Sutton's Homelessness Strategy

July 2003

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1   Introduction

This document sets out Sutton Borough Council's plans for tackling homelessness over the coming five years. It has been produced in response to the Homelessness Act 2002, which requires that all local housing authorities undertake a review of homelessness in their area and publish a strategy for tackling the problem. Strategies are to be published by July 2003 and reviewed at least once every five years thereafter.

In common with other authorities, the problem of homelessness in Sutton is far from new. The Council has been addressing homelessness for many years through services to homeless people and developing initiatives to prevent homelessness. The Homelessness Act, however, provides an opportunity for the Authority, along with its many partners, to take a strategic approach to tackling the issue.

Defining Homelessness

Attempting to define homelessness is not as straightforward as it may seem. At the one extreme are those who are literally roofless and sleeping rough on the streets –fortunately a rare occurrence in Sutton. However, there are other groups for whom the term homeless would be equally applicable. These include:

- households living in emergency/temporary accommodation provided for the homeless

- households living in insecure accommodation

- households living in unsuitable/unsafe conditions

- households involuntarily sharing accommodation long term

This strategy aims to address homelessness in the widest sense, covering those who are actually homeless and those who are threatened with or vulnerable to homelessness.

Developing the Strategy

This strategy has been developed over many months and has involved input from a wide range of individuals and organisations. The process began with conducting a major review of homelessness in the Borough, the key objectives of which were to identify gaps in service provision and emerging needs and to highlight the priorities for the strategy. It became apparent that in some areas there was a lack of information available and that further research was needed before deciding on a course of action.

The review was launched in April 2002 with a seminar for statutory and voluntary agencies at which a speaker from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) set the homelessness strategy in context. Also early on our Homelessness Strategy Group, a multi-agency sub-group of Sutton's Homelessness Forum, was established to oversee the process.

The review comprised six stages:

Stage 1

Determining the information to be collected and analysed in accordance with ODPM guidance.

Stage 2

Carrying out desk-top research to determine the wider context that shapes homelessness locally, such as the local housing market and economy, and the characteristics of the local population.

Stage 3

Collecting and analysing management information and performance data from the Council and other agencies, both statutory and voluntary.

Stage 4

Using questionnaires, interviews and focus events to obtain the views of stakeholders and groups traditionally hard to reach and using existing information from consultation with users.

Stage 5

Identifying gaps in service provision and possible priorities for the strategy to tackle.

Stage 6

Circulating the strategy for consultation to a wide range of stakeholders including members of the Homelessness Forum.

About this Document

The Homelessness Act requires that homelessness strategies address the following:

- prevention of homelessness

- the securing of accommodation for people who are homeless or are likely to become homeless

- the securing of satisfactory support for people who are homeless or those who need it to prevent them from becoming homeless again

In terms of its approach this strategy closely aligns itself to the statutory requirement insofar as it looks in turn at each of the three key areas - prevention, provision of accommodation and provision of support. However, it should be borne in mind that there is considerable cross over between these –for example, provision of accommodation can also include support while provision of support is key to the prevention of repeat homelessness. There are also a number of homelessness issues considered in relation to specific client groups.

The strategy begins by looking briefly at homelessness at the national and regional level. It goes on to summarise the outcomes of Sutton's homelessness review and within that the scale and nature of homelessness at the local level. Chapter 4 sets out our strategic priorities and aims for dealing with homelessness in the borough and shows how this strategy both informs and is informed by a wide range of other strategies and plans, illustrating a truly corporate and holistic approach.

Our proposed approach to the key areas of prevention, accommodation and support, and addressing the needs of particular client groups is set out in Chapter 5. An action plan then brings together a range of proposed actions and new initiatives within a clear time frame and which identifies lead agency responsibilities and resources

The document concludes by setting out how the proposed actions will be monitored and how the strategy will be reviewed and developed over time. Above all Sutton's homelessness strategy will be a living and evolving plan of action that will need to adapt and respond to an ever-changing socio-economic environment.

References and Acknowledgements

In producing our strategy we have drawn upon numerous sources of guidance and good practice including the former DTLR Guide '*Homelessness Strategies, A Good Practice Handbook*', the recently revised Homelessness Code of Guidance, the Audit Commission's 2003 report on homelessness and publications from various organisations including the ODPM, Shelter, Crisis, the Chartered Institute of Housing and other local authorities.

We wish to record our thanks to all our partners for their feedback and contributions to the development of the strategy. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in implementing and further developing the strategy.

2   Policy Context

National Policy Context

The Government set out its approach to homelessness in the publication *More than a Roof* (DETR, March 2002). It acknowledged homelessness to be as much about employment, education, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse and mental illness as it is about putting a roof over people's heads.

Since then the Homelessness Act and homelessness Priority Need Order have come into force. In addition to requiring the production of homelessness strategies, the Act strengthened homelessness provisions in the Housing Act 1996, particularly around housing advice and reviews of homelessness decisions. The Priority Need Order broadened the definition of vulnerable groups for whom accommodation should be provided.

The Government has set local housing authorities a target for reducing the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation for families with children. By March 2004 households with children should no longer be accommodated in B&B hotels except in emergencies, and then for no longer than six weeks.

In February 2002 the Government published "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future", outlining its proposals for achieving a 'step change' in new housing supply and identifying how resources announced in the July 2002 Spending Review will be allocated in the period up until 2005/06. In addition to providing substantial resources for tackling homelessness, the Plan signalled a new regional emphasis in allocating resources for affordable housing and a shift to direct resources to 'growth' areas in London and the South East.

Regional (London) Policy Context

Following the publication of the Communities Plan the London Housing Board was set up to direct housing investment in London. It will produce a London Housing Strategy in the same time frame as this strategy, setting out priorities for investment in 2004/05 and 2005/06.

The draft strategy contains a significant emphasis on tackling homelessness. It is hoped that this will ensure that the needs of homeless households and those vulnerable to homelessness in Sutton and other parts of London are properly considered as the London Housing Board sets its priorities for investment.

Sub-regional (SW London) Policy Context

For the purposes of delivering investment in new affordable housing, Sutton together with the boroughs of Croydon, Lambeth, Merton, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth has formed the South-west London sub-region.

We will produce a strategy with our partners setting out how we will work together to maximise investment and meet housing need. We agreed a draft strategy in June and have made representations to the London Housing Board to ensure that it develops the London strategy with consideration of our housing needs and ability to deliver housing solutions.

In developing and reviewing our homelessness strategy we will ensure it dovetails with wider London strategies and those of our sub-regional partners and other neighbouring boroughs.

