

# BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Homelessness Strategy

2012 - 2014

**This Strategy addresses the following Corporate Aims (show those which are appropriate to the Strategy only):**



## **The District of Bolsover Equalities Statement**

The District of Bolsover is committed to equalities as an employer and in all the services provided to all sections of the community.

- The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination in compliance with the Equality Strategy.
- The Council also has due regard to eliminate racial discrimination and to proactively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups when performing it's functions.

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If you need help to read this document please do not hesitate to contact us.

Our Equality and Diversity Officer can be contacted via [Email](#) or by telephoning 01246 242407.

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# CONTENTS

## ***FOREWORD***

This Homelessness Strategy sets out the vision for our homelessness service over the next two years. It identifies the challenges and opportunities that our Local Authority faces in relation to homelessness and describes the responses that have been developed in partnership with Communities and Local Government (CLG), public and private housing and support providers, the voluntary sector and of course, the clients. Consultation with our partners and stakeholders has told us what our Strategic Objectives should be. They encompass HOUSING OPTIONS, PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING, ROUGH SLEEPING and PARTNERSHIP WORKING.

The short lifespan of this strategy reflects two things:

1. The expectation of a new National Homelessness Strategy in 2012
2. The opportunity to align a refreshed Homelessness Strategy with Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire District Council's in 2014

Seeking to deliver a future joint strategy reflects the difficult economic climate that we face and acknowledges the benefits of a co-ordinated and streamlined approach. For now, the issues of anticipated job cuts and Mortgage Repossession, Welfare Reform and the "unringfencing" of County Council Supporting People budgets are highlighted and the risks to vulnerable client groups identified. Cuts to the National Affordable Housing Programme are similarly highlighted with alternative proposals to deliver affordable housing explored. Finally, the Bolsover-specific issue of a large, often poor quality private rented sector focussed mainly on 3 bed pre-1919 units is analysed with recommendations on reasonable preference, enforcement action, shared housing and demolition, proposed.

Homelessness and the threat of homelessness can present one of the most worrying and traumatic events faced by any household. Our vision links directly to individual Community Plans, to the joint Housing Market Area Strategy and illustrates our holistic approach to improving the quality of life for Bolsover District residents in housing need. We commend this strategy to you.

**Cllr Alan Tomlinson**

**Cllr Keith Bowman**

# ***POLICY CONTEXT***

## **1.1 The national policy context**

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to:

- provide free advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness to everyone in their district
- assist eligible individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and in priority need

1.1.1 With the 2002 Homelessness Act, the Government made homelessness prevention a priority through providing increased funding to tackle homelessness, setting challenging targets for prevention and placing requirements on the local councils to produce Homelessness Strategies. These strategies were to be informed by a review of performance, current service provision and estimated future need. The Act stated that the focus of these strategies was to be on prevention measures, as well as emphasising the importance of offering advice to all people in housing need.

1.1.2 The government later identified a number of targets in relation to homelessness. These included:

- to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 by 50% (against December 2004 figures)
- to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds by 2010
- to end rough sleeping by 2012/13

1.1.3 National strategies and guidance that have helped shaped this Homelessness Strategy include:

- “Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives” (2005): Homelessness Prevention, reduction in the use of temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010, from 2010 B&B no longer suitable for 16/17 year olds
- Sustainable Communities: “Homes For All” (2005): Choice Based Lettings schemes in all local authorities in England by 2010
- Tackling Homelessness” (2006): recognises the role of RSLs in preventing homelessness through partnership working, sustainable communities, allocation and management policies and better use of existing stock
- “No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping” (Nov 2008): aimed to end rough sleeping in UK for more than one night by 2012
- “Laying the Foundations” A National Housing Strategy for England 2011.
- The Localism Act introducing the option of flexible tenancies and affordable rents

These strategies had some success and homelessness and rough sleeping has fallen nationally over the five years to 2010.

1.1.4 With the new Coalition Government, however, priorities are shifting. Welfare reform is a major plank of the new Government’s agenda, with plans to devolve decision making to the local level and reducing overall welfare spending in particular the Housing Benefit bill by:

- a. Increasing non-dependents deductions
- b. Introduction of property sizes limits in Social rented sector
- c. Maximum benefits cap
- d. Universal Credit

- a. **limiting Housing Benefit entitlements** for working age people in social housing sector to reflect family size
- b. **moving towards a Universal Credit** - likely to end Housing Benefit payments direct to landlords, introduce non-dependant deductions and introduce an overall cap that may impact upon vulnerable people

As a result, there is an unprecedented amount of change underway that is likely to impact on homelessness over the coming years, both in terms of the resources available to tackle it and demands placed on services. At the time of writing, it is unclear exactly how these changes will impact, either individually or in the round but there does seem to be a consensus that services will come under pressure in the medium term while the hoped-for behavioural changes materialise.

Another of these behaviours linked to Welfare Reform for the Coalition Government is the belief that is that recipients of Housing Benefit (Council tenants) and Local Housing Allowance (Other tenants) should be expected to take financial responsibility for paying their rent. This means that with the exception of certain cases, rent support payments will be paid to the claimant rather than the landlord.

1.1.5 **Public spending cuts** - in October 2010, the Chancellor set out savings of £81bn to be made from public spending over the next 5 years. Funding for local authorities is being reduced by 26% over the next four years with the majority of cutback in the first two years. Whilst Homelessness Grant, which supports local authorities in homelessness prevention, was increased in 2011/12, this increase is marginal when compared to cuts made to welfare monies. Discretionary Housing Payments were also increased 2010/11 in recognition of increasing demand for private sector rented housing.

1.1.7 **Changes to housing allocations** – the new Allocations Code of Guidance is out to consultation January to March 2012. It allows local authorities to have flexibility in reducing their waiting list to allow only “reasonable preference categories” to apply. Because Bolsover District Council has chosen to continue with an “open” waiting list, statistics pertaining to persons without reasonable preference categories will not be used as part of the evidence base to generate new supply.

1.1.8 **Reducing capital funding for new affordable housing** - The 2011 Localism Act seeks to reduce grant dependency and encourage Housing Associations and other RP’s to borrow more heavily by introducing “affordable rents” at 80% of open market rents – thereby increasing the income stream available to Housing Associations in order to pay off interest charges on development loans. New proposals in the 2011 “Housing Strategy for England” also seek private sector investment in new affordable housing to replace government grant cuts. However, external investors have minimum rates of return that they need to achieve for their investment. It is not clear whether investment in **new** affordable housing in low value areas costing circa £100,000 to build, can achieve those levels of return. Conversely, investment in

cheap private sector rented accommodation in Bolsover District is assessed as easily delivering the gross yields required by investors

- 1.1.9 Increasing the Discounts available through Right to Buy** – The 2011 Housing Strategy for England proposes increasing the discounts available on Right to Buy properties purchased from Local Authorities. The government have also announced their intention that every sold home will be replaced by a new social rented home, but at time of writing, it is unclear how this will be delivered.
- 1.1.10 New forms of tenure** – The introduction of Strategic Tenancy Strategies in the Localism Act means that social housing providers may consider tenancies for life for new social housing tenants being replaced by fixed term (10, 5, or in exception circumstances 2 year) “flexible tenancies”, renewable depending on household circumstances. Impacts may include increased turnover in social housing, reduced demand for new social housing tenancies (not least because rents on new build and possibly relets will increase to 80% of market rents) and challenges to community sustainability. On the other hand, the narrower gap between social and market rents may, as the Government hopes, start to change perceptions about the acceptability of “decent” private sector as a long term housing solution.
- 1.1.11 Housing Revenue Account Reform** – The Coalition Government has introduced a new self financing system for stock holding authorities. This may allow more direct development by Local Authorities. The Council is embarking on an assessment of the opportunities presented by these changes.
- 1.1.12 Supporting People funding** - the Derbyshire Supporting People Programme delivers housing-related support to vulnerable people (including homeless people) across the county and thus plays an important role in tackling homelessness. Loss of ringfence to Supporting People Funding in addition to cuts are anticipated to this revenue stream with many significant supported housing contracts are to be re-tendered in the homelessness strategy lifetime.

