a series of performance indicators relating to Equalities which are contained within our draft Procedure guide for Housing Options Service staff. Our performance management arrangements are viewed as a critical step in mainstreaming equalities and diversity for non priority single homeless clients using the Housing Options Service.

We will ensure that all Housing Options Service staff receive equalities and diversity training including information about the Equalities Act 2006. We will set collection targets and make best use of Equalities data. The information derived will be used to inform Equalities Impact Assessments and to target groups for consultation and stakeholder involvement.

We also recognise that partner agencies can help us to collect and collate diversity data and will encourage this area to be explored once we develop our Homelessness Forum.

\*P1E is a statistical data form completed quarterly for the Homelessness Directorate covering a range of performance indicators e.g. number of acceptances, numbers in temporary accommodation.

### *Equalities and Diversity Our commitment ...*

- Agree, publicise and promote the Equalities Statement for the Housing Options Service
- Support and encourage Equalities and Diversity amongst partners and stakeholders
- Capture core equality and diversity data which will be used to shape and inform the local and Corporate planning process

## 2007 – 8 ethnic monitoring P1E snapshot...

	White British	White Irish	White - Any other White Background	Black or Black British: African	Black or Black British: Caribbean	Black or Black British: Any Other Black Background	Asian or Asian British: Indian	Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	Asian or Asian British: other Asian background
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(i)	(j)	(k)	(l)
Eli,PN,UnInt	90	1	8	5	1	0	2	0	13	2
Eli,PN,Int	13	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Eli,NO PN	14	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0
Eli,Not HL	28	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inelig	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Decision</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>

### 7.1 Gender and homelessness

*“Crisis is concerned that there is too little understanding of homeless women’s specific situations at all levels of the homelessness system. While homeless people, regardless of gender, share many common experiences, homeless women tend to have particular backgrounds and needs. For instance, traumatic life experiences, such as sexual abuse, neglect and abandonment, reproductive health issues and violence, regularly feature in the causes of women’s homelessness”*

By courtesy of Crisis: [www.crisis.org.uk](http://www.crisis.org.uk)

National statutory homelessness figures continue to show that the vast majority of homeless applications are from female-led single parent households with dependants. Of the 15,240 acceptances between Oct – Dec 2007 44% were lone mothers [Statutory Homelessness 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter England – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008]. This group is therefore reliant upon the provision of social housing and other forms of settle accommodation provided by a local authority.

As illustrated above women are more heavily reliant upon the provision of social housing than men. We will therefore take steps to ensure gender sensitivity in our service delivery and provision.

## 7.2 Transgendered homelessness

There has been little national research in this area and we will therefore scope this area further to ensure that we are addressing the needs of this client group.

## 7.3 Debt and homelessness

Research from the Consumer Credit Counseling Service shows that women are more likely to be in debt and financial hardship than men. Single mothers especially are twice as likely as their married counterparts to be in financial hardship. The problem of debt affects women of all ages one in five single female pensioners live below the poverty line due to low retirement savings. In St Albans we recognise that we have an ageing population and as such can readily anticipate that in the future female pensioners may be more affected by debt than their male counterparts.

The common causes of debt include illness, unemployment, overspending on loans and credit cards. However, most women are also seriously affected by relationship debt which relates to the situation where a woman becomes liable for paying her partner or ex-partners debts.

This could be because she signed a loan contract as a co-borrower, guarantor or has agreed to become a silent director of his company, or has signed a mortgage. Under the law a guarantor is liable for paying off debts they have signed for even after the relationship ends.

This again highlights the vulnerability of single mothers and divorcees particularly because these problems manifest at the end of a relationship. Many women fail to seek legal advice before purchasing joint assets and consequently fall into the traps outlined above Women are more likely to carry the debt burden and enter into ill-advised debt management arrangements. By addressing the root causes of personal debt, fewer women will fall into common traps. We know that the vast majority of our service users are female or female led households and therefore accept that there may be a correlation between women and levels of debt. This is an area that we will be exploring further with the Citizens Advice Bureau during the lifetime of our homelessness strategy [ see action plan below for further details]

With the kind support of St Albans Citizen Advice Bureau we compiled the following statistical information which provides an overview of debt and money advice in the St Albans locality:

#### **2007-8: Debt related enquiries by gender**

Female = 503  
Male = 469

#### **2007-8: Debt related enquiries by broad ethnicity**

White = 715  
Other = 96  
Asian = 90  
Black = 71

### **7.4 Equalities Impact Assessments [EIA's]**

As part of our commitment to Equalities we will ensure that the functions and policies of the Housing Options Service [and its service arms – where applicable] are subject to Equality Impact Assessments [EIA's] We recognise that we need to encourage service access and take-up to ensure that client groups benefit from the service provided by the Housing Options Service including direct access to the private rented sector, Registered Social Landlord, Supported Housing and Council tenancies.

Housing Options Service: Equalities potential impact:

- **Gender including transgender:** Medium impact – important to capture information relating to transgendered service users of The Housing Options Service
- **Race:** High impact. Disaffected white /BME groups /travellers may be under-represented or over-represented
- **Disability:** Medium impact
- **Age:** Medium impact.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Medium impact
- **Religion and belief system:** High impact for some groups. Timing of appointments may also be an issue i.e. Islamic Friday prayers etc

### **7.5 Stakeholder involvement**

The development of the Housing Options Service included a service improvement away day in 2007 for staff from Housing Management, Housing Options, Shelter, and Local Registered Social Landlord partners as well as tenants representatives from St Albans. We held an afternoon workshop which focused on Equalities and Access and we will use the findings from our workshops to inform and shape our services.

We are committed to stakeholder involvement and will continue to identify opportunities to involve our stakeholders over the term of this strategy.

## 7.6 Equalities Action planning framework 2008-2013

- Ensure that qualitative data is held on client groups by age, ethnicity, gender, transgender, vulnerability and disability
- Ensure that our policies and procedures are subject to Equality Impact assessments
- Research ways in which different groups wish to be involved and ways this can be facilitated
- Communicate the benefits of and opportunities for stakeholder involvement directed towards marginalized/polarized communities in St Albans
- Develop open days for service users and stakeholders
- Develop a stakeholder newsletter and mailing list which includes hard to reach or non mainstream organisations operation in St.Albans
- Use a variety of mechanisms to involve people (e.g. Face to face surveys, postal surveys, interviews, focus groups, use of text, use of websites, use of e-mails)
- Consider ways in which links can be strengthened with community groups and identify ways in which we can support the capacity building of hard to reach/non mainstream groups
- Re-establish the “Homing In” client newsletter
- Develop a communication activity plan which takes into account the use of local radio and free press within St Albans

## 8 Financial resources

### 8.1 Council Resources

The table below sets out the resources in the Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account which support homelessness services in the District.

The budget within the HRA for 2010/11 reflects the closure of the Ridgeview Hostel.

Revenue - Budget Heading	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £
Ridgeview	310,110	317,670	N/A
Homeless Hostels (HRA)	149,940	153,450	157,280
Homelessness General	207,560	212,480	217,790
Shelter	54,290	55,650	57,040
Leased Properties	117,050	111,880	109,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>838,950</b>	<b>851,130</b>	<b>867,510</b>

The above includes the Government grant from Department For Communities And Local Government of £45,000 per annum for next three years which helps to support the Rent Deposit Scheme and other homelessness prevention measures.

### 8.2 Capital Resources

The Council's Housing Investment Programme incorporates £150,000 for improvements to Worley Road and Sandpit Lane to make them self contained. There is £70,000 available to convert a shop into temporary accommodation as a disabled two bed unit and this scheme will be completed in July 2008.

## 9 Housing supply and Housing Development in St Albans

St Albans District Council is continually identifying and maximising opportunities for residents within the District to access decent, secure, and affordable housing which meets their needs. To help us achieve this aim it develops and maintains effective working relationships with housing associations, developers, other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector, as well as negotiating a 35% share of all new developments over 15 dwellings being classified as affordable.

In 2007/08 we exceeded our target for the year and delivered an additional 39 affordable homes, made available for rent to people from our waiting list or for shared ownership-there are a number of schemes available that offer the opportunity for low cost home ownership to first time buyers and key workers. There are currently several schemes in development that will increase the supply of affordable housing in the District over the next two years to meet our aim of delivering an average of 100 affordable homes per annum.'

The table at Appendix 1 provides details of completed and pipeline housing development within the St Albans locality. The figures below set out the supply projections for the next three years.

### Affordable housing supply projections

Year	Projected total	Provisional
2008 - 09	127	1
2009 - 10	167	35
2010 - 11	208	27

## 10 Homelessness Strategy Methodology steps 1-7

The development of our homelessness Strategy involved us carrying out a number of different checks in order to get a picture of homelessness within the locality. These on and off -site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about general opinion as well as information flow, current activities and initiatives , awareness and service improvements .We used the findings to constructively inform and shape our homelessness strategy to ensure that the document is architecturally sound .Our reality checks included:

- Meetings with key partners
- Devising an online consultation questionnaires for stakeholder
- Focus groups
- Face to face interviews
- telephone interviews
- Holding a consultation event with stakeholders

### **What will success look like in the lifetime of our Homelessness Strategy?**

- Shared understanding of homelessness issues and the ability to track progress.
- Addressing inequality or imbalances amongst service users
- A reduction in the number of homeless cases
- Increased emphasis on homelessness prevention and alternative housing option
- Long term sustainable client focused solutions
- Improved holistic service delivery , provision access and inclusion

### 10.1 Homelessness Strategy Step 1:

Convene Homelessness Strategy Project Board 2008

The primary aim of the Homelessness Strategy Project Board is to review our existing strategic document and develop and monitor our new Homelessness Strategy

The project board also has added value as it will help us to fulfill a number of additional aims:

- Engage key stakeholders in the development of our Homelessness Strategy
- Raise awareness of the Councils priorities in relation to Homelessness Prevention and Options
- Share good practice in relation to Homelessness Prevention
- Identify new joint working opportunities and avenues

Project Board profile can be found in Appendix 2

## 10.2 Homelessness Strategy Step 2:

Review of homelessness and data capture of core statistical information on homelessness within the St Albans locality

### 10.2.1 Rough sleepers in St Albans

During December 2007 there was public concern that the number of rough sleepers in the District had increased. A meeting of key stakeholders was subsequently held in January 2008. The meeting showed there were good examples of partnership working between various agencies in order to refer people sleeping rough onto the right support agencies particularly in the area of mental health. There were concerns that cuts in Primary Care Trust funding meant there were fewer resources for people with drug and alcohol problems. However, there were a number of positive points raised at the meeting which are set out below including further actions which have been implemented since then.

- New floating support service via Druglink has been implemented in St Albans for people experiencing drug and alcohol problems.
- Focus group to be set up to meet with people accessing Centre 33.
- There are a core group of rough sleepers where partners felt that action via Community Safety would need to be taken in order to protect others and that there was good liaison with Police in these circumstances.
- Need to maximise existing stock and move on arrangements. A project has subsequently been set up by the Supporting People Team.
- Martins Trust which provides accommodation for 20 single homeless people was awarded an extra £149,000 of funding via Supporting People to ensure the right provision and referral process is in place. This will prevent future bedblocking within the scheme along with better provision of support services thereby freeing up units.
- The Council was awarded £525,000 under the Places For Change Programme in partnership with Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association for improving the accommodation at Open Door and outcomes for rough sleepers linked to training.
- The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour team work closely with Hertsreach and are able to contact an outreach worker and referrals are being made for people with drug or alcohol problems.
- Further consultation with stakeholders at the Homelessness Strategy event in June 2008.

## Services for Rough Sleepers /roofless in St Albans

### Open Door Night Shelter

Between January and December 2007 Open Door provided temporary emergency accommodation and support to **361** single homeless males and females, of which **78%** had a local St. Albans/Hertfordshire connection.

We managed to support **20%** of those who accessed the night shelter to find suitable alternative accommodation, including move on to short term supported housing schemes such as Kent House, Martin House and Ridgeview lodge.

We were able to support four individuals that did not have recourse to public funds for a maximum of two nights per case. This scheme is made financially viable through funding from the Open Door Trust.

*"I am really proud of what we have achieved in St Albans"*

During January 2008, the occupancy rate for the night shelter was 114%

(against a target of 10 beds per night), an average of 11 clients per night out of a possible 16. In February the occupancy rate remained high at 98%, which is an average of 10 clients per night and during March we saw a steep rise to 114%, an average of 11 clients per night.

#### 10.2.2 Featured profile

### Marion Sklar – Specialist Nurse for the Homeless

#### Principal Health Centre - St Albans Hertfordshire

A stones throw from St Albans City and District Civic Centre lies the Principal Health Centre. The centre houses a range of practitioners and is home to Marion Sklar – Specialist Nurse for the homeless. Marion has an impressive clinical background which includes: midwifery, nursing, health visiting and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy .Marion also spent time in the United States as a Nurse Manager for a Federal Programme for Native Americans living on reservations.