Local Policy Context

The homelessness strategy has links with a number of strategies and plans, of which five are pivotal to its cohesive development and delivery. These are outlined below.

The Community Strategy

The Community Strategy is an overarching strategy produced by the Sutton Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership) consisting of all the main organisations and agencies that provide and receive services in the borough. The Community Strategy sets out how we are going to address issues that have been identified as important to local people, by local people. The main objectives in the Community Strategy, which link specifically to homelessness, are the following:

- To improve health and well-being
- To improve community development and inclusion

Shadow Supporting People Strategy

Supporting People is a major new policy initiative, which has changed significantly the way in which housing related support services for vulnerable people are planned and funded. The Supporting People shadow strategy derives targets from a number of local strategies, including this homelessness strategy.

The findings of the homelessness review will directly feed into the Supporting People programme of service reviews, informing it of new need and the need for continuing provision of housing related support.

The Housing Strategy

The Council's Housing Strategy update, published last year, identified three strategic housing objectives:

- To gain best value from all available resources to meet the needs of all Sutton residents

- To maximise housing provision by promoting involvement and working in partnership with purchasers and providers of housing services through new developments and the most effective use of existing housing in the borough

- To ensure that the existing housing stock is managed and maintained effectively and efficiently, providing a quality assured service delivered within a sustainable environment.

A new five year housing strategy, currently being developed, will incorporate specific aims from the homelessness strategy within the overarching strategic housing objectives.

Housing Needs Best Value Improvement Plan

A Best Value Review of Housing Needs Services was conducted in 2001. As there was only one Best Value Performance Indicator that related to this service and a number of former Audit Commission Indicators, Sutton's approach to the development of an Improvement Plan was to develop a range of internal and local indicators and a framework in which to monitor performance.

Actions have been categorised under the following headings:

- Strategic Management
- Customer Satisfaction
- Performance Management
- Service Development

The successful implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan will contribute to the objectives outlined in the homelessness strategy.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy

Sutton's BME Housing Strategy sets out the need to review policies and procedures in response to the aim of achieving equality in service delivery. The overriding objective of the strategy is to ensure that people from BME communities receive an equitable and fair service, free from discrimination.

The strategy sets priorities for action for Sutton's housing services and the services provided by its partners; progress is regularly monitored and evaluated against an action plan.

The broad objectives identified for the homelessness service are as follows:

- To provide a fair and accessible service

- To reduce homelessness applications by providing a viable route into social housing

- To work in partnership with other agencies and support networks to provide advice and assistance, especially to vulnerable people seeking access to housing service, amongst which black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately represented.

3   Homelessness in Sutton

Levels and Nature of Homelessness

Homelessness Applications and Acceptances

The table below sets out the number of homelessness applications made to the Council over the past five years, and the number and percentages of acceptances.

Year	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Applications	430	850	914	1133	1115
Acceptances	232	513	429	462	429
% Accepted	54%	60%	47%	41%	38%

Across London the number of homelessness acceptances has increased each year since 1998/99. In Sutton there has been a 159% increase in applications since 1998/99 and an 85% increase in the number of applicants accepted. In 2002/03 there was a slight drop in the number of applications and acceptances compared to the previous year. Over the last four years the proportion of applicants accepted has dropped from 60% to 38%.

Of the applicants not accepted the main reasons for this are that they are either found to be not homeless upon investigation or they are determined to be not in priority need. Over the last five years there has been a marked increase in "not in priority need" and a commensurate decrease in "not homeless" as the reason for non-acceptance.

Causes of Homelessness

The most common reason for homelessness is parental eviction and this has been a continuing pattern over many years. This reason together with friends and other relatives unwilling to accommodate accounted for 43% of all acceptances in 2002/3.

The only cause of homelessness where there has been a continuous increase in numbers over the past five years (other than 'other reason') is 'violent breakdown of relationship'. Although the year on year percentage increase is relatively small, this figure must be seen in context of the number of acceptances, and in the past five years there has been a 78 % increase in the actual numbers of applicants fleeing domestic violence.

Although there has been a slight decrease since 2000/1 the fifth most common reason for homelessness is 'termination of assured shorthold tenancy'. The private rented sector in Sutton is relatively small, amounting to about 5,700 households and average weekly rents are

lower than in neighbouring boroughs Richmond, Kingston and Merton, although higher than in Croydon.

The only reason for homelessness that continues to fall is homelessness through eviction due to rent arrears in local authority housing. This cause accounted for only 0.4% of acceptances in 2002/03. The position is similar for RSL (housing association) evictions.

Reasons for Households being in Priority Need

The following table sets out the reasons for accepted households being in priority need over the last five years.

	1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02		2002-03	
Dependent child	105	45%	302	59%	206	48%	210	45%	174	41%
Domestic Violence	3	0.4%	4	1%	3	1%	2	0.4%	3	1%
Mental Illness or Handicap	52	22%	65	13%	90	21%	79	17%	74	17%
Old Age	6	6%	10	2%	23	5%	25	5%	13	3%
Other special reason	6	6%	41	8%	17	4%	15	3%	15	4%
Physical Disability	10	4%	27	5%	15	3%	45	10%	35	8%
Pregnant with no other Child	19	8%	51	10%	55	13%	60	13%	62	14%
16/17 years of age	0		0		1	0.2%	26	6%	42	10%
Former care leaver -18/20 years of age	0		0		0		0		2	0.4%
Vulnerable young person	25	11%	13	3%	19	4%	0		8	2%
No information	6	6%			0		0		1	0.2%
Total	**232**		**513**		**429**		**462**		**429**	

These figures show that families and households pregnant with no other children account for over 50% of all acceptances. Acceptances due to mental ill health or handicap have been the second most common characteristic of homeless households, although actual numbers have reduced over the past two years.

In 2002/03 6% of applicants with mental health problems were found intentionally homeless and the main cause of homelessness for this group was parents no longer willing to accommodate (32%).

Since the percentage of applicants accepted as homeless with mental ill health or handicap has remained constant over the past two years, it suggests that the fall in the numbers of acceptances may be a consequence of improved support for vulnerable people rather than being attributable to assessment processes.

It is not surprising that since the new 'Priority Need Order' came into effect in July 2002 the numbers of 16/17 year olds accepted have increased significantly. Between April 2001/02 and April 2002/03, there was a 6% increase in the percentage of acceptances from 16/17 year olds. When considering the actual numbers there has been a 40% increase in the number of 16 and 17 year olds accepted as homeless and in priority need.

