

HOMELESSNESS BEST VALUE REVIEW

ACTION PLAN (REVISED JANUARY 2003)

	Action Required	Action to be Taken	*	Target for Completion	Lead Officer	Output	Resources	Comment/Progress
1	Provide a more focussed Service							
	(a) Review corporate objectives and document strategy	Document homelessness strategy.		July 2003	RSUM	Homelessness strategy produced	Officer time 30 days	Work in progress
2	Improve Customer Awareness of Service							
	(a) Ensure adequate publicity for homelessness and advice services	Produce advice leaflet on homelessness and distribute.	M	October 2001	RSUM	Leaflets produced and distributed.	Officer time 3 days. Production/printing costs can be met from existing budgets.	Leaflet produced and distributed to reception areas. Copies sent to CAB, Libraries and GP surgeries. RDC Website includes homelessness information. Delete from

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								Plan
3	Develop a more Customer focussed Approach							
	(a) Evaluate customer satisfaction	Design feedback questionnaire Implement Record and analyse feedback	M	June 2001 June 2001 Ongoing	RSUM RSUM RSUM	} } Customer issues identified and taken into account in future service planning. } }	} } Officer time 5 days annually. } }	Form designed as part of review. Ongoing survey of all service recipients once duty has been discharged. Few forms returned. Length of time for decision to be taken and use/quality of bed & breakfast accommodation have been identified by

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								respondents as the main issues to be addressed. See 6(g).
	(b) Record and analyse all complaints about the service.	Implement new corporate complaints procedure following trials	M	December 2001	RSUM	All complaints recorded, issues identified and considered in future service provision.	Officer time 4 days per annum.	Complaints recording system introduced from 01.04.02. Corporate IT based system not pursued. Recording of homeless complaints not robust and to be reviewed. Target April 03.
4	Provide a more "Joined Up" Service							
	(a) Establish protocols for liaison with other agencies for identifying and dealing with	Identify agencies/ Organisations where a protocol would improve service Agree and document	H	Sept. 2001 Ongoing	RSUM RSUM	Agencies where protocol required identified. Protocol produced.	} } } } Officer time 15 days.	Completed. Protocols with

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	homelessness, improve linkages to provide a more seam-less service	working arrangements and protocols					} } } }	Social Services Mental Health & Child & Family Teams and Health Visitors produced. Protocols with five other agencies being drafted.
	(b) Develop more formal working arrangements with Registered Social Landlords	Discuss with RSL's whether they can assist in providing accommodation for homeless persons.	H	Hold discussions with 2 RSL's by Sept. 2001.	HC&SO	4 new units of accommodation for the homeless available. See also 2(33) in Housing Strategy Action Plan.	Officer time. Use of £375,000 capital allocated to provide accommodation for homeless people. Supported housing schemes may involve development of unused Council land.	Competition held with RSLs. Agreement reached with Springboard HA to procure 11 units for use as temporary accommodation. Funding bid made by Swan HA to Housing Corporation for move-on accommodation for women

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								fleeing violence and for young people leaving care. Funding decisions expected February 2003.
	(c) Develop working arrangements with neighbouring authorities.	Investigate how far cross-border working arrangements and joint service provision can be improved.	M	October 2003 and ongoing.	RSUM	See 2(38) in housing strategy action plan.	Officer time. Provision of an independent housing advice service is likely to entail significant costs.	Some discussions have taken place during review process and in Housing Strategy Review and Forum. Project team(s) will need to be established. Development of homelessness strategy will influence decisions on housing advice services. Target of October 2003 to

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								decide way forward.
	(d) Maximise opportunities for joint work with other RDC departments.	Introduce service level agreement for client/contractor split	M	October 2001	HCSO/ HRHM	Service level agreement in place.	Officer time within existing resources.	SLA in place. Delete from Plan.
		Joint agreement on revised pointing scheme and allocations policy	H	April 2002	HRHM/ RSUM/ HC&SO	Revised letting policy in place.	Officer time 50 days.	Revised policy in place. Delete from Plan.
		Develop protocol with Housing Benefits.		March 2003.	HRHM/ RSUM	Protocol agreed	Officer time 10 days.	
5	Provide a more consistent Service							
	(a) Ensure homelessness policy and practice complies with the Council's equal opportunities	Research good practice among other authorities. Consult with EREC.	M	January 2004	HC&SO HC&SO	Best practice identified. EREC support for RDC policy.	} } } } } Officer } time 30	Dependent on development of corporate equal opportunities policies.

