

## Introduction

Homelessness represents housing need at its most acute. Yet it is not exclusively a housing problem. There's no doubt that the incidence of homelessness is greatly exacerbated by rising housing costs and an accompanying fall in the number of social lettings. But this is only part of the picture.

For most people the crisis of homelessness is the culmination of a combination of issues which they are unable to resolve. In some cases people's behaviour may have contributed or even have caused this. In others they may be powerless in the face of circumstances beyond their control which, all too often, may include real or threatened violence. Not all of these issues can be solved simply by the provision of new accommodation, though this is an important part of any solution.

Homelessness means more than just the absence of suitable, settled accommodation. Its causes go much wider than an imbalanced housing market and so, in contrast to problems such as overcrowding or disrepair (both of which are also serious issues in Portsmouth), homelessness isn't just a housing problem, it represents a more intractable challenge across a much broader front.

Portsmouth's voluntary sector has a strong track record of innovation and delivery in many aspects of homelessness and we have tried to reflect this in the strategy we have put together. Indeed it should be acknowledged that the Homelessness Focus Group, set up as part of the much wider 'Portsmouth Partnership'<sup>1</sup>, have acted as a 'sounding board' for much of what follows.

The strategy is in three parts. Part 1 describes the incidence of homelessness in Portsmouth. Part 2 sets out our vision and priorities over the next five years. Part 3 sets out how the strategy will be delivered and paid for. A separate appendix describes how Portsmouth is responding to various government targets in relation to homelessness.

The strategy does not, for obvious reasons, set out detailed policies. Instead it aims to prioritise issues, identify gaps and agree solutions to key problems. Our intention is that the document will be relevant to anyone with an interest in homelessness in Portsmouth, and accessible to professional and non-specialist readers alike.

Strategy documents sitting on shelves achieve little and gather dust quickly. An effective strategy is one which can be implemented successfully and delivers meaningful improvements. This is what we'll now be working to achieve.

Alan Cufley  
Head of Community Housing  
March 2008

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<sup>1</sup> Portsmouth's Local Strategic Partnership which includes a variety of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

Part 1

What we know about homelessness in Portsmouth

**What is homelessness?**

Categorising someone as homeless can take on a variety of meanings. Three examples of this are:

- Households living in short term or temporary accommodation secured by the council who are awaiting permanent rehousing under the homelessness legislation (which is described in the box below). Such households are referred to as *statutorily homeless*.
- A much larger group of predominantly single people could be described as homeless because, though they don't fall within the statutory definition, they lack the security of their own settled accommodation and depend on short term sharing or what is known as 'sofa surfing'. To distinguish this group from statutorily homeless households we refer to this group as 'non-priority homeless'. Whilst this seems like an unfortunate term to use, it denotes the fact that people in this group do not generally have a 'priority need' since they are regarded neither as vulnerable nor do they have dependant children.
- At its most extreme, homelessness can mean being literally roofless. We refer to this small group of people as *rough sleepers*.

Local authority homelessness duties

Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for people who are homeless, or are threatened with homelessness, if they are have a 'priority need' and have not caused their own homelessness.

Priority need means being pregnant, or having dependant children or being vulnerable on grounds of old age, ill health or some kind of disability.

**Housing need in Portsmouth**

Like everywhere else in the south of England, Portsmouth has a shortage of affordable housing. The rising cost of home ownership relative to earnings over the last ten years means that even the cheapest 'starter homes' are beyond the means of the majority of first time buyers on average earnings. This has led to mortgage lending at much higher multiples of earnings to households desperate to get into home ownership. The effect of this can now be seen from the steady increase in repossessions, which in the Portsmouth area have risen six fold over the last five years.

<b>Repossession Orders made in the Portsmouth County Court area</b> (includes suspended orders)	
2003	136
2004	158
2005	314
2006	858
2007	902

Source: Ministry of Justice

The declining affordability of home ownership means that many more households depend on renting; be that private rented, or the social housing sector. Portsmouth has a buoyant private rented market. This is fuelled by many older converted properties and, more recently, by the advent of many buy to let investors. Relative to its surrounding suburban hinterland Portsmouth's housing market provides more opportunities for new entrants to rent or buy. Demand for accommodation is therefore steady allowing landlords to be reasonably selective in the way that they let their properties.

