



***A HOMELESSNESS
STRATEGY FOR
RUNNYMEDE
2003 – 2006***



***Produced by Runnymede Borough Council in conjunction with
Runnymede & Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group***

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Appendix One Runnymede Action Plan

The Runnymede & Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group was set up in June 2003 to oversee and progress the Homelessness Strategies of Runnymede Borough council and the Borough of Spelthorne. Membership includes Spelthorne Housing Benefit and Housing Strategy officers, North West Surrey PCT, West Surrey Mental Health Service, Surrey County Council Adult & Community Care Services, Windmill Drug & Alcohol team, Lookahead Housing & Care, Apex Housing Group, Airways Housing Group, Surrey Community Development Trust, Surrey Connexions, Runnymede Rentstart, Spelthorne Rentstart, Surrey Women's Aid, Runnymede CAB and Spelthorne CAB

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Despite its relative affluence, homelessness is a problem in Runnymede. The high cost of housing makes it impossible for many households to access permanent accommodation locally. Fortunately the Borough does not have a significant street homeless problem but it is clear that there are many people who could be classified as “hidden homeless” i.e. where they are staying with friends and relatives on a temporary basis, whilst trying to find a housing solution.
- 1.2 The numbers of people applying as homeless and registered on the Council’s Housing Needs Register has remained fairly constant in recent years. In contrast Surrey and the South East has seen a significant growth in homelessness and housing need, resulting in considerable reliance on expensive and unsatisfactory Bed and Breakfast accommodation. However locally homeless pressures are changing and the last year has seen an increase in the number of homeless cases within Runnymede.
- 1.3 It is important that a comprehensive approach is taken to dealing with homelessness. At Runnymede the need to prevent homelessness and to provide additional affordable housing is reflected right across, and at all levels of, the Council. The Leader’s Position statement makes a commitment to “keeping homelessness to a minimum by providing appropriate assistance according to need”. This commitment is also reflected in the Community Strategy for Runnymede which has identified the provision of affordable housing as one of its key priorities.
- 1.4 The need to tackle homelessness more effectively has also been recognised by the Government - The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all local authorities in England to undertake homelessness reviews and produce a Homelessness Strategy for their areas. Runnymede welcomes this challenge. The development of this Homelessness Strategy has been a valuable opportunity to take stock, review need and resources locally and to identify and prioritise what more can and needs to be done in partnership with local agencies and stakeholders to tackle homelessness.
- 1.5 This strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive review of homelessness undertaken by independent consultants, PPCR. This provides the evidence base for our action plan. This review was commissioned jointly by Runnymede and Spelthorne Borough Council and was overseen by a small steering group of both councils, the lead consultant from PPCR and Shelter’s Homelessness Act Implementation Officer for the area.
- 1.6 The review involved considerable consultation with local agencies and homeless people both in the information gathering stage and in seeking views on what more needs to be done. A joint event involving some 60 participants from local agencies and clients was also held in May 2003 to feedback the reviews main findings and to seek input into the strategy itself. A Homelessness Task Group has been set up following that event to take forward and oversee the Runnymede and Spelthorne Strategies. This group has been involved in the formulation of this first strategy.
- 1.7.1 It is intended that because this is the first strategy of its kind in Runnymede and stakeholder involvement in the strategy could be developed further, then this strategy should be reviewed after three years.

2. Strategy aims and objectives

2.1 The long-term vision for this strategy is, of course, to end the incidence of homelessness in Runnymede. However the specific aims for the period of this strategy are

- ✓ To prevent and minimise homelessness.
- ✓ To work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide high quality services to people who do become homeless or those at risk of homelessness.
- ✓ To avoid the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless households except in an emergency.
- ✓ To ensure that no one needs to sleep rough in Runnymede
- ✓ To provide a positive and fair homelessness service that promotes and protects equality
- ✓ To reduce and minimise the negative experience and effects of homelessness