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	policies when finalised.	Introduce monitoring of homelessness/advice work and periodic review of results.			RSUM	Evidence that RDC's homelessness and advice work is non-discriminatory.	} days. } } }	
	(b) Introduce procedures to help ensure consistency in decision making.	Introduce meetings to discuss cases/decisions. Review decisions to be discussed with homelessness staff. Provide staff and Member training.	H	Ongoing June 2001 June 2001 and ongoing.	RSUM HHHCC RSUM RSUM/ HHHCC	Meetings arranged. Homelessness and advice staff appraised of review officer/panel decisions and reasons for them. High level of competency.	Officer time within existing resources. Officer time within existing resources. Staff training costs included as part of budget process.	Implemented Ongoing Implemented. Ongoing Appeals & Licensing Committee Member training carried out June 2001 and June 2002. Staff training ongoing.

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6	Improve Quality							

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	of Service							
	(a) Ensure homeless-ness/advice service supports corporate aims and community plan, including: i. Equality issues ii. Social inclusion iii. Community safety iv. Quality objectives.	Review policies to ensure compatibility with corporate aims. See footnote**	H	Stage 1 – April 2002 Stage 2 – April 2003	RSUM	Policies reviewed and compatible with corporate aims.	Officer time 5 days to identify issues.	See also 1(a) and 5(a). Crime & Disorder reduction strategy 2002 – 2005 and homelessness and housing advice services are mutually supportive. Remaining areas are being further developed in parallel with work on Corporate Strategy and Community Plan. Target June 2003.

* Action divided into 2 phases:

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	(b) Improve quality of interim/temporary accommodation.	Develop and implement improvements to Hatfield House Hostel.	H	May 2002.	HRHM	See 2(37) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.	See 2(37) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.	Work in progress. See 2(37) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.
	(c) Develop strategy / options to minimise use of bed & breakfast accommodation.	Discuss with RSL's whether they can assist in providing accommodation for homeless persons.	H	Hold discussions with 2 RSL's by Sept. 2001.	HC&SO	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.
Review allocations policy to ensure homeless people receive appropriate priority for permanent accommodation.		M	April 2002.	HRHM	See 4(d) above	See 4(d) above.	See 4(d) above.	
Increased use of Hatfield House Hostel and 125 High Road for interim accommodation.		H	November 2003	RSUM	Decreased use of B&B for interim accommodation.	Officer time within existing resources.	See 4(b) above. Provision of new RSL Temporary	

Initial appraisal by April 2002 – 5 days officer time
Writing/revision of policies – by April 2003 – 20 days officer time, Lead Officer RSUM.

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							Capital allocation of £375,000 available for provision of accommodation for the homeless to reduce use of B&B.	Accommodation releases hostel and 125 High Road for use for interim accommodation, pending decision.
	(d) Improve monitoring of persons in interim and temporary accommodation.	Introduce systems to ensure review of cases before expiry of 2-year duty.	M	October 2001.	RSUM	All cases reviewed prior to end of 2-year duty.	Officer time met from existing resources.	Homelessness Act 2002 has removed the need for statutory review and the two year limit on the accommodation duty. Allocation scheme revised to give additional points related to length of stay in temporary accommodation.