The uncertainty surrounding these changes on the provision of, and demand for, homelessness services mean that the authorities will need to monitor the situation carefully to ensure that the strategy remains abreast of potential impacts.

## **1.2 Sub- Regional Context**

Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire District Councils have a successful history of delivering joint projects that support homeless and potentially homeless households. By working together, the partnership is able to maximise funding and deliver joint projects that would otherwise be unviable at the local authority level. The partnership has also been highly successful in securing additional funding to support its homelessness prevention work.

In 2007, the three north Derbyshire authorities were joined by Bassetlaw District Council situated in Nottinghamshire. Together, the four authorities became the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Market Area (HMA) and delivered a number of key research projects, including housing needs studies for Young People, Older Persons, Persons with Complex Needs and BME Groups – adopted by Bolsover District Council in 2009 (weblink).

In October 2009, the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw HMA published their first joint housing strategy. This strategy proposes interventions to ensure that the Housing

Market contributes towards Economic Development and meets Housing Need. Indeed, Strategic Objective 3: “Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Groups” states that the authorities will:

*“.....work in partnership to ensure that the four authorities are able to meet the needs of vulnerable groups across the sub-region in a manner that reduces duplication and maximises effectiveness”*

To deliver this objective, the joint housing strategy action plan includes a number of actions that will deliver improved services to homelessness people and those threatened with homelessness. These actions will be delivered in partnership and will include:

- Work around the homelessness changes programme
- Work with private landlords to develop the private rented sector
- Empty property work
- Review the approach to 16/17 year olds protocols and pathways approach
- Responding to Welfare Reforms

“PARTNERSHIP WORKING” came through as a strategic objective through the consultation process. It is proposed to subsume partnership working as a cross cutting objective throughout the body of this strategy.

### **1.3 Local Context**

The Sustainable Community Strategy for Bolsover represents the aspirations of the authority by seeking to deliver the “Wellbeing” power for the benefit of local residents. The Local Development Framework for Bolsover District Council is the spatial representation of both the Community Strategy and the 2009 Sub-Regional Housing Strategy and is due before HMS Planning Inspectorate 2012 with a view to achieving confirmation of “soundness” for its Core Strategy.

The Homelessness Strategy is a statutory requirement and should be viewed in the context of these higher tier strategies but alongside the Allocations Policy, Strategic Tenancy Strategy and County Council Adult Social Care Strategies.

## **2. *HOMELESSNESS DATA AND TRENDS***

### **2.1 Housing Needs**

In winter 2010/11, the housing register for Bolsover District was reviewed in readiness for the introduction of Choice Based lettings. This action saw housing need drop from over 5000 households to just under 2000 households registered with 30% households having ‘reasonable preference’. Reasonable preference is laid out in the Council’s Allocations Policy and may cover the type of housing that you live in (such as unsanitary, unfit/non-decent or overcrowded conditions) or give preference to ex-armed forces households for example. Unlike “priority needs” classifications, reasonable



preference is a statutory requirement only in some cases – others are optional and can be used instead to reflect local circumstances.

In section 4, the proportionally poor quality of the private rented sector in Bolsover is analysed and the requirement to include private sector tenants living in properties with category 1 hazards, in reasonable preference categories, is highlighted.

#### Sub Regional Waiting List Data

	<b>Bolsover</b>	<b>Chesterfield</b>	<b>North East Derbyshire</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Bolsover Feb 2012 update</b>
1- Bed	40	1990	1740	3770	1319
2 – bed	198	781	561	1540	430
3 – bed	51	290	219	560	144
4+ bed	4	41	7	52	5
Not known	887	215	0	1102	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>3317</b>	<b>2527</b>	<b>7024</b>	<b>1898</b>
Reasonable preference	346	425	469	1240	1158
% Reasonable preference	30%	13%	19%	18%	61%

**Table One** Source: April 2011 HSSA return

The April 2011 Housing Waiting List figure for Bolsover District was low in April 2011 on account of the Housing Waiting List having been cleansed in readiness for Choice Based Lettings. By February 2012, numbers on the Housing Waiting List had increased to 1898 in Bolsover District. 61% of those 1898 households were situated in reasonable preference categories against a Housing Market Area (HMA) average of 18%. Since reasonable preference criteria are locally determined, this disparity *may* relate to high numbers of people in poor quality private rented accommodation and needs to be investigated.

## **2.2 Housing Supply**

Financial year 2010/11 saw 20% (45 of 203 completions) of all new housing developed in the district coming forward as new affordable housing stock. A further 80 units are anticipated over the next three year period with this new supply going some way towards improving housing quality for those in need of affordable rented accommodation in the district. Disability access and move-on units are routinely requested as part of s106 negotiations on private sector development sites, however, consultation with Housing Association partners has confirmed that Welfare Reform notwithstanding, the appetite for purchase of 1 bed units on new development sites is extremely limited. It seems clear therefore that housing for single persons, will have to be developed in partnership with the private rented sector or by the council itself.

The Statutory Housing Register is the prime evidence base used to indicate the size and supply of new affordable housing required. All three Derbyshire authorities

demonstrate a marked shortfall in smaller properties with Bolsover demonstrating particularly low levels of household demand for 3 and 4 bed properties. This trend is assumed to be an outcome of high 3 bed, pre-1919 private sector rented supply in the district as demonstrated later in the strategy.

## **2.3 Move-On**

<b>Derbyshire Districts</b>	<b>EREWASH</b>	<b>AMBER VALLEY</b>	<b>CHESTERFIELD BOLSOVER &amp; NE DERBS</b>	<b>HIGH PEAK &amp; DERBS DALES</b>	<b>SOUTH DERBS</b>
<b>Snap-shot March 2010 - % waiting for move-on</b>	41%	51%	82%	62%	73%
<b>2010/11 Move-on target</b>	61 Units	119 units	129 units	33 units	97 units

Despite good performance in general needs and older persons affordable housing delivery, Bolsover in partnership with Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire District Council registered the highest requirement for move-on accommodation in the County in 2010 at 82%. The provision of supported housing bed spaces for vulnerable persons remains a challenge. Those leaving move-on are placed in Band C allowing the widest possible choice for rehousing as it has the largest proportion of properties being advertised. Furthermore, applicants are awarded sufficient points to elevate them to the top, or near the top of the band.

The Council is now involved in a county wide project looking at move on accommodation. As part of the project the council has signed up to the Derbyshire Move-On Protocol and contributes to the County Move-On Co-ordinator post through use of Homelessness Prevention grant. Move-On performance in 2011/12 is expected to improve.