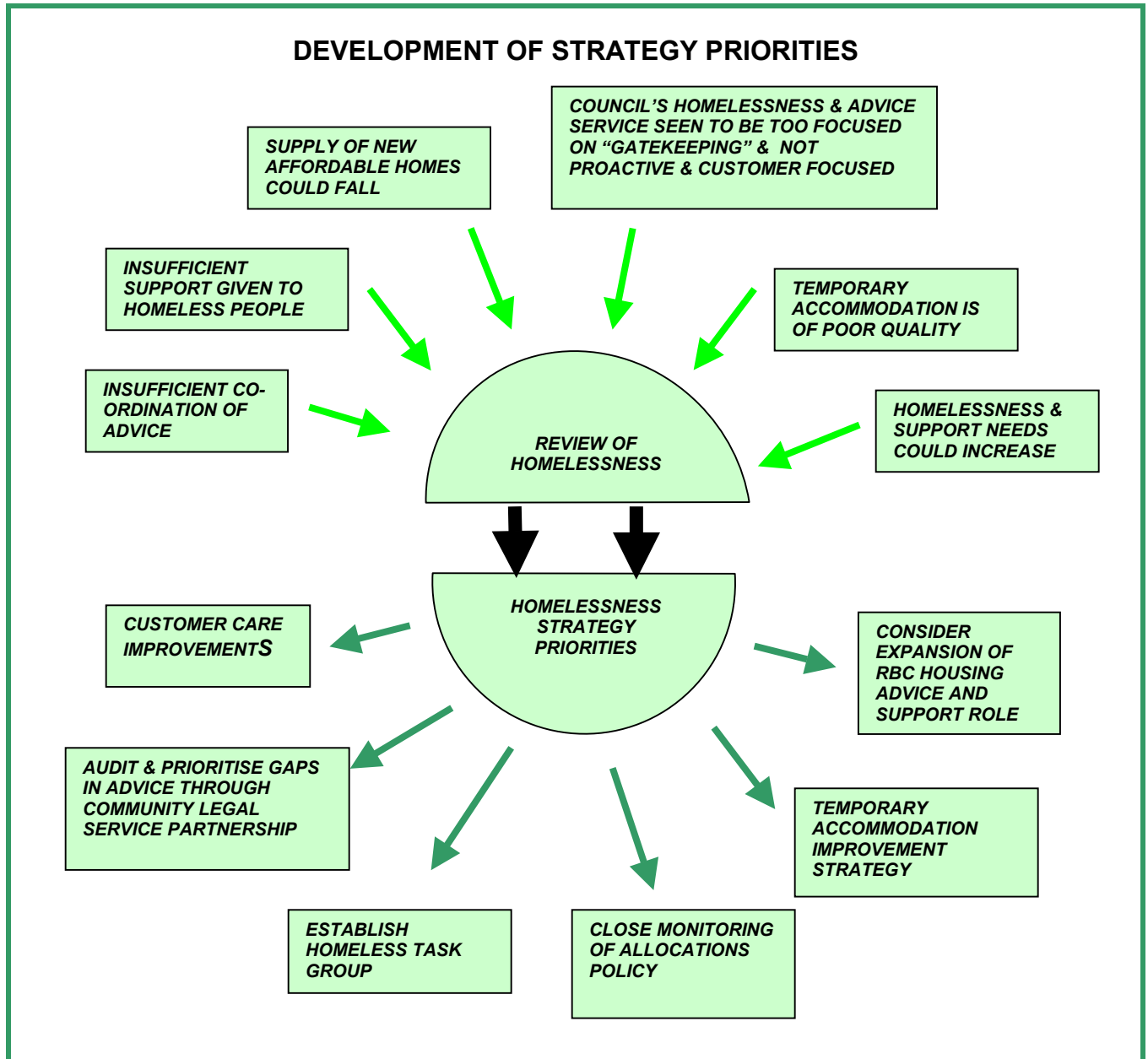
2.2 The key objectives are:

OBJECTIVE 1	To improve housing advice services in the Borough
OBJECTIVE 2	To improve the standard of temporary accommodation
OBJECTIVE 3	To improve customer care and customer involvement in the provision of homelessness and housing advice services
OBJECTIVE 4	To improve support to homeless households
OBJECTIVE 5	To maximise the availability of social housing and minimise evictions.
OBJECTIVE 6	To monitor levels of, and services for, rough sleepers

2.3 These aims and objectives reflect the corporate aims of the council and the aims and priorities for the Council's housing strategy. All the actions and targets identified in this strategy will work towards one or more of these aims.

3. Strategy priorities

3.1 The diagram below summarises the key issues that came out of the review and how they are reflected in the priorities for our strategy.



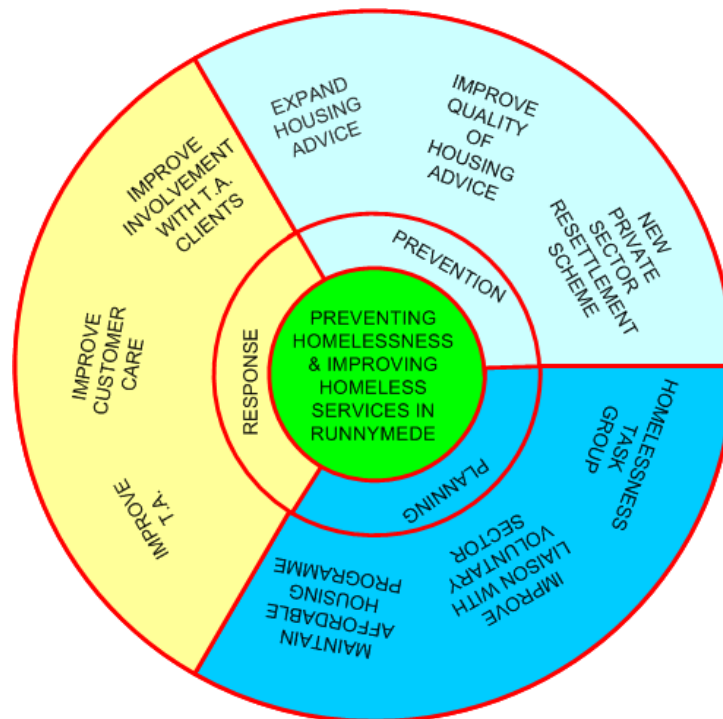
3.2 We have developed an action plan for meeting these priorities. Our action plan is set out in Appendix One in a table format which includes specific targets, timescales and resources which can be used for monitoring purposes. Sections 4 -7 sets out our plans in a more readable format and also makes reference to 'good practice' services or projects which already exist. These are shown in the shaded boxes.