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		Investigate ways of better monitoring of usage of interim accommodation.	L	April 2005	RSUM	Reduced non-occupation of interim and temporary accommodation.	5 days per annum.	Ongoing contact with residents housed in Temporary Accommodation to be further considered during development of Homelessness Strategy – by July 2003. Signing in system introduced for applicants housed in bed and breakfast accommodation.
	(e) Improve interview facilities.	Arrange, where appropriate, for home interviews.	M	Ongoing	RSUM	Home interviews carried out when appropriate.	Officer time from existing resources.	Implemented where appropriate. Ongoing
		Improve interview	H	April 2005	HAMS	Safe, private and	Corporate	Being

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		facilities at Rochford and Rayleigh offices.				welcoming interview facilities available.	resource decisions required.	considered as part of overall changes to accommodation. Difficulties with interview facilities in both reception areas which are being addressed corporately.
	(f) Improve facilities for the protection of property.	Investigate options for storage and select most appropriate option.	H	October 2003	RSUM	Secure, weather-proof accessible storage facilities available.	Current budget £7,000. Costs likely to increase. Officer time 10 days.	Committee report, dependent on costs. Costs for alternative options being investigated.
	(g) Reduce time taken to decide applications.	Report to Committee		July 2001.			Additional staffing approved at full year cost of £46,000.	Completed. Delete from Plan.

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		Appoint and train staff if approved by Committee.		November 2001.	RSUM	Staff in post. Training undertaken.	2001/2 training budget of £1,400 available for homelessness staff.	Completed. Staff in post. Remove from Action Plan.
		Speed up determination of applications		March 2003.	RSUM	70% of applications determined within 33 days	Estimate for 2002/3 is £2,000.	New target. October – December 2002 performance improved to 67% of applications being determined in 33 days compared with 47.1% for previous quarter
7	Improve Delivery of Service							
	(a) Develop realistic, challenging local Performance	Obtain information from other authorities, evaluate and determine PI's to be used.	L	November 2002	RSUM	Local PI's identified.	Officer time 5 days.	Former BVPI 67 has been adopted as a local target

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	Action Required	Action to be Taken	*	Target for Completion	Lead Officer	Output	Resources	Comment/Progress
	Indicators (PI's).	Put in place appropriate collection and reporting processes.		March 2003	RSUM		Officer time 5 days per annum.	Other PI's to be considered as part of homelessness strategy development
	(b) Provide better comparative information on performance.	Identify local authority group for comparison. Agree performance indicators Establish information sharing and reporting processes.	L	November 2003 November 2003 March 2004	RSUM RSUM RSUM	} } } } Benchmarking } arrangements with } other authorities } agreed } }	} } } } Officer time 20 } days } }	
8	More Cost-effective Services							
	(a) Develop procurement strategy for temporary/interim accommodation that ensures cost effectiveness.	Discuss with R&HM Divn to agree future allocation of temporary accommodation.	H	July 2002	RSUM	Release of 2 further RDC properties.	Officer time (see 2(32) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.	Additional properties now allocated for temporary accommodation. Total now 20.

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		Discuss with appropriate RSL's.	H	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b) above.
		Consider tendering for B&B accommodation and tender if considered appropriate.	H	March 2002.	RSUM	Determine appropriateness of tendering and tender if appropriate.	Officer time 15 days.	Homeless strategy will seek to eliminate use of bed & breakfast accommodation, except in emergencies, in line with Government policy.
	(b) Develop procurement strategy for removals which ensures cost effectiveness.	Invite tenders for provision of removal service.	L	June 2004.	RSUM	Tenders received.	Officer time 10 days.	
	(c) Implement suitable information management software.	Research available systems and implement most suitable option.	L	2005/06.	RSUM	Homelessness information software implemented.	Officer time. IT strategy estimated cost of £5K.	
9	Increase							