*"Many of the clients I see have a background in care - I met one client who had attended numerous schools and lived in many foster homes"*

9 years ago Marion joined The Principal Health Centre and was given a remit to set up a service for homeless people aged 16 plus. Marion's initial challenge was to shape and define the service to ensure that the

client group avoided referrals to Accident and Emergency and were able to access temporary pathways to GP's in St Albans. The initial set up stage included networking with local GPs and reaching an agreement for rota based referrals.

9 years on Marion's success as a health coordinator is attributed to her passionate dedication to her role coupled with the sound partnership arrangements embedded over the years with St Albans Housing Services, the Police, Community Drug and Alcohol and mental health teams.

Marion sees a range of roofless/homeless clients including: Drug and Alcohol users, care leavers, ex-offenders, sex workers, ex-forces personnel, clients with mental Health issues and clients with physical and sensory disabilities. Marion is well known and respected amongst both agencies and clients and word of mouth continues to bring in a steady stream of homeless clients to her regular outreach surgeries. Outreach plays a large part of Marion's activities and sound joint working arrangements ensure that Marion can engage with a range of clients through local day services such as Centre 33. A full assessment of needs is completed for all clients and referrals are made to primary health care and other social care services in and around St Albans. The transient nature of the client group often poses a range of difficulties. Marion often makes referrals and secures appointments however clients may lose their hostel accommodation or simply move away from the area.

Rooflessness and homelessness combined with support/complex needs such as drug/alcohol or mental health issues often lead to a rapid decline in health. Maintaining pathways to Primary Health Care is seen as a crucial component which ensures that clients can access a range of primary and secondary support services in and around St Albans. Marion continues to have a pivotal role and provides both a strategic and operational bridge between St Albans Housing Services and the Primary Care Trust.

There is scope for us to further tap into Marion's role by, for example, looking at capturing qualitative client profiles which contribute to the strategic planning process. Marion is a keen exponent of a holistic one-stop day facility which encompasses a range of primary care practitioners, wet rooms, hot meals, washing and laundry facilities, GUM clinics, pathways to employment and training and health and wellbeing suites. This is an area which has considerable potential and would be highly beneficial to roofless / homeless clients in St Albans. Housing Services will look at scoping the features and benefits of this kind of service model with a view to exploring a joint - Housing, Supporting People and PCT initiative.

*“Homelessness creates such multiple risk factors that it is difficult for homeless people to achieve even basic health and wellbeing. Health problems can seriously affect homeless people's quality of life and limit their ability to access routes out of homelessness”*

By courtesy of The Queens Nursing Institute: Briefing paper - Health and Homelessness Nov 2007 [www.qni.org](http://www.qni.org)  
Marion Sklar can be reached on: 01727 830 130

### 10.2.3 **Featured profile** Centre 33 – Drop in centre



Centre 33 provides practical support for people who are homeless or otherwise socially excluded. The Centre offers food, hot drinks, showers and somewhere warm and friendly to meet. Visitors to Centre 33 range from those sleeping rough to those who are socially isolated. Centre 33 opens every weekday morning, on Monday to Thursday evenings and on Saturday lunchtimes.

*“Centre 33 is brilliant”*

Centre 33 service user 2008

Centre users are predominantly male and are often affected by drug and alcohol misuse and mental health issues. Centre 33 prides itself in its ability to provide a welcoming and non judgemental environment. The Centre's success can be attributed to the dedication of a team of hard working volunteers who provide hot meals, clothing and basic support to service users. In 2007 the centre recorded 6,400 visits made up of approximately 300 individuals.

The Centre is uniquely placed to compliment existing services for single homeless people in St Albans and provides an outreach portal for the PCT Homeless Nurse. This ensures that service users can receive timely primary health care intervention and support. The Centre receives support from both community sector partners, the Council, from St Albans in Need, and St Albans Fund for the Future [ both charities ] as well as support from St Albans Abbey and a variety of local businesses, churches, individuals and schools.

Single homeless people face a number of challenges and their homelessness/rooflessness directly impacts upon their emotional and physical wellbeing. Social exclusion remains a key concern for visitors as does the stigma associated with homelessness/rooflessness. Of the visitors we spoke to, the majority felt that having somewhere settled to live would have a positive effect upon a range of things including employability and social integration. Single homeless/roofless clients are in most cases vulnerable on some level and this may have a direct impact on the extent to which they may be exploited by individuals who may wish to encourage/cajole them into using/selling drugs or using alcohol.

One of the main issues raised by the Centre users we spoke to was the risk of violence and assault when sleeping on the streets. The risk of violence is heightened when sleeping rough as is the risk of exacerbating or developing emotional or physical health problems.

*“The worst thing about being homeless on the streets is people being violent towards you”*

Centre 33 staff display high levels of commitment to service users, however recognise that the service they provide is limited to the provision of meals, showers and basic referrals and signposting. The Chair of Centre 33 – Peter Graham would relish the opportunity to develop the Centre further with a view to supplying laundry facilities as well as storage space for clients to leave their belongings and bedding. However the size of the Centre premises will not allow for this type of service expansion.

Centre 33 is a totally voluntary organisation, in its management as well as those who open the Centre and provide meals etc. It is not in receipt of statutory funds which it sees as having certain benefits since active monitoring of visitors is minimal and this contributes to the welcoming and non-judgemental character of the Centre.

Centre 33 has firmly established itself as a central service for those who are homeless /roofless in St Albans. Housing Services regards Centre 33 as a successful and integral part of infrastructure support and assistance for homeless and roofless clients in St Albans.

In June 2008 Centre 33 was one of the 79 recipients of the **2008 Queens Award for Voluntary Service**.

The Queen’s Award was set up as part of the celebration of the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. It is given for outstanding achievement by groups of volunteers who:

- regularly devote their time to helping others in the community

- improve the quality of life and opportunity for others
- provide an outstanding service

This Award is a clear recognition of all the support and help that Centre 33 provides for a very vulnerable part of the St Albans Community and it is a clear recognition of the dedication of the volunteers and quality of service provided.

#### 10.2.4 **Police Liaison Group**

Established for over 4 years and chaired by Marion Sklar – specialist nurse for the homeless, the Police Liaison group provides a forum for practitioners to share information about homeless people and rough sleepers within the St Albans locality.

The group comprises of representatives from the Police, Community Safety, Primary Care Trust, Supported Housing Providers, Drug Intervention, Community Mental Health Team and St Albans Housing Services respectively.

The Police liaison group discuss clients who may be at risk to themselves or others due to offending /anti social behaviour or vulnerability. Both the Police and Community Safety Team tackle the issue of community safety whilst other key practitioners focus on harm reduction and the primary health care needs of this client group.

We recognise that St Albans is affected by a small group of clients who regularly drink or converge in public places. Regular dialogue between key agencies is therefore an important element of tackling this issue.

The police liaison group represents a successful example of cross sector partnership and information sharing in St Albans.

### 10.2.5 Gypsy and Travellers **[update required]**

We have provided a 3 year breakdown of Gypsy and Travellers provision below:

#### 2006

	Gypsy Site	Pitch Numbers	%	
County	Barley Mow	15	<b>% of pitches in St Albans are Publicly provided</b>	40
County	Ver Meadows	15		
County	Watling Street	10		
Private	The Paddocks	9	<b>% of pitches in St Albans are Privately provided</b>	12
Private	Chiswell Green Lane	1		
Private	Woodbury Manor Farm	1		
Private	Chequers Lane*	1		
	<b>Total pitches</b>	52		

#### 2007

County	Barley Mow	15	<b>66.7% of pitches in St Albans are Publicly provided</b>	40
County	Ver Meadows	15		
County	Watling Street	10		
Private	The Paddocks	9	<b>33.3% of pitches in St Albans are Privately provided</b>	20
Private	Chiswell Green Lane	1		
Private	Woodbury Manor Farm	1		
Private	Tulloch side*	8		
Private	Chequers Lane**	1		
	<b>Total pitches</b>	60		

#### 2008

County	Barley Mow	15	<b>% of pitches in St Albans are Publicly provided</b>	40
County	Ver Meadows	15		
County	Watling Street	10		
Private	The Paddocks	9	<b>% of pitches in St Albans are Privately provided</b>	23
Private	Chiswell Green Lane	1		
Private	Woodbury Manor Farm	1		
Private	Tullochside*	8		
Private	Chequers Lane**	1		
Private	Nuckies Farm***	3		
	<b>Total pitches</b>	63		

\* Tulloch side has temporary consent, therefore is classed as authorised

\*\* Chequers lane is unauthorised but immune from enforcement action

\*\*\*Nuckies Farm Given 5 Year Temporary Permission for 3 Pitches in Jan 08

The Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation need Assessment [GTAA] covered the local authority planning areas of Dacorum, Hertsmere, St. Albans, Three Rivers and Watford. The GTAA identified a need of an extra 125 residential pitches in the study area but did not carve up the need between the different local authority areas. This level of need has now been superseded by work being carried out by the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) on a Single Issue Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy on Gypsy and Travellers. It was determined by EERA that the GTAA for south and west Hertfordshire overestimated the level of need required. EERA have now published for consultation a draft policy to be included in their Regional Spatial Strategy which sets a requirement for St Albans to provide 62 pitches between 2006 and 2021 (this is made up from a figure of 33 pitches to be provided between 2006 and 2011 and a 3% annual increase between the periods of 2011 and 2021). As the EERA policy and pitch requirements are draft as at April 2008, they could possibly change after the Examination in Public under an independent panel appointed by the Secretary of State. The finalisation of the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation review is expected during 2009.

The Council has already begun work on identifying suitable locations for gypsy and traveller sites. The report sent to PPAP on 29.03.2007 outlines the early steps which were taken to identify broad locations for gypsy and traveller sites across the same study area as the GTAA. Currently these locations are being assessed against criteria from government guidance to determine their suitability and deliverability.

The Council is working on producing a Local Development Framework (LDF). This will replace the current local plan once adopted and consists of three Development Plan Documents (Core Strategy DPD, Development Control Policies DPD and Site Allocations DPD). Ultimately the Council will have a policy in its Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) that will identify criteria to be used to assess planning applications for gypsy and traveller sites. The Site Allocations DPD will allocate land for sites in the district. The timescales for producing these documents is currently under review. The revised timetable that was presented to our Planning Policy Advisory Panel on 20th March 2008 provisionally looks to early 2011 to have the Core Strategy DPD in place and late 2011 to have all other DPDs in place.

#### 10.2.6 **16-21 year olds**

We have seen a steady increase in the numbers of 16/17 year olds approaching us for assistance. During 2006-07 we prevented homelessness amongst this client group on 18 occasions. During 2007-08 we prevented homeless on 19 occasions.

Number of 16/17 year olds referred and accepted into supported housing in St Albans: 2007

66 ARTISAN CRESCENT, St Albans	13
2A HIGH OAKS, St Albans (Opened in Aug 07. – 8 units)	9
KENT HOUSE ,St Albans (No longer take 16/17 yr olds)	4
OUTLOOK , Watford (now closed)	1
TOWNSEND HOUSE, Borehamwood (girls only)	1

#### 10.2.7 **Crashpad - service for homeless 16/17 year olds**

The Crashpad service provides short term emergency accommodation for homeless young people between the ages of 16-18 and for care leavers up to the age of 21. The main objective is in the first instance to provide a safe environment for young people whilst longer term options are considered. A secondary objective is to reduce the risks that homelessness can cause. The service is managed by Herts Young Homeless Group as part of the Homeless Prevention and Support integrated service who recruit "host families" to provide a room in their own home. The agency is expected to have 35 host families available by the end of 2008 and currently has 26 families across the county. From 1 July 2008, the scheme will be opened up to care leavers, and have longer-term placements to allow more time for mediation to take place and/or move arrangements to be made.

#### 10.2.8 **Advice and Information and Mediation service for young people**

Herts Young Homeless Group (HYHG) Offer advice and information on homeless prevention from a menu of options: this could include;

- Make enquiries about the young person's current housing situation
- Provide information for young people on their housing and homelessness rights and responsibilities.
- Provide housing and homelessness information, in methods and formats accessible to young people with diverse needs, on local services provided.

As part of this service Herts Young Homeless Group:

- Carry out an assessment using the common assessment framework (CAF) and/or housing/homeless assessment form\*.
- This assessment of the accommodation and support needs of young people will be made available to all other parts of the service and other relevant agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure that the service user is registered on relevant housing lists from time of referral. (subject to assessment)

Work with and assist in the delivery of support plans being lead by other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies involved in the service users' life. This will include working with the Youth Justice Service, ie assessing 16 and 17 year olds whilst in custody, prior to release and making arrangements for accommodation and or housing related support on

#### 10.2.9 Floating support service for young people

The aim of the service is to prevent homelessness and enable the young person to live as independently and successfully as possible in the community. It will support young people in a range of settings. Examples of these settings could include,

- living with parents, (young people who are at imminent risk of homelessness),
- institutional environments (ie Young Offender Institutions, residential care etc )
- temporary or emergency accommodation
- permanent accommodation at risk of losing their tenancy

The service will;

- Help young people to make the transition to independent living.
- Help young people sustain tenancies and/or move on to more permanent accommodation;
- Meet all of a person's housing-related support needs and allow choice as to what they receive;
- Be delivered to service users regardless of tenure, and 'float off' as and when the support is no longer required.