RUNNYMEDE'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY WHEEL

3.3 We have considered how we can tackle homelessness holistically by looking at:

- **Preventing Homelessness** – by researching the causes of homelessness and finding effective ways of addressing these causes.
- **Responding to Homelessness** – where homelessness cannot be prevented we have looked at how we can improve our response. This has involved consultation with those who have experienced homelessness as well as other agencies who work with homeless people.
- **Planning to minimise Homelessness** – we have looked at how we can improve our joint planning and joint working processes to minimise homelessness in the long term.

This Strategy “wheel” helps to demonstrate this approach.



4. Preventing Homelessness

4.1 Although we have provided housing advice separately from our homelessness assessment service for a number of years in line with good practice, we are looking at ways to further reduce the numbers of households becoming homeless in Runnymede by expanding and developing housing advice services. The availability of good quality advice and assistance on housing options is fundamental to the prevention of homelessness.

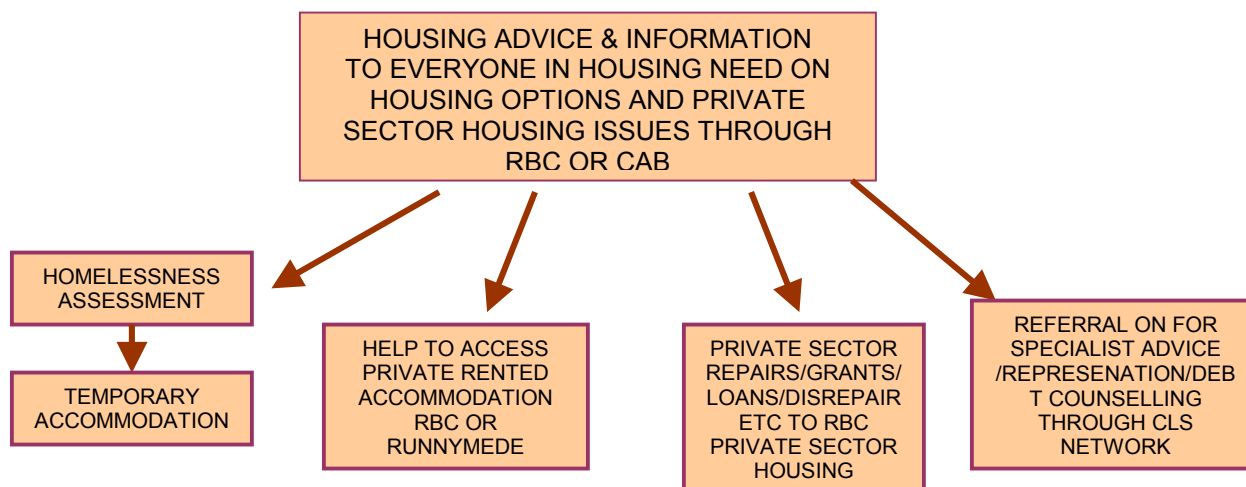
➤ *Improvements to Housing Advice Services*

4.2 We are currently looking at ways to increase resources and restructure our housing needs service to develop a comprehensive service of housing options advice and private sector housing advice. The diagram below shows how this model of housing advice might look. This model develops our existing service by further separating housing assessments (homelessness, housing register, shared ownership) from the role of housing advisers in order that they can focus on client advice and advocacy. A Housing options advice service would involve an initial client needs assessment and then the provision of detailed advice and assistance in identifying a range of housing options to meet the clients needs. Information on local availability, costs etc would be provided and further assistance could then be given to the client depending on their chosen options. Typical outline options might include renting privately including self contained or sharing/lodgings, buying a home, shared ownership, renting from the council or an RSL, relocation to another area or even staying put (depending on the clients current situation).



4.3 Private sector housing advice would include a further range of information and advice on tenancy relations matters and would cover a wide range of issues depending on the presenting problem. This advice should contribute to the prevention of homelessness by seeking to assist tenants to defend any inappropriate or unlawful action by their landlord but would also include provision of information and advice to both landlords and tenants to encourage responsible letting practices and responsible tenant behaviour.