## **2.4 Non Priority Homeless**

If households presenting as homeless are not deemed to be in priority need in accordance with the 2002 Homelessness Act, the Council does not have a duty to provide temporary accommodation or to rehouse such households under homelessness legislation (other than to offer temporary accommodation if needed for the duration of the investigation)

In 2010 the Communities and Local Government Critical Friend Assessment noted that this client group do not have homelessness applications routinely taken when they approach BDC and as a result BDC may be underreporting the number of people presenting as homeless. A non-priority decision (may) still give a household reasonable preference through the Council's allocations scheme, thereby increasing the likelihood of securing a permanent offer of accommodation. This change was implemented in 2011.

The following assistance for non-priority households is as follows:

- Rent deposit guarantee scheme to access the private rented sector
- Mortgage Rescue
- Bed and Breakfast Accommodation
- Firstbuy Mortgage Support
- The Council's Housing Waiting List
- Accommodated with family or friends.

## 2.5 Priority Need Homeless

The 2002 Homelessness Act defined priority need groups as follows:

- Homeless in an emergency
- Have dependant children
- Be pregnant
- Be a 16-17 year old owed a duty under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989
- Be a care leaver aged 18-21
- Be vulnerable due to:
  - Old age, or
  - Medical Problems, or
  - Domestic Violence

The graph below (Fig 1) shows an increase in homelessness acceptances 2009/10 for priority needs groups in Bolsover District

## 2.6 Numbers Accepted as being Homeless and in Priority Need

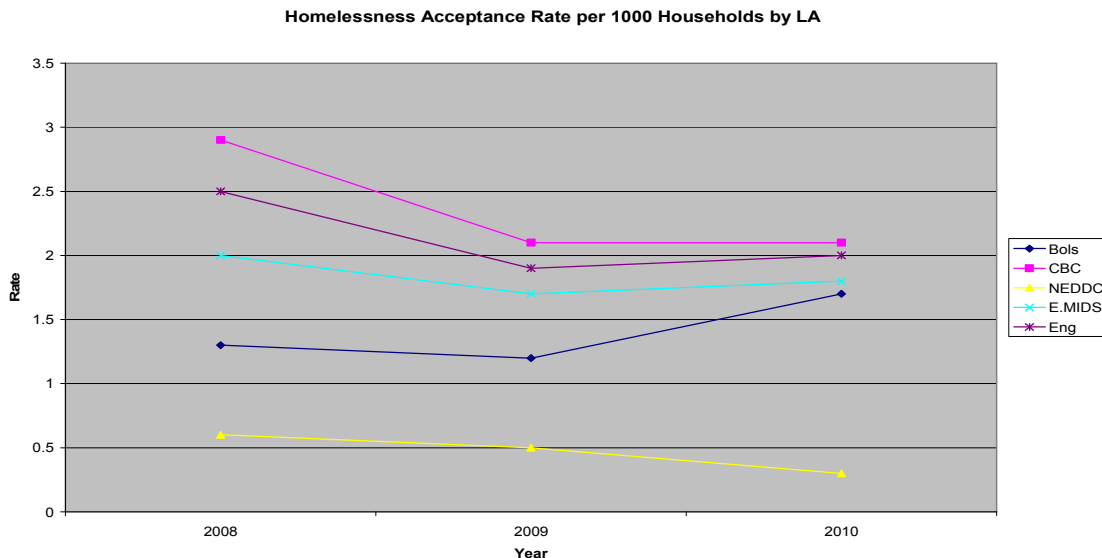


Fig 1 SOURCE P1E DATA (Returns made by Councils to DCLG)

## 2.7 Analysis of Reasons for Homelessness Acceptance

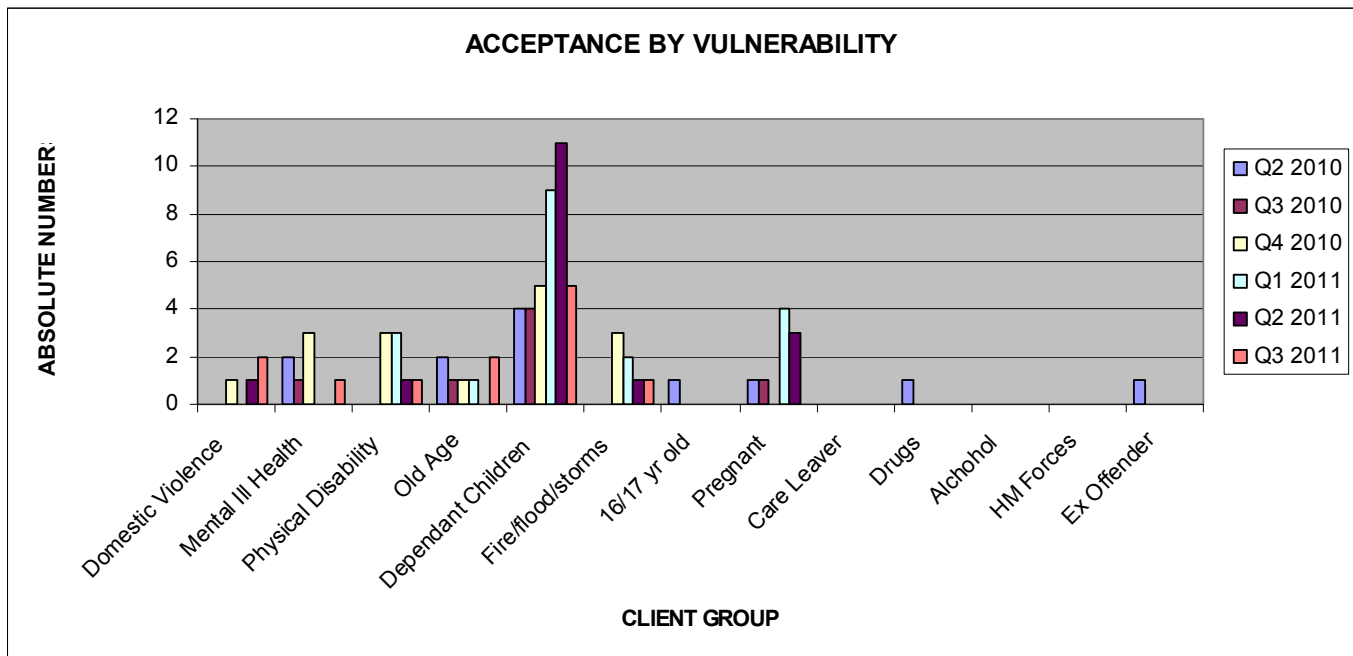
For the Homeless Service is to continue to provide appropriate prevention initiatives, it needs to be guided by the reality of why vulnerable people become homeless.

The most frequently occurring reason for homelessness acceptance is “family no longer willing to accommodate” and “termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy” (see overleaf). This analysis indicates that in terms of prevention “Mediation”, “Housing Benefit Assistance” and “Home Visits” may be effective remedies since most private sector landlords will seek to minimise rent loss due to empty properties. Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy can often relate to a Landlord seeking to increase rents, or find tenants willing to pay rent regularly and care for the property.