The fact that there is a good supply of rented property within the limits of the Local Housing Allowance<sup>2</sup> creates opportunities for potentially homeless households. But at the same time,

<sup>2</sup> The Local Housing Allowance replaced Housing Benefit for private tenants from April 2008.

costs of entry to this market in terms of deposits and other up front payments create significant barriers which low income households who need accommodation must overcome.

Another concern is that steps to improve the regulation of the private rented sector, which includes mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), may have an adverse effect on the supply of this type of accommodation. HMOs provide the most readily accessible form of accommodation for some potentially homeless people. It would therefore be unfortunate if the effect of raising standards through enforcement was to limit the supply of cheaper rented accommodation in the city.

### Access to social housing

Households unable to afford home ownership and wanting the security of a long-term tenancy look to the social housing sector in ever increasing numbers. At the same time the number of lettings available, through the council and through housing associations (referred to as Registered Social Landlords RSLs) has steadily declined. As indicated in the box below the annual number of social lettings in Portsmouth is 40% below what it was ten years ago.

<b>Declining availability of social housing in Portsmouth 1998-2008</b>	
	Total lettings*
1998/9	1,585
1999/2000	1,553
2000/1	1,401
2001/2	1,348
2002/3	1,207
2003/4	1,097
2004/5	1,081
2005/6	1,272
2006/7	1,132
2007/8	tba

\*Combined PCC & RSL social lettings in Portsmouth excluding transferring tenants

The good news is that, in the last few years the absolute decline in the affordable housing sector has ended and, buoyed by RSL development, the

sector has seen modest growth. However a significant amount of new development by RSLs in Portsmouth is in the form of low cost home ownership schemes which cater for the first time buyer market. Whilst this form of provision helps the overall market, the benefits to low-income potentially homeless households are only indirect.

There's no doubt that social rented housing tenancies provided by the council or by RSLs provide the most attractive and secure solution for the overwhelming majority of homeless households. Yet with so much pressure on the sector, especially where family sized accommodation is concerned, this is increasingly difficult to provide. In the decade to 2006 the proportion of all social housing lettings to made to homeless households grew steadily to the extent that the majority of lettings to tenants new to the social housing sector were households who had been homeless. The effect of this has been to reduce the extent to which other categories of applicant (e.g. overcrowded households) can access the sector and creating a 'perverse incentive' for households to present as homeless seeing this is as the most reliable route into a council or RSL tenancy.

In turn it can be argued that this has created a vicious circle in which as lettings to homeless households have increased applicants, households perceive this as their only opportunity to access the long-term security and an affordable rent.

### How many people are homeless in Portsmouth?

Measured in proportion to its population, Portsmouth's level of statutory homelessness is higher than the average for the South East region. It is also higher than several other cities to which with which comparisons can be made. This is despite the fact that significant reductions have been

achieved in recent years. Portsmouth also places a greater number of households into bed & breakfast accommodation, even if only for short periods.

<b>Statutory homelessness per 1,000 population</b>	
Brighton	4.1
Portsmouth	3.7
Medway	3.4
Southampton	3.0
SE region average	2.0

Source: DCLG

### **Rough Sleeping**

Rough sleeping is not a major problem for Portsmouth in numerical terms. The number of rough sleepers on any one night is likely to be in low single figures. Nevertheless it is a persistent issue in several known 'hot spots' around the city including Albert Road and the Guildhall, generally involving a small group of individuals who are well known to key agencies.

Rough sleepers invariably have a chaotic history of drug or alcohol dependency, which may be compounded by mental health issues. It has been estimated that there are more than 1300 problem drug users in the city. A quarter of those presenting for drug treatment programmes in Portsmouth report themselves as having 'no fixed abode'<sup>3</sup>.

The Safer Portsmouth Partnership has established a Street Culture Panel to tackle rough sleeping. The panel is multi-agency and chaired by the Central Point manager. All agencies meet to direct relevant services and support to individuals on the street and, where necessary, to co-ordinate appropriate action.