HOUSING ADVICE MODEL FOR RUNNYMEDE



4.4 The council already funds an independent housing advice service through the Runnymede CAB in addition to the service provided by the council. It is important that this alternative means of independent advice is available to those who would prefer not to seek help from the council. We will set down a long-term commitment to the provision of this service through continued core funding, through the development of a revised Service Level Agreement from December 2003 and through investment in regular monitoring and liaison. This will ensure the independent housing advice service develops alongside the council's housing advice service.

4.5 The Runnymede CAB has recently achieved the Community Legal Services Commission Quality Mark for general advice. This has involved the introduction of detailed procedures for all aspects of their advice. We will also look to achieve this for the Council's housing advice service within the first two years of this strategy. In addition, each of the three Housing Advisers will have a personalised training plan to help develop their advice skills and knowledge.



4.6 We will also improve the recording of the Council's housing advice service detailing the presenting problem, the advice given, client information and ongoing casework and outcomes. This will assist in casework tracking and monitoring and provide better strategic information.



More assistance to obtain privately rented accommodation

4.7 Whilst Runnymede Rentstart already provides a valuable service to single homeless people and some assistance and deposit help is available to households who the council have accepted as homeless, there are many more households for whom help with finding and securing privately rented accommodation is not yet available. We have recently been awarded funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) which will be used to set up a temporary post of Private Sector Resettlement Officer. The purpose of this new service will be to work with a wider group comprising households who are at risk of homelessness as well as those who are already homeless or in temporary accommodation, to provide more assistance in finding and maintaining a home in the private sector. Financial help with deposits will also be available. The success of this post will be closely monitored.





- 4.8 The Runnymede and Spelthorne Community Legal Service Partnership has been set up to ensure a comprehensive range of good quality advice and legal services is available to local residents and to develop strategies to meet any gaps in services. Runnymede Borough Council and Runnymede CAB are key agencies on the Steering Group. Research is currently underway to identify unmet needs in the area of domestic abuse and learning disability issues.
- 4.9 We believe that there is a gap in court based advice and advocacy. Such services already exist in other local courts but in Staines County Court, where most possession proceedings for Runnymede are heard, no service currently exists. Last minute advice and representation is, of course, not a substitute for more comprehensive advice at a much earlier stage, but nonetheless it is an important ‘safety net’ service for those defending possession proceedings who may not have obtained any prior advice. We intend to work with Runnymede CAB to help them develop such a service.

Existing Good Practice


Out of Hours Homelessness Response

Our out of hours response to homelessness is co-ordinated by our 24 hour Safer Runnymede Control Centre. A team of specialist officers is available via telephone at all times outside normal working hours to deal with emergency housing situations. When the need arises, they can make interim arrangements for accommodation for homeless people until further arrangements can be made when our offices re-open.

Existing Good Practice

Domestic Violence Outreach Project

A new service has recently been developed by Surrey Women’s Aid to provide outreach or floating support to victims of domestic violence. This can include support to women still living at home or after having left. The Runnymede post is funded by the local Crime & Disorder Partnership.



5. Responding to homelessness

- 5.1 We plan to improve the services we provide to those people who do become homeless. We anticipate that we may continue to receive approximately 60 – 80 homeless applications per year.

➤ *Improving Temporary Accommodation*

- 5.2 We have recently set up an officer group to develop a temporary accommodation strategy. We are looking at ways to improve the standard of temporary accommodation alongside



planning for continued provision of adequate units of accommodation in order to continue to avoid the use of Bed & Breakfast Accommodation. We estimate that we will continue to require approximately 60 units of temporary accommodation for people who have been accepted for rehousing under the Homelessness legislation. However over half the accommodation we currently use is shared hostel accommodation. We are planning to undertake detailed feasibility studies of the two hostels during the period July – September 2003 to consider conversion into more spacious self-contained units, in line with good practice standards. We are also considering developing alternative temporary accommodation such as private sector leasing

- 5.3 The Audit Commission through its best value framework, requires all local authorities to report and set targets on the use of Bed & Breakfast and hostel accommodation. Best Value Performance Indicator No 183 is 'the average length of stay in B&B accommodation and hostel accommodation of households which include dependant children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need'. Our targets for our performance on this BVPI are as follows:

BVPI 183 TARGETS – Average length of stay in B&B and hostel accommodation (weeks)		
	B&B	HOSTEL
2003/04	4	40
2004/05	3	39
2005/06	2	38

➤ *Improving support to households in temporary accommodation*

- 5.4 We are looking at options for improving the ongoing support provided to homeless households. Firstly we are considering the provision of a named 'key worker' to every homeless household who applies to the Council for assistance.
- 5.5 This will form part of restructuring proposals for the Housing Needs Section. The key worker would be one of the Housing Advisers and their role would be to monitor the outcome of the person's situation and provide a point of contact until the household or individual had a permanent home.

- 5.6 We are also looking to develop a range of useful information for households who apply as homeless and when households are going into temporary accommodation.