The service will work by receiving referrals from the gateway or front end of the service which provides assessment and referral advice, and information.

## **The Joint Housing Protocol**

*“Consistent, reliable and sustainable joint working can only be achieved through formal agreements between relevant agencies”*

Communities and Local Government – Department for Children Schools and Families : May 2008

**A joint housing protocol is in place in relation to 16 and 17 year old homeless people, care leavers and intentionally homeless families.**

A training programme is being rolled out across Hertfordshire to help all relevant staff increase their understanding of the agencies and procedures of the Joint Housing Protocol.

The Joint Housing Protocol has been updated to bring it in line with the arrangements introduced as part of Integrated Practice and the Common Assessment Framework [CAF] in Hertfordshire. The protocol has been updated to complement Hertfordshire’s new ways of working.

Further details and guidance on Integrated Practice and the CAF can be found at [www.hertsdirect.org/caf](http://www.hertsdirect.org/caf) and/or <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk>

The training covers

- Multi-agency processes and procedures covered in the JHP and Common Assessment Framework
- Meeting and working with multi-agency staff and identifying key contacts
- Getting to know your agency ‘s and other’s responsibilities towards supporting homeless young people
- Exploring real life case studies, what works and what doesn’t
- An opportunity to put your questions to a panel of key agencies

10.2.10 **Key performance indicators [P1E's]**  
**Data capture/analysis of trends [forecasting]**

**P1E DATA STRANDS 2003-2008: at a glance...**

<b>Category</b>	<b>2003 - 2004</b>	<b>2004 - 2005</b>	<b>2005 -2006</b>	<b>2006 - 2007</b>	<b>2007 - 2008</b>
<b>Total approaches</b>	544	547	548	404	414
<b>Total applications</b>	305	224	239	159	209
<b>Total acceptances</b>	172	145	126	105	135

We have seen a decline in the total number of clients approaching us for assistance. Early intervention coupled with homelessness prevention will ensure that numbers continue to decline over the next 5 years.

We have also seen a decline in the number of homelessness applications taken along with acceptances. Our rent deposit scheme has proved a valuable part of our housing options toolkit however we recognise that we need to develop a broader toolkit which takes into account the needs of single homeless people as well as families.

10.2.11 **REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS – accepted applications**

	<b>2003 - 2004</b>	<b>2004- 2005</b>	<b>2005- 2006</b>	<b>2006 -2007</b>	<b>2007 - 2008</b>
Parents	46	28	34	41	34
Family/Friends	53	51	42	18	40
Relationship Breakdown non violent	3	7	1	2	4
Relationship Breakdown violent	20	8	4	12	10
Relationship Breakdown violent with associates			0	0	0
Racially motivated violence			0	0	0
Other forms of violence			9	2	6
Racially motivated harassment			0	0	0
Other forms of harassment			0	0	0
Rent Arrears - Private rented	1	4	2	3	
Rent arrears - Public sector	0	0	0	1	1
End of tenancy	17	18	18	11	21

	2003 - 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006 -2007	2007 - 2008
Other loss of private rented	13	11	4	1	6
Required to leave NASS accom	0	0	0	1	0
Leaving care/ institution	4	5	5	5	0
Prison			0	0	0
Hospital			0	0	1
Other reason	15	13	7	7	9
Left HM forces			0	0	0
Mortgage arrears	0	0	0	1	2

**No returns required**

Forecasting and projections 2008-13

The top 2 reasons for homelessness relate to parental evictions and evictions by family or friends and relatives. Over the past 5 years we have seen a decline in numbers for both categories however recognise that there is scope to proactively target this group via housing options marketing and promotional materials and homelessness prevention. We anticipate a continued year on year decline in numbers from 2008-13.

**Table 1: Use of temporary accommodation as at June 2008**

Types of accommodation	Units in use
Homeless at home	7
Housing association leased schemes (HALs)	0
Private sector accommodation leased by St Albans (PSLs)	6
Council licence	71
Hostels	0
Self-contained hotel annexes	0
Shared annexes	0
Bed and breakfast hotels	0

1. Average length of stay in Temporary Accommodation

YEAR	AVERAGE (MONTHS)
2003/04	7.30
2004/05	8.20
2005/06	8.60
2006/07	8.75
2007/08	7.30

2. Temporary Accommodation figures-total households in temporary accommodation – snapshot...

The following chart shows the total number of households in temporary accommodation. Of the total households 8 are 16-17 years old. We have seen some fluctuations however a steady decline in numbers is evident since 203/04 and we are confident that we are in line with the Governments TA reduction target of 2010.

**10.2.12 Temporary Accommodation Target for 2010 is 62**

In January 2005 the Government announced a target to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation for whom we have a statutory duty by 50% by 2010 against the base figure of 1 April 2003. Progress against this target is set out below.

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Numbers in Temporary Accommodation	103	95	78	66	83
% reduction from base figure	20%	23%	37%	46%	33%

As at June 2008 we recorded 83 households in temporary accommodation. This shows an increase, however this can be attributed to our policy of offering households more than one offer of accommodation under our current Allocation Scheme. This has led to households spending longer periods in temporary accommodation. We envisage that the introduction of CBL and revamp of our Allocation Scheme will result in a reduction of households in temporary accommodation during 2008-9. We are confident that we will reach our targets in relation to 2010 temporary accommodation reduction.

### 10.2.13 Temporary accommodation – service provision

The Council currently manages 86 units of temporary accommodation. In addition there are a number of other service providers within the district including Open Door, Martins Trust, High Oaks [young people] Emmaus and Artisan Crescent who provide supported accommodation for single homeless and young people. There are also a number of support services in the district , these include: Drug link floating support, Hightown Praetorian Resettlement Service and Herts Young Homeless.

Ridgeview Lodge caters for 15 homeless families and 67 single people however this scheme is no longer considered to be fit for purpose and as such we are developing an alternative service model. The Supporting People strategy has a focus on the provision of floating support and a medium to long term move away from larger hostel type accommodation.

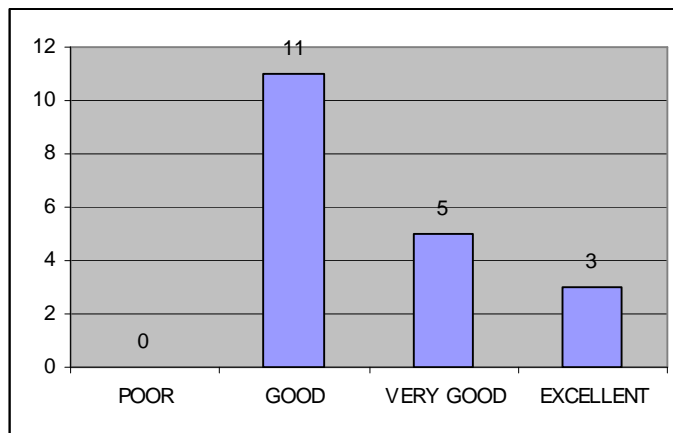
### 10.2.14 Temporary Accommodation – client survey 2007

[22% response rate]

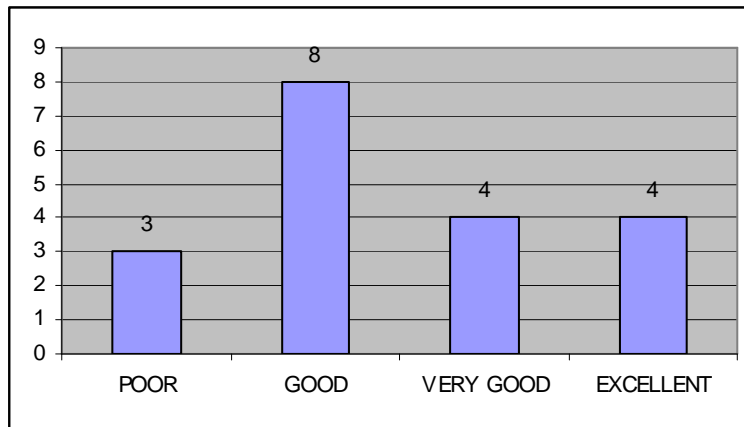
In 2007 we completed a sample survey of clients in our temporary accommodation. We wanted to obtain feedback on the service we provide.

The results are detailed below:

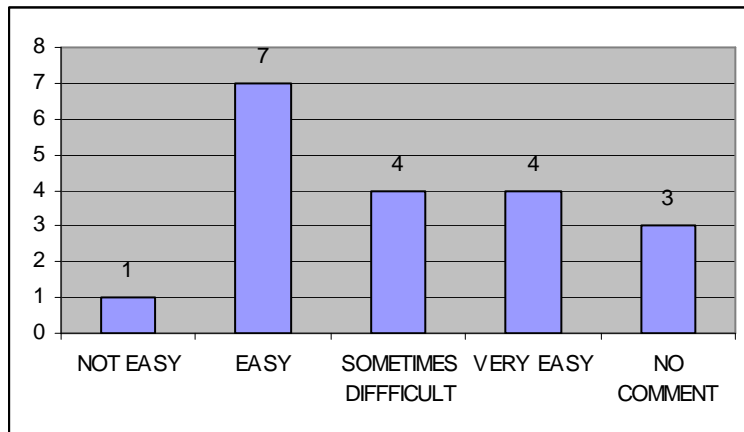
#### How would you rate the quality of the accommodation you occupy?



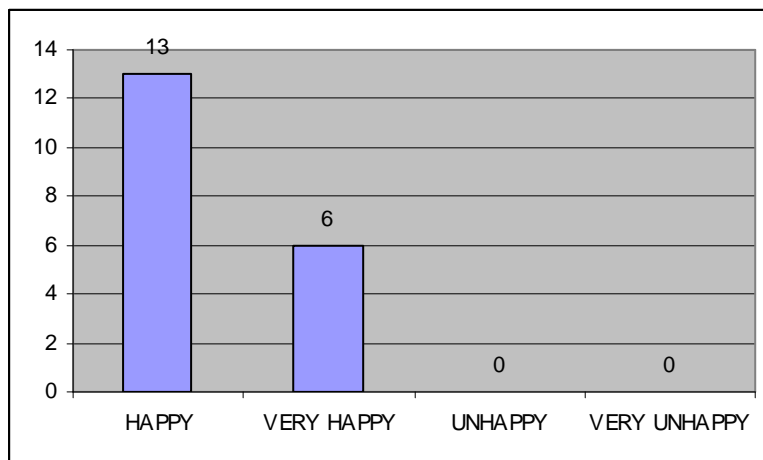
**How would you rate our temporary accommodation staff?**



**How easy is it to contact your emergency housing officer?**



**How happy are you with the service overall?**



Clients receive a range of information and details once they enter temporary accommodation however they do not receive a formal welcome pack. In 2007 we decided to explore the development of a welcome pack and our survey asked respondents what they would like included in pack. The responses are detailed below and we will ensure that we take on board the feedback from survey respondents:

**What respondents would like to be included in new welcome pack?**

- Information about becoming a tenant
- Information about sports and leisure facilities in St.Albans
- Telephone numbers for housing options service ie. Housing advice
- Information about local NHS services – dentist, GP, family planning, smoking cessation
- Information about employment and training services
- Information about local advice agencies
- Information about our rent deposit scheme

**Some respondents also asked for –**

- Information about volunteering, gaining work experience
- Information about organisations offering support ie. DV, Drug and alcohol, community groups
- Information about debt and money advice
- Information about becoming a private tenant
- Information about local facilities for mother and babies (ie playgroups)

**10.2.15 Total Homeless acceptances**

We are pleased to report a reduction in our acceptance rates compared to 2003-04. In 2007-08 we had an increase in both approaches and applications and this impacted on our acceptance rate that year, however, we will continue to adopt proactive measures including anti-fraud and homelessness prevention to seek further reductions.

Year	2003-4	2004-5	2005-6	2006-7	2007-8
Acceptances	169	147	126	106	135

#### 10.2.16 Total number of households registered on housing register

We have seen a slight rise in the total numbers of households on our housing register since 2003/04. This may be attributed to a number of factors i.e.: greater publicity of housing register, pre-requisite for accessing supported housing and Registered Social Landlord tenancies coupled with changes to the rules surrounding local connection. An increase in the number of households on our housing register can also be attributed to the high cost of housing in the district which has created a greater reliance upon social housing provision. We recognise that our Housing Register holds a vast arrays of client based information and equally provides us with an opportunity to market and product place to this audience.