<sup>3</sup> *Safer Portsmouth Partnership adult treatment plan 2008/9*. A problem drug user is defined as someone who is dependent on Class A drugs and is likely to resort to criminal activity to support their habit

### **Who is homeless in Portsmouth?**

Whilst homelessness can affect almost anyone, analysis shows that particular groups of people are especially likely to be at risk of homelessness. Low income is clearly a common denominator amongst all homeless households. Statutory homeless households fall into two groups:

- Families including a dependent child or a pregnant woman, these account for 60% of all households.
- Households which include a vulnerable adult (normally single people).

The incidence of homelessness is much higher amongst younger and recently formed households. More than half of all families placed in temporary accommodation are headed by lone parents. Young single parents are particularly at risk. Portsmouth's teenage conception rate is well above the regional average<sup>4</sup> and a cause for concern within the city, particularly given the links between teenage conception and long-term benefit dependency.

Single households without children are accepted as statutorily homeless if considered to be 'vulnerable'. More than a hundred applicants each year fall into this category. The principal reasons for vulnerability are, in order of frequency:

- Mental health or disability
- Domestic violence
- Physical disability

### **What causes homelessness?**

High housing costs and the lack of affordable housing form an important part of the background to housing

<sup>4</sup> Teenage conception can be expressed by measuring the number of conceptions amongst 15-17 year olds per 1,000 females in this age group. For Portsmouth this is 51 compared with a south east regional average of 34.

need in Portsmouth. But the single biggest trigger causing people to lose their homes is violent relationships. Violence is the principal reason for homelessness for more than one third of statutory homeless households. Most of which is accounted for by violent breakdowns of relationships between partners living in the same home. The connection between violence and the misuse of alcohol is well known; it has been estimated that alcohol plays a part in one third of domestic violence cases.

The other main triggers for homelessness are loss of accommodation with friends or family (23%) and loss of assured shorthold (private sector) tenancies (22%). By comparison, the number of evictions by social landlords is very much smaller, though this must be qualified by acknowledging that such households are likely to be deemed to be intentionally homeless and thus excluded from these figures. A small but also significant number of single adults become homeless as a result of being discharged from institutional care or custody.

<b>Homeless households in 2007: Main reason for loss of last settled home</b>		
Friends or family unwilling to accommodate, of which	66	23%
Parents	30	
Other relatives, friends	22	
Other	14	
Violent Relationships, of which	100	35%
Domestic violence	71	
Associated persons	12	
Racially motivated violence	3	
Other	12	
Harassment	2	
Eviction due to arrears, of which	18	7%
Mortgage arrears	11	
LA and RSL tenancies	2	
Private tenancies	5	
Other loss of private tenancies	64	22%
Left institution or care of, which		5%
Prison	8	
Hospital	7	
LA Care	2	
Former NASS accommodation	6	2%
Other reasons	16	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	

## Homelessness and Ethnicity

87% of statutory homeless households in 2007 regarded themselves as white/British. This suggests that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households are slightly over represented amongst homeless households, though in part this reflects different incomes and age profiles within the BME communities. Amongst some of the most established BME groups within the city homelessness appears to be much lower than for the rest of the population, this is particularly true for the Asian community. There do not appear to be any significant trends causing homelessness amongst BME groups, though, it is perhaps self-evident that recent migrants are likely to face the most difficulty in finding suitable, secure accommodation.

## Immigration and homelessness

Recent migrants to the UK are frequently blamed for all manner of ills, including a shortage of housing. So called 'economic migrants' from central and eastern Europe form the largest group of recent immigrants to Portsmouth. Evidence suggests that a significant number of migrant workers who initially came to the UK on their own are now choosing to settle in Portsmouth with their families. Many live in privately rented accommodation that can be extremely overcrowded and in some cases households have become homeless. During 2007 migrant workers and their families accounted for 5% of statutory homelessness acceptances.

Portsmouth also has small population of recent immigrants who are either temporarily living in the UK and subject to immigration control or who are seeking asylum. In both cases, assistance available to people in these groups is very limited. People without indefinite leave to remain in the UK generally have no recourse to public funds and as such cannot seek any

assistance from public agencies; even if they are literally homeless. This can create extremely difficult circumstances where, for example, a woman with children becomes estranged from a partner whom she has been financially dependent upon and who may themselves have UK citizenship.