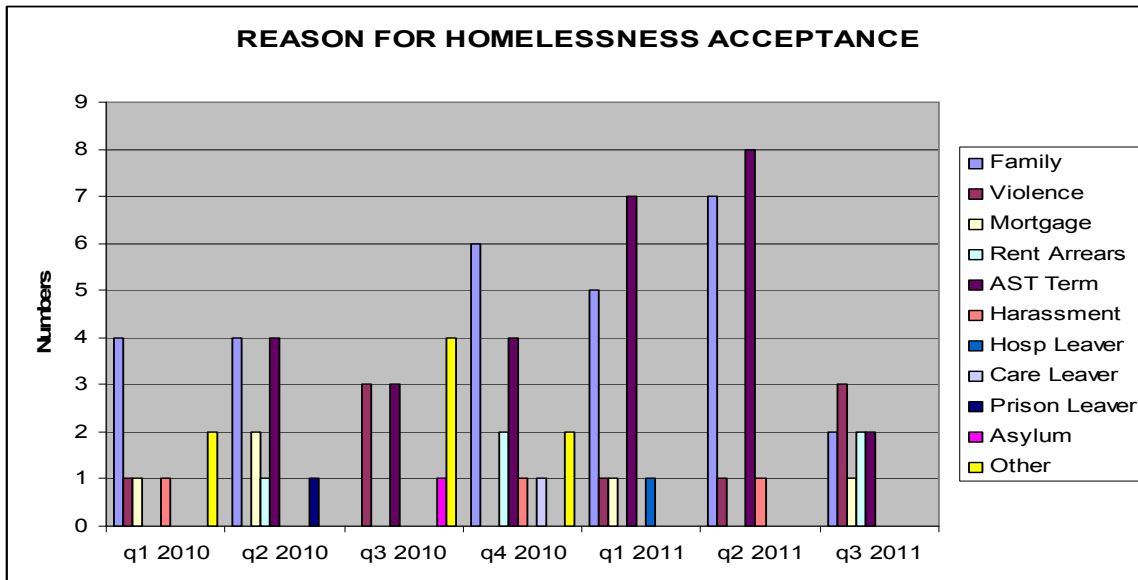
In absolute terms, the most frequently occurring vulnerable groups accessing the homelessness in Bolsover 2010-2011 is as follows:

- Those with dependant children
- Those pregnant with no other children
- Those with a physical disability
- Those affected by floods/fire/storms

Support and advice tailored for individual vulnerable groups is highlighted in the following section.



Source P1E DATA (Returns made by Councils to DCLG)



## 4. LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the above data, based on consultation with partners and service users and linked to national strategy, the strategic objectives for the Bolsover District Homelessness Strategy are as follows:

### SO1 HOUSING OPTIONS

In many circumstances, homelessness can be prevented through good housing advice. Housing Advice is delivered via frontline services at four points in the district – Bolsover District Council Offices and Clowne, Shirebrook and South Normanton contact centres. Consistency of housing advice is ensured through use of a standard housing advice sheet and through detailed procedures guiding delivery of individual preventative schemes.

- Additional housing advice is delivered through Bolsover District partners CAB, Chesterfield Law Centre (providing advocacy) and the National Housing Advisory Service with the Bolsover District Financial Inclusion Partnership funding parallel advisory services through Working Neighbourhoods Funding. Service Level Agreements are issued at a Corporate Level and action now needs to be taken to ensure that prevention statistics can be collated from partners in terms of Homelessness and delivery on Local Performance Indicator 213.
- The preventative schemes employed by the Authority as part of the Housing Advice Role, frequently in partnership with neighbouring authorities, are as per Fig 4 axis:
  - **Mediation** – dedicated “brokering” between client at risk of leaving family home (excluding DV victims) leading to homelessness prevention
  - **Mortgage Arrears Assistance** – use of government funding to prevent homelessness resulting from repossession
  - **Other** – at the Housing Options Team discretion leading to homelessness prevention

- **Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme** – assistance enabling households to access the private rented sector leading to homelessness prevention
- **Nomination to Social Housing** – Choice Based Letting will see this change to a bidding system for most social housing in the district
- **Debt Advice** – signposting to CAB or the Credit Union leading to homelessness prevention
- **Sanctuary Scheme** – provision of a range of measures including secure locks, alarms, new doors etc to the establishment of “safe room” in the family home for DV victims meaning that victim does not need to flee/present as homeless.
- **Housed with Friends/Relatives** – linked to mediation above, but more likely to refer to prevention of homelessness for young persons
- **Home Visits** – to understand current housing situation and risk of homelessness
- **Managed Move** – this can be support to undertake an exchange, or for the applicant to be transferred via the allocations policy.
- **Nomination to Supported Housing** – for vulnerable persons requiring supported living leading to homelessness prevention
- **Housing Benefit Assistance** – advice from Revenues and Benefits Team potentially encompassing Discretionary Housing Payments, leading to homelessness prevention
- **Crisis Intervention** – early warning system from Tenancy Management Officers leading to homelessness prevention
- **Advocacy** – signposting to Chesterfield Law Centre resulting in homelessness prevention
- **Prevention Fund** – use of Homelessness Prevention monies at Housing Options Team discretion resulting in homelessness prevention

The use of each prevention scheme is examined below.

Homeless Prevention - By Period & Method

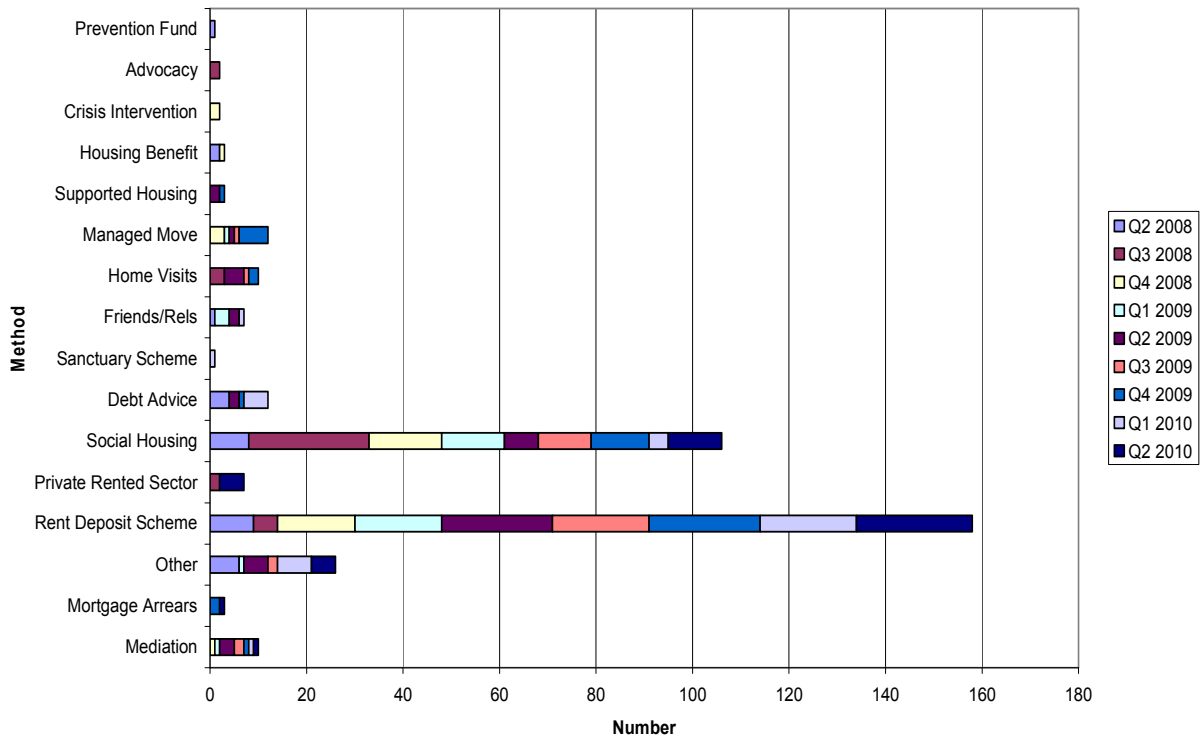


Fig 4 Source HSSA DATA

- Nominations

Fig 4 shows the method that has been used most throughout the period in all quarters when considering all interventions is that of Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme with nominations to social housing stock coming second. The authority has tightened up on nomination agreements to existing RSL stock and seen new affordable units come into management 2008 – 11. If all Registered Providers submit their housing stock to Choice Based lettings, further increase in access to affordable housing for households on the Statutory Housing Register should occur. The following issues “A” and “B” below will affect the number of preventions occurring through nominations in the future:

- **A** Flexible Tenancies

Bolsover District Council does not intend to deliver this tenure type within its own stock. Through the development of our Strategic Tenancy Strategy and in consultation with our Housing Association partners, we will endeavour to ensure that as and when flexible tenancies come to an end, the Housing Association undertakes a sustainability appraisal to ensure that the subject household will not face homelessness as a result of tenancy termination. It is proposed that the household will be able to either:

- proceed to a new tenancy where no alternative accommodation is available

- secure offer of equity share purchase in the subject property
- **B Affordable Rents**

Also introduced via the Localism Bill, affordable rents are set at 80% of open market rents. For a low value area such as Bolsover where private sector rented housing is frequently used to house those presenting in housing need, 80% of open market rents is unlikely to be unaffordable, and should the council adopt such a policy the affordable rent would be set at the 'target' rent if this is higher than 80% of market rents.
- Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

Fig 4 shows that the scheme remains a fundamental part of homelessness prevention in the district. Joint provision with CBC, NEDDC and a partner will ensure the scheme delivers quality service and best use of the limited Homeless Prevention Grants. Quality of housing and the shortfall of smaller housing (one and two beds), discussed in SO2 below, is an issue requiring assistance from the Private Sector enforcement team.
- The Private Rented Sector

Fig 4 above shows very low prevention of homelessness through use of the private rented sector without the use of the rent deposit guarantee scheme.
- Sanctuary Scheme

Fig 4 above also shows virtual non-use of the Sanctuary Scheme as a homelessness prevention method. However, the Council Employs a highly effective dedicated Domestic Violence Officer within the cross-tenure Community Safety Team. Each year the Domestic Violence Officer receives in excess of 185 referrals requiring assistance. The most common process for supporting victims and preventing homelessness is to:

  1. Get the victim to safety via refuge or friends and family
  2. Apply for injunction/court order against the perpetrator
  3. Return the victim to the family home

In this way, the Domestic Violence Officer ensures that only a small proportion of those experiencing violence in the home, actually go on to make a homelessness application. The Council now needs to ensure that all of those preventions are recorded for CLG monitoring purposes. The likelihood is that in this instance, homelessness preventions occurring through Domestic Violence support, which is part-funded by the PCT, could outnumber preventions occurring through the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme.
- Housing Benefit Intervention

Fig 4 shows a very small amount of homelessness prevention arising from Housing Benefit and Revenues intervention. However, as per Domestic Violence Support above, it is known that the true prevention figure is much higher. Welfare Reform and subsequent increases in the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) fund from Central Government means that pressure for homelessness prevention to occur via this route is likely to increase. New ways of working between Housing Benefits and



the Housing Options team are being developed for 2012 to ensure that so that all preventions undertaken by the Benefits Team are recorded.

- Supported Housing

Fig 4 shows access to Supported Housing rose slightly in 2008 owing to the development of Supporting People schemes locally. Supported housing schemes commissioned by Derbyshire County Council in on behalf of Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Council's have had the knock on effect of increasing housing advice in the district with the following supported housing providers providing accommodation and advice services:

- **Advance Housing Association** – nine units of accommodation for people with enduring mental health problems.
- **North Derbyshire Women's Aid** – two purpose built refuge schemes for women affected by domestic abuse providing 14 bed spaces plus three dispersed refuge units with floating support.
- **Action Housing** – five units of supported accommodation for people with complex needs
- **South Yorkshire Housing Association** – seventeen flats of supported accommodation for 16-25 year olds in the Chesterfield area plus a further five units of supported accommodation in Bolsover and NEDDC.
- **Stonham Housing** – supported lodgings providing accommodation for 16-25yr olds in Chesterfield

Although there have been no cuts 2011/12; Housing Related Support Services funded by Derbyshire County Council Accommodation and Support Team (previously Supporting People) who are part of Adult Care are being systematically retendered for 2012/13.

- Accommodated with Friends or Family

Fig 4 shows some homelessness prevention via accommodation with friends and family/mediation demonstrating traditional prevention techniques used for younger client groups. However, it is likely that this solution is underreported in the statistics above. Many cases are avoided by informal telephone conversations or visits. The work within schools has been particularly successful in debunking many of the myths around homelessness and the options available to young people, but there are numerous cases where young people may seek accommodation following minor family issues these remain unrecorded.

The strategic response to working with children's services was developed in 2011. Landmark legal judgements have changed the way in which young people at risk of homelessness are dealt with giving children's services a much stronger role. In addition, Home Visits are now undertaken as a matter of course in all cases where homelessness is caused by parental eviction.

- Debt Advice

In terms of assisting households who are experiencing difficulties meeting mortgage or rental payments the Council fund a CAB debt advisor to promote advice and assistance. Fig 4 shows a large increase in homelessness prevention occurring

through debt advice in 2010. In 2011, a new Service Level Agreement has been established.

- Mortgage Support

In 2010 DCLG had confirmed that the Authority would receive notification from lenders when they are seeking repossession action against a household within the District boundary. In 2011, the Housing Options Service commenced writing to all affected households to offer advice and assistance and monitor the success of the approach for the purpose of government returns. Now that additional monies have been made available for 2012, it is a possibility that DCLG will want specific reports on repossession activity prevented through the new funding.

- Crisis Intervention

In terms of identifying households facing eviction due to rent arrears, an early warning system between Tenancy Management and housing options officers was developed in 2010 for Council House stock. This process will be rolled out 2012 to all social housing stock through the RSL Forum. In light of Welfare Reform and the risk that homelessness resulting from rent arrears could become a growing problem, an increase in Crisis Intervention is anticipated.

Cost benefit analysis comparing value for money of each preventative scheme now needs to occur. On the qualitative side, exit interviews identifying the experience of households in receipt of homelessness prevention activity would also help to inform service development. Additional homelessness prevention tools available to Housing Options Officers are outlined below:

- Discharge Protocols

In terms of vulnerable persons leaving supported housing or hospital, protocols with the Health Authority and Adult Social Care have previously been established, however, these are currently being jointly reviewed.

- Information Leaflets

In 2011 leaflets advertising the Housing Options service and individual homelessness prevention initiatives have been developed and the full range of leaflets is available at appropriate locations.

## **SO2 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

- Number of households

The number of households in North Eastern Derbyshire in 2008 was estimated at 119,000 and is projected to rise to 137,000 by 2026. The number of households in Bolsover District is 34,455. The age profile of households is expected to shift as the baby boomer generation reaches retirement age and the proportion of people aged 65+ is expected to rise from 18.5% in 2008 to 25.2% of the population by 2026 affecting unit size of housing required.