YEAR	NUMBER
2003/04	1629
2004/05	1639
2005/06	1705
2006/07	1739
2007/08	1709

#### 10.2.17 Total lettings 2006-2008- 2 year snapshot

Year	Total HRA Lettings	Total to Homeless clients
2006-2007	263	100
2007-2008	245	81

#### 10.2.18 Total Council evictions for rent arrears

As is the case with all local authorities we evict a % of clients for rent arrears and other tenancy breaches. To ensure that this process is both consistent and formally addressed, all eviction case are heard by a team of senior officers who make the Housing Review Panel. The panel ensures that only the most serious of cases receive the ultimate sanction provided all the necessary safeguards have been put in place to support the client prior to taking the decision to evict. Our evictions rates have remained steady over the past 6 years despite the fact that we have an increased % of tenants with vulnerabilities i.e. drug and alcohol and mental health issues. Last year our overall eviction % was 0.2 of all \*properties.

\*St Albans City and District Council – Housing Stock as at April 2008 stands at some 5300 dwellings.

#### 10.2.19 HRA evictions – year by year

2002-2003	15 evictions for arrears
2003-2004	4 evictions for arrears
2004-2005	9 evictions for arrears
2005-2006	11 evictions for arrears , 1 other breach of tenancy
2006-2007	12 evictions for arrears
2007-2008	13 evictions for arrears , 1 other breach of tenancy

The supply of Social Housing has diminished since the introduction of the Right to Buy – a trend echoed throughout the Social Housing Sector in England and Wales. Our Right to Buy figures are detailed below:

1st January - December 2003	97 sold
1st January - December 2004	60 sold
1st January - December 2005	30 sold
1st January - December 2006	24 sold
1st January - December 2007	24 sold
1st January - up to July 2008	4 sold
<b>Total Right to Buy sales</b>	<b>236</b>

#### 10.2.20 Total Registered Social Landlord re-lets

Year	Total
2003/04	37
2004/05	72
2005/06	28
2006/07	58
2007/08	68

#### 10.2.21 New Registered Social Landlord lettings (affordable rented)

Year	Total
2003/04	7
2004/05	170
2005/06	22
2006/07	8
2007/08	23

#### 10.2.22 Total cases where homelessness prevented

Year	Total
2005/06	35
2006/07	103
2007/08	149

#### 10.2.23 Total Domestic Violence cases 3

Year	Total
2003/04	20
2004/05	8
2005/06	4
2006/07	12
2007/08	10

#### 10.2.24 Total number of St Albans clients approaching Shelter

Housing Advice is provided by Shelter by way of a partnership arrangement supported by a Service Level Agreement. Shelter staff are located at our offices during specific periods to provide high quality frontline housing advice to our client group .Shelter have been instrumental in helping us to prevent homelessness as well as provide a quality based frontline service.

Year	Total
2005/06	357
2006/07	251
2007/08	424

#### 10.2.25 Maximising take up of private rented sector accommodation in St Albans

Offering choice - Rent Deposit Scheme...

Our rent deposit scheme was introduced in 2006. To date we have successfully secured private sector accommodation for a total of **66** households broken down as follows:

Year	Total RDS lets
2006-07	38
2007-08	28

Projection – we envisage that we will be able to complete 15 Rent Deposit Scheme lettings during the financial year 2008-9

Bed-sit properties	2
One bedroom properties	8
Two bedroom properties	40
Three bedroom properties	16

We completed a small sample snapshot survey of landlords and clients using the Rent deposit scheme. This gave us an idea of the satisfaction rates as well as identified ways in which we could improve the scheme.

#### 10.2.26 Rent Deposit Scheme – Landlord satisfaction survey:

Landlords were asked how they rated our Rent Deposit Scheme overall?

Poor	Good	Very good	Excellent
0	1	3	2

Landlords were asked whether they would recommend the scheme to other landlords

Yes	No	Not sure
6	0	0

#### 10.2.27 Rent Deposit Scheme – client satisfaction survey:

Clients were asked to rate the overall quality of their home?

Poor	Good	Very Good	Excellent
5	2	1	4

Clients were asked whether they would recommend the scheme to others.

Yes	No	Not sure
8	2	2

#### 10.2.28 Private Tenants: Local Housing Allowance – implications...

With effect from the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 -the way housing benefit is calculated for some claimants will change. The new benefit will be called Local Housing Allowance (LHA) The LHA will not affect those who rent from St Albans Council, a RSL or charity. Those living in hostels, caravans or mobile homes will also not be affected by the LHA. Those renting from a private landlord will be affected by the LHA

if they make a new claim for HB, move address or have a break in their claim of at least x1 week. Payments will be made directly into the tenant's bank account, four weekly in arrears. We will not normally pay the landlord or agents however recognise that in some circumstances i.e. where a client is vulnerable this may be the most appropriate response. For those clients referred to private landlords we will ensure that they receive clear information about the LHA and will continue to work closely with our Housing Benefit Department.



### 10.3 Homelessness Strategy Step 3:

Communication and consultation with stakeholders

#### 10.3.1 Our communication matrix

In support of the development of our Homelessness Strategy we produced a communication matrix specifically designed to raise awareness of the development and production of St Albans City and District Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

Communication activities were developed with a view to creating a communication matrix and project management complimentary work stream.

#### **Objectives:**

- To increase awareness and understanding of the benefits, features and rationale behind the Homelessness Strategy 2008 - 2013
- To increase awareness and understanding of the roles and responsibilities individuals and directorates have to ensure the Strategy is produced and published by July 2008
- Ensure the timely flow of relevant and accurate information regarding the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13
- To ensure primary and secondary stakeholders have the opportunity to provide feedback

### 10.3.2 Target Audiences

Primary Target Audiences:	Directorate Contacts Existing and potential Customers Relevant and interrelated Housing Staff Project sponsors/owners – Member / Chief Officer Level
Secondary Target Audiences:	All other staff including Customer Services frontline teams All other SADC Members [Ward Cllrs] Supporting People Team [floating support] Housing Management Services Mental Health Trust / Community Psychiatric Nurse's Primary Care Trust / NHS Trust: GP's, Health Visitors, Health Centres Community Sector Stakeholders / Voluntary Sector Organisations Probation Service / Anti-Social Behaviour Team / Youth Offending Team

### 10.3.3 Key Messages

The planned Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2013 is seen as a key strategic document which will help us to measure our effectiveness in relation to Homelessness prevention and options and will assist with the forward planning process.

#### 10.3.4 Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 Stakeholder Consultation

*“The continuing development of an authentic homelessness Strategy that measurably reduces or quickly resolves incidences of homelessness within the district coupled with a robust system of housing provision in terms of temporary accommodation, social housing and access to the private rented sector”*

**David Miller, Senior Adviser, Shelter Hertfordshire**

*“Understanding the client base, why they come to St Albans, finding out if they want to be homeless or whether this is a symptom of a problem”*

**Sue Wheatley chief inspector police**

*“Identifying better ways of using shared resources and working across sectors to provide solutions for our homeless communities that lead to a reduction in numbers in the future”*

**Laura Cronshaw Chief Executive - CVS**

*“Increased support to help BME groups and travellers integrate into local communities. We have a number of travellers that have been rehoused in Oyster fields and Norris close but have not yet settled (first time tenancies). · Continue to tackle rough sleeping in Central St Albans, especially for those clients who have been deemed as unsuitable for existing services maybe due to dependency on drugs or alcohol or due to behaviour that poses a risk to others. · Work with providers of short-term accommodation to ensure there is a clear and effective process for move-on in place. There are examples of bed blocking within the District which impacts on the availability of suitable accommodation for homeless clients. · To ensure that suitable provision is made for young homeless people including education about prevention of homelessness. (The new integrated model of accommodation and support for young people funded via Supporting People may support this but suitable accommodation still needs to be available, especially where emergency accommodation is required) · To continue to ensure that effective advice is available to individuals in relation to homelessness prevention or resettlement advice. To ensure that all providers of services to homeless people work in partnership across the district to minimise duplication of services and maximise efficiency.”*

**Sheelagh Jones - Supported Housing Manager**

**“What do you feel are the main challenges for St Albans City and District Council in relation to homelessness service provision?”**

**Stakeholder consultation  
2008**

*“The main challenge is to co-ordinate the range of services that are already available to work in a more effective way with each other to reduce and prevent homelessness”*

**Mike Petter – SP Strategy and Development Officer**

*“The main problem is lack of funding and support for homelessness with specific needs. Many homeless arrive in St Albans due to the good drop in and shelter provision but then are not able to be supported health wise due to lack of funding/facilities”*

**PCSO Caroline Davies - Herts Constabulary**

*“The main challenge is lack of affordable housing in a highly popular location. This has led to severe hardship and privation for residents of the district who have found themselves without a home.”*

**Karin Williams Bureau Executive Officer  
St Albans CAB**

### 10.3.5 Online survey – Homelessness Review

The development of our Homelessness Strategy enabled us to take a closer look at the activities and central role played by a range of stakeholders and partners agencies operating in St Albans. We devised an online survey which captured baseline information about a variety of services as well as the views and perspective of review respondents.

The information gained from the Homelessness Review will be used to shape and inform our Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2013 as well as update/refresh our records relating to key service providers.

**We asked respondents to provide a broad description of their services using the following categories:**

Helps to prevent homelessness	4
Helps client to access accommodation	5
Provides support in relation to employment and training	5
None of the above	2

**We asked respondents what % of their overall activities were linked to preventing homelessness**

Less than 5 %	0
5-10 %	6
10-20 %	1
20-50 %	2
50-100 %	5

2 respondents did not reply to this question

**We asked respondents whether they would be interested in being a part of our Homelessness Forum once developed.**

Yes	14
Not sure	2

**We asked respondents whether they would be interested in attending our future open mornings which aim to provide information about the service we provide coupled with homelessness prevention and housing options including CBL.**

Yes	13
Not sure	3

### **Online Survey – Supported Housing Providers [SHP’s]**

St Albans benefits from having a range of supported housing provision catering to a broad spectrum of SP client types/groups. We value the role of supported housing providers and wanted to gain a better insight into some of the issues affecting these services. We also felt that it was important to engage with supported housing providers with a view to finding new ways of working as well as partnership opportunities.

**We wanted to see if SHP would benefit from participating in a cross shadowing exercise which would help staff to gain a better insight of supported housing and housing options respectively.**

Yes	6
No	1
Not sure	4

**We wanted to see if SHP's were part of /interested in a benchmarking or peer review club?**

Yes	5
No	5
No answer	1

The above question provides us with scope to explore, in conjunction with stakeholders and SP team, the development of a benchmarking club for SHP's operating in St Albans

**We wanted to see how many SHP's provided referral agencies with written progress reports relating to clients post placement?**

Yes	6
No	5

We would be keen to see all SHP' provide written progress reports to referral agencies – this is something that we will explore in conjunction with stakeholders and SP team.

**We wanted to see whether SHP's receive significant percentages of referrals from all referring agencies that are inappropriate or do not meet referral criteria.**

Up to 10%	5
10-20%	3
30-50%	1
Criteria always met	1
No answer	1

The above question has helped us to get a better insight into the % of inappropriate referrals received from all referring agencies. There is therefore scope for us to explore ways in which this could be improved in conjunction with stakeholders and SP team.

**We wanted to see whether Supported Housing Providers felt that any of their existing clients would have benefited from planned move-on before now?**

Percentage of existing clients that would have benefited from planned move on?

Up to 10%	1
10-20%	2
30-50%	1
No problem with move on	6
No answer	1

**We wanted to see whether SHP’s would benefit from attending a special away day with Housing Options staff to look at service improvements, prevention and options including rent deposit scheme and joint working.**

Yes	9
No	2

**We wanted to see whether SHP’s would benefit from a centralised system which helped to track clients as well as provide a global picture of local vacancies [ 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage accommodation]**

Yes	8
No	2
Not sure	1

This is an interesting area that we would like to explore with stakeholders and SP team taking into account DPA dictates and confidentiality.

**We wanted to see whether SHP automatically contacted our offices where they intended to evict a supported housing client/resident?**

Yes	3
No	4
No answer	4

This is an important question as it shows us that there is scope for us to work more closely with SHP’s where evictions are pending

**SHP’s comments on how joint working could be improved across all agencies?**

- “More meetings to discuss referrals”*
- “Better monitoring”*
- “Continue with and improve Joint Housing Panel”*
- “More/better info on resettlement”*
- “Work more closely with Supporting People Team”*

### **10.3.6 Consultation event – Draft Homelessness Strategy 2008-13**

In June 2008 we arranged a consultation event to allow stakeholders and staff an opportunity to comment on our action plan for 2008-13. The event was held at our Civic centre and attracted a cross section of delegates. Delegates were given a virtual tour of our strategic document and its highlights. A series of workshops were held to look at our key priorities and action plan composites for 2008-13.