In addition to those 16 and 17 year olds that are in priority need solely due to their age there is a further group of 16 and 17 year olds that are homeless but either with a child or pregnant. The figures below show that including this group the total number of 16 and 17 year olds that are homeless and in 'priority need' is 67. The fact that 16/17 year olds are recorded in another category if they are pregnant or already a parent hides the extent to which acceptances from young people are increasing.

<u>Age and Ethnicity</u>

The table below summarises the age breakdown of households accepted as homeless in Sutton over the past five years.

	1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02		2002-03	
No info	18	8%	16	3%	14	3%	5	1%	12	3%
16/17	22	9%	29	6%	46	11%	48	10%	67	16%
18 - 21	28	12%	89	17%	80	19%	97	20%	77	18%
22 - 25	30	13%	67	13%	47	11%	67	14%	51	12%
26 - 60	129	56%	300	58%	224	52%	224	48%	212	49%
61 +	5	2%	12	2%	18	4%	21	4%	10	2%
TOTAL	232		513		429		462		429	

Although in 2002/03 there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of 16 and 17 year olds accepted, interestingly there has been a significant drop in the numbers of accepted 18 to 21 year olds. Acceptances of households over the age of 61 increased between 1998/99 and 2001/02 but in 2002/03 the number of acceptances fell

significantly. This may be due to an holistic approach to preventing homelessness taken by the Council's Housing Centre. Early identification of potentially elderly homeless households and fast tracking of applications has resulted in better matching of need against arising supply.

The following table summarises the ethnicity of accepted households over the last five years.

	1998-1999		1999-2000		2000-01		20001-2		2002-3	
White	194	84%	400	78%	349	81%	394	85%	318	74%
African/Caribbean	6	3%	42	8%	25	6%	24	5%	47	11%
Indian/Pakistan/ Bangladeshi	5	2%	21	4%	17	4%	14	3%	5	1%
Other	9	4%	42	8%	32	7%	27	6%	54	13%
No info	18	8%	8	2%	6	1%	4	1%	5	1%
Total	**232**		**513**		**429**		**462**		**429**	

The table clearly demonstrates that (Black and Minority Ethnic) BME households are over represented among homeless households, accounting for 26% of acceptances in 2002/03. Although nationally it is known that BME communities are more likely to be at risk of homelessness, the table above shows two interesting points. Firstly, the year 2002/03 shows a significant increase in the number of African/Caribbean households accepted as homeless and secondly the above figures do not reflect the ethnic profile of Sutton's population of which only 10.8% of people were classified as BME in the 2001 census (excluding White, White Irish and White Other).

Accommodation and Services for the Homeless

Provision of Accommodation

Traditionally the accommodation needs of homeless households accepted by the local authority have been met through the provision of social housing for rent, either council housing or RSL stock. In Sutton the local authority stock has reduced significantly from Right to Buy sales since 1980 and now stands at just over 8,300 units. Although there has been the addition of new homes produced by housing associations overall there has been a net reduction in social housing for rent in recent years.

In terms of overall demand for social rented housing there were 2,075 applicants on the Housing Register on the 31March 2003. BME

households are disproportionately represented, accounting for 22.4% of registered households.

Matching supply and demand, the following table shows the numbers of new social lettings (net of transfers and decants) that have arisen over the last five years and the proportion of empty homes (local authority and RSL) allocated to homeless households.

	1998/9	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Local authority lettings (net of transfers and decants)	361	414	397	345	400
Proportion of Local authority lettings to homeless households	41% (150)	54% (223)	71% (282)	72% (249)	66% (263)
Proportion of RSL nominations to homeless households			80% (51)	73% (76)	68% (118)

A further factor influencing the ability to meet housing need is the match between the need for properties of certain bedroom sizes and the household composition of applicants on the housing register and transfer list. The table below shows that the greatest number of households registered require one and two bedroom properties (839 and 815 households respectively).

Applications by banding and bedroom size as at 31/03/03	Band	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
	Bed 1	35	0	34	51	360	359	839
	Bed 2	18	107	9	228	194	259	815
	Bed 3	5	6	2	45	219	72	349
	Bed 4	4	2	1	17	39	9	72
	Bed 5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	62	115	46	341	812	699	2075

Band 2 comprises families with children aged 16 or under who have no right to stay in the properties where they live if the owner requires them to leave. **Band 4** comprises people who have been accepted as homeless. **Band 3** includes people in supported housing projects who have been accepted as homeless and are ready to move on.

Information about demand needs to be considered in relation to the numbers of properties becoming available in each bedroom size.
In 2002/03 the following property sizes became available:

1 Bed Elderly	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	Total
43	183	207	78	14	625

Clearly there is a significant gap in terms of available social housing lettings of two and four bedroomed properties to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless households, let alone other priority groups.

The majority of accepted homeless households are on low incomes and/or benefits and therefore access to housing in the private sector is extremely difficult, given that one bedroom properties in the borough now cost a minimum of £90k and private sector rents for such units start at around £140 p.w.

Due to the acute supply/demand imbalance in relation to permanent lettings Sutton has had to make substantial use of temporary accommodation to house homeless households in recent years. As at 31 March 2003 427 homeless households were living in some form of temporary accommodation of which 39 households were in bed and breakfast and a further 17 in self contained annexes.

Housing Related Support

Through the new Supporting People regime the Council funds a significant amount of housing related support, either accommodation based or floating, for a range of client groups. Included within the borough's supported accommodation portfolio are 41 bed spaces specifically for vulnerable single homeless clients.

In addition, the Council supports a number of accommodation based and floating support schemes that provide services to people living in the community with mental health problems, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol issues or those who are vulnerable due to their age. Service users receive a range of assistance to enable them to live in the community without the risk of social exclusion and assistance may vary from rehabilitation, to help with life-skills, and skills to maintaining their tenancies.

Access to supported housing and floating support can be via a number of routes. These include the Council's Homeless Persons Service, Housing Advice and Social Services. There are also a number of multi agency panels that bring together different disciplines to consider a client's overall needs. These cover young people, those in need of rehabilitation or residential care and vulnerable tenants who require support.

Homelessness Prevention

The Council's Housing Advice Service is the main resource for homelessness prevention in the borough. In 2002/03 1,586 clients were seen, of which 1,304 (82%) were threatened with homelessness. Of the latter nearly 50% were living with parents or other relatives.

Over one third of clients seeking alternative accommodation were under 25 years of age, reflecting the particular difficulties that young people have in accessing accommodation. At the same time nearly one third were from BME groups, a significant over-representation given that only 10.8% of Sutton's population are from a BME background.