	Action Required	Action to be Taken	*	Target for Completion	Lead Officer	Output	Resources	Comment/Progress
	Availability of Accommodation							
	(a) Improve range of temporary/interim accommodation available.	Investigate assistance from RSL's	H	See 4(b) above.	HC&SO	As 4(b)	See 4(b) above.	See 4(b)
		Investigate availability of private sector accommodation.	M	Hold discussions with 2 letting agents by March 2002.	HC&SO	Agreement to provide private sector accommodation to homeless.	Officer time 5 days.	Discussion with private agents held and ongoing, but there are few properties available for rent by homeless applicants.
		Review rent and deposit guarantee scheme	M	See 2(27) of HS Action Plan	See 2(27) of HS Action Plan	See 2(27) of HS Action Plan..	See 2(27) of HS Action Plan. Officer time within existing resources.	See 2(27) of HS Action Plan.
		Consider use of capital programme/receipts to procure additional	H	April 2001	HHHCC	Minimum 4 units procured from funds set aside to reduce	See 4(b). Officer time from existing	See 4(b)

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		accommodation.				B&B use.	resources.	
	(b) Improve research into availability of good quality temporary and permanent accommodation.	Hold private landlords' forum meetings. Regular meetings with development partner RSL's.	M M	See 2(23) of HS Action Plan Ongoing.	See 2(23) of HS Action Plan. HC&SO.	See 2(23) of HS Action Plan Agreement on bids to be made for funding.	See 2(23) of HS Action Plan. Officer time 4 days per annum.	See 2(23) of HS Action Plan. Meetings held with 3 RSL's during June - September 2002. Future target – meetings held with 3 developing RSL's minimum twice a year. Next round of meetings will take place August and September 2002.
	(c) Encourage new markets, particularly private rented sector.	Hold discussions with letting agents about buy-to-rent in Rochford.	H		} } } HC&SO }	See 9(a) and 9(b) above.		

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		Review rent and deposit guarantee scheme.			} } }		See 9(a) above.	See 9(a) above.
		Encourage availability of accommodation for lodgers	L	April 2004	See 2(11) of HS Action Plan	See 2(11) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.	See 2(11) of HS Action Plan.	See 2(11) of Housing Strategy Action Plan
		Development and implementation of empty homes strategy	H	October 2002	See 2(26) of HS Action Plan	See 2(26) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.	See 2(26) of HS Action Plan.	See 2(26) of Housing Strategy Action Plan.
	(d) Improve knowledge and understanding of private rented sector.	Discuss local housing market with estate agents/letting agents, through private landlord forum.	M	See 9(b) above.	See 9(b) above.	See 9(b) above.	See 9(b) above.	See 9(b) above.
	(e) Allocations policy to give appropriate preference to applicants who have been homeless.	Review pointing system and allocation policy.	H	See 4(d) above.	See 4(d) above.	See 4(d) above.	See 4(d) above.	See 4(d) above.
10	Forward Planning							
	(a) Improve	Review data collection	M	December	HC&SO	Census information	Officer time	Target set at

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	understanding of demographic changes in the planning of the service provision.	methods and improve analysis of trends. Liaison with other Essex authorities.	M	2004 Ongoing.	HHHCC/ RSUM	analysed and implications identified for future strategy development.	20 days Officer time within existing resources.	December 2004, by which time full 2001 census information should be available. Census information released in the intervening period will be used in service planning. Liaison with EHO and Essex Homeless Officers Group. Officer discussions taking place about housing needs in the Thames Gateway – South Essex Sub Region.
	(b) Adequately prepare for legislative	Monitor Government announcements and consider implications.	H	Ongoing	} } } RSUM	} } Implications for } RDC	} } } Officer	

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	changes.	Liaison with other Essex Authorities. Committee reports as necessary.		Ongoing Ongoing.	} } HHHCC	} } Members decide on action to be taken where necessary	} time from } existing } resources } } }	See 10(a)
	(c) Investigate whether there is a "rough sleepers" problem.	Clarify definition of rough sleeper. Establish best practice methodology Survey, liaising with other agencies	L L L	May 2004 May 2004 July 2004	RSUM RSUM RSUM	Definition established. Survey protocol identified. Number of rough sleepers in District identified.	Officer time from existing resources. Officer time 5 days. Officer time 3 days. Some costs will be incurred in carrying out the survey.	