.At the end of the consultation event delegates were asked to complete an \*evaluation form – the findings of which are detailed below:

38 delegates attended the event and we received 20 completed evaluation forms

1. **Did our Homelessness Strategy Consultation event provide you with a good overall picture of our Homelessness Strategy 2008-13?**

Yes	16
No	0
Partially	4
Not sure	0

2. **Today you attended a workshop to look at elements of our action plan. How would you rate our planned actions for 2008-13?**

Poor	0
Good	12
Very good	7
Excellent	1

Consultation attendance details can be found in the appendix section below

#### **Evaluation form - Additional comments from delegates**

*“Need more info on the outcome of workshop”*

*“Homelessness Forum will/should be the driving force behind pushing the strategy forward”*

*“Looking forward to being a part of delivering this action plan”*

*“Part V11 duties and how homelessness process can be curtailed by offer of private rented accommodation. This pleases the CLG and need not be seen as failure to prevent homelessness and fluid use of TA”*

*“Holistic working amongst groups involved is good. Holistic approach to prevention and cure of homelessness is the way forward, a vast task but worth starting”*

*“Good opportunity, moving forward in the right direction”*

*“Encouraged positive thinking!”*

### 10.3.7 Client survey – Homelessness

In April 2008 we produced and distributed a survey to all tenants and leaseholders to gain their views and perspective about homelessness service provision. We also completed random client surveys at our Civic Centre in order to get a very broad and spectrum of respondents [ service users and non service users]. We received a total of 203 responses

#### **We wanted to see where people would go for help if there were affected by homelessness?:**

*“I went to the Housing department when I was being evicted, they listened and provided support throughout the long process.”*

Family	6%
St Albans Council	54%
CAB	1%
Shelter	10%
Open Door	8%
Social Worker	12%
Centre 33	1%
Ridgeview	1%
Women’s Aid	1%
GP	2%
The Library	1%

The above question has helped us to gain a better insight into referral routes. We will use this information to identify marketing , referral and signposting avenues as well as joint working and training exercises.

*“St Albans Council helped the most, CAB for legal advice and the Shelter website.”*

#### **We wanted to see what % of respondents had been homeless in the past?**

% Homeless in the past	% not homeless in past
11	89

**We wanted to see what % of respondents had friends or relatives who had been homeless in the past?**

% with friends or relatives who had been homeless in the past	% of friends or relatives not homeless in past
33	67

We recognise that many homeless people get assistance and support from family and friends in the first instance. The above question has helped us to gain a better insight into the role of friends and family and how this could be better harnessed through marketing, web entry, referrals and signposting.

**We wanted to see which of the following things respondents would benefit from if they were at risk of homelessness?**

Help with managing money	13%
Financial assistance to rent privately	14%
Help with claiming benefits	17%
Mediation	6%
Counselling and Support	12%
Information and Advice at an early stage	24%
Legal Advice	14%

We recognise the importance of providing advice and assistance at an early stage and will continue to develop this area of our service taking into account both value for money and quality

**We asked respondents to identify the areas that we should prioritise in our Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2013?**

Improve our levels of Customer Care	13%
Improve services for Rough Sleepers	19%
Improve services for 16-17 year olds	17%
Improve services for single parents	10%
Improve services for vulnerable clients ie mental health, elderly, special needs	34%
Provide better access to private rented sector accommodation	12%

We value the feedback we received for the above respondents. Throughout the lifetime of our strategy we aim to prioritise consultation with a view to ensuring that we gain the views of a range of stakeholders. Examples of specific comments from respondents surveyed are set out overleaf.

*“More 2 bedroom housing for smaller size families”*

*“More advice when in temporary accommodation”*

*“Help people more-get out of the office more to feel and share the problems of those in housing need.”*

*“Target people in schools, support families who are breaking up, offer longer time periods for the young to resolve issues, including mediation.”*

*“Help low income earners to stay in the area.”*

*“Help avoid families breaking up.”*

*“Give priority to local people-more housing points per year of residence in the District.”*

*“People should be aware of the options available to them.”*

*“Need to improve availability of rented housing-decent secure housing for families, single parent or otherwise, has to be a priority.”*

*“Council should make tenants with larger houses that are under-occupied move to smaller homes.”*

*“ Nowhere near enough counselling and support, especially for young persons.”*

#### 10.4 Homelessness Strategy Step 4:

Review previous action plan and measure progress against targets

#### Action plan 2003-2008 – Meeting our targets

**Since the publication of our previous Homelessness Strategy we are pleased to report that we have successfully implemented a number of key actions...**

Our Homelessness Strategy 2003-8 included a detailed action plan which set out our priorities for the term of the Strategy. The following table provides a review of our progress against target.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
New advice and assessment requirement	Added resource fifth Housing Adviser	April 2003	Completed (now 4½ Housing Advisers)
Legal advice to prevent court action for Council, Housing Associations and private tenants with awareness training for landlords	Plan how to set up surgery here with Service Level Agreements between the Council, Shelter, CAB's and Legal departments	November 2003	Bid unsuccessful
New pamphlets and handbook to be distributed at access points, with special attention to black and minority ethnic groups and those with visual disabilities	Collect and collate material. Translate and tape Language Line posters to be distributed with material	September 2003	Carried out and still ongoing

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Look at ways of reaching those areas identified in the housing needs survey as needing special help	Discuss tenants meeting with TPO, CAB's and Shelter	April 2004	See action plan 2008-13
Support for drug and alcohol dependents	Set up property based management scheme with Carr Gomm for specialist support	August 2002	No longer working with Carr Gomm  Priority within the HCC Supporting People Strategy for 2008/09.
Support for drug and alcohol dependents at Ridgeview	High town Praetorian/St Albans and District Churches Housing Associations/Social Services floating support scheme	September 2003	Work done through Edinburgh House now (CMHT)
Support for existing tenants	Tenancy Support Service	Ongoing	Hightown Praetorian and Churches HA funded to work with 25 tenants
Support for new vulnerable homeless applicants	Resettlement team High town Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	Ongoing	Ongoing - Hightown Praetorian and Churches HA working with 16-18 years olds
Provide support to all vulnerable groups	Investigate provision of benefit/debt surgery	2004	Money Advice Unit of CAB have advice sessions in SADC every Thursday

NEED	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Homeless 16/17 year olds	<p>Crash Pad, Mediation service and advocacy provided by Herts Young Homeless Group</p> <p>More intensive mediation and advocacy - with Herts Young Homeless Group,SS, CAB, Youth Talk, Beacon Youth Trust, YWCA</p>	May 2003/ December 2003	<p>Work completed and ongoing/ No longer working with Youth Talk, Beacon Youth Trust, YWCA</p> <p>Homeless 16/17 year olds-Young Persons Accommodation Project set up by HCC SP team in 2006 with all District Councils in Hertfordshire and relevant partners. New service model for accommodation and support services to be implemented by June 2008</p> <p>Young Person's Floating Support Scheme has been tendered for Herts and implemented. There are services covering advice, homelessness prevention and mediation. There is also a target to increase an additional 50% capacity in crashpad refuge/crisis provision for 16/17 year olds. Discussions are underway to develop an online vacancy system to all hostel accommodation which could be used as emergency placements for 16-21 year olds.</p>
Education on Homelessness and related issues for young people	Workshops at Oaklands, Youth Clubs and Schools providing information packs/ Police Communities Against Drugs		Provided as part of Young Persons Accommodation project

NEED	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Support for teenage mothers	8 units of supported housing managed by Aldwyck	In place	completed
Help those leaving hospital with housing needs (bed blocking)	Work with CAB and hospitals to raise awareness of time needed for provision	April 2004	Hospital visits carried out as required by Lettings team
Regular reviews to identify support needs of all groups	To work within the supporting people programme to identify funding	Continuous review	In progress and incorporated within service reviews carried out by SP team
Review the needs of rough sleepers	Undertake a rough sleepers count	June 2005	Completed
Domestic Violence monitoring	<p>Increase monitoring of the client group at St Albans Refuge and direct homeless approaches.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the particular difficulties faced by Asian women</p>	Continuous programme	<p>Ongoing through Domestic Violence forum</p> <p>Special Advisory Officer liaises with Anti-Social Behaviour team</p> <p>New proforma introduced by Housing Options Team in 2007 captures BV255 data for Comm. Safety Team</p>
Key worker accommodation	Naps bury-Target this group if choice scheme is approved for shared ownership and affordable rented	Part Shared Ownership of scheme ready December 2003	Completed

NEED	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Bring information to hidden households with special attention to black and minority ethnic groups and those with visual disabilities	Pamphlets, handbooks, the council website. Identify information points. Make sure agencies have copies with translations and tapes. Language Line posters ready for distribution with material	September 2003	Ongoing
More efficient use of disabled accommodation	Implement recommendations from Disabled Adaptations Working Party	March 2004	Completed
<p>More precisely defined homelessness profile</p> <p>Alleviate the pressure on temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Departmental meetings to define precise need</p> <p>Increase leased properties available for temporary accommodation</p> <p>Move families more quickly through temporary accommodation by implementing new allocations policy</p> <p>Look at practicalities of converting existing sheltered housing</p>	<p>April 2004</p> <p>March 2004</p> <p>September 2003</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Options approach introduced</p> <p>Work done, now reducing number to reflect reduced demand</p> <p>Rewriting allocation policy with Choice Based Lettings in mind</p> <p>Consultation in progress</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Upgrade/improve existing temporary accommodation	To replace 10 mobile homes at the Hedges	March 2004	Completed
	To identify further capital/maintenance improvements required to the existing temporary accommodation stock arising from the Stock Condition Survey	March 2004	Completed
To carry out improvements to Ridgeview	To convert Block A to provide 31 self contained units	September 2004	Reprovision of Ridgeview see Action Plan 2008-2011
To review services at Ridgeview in accordance with the Supporting People Programme	Completion of the Service Review	December 2004	New contract in 2006 incorporating support elements
More effective use of retirement housing	*see the following need requirements	March 2005	Adoption of quality of life strategy for older people by Cabinet in July 2006
Conversion to bigger, more desirable units for retired people	Analysis of retirement housing	March 2005	Adoption of quality of life strategy for older people by Cabinet in July 2006
Conversion to high support accommodation for the frail elderly	Analysis of retirement housing	March 2005	Adoption of quality of life strategy for older people by Cabinet in July 2006

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Further temporary accommodation for homeless families	Analysis of retirement housing	March 2005	Part of temporary accommodation strategy
Further supported accommodation for the young homeless	Analysis of retirement housing	March 2005	High Oaks project for young homeless completed
Support for black and minority ethnic, retired and frail elderly examined	Analysis of retirement housing and other material	March 2005	Adoption of quality of life strategy for older people by Cabinet in July 2006
Further provision of housing units for young people	Foyer Analysis and costing by external consultant  Look at practicalities of converting existing sheltered housing units	Ongoing	High Oaks project for young homeless completed
Examination of the various choice based lettings schemes	Working party to be set up	2006	Choice Based Lettings scheduled to start in Spring 2009

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Increase supply of accommodation by use of private sector rented property	Rent deposit scheme	Analysis through 2003/04	Introduction of Rent Deposit Scheme 2006
	Discussion of management service	Ongoing	
	Consideration of creating Landlords Forum	Ongoing discussion with other organisations and Environment Department	Discussions held
	Consideration of grants and interest free loans	Ongoing discussions with Environment Department	Grants available from Environment and Health to repair empty properties-no interested parties
	Look at various methods of lease/management	Ongoing discussions with benefits, insurance and the Small Landlords Association	Discussions held
	Look at ways of encouraging those seeking social housing to accept privately rented property		Housing Options Interviews

OBJECTIVE	ACTION REQUIRED	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS
Increase supply of affordable housing	<p>To negotiate 35% on qualifying sites</p> <p>To complete Supplementary Planning Guidance</p> <p>To complete an Affordable Housing strategy</p> <p>To complete Garage Site Strategy</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>October 2003</p> <p>July 2003</p> <p>July 2006</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
Regular training for reception staff and housing advisers	Continuous appraisal	Annual	Completed annually
Introduce appointment system for Housing Advisers	Consult staff and implement rota system	2004	Completed

## 10.5 Homelessness Strategy Step 5:

- Identify priorities and set core objectives for 2008-2013
- Action planning for objectives

Our homelessness review provided us with a clearer insight into homelessness service delivery and provision within the locality. The review also gave us an opportunity to map trends and consider future projections. As a result of the review we were able to identify some overarching priorities and core objectives, thereby providing us with a strategic focus covering the next 5 years.

We have developed a SMART action plan which we believe encapsulates our strategic needs and visioning as well as offering value for money.