Asylum seekers, in contrast, rely on financial and practical assistance with housing from NASS<sup>5</sup>. Asylum seekers are not entitled to be granted council or RSL tenancies and are generally provided with privately rented accommodation until their claim for asylum is determined. Once asylum seekers are granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK they are expected to leave their NASS accommodation in a matter of weeks (and sometimes only days). This presents a real challenge because prior to this point, such households will not have had access to welfare benefits and will have been restricted from paid work.

Some households in this position will, once their application is accepted, leave their accommodation in Portsmouth to move to other parts of the UK. Those that remain require assistance, since they are generally required to leave their current accommodation. In 2007-8 an increase in 'resolved' asylum applications where applicants have been granted indefinite leave to remain has increased the need for the council to secure temporary accommodation.

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<sup>5</sup> National Asylum Support Service

Part 2.

## **Our Strategy to Prevent Homelessness in Portsmouth**

In the preceding pages we described the current incidence of homelessness in Portsmouth. This shows that suitable, affordable housing is increasingly hard to access for newly forming households and that this is being exacerbated by the declining size of the city's social rented sector. Whilst the city council and its partners have successfully reversed the increase in statutorily homeless since its peak in 2003, homelessness remains a significant problem. Homelessness is most likely to occur amongst households with acute housing needs which are compounded by chaotic lifestyles. Progress in tackling homelessness therefore needs to address housing as well as wider social needs. For some homeless households provision of accommodation, without the right type of support, is likely to be a short-term fix.

The strategy we have agreed is based on a three-fold approach. We aim to:

- ✓ Improve widen the range of options available to people in housing need
- ✓ Developing a Prevention Centred Approach Focussing on Support for those most at risk of homelessness
- ✓ Address the underlying causes of homelessness amongst young people

In the next few pages we set out how we plan to achieve these objectives

**Objective One: Improve the range of options available to people in housing need**

*We know that*

- The high cost of housing particularly in terms of entry level costs (e.g. deposits and other advances) make it hard for newly forming households to secure rented accommodation.
- Some private landlords have expressed concern that the introduction of the LHA will make letting to young and low income tenants more risky
- Declining affordability in the market generally has increased pressure on the social housing sector, this has been coupled by a rising number of mortgage re-possession
- Unlike the social housing sector, the private rented sector in Portsmouth is expanding. For some households private rented accommodation offers the only realistic options to prevent homelessness.
- Portsmouth benefits from the strength of its voluntary sector, but sometimes services overlap. The establishment of the Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre provides an opportunity for a more joined up approach, bringing together a number of advice services including the CAB and Southern Focus Trust's existing Housing Advice Centre which impact on homelessness.
- Housing Options interviews have a key role to play as part of prevention centred approach. Such meetings need to explore the full range of possible routes to accessing a new tenancy, asking *'how can we help?'* rather than *'who can we help?'*

*What we are going to do.....*

<p><b>Priority 1. Promote the availability of affordable housing</b></p>
<p>Strategic actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address the overall problem of housing market affordability by maintaining new supply of across all tenures in line with Local Plan targets.</li> <li>• Through a combination of planning policy and external funding deliver an increase in the number of affordable homes.</li> <li>• Encourage RSLs to provide new homes which reflect the needs of homeless households i.e. predominantly family sized homes, for rent</li> <li>• Monitor PCC and RSLs allocation policies to ensure that a reasonable balance of lettings go to homeless households</li> </ul>
<p>Success criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,000 new affordable homes provided by RSLs and others 2008-11</li> <li>• Half of new RSL homes available for rent</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2. Make sure that alternatives to social housing are accessible</b></p>
<p>Strategic actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend opportunities for potentially homeless households to find private tenancies through the Access scheme and RSL leasing schemes</li> <li>• Implement a 'safeguard policy' to identify and protect the interests of vulnerable private tenants who may be adversely affected by the replacement of housing benefit by the Local Housing Allowance.</li> <li>• 'Mainstream' advice on the private rented sector as part of all housing options interviews</li> <li>• Improve the quality and range of information available on private renting both in written and electronic format</li> <li>• Make more use of Housing Options 'prevention pot' to fund creative solutions individuals facing homelessness</li> </ul>
<p>Success criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in the number of successful referrals to private landlords through the Access scheme (125 in 2007).</li> </ul>