Sutton Citizens Advice Bureaux also receive a large number of housing related enquiries. During 2001/02 they received a total of 2,634 enquiries about housing, of which threatened homelessness accounted for 27% (711). Similarly, 8% of Age Concern's enquiries related to housing issues, although their most common ones are benefits and money related issues (22%).

As part of our review of homelessness a questionnaire was sent to stakeholder organisations involved with homeless people. For many of these, homelessness is not their primary function and so they do not always record information on cases. Consequently it has been difficult to obtain a true borough wide picture of the demand for preventative services. There is also no comprehensive directory of services for homeless people although there are for certain services directed at specific client groups such as people with drug and alcohol mis-use problems.

In order to help prevent homelessness in the case of parents and others no longer willing to accommodate (the largest single cause of homelessness) the Council's Housing Centre established a post of 'Visiting Officer' in January 2003. This postholder now meets with all applicants threatened with homelessness through parental eviction in their own homes to discuss the options available to them. The discussion takes place with both the applicant and the parents with a view to reaching a joint decision regarding the best outcome for the applicant and their family.

Where the impending eviction is a result of conflict between the parents and the applicant, mediation is offered, in conjunction with other practical advice on finding alternative accommodation.

The Housing Centre also employs a full-time Young Persons Accommodation Officer to provide housing and assistance to young persons aged 16/19 and teenage parents who must leave, or don't have access to, a parental home. In 2002/03 the postholder saw 107 young people, of which 62 were taken on as a caseload. Another part-

time post, also based within the Housing Centre, works closely with the Young Persons Accommodation Officer in assisting clients to claim for and maintain benefits.

The Council also operates a number of other schemes geared at preventing homelessness including:

- <u>Private Rented Accommodation Scheme</u> helping Housing Advice clients access private rented accommodation

- <u>Route-to-Rent Scheme</u> offering clients a weekly self-help session geared at helping people in need to find their own letting in the private sector

- <u>Rent in Advance/Deposit Scheme</u> aimed at helping a range of client groups access private rented accommodation

- <u>Insurance Scheme for Landlords</u> –a scheme developed to provide insurance against rent arrears, theft or damage for private landlords willing to let their property to a Housing Advice client

- <u>Sponsored Tenancy Scheme</u> –a scheme, funded via the Government's Bed and Breakfast Unit, being introduced to provide cash incentives as encouragement for private landlords to let to homeless households

- <u>Dedicated Housing Benefit Officer</u> working closely with Housing Advice to fast track claims from households that have secured their own accommodation in the private sector. The claims of existing private rented sector clients threatened with homelessness are also fast tracked to prevent eviction wherever possible

- <u>Intentional Homelessness Protocol</u> -set up between the Housing Centre and Social Services with the aim of helping intentionally homeless families access private renting

- <u>Tenancy Sustainment</u> -The Council's Community Support, Supported Living and Assertive Outreach teams provide support to vulnerable tenants geared at helping them to live independently in the community

- <u>Changing Places</u> -a scheme for encouraging priority households, including those threatened with homelessness, to take up lettings available in the North and the Midlands

Services for Specific Client Groups

People with mental health difficulties

Of the 429 households accepted as homeless in 2002/03, 17% were in priority need due to mental illness/handicap. Over half of this client group were homeless as a result of relatives and/or parents no longer willing/able to accommodate.

Significant developments have been achieved in the Community Support service. The primary role of this team is to provide support to adults vulnerable through mental health difficulties or substance misuse and to young people to assist with tenancy sustainment.

Homelessness and Children

During 2002/03, 55% of acceptances were from households with a dependent child and those including a pregnant woman with no other children.

Findings of a survey carried out in 2001 and the Best Value Review of Housing Needs Service in 2001 resulted in the development of an action plan to improve services to households in temporary accommodation.

The Authority made applications to national programmes such as Children's Fund and Sure Start that focus on the needs of young people and children, with an emphasis on prevention and early identification of need. Successful bids for funding have resulted in the development of local programmes to tackle social exclusion and the effects of child poverty in areas of significant deprivation within the borough, such as Wandle Valley Estate and Durand Close.

Young People

In 2002/03, 31% of clients approaching the Housing Advice Service were aged between 16 and 24, representing a 40% increase from the previous year. 24% were from black and minority ethnic young people.

Initiatives, such as the establishment of a move-on quota, a provision of high support accommodation, and the appointment of an accommodation officer with specific responsibility to work with and support young people leaving care and those known to the Youth Offending Team, have been developed to reduce the risk of homelessness.

Teenage Pregnancy

The number of 16-19 years olds, pregnant or with dependent children, accepted as homeless by the Council has slightly increased from 5 in

2001/02 to 7 in 2002/03. However, this figure slightly drops for the same group aged 18/19, showing that in 2001/02 the number was 27 dropping to 19 in 2002/03

Early intervention through the appointment of specialist posts has strengthened the service and contributed to the prevention of homelessness. Joint work to improve the range, cost and type of accommodation available to young people, is being undertaken. This is conducted in liaison with the Connexions service to provide integrated information, advice, guidance and support for personal development for all 13-19 year olds in the borough.

Domestic Violence

Although the proportion of acceptances from women fleeing domestic violence has remained constant during the last three years and lower than the national average, the proportion of applications from black and ethnic minority women has increased from 10% in both 2000/01 and 2001/02 to 23% in 2002/03.

Households homeless as a result of domestic violence are offered a variety of accommodation ranging from the Women's Refuge to self-contained temporary accommodation and provided with advice from a wide range of agencies in the borough.

In response to the Mayor of London's "1 in 4" Domestic Violence Strategy, the Council is developing a new corporate strategy involving key stakeholders to develop a better co-ordinated approach to tackling domestic violence.

Ex -Offenders

66% of ex-offenders who approached the Housing Advice Service in 2001/02 and 2002/03 indicated that they had drink, drugs, mental health problems, or a combination of these issues. As priority recorded by the Council relates to associated issues the extent of the problem cannot easily be established.

A study of ex offenders known to the Probation service in Sutton undertaken in November 2002 by Dr Richard Kay identified that the majority of ex-offenders were living in insecure accommodation with relatives or friends. Unemployment was identified as a related factor affecting the ability of ex-offenders to obtain accommodation.

Further work is being carried out and links made with the Supporting People programme to determine whether current supported housing provision meet the identified needs.

Substance Misuse

It is estimated that there are 2576 drug users in Sutton. The majority of problematic drug users in Sutton are in the 16-24 age range (1589), closely followed by the 25-34 age range (564).

Although there is little hard evidence as to the total number of substance misusers in the borough, the 108 approaches made to the Housing Advice Service during 2002/03 gives an indication of the scale of the problem.