- House Prices

Average house prices in North Eastern Derbyshire are significantly lower than the national average. In 2010, the Land Registry data gave average prices of £163,909

in North East Derbyshire, £142,674 in Chesterfield and £116,251 in Bolsover. Despite the relatively low house prices owner occupation is out of reach for many households owing to low household incomes. Demand is often focussed therefore on the private and social rented sectors with shared-ownership historically considered an “unaffordable” option in the district.

- Demand for Affordable Housing

Looking at the future demand for housing, the 2007 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identified a significant shortfall in the supply of affordable homes in North Eastern Derbyshire. This shortfall was estimated annually at 1,151 properties (607 Bolsover, 133 Chesterfield and 311 North East Derbyshire). These statistics would indicate that the discharge of duty cannot be met through social housing alone – however in Bolsover’s case, the sharp drop in households on the statutory waiting list following preparations for the introduction of Choice Based Lettings, may mean that the 2013 SHMA will show lower affordable housing need.

- Discharge of Homelessness Duty into the Private Rented Sector

In order to deal with the ***national*** social housing shortfall, the Government have introduced legislation via the Localism Act to enable local authorities to fully discharge their duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector, without requiring the applicant’s agreement. However, an assessment of suitability will include an assessment of the condition and cost of the accommodation.

Where applicants become homeless again within two years, through no fault of their own, the authority will still have a responsibility to the household regardless of the priority need at that time. Systems will need to be established to ensure such cases are recorded.

- Local Housing Allowance

The table below illustrates that if renting in the private sector and dependant on Local Housing Allowance (LHA), top up of £20 per month is required on Bolsover District.

	<b>Average monthly private rent (2 bed)</b>	<b>Local Housing Allowance rate (50<sup>th</sup> percentile Aug 11)</b>
Bolsover	£445	£425
Chesterfield	£445	£425
North East Derbyshire	£427	£425

A summary.

The proposed changes to Local Housing Allowance that will potentially impact on homelessness and homelessness prevention is shown in Table 1 overleaf.

**Table 1: Changes to Local Housing Allowance and implications**

<p><b>reducing the Local Housing Allowance (LHA)</b> from 50% of the Broad Market Rental Market Area (BRMA) to 30% from October 2011. This will impact on many households renting in the private sector, reducing their LHA payments.</p>
<p>uprating and increasing the <b>non-dependent rate</b> from April 2011 is likely to place pressure on households with adult children still living at home who cannot contribute towards household expenses. The increase in the non-dependant rate will take place over a number of years and is likely to result in ongoing pressure on households with adult children at home in private and social sectors.</p>
<p><b>capping the Local Housing Allowance</b> is likely to make applicants for private sector letting less attractive to landlords</p>
<p><b>capping the total benefits</b> to a household at no more than the national average wage is likely to impact larger families and people with multiple needs</p>
<p><b>limiting payments for people under 35</b> to the shared room rate (up from 25), making it harder to place young single people in private rented accommodation</p>
<p><b>uprating LHA in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI)</b> instead of Retail Price Index (RPI) could impact on the number of private sector homes available for rent</p>

- Private Rented Housing Market

In 2010, the four authorities of Bolsover, Bassetlaw, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire commissioned a study of the private rented housing market in the Housing Market Area (HMA). The findings for Bolsover are summarised in the report as follows:

*“Bolsover exhibits a localised market where living close to family and friends is important to tenants indicating a lack of mobility and a need for family support structures, although it is noteworthy that the area has the highest proportion of tenants whose previous address was out of area. The sector caters for more single people and single parents than the other areas. Tenants typically access a property through word of mouth and the majority indicate no problems in finding a property to rent. The vast majority of survey respondents (83%) rent terraced housing traditionally associated with industrial and post industrial areas. There are high levels of worklessness amongst tenants with only 19% in full time employment, which is considerably lower than the other three areas. Tenants exhibited a slightly lower satisfaction rating with their landlord than average. Average rent levels are the lowest in the HMA. The sector in Bolsover is typical of many deprived areas, where the sector plays a complementary role to the social sector and tenants exhibit a similar profile.”*

- Empty Properties

In 2010/11 financial year, the number of empty properties vacant for over 6 months in the district rose from 936 to 1014 units – although it is known that some of this rise is the result of empty Council House stock awaiting demolition. Requirements for greater mortgage deposit means that many units will be “stuck” on the sale market with buyers unable to access sufficient loan monies. However, the narrowness of the Bolsover housing market centred on Council Tax Band A 3 bed-semis and terraces, the low numbers of households seeking 3 and 4 bed property on the Housing Waiting List and the knowledge that private sector tenants come into the district from outside the area, indicates that a proportion of empty properties may comprise residual stock.

In September 2010, CLG released an Expression of Interest opportunity for £100million monies to bring empty properties back into use as affordable housing. Bolsover District has sought to access these monies in partnership with Sheffield City Region authorities. The requirement will be to source empty properties appropriate for sub-division into smaller units/shared housing or properties that are smaller in the first instance.

In November 2011, the new National Housing Strategy for England identified a further £50million funding to deliver Empty Property interventions that could involve demolition of stock. This opportunity saw an Expression of Interest submitted March 2012.

- Ease of Access to the Private Rented Market

In terms of ease of access to private rented housing, Bolsover respondents most frequently suggested that finding their current home had been “very easy”.

%	Chesterfield	NEDDC	Bolsover	Bassetlaw
Very Easy	30	45	79	23
Fairly Easy	37	46	19	65
Neither Easy nor Difficult	14	7	0	7
Fairly Difficult	5	2	0	4
Very Difficult	0	0	0	2
Don't know	4	0	2	0

Source: Ecotech Study into the HMA Private Rented Market 2009

However, in the same study, the proportion of private sector renters on a waiting list for council or housing association property was highest in Bolsover perhaps suggesting dissatisfaction with the quality provided by private sector renting. Alternatively, local attitudes concerning the expectation of lower rent levels may be a cause.

- Private Sector Stock Condition

The private sector stock condition survey for Bolsover District Council was conducted in 2003 by Fordhams Research. The report classified 22.7% of private rental dwellings surveyed as unfit compared to a cross tenure average of 8.1%. The SAP rating for the private rental sector was 38 compared to an overall rating of 44. At 22.7% the level of unfitness was around four times higher than that found in the owner occupied sector and 16 times higher than in the RSL sector – statistics that may explain why many private sector renters in Bolsover District are querying whether they are “adequately housed” by lodging themselves on the statutory Housing Waiting list. The survey found that unfitness was strongly associated with age with 17% of pre 1919 dwellings estimated to be unfit. It is noticeable that the private rented stock contained a higher proportion of pre-1919 dwellings with 68.2% in this age category compared to 33.2% of all dwellings in the district – no doubt influenced by the low market values and high yields that such properties deliver. Yields that will increase if houses are sub-divided into shared housing units to cater for single households affected by welfare reform and the lack of smaller units available in the district.
- Private Sector Landlord Accreditation

The Council is a contributor to both East Midlands and Sheffield City Region landlord accreditation schemes. In the longer term it is hoped to mimic the approach of neighbouring authorities where accredited private sector landlord properties are advertised alongside social rented stock via Choice Based lettings.
- Green Deal