**Priority 3. Improve delivery of housing and related advice services within Portsmouth**

Strategic actions:

- Establish the new Portsmouth Community Legal Advice Centre (CLAC) in 2008, providing a more effective 'one stop' advice centre
- This will provide a more specialist approach to problems involving home ownership and mortgage arrears
- Establish multi-agency training days which bring together staff from different agencies involved in homelessness and improve working knowledge of agencies roles and responsibilities
- Improve the referral processes between agencies by establishing common assessment frameworks which avoid clients 'bouncing' from one agency to another.

Success Measures

- Successful establishment of the CLAC
- Improved working relationships between agencies
- Prevention of increased homelessness as a result of mortgage repossessions

**Objective Two: Developing a Prevention Centred Approach Focussing on Support for those who are most at risk of homelessness**

*We know that*

- Homelessness has a wider range of causes than simply a failure of the housing market
- In some cases the needs of homeless people are not limited to the absence of suitable accommodation
- Violence and threats of violence is a major factor contributing to homelessness
- A prevention centred approach requires a pro-active rather than reactive style with an emphasis on networking, negotiation and creativity
- Tailored solutions are needed to prevent homelessness for individuals with especially chaotic lifestyles, alcohol and drug dependency is a significant problem, especially for rough sleepers
- One third of those moving into direct access accommodation at Mill House are former residents
- Portsmouth's Supporting People review has identified opportunities to re-model a number of services for socially excluded groups, but this must take place in the context of an overall cut in the SP budget for the city.
- Increased emphasis on homelessness prevention has been successful in reducing the amount of statutory homelessness by more than 50% over the past five years.

*What we are going to do*

**Priority 1. Improve tenancy sustainment through effective floating support, resettlement and accommodation based services**

Strategic actions:

- Explore the use of Supporting People funding to establish a single resettlement service across the city
- Provide Housing Benefit Tenancy Support through the EC Roberts Centre to work with private tenants who are at risk of homelessness because of a failure to claim benefits to which they are entitled.
- Establish floating support role to undertake ongoing work with clients identified by the Portsmouth Combined Court Desk
- Develop the role of Supported Housing Panels as the single point of access to accommodation based support

Success Measures:

- An increase in the number of private sector residents accessing floating support
- Increased proportion of planned moves from supported housing to independent living

**Priority 2. Adopt a more pro-active approach to rough sleeping**

Strategic actions:

- Review the balance between outreach and day centre based support within the role of Central Point
- Support a more 'assertive' approach to outreach with rough sleepers; backed by enforcement through the Police and Safer Portsmouth Partnership
- Support the work of the Big Issue in Portsmouth by providing homeless people with an opportunity to earn
- Discourage members of the public from giving money to people who are begging
- Make sure people at risk of rough sleeping have somewhere secure to store items of personal value
- Support modernisation of Mill House to promote improved health and well being of residents.

Success measures:

- A reduction in the incidence of rough sleeping shown through a street count based on known 'hot spots'

- Modernisation of Mill House to offer accommodation for couples and provision of emergency cold weather accommodation for rough sleepers
- Fewer re-admissions to Mill House

<b>Priority 3. Prevent homelessness on discharge from institutions</b>
Strategic actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with Winchester Prison to prevent homelessness on release</li> <li>• Increase provision of supported housing for ex-offenders</li> <li>• Develop more effective protocols with hospitals covering the discharge of patients who have no suitable accommodation</li> </ul>
Success measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reduction in the number people becoming homeless as a result of discharge from institutions</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 4. Reduce homelessness as a result of domestic violence</b>
Strategic actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funds which can be used to provide enhanced security to victims of domestic violence who wish to remain in their homes</li> <li>• Early Intervention Project worker</li> <li>• Take opportunities to work with the Safer Portsmouth Partnership to encourage healthy, consensual relationships between people.</li> <li>• Increase resettlement support to women leaving refuge accommodation</li> </ul>
Success measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reduction in the incidence of homelessness as a result of violence</li> <li>• Sustaining the number of refuge places available within the city</li> <li>• A reduction in the number of re-admissions to the Women's Refuge</li> </ul>