➤ ***Improving customer care and customer involvement***

- 5.7 We recognise the need to minimise the negative experience of homelessness by improving the way homeless people are treated by the council. We plan to introduce a number of customer care improvements and a customer 'charter' which clearly sets out the standards of service that people can expect. Over the period July 2003 – December 2003, all staff and Managers in the Housing Needs section will undertake further customer care training and will assist in the drafting of a customer care action plan.



We will also work with consultants PPCR later in 2003 to develop the involvement of our homeless customers in providing feedback on the homelessness service.

➤ ***Monitor effectiveness of new allocations policy***

- 5.8 Homeless households usually stay in temporary accommodation (TA) for between 6 and 18 months before they can expect to be offered permanent accommodation in the council's own housing stock or with an RSL. We introduced a new allocations policy in January 2003 which established a banding system for prioritising housing need and within bands a time order system applies. Homeless households in temporary accommodation are placed in Band C along with a number of other households in housing need. All applicants can make choices over their accommodation although a more limited choice operates for homeless households after 6 months of being in temporary accommodation. It is important that the allocations policy works effectively to rehouse households from TA in order that sufficient vacancies are then created for new homeless households. Without this move on it is inevitable that we would have to use Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- 5.9 However a balance needs to be struck between moving homeless households on to permanent homes as quickly as possible and also meeting the needs of other households on the Housing Register who may be living in overcrowded or unsuitable accommodation as this can in itself prevent homelessness. We plan to undertake rigorous monitoring of our housing allocations and monitor these against targets which we will set based on estimates of need.
- 5.10 The following tables sets out our current projections for the move on rates of homeless households and our requirements for temporary accommodation for the next two years.

HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS – REHOUSING PROJECTIONS

	2001/2	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5
	Actual	Actual	Projected	Projected
Homeless households requiring rehousing during the year				
1. Number of households in TA at the beginning of the year	57	43	51	57
2. Number of households accepted as homeless during the year	45	52	50	50
TOTAL	102	95	101	107
Number of vacant properties during the year				
1. Re-let vacancies (all voids in existing stock)	258	191	232	232
2. New vacancies	80	10	35	0
TOTAL	338	201	267	232
Number of vacancies allocated to homeless households	50	30	37	35
% of total lettings	14.8	14.9	13.9	15
Number of homeless households leaving TA for other reasons	9	14	7	7
Total Number of households leaving TA	59	44	44	42
Number of households in TA at the end of the year	43	51	57	65

Existing Good Practice

Mental Health & Housing Protocol

In partnership with Elmbridge & Woking Borough Councils and the North West Surrey Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, we have developed a protocol to assist people with mental health and housing problems. The protocol aims to improve joint working in the provision of housing and support for this vulnerable client group and to provide a seamless service for people with mental health problems in need of accommodation. Measures to maintain clients' tenancies in a variety of situations are included, where this may be necessary.

Existing Good Practice

Surrey Domestic Violence Mobility Scheme

Runnymede Borough Council actively participates in the Surrey Domestic Violence Mobility Scheme. This reciprocal scheme, which includes all district and borough councils in Surrey, was developed and is monitored through the Surrey Housing Needs Officers' Group. For a number of years it has successfully assisted victims of domestic violence from one area of Surrey to find safe accommodation in another part of the county. Recently the Scheme has been extended to include all victims of violence or harassment.



Investigate levels of rough sleeping homeless

- 5.11 The Council carried out a survey of rough sleepers in 1999. This “count” was overseen by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and followed the detailed guidance provided by them. No rough sleepers were found in Runnymede.

However various voluntary groups provided anecdotal evidence during the homelessness review of a number of regular rough sleepers in the Borough and potentially the need for emergency “night shelter” accommodation and “day centre/drop in” services.

We will investigate this further by carrying out a further “count” in conjunction with Runnymede Rentstart and Runnymede CAB in 2004/05. This will be progressed as part of our Community Strategy.

We will use the results of this survey to consider further needs for emergency night shelter and day-time services in addition to the existing hostel facility in Walton on Thames.

6 . Planning and partnerships

6.1 We believe we can minimise homelessness in the longer term by developing and investing in partnerships and through the continued development of new affordable housing.

➤ ***Maintain an active affordable housing programme***

6.2 We have set a target to deliver 750 additional affordable homes over the period 2001-2006. Over 300 homes have already been provided and a number of schemes are in development. Unfortunately recent changes to the funding of affordable housing may impact on our ability to deliver some of these schemes and to meet the target. However we intend to pursue every opportunity that arises to secure the funding necessary to deliver the affordable housing programme.