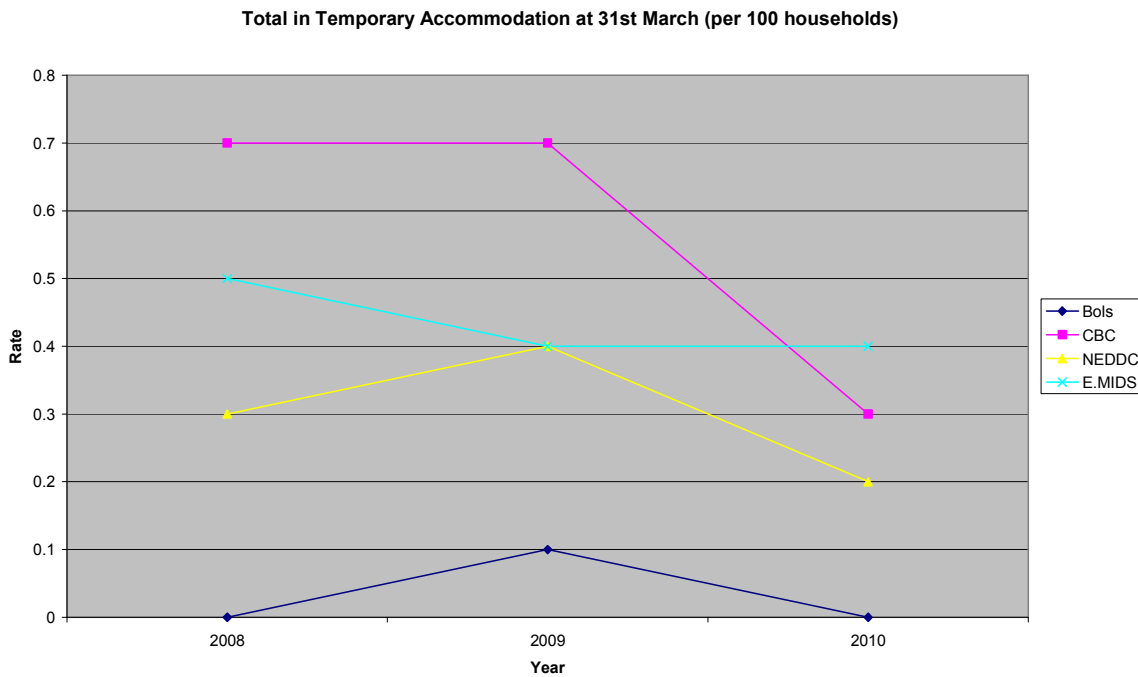
The above initiative represents the biggest cross-tenure intervention in housing quality in a generation and will be of great importance in improving the thermal efficiency of private sector rented stock in the district. Detailed guidance will be issued summer 2012 with the basic thrust of the scheme being that energy saving initiatives will be paid for through the “topping-up” of reduced energy bills.
- The most recent evidence (2003) however is that whilst Bolsover District may be seen to have a “good” supply of private sector rented accommodation (as both the Ecotech study, temporary accommodation and rent deposit guarantee figures suggest), the quality of that housing may be poor in many instances. If the authority is to use the private rented sector to discharge the homelessness duty as allowed by the Localism Act, comprehensive assessment by Environmental Health officers will be required. New Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Private Sector House Condition surveys are also key.
- It is probable that the comparatively cheap housing offer in Bolsover district will continue to attract low skill, low pay households from outside the Local Authority boundaries as per Ecotech primary research findings. Once resident in the district, these households will acquire “local connection” and be eligible to access the homelessness service should their tenancy fail.

### SO3 ROUGH SLEEPERS

- “No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping” (Nov 2008)  
As described in the background section, the above strategy aimed to end rough sleeping in UK for more than one night by 2012. This government agenda has been launched in Derbyshire through the mapping of services in the County for Rough Sleepers including a phone number for anyone to call in and notify the area of anyone rough sleeping.

- Temporary Accommodation

Outwardly, rough sleeping has never been a prominent issue for Bolsover District. The temporary accommodation figures reaching zero confirms the commitment of Bolsover to avoid the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation especially families in B&B accommodation. Temporary accommodation is only used for families in short term emergencies.



However Rough Sleeping presented itself as a strategic objective during the consultation process for this strategy. This is due to a number of sub-regional factors including :

- the proximity of Chesterfield as Sub Regional Service Centre
- the relatively high numbers of rough sleepers recorded in the Chesterfield Local Authority Area (which were – higher than Derby City in 2008)
- the potential for Bolsover residents to gravitate to the larger urban centre
- the ongoing importance of rough sleeping at a national level

the bleak economic outlook 2011 – 2017

- Homelessness Watch

Each autumn the authority participates in the County-wide “Homelessness Watch” survey. At the time of writing, the 2011 data is not available however 2008 - 10 data is overleaf showing only 4% of rough sleepers within Bolsover District but an average of 30% rough sleepers in Chesterfield. Local connection data within the 2010 Homelessness Watch report shows 7% of 2010 rough sleepers stating local connection with Bolsover District despite location of actual bedding down.

District/ Borough	2008		2009		2010	
	Number	% of Rough Sleepers in this Area	Number	% of Rough Sleepers in this Area	Number	% of Rough Sleepers in this Area
Amber Valley			3	6	6	8
Bolsover	3	4			3	4
Chesterfield	25	36	15	32	16	23
Derby City	16	23	24	51	23	32
Derbyshire Dales	2	3	0	0	3	4
Erewash	6	9	0	0	12	17
High Peak	9	13	4	9	3	4
North East Derbyshire	3	4			3	4
South Derbyshire	2	3	1	2		
Out of Derbyshire	3	4			2	3
Total	69	100	47	100	71	100

Source: 2010 Derbyshire Homelessness Watch

- Support Needs

In terms of vulnerability, 59 rough sleepers across the County reported multiple support needs.

Number of Support Needs	No. County-wide
ONE	22
TWO	21
THREE	12
FOUR	4
TOTAL	59

Source: 2010 Derbyshire Homelessness Watch



- Referral Protocols

With the possible exception of the ex-offender category, it would be difficult to state whether support needs identified in the highest ranking categories overleaf are cause or effect of rough sleeping. Clearly, in addition to appropriate accommodation for these client groups, of key importance are referral protocols with:

- Probation
- County Council Adult Mental Health
- NHS Trust Drug and Alcohol Teams (DAT)

Support Needs of Rough Sleepers	Number County-wide	% of Rough Sleeper Presentations where support need identified	% of all Presentations where support need identified	County Differential
Alcohol Problems	27	46	18	28% more
Ex-Offender	21	36	17	19% more
Mental Health	21	36	18	18% more
Drug Problems	18	31	16	15% more
Domestic Violence	7	12	10	2% more
Learning Difficulties	5	8	6	2% more
Physically Disabled	4	7	4	3% more
Other	9	15	11	4% more
No Data Supplied	4	7	4	
Total	116			

Source:  
2010  
Derbyshire  
Homelessness  
Watch

### Reasons for Rough Sleeping

The table overleaf confirms that the reasons why Rough Sleepers are homeless majorly centre around parents/partners/relatives no longer willing to accommodate. In 2008, Bolsover Council provided land at 50% of open market value to East Midlands Housing Association to deliver 3 units of supported move-on accommodation for Young Persons. The units are sub-let to South Yorkshire Housing Association, current recipients of Derbyshire County Council supported housing grant for that client group.