**Objective Three: Address the underlying causes of homelessness amongst young people**

*We know that:*

- Single Homelessness amongst young single people aged between 16 and 25 is frequently often associated with other underlying problems between a young person and their family. Typically issues include substance misuse, mental health and anti-social behaviour, exacerbating conflict with an adult in the household who, because of a previous relationship breakdown in the family, is not the young person's parent.
- Successful intervention to prevent homelessness depends on early identification of risk factors. This depends on a multi-disciplinary approach and can't be based purely on housing services. Sometimes this is frustrated by poor communication between different agencies involved.
- Generally, it is in the best interest of most 16 and 17 year olds to live in the family home. Negotiating a reconciliation to achieve this, or accommodation with another member of the family will always be considered first, subject of course to an assessment of any risks this might entail.
- Home visits are especially appropriate where young people have been asked to leave accommodation by friends or family. Home visits allow an opportunity to negotiate to remain until a planned move can be arranged, whilst at the same time making both parties appreciate the consequences of the young person's exclusion.
- Some young people appear stuck in a 'revolving door'; moving through accommodation which they are unwilling or unable to sustain. In some cases this results in young people being deemed 'intentionally homeless'.

- The number of young people placed into B&B in emergencies is too high and, for 16 and 17 year olds, this must be eliminated
- Effective intervention with young people who have lost their accommodation has the potential to prevent problem behaviour in the future.

*What we are going to do*

<p><b>Priority 1. Early intervention to prevent homelessness amongst young people</b></p>
<p>Strategic actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a common assessment framework (CAF) which will support more effective multi agency action plans</li> <li>• Improve training for housing options staff on working with young people</li> <li>• Develop use of mediation and home visits to prevent homelessness</li> <li>• Improve awareness of services available to young people whilst addressing unrealistic expectations on the availability of council tenancies</li> <li>• Include information on leaving home for Year 10 and 11 school pupils</li> </ul>
<p>Success measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decline in the number of B&amp;B placements for young people</li> <li>• Elimination of B&amp;B for 16 and 17 year olds by April 2009</li> </ul>

<p><b>Priority 2. Address the causes of social exclusion that cause homelessness amongst young people</b></p>
<p>Strategic actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve our understanding of the causes of youth homelessness</li> <li>• Make sure homeless young people have opportunities to access to learning, training and employment and the support to sustain this</li> <li>• Support young people at risk of homelessness to access primary health services information on sexual health and substance misuse</li> <li>• Implement the 'respect' standard in young persons' accommodation by supporting providers ability to manage anti-social behaviour within a fair and consistent framework which young people understand</li> </ul>
<p>Success measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of under 19</li> </ul>

year olds who are NEET<sup>6</sup>

- A reduction in the number of evictions from young persons supported accommodation
- An increase in the % of 16 & 17 year olds in temporary accommodation to be covered by a support plan

**Priority 3. Develop housing pathways for vulnerable young people**

Strategic actions:

- Expand the existing supported lodging scheme which provides transitional accommodation for some 16 & 17 year olds
- Improve access to private rented sector accommodation through the access scheme
- Aim to reduce young people's average length of stay in schemes such as All Saints through more intensive support
- Increased provision of move on accommodation through the Young People's Supported Housing Panel

Success measures:

- An increased proportion of planned moves from young persons' supported housing to successful independent living

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<sup>6</sup> Not in Education or Employment

### Part 3

## Delivering the Strategy

### Partnerships

Effective partnership working is the single most important requirement to achieve the objectives set out in the strategy. The key partnerships include:

- Portsmouth City Council primarily through its Housing Options and Supporting People teams
- Registered Social Landlords and in particular providers of specialist supported accommodation providers
- Supporting People providers
- Advice agencies

Portsmouth's Homelessness Focus Group has been established to reflect the importance of these partnerships and to provide independent, expert scrutiny of all aspects of homelessness within the city. The Focus group meets regularly and, at the time of writing, includes representatives from:

- Bolitho Way solicitors
- EC Roberts Centre (chair)
- Portsmouth City Council
- Portsmouth Primary Care Trust
- Private landlords
- Rethink
- Southern Focus Trust

The group will be responsible for monitoring the outcomes of the strategy which will be reported through an annual review focussing on the outcomes of each of the three priorities.