6.3 The homelessness review identified potential gaps in specialist provision for:

- Move on accommodation for ex-offenders
- Larger homes for extended families
- Supported housing for people with mental health problems
- 'Wet' provision for people with ongoing alcohol problems
- Self-contained refuge accommodation with outreach support for people escaping domestic violence

6.4 We will investigate robust evidence of unmet need for this provision as part of our Housing Strategy development.

➤ ***Establish a Homelessness Task Group –***

6.5 We have formed a 'task group' along with the Borough of Spelthorne, following our joint work on Homelessness reviews. This group is still in early stages of development and we will need to work closely to ensure the continued involvement of the core agencies and individuals on the group. We will meet at least three times a year as a core group and work in sub groups to develop specific areas of the homelessness strategy.

Improve and develop relationships within the council and with key voluntary sector groups

- 6.6 There is more to be done to build links with other services both within and outside the council, that impact on either the prevention of homelessness or in the provision of better services to those who are homeless. The provision of Housing Benefit services is an important example where stronger links with the prevention of homelessness need to be made. Regular liaison meetings between senior officers in Housing & Community Services and Financial Services will be established to take this forward.
- 6.7 Time will also be invested in regular meetings with key voluntary sector agencies and Service Level Agreements will be revised/established with the Runnymede CAB and with Runnymede Rentstart. Other voluntary agencies such as Homestart will be invited to attend team meetings with Housing Needs staff to promote the work of their organisations.

Existing Good Practice

RARP

The Runnymede Accommodation Referral Panel (RARP) provides a valuable forum for considering the accommodation and support needs of clients with a range of special needs. The Panel, which is co-ordinated by the Council, includes representatives from other housing providers and all the relevant statutory agencies. Its aims are to identify the appropriate level of accommodation support that each client will need when they are rehoused and to ensure that this support is available. It also provides a mechanism for recording unmet need.



Minimise evictions from Borough Council & Registered Social Landlords

- 6.8 Thankfully, the number of households becoming homeless following eviction is low, however, we are aware of the need to ensure that social housing landlords, including our own housing management section, operate policies which use possession proceedings to deal with breaches of tenancy conditions as a last resort. In relation to evictions for rent arrears, which is the most common cause of eviction in social housing, we have set ourselves a target to keep evictions below two per year for the life of this strategy. This will of course be alongside our continued actions to reduce the level of rent arrears and deal with anti-social behaviour. This is a challenging target which demonstrates our commitment to minimise homelessness across our housing service.
- 6.9 We are committed to proactive policies in which social landlords educate, advise and assist tenants and actively prevent grounds for possession. We intend to work jointly with Runnymede CAB to produce a leaflet for RSL and Council tenants facing threat of eviction setting out advice and information in order to encourage tenants to seek advice on ways to prevent eviction.
- 6.10 We acknowledge that despite these efforts, some tenants may still face eviction and in these situations we will continue to ensure appropriate protocols and referral arrangements exist for our Housing Advisers (or CAB) to become involved.
- 6.11 We will ensure that RSL practices are monitored through our annual RSL monitoring survey. We will promote good practice through inclusion of this topic on at least one RSL Forum agenda each year.

Existing Good Practice

Supported Housing for People Recovering from Drug & Alcohol Problems.

We have worked in partnership with English Churches Housing Group and the Windmill Drug & Alcohol Team to establish a pathway for homeless people with a history of drug or alcohol misuse to recover from these problems. Following completion of an appropriate treatment programme elsewhere, clients are able to move to one of two shared houses in Addlestone, which are managed and supported by a team of outreach staff from English Churches Housing Group's Vaughan House in Guildford. The houses, a valuable part of our temporary accommodation portfolio, provide a safe and supportive environment during a crucial period when clients may be extremely vulnerable to relapse.

7. Surrey wide issues

7.1 Each of the twelve Boroughs and Districts in Surrey have been developing homelessness strategies. We have been working with our Surrey colleagues to co-ordinate these strategies and to identify needs and actions across all or parts of the County. This joint working has taken place through a number of groups including the Surrey Homelessness Officers Group and the Surrey Housing Needs Managers Group. A Surrey wide action plan has recently been developed which will provide a work plan for these groups. This is available separately to this document.

7.2 The main areas which have been identified for Surrey wide action are:

- To address the lack of adequate housing & support services for vulnerable and special need client groups. This is a major factor affecting homelessness across the county and is an area where cross Borough working is required to map need and resources and develop services jointly. The Surrey Supporting People service framework provides a focal point for joint planning through the Surrey wide Supporting People Strategy. The Team are also considering how to improve recording of unmet need across the county and will work closely with Borough and District Housing Needs Managers on this over the next two years.
- To improve information and awareness on homelessness services and housing and support services. The Housing Needs Managers Group will work with the Supporting People Team to identify possible resources to develop a directory and/or web based information site.
- To consider the potential for jointly developing, resourcing and commissioning a range of services across parts of or all of the county including independent legal advice about housing rights, financial advice and debt counseling and mediation services.
- To consider joint funding and commissioning of the LAWN scheme to assist Surrey residents to relocate to other parts of the country where social housing is available.
- To review and relaunch the Surrey Domestic Violence Mobility Scheme and widen its scope to assist victims of all forms of harassment and violence to move within Surrey.
- To develop specialist housing advisers to work with young people through a joint bid with Surrey Children's Services to Surrey Connexions for specialist 'Personal Advisers'.