### 10.5.1 Priority and core objective 1

**Improve the customer experience by focusing on holistic service provision and delivery taking into account the socio-economic needs of service users**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Plan and Supporting People Strategy Value added element of Housing Options Service that contributes to the physical and emotional wellbeing of service users

Value added element of Housing Options Service that ensure economic inclusion and increased levels of financial awareness

In line with Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry

Temporary Accommodation re-provisioning and review discussed at Executive Cabinet level in October 2007

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
<p>In order enhance practical knowledge base of TA residents, Develop financial literacy/awareness workshops for TA residents in collaboration with St Albans Money Advice Service</p>	<p>Produce draft project plan in conjunction with St Albans Money Advice Service</p> <p>Benchmarking exercise completed and documented</p> <p>In conjunction with CAB Money Advice TA client survey relating to debt and homelessness completed for all TA clients to gauge interest</p> <p>Workshop Lesson plan agreed</p> <p>Roll out timetable agreed</p>	2008	Housing Options Team Leader, Money Advice CAB	£5000.00
<p>Explore ways in which homeless clients can access primary health care which meets their specific needs</p>	<p>Identify any key issues/concerns for exploration with PCT ie access to GP, s ,sexual health services, dentists, counselling/specialist services. Written details produced along with way forward options</p> <p>Consultation with key stakeholders [ including local GPs] completed and standard</p> <p>Devise client survey focusing on primary health care</p> <p>Benchmarking exercise completed and documented</p>	2010	<p>Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>Specialist Homeless Nurse [PCT]</p>	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Explore ways in which we can enhance our service delivery and provision within existing resources	<p>Business Process assessment completed in relation to opportunities to refer and signpost to a range of secondary support services in and outside of St Albans</p> <p>Improvements made to the quality of existing temporary hostel accommodation and Self contained units completed at Worley Road and Sandpit Lane</p> <p>TA Re-provisioning action plan drawn up</p> <p>“Smart Working” model used to devise new business model for Housing Options Service</p>	<p>2008</p> <p>2009</p> <p>2008</p>	Strategy and Enabling Manager	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
<p>Develop Temporary Accommodation welcome pack which includes emergency pack for TA clients</p>	<p>Draft contents produced for consultation with service users to include details of local services ie GP's, mother and toddler groups , Children's Centres, support services, transport links etc, Benchmark exercise completed</p> <p>Contents of emergency pack agreed i.e. toothpaste, nappies, canned food etc</p> <p>Emergency pack distribution policy drafted</p>	<p>2008</p>	<p>Emergency Housing Officer</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leader and</p> <p>David Bex – Emmaus Community</p>	<p>NB: Community sector partner identified during Homelessness Strategy Consultation event held 24<sup>th</sup> June 2008 – David Bex :Emmaus Community St Albans has agreed to be our delivery partner</p> <p>Total Cost of emergency packs to be incurred by Emmaus Community – St Albans</p>

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Develop tenancy skills workshops for new and potential tenants  [Housing Register used as a marketing tool]	Discussions held and documented with key stakeholders potential collaborators  Benchmarking exercise completed  Workshop outline agreed  Marketing plan produced and agreed	2008	Area Team Leader	NB - During Homelessness Strategy Consultation event held on 24 <sup>th</sup> June 2008 – Zoë Hunt from Kent House has agreed to work with us to develop and delivery tenancy skills workshops
Devise and publicise Housing Options holistic Customer Care standards	Core Standards agreed further to consultation/involvement of Housing Options Staff and key stakeholders  Benchmarking exercise completed	2008	Housing Options Team Leader	
In conjunction with SP team identify ways in which move-on can be improved for supported housing residents	Move-on initiatives identified through consultation with Supported Housing Providers  Draft Move-on action plan produced	2009	SP team Programme Delivery Group	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation in line with NI158	<p>Monthly monitoring of households in temporary accommodation in place ,coupled with proactive targeting of TA households in relation to move on options including private rented sector</p> <p>CLG TA reduction target progress report presented to Head of Housing on a monthly basis</p>	2010	Housing Options Team Leader	
Progress re-provisioning of Ridgeview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessment of clients needs completed</li> <li>2. Re-provisioning plan agreed</li> <li>3. Communication and consultation plan produced</li> <li>4. Re-provision completed</li> </ol>	2012	Head of Housing	Funding needs to be identified

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Review homeless provision and ensure provision supports local homeless strategies and move on.	Monitoring of generic floating support contract in place  move on strategy adopted linked to LAA target N141	April 2010	Lead Officer - Supporting People Team - Programme Development Group/Strategy and Enabling Manager.	
<b>Supporting People Strategy - Action plan link</b>  Alcohol and DV Strategy. Developing services to support people fleeing domestic violence.	Project Plan presented to Commissioning Body,  Adoption of strategy	April 2009.	Supporting People Team/ Programme Development Group	
<b>Supporting People Strategy – Action plan link</b>  Offenders-develop services to meet the needs of offenders and people at risk of offending.	Map existing provision, identify need in detail in each district, identify appropriate funding, remodel existing services and tender services as appropriate	2009	Supporting People Team/ Programme Development Group/ Crime and Drugs Strategy Unit.	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
<p><b>Supporting People Strategy - Action plan link</b></p> <p>Develop services in order to meet the needs of people with mental health problems.. Lead Officer -</p>	<p>Map existing provision, identify need in detail in each district</p> <p>Remodel existing services/tender services as appropriate.</p>	<p>October 2009</p>	<p>Supporting People Joint Commissioning Team.</p>	

10.5.2 **Priority and core objective 2**  
**Increase partnership working across the statutory and non statutory sectors of St Albans**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Plan, in line with Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry

Partnership working makes better use of existing resources in the homelessness sector, primarily for the benefit of local people and local agencies. Developing effective strategic and operational partnerships ensures joined up, holistic solutions are developed for the whole range of needs that homeless people face and secures effective outcomes according to individual needs.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b> Beyond time and staff
Using results of online stakeholder survey identify potential partnership avenues	Analyse stakeholder survey results Review existing partnerships and their effectiveness Meeting held with key stakeholders to explore/scope new partnership avenues in particular looking at ways in which we can encourage and support capacity building for non mainstream organisations operating in St Albans Appears as Agenda Item for Homelessness Forum	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Via Homelessness Forum explore new partnership avenues and the strengthening of existing partnerships	Discussion strand of Homelessness Forum – minuted with action points as necessary	2009	SADC Chair of Homelessness Forum	
To implement the actions arising from the Places for Change Programme to improve the accommodation at Open Door in partnership with Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	<p>Project Team established.</p> <p>Plans for improvements agreed.</p> <p>Project Plan and Milestones developed.</p> <p>Temporary relocation of Open Door finalised.</p> <p>Improvement work completed. Open Door re-opened.</p>	2011	Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association	£525,000 grant Open Door

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Devise and deliver Away day for Supported Housing Providers and Housing Options staff focusing on improving cross sector communication ,service improvements and homelessness prevention and options	List of potential delegates drawn up Consultation with Supported Housing Providers held Lesson plan devised Facilitator identified Venue and date agreed	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	£3,000
Explore and scope the development of Benchmarking club for Supported Housing Providers operating in St Albans	Terms of reference drawn up in consultation with stakeholders and Supporting People Team Discussed at Homelessness Forum	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator Supporting People Team	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
<p>Explore opportunities for co-location exercises with other service providers within St Albans to ensure clients can have better access to services provided by St Albans Council and other providers under one roof.</p>	<p>Co-Location Draft terms of reference drawn up</p> <p>List of potential co-locators drawn up</p> <p>Consultation meeting held</p> <p>Co-Locations agreed along with effective start date</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>Housing Options Co-ordinator</p>	
<p>Along with SP team - Explore development of Options surgeries for Supported Housing residents in St Albans</p>	<p>Terms of reference drawn up</p> <p>Consultation with Supported Housing Providers [SHP] completed and documented</p> <p>SHP Surgery - Options toolkit agreed</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>Housing Options Co-coordinator</p> <p>Supporting People Team</p>	

10.5.3 **Priority and core objective 3**

**Increase levels of stakeholder involvement/consultation with particular focus on marginalised or non mainstream communities**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Plan, Value added element of Housing Options Service that contributes to social inclusion In line with Key Lines of Enquiry

The future success of our service is underpinned by our ability to involve and engage a range of stakeholders. By obtaining the views and perspective of stakeholders we are better able to configure our services to meet a range of needs.

<b>OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff</b>
Develop a stakeholder newsletter to target and engage with hard to reach or non mainstream organisations operation in St.Albans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create editorial team which includes a representative from client group ie BME, women, Gypsy and travellers etc</li> <li>2. Benchmark with peers or regional champions</li> <li>3. Agree format and issue frequency</li> </ol> <p>In consultation - Agree mailing list : hardcopy and electronic</p>	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	

<b>OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>  <b>Beyond time and staff</b>
Use a variety of mechanisms to involve and engage with stakeholders (e.g. Face to face surveys, postal surveys, interviews, focus groups, use of text, use of websites, use of e-mails)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Benchmark with peers or regional champions</li> <li>2. Agree and produce communication matrix</li> <li>3. Produce communication plan which details mechanisms and target audiences coupled with timelines</li> <li>4. Update website to include a range of service related information coupled with feedback form and development of users forum</li> </ol>	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
Develop and deliver regular open days for service users and stakeholders which provide participants with overview of Housing Options service, Choice Based Lettings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using homelessness review online survey – gauge interest in open mornings</li> <li>2. Agree format for open days including agenda and speakers</li> <li>3. Agree frequency and duration</li> </ol>	2009	Housing Options Team Leader	



OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS  Beyond time and staff
In conjunction with Supporting People Team develop focus group for rough sleepers/single homeless which allows client group to influence forward planning process and delivery of holistic service provision	Terms of reference drawn up and agreed	2008	Performance Development Group SP	
Produce and publicise Equality statement for Housing Options Centre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. draft produced for consultation</li> <li>2. DRAFT Equality Statement agreed by Head of Housing</li> </ol>	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
Arrange CLG prevention and options master-class ensuring that key stakeholders are invited to attend	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact made with CLG specialist adviser [ facilitator]</li> <li>2. Date and venue agreed</li> <li>3. Guest list drawn up</li> </ol>	2008	Housing Options Team Leader	Venue costs as applicable , refreshments

10.5.4 **Priority and core objective 4**  
**Increase promotion and take-up of private rented sector housing options by increasing links with the private rented sector landlords in and around St Albans**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan, Sustainable Community Plan, Value added element of Housing Options Service that contributes to the wellbeing of service users.

Private Sector rentals are seen as a viable housing option for many households. The supply of social housing continues to be on the decline and therefore we need to take proactive steps to source alternative housing solutions in the longer term.

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS  Beyond time and staff
Identify ways in which we can work with supported housing providers to encourage take up of private rented housing options amongst supported housing clients	<p>Arrange and facilitate special away day for SHP staff across St Albans focusing on private sector housing options and the prevention of homelessness</p> <p>Way forward briefing report presented to Head of Housing and Homelessness Forum</p>	2009	<p>Rent Deposit Officer/ Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>Senior Housing Officer</p>	<p>Venue costs</p> <p>Refreshments</p> <p>Facilitator cost ( if external facilitator used)</p>

OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Look at ways in which we can expand our private and public sector rented options package to cover St Albans and surrounding areas	Arrange a landlord event which includes existing Rent Deposit Scheme landlords and potential landlords from St Albans and the surrounding area	2009	Rent deposit officer /Housing Options Team leader	Venue cost Refreshments Facilitator cost [ if external facilitator used]  Housing Corporation Funding
	Strategic Housing Market Assessment completed. Report on SHMA with recommendations to Cabinet.	2009	Senior Housing Officer	
	Deliver new affordable homes via partnerships with housing associations 107 units completed at City Station Site 64 units completed at Kwik Save 85 units completed at Oaklands	2010	Development Officer	
	Explore opportunities to maximise bids for affordable housing via Regional Market Engagement process. Quarterly review of pipeline schemes Bids agreed and submitted by RSL's.	2010	Development Officer	Housing Corporation Funding
	Landlord Accreditation benchmarking exercise completed , findings and way forward options documented and presented to Head of Housing	2008	Housing Options Co-ordinator	



10.5.5 **Priority and core objective 5**

**Increase client choice and transparency in relation to housing allocations by introducing Choice Based Lettings**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan, discussed and updated at Overview and Scrutiny in Jan 2008

The Government has set a target for the mainstreaming of Choice Based Lettings and further to a consortium bid we have successfully secured funds for the development of a choice based letting scheme for St Albans. The development of the scheme will not only put us on par with our regional peers it will also afford service users a more transparent allocation system.