Within the borough there is a range of services, offering varying levels of support and assistance to clients with a substance misuse problem. These range from advice and information to needle exchange, in-patient detox, counselling, residential rehabilitation and aftercare. Early local intervention through social care staff, Connexion advisers, youth workers and teachers is also taking place.

Gaps in Service Provision

Sutton's homelessness review identified a number of gaps in service provision to be addressed in the strategy. The key gaps are summarised below.

Research and Information

- Further analyse the needs of BME communities and the reasons for the over-representation of BME households in homelessness applications and acceptances and on the housing register.

- Assess the impact of support services on the occurrence of homelessness, in particular repeat homelessness.

- Analyse the reasons that homelessness due to arrears continues to fall and determine whether this is due to economic factors or internal policies and processes.

- Investigate whether services and accommodation for those fleeing domestic violence meets , particularly those of BME households.

- Investigate the reasons for the significant increase in homeless applications from BME groups resulting from domestic violence.

Homelessness Prevention

- Improve access to information and advice through information being available at various locations, information available on the Council's web site, the introduction of more flexible opening hours and increasing the number of outreach advice services.

- Raise the awareness of homelessness prevention through publishing press articles, increasing awareness of the Housing advice service amongst partner agencies, producing a directory of prevention services and promoting homelessness awareness in schools.

- Adopt a common recording system amongst agencies dealing with homelessness.

- Strengthen the links with the Sutton Community Legal Services Partnership.

- Investigate the feasibility of developing joint protocols between housing associations and advice agencies.

- Investigate interventions that may reduce homelessness amongst BME households.

- Strengthen the links between Housing and Social Services and review the intentional homelessness protocol.

- Consider allowing non-priority clients at risk of homelessness to access funds to move via the Changing Places scheme.

Domestic Violence

- Develop services so that remaining in their own homes is a viable option to those at risk of domestic violence.

Ex-Offenders

- Review and monitor the homelessness decisions of ex-offenders to ensure that any history of custody is taken into account when assessing vulnerability.

- Make information and support available to local authority and housing association tenants so that they are aware how homelessness may be prevented should they receive a period of custody.

- Look into the possibility of a council and/or housing association tenant voluntarily relinquishing their tenancy if it cannot be maintained because of imprisonment, with an undertaking to offer another property on release.

- Continue to increase the links between the Housing Centre and the Probation Service.

- Raise awareness of housing advice available to offenders and produce publicity material about rights and housing options.

- Establish a new procedure to manage move-on from Probation Accommodation Grant (PAG) funded projects, covering access to private rented accommodation, rent in advance/deposit schemes and the viability of introducing a Probation quota of local authority/housing association vacancies each year.

People with Substance Misuse Problems

- Improve the quality and delivery of services and implement Models of Care (a national framework for the commissioning of adult treatment for drug misuse).

- Ensure access to treatment for stimulant users.

- Increase GP participation.

People with Mental Health Problems

- Develop and strengthen the strategic links between the Mental Health Service and the Housing Centre, including:

- Establishing working protocols and procedures with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Older Peoples Service.

- Monitoring the progress of the CMHT duty system.

- Aligning the Health Clinical Information System and Local Authority information systems and identify gaps.

- Providing information and training events for health staff to identify those at risk of homelessness.

- Reviewing hospital discharge procedures.

- Developing a sub-group to deal specifically with health and social care.

- Meet the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) clients through the gathering of client information and considering BME needs when planning and reviewing homelessness services.

- Develop a mental health service map/directory.

Homeless Children

- Carry out an up-to-date review of the health and support needs of homeless households and improve access to health care and health outcomes for children of homeless households.

- Improve links and joint working between Health, Children's Services and Housing in meeting the needs of homeless families and children.

- Undertake a review of the provision of temporary accommodation and establish a temporary accommodation strategy.

Youth Homelessness

- Adopt a more co-ordinated approach to identifying at an early stage young people at risk of homelessness.

- Establish clear referral pathways to appropriate organisations, possibly commencing with an audit of services available for young people in the borough.

- Implement the planned programme of school visits by the Housing Advice Service and extend this to other agencies such as youth clubs.

- Improve management information available relating to young people. including the introduction of a common recording system, to eliminate double accounting, and outcome performance monitoring to determine the effectiveness of support given.

- Offer mediation for all young people being evicted by parents/relatives.

- Carry out a survey of landlords to gather information to determine how the access to private rented accommodation for young people can be increased.

4 Strategic Priorities

The Council's corporate vision for the future of Sutton is **to 'build a community in which all can take part and all can take pride'.**

This vision encapsulates Sutton's community-based approach and commitment to addressing quality of life issues and inclusiveness.

Seven values underpin the vision;

- Working in partnership with people who live or work in the borough
- Enabling and encouraging involvement in the Council's decision-making processes
- Making our services open and accessible so that everyone feels able to approach us with confidence, be listened to and treated with respect
- Providing high quality cost effective services which meet community needs in a changing environment
- Promoting equality where everyone is treated fairly but taking into account of the special needs of people who lack resources or face disadvantage
- Investing wisely for the future, protecting and developing human and natural resources to ensure a healthy environment for present and future generations
- The Council also recognises that its most important asset is its staff who have a key role to play in promoting pride in our community through the adoption of these core values

The Community Strategy has been developed by our Local Strategic Partnership, and includes representatives from private, public and voluntary interests in the Borough. Sutton's partnership vision is **'to improve the quality of life for all the people in the London Borough of Sutton, now and for the future generations'.**

The Council's visions and values are implemented through the achievement of five corporate goals.
The five goals for 2003/04 are:

- Promoting environmental sustainability
- Promoting social inclusion
- Promoting economic and community well-being
- Promoting lifelong learning
- Promoting a prudent and well managed Council

Corporate Action Plans setting out how priority activities will be delivered are linked to each corporate goal. These plans are clear statements to the

community of the Council's priorities and work programmes for the coming year and are the result of wide ranging consultation.

Within the Corporate Goals, we have embedded our strategic objectives and priorities for improvement. The Council implements the Community Strategy through its Corporate Action Plans.

The Council's Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan has been developed in light of the Council's vision, values. The Homelessness Action Plan seeks to address homelessness through seven strategic objectives which provide a direct link with the council's Corporate Goals particularly Promoting social inclusion, Promoting economic and community well being and Promoting a prudent and well managed Council.