Existing Good Practice

Co-operation across Surrey

We value highly the strong co-operative arrangements that already exist with other Surrey housing authorities. Appropriate officers from Runnymede meet regularly with colleagues at the Surrey Chief Housing Officers Group, the Surrey Housing Needs Managers Group and the Surrey Homelessness Officers Group. We are committed to identifying opportunities for working in partnership with other Surrey housing authorities to meet housing need and address homelessness.

Existing Good Practice

Thames Haven

Thames Haven is a prime example of cross borough co-operation and partnership working to address homelessness. Three neighbouring councils – Runnymede, Elmbridge & Spelthorne; two housing associations – Apex Housing Group & Surrey Community Development Trust; & two charities – the Thames Homeless Project & Spelthorne Rentstart have joined forces to provide a hostel for 10 single homeless people in Walton-on-Thames.

The hostel provides temporary accommodation for people who are homeless but cannot be housed by the Council because they are not considered to be in priority need. Help & support in many areas, including training, employment & accessing longer-term accommodation is also provided to residents.

8. Areas for further development

8.1 The review of homelessness has identified a number of other opportunities for developing or improving homelessness services and prevention of homelessness, which have not so far been addressed in this strategy – the priority areas are being tackled first. We will, however, consider these other areas further as we develop the next homelessness strategy:

- Specialist mediation services – linked to housing advice/homelessness assessment. We will be keeping a watchful eye on the pilot service developed in Spelthorne and expect the providers of the service, Surrey Mediation Services along with Spelthorne Borough Council who commissioned the service, to report back on its success in preventing homelessness at a future Surrey Housing Needs Managers Group meeting. Additional pilot schemes have since been set up in 3 other Surrey local authorities with Relate and these too will be closely monitored.
- Schools project – to raise awareness of housing and homelessness issues amongst young people of school age in order to prevent homelessness. We would like to see the development of Shelters' 'Housemate' pack for use in local schools but we need to identify which agencies need to participate and lead this area of work. This could involve Shelter and Connexions workers as well as the council's housing advisers.
- Joint Assessment Protocol for young people leaving care – We will consider the need for an additional local protocol with Surrey Children's Services for care leavers which will run alongside our existing protocol for 16 and 17 year olds.
- Support services and accommodation for people with drug and alcohol problems – We intend to review the needs for these services towards the end of this strategy period.
- Foyer type scheme for young people – we are already trying to develop a supported housing scheme for young people but in the longer term we intend to work with other local agencies to establish the need for a housing scheme for young people, which is linked to skills development and employment training.

9. Monitoring and review

9.1 There are several ways in which the strategy and action plan will be monitored.

- ◆ The Best Value Performance indicators are reported to the Audit Commission and in our Best Value Performance Plan. Our performance on these will be reviewed as part of Comprehensive Performance assessment scheduled for the end of 2003.
- ◆ Our continued low use of Bed & Breakfast, low levels of rough sleeping and progression of the Private Sector Resettlement Scheme will be reported regularly to the ODPM, as this is tied into our funding agreement.
- ◆ All the main elements of the Homelessness Strategy Action plan will be incorporated into the Department Service Plan which is reported to Housing & Community Services Committee and will form an appendix to our Housing Strategy.
- ◆ The Runnymede and Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group will meet regularly to review the strategy action plans for both Boroughs

9.2 The strategy will be revised in 2005/6 following a further review of homelessness and consultation with local partners and other stakeholders.

RUNNYMEDE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

1. Action to Prevent Homelessness				
NEED	ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESOURCES	LEAD OFFICER
1. Improve Housing Advice Services.	Develop and recommend new staffing structure for Councils' Housing Needs Section	New staffing structure to be considered by Housing & Community Services Committee in September 2003 following preliminary consultation.	RBC to consider funding additional post	HHN&S
	Strengthen links with CAB over the Housing Advice Service they provide through Service Level Agreement revisions and regular meetings.	Quarterly meetings to be held with CAB from July 2003 onwards Revised CAB SLA to be completed by December 2003	Within existing budgets & resources	HHN&S PO
	Obtain General Advice quality Mark for RBC Housing Advice and information service	January 2004 – January 2005	Some additional resources from a consultant may be required	HNM
	Training and development plan to be produced for each Housing Adviser	September 2003	Part funded by ODPM & partly by Departmental training budget	HNM
	Develop and improve housing advice recording	December 2003		HNM
2. Provide more assistance with accessing privately rented accommodation	Set up new temporary post of Private Sector Resettlement Officer	To advertise and recruit to post July – September 2003	OPDM funding	HNM
	To widen use of existing RBC funds for rent deposit	Within existing budgets	RBC funding £15,000	HNM
3. Expansion of other advice services/legal advice services	Work through Community Legal Service Partnership to identify further gaps in relation to advice services such as debt advice/ court desk.	Ongoing	CLS funding could be available for developing new posts	HNM
	Housing Needs Manager/Head of Housing Needs & Strategy to sit on	September 2003 onwards		HNM