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Update Allocation Scheme to ensure that it meets the need of CBL and the various client groups – redraft Allocation Scheme as necessary	Benchmark CBL based Allocation Scheme Produce 1 <sup>st</sup> Draft of Allocation Scheme Ensure policies and procedures are aligned to CBL Ensure staff receive training in relation to CBL	2009	Strategy and Enabling Manager	
Agree consultation process and local project plan for Choice Based Lettings rollout and Complete pilot exercise prior to full roll out	Draft project plan produced with milestones and timelines CBL service user/stakeholder Marketing plan produced and agreed at senior management level	2009	Strategy and Enabling Manager	

OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS  Beyond time and staff
Undertake a review of levels of under occupation in social housing	Extent of under occupation assessed and formally documented  Report to Cabinet on options for maximising existing stock.	2009	Strategy and Enabling manager	

10.5.6 **Priority and core objective 6**

**Improve and reconfigure our business model to take into account core business objectives 2008-13 and our commitment to excellent service provision and delivery**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan commitment to excellent service provision In line with Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry

We recognise that our existing business model does not fully support our business aims. To this end we will be looking at developing a business model which takes into account amongst other things – the increased emphasis on Options and Preventions as well as fieldwork and Choice Based lettings

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS  Beyond time and staff
Agree business model for housing options service 2008 which takes into account both local and corporate business objectives	Draft business model 2008 produced and outline budget set/in place  Staff consultation completed and documented	2008	Strategy and Enabling Manager	
Ensure that details of changes to Homelessness service delivery and provision are communicated to the full range of stakeholders	Website shows details of reconfigured service  Website shows details of Homelessness Strategy and action plan action plan  Homelessness Strategy action plan progress highlight report appears on website each year from 2009-13	July 2008    2009 2010 2011 2012 2013	Housing Options Co-ordinator    Strategy and Enabling Manager	

10.5.7 **Priority and core objective 7**  
**Preventing homelessness at the earliest possible stage**

Rationale

In line with supporting People Plan and Corporate Plan

We know that the prevention of homelessness is central to our activities. We have also seen the benefits of this approach and therefore will continue to progress this area with a view to improving existing processes and finding innovative new ways of working.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff</b>
Develop early intervention protocols with RSL and Supported Housing partners operating within the St Albans locality	Consultative meeting arrange with local RSL's Housing Corporation and CLG guidance reviewed and benchmarked Consultative meeting arrange with SP and local Supported housing Providers	2009	Housing Options Team Leader and Area Team Leader	

<b>OBJECTIVE/ DELIVERABLE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>  <b>Beyond time and staff</b>
<p>In conjunction with Supporting People Ensure that floating support and move on packages are accessible and available to clients across all sectors</p>	<p>SP Commissioning stages completed and documented</p> <p>Review of existing floating support referral processes undertaken and documented</p> <p>Service Level Agreements drafted for commissioned floating support providers</p> <p>Monitoring information documented in relation to the referral and move on arrangements from Martins Trust following the Supporting People review. Quarterly meetings with Martins Trust documented</p>	<p>2010</p>	<p>Housing Options Co-ordinator</p>	
<p>Implementation of Sanctuary Scheme for Domestic Violence</p>	<p>Explore joint funding with RSL's and Community Safety as appropriate</p> <p>Project Initiation stage completed and documented in consultation with key partners</p>	<p>2009</p>	<p>Housing Options Team Leader</p> <p>Community Safety Team</p>	<p>£500-700 per sanctuary</p>

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Ensure formalised links are in place with HYHG/Aldwyck Housing Association regarding mediation and crashpad services for young people.	Deliverables /outcomes formally monitored and documented at HYHG/Aldwyck Housing Association Steering group meetings.	2008	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
LAA1 target - young people who sustain their own tenancy for over six months	Monitoring of outcomes and deliverables relating to floating support documented and reviewed regularly	2008	Supporting People Team	
LAA1 target - to reduce the number of young people aged 16-25 who leave supporting people funded accommodation schemes in an unplanned way.	Formally monitor progress of young people in temporary accommodation and ensure that move on is accompanied with support.	2008	Supporting People Team	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
To review the effectiveness of Supporting People generic floating support service	Quarterly reviews on progress from Supporting People	2009	Supporting People Team	
Increase levels of home visits undertaken by Housing Options staff with a view to early intervention, signposting and promotion of housing options	Details of monthly performance indicators relating to home visits documented and part of performance reporting process	2009	Housing Options Team Leader	
Identify total number of households classified as overcrowded with a view to targeting client group in relation to options available ie Private Rented Sector , splitting households where appropriate to the needs and wishes of household.	<p>Detail of overcrowded households documented</p> <p>Details of under-occupied households documented</p> <p>Overcrowding initiatives plan drawn up and agreed at senior management level</p>	2009	Housing Options Team Leader	

10.5.8 **Priority and core objective 8**

**Provide and encourage holistic service provision i.e. links to employment and upskilling of clients**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Plan

It has long since been argued that homelessness is often one of a range of factors which have an adverse impact upon clients. Homelessness combined, a lack of skills, employment pathways and life skills places individuals and families at a disadvantage both socially and economically. The development of holistic services will go some way to improving the socio-economic prospects of service users.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATION S Beyond time and staff</b>
Identify new external and internal funding streams which will allow us to develop our service to take into account the holistic needs of clients ie employment and skills pathways [ options plus ]	<p>Complete and submit expression of interest form relating to CLG initiative focusing on holistic service delivery pilot – employment [ Trailblazers]</p> <p>Identify potential partner agencies and funding streams</p>	<p>2008</p> <p>2009</p>	Strategy and Enabling Manager	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Identify joint working opportunities with stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus, Learning and Skills Council, Oakland's College and similar training providers within St Albans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Service Co-location partners identified</li> <li>2. Existing joint working protocols reviewed and documented</li> <li>3. New joint working protocols in place</li> </ol>	2010	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
Ensure that sound referral and signposting mechanisms are in place to support a range of client needs	<p>Discussion strand of Homelessness Forum – minuted and action points created</p> <p>Benchmarking exercise completed and documented</p> <p>Review of existing signposting and referrals processes undertaken</p> <p>Staff consultation and briefing undertaken</p>	2009	Housing Options Team Leader	

10.5.9 **Priority and core objective 9**  
**Ensure our staff have core Skills which support our business activities and objectives**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Plan

Frontline staff are pivotally placed to drive through service improvements and new initiatives. Our commitment to investors in people is demonstrated through our learning and development packages for staff and managers. We believe that equipping our staff with a range of knowledge and skill-sets will enhance service delivery and provision as well as improve the customer experience

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Develop training and skills escalation plan for Housing Options staff	Draft plan in place and outline budget established	2009	Strategy and Enabling Manger	
Develop a cross sector induction and shadowing programme for Housing Options Staff	Consultation meeting held with key stakeholders such as supported housing providers, community sector agencies and advice services in St Albans	2009	Strategy and Enabling Manager	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Complete customer care core competency assessments for Housing Options Staff to ensure that all staff have a consistent approach to customer care	Assessment template drawn up and agreed  Internal or external assessor identified	2008	Housing Options Team Leader	

10.5.10 **Priority and core objective 10**

**Through the development of a Homelessness Forum Support and Encourage Innovation and creativity from our partners and other stakeholders**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan, Supporting People Strategy and Sustainable Community Plan

The government has placed increasing emphasis on identifying and tackling the causes of homelessness. In St Albans, there are a wide and varied range of statutory and non statutory stakeholders who can contribute to tackling and resolving these issues. We recognise the need to bring organisations together to contribute their expertise, experience and to foster a joined up approach to tackling homelessness and managing resources in an efficient manner.

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Develop Homelessness Forum for St Albans	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Benchmark with peers or regional champions</li> <li>2. Draw up terms of reference</li> <li>3. Compile potential list of participants</li> <li>4. Agree marketing plan and marketing material</li> <li>5. Create meeting schedule covering 12 months</li> </ol>	1 <sup>st</sup> Forum meeting to be held by Dec 2008	Housing Options Co-ordinator	

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b> Beyond time and staff
Identifying better ways of using shared resources and working across sectors to provide solutions for our homeless communities	Discussion strand for Homelessness Forum – minuted  Way forward report presented to Head of Housing	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	

10.5.11 **Priority and core objective 11**

**Introduce qualitative monitoring and core data capture including expanding diversity monitoring.**

Rationale

In line with Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Plan

We recognise that there is a need for us to look closely at the nature and depth of our monitoring processes to ensure legal compliance [equalities act dictates ]as well as ensure that we can plan and delivery our services in the medium to long term. Adopting a strategic approach to monitoring will help to inform the strategic planning process as well as supports the mainstreaming of equality and diversity and equality impact assessments [EIA]

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>MILESTONE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE : YEAR</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff</b>
Ensure that qualitative data is routinely held on client groups by ethnicity, gender, vulnerability , disability, employment status etc	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete IT system scoping exercise and reconfigure and benchmark as necessary</li> <li>2. Agree baseline data capture strands subject to consultation with relevant parties</li> </ol>	2010	Admin Performance Officer  Housing Options Co-ordinator	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Ensure that our policies and procedures are subject to Equality Impact assessments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Benchmark our policies against peers or regional champions</li> <li>2. Produce DRAFT Housing Options procedure/policy manual for staff</li> <li>3. Complete EIA's in relation to all policies and procedures and document findings</li> <li>4. Address any policy/procedural weaknesses and agree action points as necessary</li> </ol>	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
Encourage stakeholders [ via Homelessness Forum] to identify improvements to monitoring information relating to homelessness	<p>Discussion strand of homelessness forum minuted</p> <p>Analysis of homelessness review online survey relating to the monitoring of homelessness clients completed and documented</p> <p>Action plan developed and consultation with stakeholders completed</p>	2009	Housing Options Co-ordinator	

OBJECTIVE	MILESTONE	TARGET DATE : YEAR	LEAD OFFICER	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS Beyond time and staff
Standard monitoring proformas and data capture procedures in place within Housing Options Service and in routine use	Cyclical document review timetable agreed  Draft proformas produced and agreed at senior management level  Staff briefing completed in relation to monitoring arrangements	2013	Housing Options Co-ordinator	
Complete cyclical review of new work instructions relating to CBL and Housing Options procedures and update as necessary	Written details of 1 <sup>st</sup> review available	2013	Housing Options Team Leader	

**10.6 Homelessness Strategy Step 6:**  
Publish Strategy

To ensure scrutiny our Homelessness Strategy will be subject to executive level signoff/ratification. Our homelessness strategy will be published in July 2008 and links will be available via our website

**10.6.1 Monitoring and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy**

Our action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Homelessness Strategy Project Board which will transform into the Homelessness Forum post publication of our strategy. If you are interested in becoming a member of our Homelessness Forum please contact:

Linda Middleton: Strategy and Enabling Manager  
[Linda.Middleton@stalbens.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.Middleton@stalbens.gov.uk)

Our progress against actions will be reviewed and publicised on an annual basis, details of which will appear on our website.

We welcome feedback from our Specialist Adviser at Communities and Local Government and will take on board all constructive feedback

## **Acknowledgements:**

The following personnel and organisations have been instrumental in the successful production of our Homelessness Strategy for 2008-2013. Our warm **thanks** are extended to the following:

Marian Sklar – Specialist Nurse on Homelessness – West Herts PCT  
Manpreet Kanda – Planning Officer SACD  
Peter Graham – Chair Centre 33  
Kate Tansley – Homeless Health Initiative Co-coordinator – The Queens Nursing Institute  
Matthew Bradby – Marketing/Communication Manager – The Queens Nursing Institute  
Sheelagh Jones – Supported Housing Manager  
Norbert McCabe – Gypsy and Travellers Team  
Mike Petter – Supporting People – Herts CC  
Karin Williams – CABx St Albans  
Chris Roach – Head of Community Safety SACD  
Penny Williams – Chair SAH Domestic Violence Forum  
Francis Becque – Housing Options Team Leader SACD  
Victoria Brett – Lettings Officer SACD  
Alison Reeves – Housing Adviser  
David Reavill – Development Officer SACD  
Jenny Westaway – Crisis [Campaign Manager]  
Jenny Owen – Tenant Participation Officer SACD  
Rowena Lewis – SACD Housing  
Momotaz Rahim – SACD Housing

## **Feedback**

**We welcome any comments and suggestions relating to our Homelessness Strategy 2008-13**

If you have any comments or would like a hard copy of our Homelessness Strategy 2008-13 please contact:

Linda Middleton – Strategy and Enabling Manager  
[Linda.middleton@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.middleton@stalbans.gov.uk)

An online PDF version can be obtained via the following web link:

[www.stalbans.gov.uk/homelessness](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/homelessness)

**St Albans – becoming Hertfordshire’s Premier Community**

# APPENDICES

**Housing Development update – July 2008**

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
28 Abbots Avenue West, S/A	SADC	No	Contractors on site	2 shop units to be converted into 1x2bed self-contained flat	No	To be used for temporary accommodation, suitable for wheelchair user	Completed
Beaumont School, Hatfield Rd St Albans	Not known at this stage	Yes	Planning application submitted	35% of development of up to maximum of 78 units will be affordable - no further information as to size or tenure at this stage	Not known at this stage	Site is green belt land	No planning decision made to date.
Bowers Way, Harpenden	Not known at this stage	Yes	Planning permission granted	1 afford-able housing unit	No	No substantial details on file to date	No works commenced to date
Cash Incentive Scheme	N/a	N/a	Annual programme	Amount of grant depends on size of property vacated and length of tenure	N/a	2005/06 -£104,000 2006/07 -£75,000 2007 to July 08 -£15,000	Continuous
Castle Project	Ability HA	No	Land in process of being transferred to HA	9 units- 7x1-bed flats and 2x2-bed flats	Grant will be required	March Cabinet approved transfer of land to Ability Housing Association	No works commenced to date

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
City Station site, S/A	HPCHA	Yes	Developer on site	107 flats- 67xrented 40xshared ownership	SADC funded £2.694m plus NAHP grant	Building works have commenced	June 2009
Garage site review	N/a	N/a	Review	Working on identifying sites for development and improvement	N/a	SADC are identifying garage sites as part of the ongoing review into garage use for development potential for affordable housing	Annual programme
Harperbury Hospital	Aldwyck	No	No recent planning application	N/a	Housing Corporation Grant application from Housing Association likely	Confirmed with Development Control no discussion as of November 2007. Will be seeking 35% affordable housing on any development	N/a
Hertfordshire House, Bricket Road, S/A	None at this stage	None at this stage	No planning application submitted	Not identified at this stage	Unknown	Initial discussions being held with developer, will seek 35% affordable housing of any development	N/a

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
HOLD in Herts (Home Ownership for people with long term disabilities)	HPCHA	N/a	Existing properties purchased on the open market-none at present	Shared ownership units	Herts CC Adult Care Services confirmed revenue funding in place-subject to Housing Corporation bid	The HOLD scheme aims to improve housing choice for those with learning disabilities	2008 -11
King Harry Lane, S/A	None at this stage	Yes	Appeal allowed	Not identified at this stage	Grant application likely	Consideration was being given to development of retirement community	N/a
Kwik Save site, Frogmore	HPCHA	Yes	Building underway	78 units- 28 x general needs rented 40 x shared ownership 10 x intermediate rent comprising range of accommodation from 1-bed to 4-bed.	Grant approved. SADC funded £390,000 subsidy payments towards purchase of additional 14 properties for affordable housing.	Bellway Homes are the developer	Shared Ownership and key worker units due for completion by September 2008. General Needs Rented units due for completion by January 2009.