### Resources to support the strategy

We expect the following financial resources to be available to support the strategy.

In December 2007 the government's department for Communities and Local

Government announced an annual grant of £400,000 which is available to support homelessness prevention in Portsmouth in 2008/9. We expect a similar sum to be available in 2009/10 and 2010/11. The table below shows how this money has been ear marked in previous years.

<b>CLG Homelessness Grant</b>	<b>£'000's</b>
Rethink: Central Point day centre and rent deposit scheme	292
Southern Focus Trust: Money advice	25
Rent deposits (young people)	6
EC Roberts Centre: Housing Benefit support worker	17
Portsmouth City Council: Housing Options 'prevention pot'	12
Housing benefit support	23
Early Intervention Project	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>

Appendix 1.

### **Meeting the Government's 2010 Temporary Accommodation Target**

In 2005 the Government set a five-year target for all local authorities to achieve a 50% reduction in the number of statutorily homeless households living in temporary accommodation. The City Council uses a variety of temporary accommodation to meet the short term requirements of homeless households where

- a) a rehousing duty has been accepted and the household is awaiting a permanent offer
- b) the council has to accommodate a household pending enquiries about their application.

At the end of 2007 there were 107 households in temporary accommodation as indicated in the table below.

<b>Homeless households in temporary accommodation January 2008</b>	
Bed & breakfast, of which	
- Pending enquiries	16
- Rehousing duty accepted	3
PCC self contained accommodation (let on licence)	26
Private sector leased accommodation	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>

To meet the government target this figure of 107 needs to be reduced to 65; being 50% of the total in temporary accommodation in 2005.

Our first priority is to limit the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. This is the most expensive and least satisfactory form of temporary accommodation and we have acknowledged that it is used too often in Portsmouth. We believe that the measures we are putting in place through will help to reduce dependence on B&B for emergencies. Notwithstanding this, there will almost certainly be a continuing requirement for short term, furnished

accommodation which homeless people can access in emergencies. We are exploring a variety of options to achieve this including extending use of our own housing stock on a temporary basis.

In the medium term Portsmouth will meet the government target by reducing the number of formerly homeless households accommodated in private sector leased properties. The majority of these homes are former MoD homes which have been leased to the city council pending eventual redevelopment. For the time being, the council would prefer to see these homes occupied as opposed to being boarded up or demolished. At the time of writing the council is negotiating the details of this with Annington Homes, which owns the most of these homes.

Our intention is that, in the future, we will be able to meet our legal obligations to many more statutorily homeless households through provision of 'qualifying offers' of private sector accommodation, some of which may involve tenancies of properties which are currently part of the PSL scheme.

## Appendix 2

### Further information

The Homelessness strategy has been compiled by the city council with help and guidance from the Homelessness Focus Group and following consultation with a range of stakeholders. Part of this involved a consultation event held at Buckland Community Centre in November 2007.

The strategy has also been influenced by a wealth of material published by external agencies including:

The Housing Corporation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Tackling Homelessness: the Housing Corporation strategy</li><li>- Tackling Homelessness: efficiencies in lettings functions</li></ul>
Brighton & Hove City Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Youth homelessness strategy 2007-10</li></ul>
Department for Communities and Local Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Preventing Homelessness: a strategy health check</li><li>- Evaluating homelessness prevention</li><li>- Homelessness Prevention: a guide to good practice</li><li>- Sustainable Communities: Settled homes; Changing lives</li></ul>
Portsmouth City Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Review of services for socially excluded groups</li></ul>

### Key Contacts

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Portsmouth Foyer	<a href="http://www.portsmouthfoyer.org">www.portsmouthfoyer.org</a>
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Southern Focus Trust	<a href="http://www.sft.org.uk">www.sft.org.uk</a>
Two Saints HA (Mill House)	<a href="http://www.twosaints.org.uk">www.twosaints.org.uk</a>