Promote and encourage a supportive culture for Service users, Stakeholders and Staff in delivering services to prevent homelessness

Maximise the availability of permanent and temporary accommodation to meet the housing needs of homeless people

Identify households at risk of homelessness and to provide better outcomes for those households

Provide effective services to homeless households and develop effective solution to prevent and reduce homelessness

Improve access to health services for homeless people

Improve the quality of services to homeless BME households to better meet their cultural and social needs.

Meet the needs of vulnerable people living in the community

5   Delivering the Strategy

The review process has resulted in the identification of a number of gaps in service provision, which will form the basis of the strategy for tackling homelessness in Sutton over the coming years. In carrying out the review a number of themes have emerged which has informed our overall strategic aims in this area. Under each broad aim we have identified a number of objectives and within each of these a range of specific actions to be carried out.

This section sets out our aims and objectives for addressing homelessness in the borough and highlights the key targets that we have set ourselves for the coming years. A detailed action plan, in which the various specific actions with associated timescales are set against each of the aims and objectives, is appended.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Strategic Aim 1	***Promote and encourage a collaborative and supportive culture for service users, stakeholders and staff in delivering services to prevent homelessness***
Objectives:	*Develop a collaborative approach in the provision of services to homeless households and delivering the actions in this plan*
	Develop the role and function of Sutton's homelessness strategy to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and development of new initiatives
	Develop a shared understanding of each agency's service and role in preventing homelessness
	Reflect service users' views in the development of services to homeless people
	Develop a multi-agency approach to monitoring and recording homelessness in the borough
Strategic Aim 2	***Maximise the availability of permanent and temporary accommodation to meet the housing needs of homeless people***
Objectives:	*Create sustainable tenancies by maximising choice and providing support*

Maximise the development of new affordable homes through effective cross borough working

Increase the supply of temporary accommodation through an effective strategy

Strategic Aim 3   ***Identify households at risk of homelessness and to provide better outcomes for those households***

Objectives: *Raise awareness of the issue of homelessness amongst young people at an early stage*

Increase access to private rented accommodation available to young people

Assess the support needs of homeless families

Identify and reduce the number of households becoming homeless

Improve co-ordination between key agencies to ensure that homeless households discharged from prison have appropriate advice, support and resettlement packages

Improve information provision between local authorities and PCTs about homeless households placed out of borough

Strategic Aim 4   ***Provide effective services to homeless households and develop effective solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness***

Objectives: *Ensure that policies, processes and procedures support the effective reduction of the use of bed and breakfast and promote the prevention of homelessness*

Develop a range of housing options to assist service users to find and keep accommodation

Provide effective and timely advice services

Ensure that services are evidence based and meet users' needs

Carry out research into homelessness in Sutton to provide further information on the gaps identified in the review of homelessness in the borough

Strategic Aim 5   ***Improve access to health services for homeless people***

Objectives: *Work with primary health services to identify people at risk and direct them to advice and support services*

Develop improved pathways for homeless households into primary, specialist and hospital services

Improve co-ordination between key agencies to ensure that homeless people discharged from hospital have appropriate advice, support and resettlement packages

Strategic Aim 6   ***Improve the quality of services to homeless BME households to better meet their cultural and social needs***

Objectives: *Review the extent to which the housing needs of BME households are met*

Strategic Aim 7   ***Meet the needs of vulnerable people living in the community***

Objectives: *Make better use of the existing resources through the Supporting People programme*

Assess the impact of the Community Support service on the occurrences of homelessness, in particular repeat homelessness

Identify funding opportunities to develop services through a wide range of funding sources

Provide better opportunities for vulnerable adults to lead settled lives within the community

6   Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy

To take the strategy forward the Council will put in place robust structures and mechanisms to monitor and review it. The Homelessness Forum, comprising representatives from the Council, the Health service and the voluntary sector, will continue to meet on a regular basis to oversee the monitoring and review process. The Forum will be established as a Task Group reporting to Sutton's Health Improvement Partnership.   Regular reports on progress will also be provided for the Social Care Services Performance Committee.

To ensure that actions are carried out and targets achieved these will be integrated within the Council's service planning process and feature in the key performance objectives set for individual members of staff. We will also agree with our partner organisations how they can similarly put in place mechanisms to ensure that actions and targets are delivered.

Although the review has provided a wealth of information on homelessness in the borough and a sound basis for developing our strategy there is still a considerable amount of further research to be carried out over the next five years.

Given the rapidly changing socio-economic environment in which homelessness is set, our strategy will need to adapt and evolve over time. We will therefore be publishing updates on at least an annual basis and will produce a full new strategy, to meet the statutory requirement, by July 2008.

Sutton's Homelessness Action Plan

1. Promote and encourage a collaborative and supportive culture for services users, stakeholders and staff in delivering services to prevent homelessness.					

Objectives	Tasks / Actions	Measurable Outputs	Priority	Lead Service	Partner Service
1.1 Develop a collaborative approach in the provision of services to homeless households and delivering the actions in this plan.	Meet with lead services to agree specific tasks, performance indicators and monitoring arrangements for action outlined in this plan.	Performance Indicators agreed	High Year 1	Housing Centre	
1.2 Develop the role and function of Sutton's Homelessness Strategy to contribute to the prevention of homelessness and development of new initiatives.	Review the terms of reference and membership of the Forum. Review the structure of the group to enable the forum to progress effectively in its role.

Establish Sutton's Homelessness Forum as a Task Group reporting to Sutton Health Improvement Partnership. | Review completed, new Terms of Reference agreed and Forum operational

Homelessness Forum member of the Sutton Health Improvement Partnership | High Year 1

High Year 1 | Housing Centre

Housing Centre | All lead services

Sutton's Homelessness Forum

Sutton's Homelessness Forum |

1.3 Develop a shared understanding of each agency's service and role in preventing homelessness.	Encourage shadowing across agencies and agree key services and areas that will benefit from shadowing. Establish a programme of joint training.	Shadowing opportunities established as a formal training aid and cross agency shadowing carried out by one member of staff in each key service.	Medium Years 2 and 3	Training and Development	Community Care Services Children and Families Services Housing and Regeneration Health Services Probation
1.4 Reflect service users' views in the development of services to homeless people.	Consult with service users and set standards in the Homelessness and Advice Services. Establish a regular programme of consultation with service users.	Evidence that information from consultation used in setting service standards across services.	Years1 to 5 Reviewed annually	Housing Centre	Service Users
1.5. Develop a multi agency monitoring and recording system that will identify and measure homelessness in Sutton.		Multi agency recording system agreed by all agencies in use and providing statistics on homelessness in Sutton.	High Years 1 to 2	Sutton's Homelessness Forum	