Reason Why Rough Sleepers are Homeless	No. Presenting Homeless for this Reason in Derbyshire	%of 71 Rough Sleeper Presentations Falling into this Category
Parents no longer willing to accommodate	18	25
Non-Violent Breakdown of Relationship with Partner	14	20
Other Relatives/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	12	17
Violent Breakdown of Relationship with Partner	5	7
Leaving Prison/Custody	8	11
Required to leave NASS accommodation	1	1
Other forms of violence	7	10
Other harassment	4	6
Racially motivated harassment	1	1
Racially motivated violence	1	1
LA rent Arrears	4	6
Private Sector Rent Arrears	3	4
Housing Association Rent Arrears	1	1
Assured Short-hold Termination	1	1
Loss of Tied accommodation	1	1
Other reasons for loss of tenancy	5	7
Drug use meaning client unable to access accommodation	8	11
Other	6	8
No Data Supplied	2	3
Total	102	N/A

Source:  
2010  
Derbyshire  
Homelessne  
ss Watch

- Direct Access Supported Accommodation

In fact, the move-on units have been delivered prior to the main homelessness cluster unit, currently awaiting slippage grant from the Homes and Communities “Homelessness Change” programme. Worked up jointly between Bolsover, Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire District Councils, the cluster unit will provide direct access accommodation for individuals aged 16-35 with local connection to Bolsover, Chesterfield or North East Derbyshire. A site has already been identified for provision at nil value, by Chesterfield Borough Council.

In 2010, Communities and Local Government Critical Friend Assessment stated that at present, this type of accommodation is non-existent in Bolsover District and recommended a number of Local Authorities where good practice examples could be sought.

- Youth Rough Sleeping

The Council also works closely with Derbyshire County Council's Multi Agency Teams (MATs). Amongst other support, the MATs provide mediation between families to enable young people to stay at home. Each MAT has members from the County Council in addition to partner agencies that work in the area. Through this, a wide range of support services can come together to support children, young people and families in Derbyshire and mitigate against the risk of youth homelessness.

## **5. KEY CHALLENGES**

The Key Challenges can be summarised as follows:

- Stretched capacity in the Private Sector Renewal Team meaning Category 1 hazards cannot be assessed in private rented stock
- Potential for stretched capacity in Anti-Social Behaviour Teams resulting from inappropriate shared housing/management in the private sector following introduction of the Single Room Rate/Welfare Reform
- Difficulty in delivering one and 2 bed rented units for households on the Housing Register
- Inability to rationalise private sector stock through achievement of CLG monies and demolition of 3 bed ex-coliery housing
- Exacerbation of the trend whereby low quality housing offer continues to attract low skill or unemployed households from out with the district and who then acquire "local connection" through residency status
- Formula Grant cuts make procurement of Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Private House Condition Surveys unaffordable
- County Council cuts to supported housing projects owing to lack of ring fence and retendering leading to repeat homelessness
- High demand for rent deposit guarantee scheme limiting the ability to recycle homelessness grant monies
- Continuation of the economic downturn leading to increased repossession activity and a lack of mortgage finance

## **6. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

An action plan covering each of the three strategic objectives is appended to this strategy. Actions within will be subsumed into individual service plans and monitored via the "Perform" system run corporately within the Council. The Strategy and Action Plan will also be scrutinised quarterly by the Homelessness Forum hosted by Chesterfield Borough Council.

### Improvement Plan

<b>SO1 EFFECTIVE HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE</b>						
<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Actual Outcome</b>
Value for Money assessment of homelessness prevention initiatives	Housing Needs Manager	Feb 1 <sup>st</sup> 2013 completion	Focus homelessness prevention grant on most cost effective interventions for 2014	Officer time Homelessness Prevention monies		
Consultation with homelessness prevention users as a matter of course	Housing Needs Manager	From September 2012	Allow service development to occur in conjunction with service users	Officer time		
Record advice and assistance delivered/signposted to all those presenting as homeless	Housing Needs Manager	From September 2012	Better illustration of preventative work undertaken both by LA and partners. Satisfaction of SLA criteria	Officer time IT		
Establish a comprehensive set of procedures for homelessness prevention initiatives	Housing Needs Manager	Completed by April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2013	Consistency of service across the district	Officer time		
Through benchmarking, keep homelessness prevention rate in line with neighbouring authorities through homelessness prevention delivery.	Housing Needs Manager	From 2013	Reduced cost to the authority in processing of accepted homeless households	Officer time Homelessness Prevention monies		

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Actual Outcome</b>
Make supported accommodation more readily available by moving tenants on into permanent accommodation once ready for independent living	Housing Needs Manager	From 2013	Better availability of move-on accommodation	Allocations Policy Derbyshire Move On action plan		
Promote role of Revenues Team in providing advice regarding impact of welfare reform changes on affected households	Revenues Manager	From 2013	Households provided with advice and support regarding their housing options	Publicity provided, in - house and external articles. Signposting protocol between Housing Options and Revenues		
Extend the Hospital Discharge protocol	Housing Needs Manager		All vulnerable client groups leaving hospital are supported to access accommodation on their release	Derbyshire Move-on Co-ordinator		

<b>SO2 BETTER USE</b>	<b>OF THE</b>	<b>PRIVATE</b>	<b>RENTED</b>	<b>SECTOR</b>		
<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Actual Outcome</b>
Consider the procurement of a Private House Condition Survey	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager	Decision during 2012/3 financial year, Completed by 2015	Understanding of scale of interventions required by the private rented sector	Budget allocation required 2013. Partnering opportunity with neighbouring authorities		
Enforcement against landlords letting sub-standard accommodation. -	Private Sector Housing Manager	Assessed at March 31 <sup>st</sup>	Vulnerable households are not housed in units demonstrating category 1 hazards	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Team capacity		
All properties housing households accessing the rent deposit guarantee scheme to have been assessed for Cat 1 hazards by the Private Sector Renewal Team	Private Sector Housing Manager	April 2012 Onwards	No households accessing the scheme to be at risk of poor health outcomes as a result of their housing	Private Sector Housing Enforcement Team capacity		
Increase membership of the Credit union by households accessing the rent deposit guarantee scheme	Housing Needs Manager	April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2013	Ability of households to afford rent deposits on subsequent "lets"	Housing Options Team capacity		
Develop referral process to guide the allocation of Discretionary Housing Payments	Revenues Manager	Sept 1 <sup>st</sup> 2012	Provision of DHP prevents 10 households from becoming homeless annually	Revenues Manager Capacity		

<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Actual Outcome</b>
Apply for CLG empty Property monies	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager	2012	Ability to sub-divide empty 3 beds into smaller units	Empty property list		
Deliver new units of move-on accommodation in the private rented sector	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager	2013	Reduction in bedblocking	Private Sector Landlords Forum		
Commence in-depth partnership work with Private Sector Landlord Forum to deliver appropriate shared housing for single households	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager	2012	4 units of shared accommodation made available to single under 35's annually	Private Sector Landlords Forum		
Assess whether units used are HMO's or Shared Housing	Private Sector Housing Manager	Ongoing	Rise in enforcements against private sector landlords	Enforcement Officer capacity		

<b>SO3 PREVENTION</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>ROUGH</b>	<b>SLEEPING</b>			
<b>Improvement</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Actual Outcome</b>
Work with partners to implement the “no second night out” agenda	Housing Needs Manager	2015	Zero rough sleeping for two nights	Night watch (annually)		
Refresh Housing Needs Studies for complex needs, young people and older people	Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager	March 2013	Provide a robust case for HCA Homelessness Change bid	SCR Transition Fund		
Continue to work in schools to deliver homeless awareness project to years 10 and 11	Housing Needs Manager	March 2013	Young people made aware of realities of leaving home. Reduction in rough sleeping and youth homelessness	Homelessness prevention grant		