2. Action to provide a better response to homelessness				
1. Improve Temporary Accommodation	Set up RBC Officer working group – Temporary Accommodation Improvement Group	May 2003	Within existing resources	HHN&S
	Undertake TA residents survey to identify what TA improvements residents want and feedback key findings to TA improvement Group	July/August 2003	Within existing budgets & workloads	TMO
	Undertake Feasibility study for redesign and refurbishment options for Ashdene and St Jude's hostels	June 2003 – December 2003	HRA Funding of £15,000 approved by Housing & Community Services Cttee for feasibility studies	T. Fraser (Building Manager – Housing)
	Consider Private Sector Leasing Scheme	September – December 2003	Revenue funding would need to be found from existing budgets with	
	Undertake short/medium term improvements to hostels and hostel management.	June 2003 onwards	Existing budgets	TMO/T. Fraser
2. Improve support to households in Temporary accommodation	Provide additional support service to households in temporary accommodation through allocation of housing advice 'key worker' to provide ongoing advice and assistance on general support/welfare matters. Only possible if new staffing structure approved. Improve links with Homestart and FamilyLine	Dependent on revised staffing structure which will be considered by Housing & Community Services Cttee in September 2003	RBC to consider funding additional post	HHN&S
	Provide a detailed welcome pack to households moving into Temporary Accommodation	End of 2003	Within existing budgets	HNM
3. Improve customer care and	Customer care training for all	July/August/September 2003	Part funded by ODPM and	HNM

customer involvement	<p>staff including managers in the Housing Needs Section. Draft customer care improvement/action plan</p> <p>Set up customer focus group for customer feedback on homelessness services – consultants PPCR to assist. To add to customer care improvement plan.</p> <p>PPCR, consultants to undertake shadowing and monitoring of customer care/service delivery and recommend improvements to customer care to feed into customer care improvement plan</p> <p>Introduce service standards and customer charter – consultants –CR to assist</p> <p>As part of consideration of new staffing structure, consider offering all homeless clients an allocated RBC adviser for ongoing help/advice/support</p>	<p>September 2003</p> <p>October 2003</p> <p>October 2003</p> <p>November 2003</p>	<p>existing RBC training budget</p> <p>ODPM funding</p> <p>ODPM funding</p> <p>ODPM funding</p> <p>Subject to new staffing structure and additional resources</p>	<p>HNM</p> <p>HHN&S</p> <p>HHN&S</p> <p>HHN&S</p>
<p>4. Monitor effectiveness of the new Allocations Policy</p> <p>Investigate levels of, and services for, rough sleepers</p>	<p>Monitor/review the new Allocations Policy to see that sufficient waiting/balance is being achieved between housing those at risk of homelessness and those who are homeless.</p> <p>Undertake survey of rough sleepers.</p>	<p>Include information in first annual review of Allocations policy – March 2004</p> <p>April – September 2004</p>	<p>Assistance from voluntary sector will be required</p>	<p>HNM</p> <p>HHN&S</p>

	Analyse results to consider need for night shelter/day time services	September – November 2004	New services would require both capital and revenue funding	
3.Longer Term Planning to Minimise Homelessness				
1. Maintain an active affordable housing programme to meet continuing housing needs.	Ensure that as far as possible, bids are made to resource schemes within the existing programme and that the target of 750 affordable homes by July 2006 is achieved	2003 - 2006	Transitional LASHG, Housing Corporation SHG, Regional funds, other RBC capital funding	DHCS
2. Establishment of multi agency Homelessness Task Group	Set up first meeting Set out action plan and terms of reference and plan future meetings	July 2003	Within existing budgets & workloads	HHN&S
3.Improve relationships with voluntary groups who provide support services or preventative services for homeless households	Runnymede Rentstart: Set up regular liaison meetings Draft Service Level Agreement in relation to core funding provided by RBC Runnymede Homestart – invite Homestart to attend team meetings with Housing Needs and Tenancy Management	June 2003 onwards By September 2003 As required	Existing Existing	HHN&S HNM
4. Minimise evictions from Borough Councils & RSL's.	Monitor evictions through annual RSL survey. Raise good practice through RSL Forum. Contain evictions due to rent arrears to below 2 per year	Annually Annually 2003 – 2006	Existing Existing None	ENABLING OFFICER ENABLING OFFICER HOTS

*Key to Officers:

HHN&S: Head of Housing Needs & Services

HNM: Housing Needs Manager

TMO: Tenancy Management Officer

DHCS: Director of Housing & Community Services

HOTS: Head of Tenant Services

PO: Partnership Officer