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
Oaklands College, Hatfield Road, S/A	HPCHA	Yes	Building underway	95 units- 39x2-bed flats 56x1-bed flats, mixture of rented and low cost home ownership	Grant applied for	Nicholas King is the developer . 84 units included within initial scheme. 11 units excluded from bid	March 2009- 6 x homebuy April 2009 - 6 x homebuy November 2009 - 14 x rent July 2010 - 16 x rent October 2010 21 x homebuy November 2010 - 21 x homebuy
Oaklands College, Highfield Lane, S/A	None at this stage	Yes	Planning Permission granted	13 units - 7 x 2 bed and 6 x 3 bed houses - no information as to the tenure split	Not known at this stage		
3 Sandpit Lane, S/A	SADC	No	Planning permission granted	2 units- 2x1-bedroom self- contained flats	SADC funded	Conversion of 3- bedroom house to 2x1-bed flats to be used as temporary accommodation	Specification being prepared for tenders to be sent out

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
Street Purchase Scheme	North Herts Homes	No	N/a	10 units- mixture of 2/3 bed flats and houses	Yes-Budget in 2007/08 of £525k per annum	7 out of 10 properties purchased to date from 2007/08 resources.	Annual programme
1-8 St Pauls Place, Hatfield Road, S/A	Aldwyck	No	Land now in ownership of HA	8 units- 8x1-bedroom flats for rent, designated for elderly persons	No – but grant applied for	Building work now commenced	March 2009
West Hall, Napsbury, London Colney	North Herts Homes	Yes	Planning permission granted	13 units-mix of 1 and 2-bed flats available for shared ownership	None applied for	Building work has not commenced	December 2008

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
Westfield Road Allotments, Harpenden	None at this stage	No	Preliminary stage, planning application made in 2005 for erection of 42 dwellings refused	Not identified at this stage	Not known	Discussions still ongoing re number of dwellings, access road, and size of site	N/a
Wheathampstead Education Centre, Butterfield Road, Wheathampstead	Aldwyck	Yes	Outline planning permission granted	27 units	Grant applied for	Building work has not commenced	N/a
Wheathampstead Garage sites- Allen Close, Beech Crescent, Housden Close	Affinity Sutton	No	Need to apply for planning permission	9 units-1x2-bed 4 person bungalow, 2x3-bed 5 person houses, 3x2-bed 3 persons houses, 3x2-bed 4 person houses (2 units general needs rented/7 shared ownership)	No	Capital receipt of £229,000	No timetable in place although initial discussions have been had with HA

<b>SITE</b>	<b>RSL/ SADC</b>	<b>SEC 106</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Number/ tenure/ size</b>	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Estimated/ Actual completion date</b>
19 Worley Road, S/A	SADC	No	Planning permission granted	2 units- 2x2-bed self- contained flats	SADC funded	Conversion of 3 storey town house currently used as a homeless hostel with shared facilities into 2x2- bed flats to be used for temporary accommodation	Sure Cast appointed building contractors - works to commence in August 2008.

**Appendix 2**  
**Supported Housing provisioning excluding Older People**

Alcohol	8
Drugs	1
Homeless Families	100
Learning Disabilities	86
Mental Health	91
Single Homeless	92
Teenage Parents	8
Young People	5

**Key**

FE	Frail Elderly
HF	Homeless Families with Support Needs
OF	Offenders or People at risk of Offending
OPMH	Older People with Mental Health Problems / Dementia
PD	People with a Physical or Sensory Disability
AL	People with Alcohol Problems
DR	People with Drug Problems
LD	People with Learning Disabilities
MH	People with Mental Health Problems
SH	Single Homeless with Support Needs
TP	Teenage Parents
TR	Traveller
DV	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence
YPR	Young People at Risk
YPC	Young People Leaving Care

<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Service Name</b>	<b>CG1</b>	<b>CG2</b>	<b>Units</b>
Aldwyck Housing Association Ltd	St Albans Supported Housing	MH	MH	11
Bienvenue	Springfield & Foxcroft	MH	MH	7
Camphill Village Trust (St Albans)	Supported Housing	MH	MH	17
Hertfordshire County Council	St Albans Supported Living	LD	LD	4
Hertfordshire County Council	Beaconsfield Road	LD	LD	12
Hertfordshire County Council ‘	Cedarwood Drive, Hatfield	LD	LD	10
Hertfordshire County Council	Hixberry Lane	LD	LD	13
St Albans Martin Trust	Martin House	SH	SN	26
Milligan House Society Limited	Milligan House Society	SH	SH	9
Hightown Praetorian & Churches Housing Association	312 Hatfield Road	MH	MH	4
Cherry Tree Housing Association	Special Needs Housing (St Albans)	MH	MH	23
Emmaus St Albans	Emmaus St Albans	SH	SH	25
Mencap	Reed Close	LD	LD	3
Harpenden Men Cap Society	Stairways Residential	LD	LD	9
St Albans District Council	Temporary Accommodation	HF	HF	100
Aldwyck Housing Association Ltd	Russett Drive	LD	LD	7
Cherry Tree Housing Association	Supported Living Schemes	LD	LD	9
Harpenden Mencap Society	Stairways Floating Support	LD	LD	2
Druglink Ltd	Stornaway	DR	DR	1
Adepta	Ridgemont House	LD	LD	6
Adepta	Nicholas House	LD	LD	6
Aldwyck Housing Association Ltd	St Albans Floating Support	MH	MH	20
Aldwyck Housing Charity Ltd	St Albans Young Parents	TP	TP	0
Herts Young Homeless Group	Floating Support - St Albans	YPR	YPR	5
Anchor Trust	St Albans	OP	OP	60
Herts Young Homeless Group	St Albans & Dacorum Floating	SH	SH	2
Herts Young Homeless Group	St Albans & Dacorum Additional	SH	SN	5
Robinia Care Group Ltd	St Albans Supported Living	LD	LD	4
Cherry Tree Housing Association	Lectern Lane	LD	LD	1
Hightown Praetorian & Churches Housing Association	Tenancy Support (St Albans)	SH	SH	25

## **Appendix 3**

### **Meet the Homelessness Strategy Project Board**

#### **Roseann Ayton – Chair**

Specialist in Homelessness and Housing Needs including strategic and logistical management, service reviewing, quality assurance frameworks, policy and procedural development, Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry, communications and stakeholder consultation

#### **Linda Middleton**

Strategy and Enabling Manager - St Albans City and District Council Specialist - Housing Development and Supply, overall strategic management of Housing Options Service

#### **David Miller** - Senior Adviser, Shelter Hertfordshire

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Supervision and support of Shelter Specialist Housing Advisers Delivering specialist level advice directly to clients on a range of housing issues including homelessness, the prevention agenda, allocations, security of tenure, court proceedings, disrepair, social services cases and anti social behaviour.

#### **Francis Becque** - Interim Housing Options Team Leader, St Albans and City District Council

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Homelessness and prevention and options, Team enabling and development , Intensive Housing Management and Resident Involvement & capacity building, Liaison with CLG

#### **Marion Sklar** - Specialist Nurse for the Homeless, West Herts PCT

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Health related subjects. Qualified Nurse, Midwife and Health Visitor. Certificate in Drug Misuse

#### **Mike Petter** - Strategy and Development Officer, Supporting People, Hertfordshire County Council

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Supported Housing: homeless hostels, floating support and housing-related support for a range of client groups (Offenders, Mental Health, Substance Misuse)

**Sheelagh Jones** - Care and Supported Housing Manager, Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:

I have been in my current post for 2.5 years and worked for Hightown for 10.5 years in various supported housing roles. I am currently the Homelessness Champion for the Association and have in-depth knowledge of our own homelessness services and those provided by other organisations within the district. The St Albans services I am currently responsible for include Open Door Night shelter and day service, Kent House and the Resettlement Team who provide tenancy support to individuals in their own homes. In other areas across Hertfordshire I am responsible for Young People's services, Women's refuge's and some mental health services. I have a broad awareness of funding issues including all aspects of the Supporting People agenda. Tackling homelessness remains high on the Associations agenda and we are committed to supporting Local Authorities by working in partnership with them to prevent and tackle homelessness.

**Norbert McCabe** - Head of Gypsy Section, Hertfordshire County Council

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Gypsies and accommodation

**Karin Williams** – Executive Officer, St Albans District Citizens Advice Bureau

Areas of specialist knowledge / interest or expertise:  
Legal advice including homelessness

## **Appendix 4**

### **List of respondents – Homelessness Review**

Customer Service Centre

Jo Savage Director of Housing and Support Services

Christine Roach Head of Community Safety

Karin Williams Bureau Executive Officer

Sara Jackson Manager

Lorraine Imber, Children's Centre Manager

Paul Smith Director of Research and Development

Laura Cronshaw Chief Executive

Mick Tomazou, Housing Support Officer

Sue Wheatley Chief Inspector Police

Peter Graham Chairman, Centre 33

David Miller, Senior Adviser, Shelter  
Hertfordshire

Sheelagh Jones - Supported Housing Manager

Mike Petter Strategy and Development Officer

PCSO Caroline Davies

**Appendix 5**  
**List of respondents – Supported Housing Providers**

Emmaus St Albans  
Housing Support Service- Hightown Praetorian &  
Churches HA  
SPH Housing  
St. Albans Martin Trust  
Aldwyck Housing Association  
Aldwyck Housing Charity Ltd  
Charity L A Dorant for Almshouses  
HPCHA - Kent House  
Bienvenue Supported Housing Services  
Milligan House Society  
Charity L A Dorant for Almshouses

## Appendix 6

### List of attendees – Homelessness Strategy Consultation Event June 2008

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANISATION</u>
JENNY BECKWITH	ST ALBANS MARTIN TRUST
RICHARD SCAMMELL	WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
ROWENA LEWIS	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
DAVID REAVILL	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
MATT BARNES	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
RUSHNA MIAH	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
VICTORIA BRETT	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
SHEELAGH JONES	HIGHTOWN AND PRAETORIAN CHURCHES HA
PETER GRAHAM	CENTRE 33
NORBERT MCCABE	HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DAVID MILLER	SHELTER HERTFORDSHIRE
TANIA O'BRIEN	HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
SUE HAZLETON	WEST HERTS PCT
ANDREW TIPPEN	ALDWYCK HA
LIN PHILLIPS	HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
LINDA MIDDLETON	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
ROSEANN AYTON	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
DAVID BEX	EMMAUS HIGHTOWN AND PRAETORIAN CHURCHES HA
ALYSON STAPLETON	HA
KARIN WILLIAMS	CAB
RICHARD MCLELLAN	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
HANNAN RAMDANI	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
FRANCIS BECQUE	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
JODIE DALZELL	HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE
CAROLINE DAVIES	HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE HIGHTOWN AND PRAETORIAN CHURCHES HA
DENISE ROGERS	HA
LORRAINE IMBER	ALBAN WAY CHILDREN CENTRE
AMANDA BONDS	RIDGEVIEW
PETER KERNEY	RIDGEVIEW
TONY CLARKE	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
KAREN DRAGOVIC	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
CLLR JOYCE LUSBY	HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER
JENETTA BARKER	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
DENISE HIGGINS	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL
MARGARET LEWIS	OPEN DOOR TRUST
SUSAN HUGHES	DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL HIGHTOWN AND PRAETORIAN CHURCHES HA
ZOE HUNT	HA
CLLR JOYCE LUSBY	ST ALBANS DISTRICT COUNCIL