2. Maximise the availability of permanent and temporary accommodation to meet the housing needs of homeless people.					
2.1 Create sustainable tenancies by maximising choice and providing support.	Develop the Temporary Accommodation Worker post to carry out follow up visits to new tenants and review suitability of accommodation and support needs.	Establish a procedure for reporting and acting upon cases where accommodation is unsuitable. Performance targets met at year end.	High Years 1 and 2	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration
	Meet the Council's targets for lettings to homeless households and those at risk of homelessness.	Establish the 'Chain Lettings' post and recruit to post.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration
	Reduce the number of under occupied properties in the borough and maximise the number of lettings through transfers and mobility schemes.	10% of transfers utilise a property that had formally been under occupied.	Years 1 to 5	Housing Centre	RSLs
	Monitor the number of housing association properties available for nomination to ensure nominations are maximised.	Monitoring mechanisms refined and outturn reported regularly.	Years 1 to 5 Review annually	Housing Centre	RSLs Housing Strategy and Resources
	Standardise terms of RSL nomination agreements.	Standard agreement in place and used in making nominations.	Medium Year 2	Housing Centre	RSLs Housing Strategy and Resources

	Assess the feasibility of introducing a revised cash incentive scheme.	Report completed with evaluation of options.	Medium Year 2	Housing Centre	
	Work with the Planning Service to ensure that the maximum affordable housing target is achieved on all relevant residential sites.	Number of affordable housing units delivered on residential sites; percentage of target achieved. Number of homeless households housed directly or indirectly as a result.	High Years 1 to 5 Reviewed annually	Housing Strategy and Resources	Planning
2.2 Maximise the development of new affordable homes through effective cross borough working with South West London Partnership.	Work with other South West London boroughs to support funding bids across the sub-region. Establish a cross-borough nominations agreement and process.	Annual number of affordable housing units for which funding secured in Sutton and across the sub-region.	High Years 1 to 5 Reviewed annually	Housing Strategy and Resources	Housing Centre
2.3 Increase the supply of temporary accommodation through an effective strategy	Assess current supply, demand and shortfall of current resources.	Clear, transparent and cost effective strategy for the provision of temporary accommodation in place.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration
	Evaluate the cost and benefits of different options and type of temporary accommodation.		High Year 1	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration
	Complete feasibility study into provision of emergency accommodation in a former sheltered scheme. Conversion work commissioned.	Strategy Committee agreement sought and obtained; development completed and operational.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration Community Services Resources,
	Increase the number of leased temporary accommodation units.	50 new units of temporary accommodation units acquired in 2003/04; 25 new units in 2004/05	High Year 1 and 2	Housing Strategy and Resources	RSL partners

	Reduce the number of empty properties in the borough.	Achieve the BVPI target of 25 units to be brought back into use each year.	High Years 1 to 3	Housing Strategy and Resources	Public Protection

3. Identify households at risk of homelessness and provide better outcomes for those households.					
3.1 Raise awareness of the issue of homelessness amongst young people at an early stage.	Raise awareness of housing options and promote awareness of the problem of homelessness amongst young people by establishing a programme of visits to schools and youth clubs.	To be agreed with lead service.	Medium Year 2	Learning for Life	Connexions, Housing Centre
	Develop a Young People's Accommodation Strategy.	Accommodation Strategy and Action Plan agreed by October 20003	High Year 1 to 5 Review annually	Housing Strategy and Resources	Children and Families, Learning for Life, Housing Centre
3.2 Increase access to private rented accommodation available to young people.	Survey landlords to gather information on their views on letting to young people.	Survey completed.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Public Protection
	Address issues identified as barriers by landlords; assess feasibility of incentives and different letting arrangements to increase the number of private sector lettings achieved.	Evaluation of options completed .10% increase in the number of young people gaining access to private rented accommodation.	High Year 1 and 2	Housing Centre	Children and Families Service
	Assess the feasibility of a "tenancy training" flat.	Feasibility study completed, outcome and recommendations reported by July 04	High Year 1	Housing Strategy and Resources	Housing Centre

3.3 Assess support needs of homeless families.	Develop joint protocols with Social Services to ensure the effective provision of support services for homeless families and vulnerable adults.	Clear written protocols in place, including guidance on access to support for homeless families and adults in crisis or with enduring support needs.	Medium Year 2	Children and Families, Community Care	Housing Centre. Housing and Regeneration
	Carry out a new survey into the needs of homeless families in temporary accommodation.	Establish baseline data and increase the number of tenants who say their support needs are met	Medium Years 1 and 2	Children and Families	Housing Centre Housing and Regeneration
	Work with partner agencies to provide support and secure premises to enable households homeless through fear of violence to stay in their homes where the household would prefer to do so.	Safe Home Scheme developed and available as an option for households fleeing domestic violence.	Medium Year 2	Community Safety Unit	Housing Centre
	Carry out actions identified in the forthcoming corporate Domestic Violence Strategy.	To be inserted	High Years 1 to 5	Lead services to be specified	
3.4 Take effective action to identify and reduce the number of households becoming homeless.	To reduce the number of homelessness applications against the principal reasons for statutory homelessness in Sutton.	To reduce the number of instances of homelessness through parental eviction by 15 % to 156 in 2003/04. Further targets to be agreed annually.	High Years 1 to 5 Reviewed annually	Housing Centre	

		To reduce the number of households becoming homeless through loss of assured shorthold tenancies by 15 % to 34 in 2003/04 Further targets to be agreed annually.			
3.5 Improve co-ordination between key agencies to ensure that homeless households are discharged from prison have appropriate advice, support and resettlement packages.	Assess the feasibility of providing housing support for ex-offenders obtaining independent accommodation following a custodial sentence.	Need for local provision and local priorities included in Supporting People Five Year Strategy.	Medium Year 2	Housing Strategy and Resources	Probation Service
	Work with the Probation Service to raise awareness of advice services available, provide housing advice surgeries at the probation service and make information available on how homelessness may be prevented during periods of custodial sentences.	Number of advice surgeries held at probation offices; number of clients advised. Information leaflet written and available giving specific information on housing and benefit issues for offenders, ex-offenders and their families.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Probation Service
	Review the move on arrangements for ex-offenders leaving probation housing schemes and increase the options available.	Review of current arrangements completed action for increasing range of options agreed.	Medium Year 3	Probation	Housing Strategy and Resources.
	Monitor applications by offenders as homeless to assess the impact of the new 'Priority Need Order'.	Quarterly figures reported.	High Years 1 to 5	Housing Centre	

3.6 Improve information provision between local authorities and PCTs about homeless households placed out of borough.	Work with LGA/ALG to rollout NOFITY project to Sutton	NOTIFY operational	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Children and Families Community Care

4. Provide effective services to homeless households and develop effective solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness					
4.1 Ensure that policies, processes and procedures support the reduction of the use of bed and breakfast and promote the prevention of homelessness.	Meet targets agreed with the Homelessness Directorate for reducing the numbers in bed and breakfast.	2003/4 targets set out below: Number of families in bed and breakfast (shared facilities): 12 by end of Q1 9 by end of Q2 6 by end of Q3 3 by end of Q4 Number of families in bed and breakfast where notice of homelessness exceeded 21 days: 9 by end of Q1 6 by end of Q2 3 by end of Q3 0 by end of Q4 Number of families in bed and breakfast for more than six weeks: 6 by end of Q1 4 by end of Q2 2 by end of Q3 0 by end of Q4	High Year 1	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration

		94% of homeless decisions and written notification issued to be made in 25 days	High Year 1 Target to be reviewed annually	Housing Centre	
4.2 Develop a range of housing options to assist service users to find and secure accommodation.	Expand the Route to Rent initiative to increase the number of households assisted in finding accommodation	80 units of accommodation secured by clients through the Housing Advice Service	High Year 1 Target to be reviewed annually	Housing Centre	
4.3 Provide effective and timely advice services	Increase the number of cases where homelessness is prevented through the intervention of advice and make advice services more accessible.	70 cases of homelessness is prevented through cases work in 2003/04. Number of advice surgeries held in key locations in the borough and number of clients assisted.	High Year 1 Target to be reviewed annually	Housing Centre	
	Maximise benefit uptake by identifying unclaimed welfare benefit which applicant is entitled to claim.	Welfare benefits check conducted for 80% of housing advice clients. Amount of benefit claimed as a result of checks where benefit was not previously claimed monitored.	High Year 1 Target to be reviewed annually	Housing Centre	

4.4 Ensure that services are evidenced based and meet users needs.	Review the Homelessness Action Plan to assess its impact on services to homeless people and effectiveness in preventing homelessness.	Action Plan reviewed and updated 1 year after the implementation of the current plan. Performance reported to Sutton Health Improvement Partnership.	High Years 1 and 2	Homelessness Forum Sub Group	All partners identified in Plan
	Carry out user and stakeholder surveys to influence service development within the Housing Centre.	Survey for each service within the Housing Centre carried out and evidence of change where feedback is less than satisfactory. .	High Years 1 to 5 To be reviewed annually.	Housing Centre	
4.5 Carry out research into homelessness in Sutton to provide further information on the gaps identified in the Homelessness Review.	Agree a timetable and lead agency to carry out further work.	Review updated in areas where gaps were identified	High Years 1 to 5	Homelessness Forum Sub Group	All partners

5. Improve access to health services for homeless people.

5.1 Work with primary health care services to identify people at risk and direct them to advice and support services.	Raise awareness of the services available to homeless people amongst GPs and their role in referring patients for timely advice and support.	Establish baseline and increase referrals to Advice services by GPs by 10%.	Medium Year 2	Sutton and Merton PCT	Sutton's Homeless-ness Forum
5.2 Develop improved pathways for homeless households into primary, specialist and hospital services.	Establish protocols for joint working with key agencies (Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol services) to provide more timely advice, support and accommodation.	To be agreed with lead services.	High Years 1 and 2	Homeless Forum Sub Group Community Care Services	All Partners
5.3 Improve co-ordination between key agencies to ensure that homeless households discharged from hospital have appropriate advice, support and resettlement packages.	Explore the feasibility of establishing advice surgeries in hospitals.	To be agreed with lead service.	High Years 1 and 2	South West London and St Georges NHS Trust	All partners
	Provide training on housing issues and the homelessness process to health services.	12 information and training session provided to key health agencies.	Medium Year 2	Housing Centre	Sutton and Merton PCT

6. Improve the quality of services to homeless Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households to better meet their cultural and social needs.

6.1 Review the extent to which the housing needs of BME households are met.	Carry out research into the main causes of homelessness in BME households and why some groups are more at risk of homelessness.	Research carried out and reported	High Years 1 and 2	Housing Strategy and Resources	All partners
	Use the information from the above research to investigate interventions aimed at reducing homelessness amongst BME households.	Establish baseline and reduce homelessness applications by 10% Establish baseline and increase number of private rented accommodation units obtained by BME households by 10%	Medium Years 2 and 3	Housing Centre	
	Review the use of interpreting services and range of information available in the main BME languages.	Reviewed carried out and a revised range of interpretation and translation services agreed	Medium Year 2	Housing Strategy and Resources	All partners
	Monitor performance against expected outcomes in key activities that have an impact on homeless BME households.	Performance monitored and reported to Performance Committee and Community Relations Forum at least annually.	High Years 1 to 5	Housing Centre	Housing and Regeneration
	Monitor the registration of Asylum Seekers with GPs and the incidence of refusals.	Incidence of refusals monitored and reported.	High Year 1	Housing Centre	

7. Meet the needs of vulnerable people living in the community

7.1 Make better use of existing resources through the Supporting People Programme.	Review and monitor services provided to homeless people funded through Supporting People grant, re-commissioning services where they do not meet need.	Service reviews completed on all Supporting People Services by March 2006	High Years 1 to 3	Housing Strategy and Resources	Community Care, Health Services Probation
7.2 Assess the impact of the Community Support service on the occurrence of homelessness, in particular repeat homelessness	Establish monitoring processes and review mechanisms to identify the incidence of repeat homelessness and the reasons for that homelessness.	Report outcome of monitoring with recommendations and option appraisal.	Medium Years 2 and 3	Housing Centre	Supported Housing Providers
7.3 Identify funding opportunities to develop services.	Share information on funding sources and develop bids through the Homelessness Forum where appropriate.	To be agreed with lead agency.	High Years 1 to 5	Sutton's Homelessness Forum	Corporate Strategy External Funding Officer
7.4 Provide better opportunities for vulnerable adults to lead settled lives within the community	Increase the number of private rented accommodation units secured by households vulnerable due to age, substance misuse, mental health difficulties or ex offenders.	Establish baseline and increase by 10% annually.	High Years 1 to 5	Housing Centre	
	Work with Sutton Eco-Actif to ensure employment opportunities for homeless people with support needs are maximised	Number of homeless or potentially homeless people referred to Sutton Eco-Actif; number of successful placements into employment and training.	Years 1 to 5 Position reviewed annually	Housing Centre	Sutton Eco-Actif